

**Because I say so!**  
**The spirit of the child at the mercy of an adult in pain:**  
**impacts of hidden generational bullying, and prospects**  
**for hope and resilience.**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis I undertake an autoethnographic, phenomenological investigation of the experience of being bullied as a child by an adult; namely my mother, and to some extent my father, throughout my deeply religious upbringing, and its consequences and outcomes in my life.

Using as a framework the story of the hero's journey, I explore through layered storytelling and reflective analysis, how I came to marry a bully, and experience domestic violence, and my response. I investigate the difficulties I encountered in my relationship with my first son as he became a toddler.

The areas I cover are the experience of being bullied and the effects on my choice of a partner and on our relationship. As I write I am brought up against my 'self' as I look at the concept of intimate partner violence and the subject of violent women, along with family terrorism, and whether or not violence is gendered. I also investigate bullying behaviour between adults, at how bullies and victims are created, and how I came to act out both of these behaviours.

I describe my journey through counselling to gaining a new attitude towards children. Other influences which have shaped me, including religion and faith are examined, to see how they have provided resilience, and how these aspects of my life have been transformed to influence how I came to work with and for children in the educational field. I describe how my work has continued to inform and transform my views of the way adults treat children, the recognition that when children behave 'badly' there is a cause, and describe why I have a passion to see that adults find new 'ways of being' with them.

## Acknowledgements

### Images of Archetypes

The images I have used to represent the archetypes are images from cards, books and even advertisements that I have kept over the years, and which have resonated with aspects of my journey.

Innocent: **Wildflowers for Grandmother** by Larry Riley.

Orphan: **Against the Wind** by Heidi Dahl, © Verlag Walter, D-4000 Dusseldorf, KB –186.

Caregiver: **Untitled** by Heidi Dahl, © Kunsterverlag Deutsch 6635 Schalbach/ W. Germany.

Warrior: Cover illustration, artist Scott McKowen, for **The Dragon Queen** by Borchardt, A. (2002), London: Bantam Press.

Seeker: **Moon Dancer** by Deetha Watson – reprinted with permission.

Lover: Artist unknown.

Destroyer: **The Ice Queen**; personal photograph used with model's permission.

Creator: **Moon**, from the series Alphonse Mucha.

Ruler: Cover illustration, artist Stephen Bradbury from **Mists of Avalon** by Marian Zimmer Bradley, Penguin Books, reprinted with permission.

Magician: **Venetian Mask; The Moon** by Margaret Layton DFA. RBSA- reprinted with permission.

Sage: Artist unknown.

Fool: **Nose to Nose** [www.nosetonose.info/](http://www.nosetonose.info/)

Dragon: from Steer, D. (2003) **Dr. Ernest Drake's Dragonology**, London:Templa.



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## **Prologue**

**Would you like to live in a Victorian house  
in 14 acres of beautiful grounds? ...**

Ringsfield Hall is a residential centre for  
children, young people and adults to come for  
recreational and educational purposes...

*There could not have been an advertisement more designed to draw my attention at that time and this one seemed to leap out from the page. It was 1998 and my marriage had broken down two years previously. I needed work that included a place to live with my children. The first time I saw the centre the sun was shining through the amber-gold leaves of a fine November afternoon. My younger son, who was then eleven, got out of the car and stood under a chestnut tree. He gazed around at the quiet scene with parkland, garden, woodland and pasture, where an old pony grazed and black sheep munched the grass, and at the red brick Victorian house slumbering in the autumn sunlight.*

*'Are we going to live here?' he asked 'I hope we are.'*

*Oh, me too.*

*I came back for interview two weeks later, was thanked for coming with a polite handshake and drove home convinced I did not have the job. That same evening I heard I had been successful.*

*The Statement of Aims of the Trust states that it exists to develop children's physical, mental and spiritual potential. But the very first thing I noticed was a sign immediately inside the front door which read,*

*Children certainly make a difference to a place  
- but it can usually be repaired.*

*Not, I thought, a positive and welcoming way to greet them, but one far more inclined to tell them how low were our expectations, and invite them to live down to them. Many years before I had heard a radio interview with an Italian nursery school teacher who expressed her aims as ensuring that children were surrounded by the best music, the best art, the best of anything they could offer. I was excited by that concept. What I wanted was to create a beautiful, non-institutional space filled with colour for children but not childish, the best I could provide given our financial limitations. We<sup>1</sup> were blessed with a Victorian building which gave us the chance to do this, despite being assured at interview that there was little that could be done to upgrade the place.*

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<sup>1</sup> 'We' refers here to my colleague and I who started work at the same time.

*We worked hard and the place was ready in time for our first group, a non-school group of children, some of whom were only six years old, there to learn first aid. But that weekend things did not go quite as anticipated. The first thing the leaders did was hide the ornaments, because, we were told, if the children didn't break them they would most likely steal them. It was, in some small way, to set the tone, we discovered. At the first meal-time we were shocked to hear the children told 'If you don't eat that you will get nothing else'. It was quite a common threat, I discovered, but I had no intention of allowing it to be what the children remembered from staying with us. This was a leisure time group, totally voluntary, and some of these were very young children, surely away from home for the first time. When I objected, I was viewed with non-comprehension. When the little ones had been put to bed and came downstairs seeking comfort, they were told 'Back upstairs – now'. That was when the ache started.*

*Through the first weeks and months I was more often saddened than I was pleased by how children were treated by the adults with them. I came to understand at first hand how widely children are oppressed, by virtue of being small and powerless. I also noticed many small ways in which attitudes to children display a lack of respect for their personhood.*

#### **Interactions and exchanges**

*I had a conversation in the dining room one day with another group, as I replaced a tablecloth.*

*'What are you doing that for? It will only get dirty again'*

*'Ah yes, but we can't have people eating at a dirty table.'*

*'These aren't people - they're children.'*

*'Don't get me started'. I demurred, but backed off. She was only joking?*

*Later on, at a school we had visited a number of times before, a pupil with special educational needs was brought into the room early, seated by his carer on a chair to one side of the room, and was sitting quietly, talking to us and his carer, waiting for the rest of his class. When they arrived the teacher who came in with them demanded he sit elsewhere, and when he demurred, dragged him from his chair and forced him to sit down on the floor. He became distressed and upset and had to be removed. What was the purpose of this, what was achieved? He had been put in his place by an adult ( who was also shamed by this behaviour) and here was another adult shouting at him and pulling him about in front of everyone. What was he to make of that? Despite wanting to walk out and leave her to her temper and rudeness we did our presentation for the children. When we had finished talking she stood up, ordered them back to the classroom and marched out without a word to us. We had made a three hour journey to get there. We left without anyone saying goodbye and drove home.*

## Storms

*Storm;* (stawrm) *outburst, a sudden strong outpouring of feeling in reaction to something e.g. of protest*

*Tempest;* ( tempist) *emotional upheaval, severe commotion or disturbance*  
(Encarta English Dictionary (U.K.)

***Whatever one likes to call my responses to these new experiences there is little doubt that my arrival at the centre, full of enthusiasm and energised for a new project, also brought in its wake an emotional upheaval. What I have observed in these interactions between adult and child is what Nathanson (1992) refers to as the shame - humiliation response. The child's head droops and turns away, and eye contact is broken. Sometimes it is the whole body that droops, and the child, unable to respond clearly, is in a state of 'cognitive shock' (p.141). My point in telling these stories is to open up the idea that a seemingly insignificant episode for the adult may cause a deeper response within the shamed child that continues physically and emotionally long after the adult has moved on. Shame is painful; it interrupts affective communication, limiting intimacy and empathy, and it interferes with cognition. It is an impediment to interest, excitement, enjoyment and joy, and can interfere with anything that causes those responses and emotions including the thrill of discovery (p. 143) and therefore with any learning and motivation. It is painful to watch, especially as it is a familiar experience for me. Knowing the thoughts that are likely to be going through the mind of the child, the sense of fear, of being defective, a failure, weak, guilty, (p.144) creates turmoil and shame for me, at being implicated in the shaming and humiliation by virtue of being an adult.<sup>2</sup>***

I observe the way people are with children as someone who has experienced bullying and shaming, as a child, as a wife and as a mother. Observing it in my work at Ringsfield Hall revived an interest in researching relationships between children and adults.

### Important note

The story I shall tell cannot be described as neutral or objective, nor can it be seen to be the only meaning that could be gleaned from or constructed about my life. This is my account at this point in time, In a sense any such writing can be described as a fiction, in that it is not my story, it is what I have written about my story, what I recall, what seems significant to me.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis I have used font in ***bold italics*** for sections using my story. For commentary in the present I have used Tahoma, and *italics* for quotations.

## **INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON METHODOLOGY**

**Which might be read at the beginning or at the end of the thesis<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> A timeline is included in Appendix 8, (p.xxii) to facilitate the reading of the thesis

## **A Journey towards Research**

Coming to a decision about which methodology to use for my research as I began to work towards a PhD in 2001, is part of a journey that had begun around the mid 1990s. I originally qualified as a nurse, in 1971, specialising in the operating theatre. I married in 1975 and during the next 20 years I had four children, worked with women and children in my church, started counselling training and was instrumental in setting up a Christian retreat centre. In 1996, after a two year Post-Graduate Diploma, the next stage of my academic journey was to be the dissertation that would take up the last year of the MA in Counselling. I found that many of my clients had been abused as children, as had many of the participants on the counselling course, and as I had myself. The issue was very real to me, I had lived through it, and I was discovering how common an experience it was. It became clear to me that the subject I wanted to address was therefore:

'How is it that childhood abuse, sexual, physical and emotional, goes on from generation to generation, and what can be done about it?'

At our MA research residential this had not gone down too well as a possible topic. It was thought that I wanted to change the world. I felt that there was little wrong with the idea of changing something so profoundly unacceptable, or at least informing the possibility of change. Admittedly it was a huge subject, and I only an MA student. Nevertheless, the issue was a real one. Those concerned over the plight of children have talked in terms of increases in abuse and neglect for many years.

In the period 1959-69, Clegg & Megson (1973) reported that:

*Children abandoned showed an increase of 121%...illegitimate children for whom the mother could not provide by nearly 150%, children of parent in prison by nearly 25%, children in thoroughly bad homes by 168% (pp. 79-80)*

In 1994 Miles noted that:

*Reported cases of child abuse in Britain are three times more numerous today than in 1970.*

*One child in ten is viciously battered, sexually perverted, or deliberately starved of food and love. (p.6)*

She went on to comment:

*No man or woman in our society now may be legally subjected to the deliberate infliction of physical pain, deprivation of food or sleep, incarceration in the dark or confined spaces, or being locked out of shelter at night. All these things are regularly happening to children everywhere without intervention by the adult world. (p.7)*

I felt, and still feel, that anything that could shed light on the matter is worth investigating. I felt it with real passion, for more than one reason. I had been bullied and frequently hit, and I had struggled with repeating the behaviour with my son. Counselling, I firmly believed, had saved us both.

### **Where is the client?**

As the MA research module continued I began to feel increasingly uneasy and unhappy, even distressed, as I heard qualitative research described in terms that somehow still seemed to have left the subject completely out of the picture. There was no mention of the voice of the client, the subject, who remained silent. Why such an extreme reaction? Looking back I perceive this was because of my own story; my pain at my actions, my own experience of being a client, of my struggle to be heard or even to speak, of finally receiving empathy and acceptance, and of being transformed through that experience.

*Just as Kierkegaard remarked that one will never find consciousness by looking down a microscope at brain cells or anything else, so no one will find persons by studying persons as though they were only objects. (Laing 1967, p.20)*

At the time I simply could not comprehend how someone could claim to understand the functioning of the human mind and psyche without reference to the individual, the client. Yet I felt I had to be silent.

***When I was a child my mother often recited the phrase 'Children should be seen and not heard' if we spoke during meals. We were meant to listen - until we were meant to talk of course. I was never encouraged to converse and her sort of conversation could suddenly turn and bite so I learned it was safer to stay quiet. Debate was discouraged and considered to be contradicting her or answering back. Not surprisingly I spoke very quietly, but was then told I swallowed my words. I was told at length and very derisively; this continued to happen until her death. A favourite occurrence was for her to insist I had said something years before that meant I was now contradicting myself. I would have absolutely no***

***recollection of having said these things, but the condemnation was chilling. I would deny it hotly, but would fall into my pattern of wondering if she was right, and I had in fact said these ludicrous things as she claimed. It was a huge relief when I did once remember the original conversation and to know that the things she said had probably always been untrue. Till then I simply was never sure.***

### **Finding my voice**

*By locating voice, we can understand simultaneously an individual's social, cultural and political position (Dow, 1997: Strine, 1997). Further, by exploring the concept of voice, via personal narratives or stories, we can understand how individuals as social and cultural speaking subjects form their self identities through interaction (Kerby, 1997; Gergen & Gergen, 1997; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000: Strine 1997) It is this theoretical nexus among identity, voice and self-narratives that can provide important insight into identity construction... (Olson, 2004, p.5)*

When I went into therapy during the 1980s as I experienced difficulties in my response to my son, and discovered that as an adult I was allowed to speak, this resulted in the Child (Stewart, 1989) in me being released to speak for herself. It was only then that I experienced any sort of breakthrough from that sense of being silenced, and found my voice. The process of therapy revealed to me a whole new way to view the world, and later, when I came to train as a counsellor, the work of Carl Rogers in his Person Centred Approach (Rogers, 1980) had widened it still further. I was especially captivated by the concepts of empathy and acceptance (p.115), concepts which had been fairly alien to me. It took me a while to adjust to the humanist view that the human organism has an innate urge for, a tendency towards actualisation and is intrinsically seeking growth (p.118-9). I was more familiar with the concept, ever present from my childhood, of original sin.

I had started to train as a counsellor in 1992 because I wanted to be there for other women who had experienced abuse, but I had also developed an awareness of life from the child's-eye view, and a need to champion their cause. The writings of Alice Miller encouraged me. She rejected the premise of working with childhood drives (Miller 1992, p.43), putting forward the notion that rather than children responding badly to basically decent parenting (Miller 1990, p. x), it is parents who are responsible for their children's pain. Eventually, after much resistance, I came to identify strongly with this as my healing progressed. During this period of training I also came across others who had a whole different response to children than the



one I experienced as a child: people who talked of reverence for children, and who actively wanted them to enjoy freedom. People such as Johann Arnold (1997) who advised:

*Never try to catch children in the act and then use your evidence to prove their guilt. That is an act of moral violence. If you distrust children and read bad motives into their behaviour, you weaken them instead of strengthening them. (Arnold, 1997, p. 79)*

My motives as a child had always been in question. In fact I would go so far as to say there was not really any question about it, my motives were invariably interpreted as wrong, sinful, wicked or, on a good day, lazy, selfish or deceitful. I also discovered during my training that there were others who saw things in a similar way to Arnold. R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self* (1960) was one example. His existential viewpoint discerned that there is a kind of method in what is often called madness. In his work with schizophrenic patients he seemed to be someone who was truly there for his clients because he listened both to the seemingly pointless statements they made and to the attributions made about them by their families. He made every effort to understand their responses and behaviours and to be an advocate, giving them a voice (1960, p. 31). I was very moved by that. I realised also that there was a growing interest in a hermeneutic or existential phenomenological therapy framework which is concerned with the interpretation of, and finding personal meaning in, the stories of clients, rather than applying an established theory to their story (Owen, 1994).

## **Stories**

I was drawn to this hermeneutic framework, I think, because my life has been filled with stories. Most, though not all, of the stories I listened to as a child, were told to me in Sunday school, but were not by any means all Bible stories. They were often illustrated with flannel-graphs of vivid colours and remarkable ingenuity, and usually illustrated points about how to live in a way which produced good moral qualities, and strong values. But I loved them, and earnestly took them all to heart. I was always reading, and since I was fifteen, when I became a Sunday school teacher myself, I have also been a teller of stories.

The different approach to listening to the client in hermeneutic therapy felt comfortable to me and resonated with my own experience of therapy. In this phenomenological framework the clients are facilitated in interpreting themselves, and making sense of their own world, not led to accept rigid interpretations from a set of theories (Owen 1994, p. 357). By understanding the effects of a person's life events on their sense of self, it is possible to work through the discourse the client has surrounding those events. So, back in the 1990s I had wanted to counsel and to conduct research in a way that recognised the value and validity of the client's story. However the failure of my marriage, losing our home, and living on benefit, meant that after gaining the Post Graduate Diploma I had been unable to complete the M.A.. So five years later in 2001, in an attempt to pick up the pieces, as I embarked on doctoral studies I wanted once more to conduct research that heard the voice of the done to. How it is that children continue to be shamed and bullied by adults?

### **Arrival at a methodology**

By the time I started to study for an MPhil, in 2001, I had moved across the country with my children, and changed my job. I was now involved in Environmental Education with primary and middle school children, meeting hundreds of them every year. In observing the classes and listening to their teachers, it seemed that there were many who are suffering. This would seem to be borne out by the numbers of statemented children and those on Ritalin (Palmer, 2009, p.9), as well as the high numbers of exclusions and reported mental illness, self harm, suicides and violence (Palmer, 2006 p. 2). There are obviously many factors involved in all of this; nevertheless the burning question for me was as ever "What can we do to prevent children from being abused by adults?" By now, I was focussed on the emotional consequences of abuse for children. I felt that society must ask why the cycle of abuse of children, the most vulnerable members of our communities, continues. Could education alter the system that perpetuates it, I wondered? By treating children with empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard, and by teaching them how to deal with their emotions, could we perhaps prevent those who might, after bad experiences, grow up to 'need' to abuse, from reaching that stage? This would require that the adults working with them had developed their own emotional intelligence too.

## Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the term coined by Daniel Goleman (1996) as the ability to use empathy to understand the emotions of others, to recognise and understand one's own emotions and to develop reflexivity. What I came to believe as I learned about the concept of emotional intelligence, was that it was this, learned through therapy that had enabled me to break the pattern of impotent anger, shame and violence in my life.

Emotions are vitally important, organising and orchestrating many of the mind's most important functions, and are '*the architect of a vast amount of cognitive operations throughout the life span. They make possible all creative thought.*' (Greenspan, 1997, p.7 cited in Ellison, 2001, p.44)

Every moment that passes is involved in the processing of emotion, as Ellison (2001) points out:

*Emotions shape our intellect, focus our attention, link our experiences and guide our intentions, which affect the activities we choose. (p. 44)*

Every experience has emotional overtones. People respond emotionally to light, heat, colour or smell, to whether something is comforting, jarring or nostalgic. The body affects emotions and emotions affect the physical self. Thoughts also impact on feelings, which again affect the body. This unity of mind, body and emotion means that whether or not it is always appreciated, all three are always in play (p.44).

It is sometimes easy for adults to discount children's feelings, and disapprove of expressions of feelings they do not like. I have spoken to adults who are surprised to hear an interpretation of a child's actions which gives place to that child's feeling, and who are quite pleased to think that there may be a reason for what they previously thought of simply as unreasonable behaviour. Thus, as adults dealing with children, it is essential to recognise that both child and adult are constantly experiencing not just the engaged mind, but rapidly changing and often unrecognised emotional responses, along with the senses and functions in which, as Levin (1985) suggests, all are inextricably embodied (p.49). These interactions at

an often unacknowledged level are what lie at the heart of this thesis, as, according to Miller (1990), ignoring them allows the continuation of the cycle of damaged children becoming damaged adults (p. 82). It is also essential to attend to expressions of pain and anger as Miller (1983) describes with such passion (p.106). Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise and give place to the emotions of others along with one's own emotions, and to respond appropriately to both with empathy. Killick (2007) points out that emotional intelligence involves self-motivation and social competence along with self awareness (p. 16).

### **The search continues**

As I searched for a research question and a methodology, light began to dawn when I came across Clark Moustakas's book, *Heuristic Research* (1990). Moustakas wrote about loneliness, and his starting point was to experience deeply, to immerse himself as he called it, in his own loneliness for a year. Thus the possibility of using my own material and my own voice in a similar way emerged, and I began by immersing myself in my own story of parenting my first son, because I recognised that I had been in a cycle of abuse myself and had been repeating my mother's behaviour towards me in that relationship.

This led me to pick up on my interest in a phenomenological approach which involves people talking from their own '*lived experience about things they have personally felt, heard and seen*' (Balls, 2009, p.1). All of humankind tells stories:

*We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative. (Hardy, 1968, cited in Josselson and Lieblich, 1993, p.3)*

Whether the stories are ideals we try to live up to, or whether life provides the material for the stories, what is fundamental is the creation of meaning, and that takes place as the story is told. Looking at the discourses surrounding a story can enable meanings to be changed and developed, and old, unhelpful ones discarded. In phenomenology hearing the voice, the narrative of the subject or the participant goes beyond learning the facts about their stories. It involves coming alongside and giving meaning, a fresh interpretation that may also apply to a wider collective

experience, in order to bring about a deeper understanding, which might result in dynamic social change.

The fact that children continue to be abused, bullied and neglected is a catastrophe of incomprehensible proportions. Of course this is not to deny that many people have tried, and are trying to help and effect change, yet the abuse goes on. It has effects in every society, and appears to be, if not accepted, if not ignored, then deemed insurmountable.

As Shengold remarks in *Soul Murder*:

*Child abuse is the abuse of power. We do not have a coherent psychology of power, much is unknown. Soul murder is as old as human history, as old as the abuse of the helpless by the powerful in any group –which means as old as the family. But soul murder has a particular resonance within the twentieth century – with the world of Orwell's 1984 – and a particular relevance to it. ...Hitler and Stalin have proven that the strongest adults can be broken and deprived of their individuality and even of their humanity. This is one of the lessons of Orwell's 1984 - one that can be learned from the lives of those who have grown up in the charge of crazy, cruel and capricious parents, in the totalitarian family ambience that Randall Jarrell calls 'one of God's concentration camps' (1965. p.146). (Shengold, 1989, p.4)*

The main thread running through the narrative of my experience will concern abusive behaviour; emotional, physical and sexual. What it did contain was a degree of that 'soul murder'; what Shengold described as *'the deliberate attempt to eradicate or compromise the separate identity of another person'*. (p. 2)

### **First steps**

In 2001, when I started the research, I had intended to speak to some of the teachers with whom I come into regular contact, to talk to them about having responsibility for educating children, and also to speak to other people who had experienced being bullied as a child. I approached some of those people whose history had come to my attention in conversation. They ranged from vicars to security guards. Though they were willing to participate, in the end I have not chosen to stay within the confines of heuristic research and put together a composite depiction of the bullied child (Moustakas, 1990, p.68) , but elected to use autoethnography (Denzin, 1989, p. 48), with only my own material as I research my

self. There were two reasons for this. One, that the process of immersion in my own materials was a profoundly difficult experience. I felt that I was climbing back into a previously sloughed off and somewhat decayed and rotting skin. As I began to tell the story of my relationship with my son, it became necessary to tell of my marriage, my experience of being parented and the therapy I underwent. It seemed to be a multifaceted narrative, with layers developing layers (Ronai, 1995). Rather than take one narrative out of context I chose to keep it intact and explore the whole, looking for patterns and discourses which might make sense of the whole. This is a narrative enquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) into my personal narrative, telling what I have felt, heard and seen; my experience. My narrative is the phenomenon under scrutiny and the method of study (p. 4). Elements of my story centre on construction of identity at a number of levels, so the layers of personal story are presented not as an autobiography, 'I was born in...', but move between past and present.

## **Autoethnography**

Autoethnography has been used as a research methodology in a number of fields particularly over the last two decades (Lahman, 2008, p.276). It was included as a research method in Denzin & Lincoln's Handbook of Qualitative Research (2000, pp. 733-767), and the authors Ellis and Bochner have also written and developed the theory in a number of journal articles and books (Ellis, 2004, 2007, Bochner, 1997 ) along with many others (Gannon, 2006; Gergen, 1997; Holman Jones, 2005) who are coming to recognise the importance of autobiographical material in determining how humans construe their world and the self.

Using autobiographical material relates to socio-cultural genres and psychology (Holman Jones, 2005), to literature (Ellis, 1993) health and ill-health (Richman, 2000; Lahman, 2008; Frank, 1995) and to wider philosophical enquiry into ethics (Medford, 2006; Clark & Sharf, 2006, Ellis, 2007), and meaning (Jago, 1996; Hendry, 2007) as well as identity and morality (Crossley, 2000). In telling my story I am giving it meaning:

*The personal narrative is a special kind of story that every one of us constructs to bring together different parts of our selves into a purposeful and convincing whole. (Crossley, 2000, p.67)*

As Caroline Steedman (1986) states in '*Landscape for a Good Woman: A story of two lives.*'

*I see my childhood as evidence that can be used. I think it's particularly useful as a way of gaining entry to ideas about childhood – what children are for, why to have them – that aren't written about in the official records, that is in the textbooks of child psychology and child analysis, and in sociological descriptions of childhood. (cited in Rosen, 1998, p.18)*

Rosen points out that this:

*shows us a new kind of autobiographical text in which the life story narrator, the historian, the sociologist, the...psychologist (one and the same person) all enter the text and have their say. (Rosen, 1998, p.18)*

## **Emotion**

As a research methodology, autoethnography uses a personal account that includes the feelings, physical responses and thoughts of the experience (Ellis, 1993). The topics I write about are complex and intertwined. In the past, in looking at research, I had the sense that 'before the story is told, the theory is there' (Bochner, 1997). The subject's emotions and experience are not included. Research and the lived experience need to be connected (Ellis, 1993) and, as a fundamental part of comprehending that experience, feelings should be a 'significant part of the research process' (1993, p.722). This was what I had been searching for as I looked for a method that heard the voice of the subject.

The hope in autoethnography is that the reader will enter into the account fully, experiencing the emotions alongside the author, indeed to compel an emotional response, and in order to do that a story is created, a story that allows the reader to, '*enter imaginatively into the lives of distant others*' (Nussbaum, 1995, p.xvi).

## **Language**

In autoethnography, Ellis & Bochner (2000) describe how the story is usually told with a minimum of abstract and categorical knowledge and language in order to be accessible to the reader. This was appealing, for as I mentioned earlier, since

childhood language and voice have been an issue for me in that I cannot always find the language or the voice in which I need to speak.

Nor do I want to use language and terminology that I feel objectifies and distances the reader from the story, or to hide behind philosophical or psychological terminology that might create a barrier, a power structure. I use language with which I, as an object of my mother's scrutiny and scorn about my voice, am comfortable as I describe my story, and how I see it relating to the real world (Chase, 2005, p.655).

In terms of language I have had to make another journey, on from the grand narrative of childhood and early adulthood when I inhabited a world which defined people by whether they were 'saved', whether they acknowledged a particular teaching about God or not, and where self was to be despised and kept down, not looked at, not cared for. Then I experienced the monumental change of coming to see that people were not simply inclined towards evil but had a self-actualising tendency (Maslow, 1968, Rogers, 1961) to work towards health, and I was able to start trusting myself. Now I come to the concept of incomplete, interpersonal, embodied lived experience (Gannon, 2006), and though I see it I do not find that I inhabit it yet, or is that the point? Certainly others are able to dwell in the language, ripping up the concepts and dancing in the deconstructed confetti they create. I want to get there, but I'm not dancing, I'm not exactly plodding either, I'm chasing the pieces, in order to see what they say.

*The abstruse language that brandishes the post-structural/postmodern literature is incomprehensible to those who are not philosophically literate: thus it is directed to an elite audience. (Sands, 1996, p.174)*

Of course the language I use is more academic than everyday, but my intention is to enable the reader to come alongside, and not place the writer on some sort of pedestal or in an elite circle. In the same way, Carl Rogers preferred 'common sense meanings' (Rogers, [1957]1990, p.220). So the investigator, the writer, is the informant from the inside and the critic from outside (Marcus, 1994, p. 4) moving in to recall the emotions, and out again to the cultural contexts. My purpose is to see



myself as others might, to explain difference from the inside, to describe one element of the self to another, or how one becomes an Other (Bennet, 2004).

### **Bridging the Gap**

Rather than using a purely social constructivist framework, which stresses that social interaction and cultural practices shape human development (Wood, 1998, Cooper, 2006) I find myself more in sympathy with the approach of narrative psychology (Crossley, 2000, p.45). Both approaches are grounded in the concept relating to post-modern philosophies, that our self, inasmuch as there may be any unified self (Anderson, 2001, p 61), is created as we relate through language and discourse to the prevailing culture embodied in our family and the wider communities at varying levels.

In *The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self*, Gannon writes:

*The paradox of post structural autoethnography is that although autoethnographic research seems to presume that the subjects can speak for themselves, post structuralist theories disrupt this presumption and stress the impossibilities of writing the self from a fractured and fragmented subject position. (Gannon, 2006, p.474)*

Perhaps the fragments are important nevertheless:

*Having the opportunity to speak out our inner story in pictures is a sacrament. Not having the opportunity to tell our story deadens our pulse. Paradoxically it is impossible to tell the whole story. That would be like describing heaven before actually getting there. The very best we can do is to describe fragments of our story...the murmuring of angels in the wings. (Mackenzie, 2001)*

### **Theories of self**

Though, having arrived at a methodology, I was becoming more comfortable with the notion of paradox, I was dismayed, as I looked further into the idea of autoethnography, over what seemed like a lack of time to fully grasp theories of self, especially in post-structuralist theory. Post-structuralist theory finds difficult the '*humanist notions of the subject as capable of self knowledge and self-articulation*' (Gannon, 2006, p. 474). Gannon speaks of post-structuralist authors writing themselves as '*unreliable and contradictory narrators who speak the self – the multiple selves that each of them is and have been – in discontinuous fragments*' (p.491).

This I can grasp, for I see myself through different lenses. This is apparent in the layers and fragments of story I use, through Child, and the echoes of the Parent, and Adult (Stewart, 1989) and through the voices I use which represent different aspects, alongside introspection, emotional experience, and theory (Ronai, 1995), and the differing discourses and social contexts. Yet I acknowledge there is the appearance of a sense of cohesion, as I attempt *to 'represent to, as well as produce for the reader a continuous dialectic of experience' [the] 'stream of consciousness as experienced in everyday life'* (Ronai, 1995, p.396).

*Experience is invisible to the other. But experience is not 'subjective' rather than 'objective', not 'inner' rather than 'outer', not process rather than praxis, not input rather than output, not psychic rather than somatic, not some doubtful data dredged up from introspection rather than extrospection. Least of all is experience 'intrapsychic process'. (Laing, 1967, p.17)*

*Yet this way of talking does reflect a split in our experience. We seem to live in two worlds, and many people are only aware of the outer rump. As long as we remember that the 'inner' world is not some space 'inside' the body or mind, this way of talking can serve our purpose.... The 'inner' then, is our personal idiom of experiencing our bodies, other people, the animate and inanimate world: imaginations, dreams, phantasy, and beyond that to ever further reaches of experience. (ibid, p.18)*

Rogers' humanistic philosophy, in which my therapeutic experience was based, affirms our ability as humans to take effective action in the world around us, and to make choices. Initially it was Rogers' (1980) theory along with Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1961) and Focusing (Gendlin, 1978) that helped me to construct meaning through the use of language, narrative and story, initially in a feminist context. Humanistic theory is problematic as far as narrative psychology is concerned, as it considers the human self is moving towards an ideal (Crossley, 2000, p.8). Narrative psychology does, however, recognise the subjective experience of the individual in the development of the self and identity and, rather than seeking to find a true or ideal self, has a great emphasis on the connections between experienced 'self' and social structures, especially through language. Thus it bridges the gap 'between individual 'personal' experience and 'social' forms of meaning such as discourse and narrative' (Crossley, 2000, p.43).

*The subjective, lived experience of the individual, and the discourses surrounding the narratives need to be balanced in order to construct meanings. (Crossley, 2000, p.58)*

Narrative psychology adds another dimension. Crossley (2000) describes how, while being firmly grounded in social-constructivist approaches such as postmodernism, discourse analysis and feminist analysis, which are more abstract, theoretical and methodological in nature, narrative psychology allows for the understanding of the specific experiences of the individual. This leaves the possibility of writing the self, by acknowledging that, though disunity and fragmentation mark various experiences including trauma, realistically there is a sense of unity, a self who experiences, and who has a linear approach to that experience, and that this gives the possibility of reflexivity and interrogating the texts (p.41).

*We must find some way in which we can appreciate the linguistic and discursive structuring of human psychology without losing sight of the essentially personal, coherent and real nature of individual experience and subjectivity. (Ibid, p.32)*

Having chosen to base my methodology in autoethnography, I shall be using narrative enquiry which acknowledges the discourses and social-cultural contexts, but gives place to the story as I feel I have experienced it. Narrative is described by Susan Chase as:

*retrospective meaning making - the shaping or ordering of past experiences...a way of understanding one's own and other actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time.*

And also as

*verbal action as...narrators explain, entertain, inform, defend, complain, and confirm or challenge the status quo. (Chase, 2005, p. 656)*

**I** is the part of the self that acts, speaks, feels; it is not reflective. It is as we act that we are aware of ourselves, so to make meaning we look back reflexively at **Me**, that is **I** at an earlier time (Mead, 1934, p.174). Therefore, as I tell my story, it has an element of performance to it as I play out the story, looking back, giving my view, expressing emotions, thoughts and interpretations (Chase, p. 656), and the meaning I make of it on the stage of the writing.

Through reflexivity I aim to address and reflect on the issues raised by my own experiences of becoming a subject and being the '*legitimate ground of exploration*' as well as '*the legitimate explorer of that ground*' (Davies & Gannon, 2006, p. 89).

Then I will link them to wider themes of domestic violence, bullying, and the experience of children at the mercy of adults and the adult culture in which they find themselves.

Nevertheless although autoethnography is an acceptable methodology with a body of work behind it, there may still some be questions to be asked.

### **Questioning the methodology**

This strategy of putting self in the frame carries with it certain risks and leads to the question of whether writing or researching the self has any merit or purpose, or whether it is even possible to achieve?

### **Arguments against autoethnography**

Research requires that the writer appropriate experience reflexively and creatively, and avoid retreating to a narcissistic, personal or private realm, that is unable to fight familiarity, or be analytical (Delamont, 2007). A story like mine, which might be considered a therapeutic story, is open to this criticism. Am I perhaps self indulgently playing out my story publicly in order to make myself feel better, rather than adding to a body of knowledge? One critic of the therapeutic story Christopher Lasch (1980, 1984) has called the way people make sense of themselves through therapy and therapeutic stories 'morally deprived'. According to Lasch, through their 'narcissistic' stories such survivors, by only drawing on their own strategies and resources, are morally deprived. They come to see their responsibility as being to themselves, and their own sphere of self interest, with no attention paid to the wider political and public arena. This is '*paving the way to a society replete with irrationality, violence and hostility*', and the criticism is that '*therapy is an apolitical way of adjusting dissatisfied individuals to a flawed social environment*' (Lasch 1980,1984, cited in Crossley, 2000, p.161) whereas a deepening self awareness must make people more aware of their connectedness to others, and to the cosmos (Perrett, 2006, p.28).

Lasch (1980) and Perret (2006) describe a danger I recognise. My therapy had brought about dynamic change, yet this resulted in me continuing to live with a bully who could be violent, and for a while I had been caught up with the therapeutic agenda. Personal narratives which tell a story of healing from a

traumatic experience can reduce the political to the personal, rather than the opposite, depending in which discourse the stories are presented (Crossley, p.129). This could prevent wider social contexts and questions being examined. Crossley cites the example of Sylvia Fraser (1989) whose book *'In My Father's House'* contained an autobiographical account of being abused by her father. Crossley comments how early stories of sexual abuse had been located in the feminist discourse that would have related it to the public domain of a patriarchal society (Ibid, p.114). Fraser's own account includes that narrative too, but finally becomes embedded in a psychoanalytic narrative which, rather than addressing political issues surrounding abuse, delves into the psyche of the protagonist herself, and her parents, and effectively absolves the father who is now seen more as a victim of his childhood (Ibid, p124).

However I feel fortunate in that throughout the period of my therapy I also began to open up to wider political and social issues through the church, and never moved away from that awareness. It was natural for me to ask 'If this is my experience, what does that imply about other children and women?' I have used my story as a means to focus on the issues of children in the western world at this time. Indeed that is the reason for exposing my less than flattering story to scrutiny, though the experience of writing has proved more therapeutic than it seemed at the time.

### **Arguments for autoethnography**

An ideal that I have strongly related to in terms of my faith, and which postmodernism also espouses is set out by Emmanuel Levinas. Levinas' philosophy embraced the ideal of living for and bearing responsibility for the Other (Bauman 1992, p.42). I have portrayed my journey retrospectively, based on Pearson's (1991) archetypes, as a quest for identity. This quest, transformation type narrative, if based in the philosophy of being for the Other, is testifying to trauma as a means of opening up to and for others (Frank, 1997, p. 157). It can challenge predominant rationalist, materialistic world views, and pave the way for newer models of connectivity, or may pave the way for a deeper, more meaningful way of living (Crossley, 2000, p.167). According to Frank (1995) this narrative ethic incorporates a conception of morality which requires a commitment to shaping oneself as an ethical reflexive being (cited in Crossley, 2000, p.175).

Along with the need to be for the Other, there lies behind the history of autoethnography the feminist notion that there were voices that were simply not being heard within research (Chase, p.654). This is true of others besides women, it includes the poor and the oppressed, the done to. Bridgens (2007) relates, how this is often because the stories cause discomfort and it is preferable to distort or silence them (p.4). Frank (1997) describes how in post modernity an ethics of voice has allowed everyone the right to tell their own truth in their own way (p. xiii). Some social issues which had long been ignored have been opened up; stories of survivors of wars, serious illnesses and accidents, childhood sexual abuse and wife battering are but some of these. Holman Jones describes the need to respond to the challenge to move from rage at these stories to progressive political action. (2005, p. 767) Her rage came from reading Ronai's account of childhood sexual abuse (Ronai, 1995). Stories can move people to act.

### **Self, society and morality**

On a daily basis stories are told, about a journey to work, a partner, children, funny things, sad things, about things that are significant to the teller. I understand an Other by listening to her stories. I am a self only in that certain issues matter for me, and in how I relate to others and their stories (Taylor, 1989, p. 34). It is these stories that are a means to enable me to relate well to one person and have to make more effort to relate well to another. What matters to me may not matter to them. This is the essential link between identity and moral orientation. Where an individual stands in relation to what is understood to be good, to understandings of the self, and the stories through which sense is made of life, evolves in different societies, in different ages, in different ways (Crossley. 2000, p.16). The human self develops from the culture into which it is born, the sense of what is it is good to be. This will vary according to a variety of influences even within the culture of a particular nation or tribe, and includes family, religion, social class, social life, history, gender, and ethnicity. As individuals and societies choose how to conduct their lives, and what has significance for them, they come to define and nurture a sense of self (Taylor, 1989). As Simone de Beauvoir stated (1963, p.368), we can find, not self knowledge, but self realisation. The purpose will not be to know or find self, but there may be understandings gained along the way, so that the aim is to explore, reveal, play around with possibilities, struggle with new ideas, ponder

relationships, gain new perspective. It would not do to simply end such a journey through life back at the starting place.

If I am indeed attempting to find out as Bochner suggests *'what are the consequences my story produces, and what kind of person it shapes me into'*, it is most important to know *'what new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?'* (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.746). The purpose of my narrative, therefore, is not to dwell in the past or to mourn a lost future. It is not in order to create Lasch's 'narcissistic withdrawal' (Crossley, p.160) where my own needs are paramount and others may be harmed or ignored. It is a quest narrative; Frank's (1995) means of moral enquiry, (p. 157) so that, having discovered meaning, I am able, having learned to hear and care for self, to care for the Other. I identify strongly with the philosophy of Levinas that I am responsible for the Other (Bauman 1992, p.42). The 'moral imperative' (Frank, 1997, p .158) involves a profound assumption of personal responsibility. It is as much for the reader as for the author that the story is told (Ronai, 1995).

Reflection, which is an integral part of the autoethnographic process, is therefore a way of checking out behaviour within that sense of personal responsibility, and checking out my interpretation of the story with others, through theory and literature. The choice of how people behave may be less voluntary than supposed. Often I act in a way that I know is not good, and in ways I feel I would rather not act, as I did in relation to my son. Even St Paul said *'I don't understand myself, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to do – what I hate.'* (Romans 7 v 15)<sup>4</sup> Sometimes the conflict can be resolved relatively easily; sometimes it is more difficult. The story can be reshaped to fit the picture of self that is emerging, whether that is good or bad. It was important to me that I found a way to stop myself acting in the ways that were shaping me wrongly in relation to my son. I did not like what I was turning into. At other times, however, that sense of personal responsibility cannot cope, and the good has to be changed to fit the picture. In this way a violent woman might justify her behaviour towards her child, not by changing her behaviour, but by deciding that it is the child's behaviour that is not good, not her own. For a time, when I did not know how to get help this was sometimes true of me, and there seemed, for a time, to be no way out.

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<sup>4</sup> From TAYLOR, K. 1967, p. 334 **The Living New Testament**, London: Hodder & Stoughton.

This is where other people's stories are important. It is the sense of being the only person to experience such a thing that makes reflection so very difficult. Hearing that someone else has been through something can bring a profound sense of relief. For me it was necessary to know that other people found their childhood a dangerous place before I could accept that my childhood was impacting on my behaviour as an adult, rather than continuing to believe that I was simply bad, and should not exist. This brought strength, because I knew I was not alone, and pointed the way towards change.

But given the strong emotional responses to such stories, a factor that often arises in personal story telling is, is it true, or is it merely subjective, possibly wrongly remembered or distorted?

### **Narrative Truth**

If I should decide to embellish my story or write a fictional account to make it more meaningful, as others like Rigoberta Menchu have done (Lauritzen cited in Eakin, 2004, p. 22) then, like her, I might lay myself open to the possibility that people feel betrayed. Menchu put herself into the story of her brother's murder at the hands of the oppressors in Guatemala. Her brother was indeed murdered, along with many others, but she had not witnessed it. As a result, when this came to light, some people may have lost sight of the facts of what she was bearing testimony to.

In an emotive account small details and vignettes capture the imagination of the reader, perhaps because they identify with it. If it is subsequently found that the facts differed in some way, readers may feel the whole story is not to be trusted however justified the account, as in Menchu's case, and it will cloud the real issue.

Whatever the view about historical versus narrative truth it is the case that memory is frequently distorted as we look back at any experience, so it is understood that the account is not the past, but a story of the past that is contextual and temporal (Widdershoven, 1993, p.16).

The issue of the truth of an account is important from an ethical point of view. The story I shall tell cannot be described as neutral or objective, nor can it be seen to be



the only meaning that could be gleaned from or constructed about my life. I have had to make decisions about what to include and what to leave out in order to focus on the research question. This is my account at this point in time, and there will be different versions of it from other people, for instance my son and my husband, also valid. People to whom we were close at the time will have their take on the story. It is also the case that in telling my story in another situation there would be different, additional stories, still true to me. In a sense any such writing can be described as a fiction, in that it is not my story, it is what I have written about my story, what I recall, what seems significant to me.

Alternatively there may well be people who decide I should not tell the story, that this is something I should keep quiet about, that it impacts on who I am now, to the extent that it would invalidate the work I am doing with children, and that they would rather not know, or that others know these things about me.

First of all therefore I need to be clear about the reasons involved in making the decision to go ahead. Especially if it is being used in any moral sense, I want to be able to show that I am trustworthy (Lauritzen cited in Eakin 2004, p.37). If I want my story to have merit as a piece of research, I need to be as honest with myself as I can be, and take account of all my own shortcomings, as well as those of others, and explore my uncertainty.

A full discussion of the ethical considerations is included later in the thesis in Act Five, Scene 2, p. 241

The layered nature of this exploration seems to require a structure, and as I began to write I found myself telling a story that eventually offered the way into one; the story of a dragon.

## **STRUCTURE AND PERFORMANCE**

### **The Dragon Wakes**

## **Structure**

As part of a counselling assignment in 1996, before the unforeseen end of my marriage a few months later, I wrote a journal report in which I described a journey I had made through the therapy that was a required element of the Post Graduate Diploma/MA course I was still then undertaking.

In this therapy I had identified a missing part of me that was unable to be free and spontaneous, a part of me that had not been allowed to grow up, that was perhaps dead. My therapist pointed out that it was like trying to snatch a photograph of a timid wild animal; if you moved too quickly to snap it, it would bolt. He suggested relaxing, and being ready for it when it did appear. As I struggled with this I began to find myself obsessed with thoughts of death. I kept thinking I should be dead, or wishing that I was. It seemed to come unbidden-from nowhere. I saw that as my Parent (Stewart, 1989) not allowing the discovery to take place. I identified this with Laing's 'ontological insecurity' (1969, p.39) and as a result began to read existentialist texts such as Kierkegaard (1962), Sartre (1957), Tillich (1947), Robinson (1963) and other contemporary theologians. This was when I became interested in existential philosophy and counselling, in particular the emphasis on inter-subjectivity and the lack of impartiality and objectivity within it (Owen, 1994, p. 352).

I came to the decision that I needed to be free of this parent voice in my head, which I began to identify as arising from my relationship with my mother in particular. My decision to be free of the Parent included the Parent representatives in my current relationships. This made things very stormy as I accepted less and less blame from my husband. As I struggled with the continuing pressure and took some time out to lick my wounds suddenly the 'missing' part came into view. In one respect the therapist was quite wrong; the wild animal was not timid at all. Closer to the time I described it like this:



*For a time  
we sat in silence  
waiting for someone  
to appear  
quiet  
as mice  
so as not to startle  
the wild side and  
lose her  
by sudden movement.  
I thought she would be timid  
a tiny child  
shrivelled  
from long imprisonment  
grey and cold  
and  
I was dazed and took my eyes  
from her lair  
She came from behind  
and I never saw her come...*

*wild and screaming*

*beautiful and powerful*

*an enchantress*

*And when I turned*

*she was me*

*she was mine*

*What was I to do?*

*She swept me off*

*In clouds of unknowing*

*perfumed sensuality*

*abandoning the world I knew before*

*flying over lands I had*

*never seen*

*dancing through meadows*

*in wet grass*

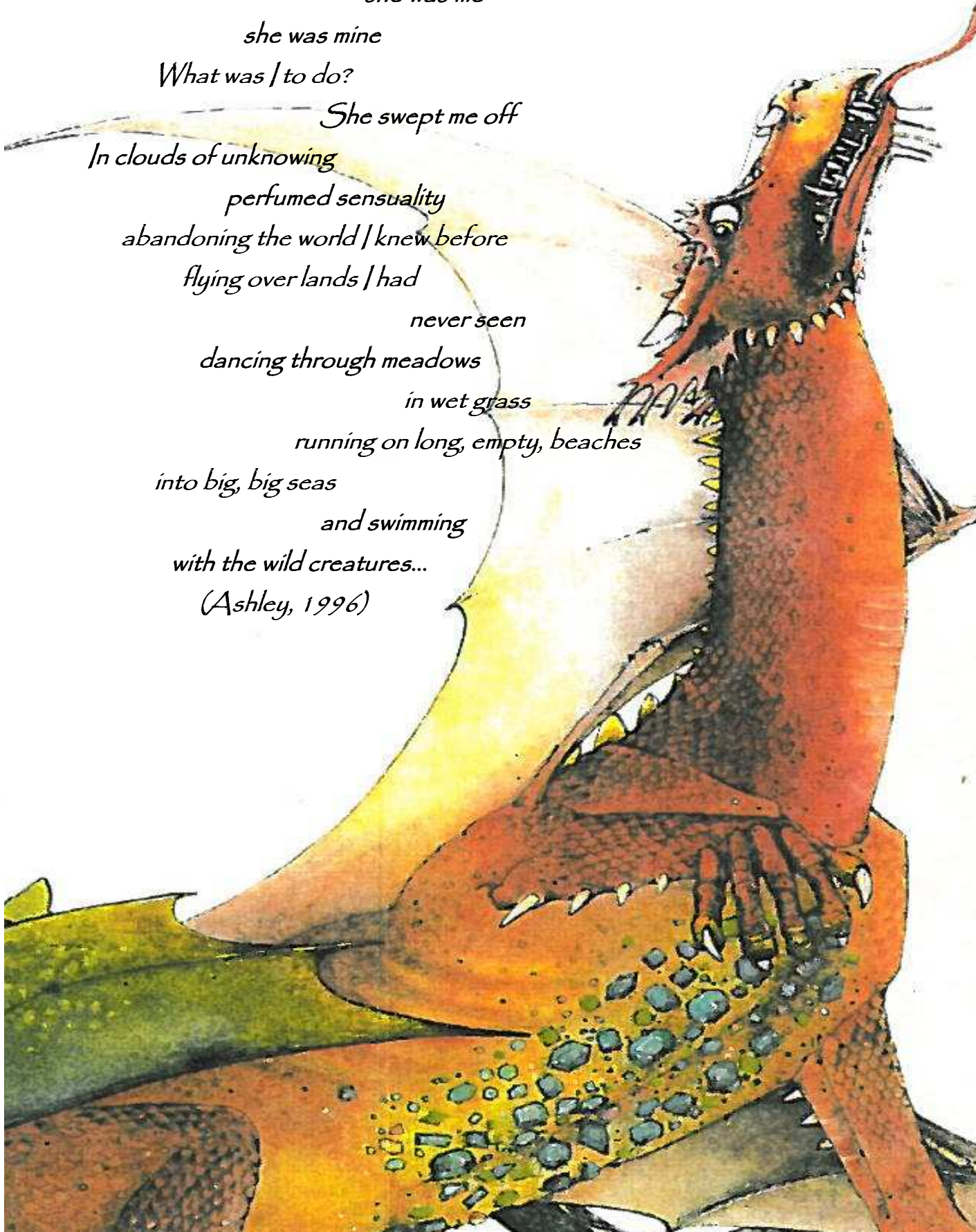
*running on long, empty, beaches*

*into big, big seas*

*and swimming*

*with the wild creatures...*

*(Ashley, 1996)*



The image that came to mind was an exotic, beautiful and powerful Dragon - erupting into existence.

Of course I realised then that I knew her quite well. This was an unacknowledged side; the part of me my mother had tried to tame out of existence; the passion, the darker, dangerous side; and with it I should be able to find my authentic self, as I thought then. I had to let go of the illusion of self created with my mother's direction, and construct a new reality of who I might become and, as I wrote around that time:

*come to terms with both passion and serenity – both of which I aspired to, and resented. Passion I had but feared; serenity I was told I had but did not feel, and felt trapped by. I had to learn to tame passion and accept it, and to get rid of imposed serenity and choose to embrace it, not be controlled by it.*  
(Ashley, 1996)

Though I was unaware of this at the time, in some spiritualities, including the Celtic and pagan, the dragon represents energy, life force, dynamism, will, courage, inspiration, and creativity (Kindred, 2001).

### **Cast of characters: the Archetypes**

Around the same time that the dragon woke I was given a book on archetypes - *Awakening the Heroes Within* by Carol Pearson (1991). I was drawn to the book partly because it was loaned to me by a woman who as a theologian and a Mennonite also came from a very strict religious background, and who was a widely respected Christian lecturer. The book was very broad based and non-dogmatic; accepting of all spiritualities and ways of perceiving things, and might have been dismissed as New Age by many Christians I knew. Having started life within a very narrow interpretation of the Christian faith in the Pentecostal tradition, I had at this point been a little afraid of the questions I was beginning to ask and the observations I was making, about the way I saw faith being lived out. I felt reassured by my friend's acceptance of the book and released to open up to it.

Hence I was able to continue in the spiritual journey which I had begun with some trepidation and to move away from dogma and certainty. I was attracted to the story element (Pearson, 1991, p.2), which allows for the hero to experience success and failure, pain and joy, redemption at any point, spiralling off into another opportunity. Nothing is final, no-one need ever be written off. It was possible to see how good and bad elements were at work in me and how to deal with them, not sink into the shame that had always been heaped upon me. Everyone is capable of going wrong, making mistakes. It also meant I could recognise negative archetypes that had been instrumental in causing me pain, for instance my mother's shadow caregiving. There is meaning to be found in any experience, and hope. To someone who experienced religious teaching which had been so black and white, so unyielding, and so final and authoritarian this was exciting.

Pearson was inspired by Joseph Campbell's *'Hero with a Thousand Faces'* ([1949] 1993) which developed from Campbell's lifelong interest in the universally recurring patterns and stories in mythology and Jung's initial observations on archetypal patterns. Carl Jung was the first to interpret classic aspects and universal patterns to our selves as a species, that we all have present or available to us within the unconscious, and which can be explored and released. Among others Jung ([1953]2003) described are Mother, with all the positive (p.29) and negative (p.35) aspects of caring; Rebirth or transformation (p.81); Spirit, which is often identified as the wise old man, sage, magician or king (p.111, 178), and Trickster Archetypes. The Trickster lived on in the Commedia dell' Arte with its irreverence, and outsider/commentator role as well as in the jester or joker, and is still visible through the clown or Pulcinella (p.170).

Using the concept of the hero's journey Pearson has, over a number of years, gone on to elaborate on these archetypes that she perceived as participating in stages of human and personal development. These were not necessarily linear but did start with the innocence of childhood, and move on through adolescence, and adulthood, to the wisdom of the elder. To begin (Pearson 1989) described Innocent, Orphan, Wanderer, Warrior, Martyr, and Magician archetypes. Each archetype is described as a character that has its own story, and describes patterns of behaviour, qualities, and aspects of our personalities that we can explore or develop.

An archetypal pattern might be missed out as the hero goes through life, or experienced later, and then re-experienced, sometimes more than once, in a spiral<sup>5</sup>. Later Pearson added another six archetypes as she refined them. There are now twelve; Innocent, Orphan, Caregiver, Warrior, Seeker, Lover, Destroyer, Creator, Ruler, Sage, Magician, Fool (Pearson 1991).

In 1996, through reading Pearson (1991), I identified this Dragon of mine as the Lover archetype at work in my life at that time. The Lover's call is to 'radical self-acceptance giving birth to the Self and connecting the personal with the transpersonal and the individual with the collective' (Pearson 1991 p. 157). It also relates to libido, which is not necessarily sexual, but a strong life force and energy within. This sense of energy and birth of the self seemed to describe what happened for me as the Dragon had erupted onto the scene.

By the time I came to write this thesis much had happened in my story: I had lost sight of the Dragon/Lover who had been driven back to her cave, and had spiralled back through pain, betrayal, and change, even transformation. As I started this writing I found myself retrospectively and actively using the archetypes once again to make meaning as I described the Journey towards the thesis, and the new Journey which the thesis evolved into. As my thesis was to involve researching the self it seemed appropriate, since I had identified myself as being on this journey in the past, to use Pearson's framework to provide the structure. In this way I could describe those pitfalls and dangers I had experienced, from the Innocent's denial, the failure and difficulty of the shadow Caregiver to the Orphan's sense of betrayal. But also there was the joy of the Seeker in discovering a new way of being, and her sense of returning home. Because the hero's journey is always a spiral or even a series of spirals, it would serve to provide an order in my layered account.

Thus when the archetypes appear in the script, it signifies my current recognition of their activity, as happened with the dragon being later identified as the Lover in

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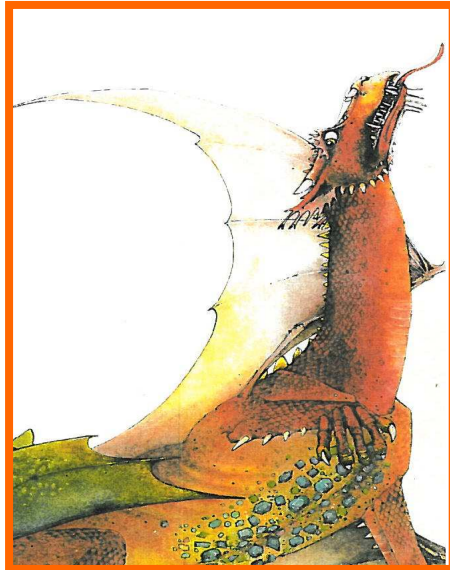
<sup>5</sup>**The labyrinth is one of the most universal human symbols. Used by almost all ancient cultures. It has one route to the centre and no dead ends, representing the pathway of the spirit as it travels through life on a difficult and tortuous spiral route, finally achieving transformation and wholeness.** (from St Hywyn's church Aberdaron. N. Wales).



Pearson's scenario, rather than that I was always aware of them at the time events were playing out in my life.

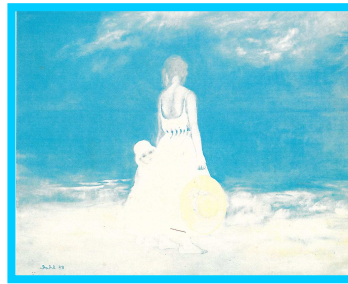
I have chosen to depict my personal archetypes with images which have been significant to me going back over thirty years:

### The Dragon/Lover



### The Journey of the Hero

In Pearson's work this journey consists of three stages. First the **Preparation**, which relates to the development of the **Ego**. The archetypes for the first stage, the Preparation, are; INNOCENT, ORPHAN, WARRIOR AND CAREGIVER. These are particularly related to childhood, though they are always with us, and are about Ego development, where we learn to be safe and successful. The Ego is the container for our life, creating our boundaries and mediating our relationship with the world. (Ibid, p.27) These four archetypes, especially the Innocent and Orphan, appear in the first two acts of this thesis.



Innocent

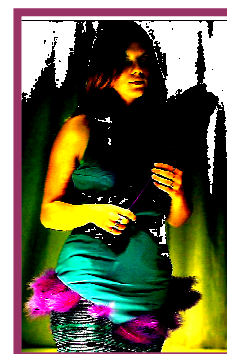
Orphan

Caregiver

Warrior

These are the characters that will appear in my thesis as I relate the story of my childhood and early adulthood. There are times when the journey I made spiralled back to revisit these characters, and then the journey continues again.

After preparation comes the Journey, which I will refer to in future as the **Quest**, for the sake of clarity. This relates to the **Soul**. The four archetypes of this second stage, are SEEKER, LOVER, DESTROYER AND CREATOR, and represent gathering information, letting go of illusions and false hopes, making new commitments to change and coming up with a solution. It is concerned with the Soul, the mysteries. The Soul connects us in Jungian terms with the unconscious and the transpersonal, but also describes the potential of the human species within each one of us (Ibid, p.28).



Seeker

Lover

Destroyer

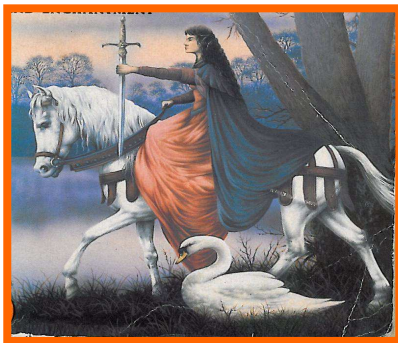
Creator

These are the characters that appear as I describe my therapy, and when, having gained some ego strength through the therapy I am looking to discover new

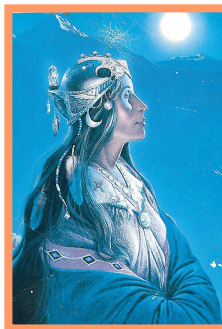
meanings in place of that which has held me back through the repression of childhood.

Last of all is the **Return** of the hero, which relates to development of the **Self**. The archetypes relating to the third stage are RULER, SAGE, MAGICIAN AND FOOL. The Self is about the achievement of genuine identity, when we experience wholeness and integrity (Pearson, 1991 p.29). My story will conclude with them – for now, until the spiral starts again.

