"How Literature Changed my Life": A Hermeneutically Oriented Narrative Inquiry into Transformative Experiences of Reading Imaginative Literature

Thor Magnus Tangerås

Acknowledgments

Some years ago, having just discovered David Shield's memoir *How Literature Saved My Life*, I chanced upon a fascinating article by the author Nicola Griffith. She had received several letters from readers thanking her for helping them to accept their identity. When I recounted this to a novelist I know, he told me that a reader had contacted him to say: "your novel gave me the courage to go on with my life when everything was black." The serendipitous confluence of these events impressed themselves upon me. I myself had previously experienced the transformative power of the written word; in my late teens I felt "like some watcher of the skies, when a new planet swims into his ken" as I discovered the hitherto hidden continent of poetry. Later on, as a literary scholar I would come to feel that there was something missing from, or taken for granted in, literary studies: the question of literature's importance and meaning in our troubled lives. Hence I was beckoned: this phenomenon, how literature can change readers' lives, simply had to be investigated. I subsequently addressed a large group of students asking them whether a work of fiction had ever changed their lives. Two people got in touch with me afterwards. I knew then that this was a project worth pursuing. What I could not possibly envisage was how rewarding this undertaking would prove to be. I am grateful for all that I have learned, and to all those who have enabled me to pass beyond that initial step.

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Finally, and above all*,* I would like to express my deepest gratitude to each and every participant in this inquiry, who generously gave of their time and courageously shared their life-changing experiences. In sharing them, you have also changed me. *Tusen takk.*

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Thor Magnus Tangerås

Abstract

This dissertation investigates how the reading of imaginative literature may be experienced as life-changing. Previous research has shown that many readers have found a particular work of fiction to be of significant help to them in dealing with personal issues. Furthermore, experimental studies reveal that readers experience self-modifying feelings during the act of reading. Research in psychological aesthetics indicate that the hitherto neglected phenomenon of being moved may be central to transformative experiences with art, and may be a more productive point of departure than emotion-based approaches. Narrative psychology has found 'redemption' to be a common trope in life-stories of change, and discursively related to notions of epiphany, catharsis and the sublime. What remains to be investigated, however, is how transformative aesthetic experience may produce lasting change and become integrated into the person's life-story, and how such subjective change is related to the experience of being moved.

Thus the aim of this inquiry is, through interviews with readers who have experienced life-changing encounters with particular works of fiction, to build new knowledge about transformative reading experiences and the relationships between life-crises, affective modes of transaction with literary works, and qualitative change experiences. Such knowledge will contribute to our understanding of transformative aesthetic experience, the affective aspects of reading and life-stories of change. This theoretical knowledge may also have practical application for the intermediation of literature. The investigation places itself within the field of Library and Information Science, but has a trans-disciplinary orientation towards reader response studies, literary scholarship, psychological aesthetics and narrative psychology.

The method developed, Intimate Reading, is a hermeneutically oriented narrative inquiry. The process of data production is envisaged as *subservation*, using a form of open interview which combines facilitating the participant's relating their experience with a shared reading of selected significant passages of the work in question. Furthermore, it involves presenting the participant's narrative in full. The logic of inquiry rests on *anteroduction*, which I argue is a particular circular mode of inference implicit in modern hermeneutics. It involves experiencing the need for better conceptual understanding, then deriving new concepts or restoring old ones which are 'carried forward' to throw light on the essence of the phenomenon. The collected data were subjected to a critical selection process in which the construct of Life-Changing Fiction-Reading Experiences was determined through comparative narrative analysis. Six narratives, edited from the manuscript matrix of transcript and notes, were then selected for in-depth idiographic interpretation. These interpretations are structured around the tripartite division into life-crisis, transaction with literary work (affective realisation and mode of engagement) and resolution. In order to arrive at an understanding and conceptualisation of the meaning of the reading experience, several languages interpenetrate: psychological research, classical aesthetic terms, literary tropes and rhetoric are brought into dialogue with the narratives of the participants, in order to throw light on their expressions and intimations. And conversely, the readers' accounts concretise and revitalise the partly-forgotten vocabulary of affection in the classical tradition.

The works that have changed the participants in this inquiry are highly diverse; this confirms previous research. The present inquiry contributes new knowledge about the kinds of life-crises that may be resolved through transformative encounters with fiction, and the kinds of qualitative changes, *alloioses,* that may result. I have identified the following six life-crises: loss, conflict, identity crisis, attachment crisis, spiritual crisis and crisis of vitality. I have accordingly determined six concepts of alloiosis that correspond to each crisis: *anagnorisis, therapon, thumos, nostos, metanoia* and *anamnesis.* These categories may serve to nuance our

understanding of psychological change processes. As regards the transaction between reader and work, I have described six qualitative aspects of affective realisations, or experiences of being moved: *ekaphany, feeling felt, crystallised felt sense, transmuting internalisation, ekpleksis* and *wonder.* The mode of engagement was found to be one that combines bodily and affective aspects, in which metaphors related to nourishment and the heart were prominent. Accordingly, I have named this transaction *reading by heart,* or *lexithymia.* These qualitative descriptions add to our knowledge of the affective aspects of reading, and can serve to expand the critical vocabulary for discussing affection.

From this understanding of varieties, commonalities and typical characteristics of life-changing reading experiences I have, through a process of abduction, sought to develop a theory of *pathematics:* six affective patterns that combine life-crises, change categories and literary protogenres to form a comprehensive and exhaustive system of transformative relations. This theory is in need of further investigation and elaboration, but may be of value to both literary reception studies and narrative psychology. The inquiry concludes that the transformative reading experience is one of *being deeply moved*; and being moved is a catalyst for altering aspects of the self. The subjective change is thus a reflective process of integrating the alteration into the self-concept, and may subsequently be experienced as 'shaping' the life-story.

Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen undersøker hvordan lesing av skjønnlitteratur kan oppleves som livsendrende. Tidligere forskning viser at mange lesere rapporterer om at bøker har vært kilde til avgjørende hjelp i en livskrise. Eksperimenter viser dessuten at lesere kan oppleve selv-modifiserende følelser ved lesing av fiksjon. Forskning innen psykologisk estetikk indikerer at fenomenet 'å bli følelsesmessig beveget', som det foreløpig finnes lite kunnskap om, kan spille en sentral rolle i transformative estetiske erfaringer og således være et mer fruktbart utgangspunkt enn emosjonsbaserte tilnærminger. Narrative studier har vist at 'forløsning' er en sentral trope i livshistorier som handler om forandring, og at disse fortellingene kretser rundt forestillinger om epifani, katarsis og det sublime. Det mangler kunnskap om hvordan transformative estetiske erfaringer kan føre til varig endring og bli integrert i subjektets livshistorie, samt hvordan subjektiv forandring er forbundet med opplevelsen av å bli dypt beveget.

Denne avhandlingens mål er således, gjennom dybdeintervjuer med lesere som har opplevd livsendrende møter med spesifikke litterære verk, å danne ny kunnskap om transformative leseopplevelser og forholdet mellom livskriser, affektive samhandlingsmønstre med litterære tekster og opplevelsen av kvalitativ endring. Slik kunnskap vil bidra til økt forståelse av det transformative ved estetiske erfaringer, affektive lesemåter og biografiske fortellinger om forandring. Denne kunnskapen er hovedsakelig av teoretisk art, men vil kunne ha anvendelse for ulike litteraturformidlingspraksiser. Avhandlingen plasserer seg innenfor biblioteks- og informasjonsforskning, men har en tverrfaglig orientering mot resepsjonsstudier, litteraturforskning, psykologisk estetikk og narrativ psykologi.

Metoden som er utviklet er en hermeneutisk orientert narrativ tilnærming; denne har fått betegnelsen *Intimate Reading*. Dataproduksjonsprosessen forstås som en form for *subservasjon*. Her benyttes en åpen intervjuform som kombinerer utforskende beretning med lesing av utvalgte signifikante passasjer fra litterære verk. I tillegg fordrer metoden at narrativer, redigert på bakgrunn av en manuskriptmatrise bestående av transkripsjoner og notater, presenteres i sin helhet. Fortolkningsakten hviler på et slutningsmodus som kalles *anteroduksjon.* Denne sirkulære slutningsformen er allerede implisitt i moderne hermeneutikk. Den innebærer, utfra erfart behov for mer dekkende begreper, å utvinne nye termer eller gjenopprette klassiske begreper, som så 'ledes fram' for å belyse fenomenets essens. Konstruktet *livsendrende skjønnlitterær leseopplevelse* avgrenses og bestemmes gjennom en komparativ narrativ analyse. Etter en kritisk seleksjonsprosess blir seks av fortellingene gjort til gjenstand for idiografiske dybdefortolkninger. Disse fortolkningene følger samme tredelte struktur: livskrise, transaksjon leser-tekst (affektiv erkjennelse og innlevelsesmodus) og resolusjon. Det anvendes og utvinnes et spekter av begreper hentet fra psykologisk forskning, klassisk estetikk og retorikk. Disse settes i dialog med deltakernes uttrykksmåter for å kunne oppnå dybdeforståelse og presis begrepsfesting av leseerfaringens mening. Samtidig konkretiserer og revitaliserer lesernes beretninger den klassiske tradisjonens affektive vokabular.

De litterære verkene som studiens deltakere oppgir at har avstedkommet livsendring er høyst ulike sjangermessig og tematisk; dette bekrefter funn fra andre studies. Avhandlingen gir imidlertid ny kunnskap om hvilke livskriser som er forbundet med transformative leseopplevelser, og hvilke typer kvalitative endringer disse avstedkommer. Følgende seks livskriser bestemmes: tapserfaring, konflikt, identitetskrise, tilknytningskrise, meningskrise og vitalitetskrise. Med disse samsvarer seks ulike typer forandring: *anagnorisis, therapon, thumos, nostos, metanoia* og *anamnesis*. Når det gjelder transaksjonen leser-tekst, beskrives seks

aspekter ved affektiv erkjennelse: *ekafani, omfavnet følelse, krystallisert fornemmelse, fordypende internalisering, ekpleksis* og *undring*. Innlevelsesmåten kjennetegnes ved en kombinasjon av kroppslige og affektive aspekter, hvor metaforer knyttet til næring og hjertet er gjennomgående. Følgelig betegnes denne transaksjonsformen som *å lese med hjertet,* eller *lexithymia.* Disse kvalitative beskrivelsene gir økt forståelse av de kroppslige og affektive dimensjonene ved leseopplevelsen, og utvider det kritiske vokabularet for å diskutere *affeksjon.* Basert på denne forståelsen av variasjoner, fellestrekk og typiske karakteristika ved livsendrende leseopplevelser fremsettes det en teori om *patematikk.* Denne er utvunnet gjennom en abduktiv prosess, og avdekker seks affektive mønstre som forbinder livskriser, endringsformer og litterære protosjangre i et helhetlig system av transformative relasjoner. Denne teorien er tentativ og krever ytterligere undersøkelser, men kan ha relevans både innen resepsjonsstudier og narrativ psykologi. Avhandlingen konkluderer med at kjernen i den transformative leseprosessen er opplevelsen av å bli dypt beveget. Denne blir en katalysator for endring av selvet. Den subjektive forandringen er således resultatet av en påfølgende refleksjonsprosess hvor endringen integreres i selvforståelsen og erfares å ha gitt form til livshistorien.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Fiat lectio transformativa: Let there be life-changing experiences of reading imaginative literature.

The story of J.S. Mill's transformative reading experience

In chapter V of his autobiography, John Stuart Mill relates the episode of his mental breakdown. In the winter of 1821, Mill finds himself with nothing left to live for:

> *I had what might truly be called an object in life; to be a reformer of the world. My conception of my own happiness was entirely identified with this object. […] This did very well for several years, during which the general improvement going on in the world and the idea of myself as engaged with others in struggling to promote it, seemed enough to fill up an interesting and animated existence. But the time came when I awakened from this as from a dream. It was in the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement[.] In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself: "suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?" And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, "No!" At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for.[1]*

At first Mill hopes "that the cloud would pass away of itself; but it did not." And so the crisis deepens: "For some months the cloud seemed to grow thicker and thicker." What can he do to ameliorate his state?

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[1] John Stuart Mill, "A Crisis in my Mental History. One Stage Onward," in Autobiography, ed. John M. Robson (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 111-12.

I sought no comfort by speaking to others of what I felt. If I had loved any one sufficiently to make confiding my griefs a necessity, I should not have been in the condition I was. I felt, too, that mine was not an interesting, or in any way respectable distress. There was nothing in it to attract sympathy. Advice, if I had known where to seek it, would have been most precious. The words of Macbeth to the physician often occurred to my thoughts. But there was no one on whom I could build the faintest hope of such assistance. My father, to whom it would have been natural to me to have recourse in any practical difficulties, was the last person to whom, in such a case as this, I looked for help. Everything convinced me that he had no knowledge of any such mental state as I was suffering from, and that even if he could be made to understand it, he was not the physician who could heal it.[2]

He is all alone in his suffering, falling back on his own thoughts. He knows that sympathy with human beings and fellow-feeling is the source of happiness, and yet it is precisely those very feelings that he is removed from:

To know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it, did not give me the feeling. My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis, while the whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the inveterate habit of my mind. I was thus, as I said to myself, left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for: no delight in virtue, or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. […] These were the thoughts which mingled with the dry heavy dejection of the melancholy winter of 1826-7.[3]

Although outwardly his life seems very much the same as before - "during this time I was not incapable of my usual occupations. I went on with them mechanically, by the mere force of habit" - he keeps on asking himself "if I could, or if I was bound to go on living, when life must be passed in this manner." He concludes that he cannot "possibly bear it beyond a year." However, at the darkest moment there comes, unexpectedly, a turning point:

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[2] Ibid, 113.

[3] Ibid, 115-16.

When not more than half that duration of time had elapsed, a small ray of light broke in upon my gloom. I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel's "Mémoires," and came to the passage which relates his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them – would supply the place of all that they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my burthen grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me, was gone. I was no longer hopeless: I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character, and all capacity for happiness, are made. Relieved from my ever present sense of irremediable wretchedness, I gradually found that the ordinary incidents of life could again give me some pleasure; that I could again find enjoyment, not intense, but sufficient for cheerfulness, in sunshine and sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs; and that there was, once more, excitement, though of a moderate kind, in exerting myself for my opinions, and for the public good. Thus the cloud gradually drew off, and I again enjoyed life: and though I had several relapses, some of which lasted many months, I never again was as miserable as I had been.[4]

"The experiences of this period," relates Mill, "had two very marked effects on my opinions and character." He adopts a new philosophy of life, based on "anti-self-consciousness." And, crucially, he discovers the value of poetry, "among the prime necessities of human wellbeing" in a transformative encounter with Wordsworth's poems:

This state of my thoughts and feelings made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the autumn of 1828) an important event in my life. I took up the collection of his poems for curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope. In the worst period of my depression I had read the whole of Byron (then new to me), to try whether a poet, whose peculiar department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings, could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no good from this reading, but the reverse. The poet's state of mind was too like my own. […] But while Byron was exactly what did not suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what did. I had looked into

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[4] Ibid, 116-17.

the Excursion two or three years before, and found little in it; and I should probably have found as little, had I read it at this time.[5]

Why did reading Wordsworth lead to a "transformation" in Mill's "opinions and character"?

What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings[.] And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence. There have certainly been, even in our own age, greater poets than Wordsworth; but poetry of deeper and loftier feeling could not have done for me at that time what his did. I seemed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings. And the delight which these poems gave me, proved that with culture of this sort, there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis. At the conclusion of the Poems came the famous Ode, "Intimations of Immortality", in which […] I found that he too had had similar experiences to mine; that he also had felt that the first freshness of youthful enjoyment of life was not lasting; but that he had sought for compensation, and found it, in the way in which he was now teaching me to find it. The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it.[6]

Unexpectedly, through reading literature, as he discovers that he can indeed feel and that Wordsworth can help him develop his feelings, Mill's depression lifts and he arrives at a new life-view. Mill's story is an exemplar of a transformative aesthetic experience of reading imaginative literature that leaves a lasting impact. This phenomenon, which I will call Life-Changing Experience of Reading Fiction (LCFRE), is the subject matter of this dissertation.

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[5] Ibid, 120.

[6] Ibid, 121-22.

Aim and purpose of this study

Art for heart's sake

"We read to know we are not alone," wrote William Nicholson.[7] Mill, in the midst of a crisis in which he experiences a loss of meaning, feels himself to be all alone. He lacks a confidant, yes, but he feels too that his crisis is not "an interesting, not in any way respectable form of distress." Not only is there no one he can talk to – his trouble is not even worth taking seriously; there is *non-respectable distress.* This loneliness, of being twice-removed from community, is paradoxically a very common experience. Many people in the throes of a life crisis will have felt such desolation. Although the majority of them may not have found help in literature, Mill's experience is not a special case. Many avid readers find sustenance and meaning in literature, which is why we are drawn to it in the first place. And yet, this issue is often taken for granted in literary studies, which, while tacitly adumbrating the primacy of this deep engagement, remains parasitic upon it. I wish to find out what we can learn from studying people's narratives of their transformative reading experiences. What makes answering this research question a matter of pressing concern? In a time in which there is purportedly a "crisis in the humanities,"[8] a time in which the importance of the classics is dwindling and people read fewer books, I believe it is incumbent upon literary scholars to address this exigency; to illuminate the vital link between imaginative literature and the soul's needs, not by offering yet another *apologia,* but by empirically investigating the meaning of literature in readers' lives. The age-worn dichotomy between art-for-art's sake and art as morally useful must be transcended and supplanted by a third way: *art for heart's sake.* This third way at the same time marks a return to the ancient notion of poetry as medicine for the soul, emphasises the autotelic nature of the engagement with art, and privileges the affective responses of ordinary readers.

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[7] This quote is recited twice in the film *Shadowlands* , about the life of C.S. Lewis, British writer and theologian. Lewis was transformed by the suffering he experienced through the premature death of his wife. When the phrase is first uttered by one of his students, it merely bounces off Lewis' carefully constructed non-emotional intellectual armour. Only later, when he experienced the pain of losing his beloved, did he come to understand the weight of these words, and the necessity of shared emotional experience. This particular experience, of cognitively knowing the truth of an utterance, but only later coming to *realize its meaning* – of which the novelist Arnold Bennett famously said: "There can be no knowledge without emotion. Until we have felt the force of the knowledge, it is not ours" – is a central concern of this dissertation.

[8] For a discussion of this crisis, see: Philip Davis, *Reading and the Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), vii: "The Crisis in, the Threat to, the Plight of the Humanities: enter these phrases into Google's search engine and there are 23 million results, in a great fifty-year-long cry of distress, outrage, fear and Melancholy."

Poetry as Medicine for the Soul

In her recent autobiography *Why be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* Jeanette Winterson writes:

> I had no one to help me, but the T. S. Eliot book helped me. So when people say that poetry is a luxury, or an option, or for the educated middle classes, or that it shouldn't be read at school because it's irrelevant, or any of the strange and stupid things that are said about poetry and its place in our lives, I suspect that the people doing the saying have had things pretty easy. A tough life needs a tough language – and that is what poetry is. That is what literature offers – a language powerful enough to say how it is. It isn't a hiding place. It's a finding place. [9]

Several other authors have also published memoirs that testify to the life-changing importance of literature.[10] That a writer has been changed by literature, and promotes its significance, is perhaps not surprising. However, among the general reading public as well as among professional mediators of literature, the phenomenon is attracting burgeoning interest. For instance, the internet site *BuzzFeed* asked its followers to reveal which books have changed their lives. Their feature "51 Books that prove reading can change your life"[11] shows great responsivity from readers who wanted to share their story. The most fascinating aspect of their invitation is that the works of fiction reported to have been life-changing are so heterogeneous, encompassing every genre and period, and that the kinds of crises experienced by these readers are so diverse.

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[9] Jeanette Winterson, *Why Be Happy When you Could be Normal?* (London: Vintage, 2011), 40. Reading helped her feel belonging, gave her access to new experiences and helped her deal with hardship: "I felt less isolated. I wasn't floating on my little raft in the present; there were bridges that led over to solid ground… Literature is common ground." Rachel Kelly, in her book *Black Rainbow: How words healed me – my journey through depression* (London: Yellow Kite Books, 2014), relates how reading poetry helped her conquer two serious episodes of depression: "it's no exaggeration to say that poetry proved a lifeline." She talks about different types of poetry and reading experiences. But the two that she emphasizes are the ability of Gerard Manley Hopkins to celebrate the healing powers of nature, and George Herbert's *Love*, which functioned as an antidote to the negative stories that dominated her mind at the time.

[10] See for instance David Shields, *How Literature Saved my Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), and Mario Vargas Llosa, *The Perpetual Orgy: Flaubert and Madame Bovary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986). Interestingly, Vargas Llosa was helped through a crisis by the very novel that is erroneously said to be about the dangers of reading fiction. My understanding of the novel is that not even fiction could save Emma's life. She was ill-starred: she did not encounter the right book at the right time.

[11] http://www.buzzfeed.com/jenniferschaffer/reading-can-change-your-life. A sample of the books that readers reported as those that had changed them: Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, Terry Pratchett's Discworld, Murakami's Norwegian Wood, Steinbeck's East of Eden, Bradbury's The Martian Chronicles, Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen, The Waste Land by TS Eliot, Haiku: This Other World, by Richard Wright, and JK Rowling's Harry Potter series. The readers report that the books have helped them in times of illness, relationship trouble, career struggles, depression and confusion.

Like Mill, Winterson regards poetry as a medicine for the soul: "Fiction and poetry are doses, medicines. What they heal is the rupture reality makes on the imagination."[12] This is of course an ancient idea. In *The Therapy of Desire* the philosopher Martha Nussbaum writes:

> From Homer on we encounter, frequently and prominently, the idea that *logos* is to illnesses of the soul as medical treatment is to illnesses of the body. We also find the claim that *logos* is a powerful and perhaps even a sufficient remedy for these illnesses; frequently it is portrayed as the only available remedy. The diseases in question are frequently diseases of inappropriate or misinformed emotion. […] *logos* is being said to play a real healing role, and to heal through its complicated relationship to the intellect and the emotions. But the concept of *logos* is still, it seems, understood broadly, to include speech and argument of many kinds. Religious and poetic utterances, philosophical arguments, friendly advice – no attempt is made to distinguish these different types of discourse from one another, where the medical analogy is concerned.[13]

The interest in *Logos* as the medicine for the soul has seen a great revival in recent years with the emergence of various forms of bibliotherapy. "Over half of English library authorities are operating some form of bibliotherapy intervention," according to a study cited in *The Guardian*.[14] In Scandinavia bibliotherapy has expanded considerably as well.[15] Bibliotherapy includes not just fiction, however, and some forms have an instrumental rather than aesthetic orientation. And yet there are ways of mediating literature in which it is the very attention to the aesthetic dimension that brings about medicine for the soul. Mill found that he could not prescribe a particular poet as remedy – he tried that with Byron and failed. The reading that did transform him was approached with an attitude of "curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it." One programme of organized reading of imaginative literature, in which the emphasis is on the shared enjoyment of aesthetic experience and where therapeutic benefits in

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[12] Winterson, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?,* 40.

[13] Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1994), 49.

[14] http://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jan/05/fiction.scienceandnature

[15] It lies outside the scope of this chapter to review research on bibliotherapy in general; heuristically, however, we may differentiate between medically oriented bibliotherapy on the one hand, in which books are used for specific interventionist purposes, and humanistic bibliotherapy on the other, which is relevant within a library studies context. Elsewhere I have discussed the therapeutic benefits of various forms of bibliotherapy. The English Librarian and bibliotherapist Liz Brewster differentiates in her PhD dissertation between 'self-help bibliotherapy,' "non-fictional materials designed as 'books on prescription' to guide the reader through self-help programmes actively aiming to change behaviours," and 'creative bibliotherapy', "referring to the use of fiction and poetry encouraging reflection on personal experiences for therapeutic effect." Elizabeth Brewster, *An Investigation of Experiences of Reading for Mental Health and Well-being and their Relation to Models of Bibliotherapy.* (Phd Dissertation, University of Sheffield, UK, 2011), 115-99. Creative bibliotherapy and humanistic bibliotherapy thus designate the same type of activities. See also Elizabeth Brewster, "Medicine for the Soul: Bibliotherapy," *Australasian Public Library and Information Services* 21, no. 3 (2008): 115-19.

the form of increased mental well-being come as secondary gains, is the research-based community-intervention programme *Shared Reading*, a project initiated by The Reader Organisation in cooperation with the University of Liverpool.[16] Several research reports on the effects of shared reading of serious literature in groups have been published.[17] *Shared Reading* functions as a reading group for people who suffer from depression, loneliness or mental health issues. The group facilitator reads aloud from well-known literature – novels and poems of high quality, and then invites participation and personal discussions of the works. The conversations are voluntary, open and exploratory. The dialogic interactions between reader and text, and between group members, are both found to be contributory factors towards increased wellbeing. What emerges from studying the interactions in the groups is that after an initial stage of "getting into" the text, followed by a deepening exploration during a "staying in" stage, some readers may experience "breakthrough" moments, in which they experience significant modifications of affective states or achieve profound insights.[18] The programme sprung out of adult education classes in English Literature at the University of Liverpool. The point of departure was thus literary, not therapeutic. This model of reading has spread to the rest of the UK and across Europe. Although the shared reading often takes place within institutions such as hospitals, prisons, care homes and libraries, the onus is on the intermediation of literary experience. Over time it has been documented that the model is successful both as a way of bringing literature to new readers and of improving mental health.[19] The praxis of Shared

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[16] Shared Reading was formerly called Get Into Reading. The mission statement of The Reader Organisation reads: "We bring people and great literature together. Our primary way of doing this is through our shared reading model, bringing people together in weekly groups to listen to poems and stories read aloud. Thoughts and experiences are shared; personal and social connections are made." http://www.thereader.org.uk/what-we-do-and-why.aspx. As part of the preparations for this dissertation I volunteered for The Reader Organisation and completed their training programme «Read to Lead».

[17] An Investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and wellbeing. Dr. Josie Billington et al, University of Liverpool. http://www.thereader.org.uk/media/33553/Therapeutic_benefits_of_reading_final_report_Executive_Summary.pdf.

[18] See for instance Ellie Gray, Gundi Kiemle, Philip Davis, and Josie Billington, "Making sense of mental health difficulties through live reading: an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the experience of being in a Reader Group," *Arts and Health* 8, no. 3 (2016): 248-61. Doi: 10.1080/17533015.2015.1121883. One of the common themes found was that participants reported a changing view of self and world.

[19] Josie Billington, et al., *An Investigation into the therapeutic benefits of reading in relation to depression and wellbeing*, accessed September 1, 2014. http://www.thereader.org.uk/media/33553/Therapeutic_benefits_of_reading_final_report_Executive_Summary.pdf

Reading, and the scientific research associated with it, has been an inspiration for this study, as I regard it as a vital proponent of art for heart's sake.

The 'Felski Challenge': to do justice to readers' accounts of being moved

The call for such a third way comes also from within academic approaches to literary studies, as exemplified by the scholar Rita Felski. "Why is it that we can feel solicited, button-holed, stirred up by words that were drafted eons ago? How do texts that are inert in one historical moment become newly revealing, eye-opening, even life-transforming, in another?" asks Felski.[20] The experience of the work of art, she argues, "is not just a matter of conveying information, but also of experiencing transformation."[21] "If you are listening to what people are saying," proposes Felski, "they will explain at length how and why they are deeply attached, moved, affected by the works of art which make them feel things." And then she asks: "What would it mean to do justice to these responses rather than treating them as naïve, rudimentary or defective?"[22] The aim of this inquiry is precisely to replace Felski's *if* by *when,* in order to turn her conditional *would* into a definite *does*; in other words, to do justice to people's responses by *listening* to them relating *at length* how they are *moved, affected and changed* by works of literature. The method I will employ in doing so I shall call *intimate reading.* In developing knowledge of how reading imaginative literature may be experienced as life-changing, the study aims to provide a richer critical vocabulary and conceptualisation of readers' affective engagement with literature, and furthermore to develop a theory of transformative affective patterns in relation to life-crises, the experience of being moved, and kinds of changes. Such a theory, which I shall call *pathematics,* will have both theoretical and practical implications for reader studies.

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[20] Rita Felski, "'Context Stinks!'," *New Literary History* 42, no. 4 (2011): 575. Felski is here quoting Latour. For a lucid critique of post-structuralist approaches and the hegemony of Theory, see her 'manifesto' *Uses of Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009).

[21] Ibid, 585.

[22] Ibid, 585.

Background

Library studies and readers' uses of literature

This study is undertaken in the context of Library Studies. Within this field, the role of literature in the actual lives of readers is of primary interest and is investigated empirically. The Danish Library and Information scientist Jack Andersen provides the following definition of the field:

> LIS studies how and through what means professional, scholarly, cultural, and social knowledge as materialized in documents (print or communicated) is communicated in society as well as what function libraries and other similar knowledge organizing institutions or activities have, or are supposed to have, in these communications.[23]

Imaginative literature represents a vital form of cultural knowledge documents, and although it may have a marginal position in information science, in library research reception studies related to the reading experience have an important place. LIS scholars Skjerdingstad and Rothbauer maintain that "the affective, performative, material, embodied, and sensual aspects of reading have gained foothold alongside more traditional cognitive and social perspectives on reader engagement."[24] Thus they highlight "the existential possibilities of reading for transforming people."[25] The direct precursor to my investigation of transformative reading experiences is an LIS study conducted by Catherine Ross, in which she researched the role of reading for pleasure as source of information. In interviews with 194 avid readers it transpired that 40 percent had had a singular reading experience that helped them or changed their life in a significant way. Although it is unclear just how many of those books were works of fiction, it was a significant portion, as readers referenced both fiction and poetry.[26]

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[23] Jack Andersen, "The Concept of Genre in Information Studies," *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* 42, no. 1 (2008): 355.

[24] Kjell I. Skjerdingstad, and Paulette M. Rothbauer, "Introduction: Plotting the Reading Experience," in *Plotting the Reading Experience: Theory, Practice, Politics*, ed. Paulette M. Rothbauer, Kjell I. Skjerdingstad, Lynne McKechnie, and Knut Oterholm (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 1.

[25] Ibid, 1.

[26] Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Finding without seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure," Information Processing and Management 35 (1999). This study will be discussed in the Literature Review.

In the years since Ross' study, there has been growing interest in transformative aesthetic experience in empirical studies, both within research on reading and in psychological aesthetics. I will extensively present this research in the Literature Review chapter in order to find out what is currently known, and what has not been researched. The review identifies two principal knowledge gaps: how do transformative reading experiences lead to lasting change? And what can we know about individual, unique life-changing reading experiences? By addressing this knowledge gap I aim to provide a contribution to both Reader response theory and hermeneutics, in which the transformative *potential* of reading is perennially indicated.

Reader response theories and modes of engagement

Curiously, although reading Wordsworth was such an "important event" in his life, Mill still does not seem to rate him all that highly. "There have certainly been, even in our own age, greater poets than Wordsworth," says Mill, indicating that there are poets of "deeper and loftier feeling." Furthermore, of *Intimations of Immortality* he remarks that there are passages of "grand imagery but bad philosophy." We seem to have two different *modes of engagement* with poetry: an affective, subjective mode and an evaluative-critical mode in which one judges the objective merits of poets. This dichotomy reverberates throughout the history of aesthetics and hermeneutics, in which judgments of objective quality and interpretations of objective meaning have always been the aim. Any form of self-implication in the act of criticism was regarded as an "affective fallacy" or a reductive form of interpretation. It was against this background that reader-response theories emerged. Reader-response criticism regards the interaction between reader and text as central, and reading is conceived as a personal event at a certain time in a certain context.[27] Reader-response criticism regards the interaction between reader and text as

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[27] Lois Tyson describes in *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006) five types of Reader Response theories and the differences that lie within each. These are: Transactional Reader Response, represented by Louise Rosenblatt and Wolgang Iser, analyses the transaction between text and reader. A reader can take an efferent stance, based on determinant meanings in a text, or an aesthetic stance, based on also on indeterminacy of meanings.
Affective Stylistics Reader Response examines a text in "slow motion" format, studying each line in order to ascertain "how stylistics affect the reader in the process of reading," 175.
Subjective Reader Response, whose main proponent is David Bleich, postulates that the readers' responses are the text, and that all meaning of a text lies in the readers' interpretations.
Social Reader Response, developed by Stanley Fish, believes that readers approach a text with interpretative strategies that are the products of the "interpretive communities" in which they belong.
Psychoanalytical Reader Response, represented by Norman Holland, analyses what the reader's interpretations reveal about the reader's personality, not the text.
Readers familiar with Reader Response studies may wonder why I have not paid much attention to Norman Holland's well-known study *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press,

central, and interpretation is a personal event at a certain time in a certain context. Whereas traditional reader response theory did not address actual readers, but dealt with the concept of the ideal reader (Iser) and the model reader (Eco), Janice Radway underlined that reception studies should look at the experiences of real readers, and their encounters with works of literature. Louise Rosenblatt, one of the most influential proponents of reader-response approaches to literary studies, argues that literature must be understood in its living context, as a transaction between the work and the reader's whole life-situation. She emphasises the value-aspect of reading literature, and has a programmatic goal for how literature can contribute towards positive socialisation and cultural integration: Literature can show young people possibilities for forming their lives, and choose a life philosophy in a complex and rapidly changing society; contribute to healthy choices in important transitional life stages and life crises; give self-insight and help to strengthen identity; enlarge perspectives on life and liberate the reader from norms and concepts of normality that are constricting; and stimulate pro-social behaviour. Rosenblatt articulates these outcomes in a pedagogical context, but they may also be operative in the private reader's motives and experiences. "Transaction" is the term she chose to designate "a two-way process involving a reader and a text at a particular time under particular circumstances."[28]   Reading is therefore co-determined by textual qualities and reader engagement:

> Any reading act […] falls somewhere on a continuum between [the] predominantly efferent (from the Latin, *effere*, to carry away), and the predominantly aesthetic (or 'literary') reading […]. The predominantly efferent reader focuses attention on public meaning, abstracting what is to be retained after the reading – to be recalled, paraphrased, acted on, analyzed. In aesthetic reading, the reader's selective attention is focused primarily on what is being personally lived through, cognitively and affectively, during the reading event. The range of ideas, feelings, associations activated in the reservoir of symbolizations is drawn upon. (The reader may retain much afterwards, but that is not the differentiating aspect.) [29]

Rosenblatt differentiates between two modes of engagement in reading: the efferent and the aesthetic. These two categories are not mutually exclusive, but form a continuum. In the efferent

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1975). He approaches the study with a ready-made theoretic framework in the form of psychoanalysis, a map towards which any terrain may be fitted.

[28] Louise M. Rosenblatt, "The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response," *Theory Into Practice* 21, no. 1 (1982): 268.

[29] Louise M. Rosenblatt, "The transactional theory of the literary work: Implications for research," in *Researching response to literature and the teaching of literature: Points of departure*, ed. Charles. R. Cooper (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1985), 101.

mode "attention focuses on what is to be carried away at the end of the reading." When the aesthetic attitude predominates, "attention will shift inward, will center on what is actually being created *during* the actual reading. […] Out of these ideas and feelings, a new experience, the story or poem, is shaped and lived through."[30] The positive transformative effects Rosenblatt enlists as the aim of literary education rest upon the aesthetic mode of engagement. By "living through" the work, the reader can achieve insight and emotional liberation. Although useful in a pedagogical context (it is important to bear in mind that the central reader response theories themselves were responses: they emerged out of practical pedagogical concerns raised in the classroom), I find Rosenblatt's continuum lacking in analytic precision. Furthermore, her choice of the term "aesthetic," although clearly inspired by Dewey, is infelicitous, as it may be understood to obfuscate the self-interpretive aspect of "living through" the encounter.[31]

In a seminal work on reception theory, Hans Robert Jauss argues that all aesthetic enjoyment is the result of a meeting between reader and work.[32] Although he uses the term "interaction" and emphasizes the historical horizon of expectation in which the reader is embedded, his concept is similar to Rosenblatt's "transaction" in that he seeks to differentiate progressive from regressive encounters between reader and work. "Self-enjoyment in the enjoyment of something other" is the formulation Jauss has chosen to designate the balance needed for the interaction to be progressive. It is a "pendulum movement in which the self enjoys not only its real object, the aesthetic object, but also its correlate, the equally irrealised subject which has been released from its always already given reality."[33] He identifies five interaction patterns which are predicated upon identification with the hero. Each of these patterns allows for a progressive or a regressive attitude. In the admiring mode of identification

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[30] Rosenblatt, "The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response," 269.

[31] Building on the work of Mukarovsky and Rosenblatt, Örjan Torell has developed a model of reading which takes into account not only the literary competence of Culler's structuralism, but also "literary transfer competence": "*Literary transfer* means that the reader refers literary phenomena to events of real life, or, on the contrary, that such events remind him of literary experiences. *Literary transfer* is therefore a way of reaching the private life of the pupils." What motivates competent reading in Torell's view, is a constant will to understand our own selves, meeting 'the other'. See Örjan Torell, "Literary Competence Beyond Conventions," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 45, no. 4 (2001): 377.

[32] Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics: Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 3, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). Rita Felski has also theorized about different forms of interaction between reader and work: Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2009). In this neo-phenomenologically inspired work Felsi criticizes poststructuralist approaches to literature, seeking to ground reading in experiential terms. She lists four main types of interaction: recognition, knowledge, immersion and shock.

[33] Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience*, 32.

with the perfect hero, the progressive form is characterised by emulation and exemplariness; the negative by entertainment by the extraordinary and a need for escape. In the sympathetic mode of identification with the imperfect hero, the progressive is marked by compassion as the result of moral interest, solidarity and readiness to act, whereas sentimentality (enjoyment of pain) and self-confirmation leads to regression. We may conjecture that Mill's reading of Marmontel was a progressive sympathetic identification. In the cathartic mode of identification with the suffering hero of tragic works the progressive response takes the form of disinterestedness and free reflection; whereas the progressive response to the beset hero of comedy is marked by sympathetic laughter and free moral judgment. The regressive responses to this mode are marked by bewitched fascination and mockery respectively. In the ironic mode of identification with the anti-hero, there is either progression in the form of creative response and refinement of perception, or there is regressive boredom and solipsism. An important caveat made by Jauss is that "this model is provisional and has the specific weakness of lacking the foundation that a theory of emotions would give it."[34] Although several theories of emotion have been developed in the years since Jauss offered his model, I do not know of any attempts to apply such theories to an expansion of his model. However, Kuiken et al. have undertaken a series of phenomenologically inspired experiments in which they identify a mode of engagement they call "expressive enactment."[35] Such enactment is marked precisely by a self-modificatory pendulum movement as opposed to a self-absorbed mode of interaction. Their empirical work has the advantage of affording greater analytic precision than the vague term 'identification' allows for. Ross interpreted the life-changing reading experiences in terms of Ricoeur's theory of "reciprocity between *text*-interpretation and *self*-interpretation."[36] What we see in the theories of Rosenblatt and Jauss is a reflection of this reciprocity. A premise in these theories is the importance of self-interpretation; this reciprocity, however, may be of either a virtuous/progressive/self-modificatory or vicious/regressive/self-absorbed kind. The former marks the potentiality for transformative reading experiences. In his close, personal, readings of works that have influenced him, Philip Davis embellishes on what is at stake in such progressive modes of reading:

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[34] Ibid., 158.

[35] See Chapter 2, Literature Review, for a discussion of Kuiken et al.'s studies.

[36] Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Finding without seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure," *Information Processing and Management* 35, no. 6 (1999): 783-99.

For despite the undeniable risk that the personal may be the place of utmost falsification, I know that anything I really think and believe is registered most deeply when it is registered at the personal level. Some other levels are safer, but none in the state of present society is more finally testing. I am not suggesting that you read simply in order 'to find your self' – the self, in that sense, is all too often and too consciously an egoistic fabrication. I am talking about taking books personally to such a depth inside, that you no longer have a merely secure idea of self and relevance to self, but a deeper exploratory sense of a reality somehow finding unexpected relations and echoes in you.[37]

Hermeneutics and the potential for transformation

It is noteworthy that in many prominent modern philosophers of hermeneutics and aesthetics, we find that the potential of literature to change the reader is an explicit assertion, and is presented as the aim of reading and the ontological legitimation of art. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer asserts: "[T]he work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes *an experience that changes the person* who experiences it."[38] In his ontologisation of the aesthetic experience, the transformative reading is what testifies to the truth of art. Moreover, not only is it the case that "in the experience of art we see a genuine experience induced by the work, *which does not leave him who has it unchanged,*" we must "inquire into the mode of being of what is experienced in this way. So we hope to better understand what kind of truth it is that encounters us there."[39] Vattimo, in *Art's Claim to Truth*, underlines the same transformative potential.[40] Paul Ricoeur maintains that fiction is as important for self-understanding as history: "Self-understanding [is] mediated by the conjoint reception – particularly through reading – of historical and fictional narratives. Knowing oneself is interpreting oneself under the double guidance of historical and fictional narrative."[41] Self-understanding is achieved via the appropriation of the truth of narratives. Moreover, the transformative power of fiction is what gives it its virtue: "The figuration of the self through the mediation of the other may be a genuine means of self-discovery […]. Self-construction might be a way of becoming what one really is […].The fictive model has a revelatory virtue only insofar as it has a power of transformation."[42]

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[37] Philip Davis, *The Experience of Reading* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), xvi.