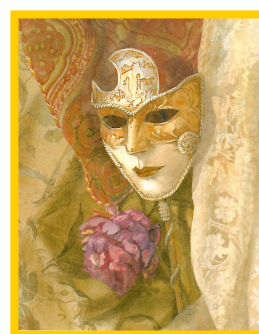
Ruler



Sage



Magician



Fool



### Shadows and dragons

Each archetype also has a shadow which, according to Pearson (1991 p.15), is when the individual is stuck in an archetypal stage, demonstrating negative aspects of it rather than moving on with the journey. It is advisable to be aware of the shadow characteristics because if an individual has an undeveloped archetype, it may emerge as a shadow with negative results. Paradoxically Pearson refers to shadow archetypes as dragons (p. 15). The negative sides of the twelve archetypes she calls the twelve heads of the dragon. My Dragon/Lover, on the other hand, appeared to be very positive, though I recognise her shadow characteristics and her danger, so I have decided to continue to use the term dragon in both ways and I do so within the titles of the acts which make up the thesis. I shall differentiate them in the text by referring to my Dragon as Dragon/Lover, and the shadows as the Shadow Dragons

*We find a model for learning how to live in stories about heroism. The heroic quest is about saying yes to yourself and, in so doing, becoming more fully alive and more effective in the world. For the hero's journey is first about taking a journey to find the treasure of your true self, and then about*

*returning home to give your gift to help transform the kingdom - and in the process, your own life. The quest itself is replete with dangers and pitfalls, but it offers great rewards: the capacity to be successful in the world, knowledge of the mysteries of the human soul, the opportunity to find and express your unique gifts in the world, and to live in loving community with people.* (Pearson, 1991, p.1)

## **The Performance**

*As we are concerned here with human beings, our most relevant variants are person as persona, mask, part being played; and person as actual self.* (Laing, 1967, P.19)

Autoethnography has a performative element to it in that the story is acted out on the stage of writing (Holman Jones, 2004, p. 766). In presenting my 'self' I have chosen to introduce archetypes as I have come to loosely and retrospectively appreciate and appropriate them in my life. As I tell my story the archetypes that, looking back, I feel were dominant at the time, will speak as the characters; as my voice. Their voices appear much as the characters and masks in the Commedia d'el Arte, the improvisational theatre players of Europe, which remained the same for each troupe, wherever they played, whatever the dramas they played out (Oreglia, 1968, p.1) There is an air of irreverence in the appearance of the archetypes through the section titles I use, as there was in the Commedia's street performances of the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the performers were often chased out of the towns if the challenge they presented was too much of an affront. They were particularly fond of poking fun at the authorities, with their comments on the social structures of their time (Ibid, 1968, p.129). This has a bearing on an archetype which emerges within the thesis – the Fool.

## **Scenery**

My story, presented in bold italics, is written much as one would tell someone a story from life. It is a more spontaneous stream of consciousness style, and uses some colloquialisms to give it a just written quality and to vary the tone from the more formal reflexive commentary presented in this normal font.

## **The story**

Initially I found myself hesitant to write anything at all, for it implied the sheer audacity of expecting that someone might read it. Fortunately for me, I felt profoundly affirmed in doing so by Bochner's (2000) emphasis that one must ask:

*What are the consequences my story produces? What kind of person does it shape me into? What new possibilities does it introduce for living my life?*  
(Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746)

And here I know that I do have something to say, I have a story to tell though it is not an easy one, and finding the courage to tell it has been a long haul.

My story has taken me through uncharted seas and hidden dangers, battles with dragon/shadows of a different hue. To become the Fool/the Jester, who stands against oppression, and to tame the shadow/dragons is the treasure or the gift.

The first Act looks at my relationship with my mother going back into my childhood. It also looks at my marriage and the subject of women and violence, and at the subject of Intimate Partner Abuse. I shall also explore the prevailing narratives about whether violence in Intimate Partner Abuse is gendered.

In Act two I describe my relationship with my son, and the therapeutic process I undertook to create an identity that was congruent with my fairly fragile sense of self.

In the third Act I discuss bullying and victimhood, and at how bullies and victims are created, also describing how I searched for a way to understand what had happened to me and who I had become.

I follow this with an Intermission as I take a peregrination, a pilgrimage, through my faith journey, as each narrative has referred to this without exploring it. I look at how discourses surrounding that faith have changed, as well as my identity within it, at both a personal and political level.

The work that I do at the moment is the subject of the fourth Act and here continues to explore the sense of identity that I have found both within my personal sense of self, and in a wider arena, seeking to enter the discussion surrounding the way children and adults continue to be abused and to be violent.

Finally, in Act five I look back at the process of the research, the ethics of writing about a life, which necessarily involves writing other people's lives too, and the methodology as it has worked out within the thesis.

I conclude with where the journey has taken me and what meaning my story has; whether there is any 'political' meaning to be gleaned from this personal story.

*All struggles against oppression in the modern world begin by defining what had previously been considered private, non-public, and non-political as matters of public concern, issues of justice and sites of power'. (Seyla Benhabib 1992, cited in Cohen-Cruz, p. 103)*

I hope that through this thesis my experience will not be captured (Hendry, 2007, p.493) and judged by others, rather what I am hoping is that this telling of the stories within my life is more about being listened to.

*Simply listen and meaning will be made. (Silko, 1991, cited in Hendry, 2007, p. 494)*

Hendry argues that is important for narrative research to become not a scientific act, but a spiritual act (Ibid, p. 496) a site of communion between two human beings.

*Those who accept an invitation into the storytelling relation open themselves to seeing (and feeling and hearing) life differently than they normally do. Listening is not so much a willing suspension of belief as a willing acceptance of different beliefs and of lives in which those beliefs make sense. Whether or not a story makes sense seems not so much an analytical question as an experiential one: Did the story draw others into its world far enough so that people's actions in that world seemed reasonable in that world? Those who have accepted the invitation to the story may not choose to remain in the world of the story, but if the story works, then life in their worlds will seem different after they return there. (Frank 2000, p.359)*

*Autobiography has beneath its modest surface the great themes of memory, identity, and the social construct of reality. (Rosen, 1998, p.2)*

## **THE STAGE IS SET:**



**ACT ONE**  
**HERE BE SHADOW DRAGONS**  
**Uncharted seas**



## **Scene 1: The Child**

Early in 2005 I sent a letter to people I knew asking for participants to join in my research. The topic was to be *'The experience of being bullied as a child, by an adult'*, with an indication that I had been bullied myself. One night, some time later, I received a phone call from my mother.

***'Was it me?' she asked 'It was me wasn't it?'***

***I went cold. I couldn't speak; for some reason I had not foreseen that she would see that letter. I was very afraid, but realised that in asking the question she was acknowledging the truth of the matter, and finally I was able to mumble something. She said she knew it was she that had bullied me and that she was most truly sorry. I was amazed as well as acutely embarrassed, as I did not expect her to admit what a part of me still sometimes only half believes to be true. I cannot be certain still that I am not just being 'stupid' as she once described it. I was able to tell her that I had found it necessary to conduct this research because of the effects of our relationship on my own ability to parent my son, which I had never been able to talk about to her before. She then talked about her relationship with her own mother.***

### **Enter the Innocent:**

*Believing what those in authority teach us, regardless of whether those authorities have our best interests in mind. The innocent trusts even when trust is not warranted. (Pearson, 1991, p. 72)*



***The interesting thing is that I loved my mother. Though we fought, and I would say I hated her then, I did overall love her very much, and could not initially access much difficulty about her until after my son was born. When I was in nursing training I came across the idea of rejection for the first time. I clearly remember sitting in a lecture about it and weeping silently. It was describing my mother's behaviour towards me. Up till then I simply accepted her treatment and assessment of me, though I realised through this lecture how it hurt me. As far as I recall there was no particular crisis; I wasn't looking for an explanation. I was simply sandbagged by the truth. It was the only time I was aware that it might not all be my fault after all, and I did not remain in that place. I was an Innocent, and I repressed that knowledge of her rejection, simply trying harder to make her love me. For the most part I was in denial, and thought of my mother as my friend, needing her love and approval, accepting the pain and anger as a normal part of life, and submitting to it and to her. I needed to agree with her estimate of me in order to survive and felt that loving her would make things alright. Mostly I wanted her to like me.***



***My parents' relationship was hard to define. They met at church. My father was a bachelor, seventeen years older than she, who lived at home with his parents. He was 42 when they married. His family was from an Irish Protestant background, which was as strict and narrow as the Brethren Church which she attended. He had participated in Orange marches, and subscribed to a vituperative anti-catholic magazine that, as a child, I would read with dismay.***

***His rages, though they were not all that frequent, were powerful. Like the time when I was four, and he smashed my two year old brother's bottle with a poker because he judged him too old to be using one. It was at the Sunday breakfast table before church, and wet cornflakes flew all over us. I remember crying so much it left me drawing big shuddering breaths for the rest of the morning. We gave church a miss that day, something that was unheard of. Once more I chose to believe that it wouldn't happen again.***

***That event was unusual and for years I used to get up very early to see him off to work. I remember trying to get away from a game with my uncomprehending friend in order to be able to say my usual goodbye when he returned to work after lunch. However it was after his long hospitalisation due to Pneumonia when I was nine that things started to really change between us. I missed him a lot, but when he came home he seemed like a stranger. It may be that his irritability started after he had been ill, and that, along with his spectacular though infrequent bursts of anger, tipped the balance. He once got into a rage, calling 1960s pop songs utterly disgusting and obscene. If they were I was too innocent to be aware of it. It just made him seem mad. For part of my childhood I felt he was the villain because he was so out of the family, so un-fun, so old fashioned, so unaware of who we were or wanted to be. When he was baby-sitting us, he would shout or smack us around the head when we annoyed him, so my brother and I got into an alliance against him for a bit, by colluding in naughtiness and mischief.***

***Sunday lunchtime could be a nightmare. He would upset us all with his heated arguments at the table with my mother about religion, which even to a child seemed so bigoted and unreasonable. My mother was the more liberal of the two, in spite of her Brethren background. There used to be huge shouting arguments about whether for example, the New English Bible was a 'true' translation, while we sat there being seen and not heard again.***

If rejection applied to my mother it also applied therefore to my father who became distant and undemonstrative. But it is almost as though he is excused. He was working, tired, ill, and old. I expected nothing. I simply grew to dislike his difference and lack of social graces. As a teenager I felt my father was the problem for me. I could not stand to be near him, but I did not understand why exactly.

Looking back I now wonder whether his distance and un-approachability was due to him becoming more withdrawn at my mother's way of finding fault. She could be totally insulting through brutal honesty, or what she conceived as honesty, without any apparent understanding of how it might destroy or hurt someone.

I think that my father's constant poor health and our subsequent low income, along with his narrow views and inclination to repress my mother and us, must have got her down. As a child I sensed that she was angry at him but not overtly. She frequently made comments to me about him, which if I'm honest must have affected the way I saw him as I got older. She told me once that he had been furiously angry with her and, though it was years after the event threw up the fact that she had once bought some bedroom furniture without his permission. Wives were meant to be subject to their husbands. She would have said she loved him, but there was not a lot of it in evidence really.

It is sad really, because somewhere I believe he cared. He had been brought up in a strange, harsh world where you kept your tweed jacket on at all times, never appeared in your shirt sleeves and never showed much emotion - unless you snapped. I know he had been disappointed in his career, and been unable to make his own choice. That was made by his father, and I think my father felt it all his working life.

### **Theme of denial**

However my relationship with my mother was more stormy, more pernicious, and far more dangerous than my relationship with my father. Even through the less difficult parts of my childhood there was a constant theme of denial of my right to be, to express emotions, needs, wants or ideas.

***On one occasion, when I was quite young, I noticed a particular ice cream vendor in our street. I knew she did not think much of the ice cream he sold, and I believed what she said on principle, so I repeated 'It's not nice ice-cream from F's is it Mummy?' There followed a lecture about how wrong it was to ask for things in such a deceitful way. It was a double bind. I knew better than to ask, but I had been trying to gain brownie points by voicing an opinion she had previously expressed. Nothing would convince her that I hadn't been trying to persuade her to buy me an ice cream.***

***Asking for anything was unacceptable even when it was sometimes a necessity. As a 14 year old I needed a proper swimsuit for an interschool competition. Swimming was one thing I was good at. There were two very nice swimsuits in a shop window nearby, and my birthday was coming up. One day I noticed that one of them had gone, and I remarked to my brother that maybe it had been bought for me. For some reason he told my mother, and she was furious. She shouted at me they were too expensive, and that even if she had the money she would not get me one. I was bewildered and shocked. What had I done other than wonder? I found it very strange when some days later she did buy me one from elsewhere. I was grateful but even more bewildered. I had believed her; she would not get one even if she had the money, end of story.***

***I recall trying to prevent her throwing our kitten out into the street because she had had enough of it. I sat in front of the chair where it was hiding, crying and pleading with her, to no avail. Yet after I was married Mum did buy me a kitten as mine had died that day. She presented it to me with a bow round its neck. Life was very unpredictable with her.***

### **Breeding and manners**

Suddenly while reading a novel<sup>6</sup> as I started my research, I am startled, by reading of a mother who made life intolerable for her daughter, into quite clearly reliving my mother's snobbery and superiority.

***Though her family was reasonably humble, some elements of the family had done quite well for themselves and a relative paid for her to be educated at a convent school, where obviously manners, deportment and elocution were considered very important. So these things became central to our childhood lives too. Those around us who did not have the benefit of my mother's social values were considered 'common'. This was especially the case when they did not even set foot inside a church. We were informed that we were being brought up properly, while most of the people we knew were not. She seemed to have taken on the persona of someone who knew the right way to do everything. She often mentioned etiquette, and it dominated meal times. We felt we were in training for belonging, to what we didn't know, but it was obviously all-important. The truth was, that we lived in a lower middle to working-class street and our house had no electricity, only gas lighting, so must have been cheaper to buy. This was after all the 1950s when everyone had electricity.***

***To my mother it was not money that mattered, it was breeding. She could tell, she claimed, when someone had good breeding and they could be encouraged. Those who hadn't would be discouraged or frozen out. I was frequently told that my grandfather's family had had a servant, and had been in India, and it would appear that she herself aspired to some social class that related to the Victorian colonial past.***

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<sup>6</sup> 'Missing' by Karin Alvtegen, & A. Patterson 2005, Edinburgh: Canongate Books

***Table manners definitely indicated good breeding. I was told that when I was a year old she remarked with some puzzlement to my father 'She has no manners!' Though she came to recognise the folly of that, and even laughed about it, the fact remained that throughout childhood meal times were torture. We were sitting ducks, as she could aim comment after criticism after telling off. My brother and I were supposed to speak only when spoken to and had to hold our knives and forks correctly, making sure we kept our elbows in and that we did not put them on the table. It was good manners to wait till everyone was served before starting, and put our knife and fork together when we finished. We asked to leave the table. We should take the nearest bun from the plate being offered whether we like it or not, and should never ask for anything when out or take the last of anything. We were not supposed to say if we disliked something, nor leave anything on our plates.***

***It felt, to me at least, that these things were trotted out as a litany at every single meal, accompanied by scathing looks and value-judgements about who we were if we did not do these things. It was wrong to contradict her, she was spending a great deal of time and money to bring us up, so we should be thankful. Moreover children in Hungary were starving so we should not want things. This we were frequently reminded of. The general message was that we were to wipe ourselves out in the name of good manners.***

***Years later I remember once giving my son a hard time over table manners, until I realised that I was embarrassing myself, him and everyone around me. I tried from then on therefore to be more subtle, but the pattern is so engrained in me that I have a real struggle with poor table manners and sometimes have to grit my teeth in order to cope with those of other people.***

It is interesting to me to note, however, that when I thought my world was collapsing around my ears after my husband left, and felt as though I was in a war zone, I told myself that the people in Bosnia were suffering far more and I needed to be thankful for all I did have, and not moan about what I had lost. Compared to them I was rich. It worked; it helped me survive.

***According to my grandmother my father did not, apparently, have the same breeding as my mother. His family were farmers, 'gentleman farmers' in Northern Ireland. To offset this, however, I was told my father's mother was a Stuart, and the family believed they were from the royal line. At times my mother seemed to think we had to behave like royalty. When I was four, my brother and I were made to sit at the top of the stairs waiting for my father to come home from work. When he came home we had to curtsy and bow and say 'Good Evening Papa'. Apparently Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret greeted King George this way. I hope that they at least had the benefit of being taught how to value themselves. My parents married on the Queen's wedding***

***anniversary, and my hair-style as a child and into my teens was the same as the Queen's is even today!***

***While all of this was not in itself harmful, it seems to indicate someone who saw her children as an extension of her own dreams and desires, not as real people. She was a terrible snob, even moving us away from the East Riding at one point, where the accent wasn't considered good enough, to live in the West Riding. The way anyone spoke was all-important. Anyone who spoke with a local accent (along with a lot of other things) was considered common. This caused her a problem when her own younger brother developed a strong local accent; she hated it and berated him about it. Years later she complained that he could be 'very nasty'. I recognise the syndrome. I call it self defence. I too had a strong sense of needing to protect myself when we spent any time together and often lapsed into silence. But she would often persist and persist until I defended myself. I came to recognise that as almost a sense of life or death. She would then sigh and act the hard-done by, misunderstood martyr, because presumably I overreacted. I felt I must have anyway, I felt guilty, but trapped.***

### **This is my house**

I am not completely ungrateful for all of this 'upbringing'. In terms of taking care of us, my mother was generally excellent. We were her priority, her life. If anything she smothered us with care and attention, some of which we would gladly have gone without. The rigidity and control of every dimension of life, from the way we walked and sat, to table settings and table manners, to the way we spoke, to my clothes which were age inappropriate, made me feel as though I was a puppet.

***She would often accost me on my way out to school, grab me around the waist and sort out my raincoat belt to her satisfaction, calling me 'a sack of potatoes'. I was made to wear her gloves, hats and suits as a young teenager in the early 1960s, which was excruciating. Her vitriol extended to my friends who she shamed if she did not like - once talking rudely about one friend, very loudly, knowing the girl was just outside the door.***

I think it was the obsessive unremittingness, and most especially the condemnation that makes what is obviously good manners feel like something so very unpleasant. My mother's concern seemed simply that we should not be guilty of disgracing her or ourselves, not whether we would become an asset to society and contribute to good conversation or the good of the world. Not 'letting her down' or 'showing her up' were the driving force. It was all such a big deal and, most significantly, the acute sense of failure to match up meant dire things about my suitability to exist.

Also the complete separation of our family from those around us, who were not good enough, or didn't go to church, or who were considered common, compounded the feeling of being different. I had the sense of being behind a wall, unable to reach out.

***The constant reiteration of 'This is my house and you'll do as I say' was a threat and was also utterly disempowering. What was also so destructive was the low level, but constant violence or physical punishment that went along with it. We were slapped, it seemed, on a daily basis, 'for your own good' she used to say. My recollection of that has humiliation, annihilation and rage attached to it, with a sense of injustice and impotence.***

### **Painful Paranoia**

***The idea, or so it seemed, was that my mother was the final arbiter of our acceptability in the world. The world was out there deciding, as she was, whether or not we measured up. People were apparently looking, listening, noticing the whole time whether or not we were up to the mark, they knew who we belonged to and we must not bring disgrace to the family and if she thought we were failing to meet the standard then there was little hope anyone else thought we matched up either.***

Looking back, extreme anxiety now seems apparent in her scrutiny and intrusiveness, as she attempted to mould us to her pattern. She was quite concerned that people were also watching her and looking at her strangely when she was out. I realised as I grew up how completely miserable she was in this anxiety and over-concern about others.

Consequently, when I was a teenager, I felt as though someone could always see me wherever I was, weighing me up and reporting somewhere. I have often wondered about the fact that though I knew God could always see me, this was not God. Writing this has just clarified that. When I first started to use a computer there was still a hint of it; when it underlined my typos I felt judged and half convinced there was a 'someone' in there somewhere!

Probably my feeling that I could be seen in some way by people, even when I was alone, seems a 'picked up' paranoia. I imagined 'they' were watching me. I was being scrutinized and observed. Instilling this idea was a deliberate and very effective method of control and discipline. This is much as Foucault described in his work on discipline and punishment, which use observation to keep prisoners submissive (Rabinow, 1986, p. 217). I absorbed it completely, and my body had become the centre of attention and a means of creating docility (Ibid, p. 181).

***I was full of fear as a child: fear of people, fear of getting it wrong, fear of being watched. I spoke very quietly as I grew up, and was told I swallowed my words. She would apologise for me in company, saying that I was shy, making me feel like I was retarded, and tell me off later. The result of all this conditioning was a mouse with nothing to say, no belief in what I said, and no right to say it. So my mother bullied me into submission and then bullied me for being submissive. I had no confidence after all that upbringing that I knew how to behave in what she deemed polite society. In fact those were the situations where I would be the least confident, and in situations where I consider someone superior, more knowledgeable, in authority, or older. However there were occasions when my verbal passivity became verbal aggression, though I can count the times it took place out of the home on one hand.***

Now I still have an issue about making myself invisible and then feeling ignored.

***I became afraid to eat outside the house, for fear of getting it wrong. What if somebody else wanted the cake that I took? I never expressed an opinion or a preference when asked. I didn't realize how bad this was until I was about eighteen and my aunt erupted in frustration because I was too 'polite' to choose tea or coffee. She told me I drove her 'mad', and it opened my eyes to the fact that no one ever knew how to relate to me. There was a rather pathetic corollary to this.***

***My friend and I went on a trip to London with the leaders of the youth group to which I belonged, and we were asked whether we would like to go to the zoo or go shopping. In order to be seen to be making a decision, after my aunt's complaint, I chose the zoo. It turned out to be closed, and I really didn't care, but somehow felt it was important to maintain the fiction that I was decisive, and the only answer I would give was that I wished I could go to the zoo. It became a game for me then and I kept it up all day till we got home. How weird is that? I knew they were sick of me, but at least I knew I had made a decision. At eighteen! At least through this I began to express opinions. I eventually became quite outspoken in the youth group and began to realise that people did listen to me.***

#### **Reminders**

***On a visit to my mother a couple of years before her death, I was thrust powerfully back into the sensations and feelings of childhood. She suddenly commented that she didn't know what the dustmen would think. She commented in her anxious way that they must think she had been having a party; there was so much rubbish because I was there (whatever that meant). I was so struck by the powerful memory of a life lived that way that I thought 'I must write that down; that was my childhood in a nutshell' always thinking everyone was noticing what she was doing. It was completely, suffocatingly, horrible. The next day I was reminded of childhood again. When she woke me up she was heavily into blaming. Once again the spectre reared its head. 'If you hadn't gone ahead and arranged this visit to the bank (for her, and agreed to by her) we wouldn't have to be getting ready to go out'.***

***My daughter J., who was with me on this same visit, had obviously become a cause of jealousy because every time J. spoke to me my mother would turn her eyes away from the television, sigh, and gaze mournfully into the middle distance. She suddenly turned to her and said 'I know who you take after for talking, your father. He could talk the hind legs off a donkey'. Poor J. was merely making conversation. My mother usually complained that I didn't talk enough, that I was boring. It was true that I used to lapse into silence because she made conversation pointless sometimes. Mum was just being contrary and jealous.***

On hearing about this someone commented that she must have wanted, indeed demanded, attention all the time, and punished others when she didn't get it. I found this idea very interesting because I hadn't quite seen it in those terms. She couldn't speak if J. was speaking, and she wasn't getting any attention. This seemed to make sense of a lot of things I remembered. It is borne out in the past too.

***When I was younger she would constantly complain of feeling unwell in some undefined way, headaches and backaches. At some point she had got hold of her grandmother's medical book and used to diagnose herself. She did tell me before my wedding that if she wasn't still around, we must carry on without her. On the day of the wedding everything was fine. Had there been anything wrong, or was she merely diagnosing herself again? When she really was ill many years later, she was a fighter.***

My mother's behaviour seems typical of someone who aspires to social status but has little hope of reaching or retaining it (Leyton, p.219). My father's poor health and therefore poor ability to provide for the family seem to have fuelled a drive to make sure everyone knew she was made of better stuff, and was only temporarily down in such reduced circumstances. We were, it would appear, the instruments of ensuring that the family kept up the right appearance. The sad thing is how viciously she enforced her will upon us both verbally and physically.

***Fortunately I became an adult in the sixties and early seventies. Times were changing, and families spreading out. Manners and mores became less formal and new ways of doing things swept in. I was growing up and thought of leaving home. I tried to leave home at 17, to go to Wales to do Orthopaedic Nursing. My mother came with me for the interview and everything went well, but in the night I just knew I could not leave home, particularly my mother! As well as being in denial I was dependent, even choosing to do my SRN training from home, when most people were taking the opportunity to move to hospitals all over the country. I could have gone to St James in Leeds, only an hour away, but I did not leave home until I was twenty two, and then with a friend.***



***Both my brother and I generally fulfilled her requirements of us; speaking well, becoming part of the caring professions and marrying suitable spouses, though both of our marriages eventually failed. In the process of bending us to her will she lost our affection and all that was left was a wary truce maintainable at a distance only.***

#### ***Good memories***

***Mum buying me an ice cream when the ice-cream van came round one summer evening, after I had gone to bed.***

***Being woken on my third birthday, and taken to see a surprise present in the garden.***

***Having measles with a fire in my bedroom and being brought brown bread and butter in bed.***

***Watching the snow fall outside the window.***

***Sitting by the big kitchen range and watching the patterns in the flames with my mother tickling my feet!***

***Making apple pie and Yorkshire puddings with her, and learning to iron with a flat iron.***

***The anticipation of coming home to sit in front of the fire and listen to Jimmy Clitheroe on the radio.***

***Lying on the sofa in front of the fire when I was off school ill (me for a change, not my brother), and reading 'A Peep Behind the Scenes'. Crying with the sadness of a child losing her mother.***

***Suddenly learning I was to have my bedroom furniture painted. I felt very surprised and cared for.***

***A treasure hunt being organised for our Christmas presents.***

***Frequent bike rides as a family.***

***Managing to stay up late by being totally quiet when the adults were talking and forgot I was there.***

***Making everyone breakfast in bed, with marmalade, jam and peanut butter on toast. Surprisingly we all ate it.***

***I used to fish for sticklebacks in the park with a net my mother made of stockings, and played cricket with my brother.***

***I remember all sorts of facts, folk lore about the weather, phrases, that my mother taught me or used, and still use them myself.***

*Things have moved on, yet I have felt that her bullying has left me broken in some way that I have felt unable to access. I thought I had done so when the Dragon/Lover awoke, but unfortunately, she was firmly knocked on the head in the battle with the dark but handsome prince and has since been kept in abeyance by my angry Warrior. Perhaps things will change? (Personal Journal, Ashley, 2005)*

## **Scene 2 The Wife: Victim or violent?**

In the story about my mother lies the origin of my sense of having my head interfered with, that my husband later continued, by violence, by lies and changing stories, by refusing to allow me to make decisions and by controlling the family finances. At one time he used to say, 'Don't fight me, I'm not your mother'. At first I was taken in because I thought he was someone who really loved me, and that I was free from all of that. Soon I did begin to fight it, verbally at first, as I had fought with my mother. I would become angry, be mocked and rendered helpless, and when he punished me physically I would now hit back, with the sense that indeed he was not my mother, and I did not have to take it from him. The physical fights probably tamed me down, however, as the pain and the fear was far greater than any she inflicted, and I hated being drawn into that situation.

### **The Innocent continues:**

*Who like us all began with optimism and openness, believing what those in authority taught – good and bad, but who has experienced the Fall with disillusionment and disappointment, and is displaying the shadow qualities of denial. (Pearson 1991, p.79)*



***We had married after knowing one another a year, having decided to marry 10 days after we met when I was twenty four. I had just left College, where I had studied theology, and had gone back into nursing while I decided the next step. He was twenty two, had just finished Music College, and was starting out working with a Christian evangelist. It was a golden September day when we married, and he wore a velvet suit and a gold shirt with frills at the throat and wrist - he was everything I had ever dreamed of.***

***I was attracted to men who were funny, but also figures of authority by reason of brains and/or talent, and force of personality. My background had led me to look up to men and to see them as the authority on everything. I had little idea of the character of maleness, and in the circles in which I had moved, among Christian men, there was no swearing, no crude jokes and no sex before marriage. It is hard to describe the world in which I lived at this time. In addition to a social life spent entirely at church, I had spent two years at Bible College, where I felt part of something significant. The ethos was that we asked God about every decision we made, and believed he would guide us and be with us, if we put him first.***

*I had had a few short relationships, and one or two encounters out in the real world that reinforced how much more acceptable Christian men were. But all I wanted, I suppose, was someone like the characters from a romantic novel, someone who had power and looks and was totally confident, who would finally be forced to admit his love for me and show his truly tender side. I was completely unprepared for the real world. Our world, the world of the church, was meant to be different, separate, pure and safe!*

*One summer vacation I had gone home from College in Birmingham as usual, and had met P. I had previously only seen him playing the organ at church, and the keyboard in a band some months before. My first impression then was that he was a 'bumptious twit'. This time, somehow, he ended up taking me home and asking me out to the cinema. When we went to the cinema, he told me that the last time he had come he had brought two girls who were both crazy about him, and that he had worn a different after-shave on each side in order to please them both. I was pleased that he chose me, and not displeased at their obvious fury when we became an item. I felt honoured to be noticed by him. If someone like P. could love me then I must be ok after all. Why was I so immature, such a prime candidate for what followed?*

*P. had charm and bearing, and an air of supreme confidence with a hint of mischief. When he asked me out I became unable to eat, and didn't eat properly for some days until our date, and for a further week. I couldn't even eat when we went for a picnic but sat and watched him, which could not have been very comfortable for him. Perhaps surprisingly he proposed a few days later, whereupon I went home and ate for the first time in ten days.*

*As well as charm he had a powerful physical presence and force of personality, and he was very good looking. I was hooked. We had things in common and so did our families: in the 1940s our parents had taken open air services in the same park with my mother and his father both playing the accordion, so our faith background had the same roots. He was studying in Birmingham as I was; we came from the same town, went to the same church, and loved music. What was more, he had real musical talent. It seems incredibly silly now, but when you are infatuated these things seem meaningful. He was also about to go into full time Christian music ministry, and as I felt I had a call on my life to serve God, this seemed so right.*

*The reason I fell so hard for him was that in the beginning he told me how much he valued and respected me. He told me that at first he thought I was too good for him because I was at Bible College. I was also two years older than he was. I had never experienced this before; it was heady stuff. What was more he told me that his parents had pointed me out to him and suggested he get to know me. He had resisted for a while, but made his own mind up when he met me properly. I felt that I must be worthy of love after all if he could love me and his parents approved. All my longing for love as a child became vested in him. My self-esteem,*

*which till then was immensely low was lifted and I felt like a normal person.*

*So it was a mere ten days before we became engaged. I loved his air of authority and a certain glamour about him. He had lots of friends and as he was part of a group that had made a number of records there were even fans around the country who wrote him letters. Even after we were engaged he would spend his time with me replying to one or two of his fans. Towards me he was kind and caring in a very indulgent sort of way; now I see it was patronising, or parenty. He made me feel cared for when he paid me attention and, again, this was new to me. He seemed very knowledgeable and to know the answers to everything I asked. This was at the time very attractive, but did also become a source of some difficulty during our engagement. I did find that sometimes I disagreed, or even knew he wasn't right about things, and this would turn into an argument which might become quite heated, though not acrimonious. There was no indication then that he was angry with me for disagreeing. It was only later that I came to recognise how very often he did not know what he was talking about with such authority, and only later that his rage at my disagreement became apparent.*

*It was not long before he started to arrive late for everything, very late, and never for any really good reason. There were times when, for instance, I would be totally ignored at a party, and that he would say goodbye to me in front of everyone else when he was going on a tour, as though I was just one of the group. To start with his charm kept me in line, yet I might suddenly realise as we drove along or did something together, that at that moment I was happy. I did not ask myself what I was feeling the rest of the time or why. But I never knew when it was going to be like that. I longed for him to ring me when he was away or going to be late, but it was quite rare. He would just smile indulgently, and if not literally ruffle my hair or pat me on the head, it felt that way. 'I was too busy, to think of you/ be on time/ get in touch, you silly little thing'. I had become, without noticing, the little woman.*

#### **My Role**

*Despite him claiming to be attracted to someone who was articulate and intelligent, he preferred the obedient, submissive, adoring, hanger on, and attempted to turn me into that. I frequently, and perhaps over-all, complied with that, without recognising that I was doing so. Because of his perceived specialness in my eyes, I thought it must mean I was lovable, but in fact he did not support that. He often called me fat and would constantly joke that I was so lucky to have him. Any beauty he saw in me needed to be preserved, maintained, improved upon, in order to keep his approval. Years later I realised that he was very proud to take me out and 'show' me to people, a kind of trophy.*

*But I was totally smitten even when unhappy. A friend once objected to his horseplay, where, for instance, he might physically manhandle me by throwing me over the sofa, but I couldn't see it as a problem. I was very hurt one day when I asked if he thought about me when he was doing other things during the day and he said that he didn't. However I believed*

***that if you loved someone you accepted them as they were and did not try to change them. It was more important to 'get yourself right' and not to be angry or impatient. That would be 'sinful'.***

I tell my daughters now 'If anyone makes you unhappy like that, even if you think you adore him, walk away!'

***Quite early on, while I was still a student, I had made the mistake of telling P. that I was slightly overdrawn at the bank. I could have had no idea of the long term consequences of that simple act. He became the financial expert, and I the incompetent. I acquiesced in this. I was scared, because previously, as a working woman I had never been overdrawn. It was a whole new experience. His family were in banking and I must have thought he was more competent as a result.***

***I gave up my own bank account when we married, and we opened a joint account. Even though I was earning again by then a regular, reasonable, full time wage and he was not, I found I became obliged to ask if I could spend 'our' money. He might say to me that I could have £30 to spend on clothes, but it was never, apparently, available when I wanted it, even though I was earning it. Not long before the wedding I contracted glandular fever. I was very ill for some weeks, and because I was working for a nursing agency, albeit in one place, I was not entitled to sickness benefit. I had to go back to work in order to survive. There was no question that he should keep me, even if he was able. But when we married I always felt that the money I earned became ours, it did not remain mine. I thought that these were the rules of engagement.***

***For our wedding we received quite a bit of money. I do not know what happened to it. I bought a pillow, a mirror and a laundry basket. The rest of it, who knows? It was some time before I got the bank to send statements to me separately, and then more time before I was addressed by my own name as opposed to Mrs P. XXXXXXXX, a hang-over from a previous generation.***

**The Innocent experiences disillusionment. Enter the Orphan:**

*The Orphan is the disappointed idealist, the disillusioned Innocent. (Pearson, 1991, p. 84)*



***The difficulties started about a month after we married. A pattern had begun to emerge with our heated discussions. At first it seemed a genuine thing that one of us was mistaken about something, or that it was a matter of opinion, but it became clear that he could not accept being wrong. I might try to convince him that I knew what I was saying. He, however, knew the answer to everything, or claimed to. It was quite a***

*joke amongst his friends I later discovered, and he also exaggerated terribly and claimed quite grandiose things. I also began to realise that not everyone thought he was as great as I did, and something of a siege mentality arose, us against the world. His wounded feelings began to cut us off from people.*

*One day a friend rang up in distress because he had heard that P. had told someone that this friend's violin was a Stradivarius, worth thousands. It was causing some embarrassment and was detrimental to him finding funding, and of course not true at all. I heard P. deny this outright. But I knew it was what he had said. Nevertheless, I could be half convinced that I had imagined it too. At worst I felt that he had said it because he actually believed it, but could not admit this, and was therefore covering his back. Having come up with an answer he could not back down.*

*His wild exaggerations and argumentativeness with others did not make me feel too bad at first. It made me angry with them, and made me feel closer to him. I continued to think he was mostly wonderful, if a little embarrassing at times. I did not love him any the less. We all get things wrong, so I always defended him. I defended him more or less to the end, until the unravelling showed what a complete fake he was, and how dangerous. I thought I knew that underneath he was insecure. He would cry quite easily (something he used later to great effect on my replacement) and it made me protective. Back then I wanted him to be the important person he wanted to be, the success, the brilliant musical arranger.*

*Eventually the strain began to show. The first time he was violent and threw me out was over a newspaper article he disputed with me. He became extremely angry that I said I had read something which he claimed I couldn't possibly have done. Rather than checking it out he became more and more unpleasant. On that occasion, rather than hitting me, he pushed and shoved me out of the house and locked the door. It was bitterly cold, I stood shivering, barefoot, on the street corner considering whether or not to end the relationship there and then, but that was a step too far for someone who believed that marriage was for life. I was now married for better or worse to a man who kept me short of money even when I was the wage earner, and who pushed me around, but who I elevated to a position of being head of the family. As such I thought he should be fulfilled in what he did, that his talent entitled him to my complete support in every way. That I suppose is the nature of being raised to obedience and passivity, both at home and in the church. Eventually I went back and when things were calm showed him the item in the paper and we made up.*

*Before long, anger at my daring to disagree after he had made a pronouncement led to him hitting out, or grabbing me around the throat. I was appalled. He was very strong. Like my father, he would hit me around the head. I can clearly recall the sensation of being hit on the head during an argument, and the feeling rising up within me that I was not going to take it any more, and I fought back. I fought to stop him and then tried to slap him back, but he was too strong and I couldn't get*

*anywhere near him. I felt like a child trying to hit an adult. He would grab my hands and sneer and laugh at me. However, it released something in me; the knowledge, or the feeling, of rage and impotence that was so obviously triggered from being hit and disempowered so much as a child. I discovered within me a fountain of rage. We fought violently all the way through that year. If we argued he would hit me or go for my throat, but I would fight to stop him. When I did get angry and frustrated at his intransigence even if I just threw a spoon down in frustration, the violence was worse. On the whole I realised that standing up for myself was dangerous.*

*To start with he was always repentant, and we talked about it. He cried and said he could never do it again. He told me he had been bullied at school, and that that his father (who he loved and admired deeply) had sometimes been very hard on him and had broken his radio as a punishment for damaging the lawn, something P. later repeated with our son. I was very sympathetic to this. It melted my heart. Because he wept about being bullied as a child I perceived him as a victim and I did not name his behaviour as bullying.*

*I think we tried to lull ourselves into a false sense that all this was part of a normal adjustment to married life. We knew other couples had rows and seemed to find the first year of marriage difficult too. One night another couple we were staying with, who were also newly wed, had a major argument, and she ran off into the night.*

*Not long after we married P. was employed to be the conductor for a musical due to go on tour. This meant I was working ten hours a day for four days a week in the operating theatre, travelling with him between three cities to weekend rehearsals, and then finally to performances in which I was also participating. Though he was at home during the days I was at work, he often laughingly apologised for not washing up, or cleaning the flat. While this was happening he would often ask me to write out parts of his musical score for him, even to the extent of staying up through the night. What he did during the day remained his business, but he always justified his requests that I help him, and made me feel guilty if I demurred. Guilt and blame became the tools he used to keep me where he wanted me.*

*The violence intensified, even once when we were staying in someone else's home. I remember saying to him then that I had not expected to become a battered wife. The reason I named it on that occasion was that there had been no argument, in fact we were playing around, when he felt he had had enough, and instead of saying so thumped me around the head. I could not understand it, when, as I used to say, 'I adored him'. As a result of all this I found I was becoming seriously depressed. One afternoon I took a 'cry for help' overdose of paracetamol pills though I must have been too scared to do it properly. Through this I accepted that I had problems. The madwoman was born.*

### **The controller**

*The adoration was taking some knocks. I no longer knew when he was right or I was right. He changed things around with complete conviction. What I said at the beginning of a conversation would turn into what he was saying, but he wasn't agreeing with me, he was still arguing..*

*As he began to get work another pattern emerged. I worked to give us a place to live, and all my free time I either joined him and helped him try to gain recognition, or sat about waiting for him. I had no life. He controlled everything, even what time I went to bed. I occasionally got to go to the local market, and would be pleased if I had £1 or two to spend. I did once admit to my mother early in my marriage, which I thought afterwards was something of a mistake, that though I was working I had no toiletries, and had to ask P. for money. She disliked him intensely from then on. I did not, and sided with him. Perhaps that was the real mistake.*

*After that first year we moved to a flat which came with my new job as a practice manager for a local Doctor's group. I began to experience a lot more depression. Writing this now actually brings back to mind occasions well into our marriage, when I was constantly feeling crushed and drifting around trying to blot things out.*

*P. would come back from trips abroad with tales of banquets, concerts and TV shows. On one occasion he tore into me for having eaten what was in the fridge, calling me greedy. Another time he went away telling me not to spend more than £20 while he was gone for six weeks. If I asked for a hug it was boring, if I asked for affirmation it would be shrugged off with a derogatory joke. Everything was on his terms, yet I thought that was what relationship meant. He would muscle in on my job at the surgery, talking about our personal issues to the staff, and spending hours on the doctors' phone at weekends ringing people about his work. After one very unpleasant incident, when I had been scalded with hot coffee, he surprised me by deciding we should go to the cinema to see 'a Star is Born'. In this, the Star, played by Barbra Streisand finds that her mentor loses face as her fame grows, and he becomes steadily more depressed and withdrawn, finally choosing to kill himself in a road accident. Afterwards I commented to P. that I couldn't bear it if that happened to him. 'Yes' he said smugly 'I thought that would be your reaction.'*

*There was still violence and he was certainly unpredictable. One afternoon after we had been out shopping and were parking the car, he suddenly revved the engine after I got out and drove the car at me in the garage. The car stopped centimetres from my legs as I stood against the back wall. He denied it of course, but I had heard the revs, and seen his face. All I could think of was that he had been quite annoyed because I had said a friend was coming to visit and he felt he hadn't been consulted. Arguing with him or confronting him about the way he behaved achieved nothing except to put me even more in the wrong.*



## **The Bullying Personality**

Tim Field of the Field Foundation, and author of *Bullying In Sight* (1996) describes at length on his website how the bullying personality is able to display a range of behaviours when confronted, in order to deflect the allegations and indeed turn them against the victim.

***Feigning victimhood;*** in the unlikely event of denial and counterattack being insufficient the bully feigns victimhood or feigns persecution by manipulating people through their emotions, especially guilt. This commonly takes the form of bursting into tears, which most people cannot handle. Variations include indulgent self pity, feigning indignation, pretending to be 'devastated', claiming they 're the one being bullied or harassed, claiming to be 'deeply offended', melodrama, martyrdom ('If it wasn't for me...') and a poor-me drama ('You don't know how hard it is for me')<sup>7</sup>

***P. was always the 'innocent' victim of others' thoughtlessness, or jealousy or self-seeking, and he blamed others for all that went wrong for him, and for years I believed him. He thrived on conflict. It used to alarm me a great deal how it could enliven him. I remember how, in a financial dispute between P. and an elderly TV personality Z, which eventually went to court, P. would gloat about the fact that Z. was purportedly in danger of losing his house over this. I was mortified. Naturally P. was seriously deluded, and lost his case. But he never learned, partly because he could sometimes carry that sort of thing off, for example over the later huge VAT fraud he perpetrated. Even before that he would simply talk at people until they gave in, telling what seemed to him plausible stories. He convinced an obviously reluctant VAT inspector that taking us all to Florida after a business trip to Texas was a legitimate business expense. He just would not give in, in the same way he would not admit to blatant lies when found out.***

The plausibility and fake charm of a bully is often a strong factor in people not telling others about their behaviour. They fear they will not be believed, and then when finally they do, they are asked why if this is true, they told no one before. It is also very hard to know that it is the other person whose behaviour is at fault, since the tendency is, or it was for me, to look at oneself, or to trust that other people's motivation is good. Field states that mediation with such a bully is inappropriate:

*Serial bullies regard mediation (and arbitration, conciliation, negotiation etc) as appeasement which they ruthlessly exploit; it allows them to give the impression in public that they are negotiating and being conciliatory, whilst in private they continue the bullying. The lesson is...you do not appease aggressors. (ibid)*

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<sup>7</sup> [www.bullyonline.org/workbully/serial.htm](http://www.bullyonline.org/workbully/serial.htm) recovered 2/19/06

This too was my experience.

***In such situations my husband was totally charming, and would have strangers eating out of his hand. Much too late I came to recognize some of these behaviour patterns; he could cry very easily, something I found endearing at first, and never learned to resist.***

***After my marriage began to break down in 1996 and as part of a response to my husband's affair, we called on a vicar we knew quite well to act as spiritual director or mediator. He turned up with two of his pastoral workers, making it three men. I was therefore the only woman. They knew the basics of the situation and asked to speak first of all to my husband. After some long time, when in my innocence I imagined that as a Christian and a business man, with a reputation to consider, he would be being challenged about continuing the affair, I was called to join in; there was no time for me to speak alone with them. The first words were 'So, your husband tells us he is intimidated by you, that you are verbally too fast for him to keep up with, and he is made to feel inferior'.***

***After the months of emotional agony I had been through and having lost two stone in weight because I was too sick at heart to eat, these words came like an axe, cutting through any expectation of a 'fair hearing'. I hadn't even been asked for my side of the story and I was already accused. I fell straight into the trap, and all the anger and pain came out. I talked about his violence and previous affair, his controlling, neglect and lying. They sat with stony faces until I slowly realized what was happening, and dribbled to an unhappy stop, apologizing all the while. I had proved his point. They offered no help, no wisdom, nothing, simply left. I was obviously beyond the pale. Case proven.***

***After he finally left us I learned, eventually, to completely avoid conversation with him; it was so fraught with the possibility of manipulation and provocation that in my heightened emotional state I would fall for. I refused mediation, knowing that he knew exactly how to provoke a response and win over observers. It was some time before I was able to accept how cynical and calculating his behaviour was, and I am still never able to be completely confident, even now, whether he was as bad as I felt he was. I still feel manipulated by his accusations about how I turned the children against him, though I quite naturally tell them about his good points.***

## **Manipulation**

Violence is only one tactic of the bullying personality, and men who are violent use many emotional forms of control and bullying in the same way. Men who abuse may be deliberately manipulative, including making false allegations. Peyton, (2003) describes how bullies can demonstrate compulsive lying, manipulation, unpredictability, deception, denial, arrogance, narcissism, attention-seeking, threats,

intimidation, blaming the victim, pretending to listen to criticism about themselves, then carrying on as before, control, humiliation, all the while being completely charming and plausible (2003, p. 41). These are all behaviours I experienced from my husband, and are behaviours that abusive men are known to employ (Olson, 2004). Many women who experience domestic violence find the psychological abuse the most destructive element (Shipway 2004, p.22).

*Because this type of non-physical abuse occurs more frequently, and in some cases more chronically, than episodes of physical violence, the effects of psychological aggression may be even more pernicious than the effects of physical aggression (Follingstad et al., 1990 in Stephens and McDonald, 2000, p.80)*

***Though violence did not continue so frequently after the first year it always remained a feature of difficult times when he might suddenly go for me, even when I was pregnant. Often it was over very trivial matters, and would usually involve going for the throat or hitting me around the head, much like my father used to. I was never injured. I felt complicit in the violence because, rightly or wrongly, I would not let him browbeat me into becoming a nothing. That was what awoke in me the day he was hitting me so early on in our marriage. He would still be repentant and tearful and I felt that as a Christian I had to forgive him. I never again seriously considered leaving.***

***By now we had been married three years. P. had not been too keen to start a family. He actually said that he felt he did not have enough love to give another person. His attitude was echoed by his father who, at 52 yrs old, proclaimed himself too young to be a grandfather. But we had agreed to start a family and I became pregnant. We needed to find somewhere to live as our flat went with the job and we had been looking to buy a house.***

***By this time I was a G.P. practice manager. While P. was away on one of his trips one of the doctors invited me to a meeting which his church's new minister and wife were also attending. This meeting finally led to us starting to attend their church. As we became more involved in the church the minister was keen for members to live close to the church itself and participate in the neighbourhood, so we began to discuss this possibility. When a house directly across the road from the church became available, we decided to try to buy it. Obtaining a mortgage was quite difficult, because P. was building up his business, but finally we managed to buy a three storey period house with four bedrooms, in need of renovation. A lot of work was needed and so, after I had to leave work and therefore the flat that went with it, we moved into the minister's family house. This was where we brought our son after leaving hospital.***

***P. wanted to work on a freelance basis so he started a publishing company, and then began distribution, which meant he was on the road three days a week. His idea was that I should work for him, doing his administration. Though I supported his wish to work for himself and stay***

***within the music business, in practice it was lonely. It was eight more months before the house was ready, but finally we felt we just had to move, even though decoration was minimal. The house was also the work place, where we stored the stock he distributed, and it still needed a lot doing to it. P's work felt like a monster to me. It filled the house with boxes of books. He was away every week and there were people on the phone rudely demanding orders. He seldom rang home while he was away. At the time I felt I was entirely inadequate for not coping. We were also still renovating the house, and I had read in some obscure Christian book that wives should not undermine their husbands by doing the decorating, so for a while the pressure was on him to do it, and probably with good reason he did not often get round to it. Eventually I got over that but still needed to ask if I could buy paint and so on.***

***Now I had left work I had no money at all. In the end the ultimate guilt for me was that I had begun to have children and to stay at home to look after them. At the time it was much more the norm for women to do that and then to return to work when the children went to school. In my family it was considered impolite to talk about money. It was both in short supply in my childhood because of my father's illness, and also considered 'the root of all evil' in the church. Little wonder I was so ignorant. I recall the surprise I felt that P. did talk about it such a lot but, I reasoned, his father was a banker after all. He was the expert, and he controlled the finances. It was even suggested by P. that we could cut the housekeeping now I was receiving Child Benefit. I felt guilty that I was no longer earning, but did have a sense that perhaps I had earned a break. He had spent three years travelling the world doing his music, or sitting at home while I worked.***

It seems ludicrous now but at the time I saw no way out. I thought if P. was happy and fulfilled then I would be happy too. I see now what a child I was emotionally. To me P. was strong, clever, knowledgeable, handsome, sexy, charming. I had been trained to know that I was nothing. I basked in his reflection, and I thought that was living, except that I felt so empty. It is clear that much of my acceptance of circumstances was due to my upbringing, which as well as everything else was old-fashioned, other-worldly.

As a child and as an adult I had spent many, many hours listening to men in pulpits passing on their wisdom, so I was taught by example that men knew best. Being teachable was a virtue and I took on teaching like a sponge. I was taught to honour men above women. As a church member I considered myself along with everyone else to be a 'son of God'. Obedience was a large factor during my childhood, both at home and school. As a child my identity was strongly meshed with my mother (Jung, 2003, p.25). I wore her clothes, I chose my career because it was what she

had done. I was raised to be demure, submissive, docile and obedient. At school we behaved and dressed for the most part as grammar school girls were meant to. I responded to the traditional culture and the authority. Similarly in nursing we wore uniform, which I loved, and Matron or more usually Deputy Matron watched us like hawks and expected docility. I was proud to look smart and do a good job. We all expected the next step to be marriage and children, and giving up work, for a while at least.

Obedience to God was also a strong part of the message I received at church. I did even promise to obey in the marriage service. At some point in my time at Bible College I had become converted to the view, only ever put forward once, that men were the head of the house. It was suggested by a gentle, elderly tutor, beloved by us all, that women had been responsible for half of all Christian heresies. Used to taking guilt on board, I heard his suggestion that, therefore, women should be subject to men, as a clarion call to me. Women should support and nurture men, and make sure their needs were met, and that life ran smoothly. I never enquired about the other half of the heresies.

I even propounded this view about women to another poor wife I met, in front of our husbands. I am mortified now to think of it. Although my mother must have held these views she did not labour the point much at all. Though she lived it, she struggled with it herself, and I remember how upset she was that my father had raised the issue of her buying furniture without his permission. She was better educated, more lively and more open than my father was, and she knew it. So I had observed and absorbed some of this independent spirit, while also being subsumed by her tyranny (Jung, 2003, p.25), the tyranny of this teaching about submission and the nuances of it being lived out without question. This was to become a complicating factor in helping me extricate myself from the identity of a failed Christian wife. I had when I married, however, an idealized view of men as being honourable, dependable, and knowledgeable. As a Christian one would add virtuous, and essentially what was called righteous. This was the way it was talked about, the discourse surrounding my identity as a Christian woman, the construct into which I stepped.

***However not only was P. not there for me, but I was not allowed to be there for him. He could come home whenever he felt like it, always with some excuse, and if he did not want the meal, the affection, me, he would let me know in no uncertain terms. I had heard of marital abuse, which I took to be violent beatings on a regular basis. This never seemed to fit any such pattern. The violence could always be put down to something, if not reasonable then understandable or forgivable. It was not a constant feature, and I always hoped it wouldn't happen again.***

*...an abuser can through a pattern of control and domination, alter the victim's view of reality vis-a-vis his isolation of her, his condemnation of her personhood, and his intermittent acts of violence and love. In other words because he takes control of the relationship and his partner, he simultaneously assumes control of her identity and sense of self. Who she is as a person is recreated within the narrow confines of the abuser's world – what he deems acceptable, worthy, and necessary. Her sense of self is subjugated to his view of reality. (Olson, 2004, p.4)*

The grooming or separation from others, the intimidation and belittling, the whittling away at my self confidence and self belief (Stephens and McDonald, 2000, p. 83) was not something of which I was aware. At first I admired how he took care of everything and only slowly realised he had taken control of me too. I was simply too naïve and inexperienced to recognize that as a deliberate pattern, and not until the marriage was breaking down did I start to identify it as a part of the violence and not just meanness or my own perceptions. As a child I had been in denial about my parents, and I remained in denial even then.

***The only pastime P. was interested in us taking part in together was sex. If we went for a walk in a forest, or to the beach, a drive, anywhere, he wanted to have sex. At night I was expected to undress in front of him. On one occasion, after staying up all the previous night decorating his office as a surprise while he was away, I was so tired when he had come home that I got into bed first. He completely lost his temper because he hadn't seen me undress, and stormed off in a rage to sleep elsewhere.***

This too was part of his way of constructing the partner he wanted. I was to be available at all times and in all places. I came to feel demeaned by it, especially when he told me that the most beautiful thing about me was my sexual parts.

***I began to eventually to dislike what had been so good at first. He would touch me in ways that made me feel cheap when we were with people, or make comments, and years later I discovered, tell them what a good night he'd had the night before. For someone who had worked full time with an evangelist, his humour was decidedly vulgar. But it merely amused him when I objected.***

***Later there were murmurs about his inappropriate behaviour from two women in the church. I found it hard to accept at the time, even though he had recently had an affair with another church member. I felt I had let him down. At that time I still believed he was basically honourable. When there was a suggestion that he was being judged, I made a fool of myself rather than let him be wronged.***

I must have thought that such a situation made me more victim than perpetrator.

## **Scene 3: Women and violence**

### **Facing Facts?**

Shipway (2004) presents figures for domestic violence in England and Wales showing that:

- *At least one in four women in the UK experience varying degrees of violent assaults from an intimate partner, at some point during their life ( many of course endure it for a significant part of that life)*
- *Domestic violence accounts for one quarter of all violent crimes reported in England.*
- *Criminal statistics for England and Wales (1997) showed that 47 per cent of female homicide victims are killed by their partners (compared to 8 per cent of men). In real terms this means that every week at least two women are killed by their current or former partner (Home Office 2000a). Women are far more likely to be injured in the home by a partner than they are to fall victim to a stranger-crime.*
- *On average a woman is beaten at least 34 times before she seeks help.*

(p.6)

Stephens and McDonald (2000) state that figures show a strong correlate between domestic violence, depression and low self esteem, indicating that:

*husband violence not only has direct effects on women's functioning and self esteem, but also may indirectly affect women's well being by interfering with their ability to use effective coping strategies and to have positive social contacts (i.e. contacts with friends and families unaccompanied by their batterer). (p. 84)*

According to Stephens and McDonald (2000), research shows that high levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder symptomatology have been found in samples of abused women, ranging from between 40-60 per cent (p. 84-5). In addition figures relating to substance abuse, suicidality, health problems, including particular vulnerability during pregnancy, sexual assault, homelessness and economic deprivation (p. 88) indicate the outcomes for women experiencing domestic violence are wide ranging and may impact on their ability to function as women and as mothers (p. 89) and protect and nurture their children.

It would seem from this that, rather than battered women's depression, low self esteem, economic dependency and social isolation being indicators of a



predisposition to being abused<sup>8</sup>, that these things may be a *result of abuse* though it has not yet been possible to fully establish this (Stephens and McDonald, 2000, p. 79).

During the 1980s it was, as I became aware of similar statistics because the church we attended at that time was grappling with the concepts, that I began to take on the more feminist understanding that we live in a patriarchal society, in which women are being treated unjustly in varying degrees. By then I was beginning to undergo therapy, and looking at the possibility of abuse in my life. I came to believe that men are more violent and abusive than women, though not all men. I also came to believe that women were victimised by men, who use violence including sexual violence far more frequently, and to far greater effect. This includes, according to Home Office figures, killing on average two women a week in this country, that is 35% of all murders, as well as intimidating and bullying women, using isolation, threats, economic control and emotional abuse (Shipway, 2004, p.7-12).

This feminist view was my position when I began to write for this research in 2001, though I had never quite managed to subscribe to the view sometimes put forward in the 1980s that women were all sisters, who would support and encourage one another, and who in a world without patriarchal violence would manage things differently (Pizzey, 2000). As a child I had the evidence of our mother and daughter relationship:

***'You will do as I say' my mother would frequently inform me. 'You show no gratitude; after all I have done for you. You are hateful. I wish you had never been born.'***

***So did I.***

And as a nurse my encounters with the hierarchical bullying by women was enough to allow some serious cynicism on that issue.

***On my first ward as a young student nurse, awed by the different coloured uniforms - navy for sister, brown for clinical tutor, royal blue for deputy matron, burgundy for Matron - I was anxious and nervous one morning to observe a brown uniform approaching. This meant I would be watched as I worked. As we stood over a temperature chart, I was***

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<sup>8</sup> [www.hiddenhurt.co.uk](http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk) recovered on 11.3.07

***shocked to hear that I had been insolent. What had I done? Apparently I had sighed when she told me to alter an entry on a chart. If I had I was not conscious of it at all, but it resulted nevertheless in me being sent up the uniforms to Deputy Matron, who struck terror into our hearts. I was saved by a very different brown uniform's intervention. 'I think', she remarked quite kindly in order to help me out, 'that you have an unfortunate expression, I don't think you mean to be sullen'. This was a salutary lesson. There were sanctions still hovering if your face and your behaviour did not fit the required mould. Shades of my mother!***

So my feminist standpoint was always tempered by this experience. I recognised that working in the patriarchal world of medicine could possibly have led to women taking on the same ethos of dominance, power and blaming that patriarchy tended towards.

### **Who Am I?**

Through therapy I had faced the fact that my difficulties with my son came not from considered decisions, but from a deep, unrecognised rage. It was due to counselling, and subsequently a change in my view about children's place in the world that I was eventually able to overcome my own rage. I found it difficult to deal with the idea that I was equally responsible for the violence in my marriage. I had felt victimised by, but then also guilty for reciprocating in violence initiated by my partner. When I married I had little understanding of domestic violence - I had never been violent previously - and I had no understanding of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). I had led a fairly narrow, sheltered life, being brought up in a highly charged religious family and a church which was strongly patriarchal, and then working in what was at the time a hierarchical, non-reflexive environment as a nurse.

Though I had always recognised that in defending myself from my husband I had not been passive, I had not considered that that made me equally responsible for the violence or that it was mutual, until I had to come to terms with the fact that I would be termed as such when I came across the book '*Violent Men, Violent Couples*' (Shupe, Stacy & Hazelwood, 1987).

*Many times when police arrive at such a domestic disturbance it is not clear just who is assailant and who is victim (p.51).*

It became clear that the vexed issue of my own feelings of violence toward my child and the question of wider violence toward children is bound up with many factors, including parenting, marriage, and social/religious factors including views of the roles of women and men, and attitudes towards children. Therefore in order to look at the subject it would be necessary to bring these factors into play in my research. I would need to explore the topic of women and violence before I could go any further. I found myself torn by the idea that I was equally violent in my marriage and I was distressed.

I did not see myself as having initiated the violence toward my husband, though I could recall a couple of incidents as the marriage was ending. I had felt that there was nothing demanding that a woman who is experiencing violence should submit to it passively. Others, it seems, might disagree. I felt that I was having labels attached to me without being heard, and I felt objectified. It was necessary to turn a new lens on the subject and on myself.

I wished to be true to myself, but to be scrupulously honest in my research. Ellis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) states that in autoethnography we have to confront the things about ourselves that are less than flattering, and that honest autoethnographic exploration will generate a lot of fears, doubts and emotional pain (p. 738). It seemed that I needed to examine the subject of women and violence still further.

## **Scene 4    Family Terrorist or Frankly Terrified?**

My confusion continued as I sought out the different opinions on the issues surrounding women and violence, and to some extent it remains unresolved, or contradictory, paradoxical.

Feminist literature has often quoted fairy tales from Western European cultures as a pointer to the stereotyping of women:

*The current selection of fairy tales presented to children makes a sharp differentiation in the treatment of boys and girls. The female role models are beautiful, passive and helpless victims: Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, And Little Red Riding Hood. Male role models include a range of active characteristics: adventurous Jack the Giant Killer; resourceful Puss in Boots, the underestimated third son who makes the princess laugh; and the gallant knight who rides up the glass mountain.*

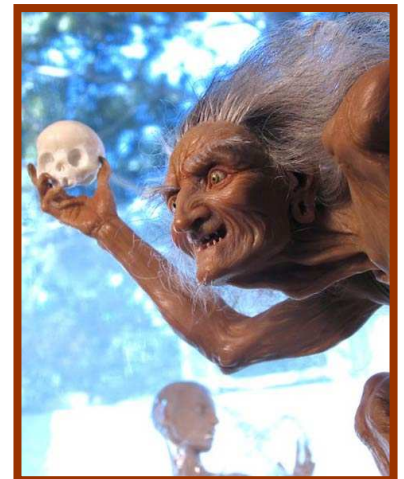
*Those tales were written down in a time when the social mores insisted on silent, passive women.*

*Examination of the female protagonists represented in (these) anthologies showed that many of the women were negative characters; a nagging mother-in-law who makes life intolerable even for the devil, a woman who personifies the misery in the world; or women who allow themselves to be mutilated by loved ones. (Ragan, 1998, p. xxii)*

### **The Shadow Destroyer: Hags and Harridans:**

*Possessed by the archetype the shadow displays self destructiveness or destruction of others (Pearson, 1991, p.146).*

*Now the Baba Yaga was a very fearsome creature. She travelled, not in a chariot, but in a cauldron shaped like a mortar which flew along all by itself. She rowed this vehicle with an oar shaped like a pestle, and all the while she swept out the tracks of where she had been with a broom made from the hair of a person long dead. And the cauldron flew through the sky with Baba Yaga's own greasy hair flying out behind. Her long chin curled up and her long nose curved down and they met in the middle. She had a tiny white goatee and warts on her skin from her trade in toads. Her brown fingernails were thick and ridged like roofs and so curled she could not make a fist.*



*Even more strange was Baba Yaga's house. It sat atop huge scaly yellow chicken legs, and walked about all by itself and sometimes twirled round and round like an esoteric dancer. The bolts on the doors and shutters were made of human fingers and toes, and the lock on the door was a snout with many pointed teeth. (Estes, 1992, p.72)*

The story of Baba Yaga and Vasalisa the heroine of the tale which includes this description, involves an ineffectual male who fails to notice that his new wife and her children are cruelly mistreating his beloved daughter Vasalisa, the beautiful, tender heroine. There is also a 'rodent' like stepmother and two daughters, and an unbelievably ugly hag, Baba Yaga, who assists the brave heroine by providing the fire she asked for when sent out by the other women, in the hope the hag will kill and eat her. However she also provides the means to be rid of the cruel step-family as the fire Vasalisa carries back to the house turns on them.

The clever, strong women in such fairy tales are almost always described as hags, witches, jealous stepsisters or deranged stepmothers, while the heroines are good, obedient, meek, submissive to authority and naturally inferior to the heroes. Married off at the drop of a hat to a murderous king with whom they unaccountably fall in love, they are locked in a room and forced to perform a feminine task like spinning straw into gold, or else face death. Or they are enchanted in some heartless fashion, victims it seems, time after time, yet always so good and so beautiful, winning out in the end while the hag is burned or beheaded or otherwise gruesomely disposed of.

Accepting that there is a need for a positive role model for girls through storytelling, what, nevertheless, of the hag, the witch, the evil mother, the mean sister? What part does she really have to play in the story of women? Is she merely a figment of the male imagination, the butt of the sexist joke, a distortion of women in order for men to dominate and ridicule them, and in order to maintain power and control. Or is there a shadow in those figures that women all know, yet fear to name and to own? Is the hag part of the feminine, and are women capable of violence, cruelty, coldness and hardness of heart?

### **Are women violent?**

According to Erin Pizzey (1982), one of the first advocates for battered women, and who in 1971 had opened, in Chiswick, what she describes as the first battered women's hostel; there are two types of women who endure domestic violence. There are the truly battered who will leave a violent relationship if they have the help and support to do so. The other category she calls violence prone, and she believes they are addicted to the violence, having being desensitised to pain (usually in childhood) then learning to find their identity and their pleasure within it. These women may be family terrorists (Pizzey 1992) who behave vindictively and destructively within the family.

My history inclines me towards guilt and to believing that others know best very easily, and I began to struggle. Did this mean that during my marriage I was a 'family terrorist' the term for the phenomenon of a bullying wife and mother, who provoked violence for some emotional end of my own? Was it perhaps the case that I had been addicted to violence and in fact thrived on it, participating in it because it fulfilled some need? Was everything that happened to me my own fault? After all I am writing as the daughter of someone who was a possible 'family terrorist'; who bullied myself and my brother; who was sharp tongued enough to fall out with most people she knew at some time in their relationship; and who probably provoked my father's anger, something I can recognise only now after therapy and upon reflection.

This has become a highly charged political subject with some researchers suggesting that violence in intimate partnerships is symmetrical in terms of gender. There are many studies which have led to a clear theoretical divide between a **gender-neutral** conceptualisation of the issue, put forward by sociologists, family violence researchers and men's activists, and a **gendered approach** still held to by feminist researchers and women activists.

*Recently, some family violence researchers, sociologists, and men's activists have challenged feminist claims that women are the primary victims of intimate partner violence; citing numerous studies that suggest men are frequently victims of violence by their female intimate partners and arguing that, because of symmetrical prevalence rates found in numerous studies, violence occurring within intimate relationships represents 'mutual combat' and should be conceptualised as gender neutral. (Nixon 2007, p.1 )*

On the other hand Belknap & Melton (2005) point out:

*Large random, and national or community samples studies using the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) a questionnaire that asks about recent use of specific tactics by an intimate partner against the respondent to measure IPA (intimate partner abuse) tend to conclude gender symmetry: that men and women are equally likely to be both perpetrators and victims of IPA. Despite these findings, other researchers (as well as most shelter workers) continue to maintain that there is not gender symmetry in IPA. These other studies are more likely to employ samples from shelters, hospitals, and police reports and report that as many as 90-90% of IPA involves a male perpetrator against his female partner or ex partner.<sup>9</sup>*

A heated debate has erupted amongst researchers, policy makers and community activists (Nixon, 2007, p. 1), centering on the rate of women's use of violence, and the degree of harm inflicted by women, as those studying violence against women argue that issues of meaning, context and consequences should be taken into account.

*a respondent who reports he or she has ever, 'pushed,' 'grabbed,' 'shoved,' 'slapped,' or 'hit or tried to hit' another person is regarded as a perpetrator of IPA (Dobash et al., 1992) This may include only one instance not taken in context. Thus when victims resist in any way, including defending themselves or their children, they will mistakenly be portrayed as intimate partner abusers. (Belknap & Melton, 2005, p.3)*

Understanding and including the impacts of nonphysical abuse such as fatal threats, threats of violence to children, over custody, or withholding money, make it more possible to address the nuances of IPA (p.2). Taking this, and other arguments surrounding the collection of data<sup>10</sup>, into consideration, Belknap and Melton believe that on the basis of existing research approximately 5% of IPA cases are female-perpetrated (p. 7). They do not accept that violence against women is gender-neutral.

### **Men as victims**

Pizzey, on the other hand, was pointing out by 1977 in a report to the DHSS that possibly 60% of the women she dealt with were themselves violent (Pizzey, 1982, p. 20). In fact she opened a hostel for male victims of domestic violence, but it soon closed for lack of support and funding (p.142).

Pizzey's tone is extremely forceful:

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.VAWnet.com>

<sup>10</sup> Appendix 2 contains more details of these discussions on the use of the Conflict Tactics Scale.

*We have had thousands of international studies about why men are violent but there is very little about why or how women are violent. There seems to be a veil of silence over the huge figures of violence expressed by women...*

As she continues she goes so far as to say:

*A gigantic hoax has been perpetrated and unsubstantiated statistics have been produce to feed damaging and disastrous political ideology.*  
(Pizzey, 2005, p. 2),

Pizzey had been someone I admired, so I found the whole narrative surrounding women, men and violence was changing before my eyes. I had already had to drastically alter my view about women's role in society, away from the traditional Christian position of subservience and inferiority, and here was a totally new and contradictory concept to deal with.

One comprehensive paper amongst the material I accessed, entitled '*The Gender Paradigm in Domestic Violence Research and Theory Part 1- The conflict between theory and data*' by Dutton & Nicholls of the University of Colombia, (2005) claims that there is in place a 'feminist paradigm' which insists that men are culturally encouraged to be violent, and are using physical force to enforce dominance (p.682).

According to Dutton & Nicholls, though the Straus Conflict Tactics Scale, which was introduced to bring some commonality to the Domestic Violence studies, has been attacked by feminists because the surveys do not take into account the context in which the violence admitted to was deployed, other studies have consistently found that female violence rates are as high as, or higher than male violence rates (p.685). Dutton & Nicholls also dispute the idea that the issue is self defence, and state that many violent women report using violence repeatedly, use it against non-violent partners, and use it for reasons other than self defence (p.689). Figures show, Dutton & Nicholls claim, that when men are injured, female perpetrators are arrested only 60.2% of the time, compared to 91.1% in the reverse situation (p.692). Furthermore, studies contest the view that women's aggression against men is less likely than male aggression against female partners to result in serious physical or psychological harm (p. 697) and also that women overreact to objective threats, (Brown 2004) whereas men probably under-react. (p.700)



According to Dutton & Nicholls, the feminist canon that male violence will escalate if unchecked appears to have no empirical support. Other studies indicate some de-escalation of violence over time (p. 703), and appear to show that the patriarchal terrorist accounts for only 3% of domestic violence per year (p.705).

*How can male violence still be depicted as being in pursuit of power and control when female violence is also frequent, and according to the women themselves not defensive? The answer of course is that feminists still view males as having power, whereas Coleman and Straus (1986) showed male dominant couples were only 9.4% of US families. In addition, the new generation of men and women may not have grown up with nor hold to feminist stereotypes of male dominance and this generation is the most female violent in the studies presented. (Dutton & Nicholls 2005, p. 700)*

Pearson (1997) comments:

*the dynamic of domestic violence is not analogous to two differently weighted boxers in a ring. There are relational strategies and psychological issues at work in an intimate relationship that negate the fact of physical strength. At the heart of the matter lies human will. Which partner - by dint of temperament, personality, life history - has the will to harm the other? (p.117)*

To start with I found myself completely unable to work out the facts from the prejudice; this was so far removed from anything I had come across before. The figures from Dutton and Nicholls (2005) initially seemed so extreme as to be ludicrous to me, however, I felt constrained to look at this very seriously. The evidence is apparently there.

Though I found these contradictory viewpoints about male/female violence confusing, and in fact threatening, because it turned my world view upside down, I kept returning to my experience to measure what was said. I had experienced in my mother what Pizzey (1992) calls a family terrorist who ruled and controlled the family and who used emotional and physical violence if only in the form of constant smacking. My father used to hit us too as a matter of course. Though less frequent, it was more unpleasant. (He was never violent to my mother, apart from once throwing a pan across the room.) I also subsequently experienced male bullying and violence in my marriage which I did not passively accept. I had therefore experienced both female and male violence.

## Myths and monsters

It was becoming clearer to me as I conducted this research that women are as capable of violence as men for a number of reasons, which include self defence, provocation, background, being a bully, and also apparently, sadistic pleasure. One might say, not why shouldn't they, but at least why wouldn't they be? Women are human. Patricia Pearson (1997) claims that women need to be judged equally as adults and the facts about violent women faced up to rather than being trivialised.

*Perhaps above all, the denial of women's aggression profoundly undermines our attempt as a culture to understand violence, to trace its causes and to quell them (p.243).*

Similarly, in 'Women Who Kill', Morrissey (2003) recognises that women need to be judged responsible for their actions. Yet she contends that society has narratives for women that do not allow for the use of force even in self defence unless life is threatened, or indeed do not allow violence of any sort. On the other hand narratives about men include violence as a given on a continuum. If men are violent no one is surprised; it is to some extent expected. She cites the case of Paul Bernardo in Australia, who along with his wife, raped and murdered two girls in their early teens, dismembering one of them. He also drugged and raped his wife's younger sister, who subsequently died due to the drugs. The reports in the Australian newspapers at the time described him as:

*One of us, a perfectly logical product of the modern age, self-absorbed ... needy... demanding of immediate gratification. (Blatchford, 16.8.95 cited in Morrissey 2003, p.148)*

And:

*...not a freak from outer space... (but) a product of this culture, conditioned in the shadowy underworld of porn. (Steed 2.9.95 cited ibid, p.148)*

His wife on the other hand was described as impossible to understand because:

*Women aren't supposed to do these things. (Mandel 2.7.95, cited ibid, p.146)*

A man who defends himself may go too far, but if he does simply defend himself without damaging the other he does not, *per se* become 'a violent man'. So how is it that the term violent is used when referring to women's self defence? There are

arguably few who would not find it reasonable to use some form of physical response to defend themselves.

This split view of women is a return of Snow White versus the Wicked Queen, even with feminist input, so that while society 'allows' men to be violent, it has no intention of 'allowing' women to be so. While in no way wanting to accept that violence by males or females is to be condoned in any way at all, I found it interesting that there was this difference in value judgement between women and men. Belknap quotes Faith on this(1993, p.1):

*The unruly woman is the undisciplined woman. She is renegade from the disciplinary practices which would mould her as a gendered being. She is the defiant woman who rejects authority which would subjugate her and render her docile. She is the offensive woman who acts in her own interests. She is the unmanageable woman who claims her own body, the whore, the wanton woman, the wild woman out of control. She is the woman who cannot be silenced. She is a rebel. She is trouble.* (cited in Belknap, 2001, p. 24)

Edwin Schur (1984) notes the tendency to label women, but states:

*the persisting inclination to label women deviant is, quite simply, a deplorable fact of social life. It must be faced up to, if it is to be eliminated.* (p. 235)

Schur applies this deviance labelling of women to numerous aspects of women's lives. On female offending he points out that:

*men have been given the power to control labelling: it has usually been men who have been in a position to define situations that might occasion the use of deviance labels.* (p. 237)

As Leyton states:

*My interpretation of our civilization tentatively concludes that men are reared to misanthropy, the hatred of people, not just misogyny, the hatred of women. Men are socialized to strive to dominate and humiliate all others; and to abuse any social group which, in refusing to remain subservient, poses a threat to their position – be it Asian immigrants, black sharecroppers, or university women.* (Leyton, 1991, p.232)

Consequently, as well as recognising that some women may be violent I also believe, however, that there is a virtual monopoly of men's use of violence in all social contexts (Dobash *et al.* 1992, 72), that women have more to fear from men, than vice versa. Men's use of violence against women in terms of rape, sexual harassment, prostitution and pimping, actions against women in wars, murders of women outside a relationship, and the status of women within marriage, law and religion throughout the world, leaves little doubt: I do believe it is possible to hold

the two views in paradox women can be violent, that there are women who terrorise or bully their families, yet violence against women has a strongly gendered element.

One extremely difficult aspect for me to comprehend is how women still view *themselves* as a part of society, how they allow themselves to be treated, especially young women. Despite waves of feminism over decades, a recent Home Office study found that 36% of people believed that women were responsible if they were sexually assaulted. Young women still submit to violent relationships with their partners from as young as 13 or 14 and disproportionately experience teenage relationship abuse.<sup>11</sup>

***I have experience of this, some drawn from tales of my daughters' friends at school. In addition one of my own daughters (despite my best efforts and the example, perhaps because of the example she had in her own life of the damage a violent relationship can inflict) continued to see someone who, on the way home from a night out, lashed out with no warning and gave her a black eye and a split lip. Though she did press charges she did not end the relationship for some time, finding reasons to excuse the incident.***

### **Emotional or social construct?**

I am clear, therefore, that male dominance and male attitudes need to be challenged. I recognise the importance of changes to systems rather than only dealing with symptoms. It was the reason I wanted to look at the question of child abuse. However the NSPCC report '*Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom*' (Cawson, Wattam, Brooker & Kelly, 2000) estimated that:

21 per cent of children suffered severe or intermediate physical abuse by a parent or carer.

15 percent of children were physically neglected with a severe or intermediate absence of care and 17 percent with serious or intermediate absence of supervision.

16 per cent of children (21 percent girls, 11 per cent boys) were sexually abused.

6 percent of children ( 8 per cent girls, 4 percent boys) suffered from emotional maltreatment.

26 percent of children witnessed domestic violence [a form of emotional abuse]. This was constant or frequent for 5 per cent.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/teen-relationship-abuse/teen-abuse-teachers-guide> retrieved March, 2011

(Summary of facts cited in Bradshaw and Mayhew, 2005, p. 182)

From this it can be seen that men can be severely emotionally damaged as children, since neglect and abuse of all kinds, including witnessing abuse are known to be causes of damage (Dutton, 1999). My own experience demonstrates that if the emotional damage is great enough, it may well not be enough to alter political, traditional, cultural or any other views in order to help men or women believe that violence is wrong. Knowing something is wrong does not prevent it happening in enough cases. I hated violence, and it was against everything in which I believed. I believed my behaviour was wrong but I was unable to stop it before undergoing therapy. Therapeutic, as well as behavioural interventions may be required before those views can be fully internalized and behaviour changed. That is just as likely to be true of men many of whom have histories of bullying and abuse, as of women.

It seems clear from the literature that there is now much more of an acceptance by both sides of the discussion, of the fact that both women and men are capable of perpetrating violence (Belknap & Melton, 2005, Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly, 2007, Das Gupta, 2001, Strauss, 1986, Dutton & Nicholls, 2005, Nixon, 2007).

So the argument continues, unresolved. It will no doubt continue for a very long time. If violence is to be reduced it seems important that that this can be understood without resorting to inflammatory and biased language and entrenched positions. This may be more of a difficulty than it sounds, judging by some of the debate. It surely needs more than discussion. It needs women and men to work together to bring about both political and individual change, and to address the way that child abuse continues to damage children, who may then become violent adults. It needs a new way of being, perhaps. Is such a thing possible?

As for me, I hope I am right in believing that I should start learning to trust myself rather than taking on board the worst possible judgements. Throughout my life, through my relationship with my mother, I have taken notice of the opinions of others as a greater authority than myself, and never been able to trust my own. Now I am able to think that, though far from perfect, I was not a terrorist in my marriage. Though I did not leave, it was not because I enjoyed the violence at any level, though there may have been an element of feeling that I deserved it. I

believe it was more that I was used to being hit, pushed around and controlled, and to being generally submissive. Also the religious element meant that I felt it was wrong not to forgive, or to leave a marriage.

The violence I experienced was not frequent, or serious enough, to be defined by Dobash and Dobash (1995) as battering. Nor was my husband a patriarchal terrorist (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005, p.704) in the physical sense. I was not beaten and injured repeatedly, the violence was spasmodic and I never needed treatment for injuries. However Holtzworth-Munroe (2000) found in her study into the typology of violent males that though it is tempting to believe that low levels of marital aggression do not lead to particularly pernicious outcomes, that in fact this is not the case, and the issue needs more attention (Holtzworth-Munroe, 2000, p. 142). P. was a bully who used his hands to achieve what he wanted. I believe he was both culturally inclined to view women as property, and damaged emotionally.

I still wish that I had not retaliated in the face of my husband's violence. I will never know whether that escalated his violence. Neither do I know how much worse it might have been if I had not. I can see that the issue of victimhood is not as clear as I had thought. My use of violence was a learned response to one specific situation, with one particular person. Why did I learn to do that when so many do not?

Yet in my discussion of all these violent partnerships one set of voices has been silent; the voices of the children.

**ACT TWO**  
**THE TWELVE HEADS OF THE DRAGON ARE THE SHADOWS**  
**Shadow Play**

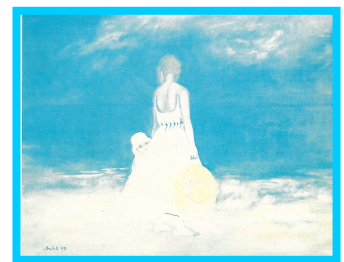


## **Scene 1: The Mother**

When I started my research for this thesis it was, I suppose, an attempt to discover why I had become violent to the degree that I had. I had other stated aims too, as I wanted to understand why abuse continued to happen to children, but I surely felt something more would emerge for me personally. Not to absolve me but to make sense, to find meaning in what I felt was a shameful story.

### **The CHILD v the child. The Shadow Caregiver tells her tale:**

*Little healthy caregiving happens when the Innocent and/or the Orphan are too damaged for the individual to begin expressing the more adult ego-oriented archetypes... [she] may become emotionally or physically abusive out of frustration or lacking the necessary caregiving skills. (Pearson 1991, p.111)*



***When my first son was born, I forgot to wonder what gender he was, and was startled that this should be the case. I had been kind of hoping for a girl. I was just so delighted that our child was here at last. I looked into his face and thought, with surprise "I don't recognise you." I think I had somehow expected that I should.***

***I recall standing with him in my arms in the Nursery at the Maternity Hospital, around dawn on a frosty morning, looking out of the window at the Christmas tree in the grounds, and knowing that this child would be OK, he would turn out well. I am thankful for that.***

***After a few days I became ill, and according to the doctor, should have stopped feeding him myself, but I couldn't. I loved him and loved feeding him. Despite the illness I was blissfully happy. I had longed for a child, and he was perfect. He was a beautiful child. He always liked to be in touch. He would sit in his bouncing chair near me and his feet would reach out to me. He had laughing brown eyes, and as the months went on I noticed that he looked like photographs of me when I was that age, in fact almost identical. I seem to recall that this intrigued me. I have said since that I wasn't sure if he was him or me. I think something began to happen to my sense of self.***

***A. was extremely active and could climb out of his cot at thirteen months. He used to come into our room and prise open my eyes so that I would wake up. I remember how he and I laughed when I took him out in his pram when the rain was simply bucketing down. He was the kind of baby that people would smile at as I pushed him along in his push-chair. The first year was idyllic, and at the time I wrote:***



*Can I just tell you  
how happy you have made me,  
we've been together now for a year  
it's as if it has always been,  
you belong so perfectly.  
Each day brings us closer,  
Like the day you laughed  
at my hiccups  
till we both sat on the floor,  
And laughed till we cried.  
And yesterday as I dozed  
And woke to find you  
head on one side-watching me  
quietly.  
It is too much to hope the idyll  
will last forever-  
One day when I irritate you,  
When you long to get away  
considering me past it,  
I hope you will find this  
And something of our oneness  
in long forgotten years will echo  
in your mind.  
How I love you. (Ashley, 1979)*

*My Mother told me once that when I was two years old, she decided it was either me or her; my will against hers. She 'had to break my spirit' in order to survive herself. This was not what I ever wanted for my child. When A. was born I was suddenly aware of all that could happen to him, afraid to cross the road and risk something coming round the corner and ploughing into the pram, I had 'flash-forwards' not 'flash-backs' about it. I so wanted to be a good parent, to give him a secure and happy childhood. I do not want therefore to have to continue to write this part. It makes me weep that there is a different story to follow. The idyll did not last. How is that possible? Writing this now brings back all that love and delight. I hope he will know in his spirit that he was a truly gorgeous, loveable child, and there was nothing wrong with him.*

*The violence and general rejection that had started in my relationship with P. left me very depressed, along with, I think, some post natal depression, and I became helpless and hostile towards A. as he developed into an extremely self reliant toddler. Until he was over a year old we had no difficulties between us that I recall, and I loved him wholeheartedly, but as he became mobile I felt less and less able to control him and became depressed, stressed and aggressive with him.*

*My mother used to be very cruel verbally; she told me I was hateful, and that she wished I had never been born. I was determined I would never say anything that would kill A.'s spirit that way. I read books on raising children because I wanted to do it right. The trouble was they filled me with despair, I couldn't organise them in my mind into a way to deal with my own little bundle of mischief. I felt that according to them I had to*

*teach him so much about how to be. It was all down to me, he was clay for me to mould, an empty vessel to be filled, and P. was away so much. One childcare book put it in terms of a blueprint for a house. Chapters were entitled Mapping out a Strategy, Determining the Floor Plan, Bringing Visions to Reality. It worried and overwhelmed me. The books advocated physical punishment and of course I had been brought up that way. At no time did it occur to me that it was wrong to hit a child; I knew that it was what you had to do. We were even hit at school, and though I hated it there and at home, it would be because I felt it was unjustified on a particular occasion, not that it was wrong in itself. It was in the circles I knew and lived in, an absolute truth that children needed to be smacked to teach them right from wrong. P. had been brought up that way too. My book told me that some secularists were confused when they said smacking was ineffective, but it was the Scriptural way and therefore right. My own upbringing made me blindly obedient.*

*So we smacked A. to teach him how to be a good person!*

*In the midst of this A. grew up into the little boy who always came to tell me when he had done something he knew he shouldn't have. He was constantly running away from me, laughing back over his shoulder, and he was intensely curious. He would take apart anything he could get his hands on and usually broke it in the process. He began to reach the age where he needed to be himself, and I was terrified that he would not do things 'properly'. At the time I saw no connection between my general depressions, and what was happening with A. and me. In fact I felt tired rather than actively depressed. I suppose it happened gradually, but as I would tell him off for something he had done or that I thought was wrong I felt there was no hope of reaching him and I began to lose control.*

*I can see now that losing control is entirely about oneself. At the time it began to roar up inside me and I responded to it, it happened so fast. As time went on I identified a complete desire to obliterate him when this happened; I could see it in my mind's eye. Maybe this was enough to at least restrain the storm of anger that would sweep over him from me. Then I would be angry at myself that it had happened. That made me angrier and nastier. It was usually verbal, but violent, and hate-filled. I would smack him and once I kicked and even bit him. Often it would happen because he hurt me, perhaps by bringing his head up under my chin or something similar.*

*One day, after I had stayed up all night decorating my husband's office as a surprise and he had railed at me for being selfish, A. came into the room behind me as I sat on the floor and hit me hard on the back of the neck as he had seen someone do on television. I grabbed him and threw him across the room. He remembers this incident, though apparently no others. His father and I were at loggerheads at the time, and I remember feeling that they were ganging up on me. I walked out of the house and for a while I considered not returning.*

*I always felt so bad about my anger and was determined it should not happen again, like P. did with me, but it always did, over and over. I could*

*not understand how I had turned into such a person, and I suppose I tried to behave as though it wasn't really me, that it was just a one off, every time.*

*I once mentioned something about it to P. and he said 'How could you?' I did not know, I did not want to do it. I was so ashamed, and the thought of having to tell anyone was awful, and in any case who did one tell? It was like being two people, one was a truly caring mother who wanted to make childhood a good experience, and another was a complete witch who seemed to want to wipe out her child. As time went on I began to experience some feelings of dislike for A., not just the flashes of anger. He became more and more of a problem, waking dozens of times a night and generally being all over the place. Eventually we discovered that he was allergic to Tartrazine, the orange colouring in squash. Unfortunately it had helped to tip the balance against him, so that I suppose I could feel less guilt over my rage by seeing him as not likeable and unmanageable.*

*At one point two people from the mother & toddler group I had started, came to tell me that I did not discipline A. enough and that he was terrorising the other children. Such irony, and it was not true of him anyway, as I discovered over the years as other 'terrible twos' burst on the scene, especially boys. But at the time I felt so alone and humiliated. On the one hand I defended him and grieved for him; on the other I guess I blamed him.*

*I had no idea what to do with all this feeling surging about inside me. I thought I just had to work harder at being a better person. I used to try and see life from A.'s point of view and hope it would help me not to get angry. But in fact I was angry all the time, the only time I wasn't was when I stuffed it down under a cloak of depression. As I struggled to come to terms with what was happening between A. and me, it was as though I had stepped into someone else's life. One way of handling it was to make it the way to be, try and feel justified in acting that way. To be justified in being angry. Perhaps my helplessness was also a way of doing that, but I did genuinely feel powerless. Looking back now, I can clearly see cracks appearing even before this: depression, suspicion, defensiveness, wanting to blot out life, anger and resentment, which I put down to dealing badly with early mornings! I would take handfuls of tranquilisers that had been returned to the surgery where I worked. I hated myself most of all. This too, I buried under depression, but did not truly recognise. When I was around twenty years old I had often wanted to wipe myself out though I had never done anything about it. I just wanted to go to sleep and not have to live with me anymore. Now I began to experience strong feelings about wanting to die, and very negative feelings about myself for obvious reasons. I still had the feelings of being watched and judged by people who were not actually there. I just struggled on endlessly, trying as I had when young to get it right, and failing.*

*This was all in parallel with times of normal enough activity and life, reading to him, trying to find things he would enjoy, but also times when*

***I did try to blot myself out, which was probably more to the point; I was trying to get rid of the bad child I had been. One night P. and I were arguing again about my lack of willingness to be available to him when and how he wanted, probably by wanting to go to bed while he was staying up to watch a football match. The argument developed into me taking some pills and going to bed anyway. Then, when he started a fight, I put my hand through a window. Later he told people that I had taken an overdose, and began to make sure people knew I had a problem.***

***We had been married five years by then and I was at the end of my tether. I was cracking up with my son, who was bearing the brunt for how I felt about myself. I hated mistreating him, and I hated myself, especially for not being able to control it. I was depressed and constantly exhausted. I was not managing my son, and I was not being a 'proper' wife. I wanted to know what was wrong with me. I began to need to talk to someone about how I was feeling.***

## **Scene 2**                      **Coming to Counselling**

***Now in this new and so unexpected situation with my son I was becoming quite frightened, and began to get more and more depressed. Spending days on my own, struggling to deal with responses to him, there seemed to be no place to go. I would try to persuade myself for long periods that things were working out. I can see now the pride and shame involved as well. People's opinions were important. I had spent my entire life trying to be good enough; how could I admit to something so completely unacceptable? How had I turned into this monstrous creature?***

***It became apparent the church's minister was interested in counselling so, after some considerable time, I tried to talk with him. It took a while before I was able to talk to him about what truly concerned me, and at first I just told him about the depression. When I first talked to him we began, through Transactional Analysis (TA) to look at the scripts I had developed as a child.***

### **Transactional Analysis 1. Decisions and scripts**

TA proposes that life is based on decisions made in childhood, forming a life plan. These decisions are made by each individual in their own way, to situations, experiences and behaviours, but are made, as a very young child thinks, in concrete rather than rational terms. Most decisions are repressed, but in adulthood they are played out in scripts, outside of awareness. Earlier decisions are pre-verbal, and may be sweeping decisions for life about all relationships, based on an aspect of the child's relationship, usually with a parent. The techniques in TA are about bringing these decisions to light, by recognising feelings, responses and behaviour patterns.

***This obviously related to my mother in many ways. I began to gain some understanding about myself and my relationship to her, but it didn't really help.***

***It took some considerable time before any progress was made, because there was no framework to the counselling. His pattern of counselling was that there was never a next appointment. After all the effort involved in plucking up the courage to ask, the whole process had to be repeated, as though after prayer it should really have been sorted. I felt that going back was a sign that I was just seeking attention. Looking back that is ludicrous, when you have a suicidal woman whose husband is violent, and who has admitted to feelings of violence towards a young child. Months would go by before I could get myself together to ask. But it was all I knew, all I had, and finally one way or another I began to be heard, and was able to get an agreement to meet again. This would mean that I could no longer live in denial about my childhood or my marriage.***

I recognise this denial now as the Innocent (Pearson, 1991), who needed to sacrifice her illusions, and face some realities.

### **The Innocent's sacrifice:**

*The journey requires a great paradox. At one level, we must never let go of our dreams and ideals, and every hero remains always an Innocent. But at the same time we need to be willing to sacrifice our illusions, gladly and daily, so that we may grow and learn.*  
(Pearson, 1991, p. 80)



***This experience of being counselled began with difficulty. Far from believing I had been wronged in any way, it was a long time before I felt it was acceptable to talk about myself. I found it so hard to believe that anyone would want to listen to me. Initially I could barely express myself because I was certain there would be judgement, not only of what I had done, but of who I was and of what I felt. I was sure that I would be found out to be a fake, truly unworthy of anyone's care. Everything I did say was self condemnatory, I was constantly blaming myself, and entirely convinced of my ineptitude, irrationality and stupidity, and could not verbalise my feelings. Indeed, initially, I was not aware I had any feelings to speak of. I even fought the concepts of accepting my emotions and of regarding myself with any sympathy at all.***

***Gradually however, I found it a little easier. Eventually I began to feel that I could trust the counsellor. At first I was startled, very suspicious and then overwhelmed by his acceptance and lack of judgement. It did not sit well with the years of judgement I had experienced, which I believed to be entirely right and Christian. That had been my comfort zone.***

***Eventually I was able to tell him about how I was finding myself losing my temper with my son. Slowly, because by then I had a baby daughter too, I began to find the emotional pain of my childhood much closer to the surface as I experienced her vulnerability. I began at last to feel the pain that had been repressed for so long.***

At this stage another child appeared on the scene: my self, my Child. This too relates to the theory of Transactional Analysis.

## **2. Ego states**

Firstly then I had to take on the idea according to Transactional Analysis, that I had several patterns of behaviours and feelings - ego states, within my person. These conform to three large categories; the Parent, Adult and Child. The Parent is the learned behaviour which we absorb from watching and experiencing authority figures during childhood. The Adult is that part which deals with facts and

information, and objective logical reality. The Child retains the feelings, thoughts and behaviours from childhood and free, spontaneous Adult (Woollams & Brown, 1978, p.7).

***The therapy came to centre round my deep and dawning sense of violation, because underneath the pain that I began to experience I became aware of such rage. I had experienced sexual problems since seeing a film where a woman was set upon by a horde of men. I could not bear to be touched for a while after that; the first time P. came near me I recoiled and cried. I had in fact never much liked being touched, or being near people, but was pleased that everything had seemed fine with P. till that point.***

***Though at the time of the counselling I began to wonder whether sexual abuse had caused my problems I had no actual evidence of that. I had a very distinct memory of being in a car with a stranger, a man with glasses, seeing my mother with a policeman, and pointing this out to the stranger. My mother insisted later that no such incident took place, which left me confused but still convinced something had happened to me.***

***It seemed more important to deal with the emotions than to cast about trying to force some revelation or memory, so in the counselling sessions that is what we did. If I felt I had been abused then we would proceed on that basis without knowing how or who. Though it seemed strange it was extremely effective. No memory was produced, though I did begin to have some idea of who it might have been.***

***Alongside that the counsellor and I looked at my relationships as a child, and in fact, as time went on, I came to view my mother's treatment of me as abusive. There were covert sexual elements to her behaviour, but without a doubt it was mainly the emotional control that she exerted that produced such rage, and the physical response to the constant smacking. Initially I do not think I had enough clarity of thought, because of her mind games, which would have made it possible for me to accept what she had done to me. It took many years before it was possible to fully access my feelings about my mother. I had few feelings about my father, though I have tried to explore them, but I do recall that it was blows around the head from my husband, as from my father, that triggered the sense of needing to fight back for once, and not to 'take it' anymore. Both parents hit me, but my mother was a constant, unremitting presence. My father appeared as a force to be reckoned with comparatively rarely.***

***Eventually things had apparently settled down as they were pushed well under, and I got away from home. The way I had been taught to deal with things was to ask for forgiveness and try harder. So at one level, though believing myself always worthy of condemnation, I saw myself as someone who still tried to be a 'good' person. I had never knowingly chosen to be evil or cruel, it went against everything I thought I was and believed in. None of my children was ever left to cry. I always hugged and comforted them when they were hurt. One Christmas Eve I stayed up half the night to sew a Spiderman mask for A. I was committed to being a***

***good parent. I had ideals and ideas about bringing up children, which in no way included turning into a screaming harridan, and I certainly did not want to turn into my mother.***

### **The therapeutic relationship**

***Finally the power of the therapeutic relationship helped me relax into it. It was through this relationship that I tentatively made a start on changing my world view to accept the view that if I am OK, and others are OK, it meant I was entitled to have my basic needs met. That along with everyone else I was of worth, value and dignity.***

### **3. I'm OK and You're OK & Life Positions**

The basic assumption of Transactional Analysis philosophy is that all people are basically OK and deserve nurturing and positive strokes, simply because they exist. Decisions and scripts may leave people in different life positions other than I'm OK You're OK, however. These influence how a person feels, acts and relates to others. These additional states are;

- I'm not OK, You're OK, which is the depressive position. Those in this position may also demonstrate guilt, fear and distrust.
- I'm not OK, You're not OK, the futility position, believing that no-one is worthwhile.
- I'm OK, You're not OK, which is the paranoid position, demonstrating distrust and blaming.

(Stewart, 1989, Woollams & Brown, 1978)<sup>12</sup>

***As a young woman, working with some experienced church leaders. I had once been told that I had no rights at all. 'I have a right to the love of God' I replied. 'No, you do not' they responded. I felt as though I had been physically punched in the stomach that day and was in a pit of despair for some time. That was one safe place for me; that God loved me. I'm still not sure what they intended by it, but it served to reinforce my insecurity.***

***What I was now experiencing was a very different view, and hard to take. Initially I thought it was against what the Bible taught. I had no idea at the time, of the impact that it would come to have. This relationship aspect of the therapy, between the therapist and myself, was in itself profoundly important in the healing.***

***I felt that all I had ever needed was available to me through it, and it became the backbone of my life. I knew now that I had never experienced unconditional acceptance from anyone, with the exception of my grandfather. I longed to find this with my mother and with my***

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<sup>12</sup> Appendix 3 contains more details about some of the concepts in Transactional Analysis (p.v)



***husband but continued to be disappointed, never feeling that it was working.***

***This was a very intense time, almost like falling in love, when new discoveries could be made on a daily basis, when the awakening of my Child was filled with new emotions. There was a great deal of anger to be uncovered, acknowledged, expressed and understood, and also tears and joy. This was made possible by the knowledge that there was a person in the world who accepted me unconditionally; more than that he stood beside and defended the child I had been, who I was certain had never been accepted before.***

***For the first time in my life someone was listening, hearing what I was really saying, though it was not while I was speaking as an adult. In fact as adult I felt distinctly unheard because I could not express what I felt. I had no idea what I did feel. It was only when the Child was allowed to speak for herself that there was a breakthrough. Through the language and some of the conceptual thinking of Transactional Analysis I discovered how the Child felt.***

### **The language of the journey as I experienced it.**

Because I was initially so resistant to the idea of caring for myself, I needed things explaining to me. Though I came to learn much more about Transactional Analysis (Woollams & Brown, 1978; Stewart, 1989), this was the way I came to accept the ideas in the first instance. Before anything else I came to understand that everything I had ever experienced was stored within me, whether in my mind or my body. Somewhere it is retrievable (Woollams & Brown 1978, p.9). Even if it was not accessible to my conscious mind, my unconscious would be replaying it. Therefore, my responses to present situations may be rooted in past experiences. If I feel anger that seems out of proportion it may not just be anger in the present, but is hooking up with past hurts, slights and pain. Often it is possible to go on despite feeling this immense anger or pain, by bottling it up, but it will eventually leak or pour out. In fact, as I now knew, it had already been leaking without me knowing. So I might erupt into anger in the present because of the pain from an aspect of childhood, and that would slightly relieve it, for a time. Then the pressure would continue to build up again, and the pattern was repeated.

If I was able to get in touch with those feelings through talking with someone who would allow them to emerge without judgement, I should be free to learn what is 'the case', and reframe the memories. I could look at the question of whether it was right that as a child I needed to be physically slapped, hit and invaded? Was I a

wicked child? Is a child responsible for the things that the adult says they are? Do children have the motives which have been attributed to them?

#### 4. Unearthing feelings

Once the feelings are clarified, it is important to get in touch with them, and accept their power in the present, and once the scripts are discovered it is possible to reframe the experience that brought them about. The difficulty is that as adults the experiences that originally provoked the feelings have been repressed, and there is no longer any memory or awareness of them in the present. It is important to clarify those feelings which are driving current behaviour.

***What was happening to produce the rage and lashing out in the present was that all those emotions of rage and pain were being triggered and reinforced by experiences in the present. Later, much later, I recognised that it was largely triggered by my husband, who was now telling me the same things I had heard as a child, as well as hitting me, especially around the head.***

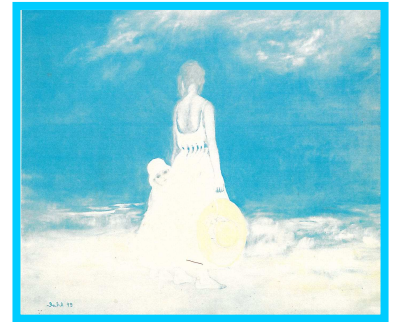
***For my Child, being defended and heard, and having my pain accepted was truly dynamic. If the response is silence, how do I know I am heard? It is not enough for the Child to be listened to. Things need reframing and this is what happened.***

#### The Orphan is seen AND heard:

***The way we worked on that concept was to identify the Child who had been damaged and 'adapted', in order to make a relationship with her. One birthday I received a card that made me weep, it was a picture of a child standing alone on the seashore. It spoke to me of the loneliness and the longing of my Child, and she suddenly became a very real part of me and not merely a concept. This I now interpret as the Orphan (Pearson, 1991) who I had been pushing away in denial; the wounded child, who needed to go through the pain of betrayal and emotional neglect and learn to accept help from others and find healing. I had to recognize I was a victim in order to deal with my denial, and face reality. Only in this way could I discover healing or transformation (Pearson, 1991, p.). I did not find it easy; I was sure I did not deserve to pity myself, even as the child I had been. A belief that our self is intrinsically wicked and working against what is good had set up a strong ethic of self rejection as being a good thing.***



***I later found another card in the same series which depicted a woman standing holding the child's hand. This connects with the healed Caregiver (Pearson, 1991); the Adult taking care of the wounded child. This idea became a very powerful and important image through the counselling, and I wrote a story linking the healed adult with the child she had been.<sup>13</sup> The whole point of the counselling was to bring the adult and child together in wholeness, not merely to indulge the child. The effects were dramatic and I began to grow and develop in a whole new way. I began to become more the person I wanted to be and my relationship with my son slowly improved. This turned out to be the beginnings of my pattern of working when after many years I undertook training and became a counsellor myself, the beginning of my interest in the hermeneutic task of the interpretation and reinterpretation of stories.***



Using the archetypes it is clear to me that the Orphan archetype would be facing her demons.

### **Voice of the Orphan**

*Learning to acknowledge the truth of one's plight and feel pain, abandonment, victimization and powerlessness, and loss of faith in people and institutions in authority (Pearson, 1991, p.90)*



Messages I received as a child:

***You are hateful and I wish you had never been born  
I love you but I don't like you  
You are a sinner  
God is watching and knows everything you think  
You are dishonest and deceitful  
You are a slut, a trollop,  
Your body is dirty  
You are like a sack of potatoes***

***Your thighs are big,  
You are greedy  
You look like Wild Nell ; you hair is always a mess, it is too thick.  
You are dangerous to your brother, therefore to men  
Put others first , yourself last  
Never say you want anything or like something.  
Always be polite, that means not having what you want, let everyone else go first.  
No one will be looking at you  
Everyone knows who you are and you had better be good***

<sup>13</sup> This can be found in Appendix 4, p.vii

***You need watching  
You should be seen and not heard  
Do not speak until spoken to  
You are too quiet, you look stupid  
You must not contradict, or answer back  
You are cheeky and too good at answering back,  
You must be smacked because you do bad things, and it hurts me more than you  
Don't forget whose house this is.  
You are completely lazy and slow  
You are too tentative –too powerful  
You can't do it, you are not strong, clever enough  
It is bad, to be praised, it will make you proud, others will think I'm boasting  
If you don't behave I will leave home***

There were some positive statements, though with injunctions:

***You are the only healthy one in the family- but you are weak because you were very ill when you were younger.  
Your eyes are pretty like Gigi, but don't make sheep's eyes***

These became scripts:

***I must not achieve anything  
I must not be important  
I should not exist; I might be allowed to exist if I'm good, get it right, look right, have right manners, speak properly, do everything I'm asked, am totally obedient.***

I was also taught that:

***I should not think, should not feel, should not be a child, but also should not grow up, be myself, belong or be important.***

***There are many conflicting messages. Though she encouraged me to dress like an adult, she undermined my attempts to be an individual and to choose a successful career in medicine, for example. She told me I was not strong enough, yet I was the only healthy one in the family. This was quite effective because it made me feel she cared at last, after years of feeling left out when my brother needed so much care. I should not achieve.***

***I came to understand that in Adult this left me looking to belong, needing security. I always had a sense of being not liked or wanted and experienced a strong wish to die at times, especially when I felt an outsider, because of the I should not exist script.***

***I was extremely anxious about expressing opinions, and even now am instantly 'obedient', though I resent it later. I had immense fear of abandonment, and was submissive overall. I could initially fight back***

*which only confirmed how bad I was, and I would always come round to agreeing this was so. At times I could be very powerfully assertive and articulate, but then I would suffer agonies during the night afterwards, feeling like a fool for having shown myself.*

*Without truly recognizing it I experienced a great deal of resentment against authority. I could be extremely passive, then suddenly aggressive, and was very concerned with what others would think, believing that people found me boring, too intense, stupid, strange. As a result I would feel 'They've lost interest, I've got to make it alright, placate, appease them'.*

*I didn't recognize for a long time that I was a perfectionist and like to control how good things are, to get them right, but it didn't work outside the family, because I couldn't tell anybody what to do to without being completely ingratiating.*

*I experienced great anxiety about getting things wrong, like table manners, and social behaviour. Certainly some of my helplessness with A. was probably that I feared him not doing things 'right'*

*I always felt that I was to blame for anyone experiencing anger, frustration, and even though this was not the case would try to make things right. I was quite fearful of strong people, avoiding them if possible.*

*I had big difficulty in creating boundaries, I would let anyone in, I couldn't say 'No'. I felt awkward, in the way, didn't know what to do, wanted to escape, had a very strong sense of others' boundaries and dare not intrude on them. I was always pointing out my failures, apologising for being there almost.*

*I wanted to be loved, and would 'give myself away' by being vulnerable enough to expose myself to judgement, in the name of honesty. I would refuse things I was offered and wanted, I would stand back and let others take over, though I was quite capable. I would make myself invisible and then dislike the fact. I felt frequently ignored, passed over and discounted. I would become perfectly patient and still and behave 'properly' and get ignored in shops etc. As a teenager someone asked my mother what I wanted as though I was retarded. I would appear to be ineffective, weak, useless and helpless. People appear to find me stupid, 'a big lump', as my mother used to say.*

*This would then make me become tongue tied, speak gibberish, and answer short, sharp obedient type answers. My vocabulary became limited at this time and I would feel in the way, unable to participate. Often I didn't really feel much in response to rudeness about me till days, months, sometimes years later. One day I might recall it of the blue; I might be taking a bath, or reading a book, and something in me would think for the first time. 'How dare they say that!' For instance, when I was sixteen I was called a 'farmer's yak' by a male nurse, I did not answer or object in any way.*

***This led to me being unconnected to my emotions, and unwilling to think situations through. I simply absorbed what people told me. I was not naturally reflexive at all. It seemed too dangerous, because it inevitably meant I would put myself in the wrong.***

### **Spirit of a Child**

During counselling I was able to access my sensations and feelings when I was a child. Of course I recognise that these were not constantly conscious feelings, but were what my 'spirit', my inner self received from my upbringing...

### **Orphan speaks from the darkness:**

*The Orphan's response is powerlessness, wish for rescue (Pearson 1991, p.82)*



***I am out in a storm. It is raining, torrential rain, with thunder, lightening and a howling wind. I am crouched alone, dirty and ragged. Voices and missiles are being hurled at me. It just goes on endlessly; howling wind and howling voices, battering me, telling me how bad I am, destroying me with words. (Ashley 1994)***

***As a child I loved it when there was a stormy night, as I lay in bed trying to get to sleep. I would fantasise that I was lost on the moors in the storm, and I had broken my leg. I waited there with the wind howling and the rain lashing down, for someone to rescue me. Eventually someone would come along, rescue me, pick me up and carry me to safety. He would stride across the dark moors with me in his arms and I would feel secure. He would take me to shelter, where there was a roaring fire, warmth and comfort. Then I could sleep.***

I imagine this fantasy was based on the story of the lost sheep from the Bible. I think it was the only way I could access my need to be rescued. Later, if my mother had had a go at me I would plot my route to France or somewhere where I could earn my keep fruit-picking. As a teenager I did once walk off into the night and slept in a field, or tried to, and once, when as an adult, I threatened to take off for London, my mother locked all the doors to prevent me. I was surprised because on the previous occasion there was no sign that she was in the least bit concerned. I felt that this meant she did care for me in her way. I am now, whatever her reasons, grateful I never took that route and ended up a runaway. I think I would have gone otherwise.

### **Parenting from *Child***

The rage I felt towards A, the rejection I experienced in relationships, the constant resentment and fear I was experiencing were not appropriate reactions to the circumstances in the present in my relationship with A, but I could not see what was happening. Looking back it was not too hard to see that in my relationship with my mother and father lay many such instances of unresolved pain. These were lurking in my subconscious, and being triggered when I experienced a similar feeling in the present. As an adult I had not been aware that this was the truth behind why I reacted to things the way I did.

Therefore, through counselling, it was important to identify the feelings that governed my behaviour, and to accept them as part of me, because they had not been unjustified at the time they happened. So began the process of recognising the feelings that were there, that they were understandable, and then how they were affecting my behaviour in the present, in order to release the present from the past emotions and scripts.

For instance from the injunction 'you should not exist' the script I had come to live by was that I am unfit to live, a script that might well have led to my suicide, as I have frequently responded to setbacks with a sometimes overwhelming desire to die. I knew that I had no choice in the matter of my birth and who I was born to, so I had no way of responding to the situation other than with helpless rage. That helplessness is still available to me. I can see the room, my mother and myself facing up to one another, I was about six or seven years old, and recall that feeling of total despair and injustice. I could not act upon it in any meaningful way, other than shouting back, and saying I hated her. It was possibly the beginning of my passive-aggression. Rage and pain locked in with nowhere to go. Being hit constantly even though it was not being beaten, also produced the same helpless rage, and served to humiliate and shame me.

Re-framing all this as an adult, I was able to see that it was wrong to tell a child such a thing. Therefore I needed to allow the Child to have the feelings, to mourn, and to learn, with difficulty to disconnect them from the present. I had already determined not to make those sorts of statements to my children, which indicated a degree of awareness, but not of their effect on my emotions. This made my

problems with anger towards A. all the more unreasonable. It was not an Adult decision to be enraged, but my Child was lashing out inappropriately in helpless rage, when feelings were triggered. Though in Adult I rejected many of my mother's methods, my Parent unconsciously took on the idea that children were dangerous and overpowering, and if emotions were triggered, all the Child's pain would be attached to it. I almost had a sense of that, looking back; an appalled knowledge that this reaction was far too great to be warranted by a little boy's naughtiness, but I could not stop it coming, it erupted.

### **I'm Not OK, You're OK**

Never before had I been aware of my deeply internalised view of human nature until I was prepared to grapple with the Transactional Analysis's concept of 'I'm OK, you're OK', which I resisted to start with. Understanding that I did not believe I was OK, while responding to others as if they were OK, helped me to see that I was in a depressive position. I needed to be able to believe that I was OK as well as believing it of others. This was extremely difficult, conceptually and intellectually, as well as emotionally. I had been taught at home and at church that none of us are OK, and in particular at home that I was most definitely not. Therefore even my view of others was not clear. Was it alright to believe that people, who are all sinners, are nevertheless OK? This took a major adjustment, as I learned to see that God believes we are OK, even when we make mistakes. Eventually I came to view the question of sin differently.

As I learned to distinguish the feelings of the Child and learn to respond in the present, I could, in theory, believe that 'I'm OK, You are OK', therefore children are OK, and deserve to be enabled to grow up to know that.

I began to go through a whole process of recognising attributions about myself, of accepting my anger and pain and the reason for them and giving to my inner child all the love and affirmation I had never felt before. It became possible to give a place to that Child who still resided in and, in fact, governed my emotions and therefore my behaviour. I had a strong sense of her presence and wanted to help her to grow up to become a whole, adult woman.



I would learn to feel a familiar unease, a reaction to a situation, and through focussing<sup>14</sup> on the layers of emotion that were happening inside, underscoring that feeling and what had triggered it in the present, I could find what was triggering my responses, and learn how to disconnect the past from the present. I could learn that there was anger from the present, see how to rationally respond to that, and gradually, having had the child's anger heard, leave the past behind.

In no way did all this new understanding excuse my behaviour towards my son, who was himself experiencing a painful childhood. It had been essential for me to nurture the Child who had been hurt, in order to at the same time phase out *her* behaviour, as *she* learned to see that *her* responses were not connected to the present situation. The point was to change the behaviour, and almost re-parent the Child so that my son could be parented by an adult in control of her emotions. At all times there had to be a recognition that this was not an exercise in making me feel better, or that from being bad I had become a good person, triumphing over my past. Rather it was in order to help me change my behaviour and my view of a little child of whom I was afraid and could only deal with by domination. It also helped with my view of, and relationship with, other children too.

### **A reflection**

None of this indicates in any way that I feel I have suffered more than many other people. The reverse is true; it is very difficult for me to look back and see that what I had thought was a normal enough childhood was nevertheless harmful; I was not starved or locked up. I had no injuries. Yet I became violent, and after counselling relating to my childhood that violence was dealt with. Yet I feel that this is the whole point of why I am writing, the political point to my personal story. Children who are raised in these ways are at risk, to themselves, and to others. They are hurt Innocents and Orphans, and their rage and hurt may be very powerfully felt if the circumstances are right. When I talk here of children I am talking of both male and female children, potentially damaged at the most crucial point of their lives. Not all victims of abuse and neglect ever become violent, but the fact remains some do.

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<sup>14</sup> Now I would understand this to be Gendlin's 'Focusing' but at the time I was not familiar with his work. (Gendlin, 1978)

My anger was now understood, but how did this childhood, not extremely violent, but with a mother who was undoubtedly a bully, result in the violence I displayed?

**ACT THREE**

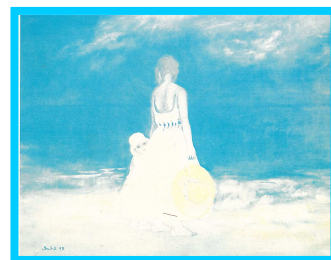
**THE SHADOW DRAGONS AND THEIR WRATH**

**The Road To Violence**



## **Scene 1; Wounded caregivers**

*Just as we are all wounded we are also raised by wounded parents at various stages on their own journey.*  
(Pearson, 1991, p.83)



The bullying adults I encountered in my parents and my husband were themselves raised with faulty learning experiences by their parents in turn, and it seems important to acknowledge this about them both, though it does not make their behaviour any easier to accept.

I felt it worthwhile, therefore, to explore the whole question of how bullies are created. Also in this section I shall look at how victims are created. I wished to investigate and understand the means by which being bullied as a child shaped my identity, as victim/ bully, and how in the course of this exploration I may have come to an understanding of my violence.

### **Generational grief**

***As a young woman my mother was very attractive, intelligent and articulate with a great deal of energy and a willingness to try her hand at lots of things. She loved nature and music and played the piano well. She liked decorating and changing the house round, and she was hospitable and charitable at times. Her passion was reading and she introduced me to the library as soon as I could read.***

***By no means a religious fanatic, she was nevertheless held by beliefs that pinched life and narrowed it down. She talked about her past quite a lot, and told me how though she was brought up to go to the Anglican church and sing in the choir, she was converted into the Brethren<sup>15</sup> Church in her twenties. This, I believe, coloured her behaviour for ever.***

***She adored her father, and disliked her mother who, through her influence, had also been converted to religion and became rather fanatical, embarrassing her in shops by asking people whether they were saved. My grandmother, who was a pretty though rather worry, whiny little woman with a great deal of personal power and no sense of humour,***

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<sup>15</sup> The Brethren church which is non denominational and conservative evangelical, started in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Some fellowships are closed to visitors attending communion services, and will not eat with others, belong to any organisation, or vote. They may discipline members by withdrawing from them, shunning or barring them. They have strict moral standards, do not drink, smoke or wear makeup and women must cover their heads in church. They have no ministers, no crosses, no adornment. (www.theexclusivebrethren.com)

*apparently bullied her husband and her daughter. The story goes that my Grandfather had been persuaded not to take up his university place but to stay with my grandmother, and became a plumber in the shipyards. They bickered a lot, though I imagine it was Granddad standing up to Grandma's shenanigans! Grandma also needed and sought attention. She was, I was told, jealous of me when I was little because Granddad smiled at me.*

*My mother told me she had a strong memory of sitting on a beach with her parents each walking off in different directions shouting 'you have her'. Her mother belittled her and, she told me, pulled her nose to 'make it grow'. She felt that her brother was the favourite although she was the one sent to a private convent school. She was a tomboy but good at deportment and English. I think she felt the nuns did not much approve of her.*

*She became a probationer in a Fever Hospital and qualified as a Registered Fever Nurse during the war years when she saw many children die of diseases like diphtheria and polio. She had then gone to Glasgow to undertake her training as a State Registered Nurse, but my grandmother contracted pneumonia and my mother was expected to return home to take care of her. Not long after starting back she became ill herself and had to take a break. In fact she never went back to complete her training and, because her health was not too good, found work as a nanny. This turned into her being general factotum after the cook left and was not replaced.*

*She wrote in a poem I found after her death that she did not consider she had any real talents, but she enjoyed the abilities she had and always 'stretched herself', continuing to learn throughout her life, and always keeping her mind active. I felt for her. Life had not always been easy for her.*

*Similarly, with my husband's upbringing; his mother did once say to me that she thought they may have been hard on him as a child. She herself had lost her mother when she was three years old. On the other hand P's sister told me that she and his younger brother thought he had received special treatment, been idolised because of his talent. Perhaps then it was the fact that their behaviour swung between violently authoritarian like the incident when his father broke his radio, and indulgently proud of his achievements in music, that he is so damaged (Miller, 1987, p. 214). He also told me of a time they had punished him by packing a suitcase, and telling him that next day he was going to the 'bad boys' home'. He spent the night in fear, and it was only as they were walking out of the door next morning that they apparently relented. Since my mother used a similar threat with me, even pointing out the remand home near the park, during a walk, I was very sympathetic. One of the things we had in common was our church background, and he would have received the same teaching about sinfulness as I did.*

## **Creating a Bully**

According to Peter Randall (1997), bullying, as opposed to impulsive aggression is:

*aggressive behaviour arising from the deliberate intent to cause physical or psychological distress to others. (p. 4)*

*[Such aggression] has a target who is to be harmed by a more powerful person, the bully, and behaviour that is intended to do the damage. (p.6)*

*Bullies are created, not born. They are the product of complex social processes which, through faulty learning, create an antisocial personality characterised by the aggressive manipulation of other people. In the main the adult bullies of today are ... the selectively bred products of their parents. (p. 73)*

Das Gupta (1995) suggests that children need appropriate responses from their carers in the early years, firm but fair inhibitions on their behaviour and warm and happy loving affection (p.101). While aggression is a normal part of the child's developmental process, it should be possible, if this is responded to well, for the child to learn to regulate acting out emotion, as their language and the possibility of verbally offloading distress, develop. In this way they can proceed by the age of three, to begin to express their aggression verbally instead of physically, and by the age of five can start to internalise rules and standards (Randall, 1997, p. 77). If language difficulties exist this is often closely linked with behavioural difficulties (Woodhead, 1995 p. 77). If parents are permissive about aggression, if there is a lack of supervision or if neglect is present (Randall, 1997, p.84), this is also a predictor of childhood aggression.