[38] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 2nd ed, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2003), 103.

[39] Ibid., 86.

[40] Gianni Vattimo, *Art's Claim to Truth*, trans. Luca D'Isanto (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2008).

[41] Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. David Pellauer (Malden: Polity Press, 2016), 229.

[42] Ibid., 241.

Elsewhere, Ricoeur introduces the concept of "refiguration," which expresses the capacity of an artwork to restructure the world of the recipient by upsetting her horizon, contesting her expectations or remodelling her feelings.[43] Mukarovsky's notion of non-intentionality builds a bridge between a distanced and an existential way of reading. It contains not only the aesthetics of norm-deviation, but also how the reader experiences the text as something that intensely concerns her. In the non-intended elements lies a transformative potential:

> Since a semantically unregulated thing (which the work is because of its unintentionality) acquires the capacity to attract to itself the most varied images and feelings, which need not have anything in common with its own semantic charge, the work thus becomes capable of being closely connected to the entirely personal experiences, images and feelings of any perceiver – capable of affecting not only his conscious mental life but even of setting into motion forces which govern his subconscious. The perceiver's entire personal relation to reality, whether active or contemplative, will henceforth be changed to a greater or lesser degree by this influence. Hence the work of art has such powerful effect upon man not because it gives him – as the common formula goes – an impression of the author's personality, his experience and so forth, but because it influences the perceiver's personality, his experiences and so forth.[44]

The work, because it is so intimately connected to our personal experience, can thus affect us so deeply that it changes us by influencing our personality and worldview. We see that the major theoreticians emphasise the *potential* for transformation in reading imaginative literature. But there are no *actual* investigations into such changes. Furthermore, what none of the theories discuss is how a progressive form of self-implication can lead to lasting change, as in the case of Mill. There is thus no systematic theory that enables us to see the interrelationships among crises, affective experiences and types of change. Finding out how readers may experience encounters with imaginative literature as life-changing may contribute towards such a theory, which would be important to both reception studies and literary studies in general.

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[43] R. D. Sweeney, "Arts, language and hermeneutical aesthetics: Interview with Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005)," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 36, no. 8 (2010): 935-51.

[44] Jan Mukarovsky, *Structure, Sign and Function*, trans. John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), 106-107.

Presuppositions: Clearing a space

Change, crisis, being moved

> Presume not that I am the thing I was.
> - Shakespear*e, King Henry IV, part 2*

Change

Mill referred to his experience as a "transformation." The influential Victorian critic R. H. Hutton, however, reputedly remarked that never had a breakdown produced so little change. So what did Hutton mean by 'change'? Presumably the outward manifestations of Mill's transformation were not evident in his behaviour or personality traits. It is entirely possible that what is subjectively experienced as a critical event of great importance will not be objectively very evident.[45] It is the subjective experience of change that concerns me in this study. In order to understand how persons and personalities change, it is important to conceptualise the different levels at which change might take place. According to the psychologist McAdams, "a number of scientifically oriented personality researchers and theorists today agree that human individuality can be captured well with respect to three different layers or levels of personality variables."[46] However, the first level is that of dispositional traits. This is what McAdams refers to as "the psychology of the stranger."[47] These traits are both observable and measurable, and is what any stranger that observed you would be able to tell about you. The second level is that of motivation, or "characteristic adaptations," those specific features of psychological individuality that "speak to what people *want* or *value* in life and how they pursue what they

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[45] According to Paloutzian et al., in their review of research on personality change in relation to conversion, "personality theory and research are not fully integrated in a way that would lead to only one way to view the issues of stability or continuity or change. There are diverse views of the nature of the fixed versus malleable aspects of human personality, and each one leads to different statements about what would constitute personality change. 'Change' in someone's personality is, for example, a matter of cognitive restructuring in the cognitive-information processing view, a modification of self and ego dynamics in a neopsychoanalytic orientation, and the performance of different responses in the perspective of behaviorists. Each view requires us to look for a different sort of evidence at different times in order to assess whether someone's personality is altered." In: Raymond F. Paloutzian, James T. Richardson, and Lewis R. Rambo, "Religious conversion and Personality Change," *Journal of Personality* 67, no. 6 (1999): 1054.

[46] Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 277. Whether the three levels he delineates should be regarded as aspects of personality or different approaches to studying personality, is somewhat unclear.

[47] See Dan P. McAdams, *The Art and Science of Personality Development* (New York: Guildford Press, 2016).

want and avoid what they do not want in particular *situations* and *time periods*, and with respect to particular social roles."[48] This level is organized in terms of two dimensions: approach/avoidance and self (agency) vs other (communion). The third level, which is the one McAdams has focused on in his research on life stories, is that of *meaning*, which he calls "integrative life narratives": how people make sense of their lives. This level is only loosely tied to behaviour and action. The only way to gain access to this deepest level of people's self is by listening to their story. It is an "internalized and evolving life story that reconstructs the past and imagines the future to provide a person's life with identity (unity, purpose, meaning)."[49] I assume that accounts of life-changing experiences will primarily relate to the second and third level. Mill's change accordingly seems to be at the level of narrative identity.

As will be examined in the Literature Review chapter, conceptualisations of the change process tend to fall into two categories. In the trans-theoretic model, change is represented as an incremental process by means of exercising willpower, whilst in the quantum change paradigm change is viewed as a dramatic and discontinuous spontaneous transformation. Between the Road to Recovery and the Road to Damascus, however, there may lie a network of lanes and alleys of change processes. I believe that Aristotle's concept of *alloiosis,* in which *being moved* and *being changed* are connected, may be appropriated to designate this landscape.

"Sensation consists in being moved and acted upon, for it is held to be a species of qualitative change," says Aristotle in *De Anima* (416b 32, 418a 4). Robert Todd has analysed the different change concepts in Aristotle's philosophy. The generic term for transformation is *metabole.* There are two main kinds of transformation. On the one hand there is *genesis*, 'coming into being', and *phthora,* 'ceasing to be': something that was not, is; something that was, is no longer. On the other hand are the three categories of *kinesis*. Apart from changes in quantity and place (locomotion), there is alteration, qualitative change: *alloiosis.*[50] The

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[48] McAdams, *The Redemptive Self,* 281.

[49] Ibid., 286. In the Literature Review chapter I will discuss the experimental studies of Djikic et al. in which they found that reading may change personality traits. Such change would correspond to McAdams' first level.

[50] Robert T. Todd, "Introduction." In *Themistius: On Aristotle's Physics 5-8. Ancient Commentators on Aristotle,* trans. Robert T. Todd (Bloomsbury: London, 2008), 3: "I have translated the generic term, *metabôle*, as 'transformation', and the associated intransitive verb *metaballein* as 'be transformed'. […T]ransformations involve 'coming into being' (genesis) and 'ceasing to be' (phthora), on the one hand, and 'change' (*kinêsis*), identified by the categories of quantity, quality and place, on the other. Change in quantity (increase and decrease, *auxêsis and phthisis*) and in quality (alteration, *alloiôsis*) have their own names. 'Change in place' (*kinesis kata topon)* however, covers locomotion. But a challenge arises when the noun *kinêsis* and both the intransitive and passive forms of the associated verb *kineisthai* refer not to change in general but specifically to

kinesthetic refers then not just to physical movement in space (locomotion), but also to qualitative visceral internal movement, *being moved*. The subjective experience of being moved leads to a qualitative change, *alloiosis*. I propose *alloiosis* as a concept to encompass the different kinds of qualitative changes that deeply moving reading experiences bring about. The project aims to establish what kinds of *allloioses* there are in transformative reading experiences. Implied in such *alloiosis* is an antecedent state, which we may call a crisis.

Crisis

Mill describes his crisis as a 'depression'. What other kinds of crisis might form the antecedents to life-changing reading experiences? Ross's study does not explicitly thematise this, nor does it reveal anything about the relationship between crisis and change.

Gerald Caplan understands the term 'crisis' to cover major life stresses, of some duration, which endanger mental health. Such crises disrupt customary modes of behaviour, altering circumstances, plans, emotions and self-concept, and impose a need for psychological work which takes time and great effort. A crisis thereby constitutes a challenge, as the individual must abandon old assumptions and create new meaning.[51] Moos and Schaefer state that crisis theory is "concerned with how individuals manage major life transitions and crises,"[52] and must address the fundamental questions of why some individuals "transcend the most profound life crises, whereas others break down after experiencing seemingly minor stressors"; what the adaptive tasks in "managing varied life transitions" are; whether there be "common phases or stages through which individuals progress as they negotiate a life crisis"; and how resources affect the "ultimate psychosocial outcome of a life crisis."[53] They argue that previous crisis theories have placed more emphasis on the harmful than on the potentially positive influence of life events, and that crises "often provide an essential condition for psychological

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locomotion. Traditionally forms of 'motion' and 'move' were used for all instances of these terms in what Ross once called 'the lesser of two evils'. But if mixing the equivalents 'change' and 'motion' is the greater evil, it will be risked here if only because *kinêsis* and associated verb forms do not consistently refer to what is naturally meant by 'motion' or 'move' in English."

[51] Gerald Caplan, *An Approach to Community Mental Health* (London: Tavistock, 1961).

[52] Rudolf H. Moos, and Jeanne A. Schaefer, "Life Transitions and Crises: A Conceptual Overview," in *Coping with Life Crises: An Integrated Approach,* ed. Rudolf H. Moos, (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1986), 9.

[53] Ibid., 4.

development."[54] Their understanding of crisis is that it represents a disruption of established patterns of personal and social identity:

> Similar to the requirement for physiological homeostasis, individuals have a need for social and psychological equilibrium. When people encounter an event that upsets their characteristic patterns of thought and behavior, they employ habitual problem-solving strategies until a balance is restored. A crisis is a situation that is so novel or major that habitual responses are insufficient; it leads to a state of turbulence typically accompanied by heightened fear, anger, or guilt. Because a person cannot remain in a state of disequilibrium, a crisis is necessarily self-limited. Even though it may be temporary, some resolution must be found. The new balance may be a healthy adaptation that promotes personal growth or a maladaptive response that foreshadows psychological problems. Thus, a crisis is a transition or turning point that has profound implications for an individual's adaptation and ability to meet future crises.[55]

Central here is the notion of crisis as a turning point or critical juncture. It is interesting that they formulate the crisis as the turning point. A different conception would be that crisis is the antecedent of the turning point, or even that the turning point precipitates crisis. "Personal growth and an expanded repertoire of coping skills often follow the successful resolution of a crisis. But failure to manage a situation effectively may foreshadow impaired adjustment and problems in handling future transitions and crises."[56] Thus, in line with the etymology of the word crisis, we may say that it represents a forking path. A psychological crisis is a life event that an individual perceives as stressful to the extent that normal coping mechanisms are insufficient.[57]

In order to manage a situation, the individual must have an adequate cognitive appraisal of the significance of the crisis, and be able to regulate emotions and preserve self-image. Moos and Schafer make an important point: "an individual is especially receptive to outside influence in a time of flux."[58] This ties in with experimental studies finding that *life-crises increases the*

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[54] Ibid., 9.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 23.

[57] Various definitions are all consistent with their view. Gerald Caplan, *Prevention of Mental Health Disorders in Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1961) defines it thus: "People are in a state of crisis when they face an obstacle to important life goals [that is] insurmountable by the use of customary methods of problem-solving". E. Michael Lillibridge, and Philip G. Klukken, *Crisis Intervention Training* (Tulsa, OK: Affective House, 1978) view it as "an upset in equilibrium at the failure of one's traditional problem-solving approach which results in disorganization, hopelessness, sadness, confusion, and panic." Richard K. James, and Burl E. Gilliland, *Crisis Intervention Strategies* (Pacific Grove, PA: Brook/Cole, 2001) define crisis as "a perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person's current resources and coping mechanisms."

[58] Moos and Schaefer, "Life Transitions and Crises," 23.

likelihood of self-altering reading experiences.[59] Moos and Schafer divide crises into developmental life transitions (from childhood to death and bereavement) and unusual crises (special family stressors, disasters, violence, terrorism, war and imprisonment). Kneisl and Riley distinguish between two kinds of unexpected crises: situational and cultural.[60] Thus we may operate with three broad kinds of crises: Developmental, situational, and existential (inner conflicts related to things such as life purpose, direction and spirituality). A crisis can sometimes be obvious both to others and to the person, other times it can be less apparent but can still lead to dramatic inner changes.

We see that there are different crisis theories and change theories. There are two major understandings of change: one is predicated on an essentially religious narrative of 'redemption' and sudden dramatic turn-around, the other is predicated on behavioural modification and incremental change. The crisis theories emphasise that normal coping mechanisms and known resources can be insufficient. What is needed is a theory that integrates crises with the different kinds of changes, in relation to facilitating agents of change. Moreover, *alloiosis* implies a connexion between qualitative change and being moved.

Being moved

In his transformation, Mill portrays the reading of Wordsworth as the "important event." And yet, reading Marmontel may have been even more vital. In imagining the distressed family and the young boy's resolve, "a vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears." Mill realizes that feeling is not dead within him. "To receive deep impressions is the foundation of all true mental power," writes George Eliot in her letters.[61] My supposition is that any transformative reading experience will have deeply moved the reader. Cova and Deonna argue that *being moved* is a subject in which "there has been a conspicuous lack of interest on the part of philosophers and psychologists."[62] Menninghaus et al. concur,

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[59] See Literature Review Chapter.

[60] Carol R. Kneisl, and E. Riley, "Crisis Intervention," in *Psychiatric Nursing,* 5th ed., ed. H. Wilson and Carol R. Kneisl (Menlo Park, CA: Addison and Wesley, 1996), 711-31.

[61] George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*, Vol. 5, ed. Gordon S. Haight (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 55.

[62] Florian Cova, and Julien A. Deonna, "Being moved," *Philos Stud* 169 (2013): 448. Doi: 10.1007/s11098-013-0192-9. I will discuss the phenomenon of being moved in my literature review.

pointing out that *being moved* is not established as a well-defined psychological construct, and believe that further research on aesthetic experiences "might strongly benefit" from doing so.[63] They propose that it is "a concept that vicariously stand in for" other visceral terms such as *stirred*, *touched* and *gripped*, and "hence serves as an umbrella term for what we call *the being-moved group*."[64] Menninghaus et al. provide the following definition:

> Episodes of being moved are intensely felt responses to scenarios that have a particularly strong bearing on attachment-related issues […]. In all these instances, one's own agency and causation by one's own behavior have relatively little importance for the elicitation of feelings of being moved; rather, an (empathic) observer or witness perspective prevails.[65]

A witness situation prevails, and agency is of little importance. Although researchers claim that it is a subspecies of emotion, I maintain that *being moved* must be differentiated from the concept of emotion, in which *interestedness*, a tendency towards action, is a constituent part.[66] I propose that being moved and emotion are two fundamental and complimentary affections, belonging to different experiential realms. Thomas Dixon in his historical account has traced the emergence of the psychological concept of *emotion* in the eighteenth century. He argues that it displaced more differentiated typologies (including affection and passions), and has consequently hampered attempts to explore the vast range of affective states that fall outside its province.[67] His argument critiques the prevailing view held for instance by Robert Solomon in his influential book about emotions. Solomon argues that there has been a negative view of the emotions because of the split between reason and emotion in the rationalistic conceptions of western thought.[68] Dixon maintains that such a view fails to differentiate between emotions on the one hand, and passions and affections on the other, and that it was the departure from the

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[63] Winfried Menninghaus, Valentin Wagner, Julian Hanich, Eugen Wassiliwizky, Milena Kuehnast, and Thomas Jacobsen, "Towards a Psychological Construct of Being Moved," *PLOS One* (2015): 25. Doi: 10-1371/journal.pone.0128451.

[64] Ibid., 3.

[65] Ibid., 12.

[66] See Literature Review chapter for a definition of the constituent parts of the concept of emotion.

[67] Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[68] Robert C. Solomon, *Passions: Emotions and the Meaning of Life,* 2nd ed. (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publ. Co., 1993).

older differentiation that lead to the reason-emotion dichotomy. Being moved unfolds in the contemplative domain, and is marked by viscerality (cf. verbs such as 'moved', 'stirred' and 'touched'), low arousal and high intensity, moist eyes, subjective feelings and a process of meaning-making.[69] In lieu of Felski's assertion, the lack of attention to this phenomenon is surprising; if people consistently respond that they are deeply moved by art, and reader response theories claim to be interested in the reader's response, why has there been such a lack of interest? It seems to be a phenomenon that has fallen into the cracks between aesthetics, hermeneutics and the psychology of the emotions. Only in recent years has the phenomenon begun to be researched.

Alloiosis **and** *pathemata*

In chapter 3, I will look at two of the foundational concepts of literary history and philosophical aesthetics, Aristotle's *katharsis* and Longinus' *hypsos.* What these two have in common is not an aesthetic orientation as such, differentiating between the stimulus of textual features on the one hand and the recipients' sensations on the other, but rather that they both ground their discussions of literature *in the experience of being moved. Ekstasis* and its concomitant affective components is literally a concept related to the *kinesis* of *alloiosis.* Aristotle's definition of tragedy in his *Poetics* is famous:

> Tragedy, then, is imitation (*mimesis)* of a serious and complete action (*praxis)* possessing magnitude […] accomplishing through (*dia)* pity and fear the purification (*katharsis)* of such passions (*pathemata).*[70]

Much of the critical discussion of this passage has revolved around *mimesis* and *katharsis*, two of the foundational concepts of Western literary history. Less attention has been granted to the term *pathemata*, and its meanings. Some translations render it 'emotions'. According to the Aristotelian scholar Else, it can also mean "'distressing experiences' or 'incidents'," and Aristotle reputedly used it as synonymous with *pathos*.[71] However, it also means 'that which

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[69] See Literature Review Chapter for empirical research on being moved.

[70] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Malcolm Heath (London and New York: Penguin Books), p. 10. This translation has been modified somewhat upon comparison with other translations of section 4.1.

[71] Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963), 229.

befalls one', 'undergoing an experience' and 'the capacity to experience strong emotions'.[72] Moreover, rendering *praxis* as 'action' is also problematic, as *praxis* involves 'passion' just as much as action. And the preposition *dia,* usually rendered 'through', is ambiguous as it could mean 'in the course of' as well as 'by means of'.

What is clear is that the experience of *katharsis* takes place in contemplation, in witnessing events, and that it is a process which moves the spectator as she undergoes an experience of strong affect. A noteworthy fact is that in the relation of philosophy to rhetoric, two of the three forms of *pisteis*, ethos and logos, have foundational status with regard to ethics, logic and epistemology. But in relation to *pathos*, we have no such fundamental philosophy, as pathos is partly reduced to the study of illness – pathology, and partly subsumed under ethics (where it is subordinated to rationality). The later emergence of aesthetics and of psychology treats emotion as a primary affective term. There is as yet no proper science of that dimension of affection which encompasses experiences of being moved – only of the dimension that pertains to the emotions per se. Accordingly, a systematic theory of the experience of being moved and changed by reading literature is lacking. This dissertation aims to contribute to such a theory, which I propose to call *pathematics*.

The Paradox of Fiction

In philosophical aesthetics there is a notorious debate regarding what is known as "Radford's Puzzle": 'The Paradox of Fiction'.[73] The essence of the puzzle is this: how can we be moved by *Anna Karenina* when we know that she does not really exist?[74] There have been various attempts to solve the puzzle.[75] But no one has seemingly put forth the Paradox of Fact: we can know that someone is suffering, yet we are not moved by it. Neuroscientific research into the

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[72] See http://biblehub.com/str/greek/3804.htm.

[73] Colin Radford, and Michael Weston, "How can we be moved by the fate of Anna Karenina?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 49 (1975): 67-80.