Some of the roots of bullying lie in these earlier years. For instance grabbing of toys is one of the earliest abuses of power as are biting, kicking, hair-pulling (Ibid, p.76). When responses are not appropriate and there is no sanction, and if aggressive behaviour is modelled or a child's behaviour is reinforced, then the normal socialisation process may not take place so effectively and maladaptive behaviours may present themselves (Woodhead, 1995, p.56).

A number of other risk factors include social background, marital relationship and maternal depression (Ibid, p. 57). Children are known to mirror their caregiver's

emotional behaviour, and rely on vocal and facial displays to guide their own. Maternal depression is known to impact on children's behaviour, and may also lead to quite abusive responses to a child who becomes demanding (Woodhead, 1995, p. 64). In addition, bullying children often have parents who believe that their children will learn skills by being given highly directive teaching and being told how to behave. The children are denied experimentation where they might find out about alternative solutions and the consequences of various sorts of behaviour. The mothers are often highly directive and confrontational, and some are inconsistent (Randall 1997, p.81).

***My life as a child was simply a barrage of correction, helped along with name calling and a lot of smacking. I could not call it beating. Nevertheless it was a constant feature and I used to flinch away when my mother moved her hand, for which she would then tell me off further. There were also threats that I would be sent away or that she would leave home. Ironically, I could complain to my mother about my father hitting us around the head. That was not considered safe by her.***

So was my authoritarian upbringing nothing more than the 1950s modus operandi, with religious overtones? I think there was something more.

***I was prodded, poked and smacked. This was coupled with constant teaching about 'self' being bad, not trustworthy, needing to be put last and not considered, name calling, accusation, attribution and put-downs. There were moral judgements on insignificant actions, value judgements on anything I did, and wanting to turn me inside out to the extent of flushing my bowels out.***

Later I became sure that the enemas were a form of sexual abuse (as does Alice Miller 1992, p.8) in that, though the motive may not have been sexual, my body was not my property but hers, and it was violated. I felt the message was 'Your body is not yours to control, its functions are all wrong, you are under scrutiny'. I was invaded, it hurt, and it was humiliating, all because I did not go to the toilet when she thought I should. Obviously it was my fault I did not have my bowels open. I was dirty, lazy and disgusting, and told so repeatedly.

***As well as feeling bombarded therefore, by accusations, suspicions, attributions and projections, I was invaded, exposed and maligned. I have no idea where my brother was on those dreadful occasions, I imagine he was around somewhere because I have a sense of public***

***humiliation. In fact I recall playing a solitary game where it was pointed out to everyone how depraved I was, and I was pilloried.***

In addition to harsh or directive parenting, parental attitudes towards a child, such as believing a child to be more difficult may cause the parenting style to be more aggressive and stress in the family is likely to increase the chance of this. Very aggressive parents often attribute negative motives to their child and criticise and blame them more readily for things than others might, demonstrating hostility and often using physical punishment (Randall, 1997; Woodhead, 1995). Physical punishment in itself is a model of behaviour to a child, who learns it as a successful way to relate.

As Randall points out:

*as children model themselves largely uncritically on their parents and are more affected by what their parents practice than by what they preach, physical punishment by parents simply teaches the child that interpersonal violence is an acceptable way for a person to impose their will on others. Often when such children reach adulthood, 'subjective recollection' has softened the 'punishments' and children 'gratefully ascribe their good characters' to their parents' good discipline. (Randall, 1997, p. 45)*

## **Smacking**

According to Cunningham (2005), throughout history, childhood in western civilisation has often been regarded as of little value in itself other than as part of a process of producing a good citizen, as someone to continue the family line, or to take care of aging parents. As such, children were seen in terms of deficiencies in that they were not capable of independent living or moral sense, and hitting or beating them was accepted (p. 23).

Cunningham (p.26) states that Christianity had then offered a new way to view childhood with the words of Jesus, who had said that to receive a child was to receive God (Mark 9:37), and who was constructing a new social order, a community for the least of the least (Myers, 2002, p.267). Jesus' injunction to '*Let the little children come to me*' (Mark 10:14-15) was followed by his warning that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will not enter it at all (Matthew 18:4). In other words only those who accept children shall enter God's kingdom (Myers, 2002, p. 268). By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, however, Augustine, who became the main influence of the Roman church which spread so rapidly



throughout Europe, was postulating the idea of original sin, and also countenancing corporal punishment (Cunningham, 2005, p.26). Teaching imbued with the idea of original sin often resulted in parents believing that children are in essence bad, and need heavy discipline and to have their wills broken to make them good.

This was the view of my parents and others I knew as a child, with injunctions like 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' based on the Old Testament injunction in Proverbs (ch.13 v24). Hunt, writing in Alice Miller's book '*Breaking Down the Wall of Silence*', states that:

*This is in any fact a misrepresentation of biblical teaching. Though the rod is mentioned many times in the Bible, it is only in the Book of Proverbs (the words of King Solomon) that it is used in connection with child-rearing. Solomon's methods worked very badly for his own son Prince Rehoboam.<sup>16</sup> In the Bible there is no support for hitting children outside of Solomon's proverbs. Jesus saw children as being close to God and urged love, not punishment.* (Hunt, 1992, p.169)

Cunningham describes how, after the Renaissance began in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, humanists like Erasmus wrote of their abhorrence of corporal punishment. He quotes Erasmus wincing at the sounds of beatings issuing forth from the 'torture chambers', as he called school rooms (Cunningham, 2005, p.44). However, within Puritan Protestant teaching the rearing of children was still geared towards the idea that, left to themselves, children will turn out to be bad. If the rod was required to break their will then it must at least be used rationally (p.47), and by the eighteenth century the more secular Locke still required a child's will to be bent in submission (not broken as the Puritans emphasised) in order to create a successful adult. He still considered it may be necessary for obstinate and rebellious children to be chastised (p.60). Belief in original sin was declining somewhat throughout society by this time.

A more humane child-centred attitude towards children has developed since the eighteenth century with Rousseau and Wordsworth's Romantic views, but total acceptance of this has always been difficult, Cunningham suggests, because there are what he describes as sub-cultures of child rearing which do not change (ibid, p. 59).

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<sup>16</sup> Rehoboam managed to lose most of his father's kingdom by provoking rebellion against his father's ways (2 Chronicles Ch.10 )

Edmund Gosse (1907) may have called his upbringing in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, old fashioned, as his father, who was also a member of the Plymouth Brethren to which my mother had belonged briefly, became very religious after the death of Gosse's mother, but much of it has strong resonances with my experience in the 1950s and 60s.

***Sinfulness was a given in my childhood. It was almost a pathological fear of what might happen to the child, but it turns into a real fear of children, terror that anarchy would follow if they were treated too well. This makes me recall that my mother considered it bad form to praise us. She thought that praise would harm us in some way, and was desperate that we should not think good of ourselves because it was somehow bad for us.***

Today, those who take the Bible literally, mainly on the Christian Right, take no account of what is believed or practised in wider society, believing it to be sorely misguided, if not of the devil, believing that God has spoken and his word is final.<sup>17</sup>

In the UK the use of violence against children, in the form of allowing parents to hit their children, is still sanctioned by the state.<sup>18</sup> The finer points of the distinctions allowed in law concerning whether the use of force is of a reasonable level may not be appreciated by the parent who knows it is their 'right' to punish and who has a short fuse, nor by the child on the receiving end of any level of violence.

*Rejecting parents are more likely to apply power assertive strategies and punishments. Those parents who are cold and rejecting towards their children and constantly use physical punishments are like those whose discipline is inconsistent, more likely to have aggressive children than other parents. (Randall, 1997, p.84)*

*The process through which parental hostility and rejection result in childhood aggression is easily described. First, such a style creates a family environment that elicits frustration amongst its members leading to feelings of anger and hostility. These feelings, if left unresolved, are likely to produce hostile and aggressive interchanges in parents and their children. Second, parental rejection and punishment serve as distinctive models of hostility and the inappropriate use of force, (Bandura, 1997). Finally it is also probable that parental rejection constitutes a basis for children to develop an 'internal working model' of themselves as unworthy, and of the social world they inhabit as untrustworthy and hostile (Bowlby, 1973). Such negative*

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<sup>17</sup> see Michael Pearl, Defence of Chastisement, May 2001, [www.nogreaterjoy.org](http://www.nogreaterjoy.org)

<sup>18</sup> A complete ban on all forms of corporal punishment to include parents has so far been resisted throughout the UK, despite the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the European Social Rights Committee, and now the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Hooper in Bradshaw and Mayhew, 2005, p.185)

*perspectives and feelings could easily contribute to a child's lack of empathy.*  
(Randall 1997, p.84)

***I remember watching a family who came to our church for a while, and for whom this philosophy that sparing the rod would spoil the child was being taken very seriously. Sitting in church, not normally a child friendly activity, but different at this church where children were encouraged to feel at home, move about, make noise; every move these children made was punished with a slap. It was completely unnecessary here, that was why it was such a travesty of loving, and so noticeable.***

***Watching it, apart from the fact that it was a policy, not just out-of-controlness, it clearly stated who had all the rights. I felt that sort of control was cold blooded. It was too close to my mother's way of doing things. It felt cruel, arrogant and calculated. I grieved for those children; I cringed and flinched when they did, as I had as a child.***

However I had not always thought this way. I don't know who had an influence on my mother's childrearing, whether the example of her own mother, or teaching in the church, but books that I read when A. was little advocated smacking as a quick, just, emotion-free way to teach a child something it needs to learn for its own safety and for society (Phillips, 1978). Phillips even suggested that the parent use an implement rather than their hands:

*this should prevent any fear from entering a child when his parent later uses the same hands to hold him and express love to him. (Phillips, 1978, p. 99)*

*A parent must be very sensitive to his child's will and spirit when spanking is necessary. He must spank until the child's stubborn self-will breaks and then stop....you must work on his will without injuring his spirit. (p.100)*

If the child gets upset, according to Phillips (1978), the parent must sit down afterwards and explain that you didn't like doing it but they need to learn these things, then give them a hug and tell them you love them and all is forgiven - if they apologise. Not that this ever happened when I was smacked. I was told it hurt her more than me, which I could not comprehend.

***I remember most how unfair it felt. There was no way to undo it. It hurt, it was meant to, but it wasn't just the physical pain, it meant you had no rights. You would simply do as you were told. 'Doing as you were told' was a big thing with my mother. You were stung, cut to the quick, humiliated, and that was the real power of it. She had the power, you had none.***

Yet when it came to my turn to be mother I 'knew' that smacking my child was the way you trained children and the books reinforced it. Cook, James and Leach (cited in Randall 1997, p.45) claim that since physical punishment is largely ineffective, it is often increased simply to achieve the same effect.

*The longitudinal study reported by Newson & Newson (1989) does indeed show this escalation. At 1 year old, two thirds of a 1985 sample had already been slapped. Their earlier study showed that the frequency and severity of physical punishment were even greater amongst 4 year olds. By the time those children are 7, the parents who still use physical punishment practice it frequently, and many use canes, slippers and other objects in addition to the open hand. (Randall 1997, p.46)*

Not only does it appear that physical punishment escalates in frequency, but it creates the opportunity for loss of control and escalation in severity while still justifying the increasing violence as normal.

*So long as any physical punishment is condoned by society, it affords the opportunity for severe and brutal treatment to be presented linguistically as a 'slap' or a 'tap' by the perpetrators. NSPCC reports show frequent punishments by parents include shaking, throwing, freezing baths, pulling hair, biting, scalding and the 'Chinese burn'. Three quarters of babies are hit before they are one year old, and more than one third of children are hit with an implement. (Hosking & Walsh, 2005, p.14)*

***I wonder whether if I had known that to hit my son was illegal, in other words that smacking him was not ever considered a meaningful way to deal with his behaviour, it could have made a difference; not to my feelings but to the whole question of childrearing. I had, however, watched a teacher in the local playground (this was in the 1980s) hit a child repeatedly on his behind. It seemed to be what one 'had to do'. It was considered in some quarters to be good discipline. I remember being disturbed by this event, it was so prolonged. But somehow I passively accepted it at the same time. The child must have done something really bad to deserve it, I surmised.***

The difficulty I began to experience as A. became a toddler also included negative thinking about him. It is possible for me to see now how the fact that my mother treated me as sinful and bad (she also later called my children 'the most wicked children in the world' on a trip out) had become a part of how I now felt about children generally. Children needed to be kept in their place, or they would turn out to be criminals or immoral. I was afraid for A. and felt incapable of knowing how to deal with his naughtiness, as I perceived it. It just kept coming. As I was brought up by being shouted at and with harsh words - such as 'go away I don't want to see

you', I repeated the pattern. I recall how this upset A. one time when he was about four, and he thought I never wanted to see him ever again. This punitive authoritarian style was not likely to make him less naughty, I felt less in control and the cycle continued until I would snap.

Although the view of original sin as such may not hold in the mind of the population at large, it is possible that the idea that humans are universally innately aggressive, put forward by Lorenz (1963) Morris (1967) and Storr (1968) (cited Montagu, 1978, p.3) may have taken hold instead. The fear seems to be that youngsters will run amok unless parents can smack them. In the UK it is possible for us to look on and see that the effects of the American gun laws are to promote death and violence. The false idea that guns help defend the peace blocks legislation time and again, that would save many lives. A similar sort of mindset operates here on corporal punishment. Those who never use it can see how ineffective it is. But violence is never an answer, because it breeds violence (Frehsee, Horn & Bussman, 1996) by increasing shame and the death of feeling (Miles, 1994, p.133,) so children who have learned to accept this as reasonable, as many do (Deater-Deckard et al. 2003), may repeat it as a way of discharging their rage at their parents.

Montagu (1978) studied a number of tribal societies where people never use violence towards children and who shun aggression and violence. Instead the children are given a great deal of attention and included in the traditions and activities of the group, who also participate in their care, and they in turn learn non-aggression. This seems to give the lie to idea that humankind is essentially aggressive and must be kept in check by physical punishment.

### **The bullied become bullies?**

Randall (1997) suggests that aggressive children become aggressive adults with poorly inhibited behaviour and an increased likelihood of negative outcomes in virtually every sphere of human activity, including relationship-building and employment (p.22). Hazler (1996) also maintains that the family is a determining force in whether a person will develop into a chronic bully (p. 36), and that the outlook for chronic bullies is not good. Though some children seem to grow out of the pattern, many do not. Those who remain chronic bullies during school age are

much more likely to have a variety of violence and crime related problems as adults (Oliver, Hoover & Hazler, 1994, in Hazler, 1996)

This may well impact on relationships as they create their own family.

*Scientific research confirms what attentive observation teaches most of us: aggression is transmitted from family to child, and flows through generations (Hunt, 1993). (cited in Hazler, 1996, p.38).*

Just because someone has been beaten, had a depressed mother, or lived in a deprived area it does not mean they will necessarily turn out to be a bully. There may be a number of other ways people become bullies. Roland and Munthe (1989) have suggested that some children or adults will respond to crises or changes in their lives by acting out in a bullying way (p.107). Others are drawn into group dynamics (Staub, 1999) or start to participate because they are afraid of the bully (Hazler, 1996 p.11). Both children and adults can often become involved in bullying indirectly as bystanders. This is also abusive because it increases the victim's humiliation. Sometimes children who have been victimised by other children discover that they can exert power over younger children. Whenever the behaviour receives positive reinforcement then it will continue (Randall, 1997, p.15).

Much aggression then seems to be in part a generational, non-gendered situation of bullying. The domestic situation in its close proximity, intimacy, conflict and isolation may appear to produce more regular and sustained violence than in the school situation, but it is still bullying. Children are terrorised at school by violent bullies on a regular basis. Also in the workplace a survey for the TUC and CBI in February 2000 suggested that bullying through petty criticism, name calling, snide remarks, harassment, intimidation, aggression, bad attitude and coercive management (Adams 1992, p. 12), contributes to the loss of 18 million working days per year (Peyton, 2003, p.12). It can be seen that bullying, though often created in the family (Woodhead, 1995, p.79), does not remain there. Bullying is often socially constructed, as people take on different roles, and their behaviour is determined by their social environment (Sullivan, 2000, p.84).

## **Scene 2      A bullying culture**

Bullies and their families do not operate in isolation. Society is under strain, with anxiety, hostility, wars, loss, recession, government cuts, with the stresses between those who have, and those who do not. The examples of businesses and banks also cause aggravation, as do politicians who cheat on their expenses, sports celebrities club-crawling and brawling, racism, sexism, media violence and stirred by media reports (Hazler, 1996). If the example for children is that adults bully and exploit one another this may also cause bullying amongst children.

Along with the idea that humans are universally innately aggressive comes the idea that the child becomes someone to be feared. If humans are like animals with a thin veneer of 'civilising' influence, as Freud postulated (Young, 1992), it would seem to follow that it must be important to focus on children as the least civilised, and repress that animal violence. Yet children and young people may well fear that repressive system, and feel threatened by it, creating what amounts to a self fulfilling prophecy.

The labelling and demonising of children as 'feral', became so common in the press that it was referred to by a joint submission to the U.N. from the four children's commissioners for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in June 2008<sup>19</sup> as an infringement of human rights in the UK. The charity Barnardo's has also mounted a campaign against what they call this demonisation (Narey, 2008)<sup>20</sup>, because a survey showed children being labelled 'feral', 'parasites' and 'vermin'. This referred to all children, not just 'delinquents'.

The discourses surrounding youth in the press and in politics at the moment in this country (Haig, 2007) have produced calls and discussion about corporal punishment, more severity, more repression, more violence. This could amount to a culture of societal bullying. The apparent match between this opinion of children and young people and rising levels of violence seem to confirm to those feeling threatened that it is a fact, children are dangerous. There may, however, be many factors involved other than the pure desire to do harm, such as what children are

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<sup>19</sup> [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk) June, 2008  
<sup>20</sup> [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk) November, 2008

being exposed to on T.V. and in the media, poverty, deprivation, diet, and ill-treatment.

## **Education**

Since I began to work alongside children and adults in schools and at the centre, I have observed, and often been disturbed by incidents, as I mentioned in the prologue. This led me to become interested in the education system in respect of bullying and shaming, and I began to look into the topic more closely and to look at the literature surrounding the spirit of the child, which is my field of inquiry.

As Roland and Munthe reported in 1989 there is:

*convincing evidence that violent and disruptive behaviours have been linked with a curriculum that places too little emphasis on individual, non-academic achievement, and too much on competition. In such schools pupils unable to achieve academic distinction turn to bullying and disruption as a way of gaining attention and status. (p.8)*

Roland and Munthe also state that heavy and inflexible use of school rules has been associated with poor behaviour. Relationships within the staff and management styles also increase disruption, and where there is disruption, such as aggression to other children and staff, disobedience, tantrums, stealing and lying, there is an increase in bullying (p.9). So is the current education system itself implicated in some of the bullying and violence?

## **A lean, mean, monitoring machine**

Children and adults in this country are operating within a specific cultural context of ever tighter control; at home and at play<sup>21</sup>, in the wider social structure, and globally, with the reality of terrorism as a threat both from afar and from within our country resulting in antiterrorist measures against ordinary citizens.<sup>22</sup> Education also has its share of control measures and zero tolerance.<sup>23</sup>

Indications of a professed need for reform in education had been emerging during the 1970s; Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party reforms in the late 1980s heralded in market led benchmarks, performance indicators and other checking and

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<sup>21</sup> [www.playday.org.uk/pdf/children's-time-to-play-a-literature-review.pdf](http://www.playday.org.uk/pdf/children's-time-to-play-a-literature-review.pdf)

Wyvers, S. et al (2010) *Ten Ways To Restrict Children's Freedom To Play* in **Contemporary Issues In Early Childhood** Vol. 11, No. 32 pp. 263-277

<sup>22</sup> See [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/uk-counter-terrorism/strat](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/counter-terrorism/uk-counter-terrorism/strat)

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/jun/13/schools.uk>



controlling devices (Johnson, 2005 p.82), which went on to permeate society much more widely and deeply, leading to:

*the reappearance of destitution in the streets and lanes of our urban and rural ghettos. Wealth creation meant that in 1990 Britain overtook the USA in boasting the widest gap between rich and poor in all the developed countries. (MacDonald, 2000, p. 21)*

This was under the open agenda of parental choice, inspection of teachers, checklists for performance indicators and a standardised curriculum, followed by published results, and league tables. According to Johnson these indicators demand power and deference to those in authority, stress individual and organisational performance and avoidance of uncertainty, and expect an organisational masculinity in which achieving goals is all important (2005, p.83).

MacDonald (2000) describes how this led to:

*A deprofessionalised and demoralised teaching force [which] faced a formidable problem of pupil resistance to a bread and water diet, and the need for a more coercive regime than most aspired to. (p.230)*

Under successive governments these policies continued. The language of the current education system has been commented on by some of those involved who are concerned about its impact on education, and our overall quality of life:

*These levels of compulsion are checked by processes of monitoring. This word achieved 500 hits in the British Educational standards website (DfES, 2005b) Monitoring has become so prevalent that many professionals have forgotten its sinister origin in surveillance. Significantly, there is never a discourse that describes any person or role as a monitor; the act of watching, tracking, checking and reporting is committed by a monitoring system, releasing it from any culpability for personal intrusion but heightening that sense of relentlessness. (Chater, 2006, p.48)*

Chater continues:

*Under this accountability, pedagogy itself becomes an activity of violence. People entering a school, university or profession in one year are a cohort; one sees them marching together, trained to move steadily through the system, reliably and obediently and even with pride. Or else they are an intake, this being an image from mechanised industry. A pupil intake is raw material entering the mouth of the machine, to be shaped into its master's specifications. It is wheat for the thresher, or coal for the sorter. It is an object; the violence of crushing, breaking or categorisation is done to it.*

*The pedagogical machine, once powered, grinds all. Awkward or resistant materials are isolated; leaders promise to stamp out or bear down on them; teachers and managers are asked to drive up standards, which may imply making the machine go faster or grind smaller...Policy makers boast of being tough on standards, or rooting out failure (Learner,2001). The machine itself is also held in judgement, as its components or units may be interchangeable or replaceable. (ibid, p.49)*

Abbot observed the same tendency to a mechanistic, machine-like culture:

*Schools are increasingly defined by politicians as mechanisms to meet the ambiguous specifications of the National Curriculum, and the teacher has inevitable been replaced by an instructor, the person who delivers to a model designed by a committee of experts. (Abbot, p.179)*

It would appear that even those involved in the monitoring process are not exempt from its effects:

*A poll of the staff of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) has found that there were 'high levels of bullying, fear, stress and bad management'...When the pollsters (ISR) analysed the data in respect of 'culture and management style', the organization, responsible for inspection and auditing the performance of English schools 'came out 16 percentage points worse than the average for public and private-sector organizations, and eight points worse than the public sector average'... This, the newspaper solemnly reported, was an improvement on the results of a similar staff poll done two years earlier in 2002. (Johnson, 2006, p.82)*

This mechanistic western world view springs from our rationalistic belief that humans can manipulate, exploit and control the world claims LeFay (2006, p.36) and the education system is inextricably linked with that world view. LeFay also comments on the fact that '*rewards and punishments keep students in a position of powerlessness and at the mercy of the authority of the schoolteachers*' (Lefay 2006, p.391).

Chater (2006) and Johnson (2005 ) accept that some terms like 'objective' and 'target' may be perfectly acceptable if they are simply about focussing on specific learning, and that not all forms of violent culture in education will matter; but as Chater writes:

*Ultimate forms of violence and monitoring exist in compliance and monitoring. These are the most damaging images because they exist not only in classrooms, but in the system as a whole, from where they spread attitudes of passivity, resentment, and anxiety. (Chater, 2006, p.51)*

*Schooling systems are open to spiritual criticism for their determinism, technicist thinking, economic goals and sometimes elitist outcomes. Education is seen as imposing a normalising process, turning human beings into objects and doing violence to their spirit. (ibid, p.53)*

### **Every Child Matters?**

Thorne (2003) is concerned with the effects that academic target meeting with its overtones of coercion, has on those involved:

*The insistent language of standard-raising permeates not only our education system, but progressively every area of our national life. It is a particularly cold and aggressive language. Standards we are told, must be 'driven up', 'ratcheted up', 'forced up'. Politicians stake their reputations on their ability to play the standards game and threaten exposure and punishment on those who fail to 'meet targets'. It is a language of coercion and obsessionality, which induces fear and guilt while claiming to be a language of encouragement dedicated to creating a more equal society and to giving the public the services it deserves. It stokes the fires of competition and brings with it a whole new army of evaluators, inspectors, surveillance monitors, appraisers, quality control experts, thought police. (Thorne, 2003, p.40)*

He is deeply concerned for the psychological well-being of young people experiencing this system:

*This performance-surveillance culture is, it is claimed, necessary for the cultivation of a work force which will ensure economic prosperity in the future. This unquestioned assumption has as far as I know, never been empirically tested despite the fact that there are countries whose economic success does not seem to correlate at all with the mean level of educational attainment of its population. Even if it were true however, it would hardly be sufficient reason for the creation of a generation who show every sign of rampant psychological disorder. (ibid, p.42)*

Since 1974 the percentage of 15-16 year olds suffering from emotional difficulties has risen from 7% of boys and 12% of girls in 1974 to 13% of boys and 20% of girls in 2006. Percentages for those of the same age suffering from behavioural difficulties were 7.5% of boys and 6% of girls in 1974; and are currently 17% of boys and 13% of girls (Layard, 2009, p. 3). The Office for National Statistics (2008) linked emotional and behavioural difficulties with stressful life events, social factors and school settings, with features such as achievement levels, exclusion, special educational needs and absenteeism being of particular note.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

Cooper (2006 comments:

*Between 1992 and 1998 the annual number of permanent exclusions from school in England steadily increased, so that by 1998 there were four times as many pupils excluded as there had been in 1992. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this increase was not in some way related to the radical changes to the education system imposed by government in this period (p.8)*

Not every one would agree with these views (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009). Some educationalists believe that children receive too much praise and are erroneously believed to *be 'fragile, emotionally vulnerable beings unable to cope with intellectual challenge'* (Furedi, 2007, p.9).

*Making children feel good about themselves has been one of the main objectives of U.S. schools during the last three decades. By the time they are seven or eight years of age [they] have internalised the prevailing psychobabble and can proclaim the importance of avoiding negative emotions and of high self esteem. Yet this has had no perceptible impact on their school performance. In Britain too, educators who have drawn the conclusion that it is easier to help children feel good about themselves than to teach them maths, reading and science, have embraced the cause of emotional education. (Ibid, p.9)*

I believe I have shown that children often are in fact extremely fragile (see previous page, and also p. 124) and that they need high self esteem, even if it did not necessarily improve their academic performance. Sparkes (1999) draws on evidence which shows that there are a number of non-cognitive skills which are significant in positive adult outcomes. Employability relies not only on success in formal exams or educational attainment, but on other valuable outcomes which are not measured by standard attainment tests or by educational achievement. These include such 'soft skills' as friendliness, teamwork, ability to fit in, communication skills, appearance and attire, also enthusiasm, positive attitude to work, commitment, dependability and a willingness to learn (p. 9). These all seem to require that young people feel good about themselves. MacDonald (2000) noted how this concept had previously been accepted as a desirable part of education (p.22) but this has changed:

*From here on it's all uphill for those who will not accept that the value of children's education can be measured, costed and stamped on their foreheads like the price tag in a supermarket. (p.34)*

### **Who really matters?**

Not only are the spirits of children under attack but teachers too. As professionals in the education system they are unable to hide from the threat of criticism, or to

changes enforced on them to the pedagogy, assessment or policy, or of special measures and even school closures, but are required to comply. Resentment, anxiety, and passivity (Chater, 2006) are likely to occur at all levels.

*Poor evidence bases for professional knowledge and political interference in schools have demoralised and depressed professionals whose job is to create encouraging and effective learning environments within state education in the United Kingdom. (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p.1)*

This is reported to be reflected in the classroom with negative results:

*The enormous pressure placed on teachers by these measures is reflected in the increased stress-related illnesses and early retirement due to ill health among teachers during this period. Stress was further transmitted to pupils, the most vulnerable of whom found themselves failing in an inflexible and high-paced curriculum, being dealt with by staff who had diminishing power to respond to children in difficulty in flexible ways. The system had become simply less tolerant and this had a negative effect on both teachers and pupils. (Cooper, 2006, p.8)*

Freire (1972) suggests that almost always during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or sub-oppressors (p.22). In the case of the current education system the culture creates the oppression for children and even when people are themselves not supportive of it, they find themselves caught up in its effects.

### **Bottom of the pile?**

As well as losing their autonomy and the acceptance of their professional judgement in decision making, teachers now work in a managerial system which is evaluated by school users, the community, and to society as a whole. This would seem to be a good thing as long as the evaluation is objective and fair. However if the culture within the evaluating, monitoring, and inspection body OfSTED is itself one of domination and bullying then one fears for the overall culture. For this is then likely to trickle down, not only to victimise the teachers who are affected by it, but also those at the bottom of the pile; the children.

All of this contrasts deeply with the views of Fueueverger (2007) who quotes Parker Palmer (1998) '*Education is about healing and wholeness and transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and reclaiming ourselves and our place in the world*' (p.56).

Having looked at the system, and individual personalities and histories, it is highly probable that some teachers are involved in bullying. Initially it seemed difficult to find writing or research about teachers bullying and shaming children. However, since 2005 number of articles by Twemlow *et al.* have brought the subject forward. In the International Journal of Psychiatry (2006) one such article by Twemlow *et al.* comments on this paucity of material:

*The issue of teachers who bully students is known to many principals, some of whom would not place certain vulnerable students with certain teachers. No clear way had been found to handle or even assess the prevalence of such a problem within the school systems. To our knowledge the dearth of papers on the topic of teachers who bully students is further support for such a speculation, and there are only a few more papers on students who bully teachers. (Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco & Brethour, 2006, p.187)*

In addition I have found a small paragraph of one handbook on bullying, which mentions the possibility of teachers bullying (Sullivan, 2000, p.25). Here Sullivan quotes Olweus (1996) a Norwegian researcher, who has done much work on bullying programmes in schools, and suggests that the subject is a serious issue, requiring more attention than it currently receives. Olweus (1996) points out that it could contribute to the problem by providing negative role modelling for others, perpetuating its presence in the school.

There is a good deal of literature about workplace bullying, which I mentioned earlier (on p.118), which includes teachers bullying teachers. Is it likely that teachers bullying another adult refrain from bullying when they walk in the classroom door? The bullying referred to by Twemlow *et al.* (2006) was self reported. In other words, some teachers bully, and they know that they do. There was also bullying observed by other teachers. The proportion may not be high; as the report points out, most teachers do not purport to support bullying, but nevertheless Twemlow and Fonagy (2005) suggest it may well have an adverse effect on the behaviour of the children, which could negatively impact on their schooling, their peer relationships and on their future.

A study by Twemlow & Fonagy (2005) which set out to determine whether staff attitudes conducive to bullying may contribute to behavioural difficulties in children, found that the teachers who reported that they bullied students were more often

seen in schools with high rates of suspension. This was consistent with the possibility that teachers in such schools, where bullying teachers are more pervasive, have an eroded sensitivity towards bullying. The study also suggested that many such teachers had been bullied themselves. It was found that the bullies were either sadistic or victim-bullies. Here it is possible to see once more the generational element in bullying. For some adults it is out of conscious awareness while others may be aware of what they are doing, but feel unable to alter their behaviour, treating children as they were treated, or reliving experiences through their buried emotions and scripts.

Many adults can recall an experience of feeling humiliated by a teacher. These may vary in intensity. I remember one such incident:

***I was once slapped round the leg by a male teacher who wasn't impressed by a bluebell I had drawn, hardly a cause for violence! School for me was usually more an experience of being invisible and I hated the fact that this episode took place at the front of the class, and I was made to feel visibly stupid. When I was first at school however, I was very afraid of the teacher who used, almost daily, to walk behind a boy called Nigel and hit the back of his head, while making nasty comments. What his crime was I couldn't tell, he was certainly not naughty, maybe his work was messy. He was a pale-faced, slightly odd child, I do not recall ever hearing him speak. It was obvious to me then as a five year old, he simply did not fit for her. She was a bully. She became a close friend of my mother.***

Harsh, punitive, target driven systems like education and the Health Service (Hadikin & O' Driscoll, 2000) are a part of our current culture. Hazler (1996) points out that, as people cannot but live within society, they must understand the impact society has and take responsibility for improving the nature of that society for the next generation (p.39).

*In addition to the expressions of violent rage or pain of children that we see manifest in society, we find also the dysfunctional effects of the victim/persecutor at work, and the unhealed wounds, prejudices and whims of the powerful that shape societies. (Miller, 1992)*

Greene (1978) discusses the fact that in order to be educating for character teachers themselves need a sense of wide-awakeness. She quotes Martin Buber:

*'You...need someone who is wholly alive and able to communicate himself directly to his fellow-beings. His aliveness streams out to them and affects*

*them most strongly and purely when he has no thought of affecting them'... (Buber, 1957, p.105)*

She maintains that if teachers submit to a system in which people see no alternatives, in which they are not awake to the values and ethics being conveyed without understanding, then education will not produce young people initiated into an ethical existence, able to make choices and determine values (Greene, 1978, p.46), rather than drifting along, acting 'on impulses of expediency, guided by vaguely perceived expectations, or programmed, feeling dominated' (p.43) and maybe choosing to fight back. The teachers need to be wide awake to the issues and to 'consider the moral issues in the light of over-arching commitments' (p.47) to decide their own values and to offer those choices to the young people they teach.

*Teachers need to be aware of how they personally confront the unnerving questions present in the life of every teacher, every parent: What shall we teach them? How can we guide them? What hope can we offer them? (ibid)*

### **Victim or persecutor?**

Is there a difference then, other than in manifest behaviour, between victims and bullies? Are they all traumatised children and victims of oppressive social systems? At one level it can be seen that the failure to develop an ability to appropriately express emotional needs, or to have them understood, will probably only occur in a situation where some degree of difficulty, trauma or neglect is taking place (Das Gupta, 1995) so the answer would appear to be 'yes'. Violence is bullying, bullying is violence. What makes the difference, therefore, between a victim who either consciously determines never to hurt anyone, or finds a way to stop themselves, one who chooses knowingly to perpetuate it and one who is unaware of their behaviour? Perhaps the answer lies in the creation of the victim personality.



### **Scene 3 Creating a victim**

As I studied theories surrounding the creation of a bully, it seemed that there were some indications that I might have become one. I certainly developed, as a result of treatment at the hands of both my parents, frustration, hostility and a working model of myself as unworthy. Because I was smacked, I took on the belief that children needed to be smacked to teach them to behave.

***Battles with my mother were a normal part of life and I assumed, indeed I was told, that they were my fault. Phrases like 'you will wish you had never been born' would elicit an angry response from me, and I would tell her I hated her. Though I was angry with her, and would go to my room and slam the door, I always came round to seeing that I was in the wrong. Thinking about it now I am glad I fought her and didn't give in completely. I don't know what it was that gave me that much strength, except that I was desperate not to give in, I had to survive. The problem was it was only in her presence, and it made the blaming and guilt-making all the more powerful when I was on my own, because I knew I was not always good, and her whole argument was that I should be.***

However, that was as far as any aggression on my part seemed to have gone in my childhood. My brother and I fought when we were younger but I do not remember losing my temper with anyone but my mother. As an adult I began to feel anger and a lot of fear inside, but again never dared express it, until my husband hit me. This was, I believe, because, as well as setting up aggression, my parents set up the possibility of being a victim.

***It occurs to me as I write to wonder that sometimes I was allowed to express my anger and stomp off, without being punished. There was instead a faint air of triumph, and then magnanimity as peace was restored. Yet, as I reflect, I think it has been that that saved me. I could vent a little. It meant that just now and then as I got older I could surprise people and emerge from the quiet shell and speak out. I remember it happening, to everyone's surprise and approbation, as a first year cadet nurse with a second year cadet who was being objectionable. I was slightly mocked till then, but things changed. It wasn't a pattern of behaviour; it could very occasionally happen, and I can remember the times it did.***

According to Randall (1997) there is less research on the creation of the victim personality, partly because being quiet and withdrawn was not in itself previously seen to be a risk factor, and partly because it was thought to be biologically determined. This has now changed, and research into social withdrawal is beginning to include many of the characteristics of adult and child victims of bullying. These

new constructs include 'social deference, timidity, submissiveness, social wariness, and anxiety about interactions' (Randall 1997, p.91). These were the very 'virtues' that Alice Miller (1980 p.7) claims poisonous pedagogy is meant to achieve, and which those who wish to continue to use the rod with children would applaud<sup>25</sup>. Also included in constructs of the victim personality are negative attitudes about self (Olweus, 1993; Randall, 1997).

It seems that it is possible to relate these new constructs on victims to attitudes towards parenting with practices such as overprotection of the child and discouragement of risk taking, which create dependency. Authoritarian socialization behaviours create low self esteem, lack of spontaneity and poor confidence. Children become passive and submissive, placatory, with low self esteem and poor self image, thinking they are stupid and ugly (Randall, 1997, p.93).

***What was missing most though was love and laughter. Life was so serious, so loaded with importance, so scrutinised. I never felt loved either as a child: too much attribution, 'you are deceitful, dirty, lazy, selfish, greedy, defiant, disobedient.' Decisions were always made for me. Children's opinions were not important so my opinions were considered as 'being cheeky'. Instant obedience was required.***

***As a child and teenager, I was always different by virtue of the strictness of the church input. I went to bed earlier than my friends, I didn't have access to TV till I was 14, things were always old fashioned, but then we were also reasonably poor.***

***I always seemed to wear adult style clothing, suits and hats and gloves, and she seemed to encourage dressing me as a grown up; I wore stockings and suspenders at 11, which felt good, but had to wear an adult's coat for school which was years out of date. I recall feeling an utter fool, and wishing I could disappear. It was important to my mother for everyone to see we were well groomed, but then again when I was going out my mother would say no-one would be looking at me anyway.***

***'Cut your hair because it is too long' then, 'Grow your hair I preferred it long', 'Sparrow legs' 'The trouble with you is your thighs are too big.' 'Fairy Elephant'. Those were the good names. I was also called a slut, and a trollop, and many other things.***

***My responses, like being reserved because of all this, were then derided. I was too quiet, no initiative, no sense of humour if I was teased, couldn't make decisions. I was still attacked mockingly and nastily until just before my mother's death, for being quiet. If I expressed a contrary view,***

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<sup>25</sup> [www.christianparents.net](http://www.christianparents.net) (1.3.11)

***long-suffering sighs resulted. If I stood up for myself, contempt came into play. When I tried to stay at arm's length, there were complaints about lack of affection,***

Though I was so timid and tongue tied as a child it was with very confident peers or with adults. I had friends and did not feel noticeably bullied. I have always had friends, though I was always very self-conscious about being different, and often as I got older, was an observer rather than a full participant. I was always included at some level as part of a group. I was a good listener. Though I was not going to dances or the cinema or going out with boys, I was allowed to be different, perhaps because it was more acceptable to be religious in the 1960s.

Yet I also have the sense that I was not really allowed by my mother to feel anything, to have emotion. Apart from anger, my father rarely showed any emotion at all. Emotion was frowned upon in the church, especially in worship. In the conflict with my mother it was almost as though the message was 'Oh you can be angry, but doesn't that just show what a complete waste of a person you are.' Contempt, a double message, came with strong helpings of shame attached. The same message I received from my husband and the elders who were brought in to help as our marriage deteriorated, as I described in Act 1, Scene 2, p. 65.

## **Shame**

Bullying and being victimised often results in chronic shame, of which the individual may be unaware. Miller (1980) notes that some victims even believe that they have had a happy childhood and are unable to accept that there was anything wrong with the way they were treated, that in fact it did them good (p.4). Dutton (1999) posits that, along with witnessing parental violence and insecure attachment, shame is one of the main contributory factors in interpersonal violence (p.3).

Shame was at the root of my relationship with my mother. I felt utterly helpless, because I had never asked to be born, and there she was blaming me for existing. However, I loved her and generally tried to become whatever it was she wanted : a good girl. I wanted her to love me, I confided in her, and when things were going well I considered her a friend. When I was first undergoing some counselling after I had left home, and was asked about my relationship with her, I stated that it was reasonable, and concentrated on my relationship with my father. It was many years

later that it began to dawn on me how untrue that was and I began to recognise her as rejecting, and later as a bully, because that friendship was completely conditional and would be withdrawn with icy or violent responses. I had normalised her behaviour.

This seems to follow a pattern described by Shengold (2004, p.30) when the child who is totally dependent on the carer and needs to maintain their support and approval, identifies with the carer who they see as good. Themselves they see as bad; otherwise, they reason, the carer would not treat them that way. The behaviour may include: being ostracised for showing anger; withholding intimacy, enjoyment and needs; ignoring and breaching boundaries. Or it may be as severe as torture, beating, deprivation and sexual abuse. These can all result in chronic shaming. It is also the 'objectifying, non accepting gaze' which is essentially dehumanising and disregarding (Mollon, 1993 cited in Pattison, 2000, p.101). This was true for me.

***My mother had a way of attempting to quell any budding rebellion; she fixed us with the look – lips pursed and eyes as cold as ice- full of contempt. She had a normal enough look of reproof that would be used in church if we were shuffling about, but this one was supercharged. It carried with it the memory of the slap and the tongue-lashing with its shaming and diminishing condemnation, and further back the despair-inducing memory of 'I wish you had never been born'.***

Harmful parenting can mean neglect or direct physical violence but also includes shouting, emotional abuse and violent discipline. It can be perpetrated by parents who mean well and believe they are doing what is best for their children, but whose parenting styles unwittingly cause lasting damage to the quality of lives their children are equipped to lead (Miller, 1987)

*The child is invited to internalise a set of false beliefs.*

*A feeling of duty produces love.*

*Hatred can be dispensed with by forbidding it.*

*Parents deserve respect because they are parents while children do not deserve respect because they are children.*

*Obedience makes a child strong while self esteem is harmful.*

*low esteem makes a person altruistic while tenderness is indulgent and harmful responding to children's needs is wrong and does not fit them for adult life.*

*The way you behave is more important than the way you really are.*

*The body is disgusting.*

*Feelings are damaging.*

*Parents are always right.* (Miller, 1987, p. 60)

Family therapists Fossum and Mason (1986) describe shame-bound families as a group of people who may have a set of rules that could include a need to control, with perfectionism, blaming, denial of feelings, lack of communication and disqualification of others (cited in Pattison, 2000, p.106). Bradshaw also mentions denial of freedom to think, perceive, feel, want, choose, and imagine, in the interests of maintaining a false, conformist self (1988, p.79).

*The child who is born into a shame-bound family has little chance of failing to develop a sense of chronic shame. Whatever else happens, she is unlikely to be loved and appreciated for what she is in and of herself. She is likely to be required to act out some role in the family that helps that system to avoid confronting its shame, such as being scapegoat (being a focus for all the bad feelings that are around), good child (avoiding unwanted negative attention by adopting a conformist personality) or star.* (Pattison, 2000, p.106)

Pattison's words well describe my experience in my family. I was meant to be the good child, but failed. We were a very cut off group, by virtue of our faith stance, and this must have added to the control, and the sense that others were no good while we were on the side of right. As we grew up we were admonished not be 'worldly', and to keep ourselves apart from those who had 'worldly standards'. As a result I was always imbued with a sense of being set apart from all the people I knew for one reason or another.

*Some families live in perpetual anxiety of what, to them, is an external, persecuting world. The members of the family live in a family ghetto, as it were. This is one basis for so called maternal over-protection. It is not 'over' protection from the mother's point of view, nor indeed, often from the point of view of other members of the family.*

*The 'protection' that such a family offers its members seems to be based on several preconditions; (i) a phantasy of the external world as extraordinarily dangerous; (ii) the generation of terror inside the nexus at this external danger. The 'work' of the nexus is the generation of this terror. This work is violence.* (Laing, 1967, p.74)

This experience within my family seems to have been particularly grounded in religion (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 94, Pattison, 2000, p. 229) and contributed to shaming by creating difference and thereby a sense of inferiority. Along with this went an over emphasis on perfectionism, *shoulds* and *oughts*, sinfulness, the fact that self is worthless, that it is good to abase oneself, along with a great horror of pride.

*Children of my generation were led to believe (by not disinterested adults!) in church, school and home that any attempt to assert themselves or to follow their own wills and desires might well be the fruit of pride, and therefore a dangerous sin. (Pattison, 2000, p. 251)*

### **Effects of Shame**

Nathanson (1992) writes on the responses to feelings of shame, suggesting that any affect (feeling) is better than shame, since shame is so very painful to experience (p.312). For me, even after going through extended therapy, and especially since the shaming effects of having lost virtually every friend after my husband left, there are still times when I can be caught out and experience what I call a 'full blown shame attack'. It will usually be something very trivial, often related to an adult in some role of authority expressing disapproval or rejection. If it should be reinforced by some other person, by night time it will hit me – hard.

*I'm useless  
Waste of space  
Shouldn't be alive  
Pathetic*

*Grief  
Sickness  
Exhaustion  
Drained  
Thick head  
Sighing  
Backache  
Churning  
Pain*

*Want to die or hurt myself  
Stab me  
I have nothing to say  
No one wants me  
I am a terrible, terrible person who shouldn't be alive.  
I don't count, I matter to no one- only my children, therefore I cannot hurt myself,  
so I have to go on hating myself.  
(Ashley, 2009)*

There seems to be no relief from this awful pain of bitter self-hatred, and I have often wanted, very powerfully wanted, to die. I have in the past taken something to dull the pain, and as a result found that after sleep things look different, though they may well return another time. If I speak to those close to me about these feelings while I am experiencing them they simply tell me how annoying it is to hear me talk like that and believe those things about myself, or try to tell me that it is not true. At that time however, I know for certain that they are true. I hate myself, with what I am completely convinced is good cause. Sometimes the urge to hurt myself is so strong that I do not know what to do, and I'm afraid. If I am fortunate I remember to tell myself;

*'These feelings are not from now. This is the Child. You do not have to feel this way now. You have the right to live. You are not worse than everybody else on the planet'*

***Some time after my husband left I went to see Julie Felix in concert. She sang a song that I pinned to the wall for a time:***

***You're not the last  
You're not the first  
You're not the best  
You're not the worst  
You're a child of the Universe  
That's who you are (Felix, 1993)***

If I remember to use these two strategies, then gradually my Adult reasserts herself and the feelings fade.

This strategy of recognising that feelings are not from the present was used in the therapy I undertook, and it appears to be very similar to one of the steps in a therapy, devised by John Bradshaw (1988). He suggests exploring the original feelings of pain, coming to terms with grief and embracing the inner child. This is followed by recognising and integrating disowned parts of the self, feelings and needs that have been denied or shame-bound while growing up. Since my moment of revelation, when the Dragon/Lover, a previously unacknowledged side emerged (as I described earlier in the section on Structure, p. 36), just before everything fell apart for me, I have tended to bury her deep in a cave somewhere again. It is clear to me that it is this inability to accept myself that results in my shame response to minor things when I'm feeling low. Some part of me feels I have failed to please,

and so I feel I am being told once again by the script I developed as a child that I should not exist (Woollams & Brown, 1978, p.11).

### **Defensive scripts**

Nathanson (1992) describes how, in order to avoid experiencing and playing out the extraordinarily painful feelings involved in shame, defensive scripts are developed. These are described (p. 332) as four compass points of *withdrawal*, *attack self*, *avoidance*, and *attack other*.

In *withdrawal* the response can most often be manifest as depression. Certainly depression was well known to me until the first period of counselling, and I had very little energy or motivation for many years after I married and had my son, as I experienced my failure as a mother.

The opposite of withdrawal on the compass of shame is *avoidance* which involves deceiving oneself about the self, to hide the shame. The roots of avoidance lie in the experience of children who come to accept themselves as being bad and their parents as good. This may present as seeking perfection or presenting a grandiose self, lying or wearing a false front to appear good. Becoming a carer, or seeking relief in addictive behaviour are ways consciously or unconsciously to make what they feel is defective appear acceptable (p.339).

I became a carer (like my mother) as a nurse, and tried care-giving in marriage and motherhood with less than satisfactory results. I used to joke that I worked in the operating theatre because I liked the patients to be asleep, and there was an element of truth in it. Another reason I liked the theatre was the precision required for the job, and the satisfaction in being tested and getting the instruments, sutures and procedures right. I recognised some years ago that this perfectionism is a pattern. I can see that when I was a nurse I conformed to Pattison's picture of a poor resentful carer (Pattison, 2000, p.114), and was a passive aggressive type, who was often resentful and complaining.

According to Nathanson (2000) the other two opposing responses are *attack self* and *attack others*. *Attacking self* may take the form of ritually humiliating oneself or putting oneself down, giving oneself away, self harming and, in severe cases,



masochism, an attempt to experience the love of the parent again through the pain. The position here is of a suffering victim feeling self-ridicule or anger, and a sense of disgust about self. Harming oneself physically, or allowing others to hurt one, fits in well with being deserving of pain and suffering, and feelings of total worthlessness (Nathanson, 2000, p.329). As I have mentioned (p.132) I attack myself verbally and have at times left myself open to being hurt by others;

***As a child I once fell foul of a bully in the park. After attempting to quell me in the playground she followed me home and accosted me outside the sweet shop, where she proceeded to hit me round the head and face in front of the shopkeeper who did nothing. I sat there and let her, feeling that it was somehow right. Though I was by no means addicted to pain, I sometimes experienced the same feelings when my husband hit me across the face.***

Nathanson's (2000) *attack others* response is an externalisation of inner discomfort. It 'halts any tendency to look within the self and thus fosters systems of blame, and paranoia' (p. 370). The feelings of shame, and rage at the shaming experiences may well be unrecognised, but they are acted out nevertheless. This is done by 'bullying, blackmail, slander, put down, ridicule, disdain, sarcasm, scorn, derision, mockery, satire, scorn, derision... contempt, or hatred' (p. 367). Other responses are for someone to 'spend a significant amount of [their] time looking for ways to diminish others' (p. 371), or to scapegoat others by finding someone with similar shame responses, and then projecting their own shame and self-contempt onto them.

These responses by a shamed individual conform to my mother's behaviour towards me, as she often employed a look of sheer disgust, and used 'cold, dissecting anger' (p. 371). It also entered into my behaviour towards A. though it was the last thing I would have wanted. I did not at first recognise my mother's treatment of me in the way I treated him

***Some years ago I was sitting with a group of women at a meeting when one of the women, M. an elderly helper who everyone loved and who I believed to be a friend, fixed me with a look that froze my blood. It was total rejection, and I had no idea what was going on. I remember getting up immediately, leaving the room, going into the toilets and crying my heart out. Again I did not know why. Much later I realised I had been as Alice Miller describes 'controlled by a parental glance alone' (1980, p.6). Subconsciously it resonated with the look my mother used, that left me***

***knowing I should not exist. This literal death stare was what I experienced when M. looked at me that day.***

***Later M. told me spontaneously that when another member of the group had been speaking, I had looked over at her and used the gesture of rubbing the side of my nose, thereby indicating conspiracy, complicity or mockery against this person. It was pure fluke because this is not a gesture I knew, or have ever used in my life, and since it had no significance for me I had no recollection of doing it at all. I did not even know who or what conversation she was talking about. I did not, as I recall, defend myself or ask any more, I simply drifted away in my usual fashion feeling condemned and resentful. It was habitual for me as a shamed person to behave as though I knew what people were talking about rather than look ignorant. At least I knew the reason for her anger, and since I knew she was simply mistaken, it did not affect my feelings for her; except I suppose to put her in the category of 'can be dangerous', along with many others. This might involve placation. It was normal for me to operate in a dangerous environment.***

Blame and envy are other ways of attacking others, with strong anti-authority feelings. P. fits well into this pattern of blaming, envy and being anti authority as well as displaying grandiosity and lying. At the time I would not have dreamed that his behaviour was due to feelings of shame. He seemed so strong.

## **Society**

Both Nathanson (1992) and Pattison (2000) contend that society today is deeply affected by shame. Nathanson states that the root of the problems of increasing acceptance of violence, vandalism, disregard for rules that allow us to share our cramped space, involves the disavowal of shame, the release of an entire culture from the constraints once induced by shame (p.473). The *attack other* response to shame, once held firmly in check by societal and cultural restraints, has been unleashed as the effects of years of sections of humanity employing disgust against other sections have boiled over, so that the *attack other* response is considered acceptable, and is even displayed as entertainment through the media.

Pattison (2000, p.143) argues that modern day western society is modelled on shaming, with its fixation on strength, power, success, autonomy and independence, and its intolerance of those who have not achieved so much. Each person is attempting to keep up. Similarly, with the postmodern concept of reflexivity, and its awareness of changing roles, constant movement in ideas, and construction of identities and multiple selves, people may become self absorbed and

self aware '*All are actors seeking to present themselves on the stage of social expectation*' (Goffman cited in Pattison, p.143). As a result the modern self is fragmented, leading to tension and anxiety. Surveillance in any number of ways, from cameras, inspection, psychologists and social workers, increase the sense of needing to measure up, and since societal ideals are less secure and less fixed. Such required measuring up has to be internalised. Individuals become narcissistic and shame prone, always aware of the observation of others. These narcissistic selves make good consumers and a good workforce.

These are grim points of view, which many may not recognise, but, as Bradshaw (2005) points out, the power of shame '*lies in its darkness and secrecy*' (p. 147). By exposing how shame is at work we can set up approaches to prevent it, and reduce its effects, such as violence, addiction and crime.

Deliberate shaming is also used as a tool for social control or reform, and recent governments have been concerned to use naming and shaming of schools, hospitals and other organisations and sectors of society, and especially younger people. As I mentioned earlier, when a society is under pressure, it seems to foster bullying (Hazler, p.39; Cooper in Hunter-Carsch, *et al.* 2006, p.9). Therefore if the education system and schools are under pressure and reflect society's bullying culture, it is possible, in a trickle down effect, that children are being shamed from above in order to create passive, compliant behaviour, and help achieve targets.

Given that my original question on p.14, asked how to prevent the perpetuation of abuse of children within society and later on p.18 '*does education in emotional intelligence have a role to play in preventing abuse and contributing to improving the outcome for children?*', perhaps a more pertinent question is '*whether modern schooling contributes to abuse through shaming?*'

Leafgren (2008) tells of an incident in a nursery school. One boy Reuben, fell on a hard linoleum floor as the class were moving in silent lines to the rear of the hall. Another child Julian left his place in the line, gently helped Reuben up and asked if he was alright. The other children stayed resolutely in line, in silence. The teacher held up two fingers and told Julian that he had transgressed twice. First he was out

of line and secondly, he was speaking. He would therefore stand at the wall at break-time. Leafgren comments

*I saw clearly that Julian's actions were 'good' – demonstrating care, empathy, courage and kindness – and yet, he was punished. For 'good' is also defined by teachers and children in school as order, silence and stillness - in other words, compliance. (Leafgren, 2008, p.331)*

She continues;

*... this study engages in the complexity of 'goodness' As teachers communicate to the children in their care that their positive regard is 'conditional' (Rogers, 1980) and so swaddle them in their social, moral and spiritual practice that they are compelled to remain steadfastly still in an orderly line, even as their friend falls and cries out (as did the children in Mrs Buttercup's line) – it appears that this complexity is being overlooked. While teachers may believe that demanding and coercing compliance is 'for your own good', Miller (1983 [1990]) confronts the damage that can be done to children by what she terms 'poisonous pedagogy' (ibid, p.333)*

Such complicated lessons for Julian who was shamed in front of the class because he was good.

It is important to point out here that I do not want to take an anti-teacher stance, any more than I am anti-parent. One of the underlying arguments of this thesis is how adults are often in pain themselves, and how this has frequently been a generational pattern. What is important is to accept what is happening in order to break that pattern for both adults and children, as occurred in the following example:

*I have come to a frightening conclusion. I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or de-humanised. (Ginott, 1972, cited in Weiss, 2006, p.153)*

### **Shame as a tool**

The temptation may be to use shaming as a tool, because as a means of social control it makes classrooms manageable. Unfortunately shaming, according to Pattison (2000):

*has the advantage of subverting people psychologically from within. They are not then able to assert themselves against their oppressors. (Pattison 2000, p.173)*

*Shamed people, like depressed people, may be unhappy but they are also malleable, quiescent and biddable. There are then, considerable advantages from some perspectives to the social promotion of group and individual shame. (p.175)*

The shame produced by such social control is not necessarily apparent. The child may be shamed already and yet more shaming may be the trigger for the behaviour to escalate from *withdrawal*, *avoidance*, or *attack-self*. Many girls and an increasing number of boys engage in self harm (Fox & Hawton, 2004, p.17) probably unbeknown to teachers. Shame is used increasingly through exclusion (Cooper, in Hunter-Carsch *et al.* 2006, p. 8). Chronic shame is said by Dutton (1999, p.3) and by Nathanson (1992, p.367) to be one of the factors for becoming violent, by producing an *attack-others* response, with detachment from the emotions of others, making them the repository for their rage. Initially the shame may be covered, but given the right set of stress circumstances it will result in abuse or attack. So a child who is already shamed may react apparently irrationally, and turn aggressive, thereby inviting further shaming. Many children are already at that point, according to the accounts of increasingly violent incidents in schools (Miles, 1995, p.237).

The cycle of shame may therefore continue outside of the home or the classroom. Either children may be shamed into submission with their peers and risk being bullied, or they may come to see the shaming teacher as a role model.

The possibility of my becoming aggressive was there because I was a victim of bullying and physical punishment, I was taught to deny and devalue myself, and had a profound sense of self contempt and unlikeable-ness. At school I had never really been bullied and though I found some children intimidating, I had friends, and was more cowed by the adults. So I was an ideal pupil most of the time. I had not become a bully at school either, merely a rather anxious, passive, diffident person, attempting to be very good, always kept in check by profound shaming. What I feared most was the critical look which produced the shame-humiliation response (Nathanson, 2000, p.141), and the comment I could not answer. So how was the restraint lifted?

## **Scene 4      Still Looking for answers**

The more I wrote about my story and reflected on the issues arising from it, the more I found myself constantly asking, wanting to know still, 'Why? Why was I violent and not others?' Was it, I had wondered, simply that bullying caused a violent response? That did not seem to be born out by my behaviour before I married. I had also looked at the question of shame over a long time and felt that some of the answers lay there. Sexual abuse also can result in violence and aggression, (Drauker, 1992, p.19) but, as I described in Act 2, Scene 2, p. 95, I was ambivalent about whether that had really happened to me. I needed an answer, a pattern because there was the danger of descending into shame once again.

In the course of my research I came across references to attachment theory. I was especially interested in what has been described as insecure attachment as it relates to aggression in childhood (Cowie, 1995, p.14), and in intimate partner violence (Dutton, 1999, 2005; Holtzworth-Munroe 2000). This is rejected as a possible explanation of IPA by feminists (Nixon, 2007, Dobash & Dobash *et al.* 1992). However, since I seemed to be accommodating gendered power issues in violence against women as well as psychodynamic factors, and accepting family systems as a cause of violence, I decided to look also into insecure attachment.

### **Attachment**

Attachment theory was initially developed over the 1950s and 60s by John Bowlby (1969) as he was exploring the interaction between children's development and the care they receive:

*Children are not slates from which the past can be rubbed by a duster or sponge, but human beings who carry their previous experiences with them and whose behaviour in the present is profoundly affected by what has gone before'. (Bowlby 1951, cited in Schofield & Beck, 2006)*

*The important element in a child's development is that there should be a 'warm, intimate and continuous relationship'. (Bowlby, 1953, cited in Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2003)*

Bowlby's theory was that infants have a biological drive to seek proximity to a protective adult, usually the primary caregiver, in order to survive danger. The infant needs a secure base from which to learn to feel safe, then to be able to manage the anxiety of the gaps when the carer is absent. Eventually the child will

use this as a base from which to explore and return, and also to learn cues about feelings and behaviour and the infant's own place in the world (Cowie, 1995, p.5).

Schofield and Beck (2006) describe four main attachment patterns, both secure and insecure which can be summarised briefly.

A **secure** attachment is formed when the caregiver is sensitive to the child's needs, is available, accessible and flexible, and the infant feels understood, accepted and valued. They are later helped to make choices and be effective, and go on to develop self esteem and the ability to manage feelings and behaviour.

There are then three **insecure** attachment patterns, which I shall summarise:

If the caregiving is not warm or sensitive to the infant's needs, and inclined to take over intrusively, the infant may feel rejected and that their feelings are not taken into account. They then learn to shut down feelings and to avoid provoking rejection or intrusion. In this way the caregiver may stay closer or not interfere. This comes to be called an **avoidant or dismissive** pattern.

An **anxious/ambivalent** attachment arises when the infant cannot tell which response will be forthcoming from the caregiver, sometimes it is accepting at other times not, and it is sometimes insensitive. The caregiver is uncertain and not effective. This makes the child demanding in order to hold on to the attention, or helpless when the strategy does not work. The infant becomes clingy, preoccupied, demanding, distrustful and resistant.

If the caregiver is completely unpredictable, rejecting and frightening, or frightened of the child, they may become helpless or hostile to the infant. This causes a lot of anxiety for the infant who becomes confused and demonstrates disorganised behaviours. Over time they develop controlling patterns of behaviour which help them feel some sort of security. This may break down, and fear and anxiety return in times of stress. This is termed **disorganised** or **unresolved**.

Strong attachments may be created within an insecure avoidant, ambivalent or disorganised attachment pattern, but the important thing seems to be whether the

attachment is secure or insecure, not whether it appears strong. (Schofield & Beck 2006, p.37)

This concept of the nature of the attachment's importance caused me to reflect again on my relationship with my mother. I had often wondered at my strong attachment to her given the pain involved in the relationship. I told the story earlier in Act 1, Scene 1, p.47, of how I responded with tears while doing my nursing training, as I first heard rejection explained, because it described her behaviour so closely.

It seemed that I might have developed an avoidant and dismissive pattern of attachment. It is possible that this had developed as I became more mobile and independent, so that the first twelve months gave me some sense of security, which would then have been eroded over the years, so that as I became a toddler she experienced me as a threat, a threat whose spirit needed to be broken. I was the classically well-behaved but ignored child at school, never asking for help, always complying, quite fearful. It was very clear to me that my emotions were considered irrelevant or bad. My mother wanted perfect children, and drilled us to behave the way she wanted.

I also grew up to be desperately anxious about being abandoned. My mother's constant threat to leave home (probably quite idle) would have fixed that also, and I was always needing to know whether she loved me.

***I once asked her as we walked to church together perfectly amicably on a pleasant summer morning whether she loved me. 'Well yes,' she replied, 'but I don't like you.' If my spirit hadn't been broken before, my heart was certainly broken that day.***

This incident seems to indicate that there were times when the relationship might have seemed to be going reasonably well, and I would occasionally demonstrate some preoccupation (ambivalence) with whether I could keep it that way. Was it now safe? This incident was probably the last time I asked that question. It proved to be very difficult to reverse the idea that I was unlikeable, and I still have trouble with it.



Therefore though I may have been strongly attached to my mother it was an insecure attachment to quite a degree.

*avoidant children and young people range from those who function reasonably well and are merely rather cool, reserved and with a tendency to focus on things rather than people, reason rather than emotion, to those who struggle to maintain relationships and who become angry, isolated and, in more extreme cases turn to aggression and antisocial behaviour when stressed.* (Schofield & Beck 2006, p.75)

However, the addition of shame to the mix kept me docile and I had not become an aggressive child. I was the reserved, somewhat aloof type. As a nurse I would catch my self walking onto a ward and starting to strip beds, and suddenly realise I had not spoken to the patients. I was focussed on the things I had to do, rather than the people. At least I could remedy this, but I had to work at it. What I had not recognised was the anger simmering beneath.

### **Light at the end of the tunnel**

The WAVE Report (Hosking & Walsh, 2005)<sup>26</sup>, which is an eight year study into the root causes of violence, discusses the effects of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on victims of trauma and its links with violence. According to the report, the American Psychiatric Association defines Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as exposure to a traumatic event followed by persistent re-experiencing of that event, along with avoidance and high arousal.

*Re-enactment is a common feature of PTSD. It is the term used for a compulsive (and often unconscious) need to re-experience the overwhelming emotion of the original event. (p. 58)*

The WAVE Report defined a propensity to violence, often caused by insecure attachment, as *the 'tendency in a child, adolescent or adult to be more likely to respond to a given provoking trigger with violence'* (Hoskings & Walsh, 2005, p.16). In other words someone with such a propensity to violence, caused through their childhood, might become violent when triggered by something that relates to the trauma subconsciously (p. 57).

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<sup>26</sup> HOSKINGS, G. & WALSH, I. (2005) **The WAVE Report: Violence and What To Do About It** Croyden: The Wave Trust

*Re-enactment usually involves a moment of choice. Some people continue to take the role of victim...others decide that they [won't]. (Hosking & Walsh, 2005, p.58)*

This, I realised, related directly to my sense of recognising the feelings of being hit in childhood when my husband lashed out, and then refusing to allow myself to be hit by him without a fight.

*The reflex to be violent in those who have been traumatised through violence and chosen to stop being victim can be very strong. An important element of this pattern is that the action reflex often does not pass through the conscious mind. The original trauma becomes emotionally locked into the limbic system and our responses to it, which may include the hair trigger reflex, by pass the frontal lobe. As our reactions are not controlled by thinking we may try to persuade ourselves (by rational thought) that we should not feel this way or act this way – but our bodies persist in doing so. (ibid, p.58)*

Again I felt I clearly recognised this as a description of my responses to my son. I would often have had no idea that I was in any state, not even that tension was mounting. In fact I usually felt depressed. I did not want to hate my son, I loved him. What happened when I would smack him would happen in a flash. I often did not plan to hit him, another reason I knew it was wrong, I was not in control. I frequently would refrain from smacking him at all, and used other methods of dealing with him, then with no warning the feelings were back and I had acted. The worst aspect of the whole situation was how I felt about A. once that happened, which was that I had strong impulses to annihilate him. I knew that these feelings were completely unreasonable. This awareness of how I felt seemed detached somehow, almost separate from reality. I knew I could not and would not go so far as to damage him physically, but the power of the feelings was what drove me to ask for help. I used to be grieved to see him swallow his response down when I got angry, and I knew this did not bode well for his future.

As Dutton (1999, p.437) describes, the pattern is for cyclical tension to mount. In this way, followed by outbursts and then externalising the blame (Ibid, p.6). I blamed A's behaviour for my response even though I was aware I was being unreasonable. At one level I found it hard to acknowledge that, and would have a sense that I had to remain angry to justify it having happened.

I had never previously felt that this sense of not having control would be seriously accepted as a valid statement. It was beginning to seem, however, that my hair

trigger response could possibly be explained, if I had PTSD. Maybe there was an answer somewhere in this scenario. If it were true that I had experienced trauma, then it is possible violence was predictable, given a trigger like being hit around the head again. Yet I did not even know that I could claim a trauma, I felt perhaps I was being too dramatic.

### **Trauma Theory**

It was then that I turned to an article by Dr Don Dutton, called The Traumatic Origins of Intimate Rage (1999). This article is actually about men who batter, but as I read it I was struck by the proposition that they often had a combination of three early experiences. These were 1. experiencing violence towards self (or witnessing violence), 2. shaming, and 3. insecure attachment.

When the three components of insecure attachment, shaming and experiencing or witnessing violence are put together therefore, this apparently constitutes a trauma source.

*Although [experiencing or witnessing] parental abuse, being shamed and being insecurely attached are each sources of trauma in and of themselves, the combination of the three over prolonged and vulnerable developmental phases constitutes a dramatic and powerful trauma source. (Dutton, 1999, p.437)*

This combination, according to Dutton's Trauma Theory, is enough to cause what he calls a temporally-delayed response (p.438). Though the individual grows up to develop new ways of thinking about the world, self and other, if their original model has been established at critical times in personality formation, it may then continue to operate outside of conscious awareness, and produce patterns of behaviour that are inconsistent with how people normally experience them (Ibid, p.437). Once more this resonated with my experience.

The link between PTSD and anger is made once again by Dutton, with the danger of criminality, suicide, depression, borderline personality, impulsivity, aggression and violence (Ibid, p.438). Trauma has the effect of creating high levels of arousal, anger and anxiety as well as an unstable sense of self. Again, some of these I could relate to. I had experienced violence from my parents along with shaming through being bullied by the mother to whom I had an insecure attachment. I had a poor

ego strength and sense of self worth, and I was also, at the time, emotionally confused between A. and myself as a child, as he looked very as I had in photographs at the same age. It began to look as though I may, after all have a trauma source.

Such a source, therefore, would leave me with a propensity to violence which was not triggered until my husband began to hit me, especially around the head. So I am suggesting, with a danger of using self diagnosis quite wrongly, that this is one of the reasons for my violent responses. The other factor, I believe, is my denial about my parents' behaviour. I had absorbed their estimate of me and their treatment of me as a normal, acceptable, and good way to bring up children (Miller, 1987) and, therefore, neither recognised the anger, or considered anything wrong with corporal punishment. This added to my propensity to violence. I believe that though some people experience abuse and are not violent as a result, it may be their awareness of the abuse done to them which in some cases affects their response to it and enables them to overcome any propensity to violence (Pelzer, 2002, p. 165). Whereas, my inability to recognise my parents' treatment of me as wrong or harmful led to the pattern repeating itself (Miller, 1987, p.25). The trigger of my husband's violence meant that using corporal punishment was the way for my immature caregiving skills to erupt in frustration at my son outside of conscious volition, and against how I believed I wanted to act.

Though, as Alice Miller discusses, Hitler's personality (amongst that of other tyrants) and his crimes can be understood through the story of his treatment by his parents (Miller, 1987, p.142 & 1992, p.88), I have come to realise how less obviously brutal treatment might still have poor outcomes. The way adults treat children produces emotion which may not be released or recognised until, as adults, they are in a position to do some serious damage. This reflection on myself indicates to me that it may be even the less serious violence of corporal punishment, along with shaming which may trigger susceptible children into violence and aggression. Any combination of Dutton's (1999) three factors can be seriously detrimental to children and cause anti-social behaviour. The violence might possibly not emerge till adulthood and may affect their future parenting skills, given the triggers.

This suggests a high degree of care is required from adults from all walks of life, and from those who organise systems and structures, in order that children, whose

inner and private lives may be invisible, as mine was, are not provoked into aggression, and are not traumatised at any level by individual or structural bullying and shaming.

In the introduction to the thesis I described how passionate I now feel about safeguarding children, after being the way I was with my son. How did it come about? Mostly of course it was always there. That, I hope, is the real me. It was the me I wanted to be: the mother who wanted to make sure everything was right for her son, to read him stories and make him laugh, to teach him games and show him the world and all it offered. I loved him. Something else got in the way, the trauma I had not even understood, and therefore was unable to deal with. As I have described in Act 2, Scene 2, (p. 89), therapy was the turning point in my life. But to bring about the total transformation other factors were involved, which it is important for me to address.

## **INTERMISSION**

### **Peregrination - journey of a life time**

*Per-e-gri-nate: to journey, travel or wander from place to place*

*Pil-grim-age: a long journey or search of great significance<sup>27</sup>*



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<sup>27</sup> From Encarta Dictionary UK

## **Scene 1    A Journey of Faith**

Alongside the story I have already told so far, there is another story which provides a strong context for all the other narratives in this account, and yet so far has merely shimmered in the background, either threateningly or enticingly according to where and when. It is the story of a pilgrimage through a life, a peregrination through the pitfalls and obstacles, the joys, the sanctuaries and friendships; from being a child in the 1950s in a strictly fundamentalist religious family, to becoming the person I am now, whoever that may be.

I had not, I realised as time went on during the process of writing my thesis, made anything much of my religious faith in my writing. I kept mentioning it in passing and had no plans to do any more than that until, eventually, it seemed to start demanding that I address it. I came to feel that as a factor, faith could not be left out. Religion was not the cause of the bullying, though it was used as reinforcement. At the same time it was a rich source for recovery and growth, and was involved in the process of me becoming the person that I became. At this point in the narrative, therefore, I feel it is necessary to bring into the equation of my stories the positive, as well as the negative elements of my religious upbringing, that enabled me to still have a faith I consider relevant, though one that is changing and adapting. So far I have only dwelt on the rescued, victim/persecutor aspect of my identity. There must also have been other elements that left me some space to grow in other contexts, other discourses. My life was not all suffering and conflict.

To introduce this as part of the whole could have complicated the main narratives so I am presenting it separately as an intermission. It is still a framework in which I find meaning, though I shall describe how that was threatened at one point.

### **Through the eyes of a child**

***It is my first day at school. It is September, and I was four in July. I have never been to nursery or playgroup, though I do go to Sunday school where we are divided into small classes with a friendly teacher, who my parents know.***

***This classroom is big but it has interesting things around it and there is a house corner which I very much want to***



*play in. Lots of children are playing in the room already. They all seem to know one another, and what to do. My mother and I approach the teacher who, seemingly from a great height, tells me to go and play. She reminds me of the woman who glared at me as I tried to play with her kitten under the garden gate when I was little. I go and look in the house corner. There are people in there and I am not sure if I can go in. I am afraid and nervous.*

*Later on an older woman in a green overall teaches us to sing 'One, two, three, four, five, once I caught a fish alive'. That is quite good fun. At playtime the staff hold up sweets, apples and biscuits and ask whose they are but I don't have anything. I don't know why. We all get a little bottle of milk and a straw. I like the little bottles, because they are miniatures of the ones at home.*

*We learn to draw round letters and write our names and then how to write other letters, which I am quite good at, and learn to read. I love reading. The books are about Janet and John and I soon start to read through them very quickly. They are a very happy family and have a dog. I don't actually like dogs much, but I like to find out what happens next, and am very pleased when I hear someone say over my head, 'She has read them all'. They had to go to another classroom to find me some more books. It makes me feel proud to be able to read so quickly. In the afternoons the woman in the overall reads us stories of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox. They are not really comfortable stories. But I do enjoy story time.*

*There are a few things I don't like. I have to put my hand up to ask if I can go to the toilet. This I find I cannot do; I do not like having to ask in front of people so I have some accidents, which is even worse. The dinner women think I am dirty. In the end my mother has to ask if I could just go to the toilet without asking, so that is better.*

*Also, the children are alright but they are quite loud and confident. I am not. I do make friends with twin boys, Richard and Christopher. It is easy for me to tell them apart though they are identical. I do not much like the teacher who we first met and she hits people, especially Nigel who smudges his paper. And she thinks is very bad at his work.*

*I don't like the music lessons, apart from singing. We sing a lot at church and Sunday school, but at school we go into the hall next to the classroom, and bang things. There is no music, just lots of horrible noise. It is no fun at all.*

*In the next classroom the teacher wears red and orange nail varnish, which flakes off in bits on the floor as she goes past. She has blond hair, and is quite young and pretty. She looks different to the other teachers and seems nicer than ours.*

*We always start the day with assembly in the hall where there is a nature table. There is a teacher there who has the same blouse in three different colours. This captivates me, I don't know why. One day my feet are so*



*cold from walking to school in the snow that it makes me cry; no-one notices.*

*We sometimes do P.E. in the playground. The teacher who takes us tells us to jump up and to land with our feet flat and our knees straight. One day the Head Teacher, who walks with callipers and a stick, comes in and tells us that we should bend our knees when we land. I wonder if she hurt her legs because someone told her to jump wrong, like us. She seems annoyed with the teacher, though she doesn't say anything to her at the time.*

*Sometimes we get to do art with small sticky shapes. I cannot do this well and it upsets me because I can manage everything else alright. This makes me feel stupid because the pieces keep sticking to me not the paper. They look messy, and won't go where I am trying to put them. I don't want to do this anyway. I like drawing and painting.*

*We finish school at four o'clock and my mother always comes to meet me. She talks to the teacher and they become friendly. Then we walk home and have some tea.*

### **Innocent dreams**

*The innocent is the part of us that trusts life, ourselves, and other people. It is the part of us that has faith and hope, even when things look impossible. (Pearson, 1991, p.71)*



*I quite clearly recall one summer afternoon, cycling past a roadside hoarding on which was a picture of the typical housewife of the late 1950s, dark hair in a permanent wave, white teeth, and elegant style, and wondering if I would look like that when I was grown up. What would I be like? Who would I be? How could I have imagined?*

*A mile or so back down the road was a similar hoarding with the Ovaltine girl standing with an armful of corn in a field filled with sunshine, her face open to the joy of living. My heart would lift whenever I saw her; I so wanted that to be me. Photographs show me to be skinny and pale with a mop of dark hair, one of the causes of my constant anxiety. My mother's name for me, at least one of them, was Wild Nell. It seemed, as I submitted to her painful attempts to tame it, to be my fault that my hair was uncontrollable.*

*I was a dreamer, called Dilly Day Dream by my mother, and an optimist. I loved reading, which fuelled my dreams, and drawing which I did constantly. We had no TV until I was fourteen so had ample time for dreaming, reading and drawing. My mother took me to the library when*

*I was rather younger than the joining age, and they allowed me to join and have my own tickets. I was so proud. We had a ticket for each book allowed out and I went at least every fortnight, sometimes more often to change my four books. I loved that library. It was across the main road from where we lived, and had high Victorian windows. I had to pass through the adult section, past the reading room where elderly men dozed over the newspapers, to the separate room devoted to children's books which over time I worked my way round, finally graduating to the adult section. I loved the quiet and the anticipation of going home and opening a new book, a new story. Longing for friendliness, I read endless tales of boarding schools where 'chums' laughed merrily, wore fascinating uniforms, solved mysteries and went on picnics. I read too of Pollyanna, Anne of Green Gables and all the sequels, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm, Little Women, Heidi, , What Katy Did, and What Katy Did Next, and so on, and was completely drawn into the descriptions of dappled sunlight, frothy orchards and community gatherings, like pot-luck picnics and sewing bees. There is a sense in which this provided an alternative life to the one I endured at home. Girls were supportive of one another, were relaxed and competent. My spirit was nurtured by the possibility of a different, more sociable and freer way of life. I dreamed also of becoming a ballerina and used to dance on the landing with the banister as the barre. I danced not just on tiptoe, but on points, without ballet shoes. I longed to ride too, and galloped around the playground at school, jumping imaginary fences in the long-jump pit with Jackie, my best friend.*

*Reality was more prosaic. We were not well off, so dancing and riding were out of the question, but we had relatives in the country, and I did spend one idyllic week in the large garden of my Great Aunt and Uncle's house, chasing off the cabbage white butterflies from the vegetable patch. We visited cousins who lived close to a golf course, where we stalked the adults among the long grass on their walks, near where the primroses and bluebells grew. I envied them their lively father, who came home quite late from work, but played cricket with them, and laughed and joked with us all.*

*I loved my father dearly when I was little. When I was born he apparently called me his little Daisy. This made me feel special, that he must love me. I longed to be called Daisy, sometimes pretending it was my middle name. He was much older than my mother and not well. He rarely played at all. In fact I doubt he knew how to play cricket or tennis. He did teach me to whistle. His world had been very different to ours, partly in Ulster and partly in rural Yorkshire, where he had to walk four miles to school. Though he was widely read, especially on theology and history, he had been forced to leave school at fourteen and become apprenticed to a butcher. He was a very serious man and very intense about religion, having for a time joined the Orange marches. He preached in his own church and as a local preacher around the local countryside. Though I was once told he joked with customers at work, and was known for his cheerfulness, it wasn't something we saw much of at home. His idea of a bit of fun was to wash up after Sunday lunch and to say that the fairies must have done it. I had a younger brother who I was sure was my mother's favourite. She called him her blue eyed boy, while I suffered the*

***string of less than complimentary epithets. He wasn't well, however, constantly suffering from asthma and having to stay off school; my mother was extremely protective of him. I once tried to pretend I was ill at school to get some attention but I had to spend the whole afternoon doing nothing instead of painting which I loved. I didn't try it again. In any case my brother was bullied at school. But though we fought, and he used to kick my shins, we played together. He always led and I followed. I learned about cars, played cricket and we shared reading interests as we got older. We read Sherlock Holmes, and I remember the Henry Cecil books about barristers. There were a lot of them but we read through the whole series. I learnt an awful lot about Roman Emperors, which briefly impressed my Latin teacher.***

***Although I loved learning, I would rather have just learned for fun. I read for the pleasure of learning, for instance I loved the name similarity of adjacent Uruguay and Paraguay, and drew maps of the area, moving on to read about the Aztecs and Mayans, and about all of South America. I once tried to map out the changing faces of the world from one civilisation to the next, but though I loved history and geography I did not like churning out facts and figures. I enjoyed biology when it was about animals, and I loved art.***

***Church was of course the dominant feature of our lives. I recall my brother and me once getting a fit of giggles as the collection plate came round. We desperately tried to pull ourselves together before disgracing the family, but it just got worse. We were normally quite used to sitting silently throughout long services. It is probably how I came to be such a daydreamer. When we were younger we used to play at churches, devising lists of hymns to sing and praying. My brother would preach. I remember inviting my father along to one of our services and being disappointed that he looked rather bored and didn't congratulate us on our piety.***

***My grandfather was the one person I would say loved me unconditionally and I loved him. I shared his birthday which created a bond. He came to tea every Friday and brought us sweets; Crunchie bars and barley twists.***

Following (Bunyan)<sup>28</sup> (1678) the Christian life is often seen in terms of a pilgrim setting out from the point of conversion and working towards transformation. This describes the role played by the archetype of the Seeker.

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<sup>28</sup> The Christian idea of pilgrimage originates in the Old Testament story of the Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years after God enables their rescue from the enslaving Pharaoh of Egypt, waiting to enter the land he had promised them. (Book of Exodus) More recently John Bunyan, who was imprisoned for his non-conformist preaching from 1660 -1672, and again in 1675, wrote The Pilgrim's Progress first published in 1678 (1996 Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions Ltd) This is an allegory which charts Christian's life from realising his sin to entering heaven.

### **Speaks the Seeker on her journey:**

*The quest always begins with yearning. We feel discontented, confined, alienated or empty. (Pearson, 1991, p.122)*

*The yearnings of our heart, however, are related to an inner hunger to know who we are at the soul level, (p.126)*

*The quest is the call [of the seeker] to experience rebirth and transformation, to die to the old, and to be reborn to the new. (p.133)*

***It is 1957, and I am sitting in a service at the City Temple Church on Hessle Road in Hull. This is a Sunday evening in the summer and the sun streams through the high windows which have just a few panes of stained glass. It is a traditional building with a balcony surrounding three sides of the church and long dark wooden pews covered with a blue carpet-type runner, which is itchy on my bare legs. I am sitting near the front with my mother.***



***Everything there is so familiar to me; the walls and balcony, the wooden pews, the blue velvet cloth on the lectern with the initials IHS embroidered in curly gold letters, the brass rails at intervals on the ends of the pews. It has a very special atmosphere. There are prayers, extemporary prayers that seem to go on forever. There is usually a testimony and a solo. I enjoy these along with the good old-fashioned hymn singing. I love the words, with their poetry and quaint meaningfulness.***

***Unusually, because all the leaders in our churches are men, tonight we are listening to a woman speaker; Sometimes women sing and give testimonies, but they do not preach. This is no ordinary woman, she is Sunny Liston. The name itself is rare and somewhat exotic for these parts, and of course she is not from round here. She is a missionary, from Africa no less. She is a small, elderly woman, or so it seemed to me, and very vital, fast talking and fascinating.***

***As she talks about Jesus, a story I have known for as long as I can remember, having heard it twice every Sunday and two or three times on Bank Holidays, this time I am gripped by it in a new way. I want so much to respond to this as I hear that Jesus died for us because of our sin. I feel great love for him and sorrow that our sins, including my own, have caused him to suffer, and I so want to do what is right. I know very well that I am a sinner, and I don't want to carry on hurting Him. So, when the time comes to respond it takes some courage but as everyone's eyes are shut, eventually I raise my hand. I have been 'saved'. I am seven years old.***

### ***Growing into faith***

***In 1964 I attended a national camp with the young people from church. By now my brother and I were going to a different church from my parents, because it offered more for young people. It was much larger and there were some very good leaders who put a lot of time and effort in with the children and young people. Most were great storytellers so that, as well as hearing sermons, we were entertained but taught through story and visual aids. I know nothing now about who ran this camp, and I am surprised that I was allowed to go, but, in particular, I remember the constant laughter and joking over the meals and the washing up, and how it warmed me somehow. I was not too used to that sort of fun and I loved it. Generally, at home, life was a rather serious and intense business, full of lessons to be learned and relationships to negotiate, and traps to fall into. My mother's younger brother was fun and would tickle me and tease me and, though I hated being tickled, I looked forward to the bit of life he brought. But here at the camp was the closest I got to my earlier yearnings to go to boarding school. Yes, this was how it could be. There was daily teaching as well as fun, and I felt the need to respond at a new age and with new understanding to the 'gospel call' during one of these sessions.***

***I was baptised by immersion shortly afterwards at the church my brother and I attended. I started attending a Tuesday evening group for studying the Bible, which I enjoyed very much. The man who led it was gentle, funny, and one of the great storytellers. I worked my way through the Bible, answering a question on each chapter in it, in order to earn my own copy. When I finally received it I was very proud, even though there was no shortage of them at home. This one had a zip, and a leather cover. When I reached 15 years of age I became a Sunday School teacher myself and began telling stories. By that time I also spent Saturday evenings at the youth group which was mostly about spiritual growth and learning how to evangelise, as well as socialising. We all took it very seriously but we laughed a lot too.***

### ***Time for change***

***I would have loved to go to Art College but I don't know that I ever expressed that to anyone, and in any case had an idea that it was out of my league. Looking back now, especially with my daughters' experiences -one of whom studied textiles and costume design, and another is studying interior architecture and design - I can see that my future could well have lain that way if I had had some guidance. This, however, was the 1960s, and, in my frame of experience (even more limited than most due to the strong religious framework) the idea of creativity as a lifestyle was unexplored. Women could paint or draw as a hobby but these things did not impinge on your role as a woman. The aim was to marry and have children, and to be a good wife. Having a nice home and cooking nice meals for a husband who could provide was the norm. We all admired those who had a boyfriend with a car, or who was in a good job, and though attraction was the main element we always bore in mind whether this might be 'the one'.***

*So, after some deliberation about whether to go into teaching or the police, it seemed to me that nursing was in my blood, and that after all I would follow my mother and great grandmother into the profession. It had always seemed romantic, when I was young, seeing the nurses from the hospital next to the library, wearing cloaks, aprons and caps, and obviously, most of all, caring for people. So, in 1966, having been told by my mother that I could not stay on, I left school at sixteen to start a pre-nursing course at the College of Technology. We worked in each department of the three local hospitals without much patient contact, though I remember being deeply affected at the sight of an elderly gentleman weeping as his wife was admitted to hospital, as they had rarely been apart. I felt very sure that this was what I wanted to do.*

*At eighteen I enrolled as a student nurse at the Royal Infirmary and my sense of vocation grew. I progressed from a yellow uniform to lilac, and finally got my cap, though by this time these were somewhat disappointingly only made of card. Aprons were no longer worn in our school of nursing. Some of my friends chose where to train by the uniform they would get to wear.*

*Quite traumatically, when I was eighteen, the church I attended split, with disagreements over the minister who was accused of spending too much church money on the Manse. I guess there were other, deeper issues, like his theology which was based on Puritan teaching. To me it seemed quite outrageous and sad to see these men I held in great esteem arguing. The minister had done a great deal for the church, numbers were up and baptisms taking place. So, somewhat disillusioned, I began to attend other churches and another young peoples' group.*

#### **Moonlit Bay**

*By 1969 I had been involved in local beach missions for children for some years with that group, and I wanted to broaden my horizons. So, along with a friend, I went to help at a beach mission in Llandudno. We would spend the mornings playing and storytelling with children on the beach, and the evenings helping to run Open Air services on the promenade. In turn we used to be asked to stand up on a box and answer questions about our faith. I noticed that people said they had things like 'peace', 'joy' or a 'purpose in living' since they had become Christians. I became uneasily aware I did not feel like that at all. Sure enough my turn came and I was duly asked to stand up and, though I answered in the same way that others had, I knew for a fact it wasn't true. I had after all been a Christian since I was seven; it would be hard to say how it made a difference to me. I knew nothing else. Nevertheless I still knew the words were empty. I had no deep feelings or special purpose that I knew of in my life. I still had a great time on the mission and on one occasion was talking to a woman and her daughter when she asked if she could come back and talk more, and bring her husband who, it turned out, was Lord Robens, Chairman of the National Coal Board. I was quite relieved that they did not in fact return. Zealous as I was I wasn't sure I felt up to that.*

*A few nights later we stood on the promenade listening to the preacher. Darkness had fallen over the warm summer evening and the moon was*

*full, hanging over and reflected in the sea that was lapping at the beach. I was thinking about what was being said and all that had been said during the week. For the first time, I became aware of a powerful sense that Jesus loved me, that he knew me by name, had died for me, and loved me, personally. It was a life changing moment. I progressed from responding out of a sense of duty, to a real experience that meant I wanted to serve God. I decided at that point that I could not live for myself alone, that any job I did would have to be concerned for others. Nursing, therefore, was confirmed for me as the right choice and I assumed I would probably become a missionary.*

*When I got home I really wanted to learn more about the Bible and bought books to help me study. I became even more active in my young people's group. This group were very evangelical and everything had a strong religious outcome. So that even on a day out to the sea, we ended up sitting in a boat in Bridlington harbour, singing religious 'choruses' while people stood around listening.*

*With a fresh incentive to care for people I went back to work. Working on male wards was much more comfortable for me as they tended to have a happier atmosphere. The men would joke, very gallantly, and I suppose flirt a bit, even the older men. For my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday they had a whip round and bought me a huge box of chocolates. The female wards were often very concentrated on the illnesses, and much more subdued. I couldn't joke with women so easily.*

*I found it a very hierarchical world. Every new group of students, a 'School', that started in either the May or September of each year knew full well its place in the pecking order, and though I got on well with peers, and students from more senior 'Schools', the ward sisters and tutors often seemed to interpret that my shyness either constituted an attitude or that I lacked initiative, or I was stupid.*

*It was, a self fulfilling way to treat someone. I was so quiet that initiative frequently wasn't noticed. I came to feel stupid and I did develop an attitude towards some of those in authority. One of these was Deputy Matron. When I had to report a back injury she had brushed it off as though I had made it up and was very hostile. (This was not unusual I discovered later. I worked with a Staff Nurse, who was threatened with the sack if she didn't stop taking time off because of her back problems. She died of cancer of the spine aged 23.)*

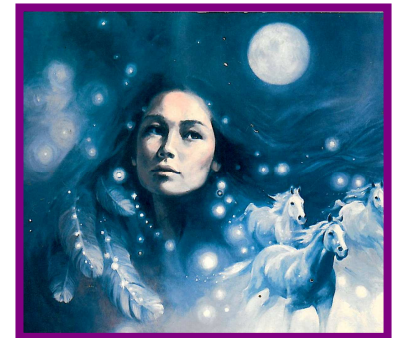
*'Good God, what is it?' remarked one Ward Sister as I appeared on her ward for the first time. I am tall and my height makes me far more visible than I wish to be. I felt cut by that remark and always felt awkward in her presence. One morning, after I had been successfully and peacefully dressing a particular geriatric patient with hemiplegia regularly for some weeks, she bustled in and briskly took over as I started. Neither the patient nor I were helped. I felt angry, silly and helpless. This was a recurring pattern.*



***For the most part I did well enough by slipping quietly under the radar and passed my final exams, much to the disgust of Deputy Matron. She was amazed that her favourite had failed and that I had had the temerity to pass. After I had become a Staff Nurse she accosted me one lunch time as I was leaving the staff dining room and demanded that I take off my uniform immediately. To be fair I had borrowed a friend's and it was rather shorter than mine but, as I was working in theatre and only wore uniform for half an hour, it hadn't seemed important. My response was 'What, here?' This did not help our relationship. Just occasionally with incidents like this I would express myself and the anger and resentment that was bubbling away inside, with insolence; it was a voice of sorts I discovered. Then I would retreat back into mouse like behaviour, unable with different personalities to prevent myself feeling intimidated.***

### **The Seeker encounters doubt**

*The inner journey we must all travel to its end, beset by danger and doubt, fear and loss of faith. (Pearson, 1991, p. 131)*



***Inevitably, at various points, I experienced some doubts about my faith, such as about God's anger, and at one point when I was in my late teens I considered seeking the truth in other religions. At the time there was a new version, a paraphrase, of the Bible coming out, a book or two at a time. I bought, for some unknown reason, The Minor Prophets. I hadn't much idea of what these were all about and, at that time, hadn't much idea of the chronology of these Bible stories, though I knew the stories up to the exile of the Israelites inside out. What struck me the most was that though God did express anger at how the people of Israel disobeyed him, it was more a cry to be heard than a threat. It was not disobedience as such that hurt him, but living selfishly, unjustly, ignoring the poor. I understood that the prophets were expressing what would be a result of continuing to live for self and wealth, with no concern for the other, and that God was, as it were, at the end of his tether with them. In Hosea God speaks of pouring himself out for the people, and stooping down to feed them like a father feeding his child. God was saying in effect 'How can I reject you? I cannot do it' (Hosea 11). I was once again struck very forcibly by the love of God, this time as Father. It moved me very deeply, and it put my fears at rest and enabled me to continue to believe.***

***I stayed with the youth group I had joined after my own church split until I left home after completing my nursing training. It had been during my time with that group that I had discovered that I had some leadership qualities. When I was with people with whom I felt secure, I could begin to exercise some ability to lead. I was just discovering that I could say things and people would listen, and I began to grow in confidence. So much so that, even to me, the seminar I had to give at the end of my nursing training contrasted remarkably with the one at the beginning, in***



***that I told a joke and was entirely at ease. Whereas, before, I had to quickly say what had to be said, verbatim, and sit down.***

***I still had little confidence in the hierarchical world of work, where I was a sitting target for deputy matrons and ward sisters who like my mother described me as passive and dopey, and 'lacking initiative'.***

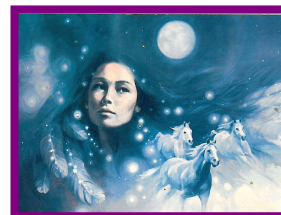
I've been frequently told by all sorts of people that I'm serene and tranquil. I don't believe either description is right. What those in the hierarchy were encountering was someone primed to submit silently to authority, albeit not always with a good grace, and terrified of being judged not fit to be alive. The apparent serenity is waiting impassiveness, watching to see if it is safe. I think the rebel in me had been emerging at school, though only rarely. I was once sent to the Head for flicking ink pellets (inspired by comic books). She wasn't there, I was glad to report back somewhat smugly.

I think people who remind me of my mother paralyse me at some level. I met many such people in nursing, though when people got to know me I got on quite well, becoming a theatre nurse and working with large numbers of surgeons. There is a skill to be learned in theatre nursing and, if you can master it, you are respected. I enjoyed theatre very much and wanted to do some more training. The time had finally come for me to leave home.

## **Scene 2 Flying the web!**

### **The Seeker moves on:**

*The call to quest can come at any age, but it is clearest and most distinct in late adolescence and early adulthood. This is the time of exploration - exploring new lands, new ideas- the time to learn about the world. (Pearson, 1991, p.125)*



***I was twenty two years old when I finally left home in 1972. I had tried to leave when I was seventeen. I went for an interview to do orthopaedic nursing in Wales, but couldn't after all face leaving my mother. The attachment was still too strong at that stage. As long as I complied I felt quite close to her, despite the fact that we bickered. Once, when I was 21, she threw a kettle of water over me as I sat in the garden because I had plans to go out. I did not know she objected to this; it was an afternoon and we had not planned anything. Thankfully the kettle had not boiled.***

***Finally, however, I did break away, and went off with a friend L. to Essex, on a course in theatre nursing, to improve our skills and have some adventure. L. was someone who started work in the operating theatre at the same time I did. She was from the School before me, and was attractive, outgoing and popular. I had always thought her above me somehow, but we hit it off and helped one another learn the job. She did not share my faith but she was very patient with me. I spread my wings a little while we were together, went to pubs and parties, and had a few relationships. I was still fundamentally serious and intense, and avowedly religious. I even dragged her off to a church in London that worked out on the streets all night. I remember her being put off at the sight of people praying before they went out. 'It's like calling something creepy up,' she commented.***

***After we had completed our six months training, my friend and I moved into London to do some agency work and it was while we were there that we started to make plans to travel to Australia to work for a year or so. Over time, however, I could not shake off the memory that I had committed my life to God on that promenade in Llandudno, and that I should be doing something about serving him. I felt it wasn't my life to order. I looked up various Bible Colleges and found a course that looked suitable. So, quite suddenly, I told L. of my decision. I felt very awkward because we had, after all, agreed to travel together. I was startled that the expectation we would stay together meant she thought I wanted her to go with me to Bible College. 'You don't expect me to go there with you?' she said. She seemed to understand but I was very touched that this person I had always looked up to and admired had wanted me to be with her. One freezing cold January day I left nursing and trundled my belongings on the train to attend The Bible Institute, and she went off, eventually to Australia, and her travels.***

### **The Seeker's dream:**

*The seeker seeks to find a better future or found a more perfect world...We begin by longing for a return to the time of innocence (Pearson, 1991, p. 124)*



***This was my first experience of college life apart from my part time pre-nursing time at the College of Technology and I loved it, really loved it. Yes, there was prayer and study, which I did enjoy but, more significantly, there was community. It was like my dream of boarding school had come real at last, well, in part. It was a truly unconventional sort of college comprised of a series of once grand houses, whose leases had been bought by the wildly eccentric and lovable Principal because they had so few years left to run. The houses were shabby and faded, but beautifully gracious, and comprised a whole street. More properties were added as they became available. We had to share rooms, and were only allowed a bath once a week. Every day for half an hour, and for a full afternoon on Thursdays, we did chores of all sorts around the college campus. We cleaned, cooked, painted, wallpapered, repaired and gardened. The first room I slept in had four different wallpapers around the walls. None of the rooms had central heating and I was so cold I took to wearing floor length skirts; women were not allowed to wear trousers, except for chores. I had one of my rebellious moments arguing over this with a tutor ( he was very like my father). 'Lights out' was at 10.30pm, and woe-betide anyone who came in later than that; the warden would be waiting. That could be hard at 23 after having real responsibility in hospitals. But rules were a fact of life, and as long as we got in on time, and wore skirts, there was no one watching our every move. So it was like school but it was fun and intellectually stimulating. After nursing it was blissfully free from hierarchies, orders and stress. I felt very free.***

***I had chosen not to do a degree there because I did not want to have to learn Greek and Hebrew. This is a decision I have always regretted. Instead I chose to do a two year diploma in Biblical Studies. Because it taught theology, the course covered Biblical criticism which was all new to me, having simply been brought up to think the Bible arrived, not perhaps in one fell swoop, but completely unassailable. There was also the opportunity to study aspects of philosophy, and understand rationalism and relativism, for instance. Between nursing and religion I had had little time for wider interests, and was woefully unaware of the thinking of the wider world. These were views I had never heard of and, since the answers were all neatly supplied by the evangelical tutors, they were no threat to my faith then either.***

***I very much enjoyed being in a mixed environment. There were 120 students of all sorts of people. I fell in love with a dashing, bearded South African but it didn't work out. Just as well really, as if you went out with someone it usually meant that you were destined to marry them. The idea of living in Africa was anathema to me after all the missionary films I was shown as a child which had filled me with fear . Anyway I was sure that I was 'called' elsewhere, I thought, to Ecuador. A couple of men professed***

*to have fallen in love with me; both were men my friends were crazy about, so I avoided those. One wrote me the most beautiful, romantic poetry however.*

*The hardest part of the experience for me was the evangelism. Saturdays meant a spell with one of a number of teams, either going into pubs, conducting open air meetings or even knocking on doors. I was reduced to tears one day by a morning engaged in the latter. It made me feel so intrusive, I could not face it another minute. Every student was also obliged to spend a week in their final summer holiday on what was known as a Trek where they worked as a team in a church, which could be anywhere in the country. For the most part the community aspect of working and living with a team was wonderful. I had just met P. and was very happy. The experience was marred by the fact that during the week one of the team had been seen coming out of a public house! An inquest had to be held. It was all rather unpleasant.*

*Students were also expected to speak at meetings. The men would preach in church but the women went to Ladies Meetings where we were obliged to wear a hat. I was once taken to task by a very ancient gentleman at such a (Ladies) meeting in an antique tin tabernacle in a tiny backstreet, for using a modern version of the Bible instead of the Authorised King James Version.*

*It is hard to believe that this all took place in the 1970s, and that we all submitted with a good grace because it was training to be 'out in the mission field', where things could be much worse. I had a wonderful time. Along with a friend who played the piano, I sang in churches and folk clubs, drifted about in long skirts through gorgeous neglected Victorian gardens reading and writing poetry and, though there were restrictions, for the first time I felt free of that censure and personal scrutiny that had haunted me till then.*

*A lot happened to me in terms of faith while I was at College, and I felt that I was growing closer to God, which was always the goal for us then as evangelicals, but I did begin to feel that I needed some counsel, particularly about how I felt about my father. This was where my first experience of counselling occurred. The people I went to were wardens of the house I lived in. They were compassionate and non-judgmental. It was quite helpful, and I was very grateful.*

*I found it hard to leave the College and indeed for a year or so, I lived in a flat there while I worked at a local hospital as an agency nurse once more. My relationship with P, begun while I was at the college, developed into marriage and I thought that all my dreams were fulfilled. The excitement that a wedding entailed enabled me to make the break from the college. For a time I was Nurse Manager of a GP practice until, after three years, my son was born.*

### **Scene 3 From entrapment to liberation: A new world view**

#### **The Seeker continues:**

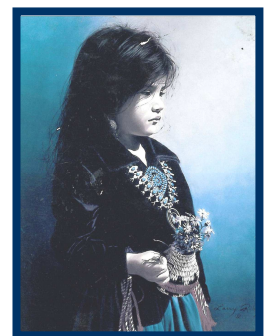


***I had always attended churches that had been conservative with a strong emphasis on salvation - securing one's place in heaven. Not long after we married we started attending a church with a radical (for an evangelical church) new emphasis on social justice. We spent ten years attending that church. I remember during this time being able to give up on the idea of needing a place in heaven. Previously I had been fearful about suffering and death, and concerned to be the right sort of Christian to be acceptable to God. I came home early from church one Sunday morning feeling very moved and took a moment or two, standing on my back door step, to recognize that my future survival was not what mattered at all. What did matter was that the justice God longed to see played out in the world should be achieved, and that my life should be lived out to that end and no other.***

***This recognition began to make me less inclined to hold on to the certainties of faith that I had been told were so imperative, and made me far more open to people and other points of view. Later my counselling course helped me to see that there were people outside of the church who had a much stronger ethical code than many Christians. I came to see that the God of the Bible is on the side of the poor and the vulnerable. This turned my whole life and upbringing on its head. Previously my view of the world had been coloured by a strict fundamentalist judgement-related philosophy, wrapped up in the idea that God loves us yet hates our sin, and that his son took the punishment for our sin upon himself.***

#### **The shadow Innocent recalls:**

***If we internalise other people's discriminatory, hostile, or otherwise harmful attitudes, we can continue to wage war on ourselves without having to figure out how to escape the situation or to experience fully our powerlessness in it. (Pearson, 1991, p.77)***



***As a child, far from being treated as though I were God's child, I was treated as though I belonged to the devil. I was told I was hateful. I suppose that the genuine belief was that unless one was saved from one's human nature then one was lost to the devil. All my parents' efforts were therefore aimed at making sure I didn't sin and lose myself. This despite also being taught that those who choose Jesus can receive forgiveness and all the love God is waiting to give, and that wrong actions or sins can be forgiven, and one cannot after making the choice be separated from God's love.***

***However, in my home and church 'backsliding' was a frequent talking point. People apparently did turn their backs on God, or more likely the church, and no-one was quite sure where that left them. So, for my parents, it was important to remember at all times to watch one's actions in case they led to backsliding or being hooked into sin, or even just caused a blockage between ourselves and God, so that when He spoke one might not hear. Then one could be in danger of choosing not to go God's way and of ending up in the wrong destination. Presumably, because they loved me, they did not want this to happen. Such a possibility was a great source of distress. So there was a real mixture of love and hate, conditional love, or love that felt like anything but love. Suspicion and mistrust of all my motives was the whole atmosphere, the air I breathed.***

***This had all affected many areas of life; how I viewed myself, others, the world, what I believed about the poor, about justice, right and wrong, crime, truth, how I lived out my faith, and my relationship with children. I recall pointing out a roadside hoarding about Christian Aid to my mother when I was very young, and saying that it was good wasn't it, that they were taking care of the poor? She said dismissively 'Well I suppose so, but they are about the social gospel.' That view is still held by many conservative Christians. But 20 years later it was becoming possible for me in this new environment to be less afraid of questioning both faith and beliefs, or more probably prejudices.***

### **Changing minds: The Seeker**

*No one is immune to the call of the unknown- whether we image it as the mountaintop, the new frontier of outer space or a new society, and whether its focus is riches,...political freedom and economic opportunity, the quest to expand consciousness...or a simple but unspecified yearning for more. (Pearson, 1991, p.124)*



***However, now in this new church, as I received what felt like the love of God or indeed anyone for the first time through counselling, I was being told that we are to accept people unconditionally and with positive regard; and for me that meant that God did that too. After all, we cannot do more than God to love, since God is love.***

### ***Incarnation***

***The story of how I came to find myself in regular therapy with the minister of the church, I have already told in Act 2, Scene 2, p. 93. As that counselling progressed and I began to take on board the healing process, I began to undergo some quite profound changes in many areas of selfhood and relationship with God which ultimately affected how I would view others, especially children. To take on board the idea that I was OK and that others were also OK, was the beginning, but Roger's philosophy of stepping into the other's world, moving about in it and understanding their experience and feeling (1980, p.142) struck a chord. I made a connection to the Incarnation story. It seemed very clear to me that the***



*whole idea of the Son of God coming to earth was simply God stepping into our world to experience what we felt and thought. Therefore, to empathise, as Rogers suggests, is to share the love of God with others. I have seen nothing that indicates Rogers ever made that connection after he rejected his own fundamentalist upbringing, so similar in many ways to mine with alcohol, dancing, cigarettes, cinemas etc all forbidden (Rogers, 1961, in Kirschenbaum & Henderson 1990, p. 7) but it shouts out to me. It made sense to me of God's love, and it started to change my view of my faith. This was difficult, exciting and frightening all at the same time. Though my emotions were being freed up, I needed this intellectual understanding to transform the way I lived in the world and the way I viewed others.*

*As well as feeling God's love, long held though sometimes unacknowledged assumptions about gender, race, war and the environment were spotlighted in the church's teaching, with the new scope that God's passion, expressed in the Bible, is that his people should live for each other. My belief that women were in subjection to men, now shifted with the recognition that there is no hint of woman's subordination 'in the beginning' until things started to go wrong. Therefore God's desire must have been for equality. Jesus had strong relationships with women as equals, breaking taboos to speak to them in public.*

*As a church we also looked together at economic issues of third world poverty, at the issue of nuclear weapons and their ability to destroy the Earth many times over and the environmental exploitation of the planet. We took on board the idea that as disciples we must discover what the kingdom of God is like and live it out now (Elliot, 1985, p.147). The kingdom of God would transform human society if we lived justly. This appraisal was applied to every aspect of life and thought, and meant putting all beliefs and political ideas, prejudices and fears under that same spotlight. How would this be in the kingdom of God? It is no use looking forward to a distant heavenly realm, the idea is stand up to injustice and to live justly, or to begin to live justly 'if not all at once, then bit by bit'. As a church we addressed our lifestyles, bearing in mind the needs of the planet. We started to eat more vegetarian meals and changed the products we used. We also began to go to military sites to demonstrate against the nuclear weapons being stored there (this was at the time of the Greenham camp) and to hold vigils outside grain stores where food was left to rot while people starved.*

At this point the concept of the fool, the clown came into play. The fool, the jester in the market place was to impact my life and work greatly in the future (Act 4, Scene 5, p.209).

## **Scene 4 Introducing The Fool**

*Wise Kings and Queens would not think of ruling without a Court Fool or Jester to express the joy of life and to entertain them and the court. However, this is not only the function of the Court Fool. Fools have a license to say what other people would be hanged for. (Pearson 1991, p.220).*



***I was so overtaken by this brand new take on faith, which addressed my sneaking disquiet with the emphasis on our own relationship and feelings for God, that, in 1985 I started Wildfire, a magazine in which, as editor I wrote a series of articles about the concept of the clown or the jester/trickster/fool as part of faith.***

*As the church we are faced corporately and collectively with the task of being the enfleshment of Christ in the world- not a set of individual clones of Jesus. Such an attitude fosters self interest and competition, followed by a search for success and achievement which mirrors the world's standards. Valuing one another because of position, gender, or race is directly opposed to the gospel.*

*The gospel demands vulnerability; that is, laying oneself open. Weakness, lack of ambition and being different are despised. But that is what it means to follow Jesus – to be part of the body which portrays him to the world. It involves being open enough within our fellowships to acknowledge our weaknesses and failures.*

*We must give up our respectable position, inside and outside the church. There is nothing respectable about Christianity; nor did Christ die to set up a new system of religion. He died to conquer principalities and powers and to set free the oppressed. For too long we the church have bolstered up these principalities and powers, maintaining oppressive systems and supporting wars. Jesus demanded not only that we love our fellow Christians, but our enemies; not only that we preach and pray, but that we feed the hungry, visit those in prison, clothe the naked. He promised not recognition but ridicule, not protection but persecution, not respectability but bad feeling, trial - even death. (He was a real clown if he thought that would catch on.) It will bring us what it brought Jesus and it means seeking no rewards; being vulnerable, going against the tide, laying down our lives.*

*When we stand against the tide of injustice and poverty, the powers that rule this world: when we learn the true meaning of being fools for Christ's sake, then the bruised and bleeding body of Christ – broken for the world – will pour out fresh healing and hope in an age of devastating despair. We will not be welcomed with open arms as we stagger belatedly into the arena. Some will ask where we have been all this time, some will castigate us for our effrontery. Some will condemn us for our politics, others cling to their private God, and others stare and laugh at our servanthood or simply ignore us. We will be clowns. (Ashley, 1985)*



This concept of the clown was becoming a way of encouraging the church out of its citadels of private religion (Myers, 1988, p.9) towards a life commitment that might identify more with those oppressed by injustice and poverty (Lewin, 1987, p. xiv).

### **Making connections**

***During this time in the church, which lasted from 1981 to 1988, I became aware, through reading the literature of the Sojourners Community in Washington DC, that there was a large body of Christians who felt the same way, and who lived out Christianity accordingly. There was mention of one group of anabaptists, living in a community in Sussex founded by Eberhard Arnold, who are committed to peace, non-violence, and non-materialism. They are called Bruderhof and are dedicated to all who turn away from materialism, militarism, racism and all violence including corporal punishment. Part of what had especially drawn my attention was their attitude towards children. At the time I was being set free from my inner Parent's attitude towards children and my Child's rage, and what they wrote really impressed me. The family is very important to the community, each family living in a separate unit, but joining together in large households producing a range of wooden toys and apparatus for playgroups, nurseries, schools and families. Children are profoundly precious to them.***

***Their attitude to children is childlike in itself; innocent, pure and open.***

*The only true service to our children is to help them become what they already are in God's thoughts. Each child is a thought in the mind of God. We must not try to bring up a child according to our own ideas for his or her life. That would not be true service. The only way we can do that service is to understand in each one the thought God has for that child for all eternity, and still has and always will have. (Arnold, 1997, p.141)*

***The responsibility for guarding the childlike spirit is taken with the utmost seriousness.***

*'Anything that puts an end to childhood is corruption.'* (Arnold, 1997, p.142)

The understanding that we as adults are not truly capable of deciding that a child has made a decision to do wrong, means that parents are not involved in trying to catch a child 'in the act' as it were. Any attempt to try to force children to be aware of their bad impulses is seen as cruel, harmful and as imputing bad will to children (Ibid, p.79).

All of this would have been completely alien to me as a child and it was like a balm to my Child's battered spirit to read about people who saw things so differently, and so beautifully.