[74] See: Eva Dadlez, "Ideal Presence: How Kames Solved the Problem of Fiction and Emotion," *The Journal of Scottish Philosophy* 9, no. 1 (2011): 115-33. Doi: 10.3366/jsp.2011.0009.

[75] The most well-known and debated response to Radford's Puzzle is that of Kendall Walton, "Spelunking, Simulation and Slime: On Being Moved by Fiction," in *Emotion and the Arts,* ed. M. Hjort and S. Laver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 37-49. But Kim argues that Walton has misunderstood the importance of the puzzle, and attempts to solve it via a cognitive theory of emotions. See: Seahwa Kim, "The Real Puzzle from Radford," *Erkenntnis* 62, no. 1 (2005): 29-46.

imagery neurons of the human brain has established that the emotional brain does not distinguish between imagined and perceived experiences: "The emotional brain responds in essentially the same ways to imaginal experiences as to externally perceived experiences, as was demonstrated by Kreiman, Koch and Fried. Thus, for the emotional brain, the imaginal experiences during reenactment are real."[76] The implication of this finding, propose Ecker et al., is that "new experiences that are imaginal can be effective for creating new neural circuits and new responses, because the emotional centers in the subcortex hardly distinguish between perceptions arising externally versus internally."[77]

The paradox of fiction rests on an opposition between fact and fiction, where fiction is given a negative definition as a non-informational text, being about 'something that never happened'. The distinctive aspect of fiction, however, is not its non-factuality. Fiction has a positive definition: the question of whether it has really happened is suspended, put out of view, as what is foregrounded is *what we make of what is presented to us*. It is not just disbelief that is suspended, but also belief, in a fundamental gesture of phenomenological *epoché*. The fundamental status of fiction cannot be represented in terms of *information*, instead we need the foundational concept of *transformation*. A text can either give us information of the world, in which case we must assess the reliability of this information, or it can give us transformation of our experience of the world, in which case we experience its ability to move us. These are two ontological formations. This capacity to undergo experience and to experience feelings is literally *passivity*. This term, however, has no positive meaning in everyday language. It has come to mean the opposite of activity, as in 'don't just sit there, do something!' The structuralist Greimas maintains that we make meaning by structuring the world in terms of two kinds of oppositions: 'A is the opposite of B' and '-A (the negation of A) is the opposite of –B (the negation of B).' For instance, the opposite of love is hate, and its negation is absence of love. Greimas believes that this fundamental structure of binary oppositions shapes our language and experience of the world.[78] Deconstructionists have of course demonstrated the instability of such oppositions, and that one term is privileged over the other. Thus activity is the positive term, and passivity the negative term. Over time, the distinction of the two pairs will collapse.

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[76] Bruce Ecker, Robin Ticic, and Laurel Hulley, *Unlocking the Emotional Brain: Eliminating Symptoms at Their Roots Using Memory Reconsolidation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 86.

[77] Ibid., 31.

[78] Algirdas J. Greimas, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at Method*, trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer and Alan Velie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

Thus passivity loses its meaning and comes to stand in for the absence of activity. The problem with the (post-) structuralist view is that activity and passivity are not opposites, they are *complementary*. Likewise, fiction is not the opposite of fact or information, but its complement, *transformation*. Without this quaternary logic, there is no way out of 'the paradox of fiction'. *Mimesis* of a *praxis* transforms this *praxis* in the passivity of contemplation.

Formulation of the Research Questions

The purpose of this dissertation is not only to describe kinds of *alloioses* in relation to *crises*, but also to contribute to a theory of how being moved by the encounter with imaginative literature is connected to psychological change. As David Miall concedes, "reading is potentially capable of transforming the self, although the extent to which it actually does so will depend upon the concerns that emerge from the reader's prior experience, or […] the extent to which the reader's imagination is seized by the text."[79]

Although the influence of literature usually will be "the result of the cumulative effect of a long series of literary experience," Rosenblatt maintains that:

> The reading of a book, it is true, has sometimes changed a person's entire life. When that occurs, the book has undoubtedly come as a culminating experience that crystallises a long, subconscious development. In such cases the book usually opens up a new view of life or a new sense of the potentialities of human nature and thus resolves some profound need or struggle. The probability of any particular work's having so profound and transfiguring an effect, cannot, however, be predicted or planned for. It would result from the convergence of a great many intangible factors.[80]

She talks about the possibility that this may happen, and what "undoubtedly" must have happened, what "usually" occurs. In fact, her book is about what *may* happen. What must be studied, argues Rosenblatt, is the unique meeting between a particular text and a particular reader. However, she does not provide any such empirical study of actual transactions.

In the emerging discipline of empirical inquiry into transformative aesthetic experience, there has been no attempts to ascertain how transient responses become permanent changes in the subject. Conversely, in narrative studies, although there has been research on processes of

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[79] David Miall, "Beyond the Schema Given: Affective Comprehension of Literary Narratives," *Cognition and Emotion* 3, no. 1 (1988): 55-78. Doi: 10.1080/02699938908415236.

[80] Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995), 188.

life-change, there has been little attention to imaginative literature as a facilitative agent of change. To fill this knowledge gap, the present investigation must therefore have a transdisciplinary perspective. Before turning to the question of how one goes about turning Felski's *If* into *When*, it is necessary to formulate the research questions. Blaikie advocates that only after the research questions, strategies and ontological and epistemological assumptions are established, should the choice of method be considered: "A number of fundamental decisions have to be made before methods of investigation can be considered. To focus attention on methods is to ignore the serious thinking and planning that needs to occur beforehand."[81] This is sound advice, although I would like to make one modification. The grounding of the research question that, as Blaikie says, precedes other choices, ought itself to be an integral part of method. The research question springs out of an interpretative engagement with previous research and theories; this engagement is part of the *methodos*, the path one must walk upon.

I am not aiming to inquire into the prevalence of this phenomenon, nor its causes or underlying mechanisms. What I wish to understand is the subjective experience of life-changing engagement with imaginative literature in both its affective dimension and process of meaning-making. What is lacking is ideographically oriented approaches that can study the transaction between reader and text in the context of the reader's life. Therefore, the central research question is:

How may reading a work of imaginative literature be experienced as life-changing?

The subsidiary research questions are:

What kinds of Life-Changing Fiction Reading Experiences are there?

What is the relationship between life-crises, experiences of being moved, and life-changes?

What characterises the readers' mode of engagement with the works of literature?

Having established the research questions, I will discuss how one must go about answering them.

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[81] Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 9.

Intimate Reading: A hermeneutically oriented method of narrative inquiry

Mill says that "the origin of this transformation, or at least the process by which I was prepared for it, can only be explained by turning some distance back." Giving an account of his transformation necessitates providing an orientation section, relating the eliciting event of the crisis and its complication, the turning point of reading Marmontel, and the subsequent process of engaging with Wordsworth that lead to a resolution: "The result was that I gradually, but completely emerged from my habitual depression, and was never again subject to it." The sequence of this episode thus has the form of a narrative. Crucial to the study of narratives and life histories are orientations to changes and turning points. Narrative psychologists McAdams and Bowman look at transitions and "changes in the direction or the trajectory of our lives" with the aim of finding out how "people make meaning out of the transitions in their lives."[82] A central method for doing so is to study the stories people tell about their lives. McAdams and Bowman have identified a narrative sequence that is "especially prevalent in accounting for life-transitions or life-narrative turning-points": when an emotionally negative situation is turned into a positive outcome, they label this a "redemption sequence."[83] Mill's narrative of his transformation is clearly an example of a redemptive sequence. Like Mill's, any account of a life-changing event implies a temporal sequence of *before, during* and *after*. As such, the assumption and invocation of narrativity appears to be embedded in the research problem of life-changing reading experiences. In light of this, it would seem apposite to choose a narrative inquiry approach to my investigation of life-changing reading experiences. Susan Chase defines narrative inquiry as a subtype of qualitative inquiry:

> Narrative inquiry revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them. Narrative theorists define narrative as a distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time.[84]

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[82] Dan McAdams, and Philip J. Bowman, "Narrating Life's Turning Points: Redemption and Contamination," in *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition,* ed. Dan McAdams, Ruthellen Josselson and Amia Lieblich (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2001), xv.

[83] Ibid., 5.

[84] Susan E. Chase, "Narrative Inquiry: Still a Field in the Making," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage, 2011), 421.

In recent years, narrative methods of qualitative inquiry have flourished.[85] The concept of narrative, however, is elusive, indeterminate and contested. As Georgankopoulou has argued, it is "variously used as an epistemology, a methodological perspective, an antidote to positivist research, a communication mode, a supra-genre, a text-type."[86]   As such, it is necessary to clarify methodological and procedural problems related to such inquiry.

In a series of volumes collecting research and scholarship on the "narrative studies of lives," the editors McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich claim that "narrative inquiry rests on the assumption of the storied nature of human experience."[87] This view is seconded by narrative researchers Hiles and Chernak, who argue that narrative inquiry involves three fundamental assumptions: "narrative is fundamental to our understanding of the human mind"; "narrative dominates human discourse"; and "narrative is foundational to the processes that organize and structure human experience and action."[88] The narrative turn in empirical research, which regards narrative not simply as a literary genre or form of discourse, but a basic property of the human mind, emerged around 1986 with the publications of Mishler, Bruner, Sarbin and others, and has evolved into a multidisciplinary perspective.[89] A central premise in the narrative approaches is that through the stories that we construct we establish our identity positions, and that our ability to think narratively is crucial to our everyday understanding of reality. Polkinghorne defines narrative as a fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into a contextualized whole, and thus essential to the meaning-making process: "Facts only partly determine the particular scheme to be used in their organization, and more than one scheme can fit the same facts: several narratives can organize the same facts into

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[85] Represented by for instance Barbara Czarniawska, *Narratives in Social Science Research* (London: Sage, 2006); D. Jean Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* (London: Sage, 2007); Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, *Analysing Narrative Reality* (London: Sage, 2009).

[86] Quoted in Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Los Angeles and London: Sage Publications, 2008), 183.

[87] Dan P. McAdams, Dan, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, eds., *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2001), xv.

[88] David Hiles, and Ivo Cermak, "Narrative Psychology," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, ed. Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton-Rogers (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 150.

[89] Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Theodore R. Sarbin, ed., *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct (*New York: Praeger, 1986); Elliot G. Mishler, *Research interviewing: Context and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

stories and thereby give the facts different significance and meaning."[90] I believe there is insufficient evidence to endorse the ontological claim of experience's 'storied nature.' The classic Diltheyan hermeneutic position maintains that it is the *expression* of human lived experience that takes the form of narrative. As such I will not subscribe to a 'narrative paradigm', but will instead adopt a hermeneutically oriented narrative inquiry. Because I understand this inquiry to involve a research strategy that combines an empirical mode I call *subservation* with a logic of inquiry that is *anteroductive,* I have found it necessary to devote an extensive chapter to methodological reflections on these concepts and their relation to hermeneutics and narrative.

What approach to data collection does using a narrative method entail? There is no consensus on this, although most narrativists assume an interactionist position, where "the researcher does not *find* narratives, but instead participates in their creation."[91] For Riessman, the narrative approach is a way of interacting with informants in order to stimulate the telling of stories. She recounts how she applied narrative analysis to conventional interview transcript material and then began to uncover the stories her interviewees were telling her. Subsequently she begun to develop interviews in which questions were meant to facilitate a narrative account, e.g. open questions with follow-up questions. Margareta Hydén proposes that the interview be regarded as a relational practice, where the ideal is the listening researcher, and the storytelling informant. She describes a form of interview that "does not base itself on questions and answers as the foundational structural element. It focuses on the person and aims to facilitate his or her free narration."[92] But how does one combine the facilitation of such narration with paying

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[90] Donald Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 181. Elinor Ochs, and Lisa Capps, *Living Narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) hold that we "imbue life events with a temporal and logical order to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present and as yet unrealized experience." (2). This view accords with Bruner's theory that we become the autobiographical narratives we tell about our lives. Narratives structure personal experience, organize memory and "segment and purpose-build the very events of a life." See Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds,* 15. Interestingly, whereas Bruner emphasises the ongoing process of creating coherence, Riessman points to the role of narrative when coherence and order breaks down: "When biographical disruptions occur that rupture expectations for continuity, individuals make sense of events through storytelling." Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences,* 10.

[91] Kerstin Neander, and Carola Skott, "Important meetings with important persons: Narratives from families facing adversity and their key-figures," *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice* 5, no. 3 (2006): 297.

[92] My translation from the Swedish original: "[…] bygger varken på frågor eller svar som grunnläggande strukturerande element. Den fokuserar den intervjuade, och är uppbygd i syfte att underlätta och stödja hans eller hennes frie berättande.» Margaretha Hydén, "Forskningsintervjun som relationell praktik, In *Kjønn og fortolkende metode: Metodiske muligheter i kvalitativ forskning*, ed. Hanne Haavind (Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2000), 132.

attention to the literary work that occasioned the life-changing experience? Inspired by Wengraff's biographical narrative interview method and the dialogic reading method of *shared reading*, I have developed an approach to data collection that tries to resolve this issue. How to proceed from dialogue, via transcript, to presentation of text I will conceptualise as a problem of reliability that can best be addressed as a matter of philology.

According to Hiles and Chernak narrative analysis can range from the "straightforward collection of stories to be categorized and classified (into genres, etc.), through a more in-depth analysis of stories […] to a more closely focused micro-analysis of the narrative sense-making process and the psychosocial context"; they emphasise that narrative data analysis is still an area "in need of considerable, radical development."[93] I have chosen to regard narrative analysis as a preliminary analysis with the view to *critically selecting* narratives for interpretation. The ensuing interpretation of a narrative is a *hermeneutic* concern to address the question of validity.

Considering that the practical procedure involves (i) empathically listening to the participants relating their intimate experience with literary works, (ii) interpreting the passages they point to as intimating something about their experience, and (iii) *close readings* of the ensuing narratives in an *idiographic* approach, I have chosen to call the method *Intimate Reading*. This term is apposite for the twin reasons that it is synonymous with *close reading* and antonymous with the *distant reading* developed by Moretti in literary studies and is reflected in coding-based approaches to qualitative data.

Outline of dissertation

The dissertation has the following structure. Part One is an extensive Literature Review. Its purpose is on the one hand to establish what is known, and what is still to be found out, regarding transformative reading experiences and life-change; on the other hand to establish a horizon of conceptual pre-understanding for an inquiry into the phenomenon. Thus, the review encompasses two separate chapters. The first chapter has two main sections. Considering the fact that the study of life-changing reading experiences is transdisciplinary, broaching as it does both aesthetical inquiries into transformative experiences of art and literature as well as psychological inquiries into life-stories and conceptualisations of change, I have found it

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[93] Hiles and Cernak, "Narrative Psychology," 152.

necessary to discuss relevant studies within both disciplines. In the first section, I discuss empirical studies of transformative reading experience. Because there is a scarcity of studies pertaining hereto, I include relevant findings related to transformative aesthetic experiences in general. The second section discusses empirical approaches to life-change, primarily narratively oriented ones. An important discovery to emerge from the literature review is that findings related to transformation are often understood in the light of three central classical concepts: *katharsis, ekstasis* and *epiphany*. I have accordingly decided to include a chapter in which I clarify, as part of the hermeneutic inquiry, these historical antecedents in order to differentiate their meanings and where appropriate to derive new, complimentary terms.

In Part Two of the dissertation I first discuss the methodological assumptions of my research strategy. Because I seek to establish the concept of *subservation* to account for my empirical approach, and *anteroduction* as a logic of inquiry, this discussion will be extensive. I discuss the relationship of philology, hermeneutics and phenomenology with regard to issues of reliability and validity. In the method chapter I first give an account of the recruitment of participants and pertinent ethical considerations. In the next section I discuss my approach to interviewing. I then problematise issues related to transcription and the presentation of data. Thereafter I explain my approach to the critical selection of data, and the preliminary analysis of the structure of the narratives. I will show how and why I have selected precisely six narratives for interpretation. I then devote a section to explicating my method of interpretation and relate it to the anteroductive mode of inference.

Part Three constitutes the core of the dissertation and its raison d'être. It is devoted to the presentation of six selected narratives, and their subsequent idiographic interpretations. The presentation of the narratives is given in a chapter entitled "Six readers re-membering." The interpretations are presented under the heading "Varieties of life-changing reading experience." I decided to present all six narratives consecutively so that the reader may relate these to each other before encountering my interpretations. Each interpretation follows the same tripartite structure: I first explicate the nature of the crisis related, thereafter I examine the transaction with the literary work, before finally discussing the nature of the resolution or outcome of the reading experience.

Part Four brings together the relevant concepts developed in the preceding interpretations, and seeks to move beyond idiography in order to develop a theory of *pathematics*. In the first section, by comparing the interpretations to each other and to genres and affective categories, I develop a comprehensive and systematic theory of transformative

affective patterns in relation to life-crises and transactions with the deep structures of literary texts. The second section, 'Reading by Heart', discusses the ways of being moved and the modes of engagement implicated in life-changing reading experience. I propose that the practical application of 'Reading by Heart' be understood as *psychagogy*. I conclude with a discussion of the significance of this study and implications for further research.

Intention of project summarised

What?

This study, crossing the disciplines of reception studies, transformative aesthetics and narrative psychology, investigates stories of life-changing fiction-reading experiences.

How?

Using a hermeneutically oriented method of narrative inquiry, which I have called Intimate Reading, I will investigate the following research questions:

> *How may reading a work of imaginative literature be experienced as life-changing?*
> What kinds of Life-Changing Fiction Reading Experiences are there?
> What is the relationship between life-crises, affective experiences of being moved, and life-changes?
> What characterises the readers' mode of engagement with the works of literature?

Why?

The study aims to understand varieties of life-changing fiction-reading experience and to develop concepts for qualitative change and affective modes of engagement. This fills a gap in knowledge about how transformative reading experiences may lead to lasting change, and how such change is integrated into the life-story of the reader. New knowledge of the affective dimensions of the reading experience and their impact on life-story will be useful both for reception studies, narrative psychology and practices of intermediation of literature.

Part One: Literature Review

Chapter 2. Transformative Aesthetic Experiences and Studies of Life-change

Empirical inquiries into Transformative Encounters with Literature and Art

    Life-changing experiences of reading
        The book that made the difference
        The temporal sequence of the reading structure
    Transformative reading of imaginative literature
        Change that can be objectified: personality change
        Expressive enactment and self-modifying feelings
    Transformative aesthetic experiences: the phenomenon of being moved
        Being moved and emotion: Kandoh
        Weeping as indicator and component of being moved
        Semantic field and conceptual structure of being moved
        Neuroaesthetic approach to studying being moved
    Models of the aesthetic experiential process

Empirical studies of life-change

    Narrative inquiries
        Life-stories of redemption and personal event memories
        Quantum change and epiphanic experiences
    Models of Change: Discontinuous transformation and incremental change
        Varieties of Religious Experience
        The trans-theoretical model of change

Summary

Chapter 3. Clarification of Classical Affective concepts

Katharsis
    Purgation, purification or clarification?
    Psychological effect or aesthetic formal feature?
    To what is Aristotle's concept a response?
    Should *Katharsis* be restricted to tragedy or drama?
The sublime
    The *Hypsotic*
    Expleksis and *eparetai*
Epiphany
    Epiphanein and *to exaiphnes*

Chapter 3. Transformative Aesthetic Experiences and Studies of Life-change

Because the specific phenomenon of life-changing experiences of reading imaginative literature has not been extensively researched, it is relevant and useful to expand the scope of the review to include: studies of life-changing experiences of reading books in general; transformative fiction reading experiences that are non-permanent or not integrated into life-story; transformative aesthetic experiences in general; and studies of life-change. The review is structured accordingly. The purpose of this review is threefold: (i) to determine what is known about the subject so that my inquiry can build on it; (ii) to identify what has not yet been fully explored or understood in order to formulate apposite research questions; and (iii), because a hermeneutic inquiry must look at historical concepts as well as empirical findings, to clarify central affective terms that form the conceptual horizon for inquiries into transformative experiences. In the first section I will look at studies of life-change and transformation in relation to reading and aesthetic experiences.

Empirical inquiries into Transformative Encounters with Literature and Art

In his article "On the necessity of empirical studies of literary reading," David Miall predicts that "empirical studies will come to dominate the literary field by providing a matrix for evaluating theoretical proposals and for rethinking the nature of literary reading and its cultural place."[1] As of today, there is little to indicate that his prediction will come true. Yet empirical studies have gained some ground, and have produced intriguing and important findings. Miall distinguishes between two main lines of inquiry: on the one hand, "a focus on the formal features of texts and their influence on readers," and on the other, "ways in which reading has an impact on the reader's sense of self."[2] It is the latter approach that is of interest here.