***Also, and this had a big impact, the Bruderhof encourage children's soaring imaginations, to create their own world, and encourage physical freedom in play; climbing, swinging, and jumping. Hence many of the playthings they create are for climbing and exploration.***

***I was becoming very interested in children and play. Though as a teenager, like many others, I went through a stage of wanting to work with children, I had moved away from that. Before my therapy, I used to find other people's children irritating when they tended not to behave as I had done as a child, with what I considered good manners, and obedience. Now I began to look at children with less fear, and a great deal of compassion and tenderness. I started a parents and toddlers group, then also ran a playgroup three times a week. As I went on to have three other equally wonderful children, without any recurrence of the difficulties I had experienced with A, that work became almost full time in the church.***

#### **The Creator's moment dawns**

*Whose goal is the creation of a life, work, or new reality. (Pearson, 1991, p.164)*

***We moved away from that particular church in 1988, and what I then thought of as my life's work came about. It was a time when the creativity I had always felt was there was allowed to come to the fore and find expression. Just before the birth of my fourth child in 1991, I had begun to train as a counsellor and together with a group of friends began to discuss the idea of moving to live in community, providing a place for people to come and find a safe place of retreat and to provide counselling. We discussed various ideas such as building for ourselves. 'What we need' one person had commented 'is an agricultural settlement'. I confess I scoffed at the idea of such a thing sitting waiting for us, and how would we afford it?***



***However, one day, as I drove through the countryside with that same person, having been on some errand or other, we saw in the distance four white hop kiln chimneys, and sighed at the romance of it all nestling in a beautiful valley. Suddenly my friend turned sharply right. As we turned, I realised we were near the kilns we had spotted, and a mere 100 yards on the left of us there stood a Georgian farmhouse with a huge courtyard of barns, next door to a little church with a lych-gate. As we covetously gazed at it I suddenly cried out. Right next to me, and what had made my***

***friend turn so sharply, was a very large sign proclaiming that this whole complex was FOR SALE.***

***It took a good few months, but somehow we all managed with a few loans, grants and re-mortgages to get the money together, and with huge excitement took possession of the complex just before Christmas 1993. It was a beautiful site, looking out over hills in every direction, and with magnificent buildings to convert. The main 18<sup>th</sup> century house was then converted and restored, and we were all gradually making the move from our homes in the city and living in rented accommodation, to free up the capital for the barn conversions.***

***A lot of work was needed, but we all travelled out from the city every weekend and shovelled out compacted manure from barns, stripped wallpaper, painted, scrubbed and designed and finally opened the following August. We formed ourselves into a community with a Rule of Life which still had as part of the vision the idea of standing out against all forms of injustice, including that involving the environment, race and gender. We continued to produce the magazine for informing and challenging churches over their emphasis on looking inward or heavenward instead of caring for the planet and all who lived on it.***

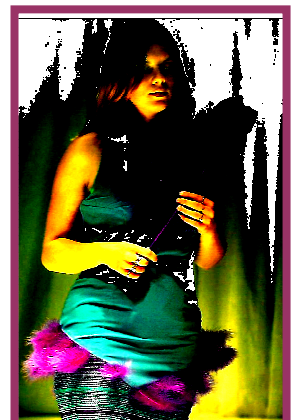
***The continuation of the project was to be to convert a barn for each family, so that we would live separately but share the work, while some continued in employment. We all worked together to cater for the guests in the main house, cooking lovely meals, lighting fires and candles, offering a sense of 'moment' to create atmosphere for events and celebrations. The idea was that visitors would feel nurtured, even pampered.***

***The children played together in the barns for hours where they made straw dens, or down the five acre hillside, paddling in the brook and climbing trees. Though they ranged from 2 to 16 years old they were really good about taking care of one another and were the best of friends, also staying over at each other's houses, sometimes for days on end.***

***I had come home. This was the realisation of all that I longed for, the picnics and potlucks, the friendship and laughter. It was all there though I had never honestly expected it to happen. The children feel exactly the same way about it still. It was perfect. This was parenting as I imagined it, as I had wanted to do it. Beyond my wildest dreams, the Retreat House offered me so much, so that in turn I could give something back. It was a beautiful place, in wonderful surroundings, I had my family and my friends, my counselling; I felt deeply grateful, life could hardly be better, I had everything. For a time.***

### **The Destroyer sweeps through**

***Sooner or later, loss or fear or pain turns our journey into an initiation. Seeking is active; we feel like we choose it. But initiation, especially under the reign of the Destroyer, chooses us.....it may be precipitated***



*by a sense of powerlessness, the discovery that everything you have counted on, worked toward or tried to build in life has come to nothing. (Pearson, 1991, p.136)*

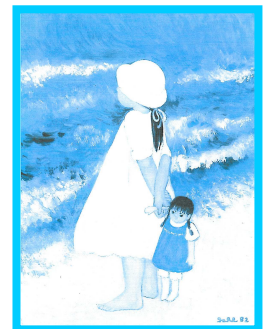
***I had been growing in confidence and sensing the possibility of having some power over my own life. I had been taking courses including a post graduate diploma, and then helped start-up and run the Retreat House. It was without doubt the happiest period of my life. I enjoyed everything I did. The one area that was difficult was my marriage. For two years I had felt that I was living with a stranger, and, just as we came to selling our house to move to the area near the Retreat House, I discovered my husband was having another affair.***

***Several hellish months followed, and then one day I discovered that after all his sympathy and empathy, my clinical supervisor was also having an affair with one of our friends. I began to disintegrate. The group began to disintegrate, and people started to pull out of the project. Nothing made sense, I was desperate. I couldn't eat. The project and the people were my life. I had come to rely on them as things between P. and I became more uncomfortable, and I had thought that if my marriage failed I could rely on them. I spent some weeks rushing around trying to stick everything back together.***

***Things finally fell apart in the New Year. everything came to a head after someone told me about another illegal deal that P. was involved in. When I confronted him, without even understanding the half of it, he literally got up and left, after 21 years of marriage. In one way I felt relieved that he simply fled, because, as it said in the books on domestic violence of which once again there was plenty, I had begun having fantasies about him dying. I knew things had gone too far between us to repair really, but when the pain and the grief hit it was like nothing I could have ever imagined. It was like having an arm or a leg ripped off. It was grinding, mind-numbing agony.***

### **Return of the orphan**

*The Orphan archetype in each of us is activated by all the experiences in which the child in us feels abandoned, betrayed, victimised, neglected or disillusioned. (Pearson, 1991 p. 83)*



***If I thought things had been hellish before I was wrong. The group completely melted away, leaving me, my children and one other person trying to hold everything together.***

***Everything had been destroyed in a matter of months. Then the letters started: the other members of the group through unpleasant solicitors letters, demanding their money back from the project, though they seemed unprepared to do any of the work required to secure it. I was in shock, terrified and broken. Everything was a shambles. P. would tell me***

***'I didn't leave the children I left you, I hope you tell them that.' I was now rubbish, thrown out with the garbage. I came to completely believe that I was garbage. It was all I was. It was this feeling that would fuel the fear and rage I displayed. The fear was terrible.***

***I had just completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Counselling, but could not now for the life of me contemplate doing the year's research in order to complete my M.A. Because I had not seen this coming I felt that I was a complete failure as a counsellor. I had now lost everything except the children, and I became extremely anxious in case anything should happen to them. I felt that I must be a truly dreadful, hateful person to be treated this way and I was deeply, deeply shamed. In this instance the shaming had been heaped upon me ten-fold when all the people in my life who I had considered would be the ones I could trust when my marriage started to unravel, not only turned and left us high and dry, but turned on us. I could not feel a thing except pain. I could not imagine it going away. I did not want to live with it. I wanted not to have to, not to be forced to go on. I resented having to live.***

***I chose in the end not to feel, not to care, because it hurt too much. The only thing I could feel was contempt. No one would hurt me again because I would never care for anyone again. No one would get close enough. Gradually the screaming, and weeping, and wailing slowed down and stopped.***

***I still had no desire to go on living, other than that I knew I must for the children's sake, and so we huddled together and determined to survive. Because as a child my mother had been at pains to let me know that while she loved me she did not like me, I became convinced that the people I had thought were friends had really disliked me all along. I felt convinced too that my mother had been right and I should not exist. After that I had no idea who I was. I felt like someone washed up on the beach without a past.***

***It was at this time that my biggest faith crisis occurred, because I could hardly believe in God. At one time the questioning and changing left me inclined to be anxious in case I might turn my back on God, and fail to continue to believe in him. Now, as my marriage ended, I began to question whether I needed a faith at all. If I did believe in Him I thought he must hate and despise me because he had not saved my marriage.***

### **The appearance of the Sage**

*The call of the Sage is confusion, doubt and a deep desire to find the truth. (Pearson, p. 212)*



*There was much confusion and doubt which, at the time felt terrifying, but which now I see was part of a maturing process. I felt that if God despised me as much as everyone else appeared to, then there really was no point in anything. The possibility occupied my thoughts a great deal and I struggled with deciding whether I wanted to continue with this faith business.*

*The only sense I could make of anything was to wonder whether those who believed as I had that God answered prayer, had got it wrong altogether. Perhaps the idea of knowing the ways and means for God to answer prayer was completely wrong and in fact it worked very differently. It was patently obvious to me that millions of people were in far worse conditions and situations than I could even dream of. I may have become technically homeless, and feel like I had been in a war zone, moving house every few months, but my children were not about to be burned alive by ethnic opponents as in Bosnia. I was not in serious danger of being raped, murdered or bombed, and we did find warm comfortable places to live, albeit too many of them in rapid succession. We were not sheltering under plastic sheets in freezing conditions. So how did so many oppressed people continue to have a real faith while I was weeping and wailing? I knew I had to find a way to come to terms with this. Either, God is a hard taskmaster who might test us, and this I do not believe because of the cross, or the form of belief I had absorbed had gone wrong somewhere.*

*For some years I had been moving away from the position that it is our private relationship with God that is all that counts. Like whether we have had a daily prayer or 'Quiet Time', as it used to be called, or whether we have harboured resentment believing that God watches our every move and motive, waiting for infringements of his moral code. So I was taken aback at my knee-jerk reaction in feeling he had let me down by not answering my prayers, when I felt I had pushed all the right buttons. I did now have a real problem about prayer. Did it have any point to it at all, or was God just looking on impassively. Did God exist? In this crisis of faith I no longer had any sense of the presence of a loving personal God. My beliefs had not had to be tried so deeply before. Was I prepared to put my life where my mouth was and live by the principles I claimed to uphold. I looked to the Liberation Theologians to find a God in whom I could trust, and I was not disappointed. I found that God is for the poor (Boff, 1982, p.66).*

## **The Cross**

*One reason I was sure that my faith was worth hanging on to was the fact of the cross, the crucifixion of Jesus. I just held on to it as something that made me able to still believe.*

*So, I was hanging in there still buffeted by the storms of loss and grief. Rather than ditching my belief in God, I came to believe that, though God had not 'sent' these things to try me, it was important to make good come out of them. It was in this sense that I came to see that God is that which*



***makes good possible. I have come to believe that every good and whole thing comes from God. This includes the good and whole in every religion and in the secular. It is up to us to find it and to live for the 'other' which, I believe, is what God is about. It is a redefinition of God who has become too confined by our private religion, our zeal to save the world from his wrath, and by our need to define him with religious language to explain him to others.***

***Much later in 2001 I came across Alastair McIntosh's 'Soil and Soul' (2001), the story of the buy-out of the Isle of Eigg from the laird by the island's inhabitants. McIntosh, a Scottish academic, activist and fellow of the Centre for Human Ecology, is also a Quaker with a rounded approach to theology. What he wrote about the crucifixion helped me conceptualise what had been merely a felt sense.***

*Traditional Christian theology saw its function as having been to appease, once and for all, God's wrath at human wickedness...*

*One can however look at the crucifixion in a very different way. It is that Jesus's plight drew a line under the sacrificial religious practices of his culture and time. Jesus, after all, was trying to transform the psyche of humankind, not that of God. The effect of his crucifixion was to say, in effect 'Let's stop these barbaric sacrificial practices once and for all: take me, who will exact no revenge, then be done with it'... By challenging the Law of Moses with its 'eye for an eye' retributive justice that would, as Gandhi said, 'turn the whole world blind, Jesus arguably sought to break the chain reaction of blood spilling more blood. By turning his own cheek on the cross and praying that his tormentors be forgiven, he demonstrated the power of love over the love of power. He showed that non-violence can cut sharper than the sword. Confronted and refuted by such courage, totalitarian terror could no longer exert its terrible control. Death lost its sting. Life, if we are willing to let it, could be resurrected. That is why, I think, an understanding of the cross is essential to the work of liberation.*

*To understand the appeal of the God-fearing approach it may be helpful to observe a core human response to a dominating power: namely that it is common for the oppressed to come to love the oppressor...if you side with the oppressor...your immediate chances of survival will probably be higher. (McIntosh, 2001, p.218)*

Pearson (1991), I discovered afterwards, talks of the cross as symbolising a death and rebirth experience, accompanied by profound suffering. She talks of accepting the suffering for the healing of the split ego and allowing for the birth of the self, in order to accept the responsibility for being rulers of our own lives. But the only way to do that is to stay with the suffering caused by the internal contradictions and paradox(p.31). This seems to fit very well.

God's concern, expressed in the Bible and in other holy writings, is that we live together well. This is not achieved by looking out for ourselves and by letting our

wealth filter down to the poor, if indeed it ever happens that way. The God of the Old Testament is passionate first and foremost about justice, not piety. Through the prophets Haggai, Micah and Amos he expresses that he hates piety which stands apart from justice. The Hebrew word frequently translated as righteousness and usually identified with moral uprightness, is the same word which denotes justice for the poor. So our view of God as the thundering, smiting voice of anger and jealousy about immorality, is twisted by the use of words in translation. When God thunders as indeed he does, it is an expression of pain at the injustice brought about through the amassing of wealth, and the immorality that uses the other for personal gain. He does not threaten, so much as describe the outcome that will occur if everyone continues down the road of living for self and by greed. In Hosea there is a form of dialogue with the expression of God's pain and frustration alternating with expressions of his great love. His love is sacrificial, as later demonstrated by Jesus. God is heartbroken, and is not interested in his people's sacrifices but that they show mercy, live justly.

The jubilee principle of the Old Testament was instituted during the time of the people of Israel (Leviticus 25:50). It worked to ensure people did not take advantage of one another, by land being returned back to its original owner every 50 years. This was in order to prevent monopolies of the sort we experience now, where a small minority hold the majority of the wealth. Biblical principles on usury and ownership are far, far more radical than most people nowadays can live by, even Christians. So I came to see the true Godly struggle as finding how to live simply and well, with and for the other, particularly the poor and the oppressed; and discovering the tools, for example forgiveness, for living together, in spite of all that we can do to one another. This is not to say people should not struggle for justice and against the oppressor, but that in the fight, revenge, murder and hatred have no part to play.

### **Accepting uncertainty: the Sage moves on**

*Paradoxically it is not until we have fully come to understand the impossibility of knowing anything for sure because each of us is so fully stuck in our own subjectivity in a universe of contextual relativism that we can let go, stop working at knowing, and allow truth to come to our lives as a gift. (Pearson, p.214)*





***All of this thinking changed me so that I felt I had to grow up, in faith as well as in dependence on others. Depending on a good feeling about God no longer worked. I had no sense of him at all other than as that which governed my actions. But it was a powerful motivation, and I felt that at least that part of the conundrum was becoming clearer, I knew what I believed, though it was a very different manner of belief, a different way of looking at and being accepting of the beliefs of others. It was still to be a 'long dark night of the soul, (St John of the Cross<sup>29</sup>) and the only comfort St. John could offer was to suggest a return to the frustration and the darkness as often as possible. For, if I wanted to see God as He is in himself, it must be within the darkness, a cloud of unknowing.<sup>30</sup> I knew this was something others had experienced before me. Through the ages there were many who had had that same grim sense of his absence.***

### **Another loss**

***The community of which I had been part at the retreat house had met together on Sundays in order to build community, to teach our children and to worship. This meant that when that all fell apart, not only had I moved geographically away from church life, but also my experiences had continued to change me. The loss of the whole structure, support, purpose and meaning in my life through the departure of my husband, his behaviour afterwards, the wholesale loss of family, friends and community and the betrayal by my counselling supervisor left me feeling very damaged. Though I longed to recreate friendship, fun and fellowship I found it hard to be with people for long. I had become an outsider to the world I had always known, a wanderer in the desert. The fool, the outsider was back.***



***For years after I finally stopped attending, I felt a church-shaped hole in Sunday, and pictures of the sun coming through the windows at that particular time of evening would drift through my mind along with a pang about missing the singing, the greeting and settling down with people, the beginning of the sermon, listening to the stories. But I can no longer deal with the emphasis there still is on personal, private piety. This is a real loss to me and, though I have tried to overcome my feelings, I simply cannot return other than to visit for an occasional special service. I berate myself. These are nice people, good people; how can I not find what I seek here? These people really believe in love, forgiveness and the Good News of Jesus, do I think I am better than they?***

***I am now more comfortable with liturgy than spontaneous prayer which, as a non-conformist, is a new development, and I find resonance in***

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<sup>29</sup> St John of the Cross was a Carmelite Monk and mystic, who lived from 1542-1591. His best known work is The Dark Night of the Soul which is available online at [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/john\\_cross/dark\\_night.txt](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/john_cross/dark_night.txt)

<sup>30</sup> The Cloud of Unknowing is an anonymous medieval document on contemplative prayer. See [www.catholicspiritualdirection/cloudofunknowing](http://www.catholicspiritualdirection/cloudofunknowing) for a version edited by Evelyn Underhill recovered 25.2.11

***liturgies from the Iona Community<sup>31</sup> which acknowledge the world's pain. I prefer silence in worship and find more comfort and sense of the presence of God in the natural world. Nevertheless, it is not just feeling damaged or that my work often keeps me away from attending at weekends, or that there are very few churches in the area where I live.***

What is it then that keeps me apart and condemns me to isolation from a world I have known all my life? I have come to understand that it is a view about 'principalities and powers' (Wink 1984).

When McIntosh (2001, *op.cit.*) talks of liberation, he is referring to liberation theology which sees spirituality as interconnection, recognising each life as a part of the whole. This sensitivity to the interconnectedness of all things is deep ecology (Boff, 1995, p.7), feeling ourselves as part of everything. Such spirituality is panentheism, the idea that not everything is God, yet God is present in everything. It is termed liberation theology, because it liberates both the human spirit and theology from the strictures we have locked them into, to challenge the powers which dominate with violence (McIntosh, 2001, p.119). This thinking is influenced by Walter Wink (1984) an American liberation theologian. McIntosh describes how:

*Structures of fallen power participate in what Wink calls the myth of redemptive violence, the idea that violence itself can control violence; that fire can be used to put out fire. Redemptive violence is the perpetuating mechanism of the Domination system. (McIntosh, 2001, p119)*

The people of God are called to stand against the prevailing violent culture when it perpetuates that which goes against God's longing for justice, peace, mercy and compassion. This is described as the prophetic role (Brueggeman, 2001). The pastoral side is equally important, caring for those who come to lay down their burdens of grief, sin, despair, as I found out myself.

However, as I have searched I have found that few churches take up the mantle of the prophet together, and through networking with others I hear how they leave the few activists in their midst to struggle on alone, often criticized and frequently ignored. Churches where war, injustice, brutality, greed and hatred are never referred to, are difficult places to be when, as McIntosh describes:

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<sup>31</sup> The Iona community is a Christian ecumenical community dedicated to peace and social justice, rebuilding of community and the renewal of worship. <http://www.iona.org.uk>

*Action for transformation, then, starts with becoming truly aware of how we feel: within ourselves, in our communities and in relation to nature. It faces up to the reality of disease – the spiritual dis-eases of disequilibria, stunted growth and cancerous growth. Rather than pushing away or masking existential pain with consumption or addictions, it recognizes its value. The pain is the mantra. It is the signal that points us to where healing is coming from, and to find what it asks of us. (McIntosh, 2001, p.120)*

There are Christians who hold views that actively uphold sexist systems and racism, (McLaren, 2007) and may consider those with concern for the environment to be linked with the occult; and anyone with political views is ostracized and suspected. There are even churches who pray for the destruction of the planet in order that the kingdom of God will come faster (Orr, 2005). This view of God is grounded, as Soelle (1995, p. 65) explains, in the idea of God's omnipresence and comprehensibility. This is a God of power and subjection. Another view of God is that he is omnipotent, and that he is love, but incomprehensible; self sufficient, invulnerable. Belief in such a God becomes absurd. The third view is that God is love but not omnipotent. This is the view to which I relate, as the God I read in Hosea, who suffers along with his people.

The congregations I have attended are nevertheless made up of some very lovely, sincere and devout people who I like very much; but dominating systems can override individuals without them being aware of it. If a congregation is numb to this pain and it is excluded from their worship, I feel it is impossible to stand together with them. In the past as a member and deacon of a church, I had input into its spiritual life, but circumstances make that impossible at present, and my pain also lies elsewhere, in a place where I feel I can pour my energy (Act 4, p.183). Without condemning the people, I deplore any religious system that prevents healing, and prevents the sort of spiritual activism that:

*brings alive the feminist principle that the personal is the political. It lights up the darkness so that the blind can see, the lame walk and even the dead rise. In other words, the simple act of becoming truly aware of reality can cause miracles. It can set loose magic. (McIntosh, 2001, p.120)*

I do not believe my position is necessarily tenable, but perhaps it is a temporary one. I do not intend to stop looking for a church, though at times I want to weep about the situation. I do maintain links with those who, like me, wish to stand up

against institutional injustice, greed and waste, warmongering and racism, whether they share faith or not.

Theologians like Walter Wink, Walter Brueggeman, and Leonardo Boff, amongst others, have written about the paralysis that systems, and a culture of fear or despair, can bring about in communities and individuals. All this was to have further implications for me in the future outside the direct context of the church.

### **Next step....**

After all the upheaval and questioning calmed down somewhat, and as I needed to support my children, I returned to nursing after a 21 year gap. After three months retraining I obtained a job as a theatre nurse. I really liked being back in the operating theatre, and walking through hospital corridors was like coming home. I felt a strong sense of belonging on one level, but I had changed enormously there too since my days in the medical hierarchy. I found being confined to one task too limiting of my personality, even though it satisfied my perfectionist, yet risk-taking sides. Since the children and I also needed a place to live, as the Retreat House was for sale, I began to look for a similar situation, where I could live and work in the same place. I had adored the Retreat House, so much so I hardly dare take the time, effort and emotion to explain how much.

***After the others had left and I moved in there with the children for a while to try and sort out what should happen next. We would take our meals up to the top of the courtyard next to the Victorian barn with its red brick walls warmed by the day's heat, and sit watching the evening sun set over the hills. On winter Sunday afternoons we would sit in the library with a roaring fire and play board games. The children loved the fact that the Christmas tree that stood in the window could be seen through the open doorways, right through the house.***

Nevertheless, not long before our final dreaded departure took place as the buildings were put on the market, I had begun to tell myself that perhaps one day an equally beautiful place would be there to help us all through the inevitable pain of losing our dream. The children loved it as much as I did and did not want to leave, but we had no choice. After two years, when it finally looked as though the sale of the house was assured, I found the advertisement for the job at Ringsfield Hall on the other side of the country. Could this be it?

All we knew to start with was that it was a Christian retreat/conference centre to which children and young people would come. Working with children really appealed to me. Now I had worked through my issues with my son I had three more children, and had worked for many years with children in playgroups. I became disillusioned somewhat with counselling by now, because of my anger and disappointment with my clinical supervisor, and feeling that I had become too dependent. As we had begun to relate to the young people in the area around the Retreat House I had the sense that I wanted to do something with more of an edge. We had started to work with young people local to the retreat centre, and I wanted to be there for children and young people in some way.

The Trustees of the Hall were looking for a couple, but my colleague and I, who were the two surviving members of the group which had started the Retreat House, and were not a couple, decided to apply anyway as we knew we could work together. Quite surprisingly they chose us against three couples, and we moved in the New Year. Though it had a Christian foundation this centre was created primarily without an evangelistic agenda. The emphasis was therefore firmly on children. Thus I was to come into regular contact with children in quite large numbers. There was now an opportunity to see if and how I had changed, and whether my desire to make a difference for children could come to anything.

**ACT FOUR**  
**THE UNIVERSE IS A GREEN DRAGON**  
**In Touch With the Earth**



## **Scene 1**                      **A New Life**

My children had been through so much that, when I had the interview I was too afraid to tell them, that is, the two youngest aged seven and eleven and their seventeen year old sister back home, that there was even the possibility of us moving, in case it did not happen. I told them we had been asked to look at decorating the place (which was part of the truth). They knew how much I loved interior design.

The week after the successful interview we were startled to find ourselves watching the school local to the Hall sing a Christmas carol on TV, apparently a long-standing tradition. It felt like a sign that things could work out for us, after two years of despair. At this point I told the children that we would be moving to East Anglia and, though this would be our fourth move in two years, we would stay there for a long time. The following year we watched the same programme again, and this time my youngest daughter was there singing with them.

### **The Trust**

The founder of the Ringsfield Hall Trust is a man who, as a teacher and Anglican priest in London's East End in the late 1960s where serious social problems were manifest, had a simple dream. One day he took his class to Wandstead Heath to study trees. He was struck by the need to allow them to climb the trees, to play, to experience the natural world, to HAVE FUN! That was the day, he told us, that he formulated the desire to one day provide a space where children could experience the countryside as part of their schooling.

In 1970 he and his wife, having been left some money by an aunt of hers, saw the advertisement for the Hall's Sale by Auction. It led to them purchasing the Hall for £17,500, and to taking possession and starting the venture in 1972. Children then had freedom to play in the grounds, on rope swings, tree houses and large A frames, and many years of glorious memories were the result. Every so often we have people calling to say they still remember their visit to here as a child, and just want to drop in and see it again

The owners had left after 15 years, and entrusted the property to the Trustees to manage. Wardens were employed to take care of the house and provide for the guests. However when we arrived this was not achieved in any other way than by providing beds and food, a base to come home to after educational trips out, and whatever use of the grounds the school allowed in the evenings. We had been told that standards had gone steadily downhill over the previous few years. The place was said by one leader to have become squalid and the food disgusting. The equipment was reduced to a couple of fraying rope swings and a tree house, and Health and Safety regulations were causing many more restrictions on free play. Historically, over the 30 years since the place had opened there had been little or no input from the staff at the centre other than the occasional tour of a 'secret passage' complete with horror story, and a walk to church on Sundays as the owner of Ringsfield Hall was also by then standing in as the local priest. Schools were responsible for planning their own programmes. By the time we came along only one school group still stayed over the weekend, and I was none too sure about the 'secret passage' which, it turned out, was in my flat, full of dead flies, and looked extremely claustrophobic.

The centre had actually closed six months before we were employed, and the ending had not been a good one, something regular guests were aware of.

### **The Ruler emerges:**

*The ruler's job is to promote order, peace, prosperity, and abundance. This means a healthy economy, wise laws that are honoured and enforced, an environment that promotes the development of each individual, and the wise use of resources, both human and material. (Pearson, 1991, p.183)*



***So I began to take stock of this new place in my charge, under my rule as it were as we set out to create an environment that would promote the development of the individual. This was a new phase for me, no longer working with friends, but staff who I would be responsible for hiring. I was not too sure about coping with that. I had difficulty telling people if I wanted them to do anything at first, but I did learn. The finances had been one of the reasons for the previous difficulties here, it had been operating at a loss for some time, with the idea that it would close when the savings ran out. A new Chair took a different view, and wanted to give it one last chance. We were set the challenge of turning the finances around, and were aiming to make the books balance in the first year. We***



***felt we had a lot to prove. It was not just the physical surroundings but the ethos of the place that needed to become healthy again.***

### **The difference children make**

***The closure had come after a difficult time and the Hall, completely unloved, decorated in multiple shades of beige, and with grey army-type blankets on the beds, nevertheless showed lots of potential, and I couldn't wait to start. I even re-arranged one or two things on the day of the interview!***

Having removed the notice about the difference children make (referred to in the prologue) we set about creating a place they could love and respect. I was once asked, when discussing my ideas about creating a fine environment for children, at a conference held at the Centre for leaders of similar centres around the country, 'If you were to decorate this room for children then, what would you do, put Bart Simpson posters up?' I replied, 'This is decorated for children', and he looked around uncomprehendingly at the ornaments, cushions, throws and watercolours. Not everyone was so bemused. One Head Teacher who allowed us into her Year 5 classrooms over a number of years to teach each class for a full day on social and emotional intelligence, stated that it was because of how we had decorated and presented the house, and that we had done it for children.

We are happy to note that when children come into the house they love it and we have very little damage. There are as few notices as possible, so that it feels like a home. Initially therefore, the concentration was on the physical environment; the ambience, the decoration, and the food we provided.

I was concerned, following my experiences, to see that children as well as adults would receive 'gentle and generous hospitality', the phrase we had used as our catchword at the Retreat House. Here also this would mean more than the food and surroundings, it would include the treatment of people in such a way that they felt valued. This arose out of the Benedictine monastic principles of offering oneself and the facilities with openness and availability towards people (De Waal, 1984), the Rogerian idea of warmth, empathy and unconditional positive regard or acceptance (Rogers, 1984, p.142) and the framework of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996).

## Painful empathy

Nevertheless in line with what Brian Thorne has pointed out in *Behold the Man* (2006), however much I feel I have been healed and perhaps become more emotionally intelligent, this healing does not leave me free from pain, though now it is often on behalf of others:

*I am acutely aware that therapy seldom leads people into calm waters or emotional serenity. Instead it seems frequently to bring about a suffering of a wholly different order to the pain and distress which may well have brought the client to therapy in the first place.*

*This new order is undoubtedly brought about through the operation of empathy. To be understood with love is the prelude to understanding with love. Empathy brings with it an expansion of consciousness which makes it increasingly impossible to be blind to the pain of others and to the anguish of the world. (Thorne, 2006, p.63)*

*I now warn clients that they are embarking on a dangerous enterprise. Should it bring about not merely an alleviation of problems but a healing of their fragmented humanity then they too, will no longer be at home in the interpreted world and will suffer the agony of their yearning for another home. (p.65)*

Thorne also offers questions for reflection which are significant in my work

*At the age of twelve Jesus was already following his vocation. In our own culture how respectful are we of children and adolescents and how do we encourage their sense of purpose? (p.66)*

## First encounters

***My colleague and I had been told that if we were to take this job we would have to be prepared to hit the ground running. We were appointed six days before Christmas and had a month to move with two households of our own furniture and belongings, plus those of a sixteen bed retreat house. We were rather disconcerted therefore to find that within a week we were due to have a full house. This meant cleaning everywhere, stripping and painting a room that had been used by staff, but which was one of only two sitting rooms in the house. It also involved removing a variety of oddly placed built-in cupboards from the landing that housed, behind curtains not doors, a huge variety of ancient linen, blankets and curtains - very few of which had any use or aesthetic appeal at all, even to such an inveterate hoarder of anything old, as me.***

***By the time the first group arrived we had integrated all the retreat furniture and stored all ours in our separate staff accommodations, manoeuvring round boxes for weeks while presenting a smart face to guests. I managed to transform the appearance of the dormitories by the***

*simple expedient of putting white pillow covers and mattress covers on each bed, rather than the grey army blankets we found here. We had some volunteer help for a while and they thought this was a very odd thing to do. I also colour coordinated the blankets. I had spent an entire weekend literally knee deep in blankets on the landing, sorting and counting them. It resulted in an allergic reaction to the dust, but it was worth it. We felt we had done a great job in re-presenting the place in such a short time. We were ready for the challenge of meeting groups of children and all that entailed. But, as I mentioned in the prologue, we found the responses of the leaders disturbing, and more was to come.*

## **Scene 2      The Warrior is aroused**

*Any time we stand up to unfair authority...and anytime we take action to protect someone else from harm we are being Warriors...It tells us, furthermore that we are not responsible just for ourselves; it is our task to defend the weak and the powerless. (Pearson, 1991, p.96)*



Watching the different styles of adult-to-child interaction was a remarkable experience in which it is possible for me to see my Warrior archetype, who would fight on behalf of the other, coming into play. During the first of our school residential visits, we were delighted to see the Year 5 children (aged 9-10) all in their pyjamas gathered in the quiet sitting room before bedtime, cuddling the soft toys they had brought, and listening to a bed time story by candlelight. The male teacher sang songs with the children as they all did the washing up together. Our hopes revived.

However through the first weeks and months I was still more often saddened than I was pleased by how children were treated by the adults who accompanied them. I came to understand as never before that children are oppressed, by virtue of being small and powerless. The discovery shook me. I also noticed many small ways in which the children were coerced into things. There are many children who have some very odd eating habits - one who only ate corned beef the whole time for instance. We maintain as part of our wish to provide a good experience, that being away from home for perhaps the first time is not an occasion for a change of diet. We don't pander unnecessarily to likes and dislikes, but we don't allow a child to go hungry.

***After having explained this to the leaders of a school trip, who seemed to agree wholeheartedly, I passed through the dining room on the first night to come across a child flanked by two adults and looking very morose. He sat glumly, head in hands; they were very intense. One of them explained on enquiry that his mother had sent his food with him (fish fingers and chicken nuggets) as he was 'very particular' As he had displayed a predilection for eating salt whilst at school, he was not being allowed to have his food because of its high salt content. We hadn't been told that he had been given food in all good faith by his mother, so we had been kept out of the loop. I quietly reiterated our view to her, that being away from***

***home and familiar surroundings is not the time to start addressing such things; thinking it was just a blip that we could remedy.***

***The next day my colleague found him sitting crying alone in the dining room after lunch, an egg sandwich in front of him. It was revealed he'd been told he had to eat it before he could leave the room. He had said he would eat the bread but didn't want egg; however that had not been allowed. The strange thing was that the fillings are supplied separately in order for children to have the choice, so there would have been no difficulty. The idea that any of this would impact on his view of the trip and on his learning experience, did not appear to be as important as the fact that what he ate should be controlled in a particular way. This was in the middle of what was meant to be a day of fun, educational activities. His experience therefore, was not one of enjoyment or of learning what our team was teaching, but of being crowded and punished by adults over something out of his control, of weeping inconsolably in front of his classmates and being made to feel shamed.***

***Another group leader started literally screaming at the children repeatedly, including screaming before 7.30 am, because someone had left their room. She was so out of control that week we wondered if we should call the Head – it turned out she was the Head. In fact, as I think about it, she was the Head of the school I referred to in the prologue where the child was dragged from his chair***

One of the first things we started to do after we arrived was to begin visiting each school that was due to come and stay.

***Our very first such visit was to a junior school in London. We were stuck in traffic and were late, then spent too many more minutes grappling with the security systems at different gates in order to gain access. Very shortly after we finally did get to meet the Head Teacher she began to weep. She had recently been told that those same security measures were not good enough, and they were going to have to tighten up further. She went on to describe the problems some of her children face. In a trendy, wealthy part of the city, alongside the children of TV stars, authors and company directors there are refugee children, children from refuges, and some who have been removed into being 'looked after' following violent attacks on them. Others have been moved from school to school, not just because of their bad behaviour, but due to parents' lifestyles, and responses to situations they cannot handle. And every day they have to negotiate the gridlock of the city's roads in the rush hour, leaving home very early to ensure they are not late. And so it went on. She too ached for what her children experience.***

We visit schools for two reasons. Firstly, it helps in our rural isolation to be reminded of the context of our work, as in this case. Secondly, in terms of the Centre our visits have been very positive in building relationships with children and staff. We tell a clowning version of the history of the house. My colleague dons a

variety of hats as I recount the story of how the owner sought out the land, built the house and moved in with various characters from maids to gamekeepers and including a very unsavoury butler! Initial wonder, perhaps suspicion of madness at adults behaving in this way turns to riotous laughter, and the children seem to feel they know us, they have asked their questions, and it looks as though it will be fun. We have tried to change the story over the years but the teachers insist we continue. If ever we have not managed a visit and the children do not know us, it is far harder to make that contact with just a welcome talk. We love it when the children come through the door and greet us by name, although it once led to a child being shouted at. He was asked, by an adult who had not been at our visit, who had told him he could speak to us? Thus our experiences of schools can vary. There are some schools that look delightful, and are, and over the years because we have got to know different year groups it is like coming home, with children calling to us across the playground. In others where we are sometimes new to the teachers, and in others even though we are known, it is not always so pleasant for us.

### **Storms & Tempests**

***We went along some years ago to visit a new school that was due to send a group to the centre. Along with my colleague I was struck by the amazing atmosphere of the school. The children were involved in our visit, joining us in our talk with the Head, showing us round the school. Children were dancing to pop music in the playground and popping their heads into the office to ask for help with the CD player. Staff were called by their first names, the play areas were delightful, the uniforms were multi-coloured, the decoration was bright and attractive. We were hugely impressed, having been to many schools before, this one seemed to combine all the best elements of all of them and then some, and yet it was a multiracial school deep in the inner city. We were warmly invited to attend assembly at the end of the day. This would be a wonderful sing-along that took place each afternoon. As we sat at the rear of the hall on low benches, having been guided there by two delightful children, we were enjoying watching the classes enter the hall. As I gazed around I did begin to feel a little chilled by the way some of the staff watched the children, scanning for misbehaviour. It seemed out of place with all we had heard, but unpleasantly similar to what we had witnessed elsewhere. Suddenly a bellow that caused us to jump with shock, came from nowhere :***

***'HOW DARE YOU? WHO TOLD YOU, YOU COULD SIT THERE? I TOLD YOU TO SIT HERE.WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING? WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? I TOLD YOU WHERE YOU COULD SIT'...***

***A boy who was sitting quietly on the floor was physically hauled from his seat and pushed into a space next to a girl rather than the boy he had sat with, to a continuing harangue over his apparently outrageous behaviour. This, in front of the entire school and in front of visitors. The adult in question must have eventually noticed two strangers staring wide-eyed at this display, for with complete aplomb she sat down at the front and assumed a beatific expression of delight at the singing which ensued. It was lovely singing, but the experience was marred.***

The emotions I experience as I visit schools, and observe those that visit us, and as I observe what Nathanson (1992) refers to as the shame-humiliation response, described in the prologue, with its pain, fear, and cognitive shock, would therefore be because I apparently no longer fit into what Thorne (2006, p.65) describes as the interpreted world of the present systems, world views and media culture surrounding children. I empathise with the children, and struggle with the rest. I experience the way children are spoken to as though I am one of them - but on their behalf, not my own. I enter their world rather than inhabit the adult world.

The more time passes the more I feel it. I want children to have fun while they learn; I want them to feel cherished. I get very upset when I see children pulled around, shouted at, harangued, constantly shushed for no reason. Unfortunately, even in this place where children have a safe outdoor environment in which to play as long as there are adults outside too, more groups than before are being confined to their dormitories for longer periods, by risk-averse adults, filled with their own fears. Of course this is not happening with all the groups who visit us, but it is in our view actually becoming more frequent.

I observe the way people are with children because of my own experience. When my son was born, though my Adult had good feelings about him, the Child in me had previously internalised from my parents, that children are bad. That they are all the things I had been told about myself and shouldn't really exist. And also I suppose, that one has to break the spirit of the child, though intellectually I would not have agreed with that. Through my therapy and my studies, I had finally began to understand what my underlying, unrecognised feelings about human nature and about children were, and why. I had also re-experienced at first hand what children can endure at the hands of adults, from both sides. I could now truly know for the first time that children are not bad, that an abused child is not guilty (Draucker, 1992, p.60). The guilt lies with the abuser. I could free up that part of me that felt

so sure that, as a child, I was wicked. I was able at last to come to fully identify with children, feel the pain of abused children and more, to reconsider the way I felt about children as a whole. Previously I had been afraid that they, in the way I had been led to believe was true of me, had questionable motives; that given the chance they would be 'up to something'. This is why the attributions of psychoanalysis feel so painful to me (Miller 1987, p.vii). The objectifying of clients is much the same to the client as the attributions of the abuser. It is why I cannot stand to hear children called names by adults. It has also released the good feelings I always had about children and the need to nurture, cherish and prize them, which was what I only ever wanted to do for A. in the first place.

I believe that the acceptance of children in society is very conditional, that in a sense society is an unhealed wound. Then I look wider and I see that our culture is treating children badly, and we are also in a system that further damages damaged adults (Plotkin, 2008, p.9). I fear that the unresolved issues of adults in pain blind them to the effects of repeating the damaging treatment they may have received, and that they, like many before them, see today's children with all their difference as a threat.



### **Scene 3    Imagine**

Imagine being a child in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Step into childhood as Rogers (1980) advocates stepping into the world of the other. There has been some enormous change, especially over the last thirty years with the technological advances made. How different the world is today from previous generations.

The following passage is from a presentation we have given, with effect, for groups of people (in rural churches), who in the area near where I live have often become detached from the world of childhood. Some have demonstrated real antagonism towards children, by forcing the closure of recreational areas, and preventing detached youth workers meeting with them.

#### **A modern childhood**

***If you reflect on your own childhood, can you recall your favourite place to play? How did it look, how did it smell? Is it clear in your mind? Take a moment to think, and to talk with your neighbour...***

***Could we predict that it may well have been out of doors, away from adults, a bit wild perhaps? Fields, parks, woods, friend's gardens, streets, open ground?***

This has invariably been the case though not all have rural backgrounds

***As you have talked you agree this would be true for most of you, and probably for most adults; but is not true for many children today.***

***Fear for children's safety now prevents many children being allowed outside to play. In a recent survey by the Children's Society, forty-three percent of the adults surveyed said the age they thought children could be allowed to play out unsupervised was (wait for it) 14yrs old. Twenty-two percent of people over 60 said 16 years old!***

***Think back again to being a child. Imagine your childhood indoors or only being allowed out with an adult in tow. Can you recall how you felt about adults when you were young? Of course we loved our adults, but often we thought they were boring, old, drank tea all the time, talked about uninteresting things and dragged us to educational, worthy places.***

***Children are disappearing off the streets at a rate that would put them at the top of the endangered list of species if they were any other member of the animal kingdom. Most children would prefer to be playing out with friends, and adults too wish that it was possible. Yet the more we do not let them, out of fear, and allow this situation to continue, the worse it becomes out there, where only the neglected and uncared for are allowed***

***to go. Furthermore, the restorative effects of the outdoors are enhanced by natural settings, not merely the street. They need to go further than we would dare let them go.***

***The 'home habitat', the area in which children are allowed to travel alone has shrunk to one ninth of its former size in a single generation. How far away from home did you travel?***

***It may be unrealistic, given the changing world, to imagine that we can return to the way life used to be even 30 years ago, because it is not all down to being allowed out to play. Have we perhaps not recognised the other rapid change in the lives of our children over the last thirty years, particularly the speed of travel, speed of communication, the ever emerging update of new technologies, and the constantly changing images that children need to process; including, for instance, images of terrorist beheadings available on the phones of children. Expectations are different too. Look at clothes, and phones and trainers. Children are labelled by their clothes in new ways now, with the manufacturers name and logo printed on the outside, not hidden behind the neck - no hope of escaping the eagle eye that brands one a success and one a failure, one cool, and one a 'skank'. Parents don't want their children bullied and so they keep up with the latest designs, and so the cycle goes on, with children caught up in the maelstrom we create.***

***As children we ate mostly home cooked food, and convenience foods were the exception or a bit of a treat. We did not receive from our parent's hands the cocktails of chemicals that preserve food for long periods. Our food was fresher, purer, by default. Crisps and fizzy drinks were not on tap to send our weight soaring and create the cravings children nowadays experience, and television was gentler, watched by families together, not in any number of separate rooms in each house. There were no computers other than in large rooms operated by numerous programmers, and violence was not fed to toddlers via films seen at home by parents so insensitised that they did not recognise they might have an impact, who laughed as their toddlers cowered behind a chair.***

***Imagine then the life of a child in the twenty-first century; if you can.***

(Freerange Childhood Presentation to Deanery Synod, Ashley & Walton 2006). (c.f. Tim Gill, *If You Go Down To The Woods* (2005), and Sue Palmer (2006) *Toxic Childhood*)

Without laying all the blame in any one place, and whilst not claiming that childhood in any previous generation was perfect, Palmer's book *Toxic Childhood* (2006) contends that the developed world has produced a toxic mix of contributing factors,

similar to those mentioned above, which are involved in causing damage to children and young people at this juncture<sup>32</sup>.

Sue Palmer is a writer, broadcaster and consultant on education, and an independent advisor to the DfES who, in response to awareness of an alarming rise in special needs reported and observed by those in education, gathered research and evidence from experts across a range of disciplines. These were, according to Palmer, most frequently, ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder), dyslexia, with its cluster of conditions relating to physical coordination, speech, numeracy, and writing, and the especially rapidly increasing conditions from the Autistic spectrum. Even allowing for greater rates of recognition and diagnosis, the rate of increase has been 'phenomenal' (p.40). These increases, along with similar increases reported from all over the world in deteriorating behaviours such as distractive, impulsive, disrespectful and bullying behaviours, were causing great concern especially to teachers as they struggled to cope, and found themselves spending more time on behavioural measures at a time when the pressure on them to raise standards was increasing (2006, p 9).

*Yet if nothing else, each time a new baby is born there is a possibility of reprieve. Each child is a new being, a potential prophet, a new spiritual prince, a new spark of light, precipitated into the outer darkness. Who are we to decide that it is hopeless?* (Laing, 1960, p. 26)

Laing asks 'who are we to decide that it is hopeless?' but far from viewing children as potential prophets or as new sparks of light, as he describes, adults can and do decide children are hopeless.

In a recent survey and report by Barnardo's for their *Believe in Children* Campaign (2008), the Chairman Martin Narey writes:

*Children, all children; your children and my children, are routinely traduced. Dismissed as worthless they are referred to as 'Vermin', as 'Animals' or as 'Feral'. If these words were used to describe people who are black, who are gay or those of a particular religious persuasion, there would be uproar. Yet this language is now casually used by people when talking about the youngest and most vulnerable in society.'*<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> A summary of these is provided in Appendix 5, p.x

<sup>33</sup> from [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk) retrieved 17.11.08

Narey also points out;

*Over half of the population agreed with the view that British children are beginning to behave like animals, with just under half thinking that people are right to describe children as feral because children behave that way. (ibid)*

The 'Fool'-ish part of me wants to stand on street corners and ask 'what are we allowing to happen to our children?' My research therefore is an attempt to perform and lay out through telling and reflecting on my own experience, my growing sense that the way childhood is currently perceived has a deep impact on children. Such factors as Palmer (2006) has mentioned are not taken into consideration and some children are starting to respond to them, by apparently becoming what we demonise them as being. The adult world is not, as a whole, addressing the issues that could make a difference.

The Good Childhood report in 2009 from the Children's Society pointed out that children are missing out partly because of individualism (Layard & Dunn, p.6) and lack of values education (p.73). The report challenges parents, schools, society and the media to ensure children receive, love, respect, and a good moral vocabulary. There are those who say '*What a pity The Children's Society is blaming parents. They are hard pressed enough, without more blame being heaped on them*' (BBC newscast Feb, 2009). Of course parenting is a hugely demanding task, and parents are hard pressed. Yet from my story I recognise that it is surely the adult world which is responsible, through creating toxic systems in which the children are confused or damaged, or by not passing on or modelling the values children are expected to have, then blaming and demonising the children for not adhering to those values.

In the same way that, though we have not individually been personally responsible for the injustices of slavery<sup>34</sup>, yet we apologise for our part in it, I cannot help feeling the adult world must 'repent' of its part in creating a society that is hostile and at the same time over indulgent towards children. As Layard points out, society fosters selfishness and individualism, leaving children floundering. It is adults who must take responsibility for the world we have created for our children (Robert Coles, 1997).

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<sup>34</sup> The U.S. Senate apologised for slavery on 19.6.09 ( [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)). The UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, expressed profound sorrow for our part in the issue of slavery (Nov 27.2006, [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk))

Rosalind Miles' book, aptly entitled 'The Children we Deserve', features many of the concerns that Palmer (2006) raised. Alice Miller (1992), Maria Montessori (1936) and Penelope Leach (1994), are some of those who have challenged adults to address their treatment of children, and R.D. Laing (1967) their treatment of one another. I believe that all this, and my own story of how children are seen and treated, does show that a culture gets the children it creates.

## **Scene 4 Fostering the Spirit of the Child**

### **The Caregiver's view**

*Willingness to care and be responsible for people (and perhaps also for animals and the earth) beyond the immediate family and friends; community building.*  
(Pearson, 1991, p.115)



How is all this concern reflected in the work that I do with children therefore? Certainly the warrior was aroused on behalf of the children I saw shamed. It was important for us to reflect on what we had seen and act accordingly, but we knew not how to enter into combat over this raw painful truth about some of the ways in which adults can shame and unwittingly perhaps, create problems for children. In any case we had no power to do so. Therefore as I reflected on the problem my overwhelming sense was of wanting to raise awareness, and in practice to simply nurture or foster the spirit of the child among those who came to us, if possible.

Inspired by the power of my experience of unconditional positive regard in the therapeutic relationship (Rogers, 1980), which I experienced as re-nurturing and fostering me, and my process of understanding emotional intelligence in relationship, the phrase 'fostering the spirit of the child' struck me as that which encapsulated how I wanted the children who come here to be treated. This phrase called me to attend to the individual nature and identity of each child as a whole.

The stated aim of the Trust set up so many years before in 1972 to develop the physical mental and spiritual potential of each child was echoed in the 1988 Education Reform Act which sets out that:

*the central aim for the school curriculum is that it should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and society, and prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.* (cited DfES. 1994:9)

Though the Trust has a Christian foundation we recognise that, while spirituality may be connected with religion, it is not necessarily so, therefore we keep the two separate. What does separating spiritual education from religious education then

involve? Jane Erricker's simple statement that spiritual education is '*The nurturing of all children towards a fuller understanding of their own emotional and aesthetic potential and the development of the skills required*' (Erricker, 2001, p.200) fits with my experience and understanding that emotional literacy is a vital part of education.

### **The spirit - the 'I'**

The spirit of the child, as I use the term, is not only that which deals with a child's spirituality in the more recognized form of how she might relate to the questions of existence, God, birth and death, to the sacred and the transcendent and to wider meaning making (Mercer, 2006, p.25), though it is definitely a part of what I mean, and a part I cherish. It is also the deep inner self, how an individual chooses to, or falls into responding to life events or experiences (Denzin, 1989, p.28).

***As I look back at childhood there are clear patterns emerging in what I chose to read. These patterns indicate my survival techniques. They are my unique response to my personal circumstances, including the sociological circumstances of being taught to read well, of being encouraged to read, of having access to books through the library, and being able to visit frequently on my own.***

***The books I read as a child were frequently about girls who were orphaned and sent to live with someone who was harsh, but came to love them dearly. These were very moralistic stories, and encouraged good behaviour though they did not condemn mischief or struggles to conform. These were the books that created a world into which I wanted to enter. My mother might like me one day, if I learned to be as good as Anne of Green Gables, or as optimistic as Pollyanna.***

***Reading them again recently I am struck by how I entered fully into their joy and pain, crying for them and physically hurting sometimes at their anguish at being unjustly treated, even beaten.***

***There was also an indication of the fact that some adults had a different view of how to deal with children, even when they did not conform. In Anne of Avonlea:***

***'I shall never whip a child' she repeated firmly. 'I feel sure it isn't either right or necessary.'***

***'Suppose a boy sauced you back when you told him to do something?' said Jane.***

***'I'd keep him in after school and talk kindly and firmly to him', said Anne 'There is some good in every person if you can find it. It is a teacher's duty to find and develop it...Do you suppose you can find***

***any good in a child by whipping him? It's far more important to influence the children aright than it is even to teach them the three R's.*** (Montgomery, 1925, p.39)

***This secret part of me was fostered and nurtured by these books, these stories of girls who found love where it did not appear to be present. I learned from them as well as becoming a hopeless romantic. But I learned empathy, and that people can survive harshness, especially if there is beauty about. I learned views of the world that differed from those I heard expressed all the time, about warmth and nurturing, and about hospitality.***

***Values and morals were imparted through these books as well as through the church and my parents. But no one, least of all me, knew what was going on in this secret place inside. My mother's attempts to coerce and punish, shame or invade caused another response, which again was never expressed, or examined. Looking inwards felt wrong, as I knew what I was, bad, so I accepted what I was told and escaped instead to a world where***

***A great blue bowlful of snowberries overflowed on the polished table. The shining black mantelpiece was heaped with roses and ferns. Every shelf of the whatnot held a sheaf of bluebells; the dark corners on either side of the grate were lighted up with jars of glowing crimson peonies and the grate itself was aflame with yellow poppies. All this splendour and colour, mingled with the sunshine falling through the honeysuckle vines at the windows in a leafy riot of dancing shadows over walls and floor, made of the usually dismal little room the veritable bower of Anne's imagination, and even extorted a tribute of admiration from Marilla, who came in to criticise and remained to praise.*** (Montgomery, 1925, p. 165)

### **The sense of self**

This sense I had of the inner self is well described by Miel (1995) drawing on William James:

*A child's first step on the road to self understanding and the establishment of a personal identity can be seen by the recognition that she exists. William James labelled this self the 'I', or the self-as-subject, now often referred to as the 'existential self' ...James gave it four elements .*

- (a) an awareness of ones' agency (i.e. ones power to act) in life events;*
  - (b) an awareness of the uniqueness of one's own experience, of one's distinctiveness from other people;*
  - (c) an awareness of the continuity of one's own identity;*
  - (d) an awareness of one's own awareness, the element of reflexiveness.*
- ( p.192)*

As well as the sense that one exists Miel goes on to describe how the unique self is constructed.



*A second step in the development of a full sense of the self can be seen as the acquisition and elaboration of what James (1982) called the 'me' or the self-as-object, and which is now often referred to as the categorical self ... This aspect of a person concerns the qualities or characteristics that define a person such as gender, name, size and relationship to others. Once a child has gained a certain level of self awareness (of the existential self), she begins to place herself- and to be placed by others – in a whole series of such categories which go on to play such an important role in defining her uniquely as 'herself'. (ibid, p.194)*

When I refer to the spirit of the child, I am looking at the self-as-subject, the one who is aware of his separate self, of others, of his past and that he has a future.

*This awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own short life span, of the fact that without his will he is born and against his will he dies, that he will die before those whom he loves, or they before him, the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society. ( Fromm, 1956, p. 6)*

Also the 'I', the self-as-subject is placing herself within categories in order to become herself, by observation and interaction with others, by being challenged by them, by being placed in roles within the family and in wider circles. This aspect varies widely within different cultures. Nevertheless various theorists, such as Mead (1934), have emphasised the role of the social context:

*The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience...it is impossible to conceive of a self arising outside of social experience. (Mead, 1934, p.140)*

This then is the crucial place that others have in the life of a child. Children imitate, have their views changed, and are defined by others. This takes place to a great extent within the first two to three years (Miell, 1995, in Barnes, p.198), but is built on throughout childhood. If this experience gives them a poor sense of self because of negative value judgements by self and by others, this 'I' may be hurt or damaged to a greater or lesser degree, and this too will be built on as the years go by. Jane Erricker describes the importance of being there in relationship for children in this process:

*Children need to be allowed the opportunity to carry out this process of identity construction...and nurtured in the skills to do so. If identity is constructed in relationship, then the skills of relationship are what is needed. (Erricker, 1999, p. 386).*

She describes the dimensions of good relationship *as 'empathy, unconditional positive regard, genuineness, and immediacy'* (2000, p. 159) and goes on to identify the skills of emotional literacy which should be nurtured for this process to take place well. These include:

*Reflection of one's own emotions,  
Self knowledge (understanding why one does something)  
Understanding of consequences  
Self criticism according to one's own recognised principles  
Reflection on the emotions of others  
Empathy  
Criticism of others (according to one's own recognised principles)  
Understanding why others do things  
Recognition of relationship  
Recognition of difference  
Recognition of the complexity of social discourse.* (2000, p.151)

Adults working on emotional literacy with children must be in the position where they are equally aware and reflective (Farrer, 2000, p.38) and effectively bring the therapeutic relationship into the everyday situation. This 'I', the child at Ringsfield who is experiencing me as the other, needs to know unconditional positive regard too. Inspired by Rogers' necessary therapeutic conditions and later his qualities that facilitate learning i.e. realness, prizing, acceptance, trust, and empathic understanding (1983, p. 121-125), it seems to me as I see it in action, that perhaps we can dare to call it unconditional love, as described by Eric Fromm ( 1956). Unconditional love is loving in order to show the child *'you are loved for what you are'* or *'because you are'* (Fromm, 1956, p.33).

This active love *'preserves one's integrity and that of the other'*, (p.17) and demonstrates care, responsibility, respect and knowledge (, p.20-21). In fact this goes deeper, for as Levinas (1985) has said, *'my responsibility is more than being responsible for my self and my own actions, it is a 'for the Other'* (Levinas 1985, p.96), regardless of whether it concerns my deed, whether it relates to what matters to me or does not, whether it is accepted or refused. And this responsibility is not dependent on whether it is reciprocated.

*It is to say: here I am [me voici]. To do something for the Other. To give. To be human spirit.* (p, 96)

Levinas quotes the words of Father Zossima from 'The Brothers Karamazov' by Dostoevsky,

*We are all responsible for all men before all, and I more than all the others.*  
(Levinas, p.101)

*In the story, 'The Brothers Karamozov', Father Zossima continues:*

*Love children specially, for they too are sinless like the angels; they live to soften and purify our hearts and, as it were, to guide us. Woe to him who offends a child!...Every day and every hour, every minute, walk round yourself, and see that your image is a seemly one. You pass by a little child, you pass by with ugly and spiteful words, with wrathful heart; you may not have noticed the child, but he has seen you, and your image, revolting and godless, may remain in his defenceless heart. You don't know it, but you may have sown an evil seed in him and it may grow, all because you were not careful before the child, because you did not foster in yourself a careful, actively benevolent love. Brothers, love is a teacher; but one must know how to acquire it, it is dearly bought, it is won slowly by long labour. For we must love not only occasionally, for a moment, but forever. (Dostoevsky, 1879 cited in Bruderhof, 1988, p.247)*

Therefore care is the active concern for the life and growth of that which we love, and as we work out in the woods with children this is what we are looking to provide. Anything that prevents that, that might cause children not to feel it is good to be, or to begin to classify self negatively, we try to mitigate by showing them we are on their side, by spending a moment to show that we recognise them as someone who it is good to be. There is the sense that while they are with us we are responsible for their psychic needs, and will respond to them and treat them with respect because we want them to grow and unfold as they are. When children are angry, withdrawn or acting inappropriately we say to ourselves 'presume a cause' and look to know what is going on with them in order to help them come back into the group, if we can.

This is not merely a vague sense of wish, but in the light of what I have learned through the time I have been working on this thesis, has become an active policy in recruiting and training staff, who are skilled in conflict resolution, consensus, team-building, and emotional intelligence as well as being ecologically aware. Staff are not required to hold any particular religious beliefs, but need to be able to nurture the spiritual, not merely in the sense of the individual's experience of mystery,

beauty and wonder, what Radford (2006, p. 393) calls an ego-centric view of spirituality, but in the socio-centric, broader sense of connection with self, others the world and what may lie beyond.

I cannot, perhaps, change how others treat or have treated children I meet here briefly, but I can in the short time I am with them, I hope, offer unconditional love as a thank you for that which I received. Those who are loved, give love in return. Unconditional love will also demonstrate to the child *'it is good to have been born'*, *'it is good to be alive'* (Fromm, 1956, p.41) and if a child does not generally feel that, it is important to me that even if only for a moment, a day or a week, someone shows the sort of love that might be like a blessing to them.

In a study conducted with teenagers who visited youth camps, Pearmain describes how the impact that an accepting ethos created was 'almost shocking' (2005, p. 282). The creation of a safe haven had a powerful effect on the young people, enabling them to feel more secure, to be able to start assessing what they liked or disliked about themselves, and their lives. Though very few children have the opportunity at the moment to return here, and in particular to visit outside of the school setting, it is something we hope to work on, as it seems that there is a cumulative effect, and a growing self acceptance attendant on such return visits (Pearmain, 2005, p.283).

For now it might only be taking someone whose excitement has been wiped out and whose head has drooped, and giving them time to know they are OK and to see them lift up their heads again. It is also offering an opportunity to allow the natural world to enter their inner space, to observe the beauty, feel thankful for the air the trees make available, recognise that they are part of the continual cycling of air, soil, and water, see how many greens there are, and understand the pain of the loss of species (Sewall, 1995, p. 214).

Watching children respond to adults, it is that flinch, or those tears or sobs, that swallowing down, that giving up, that desire still to please, that shrug, that delight, that relief, that joy, that assurance, that confidence, which indicates the character being formed or the scripts being created. It is these which express their individual concept of the self who is a set of experiences, a response to an environment and

to imparted values, a genetic imprint, as it were randomly and differently selected from the same genes available to their siblings.

*Each individual reflects and is constituted by, the organised relational pattern of that process as a whole, but each individual self-structure reflects, and is constituted by, a different aspect or perspective of this relational pattern, because each reflects this relational pattern from its own unique standpoint; so that social origin and constitution of individual selves and their structures does not preclude wide individual differences and variations among them, or contradict the peculiar and more or less individuality which each of them possesses. (Mead, 1934, p. 201)*

It is how each one responds to such things as pain, loneliness, solitude, pleasure, criticism, fear, pressure, to that isolated incident no one knows about, to abuse, neglect, or love, and how the response is expressed (Denzin, 1989). And who can tell what has gone on in a child's life before that moment? That is what I mean by fostering the spirit.

An incident in which my colleague was involved demonstrates this point:

***Some children came running over to their leader saying, in varying degrees of excitement and distress that the peacock had gone into the guinea pig enclosure, picked one up by the scruff of the neck, and was shaking it. One child however was totally distraught and sobbing. He was told to stop being silly, the guinea pig was fine, there was no need for all this fuss, and he was left sobbing alone, apart from the other children standing anxiously nearby. My colleague K, who happened to be nearby, knelt down and held him while he cried desperately. After a minute or two his teacher came running back, whispering urgently in K's ear that she had just remembered; when he was two this child had been hung by his neck, by the new partner of one of his parents!***

Not all children have experienced such trauma, but it is surprising how many there are with stories to tell that make us ache for them. But they do not come with a label, so that they can be treated differently, nor should they. Nor does understanding the cause alone provide a suitable basis for strategies for working with vulnerable young people (Cornwall & Walter, 2006, p.65). But a structure that does know the causes and still expects compliance with practice that exacerbates the situation, is going to be in difficulty.