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[1] David S. Miall, "Empirical approaches to Studying Literary Readers," *Book History* 9, (2006): 291-311.

[2] Ibid, 293.

Life-changing experiences of reading

The book that made the difference: the importance of the contextualising story

Within Library and Information Studies, the most important contribution to the study of life-changing reading experiences is the qualitative study performed by Catherine Ross. In this large inquiry, interviews with 194 self-declared avid pleasure-readers were conducted. The context of the study was information-seeking, and the role that reading for pleasure may serve as a source of information – the premise behind the study being that "since meanings are constructed by readers, we must ask the readers about the uses they make of texts in the context of their lives."[3] What transpired was that the majority of readers reported serendipitous encounters in which a book had made a significant difference to their life. Among the questions put to all informants was the following: "Has there ever been a book that has helped you or made a difference to your life in one way or another?"[4] Ross found that "approximately 60 per cent of the readers in the study provided sufficient detail about one or more particular books that it was possible to discern a significant way in which a book had helped in the context of their lives."[5] The actual figure may well be higher, given that "the claim that no single book made a difference was possibly for some readers a way of protecting privacy, since identifying a particular significant book would entail self-disclosure."[6] What is not clear from the report is how many of these significant reading experiences involved works of fiction. What the study did show, however, was that "whether fiction or non-fiction, almost all had a narrative form. Their key feature is that they tell a story that readers can relate to their own lives," says Ross, with the caveat that "the resemblances between reader's life and the life represented in the text may be discernible only to the reader."[7] Moreover, "sometimes the encounter with the

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[3] Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Finding without seeking: The information encounter in the context of reading for pleasure," *Information Processing and Management* 35, no. 6 (1999): 783. A seminal study related to reading for pleasure is Victor Nell, *Lost in a Book: The Psychology of Reading for Pleasure* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1988). Nell investigated the psychological mechanisms that are involved in autotelic reading. One of his findings is that readers can use fiction for affect regulation, by transforming negative affect to positive: fear is turned into a feeling of control, depressiveness to joy, disquiet to tranquility. This raises the possibility that through a process of re-reading, the individual may achieve life-changes.

[4] Ross, "Finding without seeking," 785.

[5] Ibid., 790.

[6] Ibid., 791.

[7] Ibid.

significant book was accidental," and in all cases "reading was interwoven into the texture of their lives, not separate from it."[8] Ross subsequently analysed 15 accounts of significant reading experiences, finding that:

> The most commonly occurring claim (in one third of all the cases) was that the book had opened up a new perspective, helped its reader see things differently, or offered an enlarged set of possibilities […] To describe these books, some readers used the metaphor of an 'awakening' or referred to books that 'opened my eyes' to a new perspective or 'opened a door' on a new reality. In about a quarter of all cases, readers said books provided models, examples to follow, rules to live by, and sometimes inspiration. […] interviewed readers looked in particular for characters whose lives offer models for living. In some cases, reading changed the readers' beliefs, attitudes or pictures of the world, which change in turn altered the way readers chose to live their lives after the book was closed.[9]

Ross divides the commonalities of readers' responses into the following seven (non-mutually exclusive) categories:

> 1) awakening/new perspectives and possibilities: e.g. 'major turning point'; 'made me aware of things I had taken for granted'; 'an awakening of sorts'.
>
> 2) models for identity: e.g. 'character became a role model to me… helped give me the courage to make some major changes in my life'; 'a profound influence on my life'.
>
> 3) Reassurance, confirmation of self-worth, strength: reader realized 'that I had to be true to myself'; strength to go on 'when I felt as though it wasn't worth going on'.
>
> 4) Connection with others/awareness of not being alone: 'she had to come to grips with her lesbianism, the book helped me to do the same thing'.
>
> 5) The courage to make changes: 'I can see myself in her struggle to get self-confidence'.
>
> 6) Acceptance: 'When I came to that understanding of what he was doing … I was able to resolve my problem'.
>
> 7) Disinterested understanding of the world: 'I've never forgotten the description of the destruction of so many human beings for an ideal. It was really an important book for me'.

It can be gathered from this catalogue that the kinds of change brought about by the reading are manifold and complex. Ross concludes that the interviews provide evidence that "when the right match is made between reader and story, readers use the text to create a story about

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[8] Ibid., 787.

[9] Ibid., 793.

themselves. They read themselves into the story and then read the story into their lives, which then becomes a part of them."[10] Ross, basing her view on Ricoeur's hermeneutics, regards this circular interaction between text and reader in terms of a 'reciprocity between *text*-interpretation and *self*-interpretation.'

What Ross found was that behind each of these instances, there "was a story situated in the context of the reader's life"; therefore, emphasizes Ross, "without the contextualizing story, we cannot understand why *this* particular book, and not another, performed its magic trick of helpfulness."[11] *Without the contextualizing narrative*, we cannot know the particulars of the relationship between the book, the life situation, the reading experience and the helpful outcome of the encounter. Because the study does not provide the contextualizing stories, however, it cannot explore in detail "the uses readers make of texts in the contexts of their lives."

Within the field of LIS there are studies that partially corroborate and challenge Ross' findings. In *The Book that Changed My Life* Coady and Johannessen invited 71 authors to write a short account of a book that has had great significance in their lives. According to the authors these accounts provide "a dramatic reminder that everywhere, every day, someone is changed, perhaps even saved, by words and stories." The books they have selected make up a mix of novels, poetry, drama, biography, memoirs and children's books. Although this is not a scientific study, at least it points to the possibility that life-changing reading experiences are not only occasioned by encounters with narrative works.[12] Canfield and Hendricks asked 55 persons to relate how a book has changed their life, and then edited these accounts. Not all the books related here were fiction, but they found that the majority of changes these books had produced, were changes in the person's beliefs, values and plans of action. Moreover, a dilemma often preceded the reading, and the book provided the solution.[13] This indicates the importance of understanding the reading experience within the context of the life-story of the reader. Sabine and Sabine, as part of the "Books that made a difference" project, interviewed 1,382 US readers about books that have been life-changing. Although there are problems of

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[10] Ibid., 793.

[11] Ibid., 792.

[12] Roxanne Coady, and Joy Johannesen, eds., *The Book that Changed my Life* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006).

[13] Jack Canfield, and Gay Hendricks, eds., *You've Got to Read this Book: 55 People Tell the Story of the Book that Changed their lives* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

self-selection in this study, an interesting result here was that the majority state that the impact of the book came as a surprise – it was an unexpected rather than sought experience.[14]

In a study aiming to assess the value and impact of public library book reading, Usherwood and Toyne used both surveys and interviews to investigate what motivates adults to read imaginative literature. They found that "reading imaginative literature is regarded as a special [and crucial] activity which serves to satisfy a wide variety of needs", and propose that "there is convincing evidence that through reading a person's life can be transformed."[15] However, the evidence is not entirely convincing. 20 per cent of the readers reported having experiences of a kind of escapism that provided aesthetic pleasure that stayed with them. It is unclear just what the nature of these experiences are. Moreover, Usherwood and Toyne make the questionable assertion that "irrespective of how imaginative literature is used to aid their escape, the crucial point is that whether the experience is fleeting or long lasting, the reader's real life is transformed."[16] One finding may contradict that of Ross: "it is not always necessary for the reader to relate to the experience the character is going through in order to learn about his or her own situation. Some respondents felt that they learnt by reading about experiences which were not necessarily their own."[17] An interesting finding they made is that the reading experience was described by many respondents in metaphors related to food and eating,

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[14] Gordon A. Sabine, and Patricia Sabine, *Books that made the difference* (Hamden, CN: Library Professional Publications, 1983).

[15] Bob Usherwood, and Jackie Toyne, "The Value and impact of reading imaginative literature," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 34, no. 1 (2002): 40.
   Soheli Begum discusses the transformative aspects of reading in his article "Readers' advisory and underestimated roles of escapist reading," *Library Review* 60, no. 9 (2011), arguing that "It is not always a mindless pleasure that readers seek through escapist reading; it is often a meaningful change, a meaningful transformation that they are after." (738). Begum found that leisure reading "can be used as a means of escaping boredom, but can also be a critical tool for self-preservation in far more turbulent environments"; additionally, leisure reading transports readers "away from current situations and also shapes and affects how they view and respond to future events. The transformative nature of leisure reading is such that it can be considered by many a means of maintaining humanity and a sense of self in sometimes uncertain and dangerous settings." (740). Whether the most fruitful strategy is to include transformative reading experience under the term "escapist", or to differentiate between precisely the escapist and the transformative tendency, is not raised in his article. Nor does he produce evidence that the transformative effects are lasting.
   Elizabeth Brewster, in *An Investigation of Experiences of Reading for Mental Health and Well-being and their Relation to Models of Bibliotherapy* (Phd Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2011), studies how the reading experience is related to mental health. She found that "Readers have a personal connection with literature; the act of reading itself is important, and readers often use literature as a form of escapism […]" (204), and also as self-help. Significantly, Brewster found that participants who use fiction as bibliotherapy are highly diverse, and so are the books they read. Moreover, "symptoms of mental health problems impact on the reading experience" and "the use of bibliotherapy is related to the personal situation of the reader." (205).

[16] Ibid., 36.

[17] Ibid., 38.

regarding the imagination as in need of nourishment. "When talking about the nourishment on offer through imaginative literature, several participants developed the eating metaphor."[18] Incidentally, Ross in her study of metaphors of reading examining statements about reading made by librarians in the late nineteenth century, found that there were two metaphors in particular that structured thinking about reading: reading as a ladder, and reading as eating. The content of a book can be chewed and swallowed.[19]

Vivian Howard argues that "recreational reading has too long been ignored" within LIS "in favour of research into information and information seeking."[20] I find her use of the term "recreational" apposite, in that it signifies both recovery, the curing of a person, and refreshment by eating. In her exploratory study she investigates the role of pleasure reading in the lives of young teens aged 12-15. She found that one of the three functions the reading fulfilled, was personal development aiding them in the transition from childhood to adulthood: "teens gain significant insights into self-identification, self-construction and self-awareness."[21] She concludes that the inquiry confirms Ross' theory about the circular relationship of reciprocity between text-reading and self-reading.

The temporal sequence of the reading structure

There have been few phenomenological investigations into transformative reading experiences. The phenomenological psychologist Paul F. Colaizzi made the first such inquiry into what he terms "existential change occasioned by reading."[22] In qualitative interviews, readers were

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[18] Ibid., 39.

[19] Catherine Sheldrick Ross, "Metaphors of Reading," *The Journal of Library History (1974-1987)* 22, no. 2 (1987): 147-63.

[20] Vivian Howard, "The importance of pleasure reading in the lives of young teens: Self-identification, self-construction and self-awareness," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 43, no. 1 (2011): 46. The role and function of literature within LIS is unclear and somewhat marginalized. Tuomaala et al. have analysed the research within the field over the past 20 years. They found that due perhaps to selection criteria or classificatory strategy, research on literature emerges as marginal. See: Otto Tuomaala, Otto, Kalervo Järvelin, and Pertti Vakkari, "Evolution of Library and Information Science, 1965-2005: Content analysis of journal articles," *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 65, no. 7 (2014): 1446-62.

[21] Howard, "The importance of pleasure reading," 53.

[22] Paul F. Colaizzi, "Psychological Research as the Phenomenologist Views it," in *Existential-Phenomenological Alternatives for Psychology,* ed. Ronald S. Valle and Mark King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 57.

asked about a particular reading experience that had such a profound influence as to bring about change in the reader's life. The inquiry does not deal exclusively with works of fiction, and the context of the study is one of demonstrating the application of phenomenological method. Still, the study is instructive. Colaizzi found that the outcome of the reading experience "is not so much the creation of a new world as of discovering a new way of living one's own world."[23] The reading does not provide information about the world, but restructures the way the persons relate to themselves and their lifeworld. Colaizzi found that the transformative reading experience is structured into three temporal phases: before the reading commences ("Readiness"); during the act of reading ("revealing power of the book") and the after-effects of the reading ("consequences"). Although Colaizzi does not discuss it, one must ask whether it is the experience itself that has this structure, or the *narrative* of the experience. He describes this "reading-change structure" in the following way:

> Regardless of his initial attitude toward the content of the book, at some point the reader is 'caught', and once he is he can no longer ignore the book's call. Its call is powerful, motivating all of the reader's other interests to be subordinated or integrated within it; it acts as a powerful magnet, unifying all of his interests, attitudes and efforts.

> Regardless of the book's content, it ultimately refers back to the reader himself; each and every area illuminated by the book illuminates the reader; and in no case, regardless of the joy, pain, struggles, threats or guilt of this self-illumination, can the reader, in good faith, deny or ignore these self-disclosures. These self-disclosures create a tension within the reader to decide whether or not to embark upon the existential project which the book announces.

> The ordinary is all radically re-structured, and for a long time afterward the reader is occasionally reminded of the extraordinariness of the commonplace in some area, about which he is convinced that the author has established some truth, and to which he is converted, at least temporarily.[24]

Other studies corroborate the before-during-after structure identified by Colaizzi. The psychologists Swatton and O'Callaghan investigated the significance of healing reading experiences in the life history of their informants. They identified three main categories which correspond to Colaizzi's identified structure. First, there is a "context of struggle" that preceded the healing process. Secondly, there is the unfolding of the healing process itself, which was characterised by a personal process that gave the readers insight into choices and possibilities for liberation "in an exploration and awakening to the experience of healing."[25] The third stage

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[23] Ibid., 60.

[24] Ibid., 65.

[25] Susan Swatton, and Jean O'Callaghan, "The experience of 'healing stories' in the life narrative: a grounded theory," *Counselling Psychology Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (1999): 427.

they found to be a working through of the effects of the reading, in which the book "has continued to provide inspiration in the participant's lived experience."[26] This finding is supported by Laura Cohen's study of therapeutic reading.[27] She found that the reading experience is a process that stretches beyond the actual act of reading, and constitutes a process that extends its work long after the book is closed. According to Cohen, the reading experience continues to play a helping role in difficult life situations. Another study that looks into the interactive influences before, during and after reading, is Mar et al.'s review of empirical research "on the dynamic interaction between emotion and literature at each of these stages."[28] They argue that emotions and mood influence the reader "before one even engages with a story"; moreover, "once one has finished reading, these emotions don't simply dissipate but may have an impact […] long after closing the book, perhaps re-emerging whenever the book is brought to mind."[29] Reviewing studies that have investigated fiction's potential to change readers' emotions, they conclude that "studies of reading and of emotion tend to examine short-term outcomes; it is time to begin looking at whether profound and long-lasting changes can occur after engagement with meaningful narrative fiction."[30]

Transformative experiences of reading imaginative literature

Change that can be objectified: personality change

Relating to the potential for literature to facilitate measurable change, most of the research literature has endeavoured to investigate whether reading fiction may improve the person's

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[26] Ibid., 413.

[27] Laura J. Cohen, "Phenomenology of therapeutic reading with implications for research and practice of bibliotherapy," *The Arts in Psychotherapy* 21, no 1 (1994), 37-44. In order to explain this mechanism, Cohen makes use of a concept from developmental psychologist Daniel Stern, 'evoked companion'. The reading experience may be understood as a representation of a generalized interaction. When similar critical life situations arise later on, this representation will be reactivated, as if a companion is evoked. This evoked companion is not so much a memory of the prior event as an "active exemplar" of the experience.

[28] Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, Maja Djikic, and Justin Mullin, "Emotion and narrative fiction: Interactive influences before, during and after reading," *Cognition and Emotion* 25, no. 5 (2011): 819.

[29] Ibid., 819.

[30] Ibid., 830.

ability to empathise with and understand other people.[31] In a review of experiments designed to demonstrate such pro-social effects from reading fiction, Djikic and Oatley found that such experiments fail to capture long-term effects. Another limitation is that the studies focus on prose fiction, excluding consideration of poetry.[32] Djikic and Oatley propose three aspects of literary fiction reading that may explain how literature can facilitate but not dictate self-change. Based on Oatley's theory of fiction as simulation of experience, they propose that via processes of abstraction, simplification and compression such simulation can offer a personal testing of vicarious experience. Furthermore, such simulation may "temporarily destabilize the personality system."[33] They therefore hypothesise that "literature shares with the other arts an effect of introducing a perturbation to personality, which can sometimes be a precursor to a more permanent personality change."[34] Thirdly, literature, in contrast to communication that seeks to persuade, involves indirect communication, argue Djikic and Oatley. It has "the non-directive property of inviting those who engage with it to experience their own emotions and thoughts."[35]

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[31] In his extensive study of empirical investigations of fiction's capacity for empathy increase, *The Moral Laboratory: Experiments examining the effects of reading literature on social perception and moral self-concept* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2000), Frank J. Hakemulder found some evidence that reading fiction helped people to imagine the situations of other people, affecting their beliefs about what it is like to be someone else, although no direct correlation between reading fiction and empathy was established. However, more recent studies have demonstrated such an effect. Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, Jacob Hirsch, Jennifer dela Paz, and Jordan B. Peterson, "Bookworms versus nerds: Exposure to fiction versus non-fiction, divergent associations with social ability, and the simulation of fictional social worlds," *Journal of Research in Personality* 40, no. 5 (2006): 694-712, found that the more fiction people read, the better their empathy was, as measured by their scores on The Mind-in-the-Eyes test, a theory-of-mind test in which the test person makes attributions of another person's mental state based on reading photographs of the facial area surrounding the eyes. A number of subsequent studies have established that it was the reading of fiction that produced increased empathy, thus disproving the counterclaim that these results only demonstrate that empathic people are more inclined to read fiction. See the following studies: Raymond A. Mar, Keith Oatley, and Jordan B. Peterson, "Exploring the link between reading fiction and empathy: Ruling out individual differences and examining outcomes," *Communications: The European Journal of Communication* 34, no. 4 (2009): 407-28; David C. Kidd, and Emanuele Castano, "Reading literary fiction improves theory of mind," *Science* 342, no. 6156 (2013): 377-80; Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley, and Mihnea Moldoveanu, "Reading other minds: Effects of literature on empathy," *Scientific Study of Literature* 3, no. 1 (2013): 28-47;Dan R. Johnson, "Transportation into literary fiction reduces prejudice against, and increases empathy for Arab Muslims," *Scientific Study of Literature* 3, no. 1 (2013): 77-92; Dan R. Johnson, G.C. Cushman, L.A. Borden, and M.S. McCune, "Potentiating empathic growth: Generating imagery while reading fiction increases empathy and prosocial behavior," *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts* 7 (2013): 306-312.

[32] Maja Djikic, and Keith Oatley, "The Art in Fiction: From Indirect Communication to Changes of the Self," *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 8, no. 4 (2014): 499.

[33] Ibid., 500.

[34] Ibid., 502.

[35] Ibid., 503.

There exists only one specific experimental investigation into how reading fiction can produce transformation of the reader's personality. In their study "On Being Moved by Art: How Reading Fiction Transforms the Self," Djikic et al. tested the hypothesis that reading fiction can cause significant changes in the experience of one's own personality traits under laboratory conditions. The premise for their investigation was that "an examination of the impact of art on the personalities of those who appreciate it" has been missing in psychological aesthetics.[36] They concede that there probably exist good reasons for this lack: "Although many art lovers feel personally transformed as a consequence of an interaction" with a moving art work, Djikic et al. regard such change as "rare, unpredictable, unique and difficult to measure. Such experiences tend to be dismissed as anecdotal."[37] Apart from the contradiction inherent in "many" and "rare," they are right in emphasizing the uniqueness of such experiences, and the difficulties of subjecting them to experimental conditions. They refer to Ross' and Sabine & Sabine's studies, maintaining that "the vagueness of what respondents in these studies meant by *transformative* does not preclude a systematic study of whether their intimation […] could be accurate."[38] They hold out the possibility that the subjective experience of change reported in the quoted studies "could have marked genuine transformation of their personalities."[39] They therefore devised a way to test this in a controlled laboratory experiment involving 166 participants. Personality change was conceptualized as a marked difference on the Big5-inventory of traits before and after participation. A sensitive dependent variable was created to register small (but possibly significant) shifts in participants' experience of their own traits" upon reading a short story, Chekhov's *The Lady With the Toy Dog,* or a control story with the same content, but documentary in form.[40] Both experimental and control group completed a BFI questionnaire and emotion checklist before and after reading. The hypothesis tested was

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[36] Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley, Sara Zoeterman, and Jordan B. Peterson, "On Being Moved by Art: How Reading Fiction Transforms the Self," *Creativity Research Journal* 21, no. 1 (2009): 29.

[37] Ibid., 24.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 25. In another experiment they tested the hypothesis that the emotional disengagement of avoidantly attached individuals can be subverted by reading literature, using the same experimental and control texts. Here, they found that avoidantly attached persons did experience significantly greater emotion change when reading the Chekhov story. What they found to be essential was "exploration of emotional complexity." See Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley, Sara Zoeterman, and Jordan B. Peterson, "Defenseless against art? Impact of reading fiction on emotion in avoidantly attached individuals," *Journal of Research in Personality* 43, no. 1 (2009): 16.

[40] Ibid.

that "exposure to the experimental condition would create significantly greater change in traits than the control condition, and the change that each individual might experience could be in any trait and in any direction."[41] The results showed that the experimental group experienced significantly greater change in self-reported experience of personality traits, and that emotion change mediated the effect. The possibility of mood induction may be discounted, given that the art condition "uniquely and differentially affected their entire trait profile. The authors emphasise that "it may not be the sheer presence, but the quality of art-induced emotions – their complexity, range, and intensity – that potentially facilitate the process of trait change."[42]

It was the form of Chekhov's prose that "changed (even if temporarily) how they experienced their own personality traits."[43] The experiment has no way of determining whether these changes may produce permanent trait alterations. What is important is that this gives objective support to Ross' findings. Djikic et al. conclude that "further consideration should be given to the role of art in the facilitation of processes of personality growth and maturation."[44] They maintain that the potential for change through encounters with art is worth exploring. Furthermore, the authors relate transformation to "being moved," without specifying what it means to be moved.

Expressive enactment and self-modifying feelings

Kuiken, Miall and Sikora aim to "reawaken interest in the notion of aesthetic experience,"[45] and to investigate empirically "the transformative potential of literary reading."[46] They argue that other reader-response approaches have failed to take into account how the reader's sense of self influences and is being affected by reading. The basic premise for their approach to empirical reading studies is that literary texts afford a different mode of understanding than that offered by non-literary texts: "We read literary texts because they enable us to reflect on our

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[41] Ibid., 26.

[42] Ibid., 28.

[43] Ibid., 27.

[44] Ibid., 24.

[45] Don Kuiken, David S. Miall, and Shelley Sikora, "Forms of Self-Implication in Literary Reading," *Poetics Today* 25, no. 2 (2004): 198.

[46] Ibid., 173.

feelings and concerns, clarify what they are, and reconfigure them within an altered understanding of our own and other's lives."[47] Through combining experimental studies and numerically-aided phenomenology, Kuiken et al. have identified what they call "expressive enactment," "a form of reading that penetrates and alters a reader's understanding of everyday life" and "modifies feeling, and reshapes the self."[48] The think-aloud and self-probed retrospection approach, in which readers mark striking passages when reading and subsequently comment upon them, is designed to "capture the temporally unfolding *experience* of a text rather than its consummating *interpretation.*"[49] They argues that such "expressive reading" constitutes a distinct and particular level of feeling in relation to literary reading. Kuiken and Miall differentiate between four levels of feeling. The first domain is constituted by evaluative feelings: the level of satisfaction, enjoyment and pleasure of the reading activity. The second domain is that of narrative feelings: feelings of empathy and sympathy with author/narrator/character, and immersion in story-world. The third level is composed of aesthetic reactions: feelings of fascination or intrigue in response to "the formal components of literary texts" and their foregrounded features. The fourth level is that of self-modifying feelings "that restructure the reader's understanding of the textual narrative and, simultaneously, the readers sense of self." [50] The dynamics of feeling response in this domain is such that "aesthetic and narrative feelings interact to produce metaphors of personal identification that modify self-understanding."[51] They argue that it is within this fourth domain that "we can locate what is distinctive to literary response."[52] In several studies they have attempted to determine the distinctive characteristics of this form of self-implicating reading and the affective response that literary texts invite from readers. Not all readers engage in this form of reading; in fact only a minority do so. They found that nine out of forty readers manifested commentaries that

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[47] Shelley Sikora, Don Kuiken, and David S. Miall, "Expressive Reading: A Phenomenological Study of Readers' Experience of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,*" *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 5, no. 3 (2011): 258.

[48] Don Kuiken, David S. Miall, and Shelley Sikora, "Forms of Self-Implication in Literary Reading," *Poetics Today* 25, no. 2 (2004): 172.

[49] David S. Miall, and Don Kuiken, "A feeling for fiction: becoming what we behold," *Poetics* 30, no. 4 (2002): 239.

[50] Miall and Kuiken, "A feeling for fiction: becoming what we behold," 223.

[51] Ibid., 221.

[52] Ibid., 223.

reflected expressive enactment.[53]

They have found two different factors that dispose readers towards expressive enactment. The first factor is a personality trait named 'absorption'.[54] Readers who score highly on this trait are "more likely to report affective theme variations and self-perceptual shifts."[55] The second factor, coming to light in an experimental study where expressive enactment occurred frequently among readers who had suffered a significant loss, was the impact of personal crisis.[56] We do not know exactly how these two factors co-operate. However, we may reasonably conjecture that both are necessary if the transformative reading experience is to have lasting effect in the life of the reader and become and integrative part of their self-concept. Kuiken and Miall consider that this approach to reading may be "more deeply tied to particular life circumstances than theoretical discussions of historically relative and institutionalized reading practices would allow," and raise the following question of utmost relevance to an inquiry into life-changing reading experiences: "What if, for example, expressive enactment […] occurred with greater regularity among individuals who are psychologically predisposed by experiences of loss, death, and bereavement?"[57] Without expanding on other types of possible life crises, Kuiken and Miall stipulate that self-modifying reading may be "dependent upon the opening – or closing – of experiential windows during such seemingly inevitable life crises."[58]

What is the relationship between self-implicating reflection (identification, empathy, sympathy, fusion, resonance) and self-modification? Kuiken et al. propose that by means of "qualitative studies of literary reading using the self-probed retrospection technique" combined with "closely reading the 'text' of what people say about their experience, by articulating how

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[53] Kuiken et al., "Forms of Self-Implication," 194.

[54] For a discussion of the relation of absorption to engagement with attentional objects, see: T. Cameron Wild, Don Kuiken, and Don Schopflocher, "The Role of Absorption in Experiential Involvement," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, no. 3 (1995): 569-79. Absorption is shown to positively correlate with participation in the arts, with effects of such participation on mood, and with ratings of the importance of such participation to the quality of daily life.

[55] Don Kuiken, Leah Phillips, Michelle Gregus, David S. Miall, Mark Verbitsky, and Anna Tonkonogy, "Locating Self-Modifying Feelings Within Literary Reading," *Discourse Processes* 38, no. 2 (2004): 267.

[56] Kuiken et al., "Forms of Self-Implication," 172.

[57] Ibid., 194.

[58] Ibid.

they weave personal memories into their understanding of literature," we may be able to increase our knowledge of how self-implicating feelings become self-modifying feelings. I believe theirs is an empirical means of establishing what Rosenblatt and Jauss postulate theoretically: that there are ways of personal reading that are progressive (self-modifying) rather than regressive (self-centred ways of defending oneself against change).

Kuiken, Miall and Sikora examine two different forms of self-implication, one that functions like simile and one that functions like metaphor. The former is marked by explicitly recognized similarity between personal memories and aspects of text-world in a comparative gesture; the latter is characterised by metaphors of personal identification in a process during which the reader comes to identify asymmetrically with an instance in the text: I am like the character, but the character is not like me. In their example of readers' engagement with a short story by Katherine Mansfield, when the reader finds that "I am Mrs Bean" this is not equivalent to her saying "Mrs Bean is me."[59] Kuiken et al. posit that it is this metaphoric self-implication that constitutes the distinct mode of engagement termed 'expressive enactment'. In their numerically-aided phenomenological study of different types of responses to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", they found that such expressive enactment was marked by "(1) explicit descriptions of feelings in response to situations and events in the text, (2) blurred boundaries between oneself and the narrator of the text, and (3) active and reiterative modification of an emergent affective theme."[60] They identified six clusters in total. *Ironic allegoresis* is much like a hermeneutic approach, where the text is understood as "referring to abstract themes embodied in cultural narratives external to the poem."[61] *Autobiographical assimilation* was marked by intensive self-reflection in which attention to poem was displaced. *Autobiographical diversion* was characterised by recall of similar environments but with low level of felt involvement in the poem. *Non-engagement* constituted responses that failed to engage with poem. *Aesthetic feeling* reflected engagement with the sensory imagery of the poem both visually and kinesthetically, but reflected a "tendency for readers to become imaginatively absorbed in the aesthetic surface of the text without simultaneously becoming personally implicated."[62] The cluster they singled out, *expressive enactment*, "described transformations of meanings central

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[59] Ibid., 184.

[60] Ibid., 171.

[61] Sikora et al., "Expressive Reading," 262.

[62] Ibid., 265.

to readers' experience of the poem."[63]

Expressive enactments, in contrast to other clusters of typical responses, were less likely to refer explicitly to autobiographical memories, but "*more* likely to indicate that the reading experience involved resonance between the reader's feelings and those embodied in the poem."[64] Therefore, the metaphoric personal identification is a process more subtle than comparing the text to self. The blurring of boundaries was signaled by two features: the use of the pronoun 'you' to speak inclusively and personally at the same time, and the shift to present tense. Sikora et al. found that "it was sometimes difficult to determine whether the reader was describing her own experience or the world of the poem, the experience of the narrator, or the experience of one of the narrative personae."[65] Progressive realization of the expressive potential of the poem manifested as a reiteration of an emergent affective theme that resembled the structure of a musical fugue. With each reiteration, the theme was expressed "more intricately and intimately than before."[66]

Regarding one of the readers who participated in a study in which bereaved persons read this poem, Kuiken et al. uncovered three significant aspects of her account. They found that she spoke "with the characteristic attunement to feeling"; she used the pronouns 'you' and 'we', and "she repeatedly returns to a theme in the poem that, through its successive variations, is gradually woven into the imaginative life that accompanies her grief and into her reflections about the loss of her grandfather and father."[67] An interesting finding in this experiment was that self-perceptual shifts "were not associated with depression about a recent loss but rather with depression about a loss that occurred two or more years before."[68] If the loss is too recent, the person may be in a state of psychological numbness and derealisation that may "preclude the saturation, richness and depth" involved in such reading. If the loss is more temporally remote, but still unresolved, on the other hand, the reading may be particularly engaging and

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[63] Ibid., 263.

[64] Kuiken et al., "Forms of Self-implication," 187.

[65] Sikora et al., "Expressive Reading,". 264.

[66] Kuiken et al., "Forms of Self-implication," 188.

[67] Ibid., 191.

[68] Ibid., 195.

"especially likely to penetrate life when it is not too directly reminiscent of the pain."[69] Thus, they conclude that the "fugal movement toward increasingly intricate and intimate personal understandings and this progressive articulation of initially vague and inexpressible convictions constitutes the entry of the literary text into the reader's life."[70] This expressive enactment shape depends on the manner of recollection of personal memories. "Whether personal memories are explicitly and comparatively considered, as in personal similes, or implicitly and enactively evoked, as in metaphors of personal identification, may determine the regenerative potential of reading."[71]

The expressive mode of reading is regarded as a "hybrid mode of engagement" that is attentive to both narrative and stylistic aspects of the text. Moreover, it is self-implicating without being self-absorbed or self-centred. The studies show, Kuiken et al. contend, that "it is possible to differentiate empirically the self-transformative potential of expressive enactment from self-absorbed assimilation of the world of the text."[72] Implied in this is that the reading will have a therapeutic function only when it is self-transformative, not when it is self-absorbed as in superficial and escapist reading. What their approach does not account for, however, is how the expressive enactment may lead to lasting change in the sense of self.

The process of self-modifying feelings is such that the experience of feeling in one situation leads to the re-experiencing of those feelings in similar situations based on affective scripts: "conventionally different narrative elements may seem 'the same' by virtue of the progression of feelings that are common to them."[73] During literary reading, when responding to foregrounded features, feelings will elicit memories that are affectively related to the text: "aesthetic feeling (feeling struck, captured, held) in response to foregrounding provides the reading experience with a diffusely heightened feeling tone, an affective context within which narrative feelings are more likely to guide the crossing of conventionally scripted boundaries."[74] Moreover, this provides a framework for understanding subsequent narrative developments, by

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[69] Ibid., 196.

[70] Ibid., 193.

[71] Ibid., 198.

[72] Sikora et al., "Expressive Reading," 267.

[73] Miall and Kuiken, "A feeling for fiction," 226.

[74] Ibid., 227.

alerting the reader to the significance of an event that has begun to unfold and thus to novel feeling connotations. Readers are able to anticipate the recurrence of affective themes. The result of the hybrid mode of expressive enactment is that "when foregrounding accentuates aesthetic feeling and narrative feelings cross conventionally scripted boundaries, the readers' sense of self will sometimes be imaginatively challenged."[75] Through such challenges, argue Miall and Kuiken, literary reading has the capacity to alter the narratives we weave about who we are or wish to become. It is precisely such narratives that have to be investigated.

Kuiken et al. have related their phenomenological findings to the two central affective concepts in literary history, catharsis and the sublime. Kuiken and Miall propose that the concept of catharsis constitutes one particular form of the more general pattern of "hybrid engagement" of aesthetic and narrative feelings. They suggest that when a sequence of affective responses constitute a modification of a first feeling by a second, this may be considered a form of catharsis. This is because in Aristotle's theory, they maintain, catharsis modifies inappropriate emotions and "fear in the end appears to be modified by pity"; this "radical qualification of one emotion by another in our rereading of catharsis suggests that Aristotle's tragic catharsis is a special case of a more general process in literary reading."[76] A cathartic shift may have occurred in several of the readers that took part in their study, "as earlier feelings are recontextualised by other more inclusive feelings."[77] This is an interesting reinterpretation of catharsis, but may cast its net too wide if implying that any qualification of one feeling by another one that modifies inappropriate emotion constitutes catharsis. In another study, Kuiken et al. discuss "apex experiential reading moments" in terms of the sublime. They identify a core process involving apex moments that leads to self-alteration. Building on Gendlin's phenomenological concept of felt sense, they delineate a process through which "an inexpressible felt sense guides reflective explication of the something 'more' that the felt sense prescribes," leading to either of two forms of sublime feeling, sublime enthrallment and sublime disquietude. [78] These are characterised in terms of affective bearing and epistemic tone: "the expressive depth of sublime enthrallment also has the affective bearing of wonder and the

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[75] Ibid., 229.

[76] Ibid., 234.

[77] Ibid., 237.

[78] Don Kuiken, Paul Campbell, and Paul Sopcak, "The Experiencing Questionnaire: Locating Exceptional Reading Moments," *Scientific Study of Literature* 2, no. 2 (2012): 264.

epistemic tone of reverence while the expressive depth of sublime disquietude also has the affective bearing of disquietude and the epistemic tone of discord."[79] One important aspect of their analyses is that they draw heavily on, and partially reinterpret, the classical concepts of katharsis and the sublime. The classical concepts serve to illuminate important affective aspects of the expressive enactment, while descriptions of expressive enactment conversely modify the understanding of the classical terms. This is significant: it is as if their phenomenological approach must be supplemented by a hermeneutic dialogue with the classical tradition, whose affective categories are problematic but necessary in order to interpret transformative reading experiences. These categories may be productive in relating self-modifying feelings in expressive enactment to the experience of being moved and changed.

Transformative aesthetic experience: being moved

In a survey of psychological research on art experiences Funch concludes: "if appreciation of a specific work of art really has an impact on the viewer's life […] it would be difficult, if not impossible, to give evidence of such influences through empirical studies."[80] Since then, however, empirical approaches to transformative aesthetic experience has sprung up within psychological research on emotion, being moved and neuroaesthetics.

In his review of research on the relationship between art and emotions, Silvia argues that "the psychology of emotions is a good starting point for exploring emotional responses to art," and that appraisal theories of emotion can inform the experimental study of aesthetics and "make new predictions about emotional responses to art, expand the domain of aesthetic emotions beyond positive emotions such as interest and enjoyment, inform other theories and reinterpret past findings."[81] This sounds reasonable, given the enormous upsurge in research on emotion, and it is an influential approach. For instance, Jenefer Robinson explores the role of emotion in both literature and the arts. She emphasizes that "we need to have a firm grasp of

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[79] Ibid., 265.

[80] B. S. Funch, *The Psychology of Art appreciation* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1997).

[81] Paul J. Silvia, "Emotional Responses to Art: From Collation and Arousal to Cognition and Emotion," *Review of General Psychology* 9, no. 4 (2005): 357. See also his article discussing a variety of "aesthetic emotions": Silvia, Paul J. (2009): "Looking past Pleasure: Anger, Confusion, Disgust, Pride, Surprise, and Other Unusual Aesthetic Emotions" in: Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 3(1, 48-51.

what emotions are before we go on to tackle more difficult questions about emotion and the arts."[82] However, one of the problems of starting out from emotion is that there is no unified theory. Difficulties in understanding the nature of emotion translates into difficulties in understanding aesthetic emotions. Scherer, on the one hand, argues that aesthetic emotions are different from ordinary emotions because they lack the appraisals of goal relevance and coping potential.[83] Lazarus, on the other hand, maintains that there are no exclusive or prototypical aesthetic emotions. When it comes to basing research into the aesthetics of literary response on theories of emotion, Miall and Kuiken makes a pertinent critical point. They argue that it is not to be expected that such theories can illuminate the role of feeling in literary response. Indeed, they argue, "the position may rather be the reverse: given the nuance and detail that literary response affords to the study of feeling, the conclusions that we eventually reach about feeling may point psychological investigations in new and more productive directions."[84] I wholeheartedly endorse their view. Perhaps a more fruitful point of departure could be found in establishing a science of being moved.

Being moved and emotion: Kandoh

Cova and Deonna claim that being moved is a subject in which "there has been a conspicuous lack of interest on the part of philosophers and psychologists."[85] They argue that the phenomenon of being moved is a distinct type of emotion, by attempting to show that it meets the five most common criteria in psychology for defining an affective episode as a distinct emotion.[86] If all of its instances (i) are intentional states directed at objects, (ii) have the same

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[82] Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper Than Reason: Emotion and its Role in Literature, Music and Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 2. Robinson argues that "little has been done on the role of emotion in understanding narrative", 101. However, recent years has seen the advent of Affective Narratology. Patrick Colm Hogan argues that the structure of stories is a systematic product of human emotion systems. He examines the ways in which events, plots and genres are a function of emotional processes. He argues that emotion systems are crucial for understanding stories, and that stories may play an integral role in the development of our emotional lives. See: Patrick Colm Hogan, *Affective Narratology: The Emotional Structure of Stories* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011). See also: Per Thomas Andersen, *Story and Emotion: A Study in Affective Narratology* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2016).

[83] K. R. Scherer, "Which emotions can be induced by music? What are the underlying mechanisms? And how can we measure them?" *Journal of New Music Research* 33, no. 3 (2004): 239-51.

[84] Miall and Kuiken, "A Feeling for fiction: becoming what we behold," 222.

[85] Cova and Deonna, "Being Moved," 448.

[86] Florian Cova, and Julien A. Deonna, "Being moved," *Philos Stud* 169 (2013): 447-66. Doi: 10.1007/s11098-013-0192-9.

formal object or core relational theme, (iii) share the same distinct phenomenology, (iv) are associated with the same type of action tendencies and (v) serve the same general function, then being moved may be classified as an emotion.[87] However, by their own admittance, regarding criterion (iv) no such observation can be made, and that it makes "little sense to look for particular action tendencies associated with being moved."[88] Thus they concede that "being moved might be an emotion characterised by a retreat without any easily discernible action-tendencies but with beneficial features that are more diffuse and have their effect over a longer horizon."[89] Thus, we have a clear case for rejecting their proposal that it is in fact an emotion, although the process of being moved will be accompanied by emotions.