The adults a child encounters are crucial to nurturing, fostering, encouraging and developing the deep inner self, the spirit of the child. In terms of the centre's work I have defined fostering the spirit of the child as:

*Respecting the inner life, the individuality, the experience of each child.*

*Providing skills which would help children to grow into safe secure adults.*

*Providing life enriching opportunities in small everyday ways.*

*Encouraging pleasure in simplicity.*

*Treating each person as we would like to be treated.*

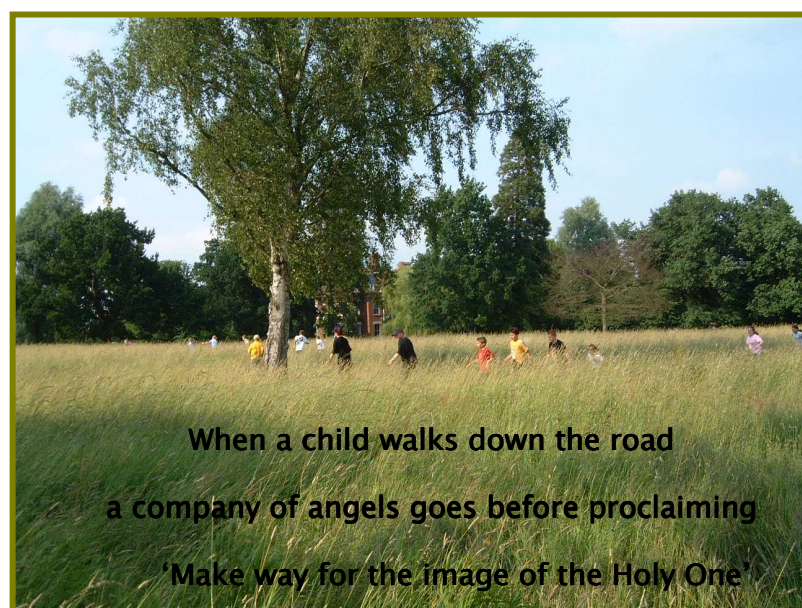
*Hearing the voice of the child, in adults too.*

*Encouraging wonder, delight, imagination and creativity.*

*Relating to self, others, the earth and...*

But the most important thing is to have fun!

The notice we found inside the front door when we arrived has been replaced with one containing words which I understand to be a Hasidic saying:



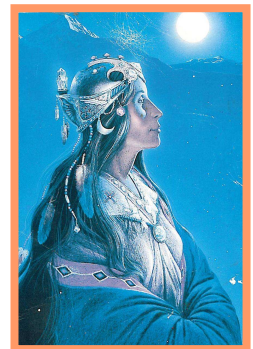
This awareness of the precious nature of children, which can be damaged and distorted by abuse and by abusive systems, resulted in us feeling it important for the Trust and ourselves to find out about and be involved in combating, by lobbying, campaigning, educating, anything which militates against the spirit of the child, and encouraging what will nurture the spirit of the child.

### **Looking inwards**

Because of the strong feelings that were being evoked by this contact with children on a daily basis, and reviving my interest in how, in a wider field children come to be treated badly, in October 2001 I began the process of working on what was then an M.Phil. Because of this research and the time taken out for reflection I was able to reflect on my own practice and way of being with people, especially children. It was one thing to believe in fostering the spirit of the child, and another to know how to do it, and to be congruent in acting it out, as I had had to learn so many years before.

### **Manners: The Sage**

*The Sage allows us to notice our pathological patterns, and to see the way we have been projecting our own scripts or perceptions of them onto the world (Pearson, 1991, p. 59)*



I am all too aware (who could fail to be with my history?) that many of the behaviours I see exhibited towards children, and the views of them I hear expressed, are those I have held myself. Part of the emotional upheaval I began to go through was the recognition of how I needed to further change towards children. Even when I was feeling hurt on their behalf, I was still very bound up in patterns from my own childhood.

***At the start of one visit, as we handed out drinks and biscuits, I reminded a child I had just met to say 'please' as he asked for a biscuit. I felt put out that he was being so abrupt, in my book it was rude. He dissolved in tears, and was comforted by a Teaching Assistant. I felt terrible, and realized that I had made a snap judgement of him. I had replayed my own childhood, with me now as persecutor but, as it turned out, he was a particularly vulnerable child. I had not bothered to take time to consider that. This boy's first experience of me and of this place was that he was being told off, yet another person repeating treatment he had had far too***

***much of. Having met nearly 20,000 children in my work here, I feel I can say that though children forget on occasion to say 'please' and 'thank you', they are overall friendly, polite, open and fun, when allowed to be.***

The endless correction I experienced as a child made me feel helpless and badgered. So why was I repeating it? Perhaps more to the point is what tone I used. I need to recognise the echoes of the way I was spoken to in my interactions with people. It is perhaps easy enough to see how, as I have described, my experiences shaped my views on children. My personal filter of world views and experience determined how I reacted to that child's attempts to make sense of the world.

I came to see that I had to some degree retained the view, due to the strictness of my school upbringing and in nursing, on top of what I experienced at home, that assumes the right to correct children, even those who were not my own, about speech, language and manners. Children are considered to be less than those who are 'in charge' of them, because they 'need to learn'. As such, permission is implicitly given to everyone to view them that way. But this treatment can be responsible for shaming and bullying children, and shaming and bullying cause, or can cause, violence (Nathanson, 1992, p.399). I began to be clear that I no longer wanted to be that way. This reflection enabled me to stop taking that sort of role with the children.

However, what had been a tentative position taken in sheltered circumstances before I took on this role, demanded more change from me. It was time for another archetype to emerge.



## **Scene 5: The Fool breaks through**

*The inner fool is never far away from us. Indeed, it is the archetype that preceded even the innocent. The Fool is the aspect of the inner child that knows how to play, to be sensual, and in the body. It is at the root of our basic sense of vitality and aliveness, which expresses itself as a primitive, childlike spontaneous, playful, creativity. (Pearson, 1991, p.221)*



Shortly after our arrival my colleague attended a workshop by Vivian Gladwell of the clowning group Nose to Nose.<sup>35</sup> This workshop was merely an introduction to the idea of finding the inner clown. As my colleague enthused about the course and the possibilities of going further with it I became interested in following up the idea. I felt the need for something to enable me to lighten up, to take away the air of trauma that I felt I still carried, manifest by a deep reserve and wariness.

There are a number of levels or aspects of the clown/fool. Pearson describes Fool, Trickster, Jester and Wise Fool. Like the circus clown one aspect of clowning that I have seen in churches involves literally dressing up in funny trousers, hats and painted faces and engaging with people through storytelling, drama and comedy. This is the entertainer, who simply has fun, the lovable, vulnerable comedian, who creates benign chaos (Nisker, 2001, p.32), and helps us laugh at ourselves. Within the church there may well be a moral or message added to this element. While I have always told stories and used storytelling with children, I felt this was only a part of what I was looking for.

The jester will use wit and satire, parody and mimicry (ibid, p.35), anything to challenge what people hold dear or have not learned to question. Nose to Nose also embrace what was called Social Clowning, where clowns work with groups of people, observing and commenting on how systems function, and how people interact. In a slightly different context, this was very similar to the clown or fool as we had understood it in the church, as I described earlier (Intermission, Scene 4, p.164). This would be like the prophet or the jester, pointing out often with biting wit, what people may not be sure they want to hear.

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<sup>35</sup> [nosetonose.info/index.htm](http://nosetonose.info/index.htm)

There is also the Trickster who will push this further, by seriously disrupting what has become easy or familiar, creating trouble and slipping away, playing crude tricks, telling the truth without fear. Some Tricksters use theatre, art, music or demonstration to deconstruct, or to make people question by shocking them, literally stopping the traffic, being prepared to be arrested, not responding to aggression, refusing to be allied with the system or the authorities, dancing to a different tune.

Since I was not in touch with any level of clown or fool as part of me, I booked to attend a workshop on The Holy Fool, or the clown within, being run by someone I knew slightly. Nisker (2001, p.48) describes the Holy or Great Fool as someone with different values, outside of the routine, open to the surprise of the moment, aware of the unity of creation. The Holy Fool is a part of many spiritual traditions (Willeford, 1969). St Francis of Assisi, who sold his father's rich fabrics to give money to the poor and who preached to birds, is considered to be a Holy Fool. St Basil of Moscow is another. He became a vagrant, often destroyed the merchandise of dishonest tradesmen, and dared to warn Ivan the Terrible that his violent deeds were dooming him to hell (Forest 2008)<sup>36</sup>.

The starting place is to find the inner clown, through improvisation, meditation, reflection, dance, play, creative writing, art and music. Angela Knowles who ran the Holy Fool workshop describes it this way in her publicity (2010):

*To be a fool is a radical and simple surrendering to life, just as it is. One deepens trust, sensitivity, compassion, authenticity and a profound awakesness to the unfolding of creation moment by moment.*

Among other things, the aim is to meet life playfully, to always find the clowning moment, to say 'Yes' to whatever happens and to improvise, and to understand that '*astonishing creativity and beauty are in everyone*' (Knowles, 2010). This parallels Pearson's words:

*Living in the moment...being unselfconsciously who one is, and...fully trusting one's own process and that of the universe.* (Pearson, 1991, p. 228)

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<sup>36</sup> This essay was first published in 'Praying with Icons' by Jim Forest 1997, revised 2008, New York: Orbis Books recovered 25.1.11 [www.jimandnancyforest.com](http://www.jimandnancyforest.com) )

Though not aspiring to sainthood I did find these workshops made a difference. It was as a result of one of them<sup>37</sup> that I finally broke out of my self inflicted detachment and my decisions never to trust or care for anyone again after my divorce, and moved towards forgiveness in a new way. A few months later, in August 2006, I was married again, to another clown.

The Holy Fool must be vulnerable and available to others, and my vow never to be that way again would have prevented me from helping those I most wanted to help. I had to allow love and trust back in.

## **Laughter**

I was looking for my missing spontaneity and ability to play. I am not a natural clown in daily life. People are not always clear when I'm being funny. I am frequently too serious, anxious, and concerned about getting things right to remember to lighten up easily. I am one of life's sewn up and intensely contained people, with a distinct lack of spontaneity, more so of course since the loss of everything I cared about, or so I believe. *'Being playful means not knowing the punch-line. Being playful means to engage with the unknown'* (Seeley, 2006, p. 357). Reading this description of playfulness was a light-bulb moment which helped me to see that this is precisely where I could clown. If I engage with the unknown, which I am prepared to do, it will be with great earnestness. This was my clowning opportunity, to exaggerate the earnestness, the concentration and play with it, not to try to be what I am not. And therein lies freedom and laughter.

The Clown or Fool, Jester or Trickster, since all aspects, Nisker states (2001) are inclined to trade their costumes and steal each other's tricks, has become an extremely important way of being with, rather than an activity carried out for, children in our work. We hope this will be a foil to the culture of 21<sup>st</sup> century living and school life, both of which are often encountered or interpreted by our sensitised selves, (referred to on page 187) as harsh, repressive, regimented, cold and intense. It underlies our relationship with children rather than only dictating activities. It enables us to be flexible and seize the moment, to create magical experiences, not just present things in a matter of fact way. It involves laughter

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<sup>37</sup> The full story about the clowning workshop is in Appendix 6, p. xv

which includes vulnerability, because we encourage laughter at us and at ourselves, which some adults find threatening. We believe that laughter facilitates learning and fosters self esteem and that it helps to develop fellow-feeling and empathy. We want children to have fun while they learn.

As Johnson notes:

*the playful and laughing child, one who has not been cowed into a sullen acquiescence or provoked into an aggressive rebellion, has the spirit and the means to learn, and that such learning should go beyond the mere assimilation of the familiar...though rules are important, to the adding of new ideas (Piaget, 1952, in Helder and Piaget, 1958) so humour and laughter are part of the development of the individual child - and support the personal, spiritual and professional development of the teacher. (Johnson, 2005, p.91)*

Would it ever be possible? Johnson asks, for:

*laughter as a performance indicator that shows how conditions have been achieved in which learning and growth will take place successfully, that an educational process is under way, and that the humour that results in laughter is itself an educational process. In this way, laughter can be seen as a means by which the individual, be he or she a teacher or pupil or government inspector, gains wisdom and power over their own lives. (p.92)*

Along with the laughter is a serious desire to provide a transformative experience that while working alongside the system, is prepared to offer an alternative.

## **Scene 6      Transformative Education**

I suppose when I first arrived here I had not thought too far beyond ensuring that we did all in our power to create a truly enjoyable space with healthy, home cooked food, pleasant places to play and an ethos that demonstrated that each child was valued and accepted, but the more we saw, the more we wanted to be involved. Having taken on board this passion to see that children were well cared for in all areas of life, including wanting to foster the spirit of the child, I was looking to see what could be offered at the Hall, if anything that might make the place have meaning in the children's lives. We were looking therefore for a way to be with children, and a way of being on the earth for them and us.

### **Changing Stories**

Because of our advancing age (we were both in our fifties by this time) we knew that we could not turn the Hall into an activity centre with rock climbing and canoeing. For one thing there was a severe shortage of rocks to climb in this area and there were only two domestic staff and one gardener in addition to ourselves. There was no income to pay for sessional outdoor coaches for water sports. We wanted, though, to continue the vision of the founder, and actively contribute to children's emotional, social, spiritual, physical and mental development. What we could offer was a concern for the environment, which for me had been reborn during the 1980s through the church, when we had recognised that social justice demanded we care for all of creation, especially in the light of an increasingly consumerist society. By now, attention to environmental issues and sustainability had also been recognised in the curriculum as a necessity for the planet's life forms to continue to flourish, if not survive. As I looked at the increasing amount of literature surrounding ecological literacy it became apparent how much of a link there is considered to be between awareness of the place of humans within the interconnections of the natural world, and our physical and emotional well-being. Education itself is implicated in this, so we wanted to find a way to participate in the education of the children we met.

*The dominant form of education that has evolved from within the mechanistic framework has been responsible for a restricted consciousness that has all but killed our capacity for creativity, holistic thinking and critical debate. A new paradigm of education that enables us to participate fully and responsibly in the world... will be driven by a process of genuine enquiry that seeks to understand the web of life and our place within it. (LeFay, 2006, p.44)*

On a weekend away to consider the issue of how to develop our work with schools, we decided therefore to re-brand as an eco study centre, and concentrate on environmental education. In the foreword by David Ray Griffin to David Orr's 'Ecological Literacy' (1992) Griffin states that, in an age where the continuity of modernity through individualism, economism, anthropocentrism, patriarchy, mechanisation, consumerism, nationalism and militarism threatens the survival of life on our planet, a new way of being in the world is called for. Griffin describes a way called constructive postmodernity, that embraces ecology, peace, feminism and other emancipatory movements of our time. My understanding of ecology embraces this philosophy, not merely a limited perception of ecology as 'green' issues, labelling and identification or conservation. Environmental education should be about how we live on the planet in all respects and with all other living and non-living things on the planet, ecological literacy. As well as care for the planet it should include the ability to know and believe in oneself; emotional literacy. Also to relate well to, and to care for other people; social competence and justice and peace. It also needs to include an element of seeing beyond those to develop a sense of wonder, develop creativity, imagination, relationship and reflection; spirituality.

So our logo includes the words 'restoring connections with self, others and the earth.'

I responded to the idea of working in the natural world so positively I think because of its resonance, its connections with my self in childhood.

***One of my earliest memories from being very young indeed, probably two or three years old, was of being in our garden alone, and seeing a bird alight on a branch. I crept up to it, and was close enough to see its bright black eye shining at me. It is something I have never forgotten. As we had no TV I spent a lot of time with books, and learned to identify birds, trees and flowers to some extent. I recall going home to someone's house after school with the sole purpose of identifying a flower we had seen. I was disappointed to hear it was a mugwort, which sounded so unfriendly. There was always a nature table at school, with branches of pussy willow and horse chestnuts during the appropriate seasons, and we frequently went on bicycle rides in the countryside with our parents. My brother and I collected wild animal cards from packets of tea. For all her difficult ways my mother at least would converse with us about what things were. She***

*wanted us to be well educated. This was important to us. I was surprised one day to receive a book on sea birds from her, entitled 'Out With Romany by the Sea'. I still have it, because I remember the pleasure of receiving something for no apparent reason.*

*Our garden contained two trembling aspen trees. The leaves moved constantly and in the autumn they shed their golden treasure onto the lawn, where I used to create paths through them and create adventures by piling them up and moving them around in a dozen different ways. I also climbed up the fence that ran behind them where it felt as though I was sitting in the trees. In the mornings the sun would rise through the leaves, and occasionally, I could be lured out to enjoy the radiance of an early summer morning.*

*One reason I enjoy crunching through autumn leaves now is because I recall my mother kicking up the leaves falling from the numerous horse chestnut trees forming an avenue down the middle of the park near our home. It was memorable and significant because it was unusually light-hearted. In the spring we would observe the sticky buds, and the brilliant lime green early shoots. My mind returns there whenever spring and autumn come round. I often went to the park with my brother or with friends as we grew older. In the summer we fished for sticklebacks in the pond. In the winter we sat for hours round the kitchen table drawing and watched the snow falling. Or quietly reading or talking in front of the old range fire, watching the changing shapes in the flames licking the coals, imagining underground caverns and tunnels.*

*I have always loved the sea, and as children we were taken to the nearby towns of Hornsea, Bridlington and Scarborough by steam train, bus or sometimes by car with the teacher from my first Primary School who my mother befriended. I would try to escape the watchful eyes of the adults and wander off to the sea, being careful to step over the sandworm casts. I never liked the slimy, tickly un-aesthetic sides of the natural world, I confess. Pictures of spiders and worms and snakes would make me turn pages rapidly or even stick two together. But I loved the sea, the sound of the waves on the sand and its vastness.*

*One summer when I was about twelve our church young people's group went on an outing to the holiday home of an elder from the church. It was a 1930s seaside bungalow with a veranda, and adjoined a hay field. I think it was one of the happiest days of my childhood. We were allowed to simply play with the bales for hours in the hot summer sun. The adults let us be, which was especially refreshing for me, so I was thrilled to be able to give my children similar experiences when we went away with a group of friends and their children, who then spent hours playing in the hay barn, and again when they found one of the barns at the retreat centre was full of straw. A photograph we have of all of them together in the barn displays only impatience at the adult's interference in their space. They also had a 5 acre hillside wilderness to play in, with a stream at the bottom, and we just let them go.*

These are the kind of memories and experiences that I long to reproduce for the children who come here. I feel that I know how important early experiences can be for a child, since they were so instrumental for me in creating a wider world than the confinement I felt in my family. I long to create them for children who may not have had them, in order to foster a love for the natural world, which might then become a desire to care for it.

Therefore when I understood that the natural world was in danger I responded from the love which till then had been merely romantic, and determined to try to live differently so as not to cause further damage.

Here at the eco centre we decided we would work outdoors with the children on issues relating to the natural world, and also offer sessions which would encourage teamwork, as well as emotional literacy, development issues and spirituality through creativity and reflection, and give inspiration through storytelling.

First of all we needed a programme of work with the children about caring for and relating to the natural world. Any attempt to encourage learning about the natural world has to include, not a mechanistic necessity to change how we live, but knowledge about the earth, and how it works, as well as relationship with it. For what we love we care for. Plotkin (2008) describes it as needing to move from an immature ego-centric adolescent society, through a transitional healthy adolescent stage, recognising the need to save the planet and ourselves, to a mature, eco-soul centric society that desires a lot more than to save itself physically and economically, but that cares for the earth and the earth community for itself (Plotkin, 2008, p. 458).

### **The Magician: The Magic of Earth Education**

*The goal of the magician is the transformation of lesser into better realities (Pearson, 1991, p.193) ...To be an effective Magician, it is important to be spiritually, emotionally and physically linked in to the great web of life. Real power comes paradoxically when we recognise our dependence on the earth, on other people... (p.202)*





***Just before I arrived here I had taken my own children to a woodland Visitor Centre in the Wyre Forest, where there were a multitude of interesting things to touch, smell and experience as well as look at. A large notice enjoined us to 'Please Touch'. I was amazed at the contrast with other such places which might have a model of the land and some posters of wildlife. I asked where they got their ideas from and was told it was the Institute for Earth Education. It took some time for me to track this down, but eventually I obtained a copy of the book of one of their programmes 'Earthkeepers' which seemed ideal for our use, and we went along to hear Prof. Van Matre speak. With his long white beard and safari suit, obviously modelling himself on John Muir who was instrumental in the formation of U.S. National Parks, he hooked us and inspired us. Since Van Matre's aim is to create magical learning experiences in the natural world, it seemed time at last to develop the magician archetype.***

Earth Education is described as:-

*The process of helping people to live more harmoniously and joyously with the natural world* (Van Matre, 1987, p.5).

Another phrase that is used is '*learning to live lightly on the earth*', (ibid, p.vii) which fits in well to my mind with the Holy Fool, utterly one with oneself and the cosmos (Pearson, 1991, p.228). The Institute for Earth Education was begun in the 1970s by Van Matre. He believes that learning should be an adventure; an adventure that leaders and learners are embarking on together.

The human passengers onboard planet Earth are endangering most other living things that share the planet with them (Van Matre, 1990, p.89), and their own life support systems in the process, and people with broader understandings and deeper feelings for the planet are wiser, healthier and happier (p.93). Earth Education programmes aim to have a strong focus i.e. teaching people how the planet works, and how to take care of it by giving them experiences which will help them to love the earth (p.45). The programmes are used to train earth advocates to serve as models and to champion the life forms of earth (p.97).

Earth Education is based on giving learners a participatory role in every activity. Trainers act with learners rather than upon them, and motivation comes from magic and adventure, with a sense of wonder and the excitement of discovery for both trainer and learner. This, not threats and withholding rewards, will keep learners engaged. I took on board the statement that if your learners are losing interest, you need to ask yourself what you are doing wrong (Van Matre, 1990, 299).

With a huge sense of excitement which, given the previous few years was like a new beginning, I tried to find out how to start this amazing programme. I was filled with energy, and urgency. This all seemed to fit in every possible way. It put us in contact with children in an imaginative way that, as a parent, I had always longed to do but probably not achieved too well, and the way of being with children appealed to me enormously. It fitted with our desire to 'be with', not to 'do to', and to be offering a nurturing approach, which took us to their side of the experience, not the adult side. It also seemed perfect for our centre and the numbers of staff available (initially only two i.e. ourselves), and without huge amounts of financial input. This was very reasonable, as we were trying to put right the finances, bring in bookings and upgrade the centre, as well as create an identity with a distinct purpose.

Earthkeepers™ had been developed for school residentials as opposed to summer camps. It was a perfect choice for the length of the school visits to us, and for the age of the children, so in 2001 we began to offer it to schools who were visiting.

Behind every activity is the thought and planning put into it over years of piloting and refining by the creators, the careful setting up of the moment so that is as magical and memorable as possible.

### **The magic of learning**

Professor Van Matre defines it this way

*What is this magic in living and learning that we believe is so important?  
Words can never convey the real scope of this idea. It is an undefinable  
quality which holds the various components of Earth Education together, and  
then transforms them into something which is far more than the sum of the  
parts.*

*It is exhilarating joy*

*It is simple fun*

*It is excitement, enthusiasm and eagerness*

*It is a pinch of fantasy and a pound of adventure*

*It is usually part of an emotional rather than an analytical response*

*It's an 'Oh, WOW!' perhaps followed by an 'Aha!'*

*It is frequently shared*

*It is something tied up with caring, with someone doing something for*

*someone else.*

*It is often part of a feeling of flowing with things – not being pushed, but pulled, by the event, the happening.*

*It is an intense involvement: a loss of self consciousness and time structuring*

*It is delight in the moment. (Van Matre, 1979, p.9)*

It is therefore playfulness, it is clowning.

### **Magic Spots**

As well as the 'Wow' and the 'Aha' that earth education hopes to bring to children, solitude and reflection are very much part of it too, and 'Magic Spots' (Van Matre, 1979, p.188 ) which occur in every programme on each day, is a time when each child goes off to be alone in the natural world. The idea is that they might see and experience things they have never seen before thus, along with the other activities providing lots of rich, first hand experience with the natural world.

*awakening people to the marvels and mysteries of daily life they are missing -increasing their perception by holding on to the childlike qualities of bubbling effervescent joy at being alive; their marvellous ability to totally immerse themselves in the moment, to lose track of time and space and just merge with the flow of life; their insatiable curiosity and sense of wonder about everything around them. (Van Matre, 1990, p. 228)*

Earth Education did not just bring an 'Aha' moment to the children, it was as though our purpose clicked into place. The clowning with its playfulness and joy, the child-centred, nurturing view, the environmental concern had all come together.

### **Enjoyment and awe**

Over the last nine years we have taken around 2000 children through the Earthkeepers programme. It has been a profound experience.

Our desire is also to take teachers with us on this learning adventure. The first time we played the closing ceremony to the children, the narration ended and a song began to play. The children sat in total silence till it finished, and then only when prompted did they get to their feet in a daze. Their teacher was in tears. Their response had taken her completely by surprise, and surprise is the emotion most expressed by the teachers at the children's response to this programme, along with Forest Schools which we have incorporated into it, where they light camp fires and

build dens. Seeing the children in a different light they become aware of how they respond to a different situation, and most of them eventually visibly relax, and daub their own faces in mud or charcoal like the rest of us. One teacher, described by her Head as a 'city chick', was very edgy until we got out in the woods, but as she became engrossed, she remembered her own childhood and the joy of playing outside, and threw herself into it with more commitment than any other teacher we have met.

### **A way of being**

I too have been fundamentally changed by this experience, this concept. I feel it has been a transforming, or perhaps a fulfilling experience. It has enabled me to become a creator, a magician, who facilitates the provision of magical experiences and it enables me to participate in providing amazing spaces, like E.M's Lab. and Outlook Inn<sup>38</sup>, to which the children are drawn again and again.

All of this, the magic, the moment, the mystery, the sense of discovering together have become my model for the way to be with children. The parently voice in my head that demanded a please or thank you is far more concerned with creating an unforgettable happening for children who are hardened by video games, sexualised too soon by marketing, shut away in the cleanliness, or otherwise, of their rooms, unused to dirt and mud and company, bored, bullied, or even under pressure to stay on top. Often they turn up without boots to wear in the mud and wet grass, wearing pink or white jeans and trainers. It does not often take long for them to stop caring about getting dirty, just revelling in the sensations; jumping in the mud till they are covered head to toe, sometimes repeatedly. Before they come the children ask if we have TV, and we tell them we don't, and they won't miss it. They're unconvinced, but it's true. It takes a very short time for children to get in touch with outdoor fun, and being together, and it is a delight to see. More than this it is enabling me to recreate my sense of self which had been so destroyed through the experience of losing so many people in my life in one fell swoop.

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<sup>38</sup> For a description of Outlook Inn and other Earth Education activities refer to Appendix 7, p. xviii

## **Fit for purpose**

***One benefit of this job, is staying fit enough to outrun 10 year olds though I'm in my mid - now late 50s! When I got here I was really quite tired. I had returned to nursing and been working and doing assignments, and then had packed up the retreat house after two tough years of sorting out the details of the sale etc, and dealing with the people who had left. When we got here we rearranged the house ready for use within a week, as well as decorating and cleaning. Age-wise I had reached a stage of life when I might have expected to slow down, but when I was with the children I was running, I was motivated. I felt invigorated, especially when I discovered Earth Education. It was like being given a huge injection of physical energy and vigour. I couldn't really work it out. I felt it was as though I was being given the last ten years back after I had been thrown on the scrap heap. I did become almost convinced that it was in some way a compensation for the misery I had felt. It felt like quite a spiritual thing, a gift that I marvelled at, and revelled in. I could be involved in something that I believed in, I could help to create magical experiences, and be the giver of the fantastic gift of fun.***

The programme involves an element of performance as the children come across the characters who present the activities such as The Connection Inspector, or simply in creating a sense of 'moment' by, for example, turning a corner to find a picnic laid out on a chequered cloth, or by lying under the stars and hanging on to the ground, realising that we are travelling through space on a huge sunship at great speed, or opening a box under a bush by the light of a lantern, with their own key, to find secret meanings. There is particular joy in handing over the first key, the K key. The mystification as the children approach gives way to a variety of responses from a whispered YES, to punching the air.

There is much laughter, and also awe, as they chat about where eggs or chickens come from, or hear someone comment how much these children need this, and how a child has joined in or behaved differently. We have dozens of things we recall them saying, about being in a field for the first time, even being afraid of the stars 'Why are they like that?' asked a child from Whitechapel, 'There ain't no stars in Kilburn' said another after initially recoiling, covering his head and asking what 'that' was, or feeling a sheep and realising it 'feels just like wool, Miss'.

***On one occasion I took a group on a walk across the fields to the local school of around 50 pupils, which their school of over 300 pupils in Chiswick has visited for many years to make comparisons on traffic, leisure time activities for children, and the different experience of schooling. One boy dressed in a white designer track suit, took off and***

***ran, and ran, and ran. He ran the entire way to the school, and later he ran all the way back. The staff were astonished, because he was the coolest, most laid back child, and never stirred himself for anything- but given the chance he just wanted to run.***

### **Forest Schools**

In 2004 I also underwent training for *Forest Schools* leadership. *Forest Schools* originated in Scandinavian kindergartens, but since the 1980s has been developing within the UK. The ethos of Forest Schools is to foster a love for the natural world and the desire to conserve it, and to develop confidence and self esteem, by working within a woodland camp setting and presenting small achievable goals. Many Nursery schools now set aside a day a week for the children to spend in a woodland setting which is their camp space. There are opportunities for map making, woodland skills, fire lighting, use of tools, cooking, play, den building, furniture making, cooperation, contemplation. More recently still, and more true to the Scandinavian model, are Green Nurseries, which are almost totally outdoor each day. The younger children are, when they develop this relationship with the earth, the better.

In endeavouring to promote self esteem and confidence, areas which would come under PSHE and Social and Emotional Learning in the National Curriculum, Forest Schools training promotes emotional literacy, and rather than presenting leaders with a set of lessons for classes to work through, encourages leaders to develop their own emotional intelligence, and to come alongside the children where they are. In this way it is possible to hope that adults in Forest Schools at least will not be engaged in shaming and bullying behaviour but will be actively relating to the children and allowing them to lead the activities.

One tool used in promoting emotional literacy within Forest Schools is storytelling. As I have said I have always loved stories and found in them a sense of refuge. In difficult times they were a place to escape, but there is much to be learnt even in escape. Entering into the world of another who has experienced pain, confusion and insecurity, or joy, freedom and accomplishment has taught me compassion, understanding and led me to believe that I could also find joy. Somehow I have always had a sense that things will turn out in the end, and I believe I have found that through stories. Even when situations did not turn out as hoped, there was the

knowledge that the journey was not over yet, and this too could be a beginning. Stories have the power to transform (Feueverger, 2007, p. 42), to show that one can be on a personal journey and become a seeker. Feueverger quotes storyteller Barry Lopez,

*'Remember only this one thing,' said Badger. 'The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away when they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other's memory. This is how people care for themselves.'* (From the folk tale Crow and Weasel by Barry Lopez, 1990)

For a number of years, we have worked with primary school children using a day of storytelling and activities, to open up the concept of understanding and managing emotion in themselves and others. I based the day on the story of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century explorer, Magellan.

During the story, which takes place over three sessions based on relating to self, others and the world, the children take part in activities and exercises that enable them to work at recognising the range of emotions Magellan must have experienced. Magellan served the king of Portugal, but was disgraced and excluded after false accusations. He came back from his ignominy and shame in the court of the King of Portugal with determination to succeed no matter what. This led to the delight of convincing the King of Spain that he could find a way to reach the Pacific and, importantly, the Spice islands to the east, over which Spain and Portugal had fought a war, by sailing west. There was the chance to show courage and patience, totally focussed as the journey became difficult and soldiers rebelled, mutinied and stole the supply ship. He must have felt complete despair after the jubilation of finding a way through as, crossing the Pacific, the men were reduced to gnawing the ships' rigging and eating rats. Then the relief and excitement, the sense of achievement as they reached the islands they sought and could eat and drink well again. His previous experience with the Portugese meant that from this point he was familiar with the rest of the journey home. In his cultural arrogance, our hero's final act was to launch an attack on islanders refusing to pay tribute, and one can only imagine his sense of complete shock, despair and failure as he lay dying with the journey incomplete. His lieutenant finished the first true complete circumnavigation of the globe.

The children work at recognising and expressing their own emotions appropriately, and, thinking of the other men on that journey, develop understandings about being part of a social group and of a wider, even global society, developing self awareness, and reflective thinking skills.

*Forest Schools* offers opportunities to work like this with stories in the outdoors, either in a regular way with one group of children or as a one off like this with children who are unable to visit more than once.

When I started my thesis I had no idea that the storytelling I loved so much might provide an answer to one of my questions. We are moving towards exploring how it is possible to help children through the traumas they may have faced, and help them to begin to develop emotional intelligence so that they are able to think about feelings, rather than being overwhelmed by them (Killick, 2007 p. 20). Feueverger (2010) posits storytelling as a transformative process, and as offering ways to make meaning. They also allow others to:

*look into and appreciate and embrace the cultural worlds of the 'other' and open a road toward cultural literacy, increased imagination skills and a new empathy for the suffering of oneself and one's fellow human beings.*  
(p.233)

*Forest Schools* has more recently begun to be recognised within education as appropriate for use with all ages and Key Stages, as well as for use with disaffected and excluded young people, and those with conditions which make relationships, social skills and understanding difficult, such as Asperger's and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. There are activities within the curriculum framework for Citizenship with team building, problem solving, decision making, as well as Science, Design Technology and environmental art, to name but some. A recent addition to our work is developing work with teenagers such as this who are experiencing difficulty at home and school, and who have been referred for help.

Recently I found a member of our staff weeping and distraught because she had heard the amounts of Ritalin prescribed to the young people who were staying were five times higher than normal. Without it, she was told, they were engaged and alert but after their medication they were apathetic and listless. C. apologised for



weeping. 'Don't be sorry' I replied, 'This is what we want - people who care enough to weep'. Two weeks later a temporary member of the team related how she had heard that exchange with amazement. After years of working with troubled young people she knew this was the place she wanted to be. Another day a social worker who had yelled at the boys and threatened to send some home over a misunderstanding, wept as he left. 'I don't know how you do it' he said 'I must just be getting soft, crying like this'. A team member replied, 'No you're not, that is how we do it'.

Alongside a reawakening of the need for us all to admit the earth into conscious awareness, is a growing recognition (Louv, 2005; Nabhan & Trimble, 1994; Gill 2005; Conessa-Sevilla, 2006) of the loss to the human soul or spirit through estrangement from the natural world. In Ecopsychology (1995) Barrows writes that we can see in every child

*...a life force made manifest, a porous, permeable, sensitive essence intertwined with all other essences, affecting and affected by them with its every breath.* (Barrows, 1995, p.110)

Developmental psychology, which has evolved in urban situations within nuclear families, needs, Barrows states, to take on board the infant's natural affinity with the natural world (1995, p.102). The split between the individual and the earth has been linked to the all consuming self, (Kanner & Gomes, 1995, p.77) to the addictive personality (Glendinning, 1995, p.53), a truncation of societal maturation, and fixation in an immature adolescent phase, linked to a society heedless and selfishly consuming and exploiting, stuck in separateness, otherness and limitation (Shepard, 1995, p. 37).

Roszak suggests that the global environmental movement, and the personal, internal scale of therapy need to come together in a new way to combat not only the destruction of the natural world, but the violent and addictive, all consuming nature of the modern world (Roszak, 1995, p.2). Is this, I wonder, another way to look at the question that started my enquiries in this thesis? Has, eco-psychology, eco-literacy, a part to play, answers to give within the wider, universal, cosmic violence, as well as the intrapersonal and interpersonal violence of which I have spoken so far?

## **Scene 7 Making the Personal Political**

### **The Fool speaks out**

*Fools have a license to say what other people would be hanged for, to puncture the Ruler's ego when the Ruler is in danger of hubris, and to provide balance to the kingdom by breaking the rules and thereby allowing an outlet for forbidden insights, behaviours and feelings (Pearson, 1991, p.220)*



Do I feel the need to analyse our position, our aims, our outcomes, to prove it works, that it has effects that can be measured? Constantly as we work we '*make an effort to relate and confront action and reflection, reflect on our conscious and unconscious doings in order to develop [our] actions, and act reflectively in order to develop [our] knowledge*' (Altrichter et al. 1993, p.6). But our outcome is something that, while we need it to be acceptable to schools, does not tie in easily with the aims of the present education system. I believe that the bullying, shaming system is as I have described, based in militaristic, patriarchal, warrior archetypes. I observe that it is failing more children, by placing attainment and targets above concern for the individual, for every individual. Yet we meet many teachers and people who work with the young who share our views. Therefore the challenge is to stand on the edge and speak out.

As I have mentioned previously, the philosophy of Carl Rogers made a very deep impact upon me. Not only was it powerful for me to understand that on a personal level I could be accepted unconditionally, but it gave me a framework for continuing theological reflection and upheaval. Where previously my relationship with God was about my own spiritual journey towards my place in heaven, I instead began to identify the love of God with love for the poor and the oppressed. One day I simply gave up the necessity for my place in heaven, my own salvation, and chose to be onside with the God who identifies with those in need. Whatever the outcome of that might turn out to be, it was enough to be identified with all other things and with love.

Because of Carl Rogers' description of empathy as entering the private perceptual world of the other and moving about in it, sensing felt meanings, accepting others

and not judging (Rogers, 1980, p.142), I understand incarnation as God entering our world, and identifying with the weak. This is not the passive empathy that leaves one experiencing rage and feeling numb, unable to act. Through understanding and coming to terms with my own pain, and changing my understandings of the narratives surrounding issues such as gender, race, the environment I learnt how the ill-divided world caused emotional and psychological damage (Boyd, 2006, p.295). Thus it was necessary for me to work within the world incarnationally, that is, stepping into the world of the other either physically or conceptually; being with the emotionally wounded, identifying with the testimony of the vulnerable (Boler, p. 170) on the side of those fighting for social change and justice. I began to understand concepts like sin in a different way.

For a time I found working within counselling satisfying and fulfilling, but became increasingly unhappy at the idea that we were picking up the pieces after systems fail to halt the injustices of child abuse and domestic violence, and I felt trapped by the myth that we cannot change the world. It is sometimes necessary to recognise that distress is located in systems and social conditions (Sanders, 2006, p.6), as well as in people's internal responses. Though much could be done to change responses and help towards empowerment, the social situation often remains, in the same way that I was healed to continue to live with a controlling and bullying, violent husband.

As Sanders writes:

*Is it the person who should change, mending human flaws and shortcomings in order to best fit in with the world, or should we change our world and its structures in order to best support our striving for fulfilment?* (Sanders, 2006, p.11)

Rogers (1983) saw his ideas as applying beyond the counselling relationship and into the medical and teaching profession, into education, and the corporate world of business. Liberation theology, Theatre of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal, and Paolo Freire, are voices raised in the political arena which believe, as Rogers did, in the intrinsic worth of human beings and point to the idea that another world is possible because the myths and stories can be broken (Boyd, 2006, p.298).

The trauma I experienced in 1997 moved me away from direct involvement in therapy as at some level I blamed it for keeping me docile and not questioning sufficiently.

Others have commented on this tendency to withdraw, to privatise, and to the subjection into which the client is placed (Crossley, 2000, p.161). I observed how some clients concentrated on their own growth and development, sometimes to the exclusion of others, or any political action, any wider implications, and once again I was reminded, as I faced homelessness and living with only the state to support us, that incarnational love is not about my personal feelings and wellbeing but about the weak, the dispossessed and the oppressed.

Having attempted to develop the Fool or the clown within myself, the next phase would be for the Fool to act or to comment. In writing this thesis I am taking on some of that role in claiming that the personal story has political value. The jester in the ruler's court points out the foibles and failings and holds them up for reflection. This puts her at risk of falling further out of favour with the rulers. But

*the Holy Fool seeks wisdom today not in flight but in open confrontation with the systems, the accepted wisdoms and the discourses which must take responsibility for the crisis. (Grey, 1993, p.6)*

My aim is to hold up a mirror so that the oppressor, in the form of an oppressive system run by individuals, might come to see itself as such. Another aspect of the Fool is that of identifying with the vulnerable, those at the bottom of the pile, and of being available and vulnerable oneself (Northumbria Community)<sup>39</sup> though this will not necessarily mean that things change (Freire, 1972, p.26). For instance Soelle (1993) describes how Bartolome de Las Casas (1484-1566), a priest, who after participating in campaigns to quell rebellious indigenous people and slaves, had his eyes opened to the evils of slavery and injustice towards the Indians in the West Indies and South America. Having spoken out against it, he was described at various times as 'fanatical, malicious, mentally ill, a preacher of Marxism and an egalitarian possessed by the devil', even as late as 1946 (p.146).

Augusto Boal developed a role as joker or trickster in his Theatre of the Oppressed, as a means of satirical and comedic resistance (Schutzman, 2006, p.133) in pursuit of social change, telling and interrogating the story of the oppressed as well as enabling the oppressed to conduct their own analysis of their reality (Ibid, p.2). He

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<sup>39</sup> The Rule of the Northumbria Community, (which is a dispersed ecumenical community, with an identity based in Celtic Northumbria, and which aims to explore and express the heart of monastic spirituality in the everyday ordinariness of our lives, as a different way of living in and relating to today's world) commits those who take the vows, to availability and vulnerability [www.northumbriacommunity.org](http://www.northumbriacommunity.org)

was imprisoned for his political activities. Resistance is more than a valid response to oppression; it is an obligation (Soelle, 2001) which requires the speaking out of a different set of values (Grey, 1993, p.52)

Through working with children in the way that I do now, and by conducting this research, I have faced some realities of the impact of shaming in schools and the fate of children at the hands of adults in this damaged world. I have also seen the damaging effects on both teachers and children of the current education system, which includes shaming.

The only place I feel at home and see a way forward, is within the person centred philosophy that believes the personal is political, but resists the idea that means simply telling my story is enough. I have to believe the story can be changed.

## Summation

As I reach the end of my thesis I can reflect on and voice what I have encountered, experienced, explored and explained during the course of the research. In this summation I bring together what I feel I have learned and what may have been achieved in terms of the claim of the title to look at '*the spirit of a child at the mercy of an adult in pain: the impact of hidden intergenerational bullying*'. In the thesis I have also broadened out that inquiry to include, not merely my own psychodynamic journey of transformation, but the wider socio-political implications for situations where adults and children interact, and where adults in pain may unwittingly continue to perpetuate the cycle through relationship and through systems.

My 'theory' of how difficult it is, and what it takes, to disrupt the continued cycle or system of bullying and shaming, as I have developed it experientially and reflexively, and how transformation can come about, consists, therefore, of the following:

I began with an explanation of why I believe in the relevance of personal story and testimony and of reflexive inquiry, in gaining wider understanding, and how the researcher can meaningfully be the subject and the object of the research.

The process of disrupting the cycle began for me with some ten years of psychotherapy, which first involved accepting my vulnerability and need for healing, as I describe in Act Two, Scene 2, p.93. To do this it was necessary for me to recognise the value of self and others, and then the concepts of unconditional positive regard, empathy and acceptance, which I now consider essential for relationship in both the human and more than human world. A theoretical understanding through becoming a counsellor clarified and enlarged that understanding.

Then came the recognition that the sense of being abused as a child had implications in the wider spheres of gender relations as well as in a personal sense. This socio-political awareness led me to adopt a more feminist stance and to an interest in relationships between children and adults in general, resulting in my desire to champion the cause of children who are abused.

A change in wider social and political awareness followed, as I explain in the Intermission, Scene 3, (p.165), through understandings gained using the concept of the clown/jester/fool. This was through a new understanding of faith as both servanthood and 'continuing conversion', and through person-centred theory. This led to addressing the need to question personal opinions, prejudices and ignorance of issues surrounding gender, race, nationalism, militarism, lifestyle and exploitation of the natural world, in the light of recognising our common humanity and dependence on the earth, and to join in the struggle against injustice, poverty and war.

Some of this awareness was learned theoretically through the church and counselling theory, then, as I explain in Scene 4 of the Intermission (p.171), a fuller transformation to experiencing a new world view came about through my own experience of suffering, loss of home and change in economic circumstances (though minor compared to the permanent grinding poverty and violent oppression of other peoples and countries). This led me to accept that pain and suffering are part of the human condition and need to be used creatively for growth, whenever possible and appropriate, rather than desiring escape or rescue.

In Act One, Scene 4, p. 84, I described how I had come to recognise that both men and women are capable of violence, and that the way forward is not through entrenchment but in working together, in accepting the psychodynamic elements along with the patriarchal culture, working with individuals as well as systems. I looked for answers in Act Two, Scene 1, p.110, for the reason why I became violent, examining the factors that create both victims and bullies. I could see definite predisposition to both, yet I was not sure that this explained what happened between me and my son. Trauma theory shed light on this for, through the combination of shame, trauma and insecure attachment, decisions are made and patterns set within a young person's brain which may, given a triggering situation back to the trauma, provoke a sudden violent response which seems out of character with the adult, and this, I felt, was my experience. This links back to therapy but also speaks of how important it is that shaming and bullying techniques are not part of a culture or system, since the use of them may provide a causal factor or a trigger.

This was what I took with me into a situation where I was an observer of adult-child interactions, in Act Four, Scene 1, p.183. I found that, due to the healing gained in therapy, as I describe on p.186, I was experiencing real pain in empathy with children, and a sense of being out of step with the interpreted world. There was also recognition of the power of being *for* the child, and a desire to foster the spirit of the child, as children sort out who they are. My aim is to play a part in opening them up to spiritual experience through reflection, purpose, meaning, creativity, imagination, cooperation, contemplation, wonder and community, qualities which are aspects of the Holy Fool, even if I am only able to spend a short time with them. Alice Miller (1992, p.53) noted the need for every child to experience one person or witness who was there for them, to counteract the perpetuation of poisonous pedagogy and create some resilience. This awareness took me back to identifying those elements of my childhood that created my own resilience in the face of negativity, one of which was my relationship with my grandfather who simply loved me without expectation or judgement, and with whom, in part because of our shared birthday, I experienced a sense of real connection.

In addition, my resilience may have resulted from various other sources, one of which, reading and story, was depicted in the Intermission, Scene 1 (p.153). From these I acquired elementary sympathy and understanding for humanity and used imagination. I did experience connection to the natural world as a child through gardens and parks, flowers, birds and trees, (Act Four, Scene 6, p. 213) cycling in the countryside (p. 57), all of which my mother encouraged, sharing her own knowledge and enjoyment along with her love of music. All helped create a ready ground for later responsiveness to environmental concern.

The absence of television during childhood would have left me free to read, dream and wonder, sitting on the fence between the trees at the bottom of our garden or gazing at the moon, and gave me the opportunity for physical play outdoors, to run and skip, and perhaps release some of the tension I experienced. In the Intermission, Scene 4, p.174, I describe how a strong moral code and set of values, while it often weighed down upon and constricted and constrained me in the way it was applied, supported me later through difficulties such as the breakdown of my marriage and in the realisation of the danger for my son. My longing for community



tended always to, until recently, take me back to churches, where, while I experienced teaching that was repressive, I had a feeling of belonging. The teaching about loving others, though perhaps vague and undefined, and fairly patriarchal, helped me perceive that I was part of something greater than myself. In addition, it is possible that the ontological fear I felt over my right to exist, described on p.99, may sometimes have made me find it necessary to fight for my life verbally. I learned this much later one day from my youngest daughter, then still a defiant toddler, and I read the same message in her eyes.

In understanding something of the loss to the human race's psyche, in particular in developed countries, through the particular economic, growth model they have adopted, as Act Four, Scene 6, p. 224 details, I came to embrace eco-psychology. Eco-psychology recognises the need for a new psychology in which the child's natural affinity and the connections between self, others and the earth, including the more than human, are fully recognised as crucial to the healing and wellbeing of all elements of life.

The place of the natural world in healing of that unrecognised loss and grief led to me working with children using a programme which espoused joyous, magical learning experiences and which could offer the opportunity to cultivate a relationship with the natural world, and a love for it. This led back to the clown/fool. Levinas (1985) states that our humanity lies in living for the Other without requiring or expecting change. One simply is 'there for', *me voici* (p.96), and loving the Other, as Fromm (1956, p.33) points out, simply because 'they are' (p.202). Because this stands against the prevailing culture, it is the Fool position. The pertinent point for my work with children is laughter, joy, wonder and magic and also emotional intelligence. I have frequently used the term emotional intelligence, but have come to realise that perhaps I am using it in a particular way. It is often used in education to ensure control of emotion and social competence, perhaps in ways that support the establishment and the culture that I have described as oppressive. For me the crucial element is empathy, along with unconditional positive regard and acceptance. Only then, I feel, can emotion be safely displayed and explored. It is through this that the opportunity for emotional and spiritual intelligence can develop. Without this nurturing atmosphere it may develop into yet another mechanical device for control.

Frequently, because of my involvement in a residential job, the tendency has been to lose sight of myself and my separate identity as a person and as clown, and there have been aspects of that archetype which I am aware I could develop further. Also I have been saddened at the fact that the Dragon/Lover was sent back to her cave while the destroyer, orphan, ruler, and warrior were active in my new situation, welcome though they were. I have missed the Dragon/Lover's disruptive, exciting presence, full of energy. Often I have wondered whether she might ever return. I feel that the thesis has brought me to the point where I can see the Child, the true innocent, and the Dragon/Lover into whom she 'grew' has been denied existence out of fear that I would become destructive and dangerous once again. I blamed myself, for if I had not followed that path and found the Child and then the Dragon/Lover, I reasoned, my life might have stayed safe. The Dragon/Lover, the Innocent and the Fool have links in archetypal terms through the energy and playfulness, joy and irreverence, linking one to another.

In an effort to both allow the Dragon/Lover back and explore the Fool further I am working on developing my own creativity apart from my work, through painting and drawing which I did constantly as a child, meditation and finding a 'sacred space' where I can connect with the earth. The technique I use encourages me to feel myself growing roots deep into the earth, then breathing in the energy of the soil, the earth over which I am sitting. Then I imagine a white light washing down through me as I breathe in, washing the earth out again. It is a very powerful experience, and has led on one occasion to feeling a very real connection with the earth's core and imagining the rift near Japan being soothed. Another time, I experienced a similar strong grief connection with the life sustaining and disappearing rain-forest, then looking for enlightenment as to how to become involved in that issue. Recently I took an opportunity to present the Fool's voice to the world that finds nuclear energy a reasonable option. Along with my youngest daughter and my husband I put on my clown mask i.e. my red nose, and demonstrated peacefully outside Sizewell on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the explosion at Chernobyl. Then for half an hour we danced in the sunshine at the gateway to the plant, thereby symbolically and effectively blockading the site.

Conducting this research has led to an interest in using testimonial story (see p. 236), as a means of awakening the hearts of people who are oppressed and/or

oppressive within relationship, culture and systems, often without awareness. I would like also to use story and clowning to work with teachers, teaching assistants, parents, particularly young parents, and nurses and carers, where circumstances have not nourished the possibility of creating Buber's aliveness (1957, p.105). I could see too the potential, perhaps, of fictionalising elements of my story for young parents and teenagers.

It seems there may be a possibility there is something that can disrupt the cycle of abuse, namely empathy, non-judgement, acceptance of self and Other and an ability to be available and vulnerable as is the Fool. The Fool has a passionate connection with the earth and the more than human community, and displays laughter, joy and awareness of the moment, concern for justice and an upside down view of the world which refuses to overpower the Other through shame, economics or exploitation, and where freedom lies in simplicity, not wealth, service not power.

## **ACT FIVE**

### **TAME THE SHADOW DRAGONS AND THE GIFT IS YOURS**

#### **Ethics, Process And Meaning**



*The truth of a single human being's experience may in the end be impossible to establish in mining the specific archaeology of a human psyche. We can only guess at the truth with the tools available to us i.e. the knowledge they have shared with us and our own meagre capacity for empathetic understanding.*

*Though there is usually a hidden internal consistency in even the most erratic behaviour, there is often a mysterious incommensurability between the inner and the outer life: one trapped within the other. Beneath the vision of the human body in action and concealed sometimes from the person themselves, lies the determinant interior. The master who provides motive for all we say or do. A peaceful co-existence between the two marks the harmonious life. And when the battle rages I am sometimes able to detect the CAUSUS BELLI but only sometimes.*

*Because it may be in the story people choose not to tell, that their true personality lies. Not because of what has not been revealed, but because this was the specific fact they chose to hide. and like phosphorus, that secret, the inner script which they will take to the grave gleams with maximum intensity when it is about to die. (Hart, 2002, p.74)*



## **Scene 1 The Creator - Process**

*Aim: the creation of a life, work or new reality (Pearson, 1991, p.164)*

*Creating a life, then, is not about creating a product, but enjoyment of a process. One does not have to be at the end state - to have created a wonderful life that contributes to the greater good - to have that sense of great joy. The joy comes from the process itself. (p.175)*

*We first claim our power to name when the creator is active in our lives and we begin to tell our story in our own voice. (p.197)*



The years since 2001, when I started this process, have been an extraordinary and lengthy journey. As well as my concern over the subject of how it is that abuse continues, one of my reasons for undertaking research was to have a sense of completion to the interrupted process of academic research from some years before. Another was to gain a sense of self worth and identity, after the end of my marriage, and the additional losses that had reduced me to feeling so unworthy. At the start I had no idea what would emerge or that autoethnography was the methodology I would choose. To write about myself had never occurred to me. At Bible College, when I was 23 years old I went for a walk with another student who was asking me about myself. I realised, as I struggled to answer, that this was a new experience. I recall finding it quite difficult to describe feelings or express myself clearly. Talking about self had always been discouraged at home as it took one's thought away from God, so in a sense there was a kind of taboo on it. Nor did nursing provide any scope for reflexivity or talking about oneself in the late 1960s. The therapeutic process had later changed things for me to some degree, at least with those who contracted to listen, but the idea of writing a thesis based on my story took some considerable time to take root, especially the idea of only using my own story.

Looking back at what I journalled as I started the research process in 2001 and for the first five years, reveals how afraid and insecure I was, unsure of everything in my life.

*The job I've taken prevents me from having much of a social life, and I've thrown myself into the work 60 or more hours a week. The people we are*

*involved in caring for are more transient and less involved than I'm been used to, and I realise that I am lonely. I miss my friends and that makes me angry.*

*I might have shucked off the old life, changed my name by deed poll, moved, and started a new career, but it isn't all positive. I have no friends of any description, whether I would be able to trust them or not isn't an option, they aren't there. (Ashley, Journal, 2001)*

Finding myself a single, working parent of four, after 20 years as a wife and mother at home (albeit doing voluntary work and training as a counsellor) was a severe shock to my system. Everything I knew about myself, my whole identity was gone. The only constant was my children.

Moving across the country to be free of a violent ex-husband was something of an adventure when we got used to the idea, but I found this was not the place to pick up the threads of an identity or even a social life. In the past I had been used to being surrounded by people, and used to make friends easily, but here we were fairly confined by the residential job in the wilds of rural East Anglia, far from any culture we recognized, without even a church to provide a framework. I was lonely; no one seemed to know or want to know anything about me. Indeed, when I mentioned after some time that I had been a theatre nurse, one person repeated the phrase with a look of horror. I wondered what on earth I had said. It was quite a while later that I discovered the previous manager of the centre had also been a theatre nurse, and she had made things very difficult. So perhaps the history of the place itself was also a deterrent. It only served to isolate me. The hours were also more than full time, this being a residential job.

When I started the research, therefore, I hoped it might also be a way of meeting people and maybe making friends, or at least joining something. It did not turn out that way, but in some senses compounded the problem by filling up time when I wasn't working, and taking over most of life except when I needed to do things with the children. It was certainly a challenge with a ten year old and two teenagers but the richness that developed in terms of interest and stimulation, and the resulting development of the work here through it was of immense value and satisfaction.

### **Early days**

At the time of starting I was not sure how it came about that I had been accepted to do the research at all, but having done so I was determined to make something of it. I began with a strong heart, but quickly quailed at the reality as I sat time after time with my supervisor, hoping against hope that she didn't see through me for the fraud that I felt I was. At our meetings I was so afraid, that I would break out in a sweat and burble desperately, seeking to hide how out of my depth I was feeling. My old patterns of thinking intimidated me into believing that she thought I was stupid and that probably made me appear so. Initially this feeling dominated our sessions together. My supervisor's response was to behave as though I was normal when I felt anything but, and to patiently agree to see me every three weeks. As it turned out that was to continue for a very long time.

For some months I hummed and hawed about how to approach the subject that concerned me, the abuse of children, and didn't hear clearly that using my own material as autoethnography was a real option even though it was gently suggested a number of times in the form of a question. When I was a child I would say 'No thank you' to what I wanted, out of a sense that it would be selfish to accept (I must have been a nightmare to entertain!). This was a similar situation. It would be too good, too easy, I thought, to use my material; I should not do it. Also my previous near foray into research had left me convinced that research must be of a certain sort. It must be objectively presented even when qualitative. I did not understand how only using my material, whatever that might be, could be acceptable.

### **Moving on**

The decision to undertake research using my own material about parenting, came about in early 2002, a few months after enrolling. Heuristic research involves, most importantly, the process of being immersed for some considerable time, and with a degree of intensity, in the subject under research (Moustakas, 1990, p.28). The process also requires indwelling (p.24) by turning inward to seek deeper understandings of the experience. My initial response to reading about heuristic research was to accept that I had experiences which could bear study, with which I identified strongly (Ibid, p.15) and to explore how I had experienced violent feelings

towards my son as a toddler, in 1979. It was in fact those experiences that had led me to the point of doing research at all.

*Heuristic enquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand oneself and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social - and perhaps universal – significance. (ibid, p.15)*

At the time I intended to link it with research into social and emotional learning, and into how damaged adults continue to damage children.

Eventually I started to write about the interaction with my son as a means of collecting the data and becoming immersed in the subject. The aim was to include the story of my therapy as I achieved healing from my anger and release from my feelings of invasion, through recognising a felt sense (Gendlin, 1978) of violation and abuse as a child. I was told it was a moving story and that I could write. Till then I was always very, very afraid.

### **Immersion**

Initially the writing went well. However immersion in my painful past, especially when still suffering the effects from divorce and its attendant horrors, and struggling in a strange environment was perhaps not the way to promote well being, especially as I was feeling overworked and isolated. I began to suffer once again from many of the emotions I had had as a child, in particular, shame. I became tired and unmotivated, and found myself internally at war with people, in particular my colleague at the centre, who being very funny and upfront, would be addressed as the boss, people frequently assuming I was the housekeeper. When one such person introduced himself and I said I was the Centre Director he said 'Really? No, are you really?' I began to feel that I was only seen as someone who was here to do the menial tasks and that I didn't have a place in which to be, no desk, no base.

This was a situation to which I had never wanted to return, after my therapy had released me from permanent, though mostly unrecognized rage.

I wrote in my journal:



*Looking back over the last year. Began to lose all sight of self and could not envisage how to do my research, felt everyone was busy thinking I'm rubbish. My supervisor suggested counselling and so I have embarked on that and am recovering parts of me that were locked up after the debacle...*

*Writing is bringing things up again....Had a bad incident straight after counselling, actually when I got back here... by dinner time I began to feel horribly depressed. By bed time I was a complete wreck, and very aware of the Child being told 'I wish you had never been born' etc. I couldn't get out of it. I was in such pain...*

*Talked about my non acceptance of people, and on the whole R's advice is to trust my feelings and also to stop being so hard on myself...*

*For some considerable time I have been stuck, paralysed, bogged down, and helpless. I see many areas that I need to write into. I also need to write up the experience of being stuck. (Personal Journal, 2002)*

I had been in counselling for about a year, when it began to feel too long, though some helpful work was done. Yet I did not know how to stop. Even during the following months many useful things were talked about and I felt it was after all good to be doing it. I had recovered so many parts of my 'self' from the past. I had felt that I was a person with no past, no friends, no construct. I had had to deny it all. That was changing - I was immensely cheered one day to be able to joke about being a woman with a past! I also found the strength to claim a base, a space from which to work, and to learn how to use the computer. This greatly empowered me.