Akihiko Tokaji has done research on the features of the state of being emotionally moved in response to artworks, in an attempt to build a structural model of the phenomenon.[90] He argues that the state of being emotionally moved, which in Japanese is termed *kandoh*, has not been made the object of research in psychology. He states two reasons for why this concept has so far not been elaborated. Firstly, there is no noun in English for this notion, it is usually expressed in verb form as "being moved" in everyday parlance. Secondly, it cannot easily be subsumed under the usual classifications of feelings, affects, moods and sentiments that lend themselves to operationalization in experimental research, therefore *kandoh* has escaped the framework employed in emotion research. His hypothesis is that *kandoh* "is a dynamic high-order emotional phenomenon produced by the interaction of cognition and physiological change of the body."[91] As such, it is the end state of an elaborate process. *Kandoh* can be accompanied by either emotions of joy or sadness. The subject must "know detailed information about the hard process of difficulties and efforts experienced by a character until his or her struggle resulted in some achievement and accomplishment" and is subsequently relieved of tension of body and mind.[92] Thus, the difference between "the evocation of mere emotion and

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[87] Julien A. Deonna, and Klaus Scherer, "The case of the disappearing intentional object: Constraints on a definition of emotion," *Emotion Review* 2, no. 1 (2010): 44-52.

[88] Cova and Deonna, "Being Moved," 458.

[89] Ibid., 457.

[90] Akihiko Tokaji, "Research for determinant factors and features of emotional responses of 'kandoh' (the state of being emotionally moved)," *Japanese Psychological Research* 45, no. 4 (2003): 235-49.

[91] Ibid., 236.

[92] Ibid., 238.

the evocation of *kandoh* with a certain emotion are that people have knowledge about the detailed process until it results in a climax and the high degree of involvement in the occurrence."[93] Whether it is correct to describe it as a state or a process remains unclear. However, Tokaji emphasises that *kandoh* is a response that requires a certain time-frame, and that needs "the dynamic process accompanied by a contrast effect in both cognitive and physical aspects."[94]

Weeping as indicator and component of being moved

Pelowski proposes a means for finding specific evidence for self-transformation by looking at the function of crying. "Crying arousal is argued to be a physiological response of the parasympathetic nervous system accompanying relief of tension following schema change."[95] He suggests that subjects' reports of "feeling like crying," rather than overt weeping, "mark culmination at schema change" and indicate a full progression to transformative aesthetic experience.[96] Barbalet maintains that weeping is a somatic or bodily expression that registers transformations of the self: "weeping is a form of internal communication in which the self is engaged when registering transformations or changes in the self."[97] Moreover, he argues that weeping may not only be expressive of sadness, but also of joy: "there is nothing contradictory in holding, then, that tears may express the joy of being more of a self. Indeed, such grounds of joyful weeping register a positive transformation of self […]."[98] He regards tears of suffering as a negative transformation. His inclusion of joy is important here, but Barbalet may fail to make an important distinction in regarding tears of sadness as a negative transformation. The crying that follows suffering loss may be different from the weeping that accompanies reconciliation to the loss later on in the grief process. As McNaughton has pointed out, "tears

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[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., 239.

[95] Matthew Pelowski, "Tears and transformation: feeling like crying as an indicator of insightful or 'aesthetic' experience with art," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6, no. 1006 (2015): 3. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01006.

[96] Ibid., 11.

[97] Jack Barbalet, "Weeping and Transformations of Self," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 35, no. 2 (2005): 141.

[98] Ibid., 131.

occur during recovery from emotion rather than at the peak of arousal."[99] Barbalet distinguishes weeping from the expression of emotions: "The expressive aspect of emotion typically serves to communicate to others the subjective feelings of the emoting person. With weeping, though, the communicative or expressive aspect is secondary or incidental."[100] By this Barbalet means that weeping is not primarily orientated to external communication but "literally concerned with the subject's growth and development." [101] This may be of great significance. If weeping is the indicator of being moved, then it may be important to distinguish between emotions and being moved. Barbalet furthermore highlights the importance of the experience of self-surrender in episodes of weeping, a yielding or inner capitulation. "Without the physical act of weeping," argues Barbalet, "involving both self-surrender and the consequent discharge of emotional energy in the form of tears, the changes in the self that are signified by the emotions associated with them could not be assimilated into the self-forming processes."[102] Whether Pelowski's concept of "feeling like crying" rather than actual tears would be sufficient for such change is uncertain.

The semantic field and conceptual structure of being moved

Milena Kuehnast et al. maintain that being moved, because of the lack of experimental and theoretical attention, is not yet well understood.[103] The goal of their study was therefore to map the general meaning of being moved, by exploring its semantic field and conceptual structure. The method employed was to use the present and past participles (which respectively focus on the eliciting situation and on the felt affective state) of eight verbs as primes in an association task, which all have both a physical and an emotional interpretation. The primary targets were *moved, stirred, touched, seized/deeply moved*. As control words were used *excited, shattered, elevated, gripped*. It was hypothesized that the latter four, although sharing the features of emphasis on subjective feeling, having a broad range of eliciting events and having complex

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[99] Neil McNaughton, *Biology and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 148.

[100] Ibid., 136.

[101] Ibid.

[102] Barbalet, "Weeping," 137.

[103] Milena Kuehnast, Valentin Wagner, Eugen Wassiliwizky, Thomas Jacobsen, and Winfried Menninghaus, "Being moved: linguistic representation and conceptual structure," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5 (2014): 1-11. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01242.

affective ingredients, would differ from the first four with respect to valence and arousal. It was predicted that whereas the first four would have ambiguous/neutral valence and low arousal, *shattering* would be unambiguously negative and *elevating* positive, whereas both *exciting* and *gripping* would have high arousal. This was confirmed. But they discovered that although the four main verbs had low-to-mid arousal, they were experienced as of high emotional intensity. What they also found was that "there was a consistent prominence of both joy and sadness in the affective spectrum of all target verbs," but not for the control verbs.[104] Shattering was associated with negative affective terms, while elevating carried positive associations. Both laughing, crying and tears were among the most important introspective features for the verbs *to stir* and *to move deeply*. The eliciting situations of deeply moving events were predominantly positive, whereas those of moving events also included negative elicitors. They found three main types of eliciting events: significant life events (such as births, deaths, weddings); art stimuli; witnessing earthquakes and calamities. The latter are not moving in themselves, only our understanding of their impact on the people affected. Thus we may conjecture that the third type of eliciting event is hearing about people's suffering. Moreover, "as a rule, those who are moved by an event do not cause it but rather only witness it, and they neither need nor wish to change it."[105] Kuehnast et al. do not consider valence and arousal to account exhaustively for being moved. "Rather, we conceive of being moved as a discrete emotional state that has a unique quality, and featuring cognitive, expressive, physiological, motivational and subjective feeling components."[106] They propose that episodes of being moved are "experienced as particularly significant, or meaningful, emotional episodes of a joyful and/or sad type."[107] So what is the relationship of joy and sadness to being moved? Is the latter a subcategory of the former, are they blended or do they co-occur? The authors argue that being moved represents "an additional feature found in highly select episodes of sadness and joy. Moreover, a variety of moving experiences occur outsides the confines of happy or sad episodes."[108] The study does not conclude that being moved is a distinct emotion, but consider being moved "as only a

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[104] Ibid., 5.

[105] Winfried Menninghaus, Valentin Wagner, Julian Hanich, Eugen Wassiliwizky, Milena Kuehnast, and Thomas Jacobsen, "Towards a Psychological Construct of Being Moved," *PLOS One* (2015): 8. Doi: 10-1371/journal.pone.0128451.

[106] Ibid., 8.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid., 8.

modifying feeling that adds a special flavor to a variety of different emotions."[109] The authors emphasise that the functional role of being moved as well as its neural structures should be the subject of future research. In a different paper, Kuehnast et al. point out that being moved is not established as a well-defined psychological construct, and therefore attempt to remedy this. They state that it is "a concept that vicariously stand in for all of the four terms under investigation and hence serves as an umbrella term for what we call *the being-moved group*."[110] The following definition is provided:

> Episodes of being moved are intensely felt responses to scenarios that have a particularly strong bearing on attachment-related issues […]. In all these instances, one's own agency and causation by one's own behavior have relatively little importance for the elicitation of feelings of being moved; rather, an (empathic) observer or witness perspective prevails.[111]

In a study of the phenomenological qualia of how being moved is subjectively experienced, Menninghaus et al. found that feelings of being moved "were rated as wide rather than narrow, elevating rather than depressing, fine rather than coarse, warm rather than cold, open rather than closed, soft rather than hard, round rather than angular, feminine rather than masculine, and pleasant rather than unpleasant."[112] Thus, these episodes were subsumed under the category of 'melting' emotions, a subcategory of 'tender' emotions. Menninghaus et al. make an important comment about the meaningfulness and special relevance often attributed to feelings of being moved. They consider that this may be "due to the combination of its special antecedent focus (significant relationship and critical life events) and the significance of the cognitive appraisals for compatibility with social norms and self-ideals."[113]

Kuehnast et al. believe that further research on aesthetic experiences "might strongly benefit from establishing *being moved* as a well-defined emotion construct."[114] They reference Tokaji's study of *kandoh* as revealing a similar conceptual structure in a different language. Moreover, they refer to Konecni's aesthetic theory, in which being moved is a particular

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[109] Ibid., 8.

[110] Ibid., 3.

[111] Ibid., 12.

[112] Ibid., 22.

[113] Ibid., 24.

[114] Ibid., 25.

category. Here they take care to differentiate being moved from another central category in Konecni's theory, namely the sublime and feelings of awe. Konecni argues that the imprecise concept of "aesthetic emotions" be replaced by three different states, which are pan-cultural and prototypical responses to art: aesthetic awe; being moved or touched; and thrills or chills.[115] Experiences of aesthetic awe are always accompanied by the latter two. It is the response to a sublime stimulus, and is "a primordial mixture of joy and fear" that requires existential safety and absence of physical threat.[116] In Konecni's trinity, it is clearly the privileged term, occupying the highest place in a hierarchy. Being moved requires a personal associative context. Thrills and chills are the most common aesthetic response. Konecni argues convincingly that the major commentators on the sublime in the tradition of philosophical aesthetics have confused the concept of the sublime "by alternately (and sometimes simultaneously) treating it as both an object external to the experiencing person and as the subjective, internally felt consequence of one's exposure to a relevant stimulus array."[117] To achieve clarity, Konecni considers it to be an external stimulus-in-context. Even though an object lacks grandeur, it may be sublime on account of the unique context in which it is encountered. He argues that aesthetic awe be considered among the fundamental emotions, but in my view fails to account convincingly for why this should be so. Whereas aesthetic awe is always accompanied by the state of being moved or touched, "there are many instances of being moved by aesthetic stimuli that do not encompass, or reach, the ethereal, but powerful, aesthetic awe experience."[118] Furthermore, the personal associative context plays a greater role in being moved. In his view, it is a distinctive subjective feeling in which there is an absence of a concrete action tendency. Moreover, one may admire the skillfulness with which the artwork is made, without being moved by it. Thrills and chills refer to "the archaic physiological response of short duration to aesthetic stimuli": pilo-erection, shivers, a lump in the throat – states that can be objectively measured. Konecni cites horror and tear-jerker movies as typical elicitors. "The superficiality of these responses from an aesthetic point of view, despite their appeals to some, is demonstrated by the ease with which the experiencer can terminate the response."[119]

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[115] Vladimir J. Konecni, "The Aesthetic Trinity: Awe, Being Moved, Thrills," *Bulletin of Psychology and the Arts* 5, no. 2 (2005): 27-44.

[116] Ibid., 27.

[117] Ibid., 28.

[118] Ibid., 32.

[119] Ibid., 36.

In my understanding of his trinity, Konecni implies that thrills and chills are the responses to entertainment, where expectations can be reliably met. Escapism would then mean being able to experience thrills and chills whilst avoiding activating the personal associate context of the being moved experience. Being moved is not something one can plan for.

Being moved and personal relevance

Vessel et al. have investigated the neural underpinnings of aesthetically moving experience, to find out why we are so influenced and moved by works of art. As they say, art at its best "can feel strikingly personal" and "intense aesthetic experience often carries with it a sense of intimacy, 'belonging' and closeness with the artwork."[120] Their approach is to look at what happens in those cases where the recipient has been deeply moved by what they see, isolating "the neural dimensions of aesthetic *responses* as opposed to reactions to particular features of a given work of art."[121] Thus, instead of subjecting all participants to the same stimuli, and thereby leaving out truly individual aspects of subjective aesthetic experience, they used various stimuli for which people expressed widely divergent preferences. The point was therefore not to see how people responded similarly or differently to the same object, but to study the strongest individual responses and what uniquely characterised these. Participants viewed a set of artworks of different styles and from various epochs while lying in a scanner. They were to use a scale of 1-4 in response to the question: 'how strongly does this painting move you?' independently of whether they judged the work to be beautiful or ugly or strange. (Subjects gave a 4 rating significantly less than 25% of the time). They were subsequently asked to rate the intensity with which each work evoked the following nine responses: joy, pleasure, sadness, confusion, awe, fear, disgust, beauty and the sublime. Vessel et al. found that "there was very low agreement in recommendations across observers."[122] More importantly, however, is that there were "strikingly higher response of frontal regions for artworks rated as the most aesthetically moving."[123] This lent support to their hypothesis that a '4' response was

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[120] Edward A. Vessel, G. Gabrielle Starr, and Nava Rubin, "Art reaches within: aesthetic experience, the self and the default mode network," *Frontiers in Neuroscience* 7, no. 258 (2013): 7.

[121] Edward A. Vessel, G. Gabrielle Starr, and Nava Rubin, "The brain on art: intense aesthetic experience activates the default mode network," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6 (2012): 1.

[122] Ibid., 5.

[123] Ibid., 6.

fundamentally different from the others – and that it reflected the engagement of an additional process in the brain: "a large swath of activation on the medial surface of the left hemisphere, extending from the anterior medial prefrontal cortex."[124] The significant aspect of this activation is that the aMPFC is a core region of the "default mode network" (DMN) that is associated with inward contemplation and self-referential mentation, supporting personally relevant assessments. Whereas responses of 1-3 showed a decrease in activation, the most moving artworks showed no suppression of aMPFC activation. Thus, "release from deactivation during aesthetic experience may reflect observers' matching self-inspection with their perception of an object."[125] During the most moving experiences, "the aMPFC may function as a gateway into the DMN, signaling personal relevance and allowing for a heightened integration of external (sensory/semantic) sensations related to an art object and internal (evaluative/emotional) states."[126] What is the significance of this finding? In my view, it lends support to Kuiken et al.'s differentiation of expressive enactment. During the strongest affective responses, self-referential mentation is activated in a different way, encompassing affective response and personal relevance. A fundamentally different brain activity accompanies only the most moving aesthetic experiences, in which there is integration of attention to artwork and internal states. The most moving artworks "produce a clearly differentiable pattern of signal, going beyond mere liking, to something more intense and personally profound."[127] Vessel et al. argue that their study presents a solution to a paradox: participants react strongly to very

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid., 9.

[126] Ibid., 9. In another study, Vessel et al. point to the surprising fact that the DMN was positively activated during the most moving experiences. Normally, one would expect it to show greater activity during periods of rest than task performance. They therefore posit that DMN regions can also be activated during structured tasks if these involve self-relevant information, and that DMN activity serves to signal self-relevance. Vessel et al. hold that the DMN is "emerging as a highly interconnected network of brain regions that support self-referential mental processing." ("The brain on art," 6). "Certain artworks, although unfamiliar, may be so well-matched to an individual's unique make-up that they obtain access to the neural substrates concerned with the self – access which other external stimuli normally do not get." ("Art reaches within," 1). Although we cannot say what attributes make specific artworks so attuned to an individual, we may conclude that when there is such resonance between artwork and recipient, the access to the neural substrates and processes concerned with the self "allows the representation of the artwork to interact with the neural processes related to the self, affect them, and possibly even be incorporated into them (i.e. into the future, evolving representation of the self." (6). Vessel et al makes the interesting observation that "intense aesthetic experience can sometimes be thrillingly bidirectional: not only does the perceiver feel as if they understand the artwork, but there is a sense that the artwork 'understands the perceiver, expressing one's innermost thoughts, feelings or values." Therefore, in aesthetic experience, unlike in self-referential emotions, one is "not focused on appraisal but on a sense of understanding, gained insight and meaning." (7).

[127] Ibid.

different images and are moved by particular images for different reasons – yet the ability to be moved appears universal. "Aesthetic experience involves the integration of neutrally separable sensory and emotional reactions in a manner linked with their personal relevance."[128] Thus, the most moving aesthetic experiences are felt to be personally relevant. This finding from neuroaesthetics corroborates both Ross' and Kuiken et al.'s emphasis on self-implication in transformative reading experience. Self-relevance emerges as an integral aspect of intensely moving aesthetic experience and transformative expressive reading. Thus, being deeply moved and self-implication are concomitants that enable the experience of being changed.

Models of the aesthetic experiential process

There have been several attempts to integrate empirical findings into comprehensive models of the aesthetic process. Leder and Nadal have developed an information-processing model of aesthetic experience that seeks to provide psychological aesthetics with an integrative view of the cognitive and affective processes involved in aesthetic appreciation. It conceives of art appreciation in modular terms as consecutive stages of information processing. An important strength of the model is that it highlights contextual factors; art is encountered in a specific time and place. What I find especially significant about the model is that it allows a relative independence between aesthetic judgments and aesthetic emotions: "It is possible to be emotionally moved by artworks we understand poorly, and it is possible to feel indifferent towards artworks we understand well and judge highly."[129] However, a shortcoming with the model is that it focuses too narrowly on informational assessment and successful mastery. The model has been criticized for leaving little opening for considering the role that self-identity plays in shaping information, or the role that the artwork plays in questioning expectations.[130] According to Pelowski and Akiba, this means that such a model is unable to account for disruptive experiences, "epiphanies" and fundamental change in which people "transform themselves through engaging with art."[131] They are interested in finding out how art may "break

[128] Ibid., 11.

[129] Helmut Leder, and Marcos Nadal, "Ten years of a model of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic judgments: The aesthetic episode – Developments and challenges in empirical aesthetics," *British Journal of Psychology* 105 (2014): 447.

[130] Matthew Pelowski, and Fuminori Akiba, "A model of art perception, evaluation and emotion in transformative aesthetic experience," *New Ideas in Psychology* 29, no. 2 (2011): 80-97.

[131] Ibid., 84.

in upon us." In order to address "art's ability to mark and change lives," they have introduced a five-stage model of art perception.[132] They base their alternative model on John Dewey's theory: "Dewey argued that it is disruption in viewer interaction with art, and subsequently viewer response to disruption, which both provides a mechanism for substantial change in the experience of art, and a means of organizing this experience."[133] Initial failure in the application of pre-expectations forces a viewer out of information mastery and induces a meta-cognitive mode of self-change, Pelowski and Akiba argue. "It is this entire process, then, wherein a viewer returns to cognitive mastery with a new set of expectations or schema as a direct result of their perception of art, that Dewey argued should be considered an aesthetic experience."[134] Based on this theory, they present a cognitive model for this process with the following stages: 1) viewer pre-expectations and self-image; 2) initial application of schema within cognitive mastery process; 3) subsequent attempts at self-protectionary reconciliation, or escape from experience because of discrepancy; 4) transformations of viewer schema in meta-cognitive reflection; 5) leading to epiphany. Pelowski and Akiba's model clearly deals with transformative experiences, but is restricted to encounters with modern art that fails to meet our preconceptions of what art is. Their model has strong resemblances with accounts of the sublime.

We know little about what happens in the brain when people read literary texts, argues Arthur Jacobs in discussing the state of the art of neurocognitive poetics. Jacobs emphasises that the present approaches do not allow for studying long-lasting reading acts; therefore the primary challenge "is to motivate empirical studies of more natural and ecologically valid

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[132] Ibid., 81.

[133] Ibid., 84. Central to Dewey's conception of aesthetic experience is "recovering the continuity of its esthetic experience with the normal processes of living", restoring art to the vital interests of the ordinary person. See John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 11. Aesthetic experience stands out from ordinary experiences as a distinctly memorable event, in which we feel more alive, integrating all the elements of ordinary experience into a whole which requires a new organization and change in schemas. Dewey's ideas of aesthetic experience has had a resurgence, with this new attention to the transformative aspect. Philip W. Jackson, *John Dewey and the Lessons of Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998) argues that Dewey's theory is about "the power of art to be genuinely transformative" (5). Richard Shusterman, "The End of Aesthetic Experience," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 1 (1997) argues that aesthetic experience, through combining the vividly felt and the meaningful, can be transformative. The decline of the concept of aesthetic experience, according to Shusterman, is the result of continental critique that has challenged its phenomenological immediacy and its radical differentiation. He argues that even in Adorno's theory, real aesthetic experience, through submission to the artwork, "can transform the subject" (30).