*On reflection though I came to a point where I was working on individual incidents and being told how to respond. I felt I was simply sitting moaning about nothing and I no longer felt the need to continue. Every week it would be 'Same time, next week?' and I would agree, but it became more of a chore. I think I may have seemed more like a child. I became afraid to see my supervisor and restart the research. I had stopped reading because I thought I had to experience in an immersing way what I had experienced in the past.*

*I saw my supervisor, it was good. She read my journalling. I stalled again, then decided to take her advice and intercalate. (Journal, May 2003)*

This, the first of two intercalations, was partly because I was attempting to seek restitution from my ex-husband who had stolen a large sum of money from me through insurance fraud. These provided a period of what Moustakas calls

incubation (p.28); the opportunity to detach a little and reorganise thoughts perceptions and understandings.

As the process continued the part that I found hardest to write and to access was the story of the initial therapy, which surprised me.

*So eventually I came to the story of my therapy, This stopped me in my tracks and along with tiredness and busy-ness I could not face any more.*

*I want to write but something is in the way. I do not know how to understand it I only know it is pain and grief. (Journal, 2004)*

Obviously, I had once again fallen back into my old pattern of behaviour, that of being compliant yet resentful, and unable to say what I wanted, particularly with women in a position of power, albeit benign power. I felt accepted, listened to and understood, but I felt like a child in that situation where I was given advice and duly reported back how it had gone.

Finally, after another year, the therapy came to an abrupt end.

*I told myself that obviously I still needed therapy, it was just that I was so busy I felt a bit trapped. Things went wrong one day when I had to put work first, and I was 'discontinued' !!*

*I realised there was obviously some miscommunication and misunderstanding about my attempt to give due warning that I could not make the next appointment...I tried to write and say that, then I discovered that I did not want as I had thought, to go back into that situation. Partly it was beginning to feel unhealthy, partly it was huge relief. I was cut loose. I was free!*

*Lo and behold, I began to emerge from the stuckness. I actually still at this stage have a sense of having escaped from something, and thumbing my nose at my 'captors'.*

*Probably it is the process of immersion in my issues that I have escaped from. In terms of research something else is called for...I have made a start this morning. (Personal Journal, July 2004)*

As things had fallen apart back in 1997 and my then clinical supervisor had an affair with a client of mine, I had shut down. I blamed counselling in some way for my troubles. At one time I felt I had been dependent too long. Whatever it was, in 2004 I could not face writing about my therapy. I allocated a space for it, but it took

a long time, at least another two years before I could fill that space. I had felt contaminated by all the memories and was not really able to recognize till the writing was over what I had been going through, so it all took far too long. However, when I did finally complete it, in terms of writing all the emotion was there to access and describe.

## **Scene 2**      **The Question**

As I attempted to define the research question I was recalling my history of being a client in the 1980s and of becoming a therapist from 1991-1996. During 1994-6, I undertook therapy again as part of my counselling diploma, and during that I came to recognize that the sense of violation and abuse may have been caused by my mother, and may have included being abused sexually, though I am certain she would not have recognized it as such. Through the counselling during this research in 2004-5, I began to name that what my mother was doing was bullying me. I had not done that so clearly before. It gave a new dimension to how I looked at things.

***During the period of this research project my relationship with my mother went through some uncomfortable and difficult times. Her response to the fact that I was undertaking this research was somewhat typically low-key; she just asked why would I want to do it. My brother's university work was worthy of mention along with great sympathy for the fact that he was working and studying. My job, however, involving long hours and charity pay of the lowest legal standard (below for some time) she did not rate. I think she quite mistakenly thought I was merely the assistant person in charge and nothing more than the cook and cleaner. She could not grasp that I was involved in teaching the children who came to our Eco centre. Why even cooking merited less sympathy, being exhausting work and very demanding I don't know. She never appeared to get the point either of my work or the nature of the research.***

***The fact that her children divorced was difficult for her. There was one incident where she actually told me divorced people weren't fit to do research, despite the fact that my brother is divorced too. She came from a culture where it only happened to 'loose' people. She disapproved too of my lack of contact with my husband and my anger at his theft and violence. It was too difficult to endlessly go over the 'whys' and 'wherefores' of it time and again.***

***In order to celebrate her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday I arranged for her and my brother and family to visit. Along with the photographs of her sitting, a grim dark presence in the midst of her smiling family, I recall her rounding on my brother for playing happily and boisterously with his children, in case anyone should hear. We live in a large Victorian house with neighbours at a country-style distance and no one else to disturb. Her constant fear was that someone would hear and judge us. She did not allow the grandchildren, or indeed she herself, to play the piano at her home in case it disturbed the lady next door whose TV could be heard clearly through the wall. This was life in a goldfish bowl.***

***By this time I was beginning to notice less mental agility, and retentiveness. She had always been so sharp but age was taking its toll***

*and things were changing. As a result I felt that we needed to be thinking about her future as she lived alone and had had intruders a number of times. I suggested that we try to find somewhere closer to me so that we could visit more often and the children could pop in and help out. She finally agreed, and took some steps towards it. When the first steps did not work out she stated it was not to be, that she was unlikely to see any more of us if she did move nearer anyway and she wouldn't bother ringing me again, thank you very much.*

*We also got into difficulties on one visit over her behaviour towards my children. It was at this point that she called them names like 'wicked', and 'the worst children in the world' and I lost my temper. I told her we were going home so she turned to my daughter and told her it was her fault. With my childhood flooding back into my mind I told how damaged I felt but she derided that with a curled lip. I took after my father, she informed me and said he had been depressive (which was news to me) and that is was no wonder my husband had left. That created quite a rift for some time. I do recall that on this occasion she eventually apologised, which was quite a new thing for her to do.*

*When her aunt had died my mother was left some money. This caused her to lose sleep and to fret. She had been quite comfortable and felt she didn't need it. Conversations went round in circles, and nothing anyone suggested was any help. In fact she even cut down on spending complaining that she was worse off now. She believed that she had to preserve the money intact to be passed on to us even though my brother and I both told her to enjoy it. She was in reasonably good health with good mobility; she could have travelled abroad which she had never done. To her, however, money was not something to be enjoyed. My brother suggested something I knew was not strictly legal, like putting into a bank account under a different name, but when I suggested buying a property with it, which is legal, it was as though I had tried to mug her. I was called a cheat, accused of trying to get my hands on her money, and I was accused of cheating in the past over Benefit, which was not the case. I was deeply hurt after this further incident with her and cut myself off from her for some months. Ironically, in the event, most of the money went to pay the very high care prices after she had her first stroke. I am so grateful it was there, and we had no concerns for her wellbeing in that respect.*

*Eventually I broke the ice and wrote to her telling her how I felt, and received a nasty letter back in return. But slowly we picked up the pieces again, which was always the way of it, and plodded along. I felt that it was right to honour her as my mother. I could not say I wanted to but there was something there between us. I wanted a mother to share things with. I frequently got battered emotionally and learned to modify what I shared, but it felt right to me that even someone as vicious as I could experience her to be was now a frail old lady and shouldn't have to be completely alone. I was also always aware from the time I started counselling that she herself had been damaged; that the females in the family were passing on their inability to handle children from generation to generation. When my mother attacked my children and defended the*

*attack by stating that it had happened to her I told her that I would have thought that if that was the case, she would want to be different. But I could see that it had never occurred to her. She was unknowingly on a journey of vengeance somewhere from deep within. The only person who got close was a friend who was a counsellor. She encouraged my mother to talk but the pain was too great for her to bear and she would not continue. She preferred to cover it back up again not realising how much it leaked out anyway. I could not totally condemn her and write her off.*

*In the summer of 2006, my mother had a stroke and when she came out of hospital I went to stay and look after her. It was clear that she wasn't herself any longer in that she was disorientated about time, couldn't dress herself and wouldn't eat. However, I couldn't do anything with her. She would not let me help, and then she would be bossing me around as though I was five again. I responded as though I was five again too, for which now I berate myself. I know however that it took only a very short time in her company for me to feel that way despite telling myself not to respond. Eventually, with much resistance, she had to go into a home. Thankfully this one time it was my brother who got involved in the decision.*

*Initially she was furiously angry about her condition and longed to die. She didn't like having visitors and told them so. She ignored my youngest daughter after we had travelled four hours to see her. She wanted nothing from the past, no pictures of her family, no books, no ornaments, no music. It took some time but she did improve though she was never well enough to look after herself again. I quietly persisted in taking things in a bit at a time and gradually she seemed to be restored to normal, and would start asking for things. Thankfully I had kept most things I thought she might want though I had had to clear the house. All the staff were wonderful. She was especially fond of the male carers who were very kind when she couldn't sleep, and they brought her cocoa and biscuits. It was such a relief to know she was safe and well cared for. The staff said they liked her because she was the only resident who was (mostly) rational and quite feisty and they could laugh her comments off on the whole though she did hurt their feelings too with her bluntness. During one review she kept calling them fibbers and accused them of stealing her chocolates.*

*I would visit as regularly as I could, and apart from falling out with her about her Christmas present, we generally got on quite well, and she seemed to look forward to and appreciate my visits. On that occasion I had bought her a CD and cassette player, so that she could listen to her beloved classical music, but she insisted there was no room for it. She said she wouldn't be able to work it and told me to give it to the staff. I had looked high and low for one she would be able to manage, and there was plenty of room for it, and plenty of people who could help. It was a classic case of her pressing my buttons. It wiped me out as a person with judgement, concern or common sense. It reminded me of the time that I had cooked her a dinner when she was ill. I was a young teenager. She virtually spat at me that it was too much. I was, she said, completely*

***uncaring to think that someone who was ill would want to eat so much. I did not then, and still do not understand why everything had to come down to an assessment more like an assassination, of my character and abilities, and why she couldn't have simply left the food. That was the pattern. Any mistake required comments about laziness or shyness or loudness or stupidity, along with name calling.***

***My older daughter, J. who was present at this incident over the CD player could not understand why I reacted so badly. I was so distracted that I nearly killed us in the car on the way home, not noticing we had moved from double to single carriageway.***

***The last time I saw my mother to talk with she was less well and seemed tired, having had a brief spell in hospital. We sat in the garden and talked about her nursing career. My daughter, J. was with us once again. In recounting the story of her time in Glasgow she told us how the hospital had arranged a dance one evening. A handsome army Captain had danced with her all evening, and then asked Matron if he could drive her home. In her words he 'assaulted' her. She asked him to stop but he did not. She had never told anyone.***

***This was my last conversation with her, and it was deeply saddening. As I said to J. I wished I had known sooner. I felt like it would have made all the difference.***

***Of course, it would not have changed anything for me as a child.***

As one of the goals of autoethnography is said to be to make the personal political (Holman Jones, 2005) I started to consider how much my relationship with my mother had impinged on the situation with my son, how adults bully children and the effects such bullying might have on those children. This became therefore the focus of my research question.

### **Intercalations**

As I mentioned earlier, this long process has included two separate intercalations, both of six months duration. The second time was in 2006, because my soon-to-be new husband was diagnosed with cancer, his mother died, and two months later my mother's condition worsened and she too died.

***She had a massive stroke not long after that conversation and never regained consciousness again, though for a second or two when I got there she did look at me and tried to communicate. I hope she knew who I was. When she died I was truly sad. She had always said that she didn't want people at her funeral saying lots of nice things about her that weren't true, so I wrote her life story with information from her own***

***writings on a leaflet, with pictures of her at various times of her life. There were plenty of people at the funeral and the leaflet was much appreciated. My cousin remembered my mother with fondness for taking in her parents and the four children when they returned from Canada. I was glad that the positive sides of the woman she had been were remembered, not just a cantankerous old lady.***

***It is strange not to have a mother there at all; no one to tell things to. Although that was diminishing anyway, I still miss it. It was frequently disappointing to tell her things, because of her response, but even that was something to talk about – 'my mother said'.***

***She was the holder of the family's story and now that is down to me. It feels odd; sometimes I want to know something and the thought half formulates 'I will ask my mother'.***

For her funeral I wrote the following:

*Her faith was unequivocal, and absolutely paramount. She had high standards and expected good manners at all times. She was not afraid to speak her mind and declare what she thought. Looking back as we are now over the 83 years of her life, it is important to remember her not only as a frail old lady but that Inez was a beautiful and vigorous woman, with a powerful personality, a love of and an interest in her family. (Ashley, 2006)*

## **Ethics**

Quite a large part of my story is necessarily about other people, not just my mother, but my ex husband and my son as a toddler, now a father himself. With the death of my mother the questions around the ethics of writing about my self which would involve using her and others in the story intensified. Though my mother had finally learned what subject I was researching and thereby, by acknowledging that she had bullied me, she had agreed to me continuing the process, it now meant that she was no longer around to defend herself against what I might write, or to offer alternative views about what sort of child I had been. The ethical dilemmas attached to the idea of using a story centred on a parent and giving opinions about how they may have affected our lives are perhaps even more pertinent when that parent has died and is no longer around to answer to what is alleged; or to the possibility that I have made unfair judgements of her behaviour. A number of issues come to mind. While the story may be my truth, it may beg the question about whether I seek to justify myself by maligning her. Does it include fictional accounts told to bolster up my testimony, and to make the story more dramatic? Would that be acceptable?



Researching the self, at the time that I started my research (though this has changed in the years that my research has been continuing) did not automatically require that the Ethics Committee should be consulted. Therefore it was decided that it was not necessary to present it. I needed, nevertheless, to address the ethical questions about the methodology as well as the theoretical value of writing a life.

The question is, not just whether things I tell about are factually correct, but how fair is it to say these things with the people I tell about having no voice? Can I give them one? Have I let them speak and allowed them to be heard in any way at all? Does my voice overpower theirs? What voice have I used about them? Have I portrayed myself simply as a victim, or have I been able to stand back and look at the situation and interrogate it? How will any one reading this perceive the stories? Have they a clear picture? Have I answered all their questions? Am I invading their privacy? Is this a betrayal? Can I preserve their anonymity? How will this affect our relationship, and is it likely to harm them in any way?

### **Exposing others**

The issue of how a moral assessment of a parent is influenced by the experience of having children of one's own is relatively unexplored (Barbour, 2004, p. 74) and it is certainly true that my life would not have started on this course unless I had had my children, and experienced the most unexpected response. I had known that I had issues with my parents, but until my son was a toddler had had no concept of the impact on my present emotional state or any idea that I would struggle to parent in the way I wanted to. Nor did I consider that I would need to subject my parents' behaviour to any scrutiny at all. I simply accepted it as how life had been dealt to me. The need to subject myself to moral self-criticism became evident soon enough but was in any case already well established.

***My mother and I fought at times like cat and dog because as I grew I stood up to her attempts to break me, at least on the surface. I always went away and thought over what she had called me and ascribed to me, and despairingly I privately agreed with her. I knew that I was all the bad things she said I was. It was only as long as I knew I was in the wrong that our relationship was reasonable.***

As Barbour (2004, p.74) points out, the desire to protect the privacy of one's children probably plays a large role in this relative shortage of material and there is a very real difficulty there. Writing about one's children, even when they are adult could be seen as stealing their story, using material they may want to use one day in their own way. The purpose of using the material would seem to be the most pertinent issue at stake here, for after all the child's story could be of even more interest, having been hinted at elsewhere. If I had set out to use my child's story to make money, by fictionalising it or by sensationalising it, it could indeed be questionable. As Claudia Mills points out:

*the external benefits cannot be what drives the relationship; the relationship must always contain the central element of a desire to benefit the beloved for the beloved's sake.* (2004, p.103)

Does it betray my son, in his trust in me as a parent to look out for his best interests? Since his behaviour is not an issue in the story, only mine, then the issue of trust may be less pertinent. There is no sense of vicariously intruding into his thoughts and motivations or finding his behaviour cute, humorous or wrong, since I have been careful never to mention his behaviour at all. However he may, as a man, object to being portrayed as a victim and, having been victimised once, it would be unethical to do it all over again.

My hope has been that if there are difficulties my son is now experiencing perhaps as a result of my behaviour, he could make an assessment and maybe learn from what he has read. There is also the possibility, however, that he might have reacted badly to it and feel further damaged. It has been important to ensure that this reaction would not take place and make the judgement, based on our discussions before this project ever began, and again when I asked him for permission to use the material, as to whether there is that possibility. Though there may be things of real use for him and for others to learn from all this and though the material I am using could not be gained in any other way, it having arisen from an experience I certainly never looked for, it would be unethical to use the story if there was a chance of him being damaged by it.

When it comes to my parents and to my ex-partner things are very different.

For a long time I displaced my rage at my parents. When I had done some years of therapy and had taken on a completely different view of the world, of children and parenting, I then stood for a time in condemnation of my parents as I began to immerse myself in the experience from a very different standpoint. This was especially true of my mother who I felt bore the most responsibility for the difficulties in my relationship with my child. I felt abused and betrayed. What was more, though my father had died, my mother was still causing me stress. It would be all too easy to stand in judgement of her.

To judge is generally not considered an ethical thing to do. Judgement involves condemnation or pardon and who are we to do either? Assessing the values and belief systems of our parents, however, is a necessary part of deciding how they have impinged upon our character and deciding who we wish to be in the world. It has been important for me to learn how not to be with my children and, yes, there are times when I recall what my mother taught me and still use it. Initially I had little awareness of how my hopes, fears, beliefs, opinions and prejudices were shaped by my parents. I thought I had decided ways to be different, as in not calling my children names. But had failed to take account of the ways I had taken on their views, for instance, in my use of smacking, which I simply accepted as a valid way to bring up a child, and particularly the tone of voice in which I spoke.

Taking time to find out how my parents came to have their values and belief systems might have made a difference to the assessment, especially if I discovered any attenuating circumstances which may have lead to particular behaviours and responses. Was my mother in fact bullied or rejected herself? As I mentioned earlier (Act 3, Scene 1, p.109) this was in fact the case when she sat on the beach as her parents walked off in opposite directions.

The story my mother told me when we spoke just before she died did make me wish I had known it sooner. I wondered what difference knowing might have made. Knowing earlier might have led to a strong desire to forgive in the present, however it is unlikely to have changed the tenor of the experience for the child who lived with her, and could, if I was not careful, have led to brushing things under the carpet in a deliberate denial.

Forgiveness does not involve saying '*it is as though it never happened*', it is a recognition that something did happen, that my pain has been heard, by someone at least, and that in order to be able to continue free from bitterness and vengefulness I am refusing to cause harm in response. This concept of forgiveness was powerfully demonstrated in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Tutu, 1999)

***I did try to forgive her. I never told her that of course. She would have poured scorn on my need to until towards the end of her life. Forgiveness was no easy task, and maybe caused me more pain than I needed to have put up with, but she was my mother, and now I have no mother I am saddened.***

For me this recognition that something did take place in my childhood went some way to restoring a sense of personal power which developed over a long time in my relationship with my mother. Though there were times when she was so spiteful and vicious I vowed never to speak to her again, somehow telling her story and mine has eventually led to me attempting to forgive her. Might this change the tenor of the writing in any way that might impact on someone reading it, so that they feel pressurised to do so too?

There may be an assumption that in taking a stance against my mother's behaviour it would appear that I thought myself to be better. In this instance it is simply not possible for me to do that as I had continued the pattern with my first child. I have looked at my own experience of parenting and seen her mirrored there. And in her parenting too I see her mother mirrored. There is no doubt we were in a cycle that would, and maybe previously had, continued through the generations. Nevertheless I can and did say to her, '*I stopped it, why did you choose to continue it?*' It seemed she had simply not recognised that possibility.

Is it right to go public as it were with these recollections and reflections? She was living her life as she knew how and much of her behaviour was bound up with the culture in which she was bringing me up, the church, the still straight-laced fifties and the aspirations we all experience perhaps to be more than we are. I have to concede that there was very little opportunity for her to find therapy, even if she had recognised her behaviour as wrong at the time, but she obviously did not. It

was wrapped up in her religious belief, her lack of emotional intelligence and disguised by the rules of parenting she knew.

So the process of the moral assessment or judgement of parents is bound up with a multitude of shifting patterns of guilt, of anger, of pity, and still some rage for the child who was just that, a child.

### **Return after intercalation**

When, in 2007, I returned from intercalation to working on my material again I realised time was running out. I began to write up the thesis thinking I knew where I was going. The process of writing and being immersed again in the experience of my childhood and marriage had also brought up emotions, memories, and understandings about my relationship with my ex-husband which had been violent from early in the marriage. Again I came to recognize that even when he was not violent he bullied me and I came to accept and understand how our relationship and in particular the violence was likely to have been the trigger which moved me into experiencing feelings of violence towards my son. This was a new understanding, yet something I must have known tacitly (Moustakas, 1990, p.20), perhaps a moment of illumination (p. 29). How, I wonder, was it possible that I thought I had come to have so much insight into my emotions and yet failed to locate the trigger?

Perhaps it was because it was yet another layer of experience added on top of layers beneath. I had started my excavation in therapy by drilling straight down into the bedrock, not like an archaeologist scraping away at the top and unpeeling with gradual revelations. There is little doubt that during the marriage I was in denial about my situation. I do not think I told any of my friends that P. was violent towards me in nearly twenty years of friendship. I had mentioned it to certainly one of the therapists, but I had not really made anything of it. Our relationship was still violent on occasions as I trained and practiced as a therapist.

Writing one's life is a practice that is well established and much discussed. (Anderson, 2004; Barbour 2004; Brodzki, B., & Schenck, C., 1988). I have chosen to do so in order to portray the realities and issues arising from my desire to make the research relevant and an attempt to represent an experience from the inside and to demonstrate to a degree, the methodology I have chosen. In using

autoethnography I am not merely telling my story for the sake of it, nor am I abandoning theory. I am grounding the writing in Narrative Psychology, which espouses poststructuralist theory along with a recognition of the subject's lived experience. It is not my intention to leave the self untroubled (Gannon, 2006, p.477) in this telling, but to apply a critical eye.

*Writing of the self produces transformation of the self and potentially, of the world in local and particular contexts. (ibid p.479)*

As I read about the subject of domestic violence while writing about my own experience, the idea that women are equally guilty if not more guilty of Intimate Partner Abuse, and that I might therefore have been as responsible for the violence as my husband, seemed to demand exploration. I decided to start writing up with this, and to make the writing the research as it seemed a massive adjustment to my self construct might be required. Initially I had intended to find other people who had similar experiences with bullying parents, but by this time I decided to use only my own material, as there were so many layers and interlocking stories, each an autoethnography in itself, as well as a process to explore, and I took the decision to proceed to doctoral study, presenting a transfer paper in September 2007.

### **A change of course**

The process of writing the thesis enabled me to explore the topic of violent women. I found this challenging. What I learned shook me, and finally changed the course and content of some of the thesis as I followed the thread of where it all led me. I explored the phenomenon of my own violence within the marriage, concerned about whether I had been what has been described by Erin Pizzey as a family terrorist (Pizzey, 2005). Similarly, because of reading literature on the question of whether it is men or women who are most violent, I came across the use of attachment theory in regard to whether men should receive therapy or address their cultural violence. Using writing as research I was also able to explore my own attachment to my mother, and the subject of how bullies and victims are created. This led me to investigate the reason why and how being bullied might have triggered a violent response in my case, as not all children who are bullied become violent towards their children, and not all women who experience domestic violence respond violently. Bearing in mind that children of violent and or bullying parents will

frequently suffer emotional stress and may well respond violently themselves, I interwove my stories together to concentrate on children; the story of my relationship with my son, and my search for help, leading on to the story of the therapy I experienced, which included looking at my experience of childhood.

Although, as I have mentioned, it is possible to say that my mother tacitly gave her permission by acknowledging what I was doing in my research, and by admitting her treatment of me, the same cannot be said of my ex-partner. All the issues arising from my use of my mother's material apply to him too. There is however a different situation. It would not be possible to tell him what I am doing or to ask his permission to use his story. There is little doubt that he would not agree to it, and would contest the facts of the story as I tell it. He has his own story. Despite me completely changing my name by deed poll after he left, he might nevertheless be identifiable. The audience is necessarily likely to be limited, yet even then I imagine there is the possibility he or someone who knows him may come across the story.

It is therefore necessary for me to be as totally honest about his side of the story as I can be, without denying what I did experience. As I have said in the Prologue (p.12) and in the section on methodology (p.33) I do not claim it is the whole story of our relationship which was often agreeable, often tempestuous and full of contradictions. There are still aspects of his personality that I see in the children, a grin, a stance, an attitude, that cause a pang, of what I am not sure. I do know that I was not emotionally intelligent (Goleman, 1996) when I married, and that I was only too willing to adore and for him to be adored. I felt it was my duty to support him and make sure that he felt good. So should I complain that, after the initial flush of feeling fortunate that he loved me, it drove me to feel like a parasite, especially as I stayed? There is also the fact that I changed from that original position a great deal, as I became more aware of feminist issues. He did appear to try to change his stance on gender but did my changing views in fact cause a crisis that may have lead to the end of the marriage? For, after all, I did not decide to end the marriage because of the way he behaved. It was only in the last few months, when he was perched on the edge and getting ready to jump, that I took a good hard look and learned to see the marriage as the abusive relationship it undoubtedly was. I know that he found my relationship with my therapists threatening, and with all the transference washing about, maybe with some good

reason, though I know that I was committed to staying with him and continuing to love him. So should I be sorry he went? Am I only able to tell the story because he did go? These are all concerns that make me look again at whether I should use our story in this way. On the other hand might I find clues to the violence that I missed, and point others away from walking that path.

My reasons then for telling the story are not knowingly malicious; some of the facts are legal knowledge anyway. I have tried to forgive him too and that has been more difficult. There is apparently now no relationship to be affected by this revelation. Though we have met and conversed at a couple of family gatherings the most recent one went disastrously as he refused to speak with our daughter, later shouting at and insulting her. Still, such a bond after over 20 years together cannot be decisively cut. I must, though, be clear about my part in it all. I am clear that I need also to look carefully at what I write, to give him credit for the parts that were genuine, as I try to do to the children, without denying the manipulation and try to understand too his reasons for becoming who he was. He too was shamed. I wish sometimes that I had the understanding then that I do now. But would it have stopped him straying?

This is after all the purpose of the narrative, to see how I come to act as I did, not just what values and beliefs I held. Actions and beliefs are not necessarily the same. I wanted to do what was good in relation to my husband and son, be a good wife and mother, but my values and beliefs did not stop me from failing to act the way I wished to. Perhaps exploring stories which include the dark side might be a means to illuminate the darkness.

*To speak of our past is always an invitation to others to think and possibly speak of their own. (Rosen, 1998. p.17)*

Though I may feel free to disclose my own story and hope there may be healing for someone through that, I have had to look at the ethical considerations concerned with doing that and the resulting exposure of the lives of the others in my story. The purpose of doing the research may or may not justify the intrusion into their lives, and is different for each of the individuals concerned. I must at least know that I have paid attention to the ethical principles involved.



Very late in the process of writing up the thesis one of my supervisors commented, not for the first time, on how invisible my father was in the story for much of the time. As I returned to the text to make corrections I was stricken by the understanding that I did always know that he loved me. I was shaken because it was something I knew yet discounted, and I felt appalled for him. Yet I think now, on reflection, that my dislike of him arose because I was angry and betrayed that though he loved me he did not help me or demonstrate that love to me. He could not connect, and I could not connect with him, so I rejected him. It perhaps explains how the last time I saw him before he died I longed to tell him I loved him and I could not do it, but I stopped and looked back and we smiled. I have always hoped he knew. I do not yet know how to deal with this, but I feel grief for us both.

### **Knots & Tangles**

Coming to look, towards the later stages, at how and why I came to have an overwhelming concern for children, was difficult. I mentioned to my supervisor that I felt that I shouldn't really write from where I was at because it would be a rant about how people treat children and I was not in a position to be able to pass such comment. She encouraged me to write, nevertheless, and I spent a week away, pouring out my feelings and experiences and how I responded to them.

When I next visited her the comments were that I had made her feel bad personally, that I was condemnatory and should not use my comments on situations as the stories spoke for themselves and, though I talked a lot about empathy I came over as having very little for adults. Somewhere, I think, we both lost sight of the fact that I had been encouraged to write from where I was at. I became frustrated and confused. I felt I was effectively being silenced about adults' bullying behaviour towards children. Perhaps if the response had not felt so personal to both of us, I would have been able to let the work go. What from my point of view had been 'Let's see what I could do with this' turned into what seemed like 'You can't say that adults bully children, it makes me feel bad' - a position that led me to defend something I had always known would not be the final product. I became demotivated, and tongue-tied, unable to explain myself. The apparent silencing reminded me of my response to my mother. For a time we were locked into a transference and counter-transference that now seems really quite plain, but for many months it seemed as though it was not possible for us to deal with it.

## Faith

While I was struggling with all of that and unable to get out of the block I felt, I recognised the need to bring into the equation of my stories both the negative elements of my religious upbringing and the positives I had drawn from it that enabled me to still have a faith I consider relevant though, it was changing and adapting. I had not, I thought, made anything much of my religious faith. I mentioned it in passing until it seemed to start demanding that I address it. I came to feel that as a factor it could not be left out. It was not the cause of the bullying though it was used as reinforcement for it. Yet at the same time it was a rich source for recovery and growth. Initially I considered this could have complicated the main narratives so I dealt with it separately as an intermission. It is still a framework in which I find meaning, though I describe how that was threatened at one point (Intermission, Scene 4, p. 173).

However when my second academic supervisor described my draft thesis as the story of a 'Christian woman' I found that internally I strongly resisted this idea. What was I resisting exactly? I have always found it difficult to be defined by gender. I like being a woman but dislike the way I am treated compared to men in similar roles. I would rather be judged simply as another person. But to be a Christian woman seems doubly restrictive. I would have to admit that I do not have too many good role models for that apart from perhaps the Catholic activist and journalist Dorothy Day (Reigle, 2003) who did inspire me with her work for the poor, or theologian Dorothy Soelle (1995), whose writing on resistance to unjust structures is inspirational. The term Christian woman has for me overtones of sugary sweetness and earnest goodness, which, as I write, I can see may be unfair. There is a movement in Christian womanhood, however, that upholds the idea that women are fulfilled only in motherhood and obedience to the husband, who have to be 'covered' by a man before they can speak in church. They wear only very plain long skirts and wipe out any sort of beauty and sexuality, and seem to wish to see women waiting at home in eager anticipation of being available at any moment.<sup>40</sup>

My mother was also a Christian woman and I fear identification with her and her views. Remembering what my mother used to say about every thought and word

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<sup>40</sup> E.g. [aboverubies.org](http://aboverubies.org)

being recorded and that it would be used against us on judgement day, I wonder whether I am trying to get my story in first.

I did not set out to write about faith, so it was an interesting incident. Given my experiences, then, how do I define myself? What meaning do I give to my life and my story? For me the main thrust of my story had been to tell how a damaged child can become an adult who may damage future generations and the story of my faith was, I thought, incidental. Through writing I recognize that my faith, as I have now defined it, has become part of the framing story of the last few years. I still somewhere feel resistance to that idea, however, in case by rejecting the faith element someone might reject the point of the story. It did bring back to awareness the importance and significance of social justice and the Fool.

I finally broke out of the difficulty with my supervisor after a comment from a friend, and a conversation with my husband clicked with this. These helped me recognise the activity of the Fool archetype through sociological comment on the education system. This helped to clarify where I felt I was going and enabled me to enjoy writing once again. Without the difficulty this might not have happened. My comments on adults and how they treat children are taken directly from my own experience of being an adult in pain visiting that pain upon a child. This after all is where I was coming from. It is the basis for my thesis. It is not wrong to reject the shaming behaviour, as long as it is still possible to have empathy for the individual engaged in it who is in many cases dealing with their own demons. I have explored the ways in which therapy has impacted on me in that respect in my current job as Centre Director of an Eco Study Centre, where I work with school children. I have looked at how the work I do and how the impacts on the children of the current culture in educational continues to change and affect me, and how I have acted out that concern within the work that I do.

I have, I believe, begun to find my voice in writing, and discovered as others before me (St. Pierre, 2005, p.970) how it clarifies thoughts that would not, and maybe cannot, emerge by thinking alone. It gives my faltering words a second chance when the critical gaze would still my tongue. It is a means of enquiry; into the presence of violence, into the spirit of a child, into the search for self and the Other. It enquires into how violating boundaries can destroy a soul, and of the healing that can breathe between the 'I' and 'thou' when one steps gently inside the world of

another. It is more confetti thrown into the wind for a reader to sweep up and discard in irritation, to piece together, or perhaps to cause fragments of understanding wonder to flutter down into a new design.

### **Scene 3 Looking back on the Journey**

This long journey involving my rescue from the imprisonment of servitude to poisonous pedagogy, and from repeating its horrors myself, began with therapy when I was thirty. In July 2010 I was sixty. Along the way, since 1996, the voices and guides for the process have been the archetypes as described by Pearson (1991). Using the archetypes, even retrospectively, as Moustakas (1990) writes about creative synthesis (p. 31), has enabled me to find patterns, recognise stages and discover hope and meaning in what has been an awkward and often uncomfortable life story.

#### **The Preparation Stage**

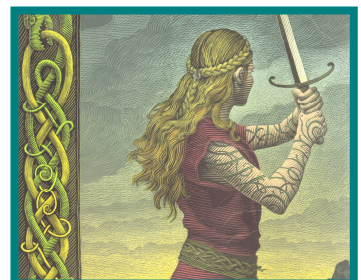
The **Innocent** was the trusting, optimistic and loyal child. I believed what I was told even when it was not warranted. That is that I was lazy, selfish, deceitful, wicked, fat, a mess. If able to deal with the realisation that all is not perfect, the **Innocent** will develop in a healthy way with faith in goodness (p. 71) The shadow of the Innocent develops, however, when the Innocent is unable to recognise that the parent or partner cannot be trusted and keeps on in relationship, accepting, while not recognising, mistreatment. The **Shadow Innocent** cannot face her own imperfection without feeling very bad about herself, and so is controlled by guilt and shame.



The **Orphan**, which had been repressed, came to the fore as I began, through therapy, to recognise the betrayal and lack of nurture in my childhood (p. 82). It was necessary to recognise the pain in order to stop being in denial and to work it through. I was fortunate to find help to do this healing work and was able, through some understanding of the **Fool**, to develop the **Orphan** as Rebel, beginning to claim solidarity with other oppressed and wounded people.



My **Warrior** had not been well developed as I had been unable to create boundaries (p.94). I would stand up to my mother and to my husband for a time, but this would often deteriorate into shadow as I sensed my impotence in the face of their greater



power. I did stand up for what I believed in the one area I knew well and where I felt confident i.e. religion. The **Warrior** did gradually begin to learn the necessity of creating boundaries, learning to stand up for herself in other areas, though she was still weak.

Through nursing and in motherhood my **Caregiver** tried to display compassion but, due to the repressed Orphan and undeveloped Warrior, was mostly negative (p. 110) as I had not developed boundaries or established my identity. While my son was a baby everything was fine between us, but when he began to exert his will I was not therefore able to respond appropriately, feeling confused about his separateness. The shadow caregiver was therefore in operation at that time. I was also unable to say no to anything asked of me, yet resented this. I felt under siege when people walked in the house and demanded hours of attention, yet never locked my front door during the day.



### **The Journey/ Quest Stage**

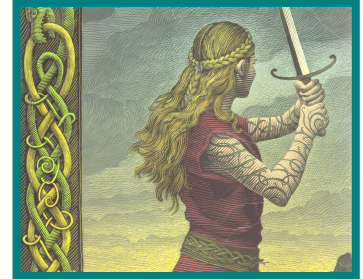
Through therapy I felt I was embarking on a quest. All the preparation archetypes were developing at some level. The Innocent had survived the realisation that she had been betrayed and the Orphan's wound was receiving healing. The Caregiver and Warrior were creating boundaries. I was learning interdependence, rather than symbiosis or co-dependency and was learning to offer less conditional love.



After several years in therapy I had begun to feel the need to make a difference in some way. When my second child was a toddler I began to edit a magazine which presented ideas to Christians about involvement in social issues. This was the **Seeker** searching for a better way (p.123). After my fourth child was born I decided to learn how to become a therapist.



Inspired by this I was able to express the **Creator** as I helped bring the Retreat Centre to birth (p.164) and facilitated the decoration, ambience and, most of all, its purpose, and, as this process took place, I found that I was less willing to be confined in the negative elements of my marriage. I spiralled into **Warrior** again, but this time with more ego strength (p. 33) and refused to accept the blaming that went on.

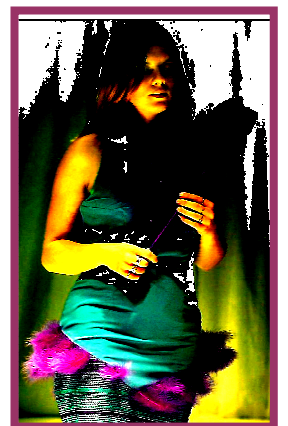


Through the therapy I was obliged to undertake on my counselling course, I had encountered the **Lover**, where life-force energy inspired and drove me on to love and accept myself and others (p. 46). Issues of faith were still being challenged and I found the theories of counselling and the people I met far more interesting than others who were not involved in it. I was on a 'high'. I aimed, I believe, to become the **Magician**, to transform, and to heal. Perhaps my **Lover/Dragon** was still the **Seeker** and my Dragon was actually her **shadow**? Pearson comments on the danger of spiritual ambition when the urge to ascend spiritually is an ego-powered adrenaline rush of excitement (p. 131). The dragon aimed to fly too high, to a place I was not ready to go, and was brought down. However, as Pearson (1991) points out, the story of Icarus who also tried to fly high but whose wings melted in the sun does not



*inherently discourage the quest...[ it ]...merely warns against presumption and pride - flying higher than you have the skill or the right to fly. It is not the attempt to ascend that is punished... but rather presumption and obliviousness to appropriate limits. (p.132)*

When after a wonderful three years of journey and discovery the archetype of the **Destroyer** became evident, when everything I valued apart from my children, was lost to me, it felt like a punishment. For true transformation to take place, Pearson says we must die to our former selves (p.136). My home, marriage, friends, work, the Retreat Centre, my identity as a married woman with a lifestyle and growing old with my partner, were all gone in the blink of an eye on a snowy January day in 1997 when my





husband left. I was surprised at how completely they had defined me. I felt my life no longer had meaning, and the **Orphan** returned with a vengeance. I felt betrayed and abandoned. At times I felt mortally wounded. Here I learned with incredulous anger that God did not keep me safe as my childlike ego still hoped, and death beckoned enticingly. I had no will to live, merely the obligation of not destroying my children's lives further than I was sure I already had. It was only much later that I could see the transformative elements of it.



This was the time for rebirth, though it took two more years before I could appreciate that. Moving on from the wounded **Orphan** I spiralled up into the **Warrior** once more, though this time with iron-clad boundaries that I swore would never be breached. I did resolve during that time, however, that I would find what good I could from this experience. I chose not to believe that God sent this punishment but I knew the only way forward was to find some good in it or my children would be destroyed by bitterness. I learned to move on from the childlike ego state that wants to know God will keep us safe and to accept that the realities of life are not always controllable even by God.



After two terrible years I found myself moving across the country to undertake this job and to pick up the pieces of the quest as I began to create the work here. I wanted to present myself as a Crone, a non-woman. Yet still I had to recognise I was not ready even for that. After all the crone is the **Magician/ Sage/ Fool** along with the **Ruler** in charge of the kingdom, who knows, and has to be sought out by others. Something else was required.

### The Return Home

After a quest the hero returns home to rule the kingdom. Thus the first archetype to emerge when I arrived here after the quest in which I almost died, was the **Ruler**. I was given the task of creating a harmonious and prosperous kingdom (p.181) and of becoming a leader. This is an ongoing task and the kingdom





is imperfect yet I am aware that I have slowly grown into that role, grown from being apologetic and afraid to offering clear guidance.

The **Lover** and **Creator** have had to be rediscovered. They slowly kicked back into life as I learned to believe again, to forgive myself, to let down the drawbridge at the boundaries and to bring vision to reality.

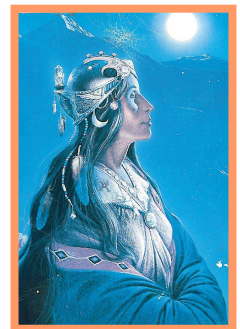
The **Magician's** magic (I am delighted to discover) is not mine; it is opening others up to the mysteries of the natural world through the educational tool I am privileged to use, and using education to open my own children's eyes to their full potential. Still and still I yearn to become a Crone/Storyteller. Perhaps when I stop seeking it will take place.

Along the way is the need to attain wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge as the **Sage** emerges. It is about becoming wise and I find myself being drawn towards the contemplative, to meditation and to connect with truths beyond myself (p. 215). Along the way I realised how complex truths are. I have learned to accept paradox, and subjectivity and inadequacy. I am aware of how little I know and I hope I have learned never to stop learning.

The **Fool** stands before me. The Fool archetype spirals back into the Innocent. It lives life in the present.

*It is the aspect of the child that knows how to play, be sensual, and in the body. It is the root of our basic sense of vitality and aliveness, which expresses itself as a primitive, childlike spontaneous, playful creativity (Pearson, 1991, p.221)*

The **Fool** is the archetype that helps us deal with the world we face in all its absurdity and injustice. She delights in breaking rules or poking fun at the authorities and systems, and find ways around obstacles, in order to expose truth without provoking hostility (p.223)



## **Conclusion**

### **A word on transformation**

I have talked a lot about transformation and my concern is that, with so much apparent transformation going on in my story, I may give the impression that I believe myself to be progressing up some ladder to a level of awareness that puts me above those who have not made such a journey. Also that it gives a rosy glow to the writing, an expectation that everything in my life is sorted and clear. This is far from the case.

There was a very short time in my life when after therapy, I liked myself, felt I had achieved something, felt beautiful and was thankful for all I had, but the journey wasn't over. Pearson's archetypal hero sets out on a journey, a quest, and finally reaches the kingdom, only to find that another journey has to be undertaken or there was further to go. After that particular period in my life I descended into my own personal hell where I acted in ways that I did not feel in control of, when I could not help my pain leaking out, came to see myself as excrement, and could not understand why I needed to go on living. The next stage of transformation felt only negative, but I learned that I could at least survive the monstrous spectre of abandonment, which had haunted me all my life. I learned too that I could survive rejection, and that I could control my feelings of pain, regret and self hatred.

Now, though I am deeply thankful for the love of my family and husband I find it hard to accept it. I consider myself to be irritable and stressed. I too frequently raise my voice in frustration at what I cannot alter, fret and swear about people who wind me up. I frequently feel rejected, and still suffer from feelings of shame. The desire to die still haunts me occasionally, and I hide from people and situations. I am opinionated and tease my husband in order to feel his equal and wish I did not. I wish too that I were the tranquil and serene persona that I apparently present to the world. I wish I were not so bossy, selfish and controlling and too often angry.

Yet I am deeply, profoundly thankful that I am not mad or dead, that I am no longer violent, just passionately vehement about what matters to me. I think I may even have some good points, but I do not think I am special.

My concern has not been to concentrate on myself for the sake of telling either a poor-me victim tale, to excuse my behaviour, as a triumphalist story of recovery, or to point the finger of blame; but to relate what has been quite a gruelling phenomenological enquiry into meaning and identity, and if possible to make this personal story political, at least to a degree, by placing the stories in social and cultural frameworks.

This is the nature of narrative and stories of self. No story is true or perfectly located within a particular discourse. Is it a part of the post-modern sense of fun, that can throw all up the air and see what comes down, or indeed stays up.

One element of my story, i.e. my problem relating to my son was located within a faith narrative. It was my moral sense and the knowledge of my life within a church that told me this was not acceptable. Yet it was my own actions and feelings I was dealing with, and if you like from which I needed 'rescue'. My theoretical position did not marry with my actions. This was an example of the **I** which is not aware or reflexive, surprising itself by its own action (Crossley, 2000). Was it simply that I needed to place the issue in another discourse? Would the recognition that it was the violence I lived with that triggered my behaviour have changed things? If my therapist had not dealt with the situation that way, but as a pastor had marched round and told my husband that the violence had to stop, would it have done? No one ever suggested to me that he might be the cause or that I should leave him, or even that we should go into therapy together. It was always my issue to deal with. In fact there were all sorts of ramifications from that choice that might have altered the outcome completely if the therapist had made a different choice.

For me this happened in particular ways, and not overnight, through a particular form of therapy. It was therapy which enabled me to see life from the point of view of a child. But also and I believe importantly, dynamically so, it was the understanding of the theory that we are all ok, that all should be accepted, non-judgementally, and that that includes children. Therefore I cannot regret it.

The fact is that I find I do still believe that I needed psychodynamic therapy before I was to be able to slowly address the political issues surrounding the problem, namely my husband's violence, and my mother's bullying. In fact the violent

relationship with my husband continued until he left in 1997, when our son was eighteen, even though I had long before taken feminist philosophy on board. Or had I really? It was undoubtedly influenced or contaminated by feelings of shame, also perhaps by being part of a religious community, or simply by being a woman with four children, and no will to subject them to single parenthood.

What have I not told in this story, as I have constructed this particular narrative from it? Could this invalidate my story, or leave it defenceless. Looking at this now I personally believe that the major underlying narrative within this is strengthened rather than weakened. My mother's bullying and shaming behaviour produced an adult with no sense of boundaries, no ego strength to speak of, little self esteem, and such a sense of self-condemnation that even in the face of political discussion about gender, and changing views, continued to live with a man who was violent, and in some ways did not want him to leave when he did

It is definitely not the story of an academic researching objectively, nor is it merely the story of a woman who found her way out of a mess. It is the story that a child suffered as a result of an unhealed adult, indeed, that generations of children suffered because of previous generations of unhealed adults. There may not have been the resources or the discourses that made healing possible or probable even had they been there in previous generations, and the adults in that sense cannot be judged, but the damage was still done. And the political point here would be that damage takes a long, long time to repair. It causes more damage on the way, to other adults and to children. The only people who can alter that are the adults.

Did I construct the story in order for that point to emerge? Perhaps. Yet at one point I used the process of writing to confront an idea about myself that filled me with horror and shame. I was not set on clearing my name, I was prepared to face the facts, and ploughed through a great deal of material on violent women that shook me to the core. I might have nevertheless buried my head in the sand. Perhaps it is possible for others to make that judgement. I may have been through some transformative experiences, but there are many more needed! I have been groping my way along a dark path, sometimes like the Pilgrim Bunyan described, falling into a pit of despondency, at others emerging into a pleasant valley filled with sunshine. I have a sense that this is only the beginning.

## **Parents adults and children**

Throughout the thesis is woven the theme that, since it is the way we are treated as children, along with culture and social discourses, which shapes our adult behaviour, it is incumbent on adults to consciously understand and consider the effects of their behaviour upon children, especially when the adults have been victims themselves. In conclusion I use my experience and that of others, to describe how adults can recognise if they are in pain and are in turn inflicting pain on others. This is followed by discussing the idea that nothing justifies treating children badly; that this recognition brings with it an obligation to change the behaviour in order to break the generational cycle of violence, and sometimes it is deep emotional change and at others a cultural change that is required, a new discourse surrounding children.

Shortly before starting the research I had come to East Anglia to work in a centre with children in an educational setting, and found that this was reinforcing what I was learning, and the learning was informing my work here. I felt that it was important to counteract the culture of society and the education system in the work at the centre, and also to campaign on behalf of children. I have ended on a positive note, because I have come to the point of wanting to change the story for and about children. Again, I am well aware that it will not be me who does this, but I hope that with effort the story that children are feral, parasites which may be true inasmuch as society may have created them that way, and that they need knocking into shape with short, sharp shocks can and will change. Perhaps as a result some children who might have snapped and become violent will not do so. If it is also true, as I have described, that adults continue the cycle of violence from their childhood, then it is even more important to change the story, in the media and the workplace and every other area of life. The factors described by Dutton (1999) will not always be apparent in children as adults work with them and care for them, so avoiding those things which could add to trauma or trigger aggression is vital. My concern therefore now is that, if adults do not become aware of the reactions that may be going on in a child, who may have experienced any number of previous episodes of stress, then adults cannot institute a hard line repressive system, designed to, if not break their spirits, at least bend them into submission, then blame them when they react. In this, the issue of 'awakeness' (Greene, 1978), which I mentioned in Act 3, Scene 2 (p.126) seems crucial: a decision to take on

board the task of shaping a structure, even a society that will nurture children and provide them with the framework for ethical choices

I have therefore concluded with a look from my own experience, at how adults can recognize whether they are bullying children, how adults need to take responsibility for that if they are doing so, and how the adult culture might need to change for that to happen.

Adults may be acting upon the Child-in-pain within, with no comprehension that that is so. Is it possible to evaluate one's behaviour to see how old wounds are being triggered into present actions? How is it possible to change should it become recognised that past hurt is still present in the now? These patterns of behaviour are those that, in reflecting on my own experience, I see indicating the possibility of bullying behaviour.

Behaviour that I cannot control towards someone that I dislike.

Hurting, snapping at, rejecting or reprimanding someone and feeling bad afterwards.

Inappropriate or excessive response to a situation, such as anger, feelings of rejection, depression, sadness, worthlessness.

Simply having feelings that I cannot explain.

Being reminded of someone or an experience in the past.

Dislike of a child I have just met, or one I don't really know.

Fear or being intimidated by someone.

Inability to be oneself.

Feeling stressed or inadequate.

Poor self image, little self respect

Feeling the need to blame or better someone - bring them down just for who they are.

Recognising patterns of behaviour or scripts that stop me being free to act in new ways.

Being part of a system or belief system that puts rules before love.

Looking at world views-beliefs, prejudices, traditional views, opinions, finding sources, and discerning whether they are true to who I am, or want to be.

Instead of reacting from past feelings, ideas and prejudices I would like to see adults, rather than only teaching emotional intelligence to children, taking on the idea of developing their own emotional intelligence. As an adult who was in pain and causing pain, I feel it is imperative to understand that knowing about one's trauma will not necessarily alter behaviour, but creates an obligation to work on healing. I believe that adults should be creating nurturing communities, moving beyond an obligation to their own families, so that they facilitate children's play, and look out for them, instead of imputing bad intentions to them. For as adults wrapped up in the business of being grown up we do not know which child is on the brink of being triggered into violence by a slight which means little to the adult but is one more shaming-humiliation that is leading towards that happening. Mother Theresa used to say that we should see Christ in every person we meet. Perhaps adults could learn to see that each child has the potential to be as Laing wrote and I quoted earlier

*Yet if nothing else, each time a new baby is born there is a possibility of reprieve. Each child is a new being, a potential prophet, a new spiritual prince, a new spark of light, precipitated into the outer darkness. Who are we to decide that it is hopeless?* (Laing, 1960, p. 26)

The alternative i.e. seeing them as hopeless, or treating them carelessly may be building up a store of shame-humiliation that will render them hopeless as self fulfilling prophecy. I see that so clearly now.

As a part of a new way of being with children that has developed, my journey led me first to the idea that all people are OK, which is in contradiction to being described as vermin, and from that to the concept of empathy. This ability to enter the world of the other also necessitates being for the Other, and children need people who are for them. Levinas (Bauman, 1993) sees that the whole point of being human is to bear responsibility for the Other whether or not it is reciprocated, and whether or not it appears to make any difference. Clowning brought me to the concept of saying 'Yes', of being available, and being vulnerable.

Recognising the world of the modern child, and the fact that young people are blamed for being products of the environment that created them, this *seeing* requires adults to live alongside them in penitence; not guilt, but a *grief* which leads to *acting* for them in the *hope* of changing the story.

Hartmann (1998) believes that, when a certain number of people believe a new story, then the story changes. And a new one can be put in place. I'm fool enough, as a result of this period of my life, to believe that that might happen.

### **The Wild Foolishness of Hope**



*Changing the wind would mean changing public opinion, which requires changing the values that guide people individually, and as groups, which in turn requires changing the vision of what is both possible and desirable, which ultimately means our framing story. In other words changing the wind means doubting, rejecting, and defecting from our old framing stories, and instead, discovering and adopting - in a word, believing - a new framing story....*

*Tame believing **for** and **within** the dominant system may be easy; but wild believing **against** and **beyond** it turns normal people into heroes and history changers (McLaren, 2007, p. 270, author's emphasis)*

Can the situation regarding violent and bullying behaviour towards children, and the way the world of the adult rides roughshod over the next generation, really ever change? Am I merely tilting at windmills? Can stories of healing and transformation ever be anything like powerful enough to make a difference?

The simple answer of course is that nobody knows (ibid, p. 269). Should that matter?

I do not believe it should prevent us from trying.

What would it take to change public opinion in a country where there have been a number of unsuccessful efforts made to prevent the physical punishment of children for instance (Miles, 1994, p.130), and where violence in the media, neglect, domestic violence and familial and structural bullying would require all that McLaren (2007) intimates above, in each of these areas and more? The issues seem to be insuperable.

Believing that this story cannot be changed, that nothing can be altered within the dominant system of intergenerational relationships, is to give power to the idea that life can never be different. Such belief invested in it may, however, be the only way the story has power, if we stop believing it, it stops being 'true' (McLaren, 2007).



Throughout history people have stood up to be counted and believed that what was being told to them as the truth or as fact was mistaken, or that there was another way. One story which I share with children concerns the work of Galileo who believed a new story about the solar system and the universe. He suffered greatly for those beliefs at the hands of the authorities of his day, yet thanks to the work of Galileo, Copernicus and others, no one believes any more that the sun revolves around the earth. Beliefs can change.

Issues of child labour, slavery, civil liberties, feminism, racism, disability, homosexuality and climate change, to name but a few, have required that people started to question the dominant story, and have changed the mindset of thousands, sometimes millions of people, often for the better, though sometimes it will work for the worse (Hartmann, 2001, p.217).

What happens with dominant stories is that though many people do not personally subscribe to the views expressed in them (Wink, 1992, p. 95), or support those views in their behaviour, neither do they stand up and say so by providing alternatives and attempt to 'change the wind'. Nor do they stop believing in or accepting the power of the stories to dominate, or attempt to intercept them. Thus those dominant beliefs, opinions and practices become the norm (ibid, p.96).

There are many adults who are seriously concerned about attitudes and behaviours towards children, yet who nevertheless feel it is hopeless to try to alter the fundamental deep-seated causes of that violence, or who, because of their own occasional lapse, will feel it is unalterable human nature that this happens. This malaise can affect those who are trying to live in hope 'as if' things were different, and believing they will be. It is fool-ish.

The Fool is one who will see through all this, who will start to question and will come to believe an 'alternative and transforming story' (McLaren, 2007, p.270). This requires hope. Hope will withdraw its support from the narratives that support the status quo, that conform to what on the surface appears to be non-coercive or non-offensive, yet are subtly attractive. After all (it can be said) by being on the inside it might even be possible to do good from within, thus causing the high price of

conformity not to be noticed ( Brueggeman, 1989, p. 117). Rather, hope will start to envision what it can mean to expose the destructive system that allows children to be bullied and beaten. Views on children have altered before, and can do so again (Hughes, 2010, p.8).

The call of the Fool to hope therefore, is to stop listening to the story that sees children as the enemy, believes that harsh treatment is the only way, and that shaming is a useful social tool to be used without regard for its effects. Hope will stop believing that if adults can behave as they please, and if children are raised in violent, contemptuous, and neglectful homes, watch or experience extreme violence and explicit sex, stay up all hours, consume junk food, drinks, and alcohol, it will not harm them or our community. Hope will start believing in the possibility of goodness within each child, and will sacrifice all to ensure it can be nurtured. Hope will believe that people can change, can be transformed, can be healed. Hope will look at how our own emotions are affecting us (Bennet-Goleman, 2001), as we gaze at a child with fear, anger, dislike, uncertainty, inadequacy.

This hope is not stoic belief in the face of despair, it is hope such as is based in the 'pastoral cycle' developed by the liberation theologians in the 1970s (Green, 2009, p.16). This is often summarised as See, Judge, Act. To this Bodenham (2008, p. 4) adds Grieve which engages the heart, and, in the judging or reflecting phase of the cycle, Hope to signify its transformative purpose (Green, 2009, p.114). In this context it would mean:

### **See**

Allowing ourselves to be awakened to the issue of the spirit of the child; no longer seeing their abuse as an inescapable fact of life,

*We find there exists potential for a new kind of generosity. This is a generosity which serves those who will never thank us - future generations... It is their world we learn to see, and with their eyes. (Bodenham, p. 4)*

### **Grieve**

Hope will say to others who have always believed the same way, but felt disempowered and isolated, that if they recognise this as the pain of God, they can

then grieve with her. Then that grief can mean the possibility of a new way of being, by producing repentance (Soelle, 1995, p. 75, Brueggeman, 1986, p. 41) the beginning of action. Thus hope requires us to feel the grief, the fear, rage, and sorrow, which it is easier to hide in denial; the children need our grief.

## **Hope**

Hope can recruit others who feel the same, who recognise that the grip of the old system that will not let go of the right to treat children as possessions, can be broken, and that a new story that views children as precious, as people, can come to the fore.

## **Act**

Stories begin to change and alter the culture when a critical mass is achieved (Hartmann, 2001, p.221). Although within any culture there will always continue to be those who believe the old story, when a certain number of people challenge the old story (Ibid, p.217) it is difficult for people to continue to tell it and be believed. They have done so through denial, but the voices raised in protest become too insistent, and a cultural shift can take place (Hartmann, 2001, p.220).

Hope acts as though stories can be changed and it is we who must change them. It is the living out of what one envisages as though the story has changed, believing it can change. Hope will believe in a determined, imaginative way, and can work as a powerful, peaceful underground - a resistance (Brueggeman 1989, Soelle 2001). This resistance is to those who believe there is nothing wrong, or who believe nothing can be done, or that the status quo will prevail.

This will mean action - fighting for change, exposing the areas where fear rules quietly, and perhaps most importantly working underground, being prepared to be judged fools, making sacrifices, making noises, insisting on being heard. Regardless of whether it is seen to win or be proved right. I take hope from the stories of others who have not been afraid having seen and grieved to speak, to act, to hope. I do not therefore believe it is naïve to want to change the world. It is not naïve to believe that attitudes about children, about abuse and bullying can be changed. So this is only a beginning.

This is where the research has left me. It is what I must do. I must hope, but also see, grieve, and act.

Writing about Thomas Clarkson, one of the leading figures in the cause of the abolition of the slave trade, Adam Hochschild states:

*The riveting parade of firsthand testimony he and his colleagues put together in the Abstract of Evidence and countless other documents is one of the great flowerings of a very modern belief: that the way to stir men and women to action is not by biblical argument, but through vivid,, unforgettable descriptions of acts of great injustice done to their fellow human beings. The abolitionists placed their hope not in sacred texts, but in human empathy. We live with that hope still.*  
(Hochschild, 2006, p.155-6)

**The dragon is wisdom and power. That is why it is so feared and yet courted. Nothing is more powerful than the dragon...And as you put your feet on the path, you hope - you pray that somehow the wisdom is granted to your heart that allows you to deal with that great power without vainglory or selfishness. That your spirit doesn't die like a rotten tree eaten away from within by its own greatest gift turned into a fatal tragic flaw. (Borchardt, 2002, p.469)**

**So the circle is complete, and we are ready to experience the cycle again – but this time beginning at a new level. (Pearson, 1991, p. 230)**



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. <http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/proj/genbunronshu/29-2/haig.pdf>}