[134] Ibid., 84.

reading acts."[135] Jacobs stipulates that a model should include the entire reading process, including what happens before we open the book: "already during the selection of the reading material psychological context factors such as mood and motivation play a role."[136] There are thus two significant knowledge gaps as far as models of transformative reading experiences go. We must study the relationship between life-context, mode of engagement with a particular work and the process of being changed on the one hand. Moreover, we need to find out how being deeply moved may lead to permanent change, understood as integrated into the life-narrative or self-concept.

Empirical studies of life-change

Narrative inquiries into life-changes

Redemptive life-stories and personal event memories

In the introduction to a series of volumes on the narrative studies of lives, the editors McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich claim that "narrative inquiry rests on the assumption of the storied nature of human experience."[137] I believe one does not need to endorse such an ontological claim in order to use methods of narrative inquiry. Sarbin has suggested that the concept of narrative is a "root metaphor."[138] In my view, the *expression* of human lived experience may take the form of narrative. What is beyond doubt, however, is that the study of narratives cuts across

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[135] Arthur M. Jacobs, "Neurocognitive Poetics: methods and models for investigating the neuronal and cognitive-affective bases of literature reception," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 9 (2015): 17.

[136] Ibid., 15.

[137] McAdams, Dan, Josselson, Ruthellen and Lieblich, Amia (eds) (2001): Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition. Washington DC: American Psychological Association, p. xi. McAdams, Dan, Ruthellen Josselson, and Amia Lieblich, eds., "The Narrative Study of Lives: Introduction to the Series," in *Turns in the Road: Narrative Studies of Lives in Transition* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2001).

[138] Theodore R. Sarbin, ed., *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York: Praeger, 1986). There is an inherent tension here between essentialising story and viewing it as a metaphor.

disciplinary boundaries: life history research is relevant to sociology, narrative psychology and history alike.[139] Central to the study of narratives and life histories are orientations to changes and turning points. McAdams et al.'s study 'Turns in The Road' focuses on transitions and "changes in the direction or the trajectory of our lives" with the aim of finding out how "people make meaning out of the transitions in their lives."[140] A central method for doing so is to study the stories people tell about their lives. McAdams and Bowman identify two different narrative sequences that are "especially prevalent in accounting for life-transitions or life-narrative turning-points": When an emotionally negative situation is turned into a positive outcome, they label this a "redemption sequence"; they contrast this with the reverse movement, a "contamination sequence", in which "an emotionally positive or good experience is spoiled, ruined, sullied, or contaminated by an emotionally negative or bad outcome."[141] McAdams and Bowman view these sequences in performative terms, regarding them as "devices for charting upward movement […] used to convey a progressive understanding of self" or to express decline or stagnation […] as characters fall backward, lose ground, or circle over the same ground again and again."[142]

The sequences are thus understood as plots of upward and downward trajectories, respectively. We may understand them as positive and negative transformation sequences. The authors make two qualifications, however. Whether the person reconstructs events in either redemptive or contaminative terms, we "have no way of knowing how the events were experienced at the time."[143] Moreover, there may be several sequences in a life story, so that

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[139] Central contributions to narrative life-studies include: Michele L. Crossley, *Introducing Narrative Psychology: Self, Trauma and the Construction of Meaning* (Buckingham, UK: Open University Press, 2000); Carol E. Franz, and Abigail J. Stewart, eds., *Women Creating Lives: Identities, Resilience, Resistance* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); James A. Holstein, and Jaber F. Gubrium, eds., *The Self We Live By: Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ruth Josselson, *Rewriting herself: The story of women's identity from college to midlife* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996); and Shadd Maruna, *Making Good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives* (Washington, DC: APA Books, 2001).

[140] McAdams et al., "Turns in the Road," xv.

[141] McAdams and Bowman, Philip J. (2001): "Narrating Life's Turning Points: Redemption and Contamination," 5.

[142] Ibid., 6. Regarding the performative benefits of telling life-stories, James Pennebaker in a series of experiments documented the positive effects of translating negative personal experiences into stories. An important caveat is that this effect is only documented for *writing* such stories, not for *talking* about negative experiences. See: James Pennebaker, "Writing about emotional experiences as a therapeutic process," *Psychological Science* 8, no. 3 (1997): 162-66.

[143] McAdams and Bowman, "Narrating Life's Turning Points," 7.

"even the most tightly drawn life narrative can suggest thematic lines that run counter to the story's dominant thrust."[144] These "narrative strategies for making sense of perceived transitions in life" are referred back to "ancient sources" in the forms of myths, stories and imaginative literature. Moreover, both strategies draw upon cultural discourse formations. In his recent study "The Redemptive Self," McAdams found that in stories of redemption there are "six different sets of images and ideas that people routinely draw upon": (i) from religious sources we often borrow the language of atonement and salvation; (ii) the political discourse of emancipation; (iii) the economic discourse of upward mobility; (iv) from medicine and psychology there are stories of healing and recovery; (v) the scientific-educational discourse of enlightenment from ignorance; and (vi) the psychological rhetoric of growth and movement from immaturity to moral growth.[145] The study revealed that "highly generative" Americans (ordinary people whose life-orientation is characterised by concern for the next generation and the wish to exert a generative effect on their world) are more likely to make sense of their own lives through use of redemptive sequences, and "attribute more significance or meaning to the redemptive scenes and situations they do recall. They also expect more redemptive scenes for the future."[146] These studies are important in identifying plot trajectories and discourses as resources the narrator draws upon. Central to the inquiry is the metaphor of 'redemption'. What I find missing from the studies is greater attention to story "shapes" within each trajectory. One aspect that goes into such shaping is temporality. Brockmeier distinguishes between six different narrative models of autobiographical conceptions of time: linear, cyclical, circular, spiral, static and fragmentary.[147] Building on the work of McAdams, Tilmann Habermas et al. have developed a theory of life story development, in which life narratives are "segmented into three major types of text: namely *single event narratives* […], *chronicles* which list events or summarise extended time periods, and [autobiographical] *arguments* […]."[148] Arguments may be used in both single event narratives and life narratives. A special type of narrative is the

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[144] Ibid., 9.

[145] Dan P. McAdams, *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 24-25.

[146] Ibid., xiv.

[147] Jens Brockmeier, "Autobiographical time," *Narrative Inquiry* 10, no. 1 (2000): 51-73.

[148] Tilman Habermas, and Elaine Reese, "Getting a life takes time: The development of the life story in adolescence and its precursors," *Human Development* 58, no. 3 (2015): 176. Doi: 10.1159/000437245. See also Tilmann Habermas, and Susan Bluck, "Getting a life: The Emergence of the Life Story in Adolescence," *Psychological Bulletin* 126, no. 5 (2000): 748-69.

critical event narrative. Whereas the life narrative integrates and encompasses the entire life span to create a coherent account of the life, and the single event narrative may isolate one event and form part of a fragmented life narrative, the critical event narrative sees one or more events as critical turning points and thus embedded within a greater whole. Baumeister has found that there is a "crystallization of discontent" in processes of major life change.[149] Heatherton and Nichols have studied stories of attempts at life change. Rather than focus on the stress that comes with change, they focus on people's attributions of what precedes change. They found that stories of successful attempts at changing one's life had a greater likelihood than stories of failed attempts to include intense emotional experiences and focal events that culminated in crystallizations of discontent.[150]

David Pillemer has researched narratives of what he calls "personal event memory": a specific episode that has profoundly influenced the life course. He argues that research on such episodes has been scant because of a prevailing belief in the consistency of personality, and a greater focus on general and semantic memory than on the episodic within cognitive psychology. A personal event memory is a circumscribed one-moment-in-time event, rather than an extended time period or series of repeated experiences. It is "represented in memory as profoundly life-affecting and even life-altering."[151] Accounts of such specific event memories have the following defining characteristics: they contain a detailed account of personal circumstances; they contain sensory images and bodily sensations; and "the rememberer believes that the memory is a truthful representation of what transpired."[152] An important finding of his research is that "the concern with the *accuracy* of memories, so prevalent in experimental cognitive psychology, gives way to an emphasis on the person's *beliefs* about what happened: psychic reality is as important as historical truth."[153] In memory research, "there is widespread agreement that memory is an active, reconstructive process […]" and that

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[149] Roy F. Baumeister, "The crystallization of discontent in the process of major life Change," in *Can Personality Change?,* ed. Todd F. Heatherton and Joel Lee Weinberger (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 1994), 281-97.

[150] Todd F. Heatherton, and Patricia A. Nichols, "Personal Accounts of Successful versus Failed Attempts at Life Change," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 20, no. 6 (1994): 664-75.

[151] David B. Pillemer, *Momentous Events, Vivid Memories* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 7.

[152] Ibid., 51.

[153] Ibid., 10.

"memory, for the most part, does its job; that is, memory descriptions usually are consistent with the general form and content of past experiences, even if particular details are lost, added or distorted in the act of remembering."[154] Therefore, narratives of personal event memories cannot tell us exactly what happened then, but they can tell us how the event is remembered here and now. This has important consequences for the ontological and epistemological assumptions of an inquiry into life-changing reading experiences.

Momentous events often involve an element of change or are unexpected. Pillemer found that "when a life-altering event happens suddenly rather than gradually, the personal impact may be intensified."[155] Moreover, "life-changing insights can be triggered by unlikely circumstances."[156] What are the critical incidents? "Although it is hard to identify a priori which everyday life occurrences are likely to be memorable and influential, it is possible to identify general life circumstances or 'critical periods' when people are especially susceptible to the influence of specific episodes."[157] He cites times of dissatisfaction with a current life path, personal crisis, periods of transition and uncertainty. What these situations have in common is that "scripts governing how to think and behave are violated or missing."[158] We note that such narrated memories of life-altering events refer to critical periods, they describe the circumstances surrounding the event and the affective reactions to it. Thus, when it comes to narratives of life-changing reading experiences, it is reasonable to suppose that they will involve 'redemption' sequences, that they will involve a crisis or critical period preceding the reading, and that the reading will represent a turning-point.

Quantum change and epiphanic experiences

Psychological research into processes of change have primarily been oriented towards gradual and linear conceptions of change. According to Skalski and Hardy little attention has been directed to what they call "discontinuous forms of transformation" - sudden and unexpected

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[154] Ibid., 55.

[155] Ibid., 27.

[156] Ibid., 40.

[157] Ibid., 42-43.

[158] Ibid., 88.

changes in ordinary people's lives that bring about "an enduring shift in consciousness."[159]
They point to an important precursor for such inquiry in Maslow's study of peak experiences,
which he argued involve a particular form and quality of understanding. Such positive peak
experiences lead to new perspectives on self and world, a qualitative change: "In peak
experiences, platitudes that were once trite suddenly rupture with meaning."[160] I find this
formulation highly evocative. It implies that there is a form of insight or understanding where
it is not the cognitive content itself that is new, but the *depth* of affective experience registered
bodily. Such experiences would lead to a transformation of the self, Maslow maintained, if they
were not fended off through fear and defensive opposition. However, it is important to note that
Maslow's prediction did not bear up: not all reports of peak experience did lead to a
transformation. Miller and C'de Baca have termed such discontinuous transformations that lead
to permanent change in the way one views self and world 'quantum change'; and through
qualitative inquiries into the life-stories of people who have experienced this phenomenon, they
have attempted to elucidate the concomitant psychological processes involved.[161] The authors
differentiate between two types of quantum change. "Insightful change" involves having a
sudden and surprising insight, often coming to know a new understanding of self and reality
that leads to "cathartic" experience. 'Mystical change' has an added spiritual or supernatural
element and leads the person to a more compassionate way of being. Miller and C'de Baca
emphasise that the difference between these two types of quantum changes is difficult to
decipher and they can be blended. Common characteristic themes that emerged from their
interviews were: (i) a feeling of "distinctiveness" and an awareness that something profound
was happening to and within the individual was commonly reported; (ii) the element of
"surprise" reported as an uninvited change was occurring; (iii) a feeling of "benevolence" where
great joy and blissful freedom were experienced; and (iv) "permanence," the feeling of going
through a door through which there is no return to the prior way of being. Many participants
reported being the same person, but had changed at a core level that resulted in feeling more
themselves than before the changing event. Miller reports finding post-change commonalities

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[159] Jon E. Skalski, and Sam A. Hardy, "Disintegration, New Consciousness, and Discontinuous Transformation: A Qualitative Investigation of Quantum Change," *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 41 (2013): 160.

[160] Ibid., 161.

[161] William R. Miller, and Janet C'de Baca, *Quantum change: When epiphanies and sudden insights transform ordinary lives* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2001).

among his interviewed participants.[162] These include emerging from the change experience with a sense of peace and calmness and a renewed way of dealing with life's challenges; changed behaviors; and a different view and reformulation of relationships that leads to changes in current relationships. Furthermore, participants conveyed difficulty in articulating and expressing the transcendent experiences. As a follow up to their initial research, C'de Baca and Wilbourne re-interviewed participants ten years later, and found that the quantum change experience was the beginning of an ongoing process. They found that the persons interviewed still remembered their quantum change experience, and the changes experienced still endured.[163]

In his review of the history of transformative experiences, defined as singular events that occur suddenly and unexpectedly, and which leave a lasting change in the person, White identified five distinct characteristics: (i) *surrender*: the subject first goes through an experience of resistance before choosing to "surrender" to the experience; (ii) The experience is vivid and sensory, accompanied by strong physiological reactions; (iii) the impact is extensive: identity is changed, and the account of the experience is marked by a clear divide between before and after; (iv) the experience is of short duration, but its effects are enduring; and (v) the change is of a positive character.[164] The latter characteristic is slightly contradicted by C'de Baca and Wilbourne's study, in which it was found that "for two individuals, however, their lives changed for the worse. These individuals reported lost relationships and spiritual opportunities that negatively impacted their sense of self."[165]

In "The Nature of Epiphanic Experience" Matthew McDonald interviewed people who had experienced what he refers to as 'epiphanies'. He found that there were common characteristics to the informants' reports. The antecedent state was marked by "periods of anxiety, depression and inner turmoil," and the epiphanies led to "an acute awareness of something new, something that the individual had previously been blind to." And although it was a momentary experience, it resulted in "an experience of profound change and

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[162] William R. Miller, "The phenomenon of quantum change," *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session* 60, no. 5 (2004): 453-460.

[163] Janet C'de Baca, and Paula Wilbourne, "Quantum change: Ten years later," *Journal of Clinical Psychology/In Session* 60, no. 5 (2004): 531-41.

[164] William L. White, "Transformational Change: A Historical Review," *Journal of Clinical Psychology/In Session* 60, no. 5 (2004): 461.

[165] C'de Baca and Wilbourne, "Quantum Change: Ten Years Later," 532.

transformation in self-identity" that was "made significant and enduring by the ascription of personal meaning."[166] McDonald's choice of the term epiphany is interesting, as he does not analyse the meaning and history of the concept. He chose to use this classical term as a name for transformative experiences because the experience was elicited by a minor event rather than something major. It is possible that McDonald's notion of epiphany corresponds closely to Miller's "insight change." In any case, they both seem to be inspired by a common source: William James.

Conceptualisations of change: discontinuous transformation and incremental change

Varieties of Religious Experience: The essence of transformative experiences

Underneath all studies of life-stories of redemption, personal event memories, quantum or epiphanic versions of discontinuous transformation runs a common current: William James' seminal inquiry into ordinary people's accounts of transformative religious experiences. In the lectures that make up *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James progressively passes beyond the surface manifestations of the varieties of religious experience to the underlying essence, the core of the spiritual experience itself. When surveying the history of the different narratives of Christianity, he finds a gradual circling in of one particular experience: the crisis of self-surrender and the idea of an immediate spiritual help, experienced by the individual in his forlornness. "That man must die to an unreal life before he can be born into the real life" - this insight belongs, for James, equally to psychology and to religion, pointing beyond the schism of subconscious continent and transcendent dimension to an all-embracing notion of *consciousness*. The crisis of self-surrender is the turning-point in two different senses: The critical point around which James´ investigation turns, and the point where the life of the individual is transformed from egocentricity to allocentricity, from forlornness to redemption: "In such a surrender lies the secret of a holy life."[167] At the core of James's inquiry, then, is the turning point of the self-surrender. Crisis-surrender-redemption is at the heart of the

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[166] Matthew G. McDonald, "The Nature of Epiphanic Experience," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 48, no. 1 (January 2008): 89-115. Doi: 10.1177/0022167807311878.

[167] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature,* ed. Martin E. Marty (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 175. Incidentally, William James also suffered from depression and, like JS Mill, found that Wordsworth's poetry helped him.

phenomenology of transformation and constitutes his narrative of narratives. In the conclusion to his study, James speaks of formulating the *essence* of religious experience. He finds that the only thing that it "unequivocally testifies to is that we can experience union with something larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace."[168] He also says that a conceptual belief is non-essential: "(...) the conceptual belief about Christ's work, although so often efficacious and antecedent, is really accessory and non-essential."[169] Thus the essence of this experience may perhaps better be called *transformation* than *conversion*: "Our ordinary alterations of character, as we pass from one of our aims to another, are not commonly called transformations, because each of them is so rapidly succeeded by another in the reverse direction; but whenever one aim grows so stable as to expel definitively its previous rivals from the individual´s life, we tend to speak of the phenomenon, and perhaps to wonder at it, as a 'transformation'."[170] A transformation into a stable alteration and unification of character on a higher level is the result of the crisis of self-surrender. What does James mean by "surrender"? James says that it lies in the "abandonment of self-responsibility":

> The transition from tenseness, self-responsibility and worry, to equanimity, receptivity and peace, is the most wonderful of all those shiftings of inner equilibrium, those changes of the personal centre of energy, which I have analysed so often; and the chief wonder of it is that it so often comes about, not by doing, but by simply relaxing and throwing the burden down. This abandonment of self-responsibility seems to be the fundamental act in specifically religious, as distinguished from moral practice. It antedates theologies and is independent of philosophies.[171]

The surrender, the abandonment, is preceded by a crisis. The crisis cuts across the dichotomy of the Healthy-minded and the Sick soul; beyond the distinction between healthy-*minded*ness (an attitude encompassing both temperament, character development and flourishing life-situation) and the sick *soul* (a condition of being a problem unto oneself) lies the crisis of ego-centricity: "So long as the egoistic worry of the sick soul guards the door, the expansive confidence of the soul of faith gains no presence."[172] Only when confronted with the inadequacy of any rational approach, or the problem of holding onto problems, can the crisis be fully faced.

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[168] Ibid., 384.

[169] Ibid., 193.

[170] Ibid., 153.

[171] Ibid., 224.

[172] Ibid., 167.

And only then can the person surrender to a greater force and be redeemed. But this involves the greatest risk: there is no guarantee that when giving oneself over, one will be received by anyone or anything. There is "a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts," says James:

> 1. The uneasiness, reduced to its simplest terms, is a sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand.
>
> 2. The solution is a sense that *we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connection with the higher powers.[173]

What does James say about the relationship of the essence of the spiritual experience to poetry?

> The simplest rudiment of mystical experience would seem to be that deepened sense of significance of a maxim or formula which occasionally sweeps over one. 'I´ve heard it said all my life,' we exclaim, 'but I never **realised** its full meaning until now.' ... This sense of deeper significance is not confined to rational propositions. Single words, and conjunctions of words, effects of light on land and sea, odours and musical sounds, all bring it when the mind is tuned aright. Most of us can remember the strangely moving power of passages in certain poems read when we were young, irrational doorways they were through which the mystery of fact, the wildness and the pang of life, stole into our hearts and thrilled them. The words have now perhaps become mere polished surfaces for us; but lyric poetry and music are alive and significant only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own, beckoning and inviting, yet ever eluding our pursuit. We are alive or dead to the eternal inner message of the arts according as we have kept or lost this mystical susceptibility.[174]

James here indicates that by being moved by poetry and "the eternal inner message of the arts" we can be transformed. Moreover, he says that realisation of meaning comes when something we already know takes on deeper significance, thus echoing Maslow's comment about the latitude of platitude.

A model of incremental change: the 'trans-theoretical' model

The studies that follow in the tradition of James have focused on discontinuous, sudden changes. Within psychotherapy and psychology, more attention has been devoted to changes that are gradual and incremental. According to Heatherton and Nichols, in their introduction to a research volume on personality change, "a variety of past research suggests that personality change is best described as gradual and subtle, reflecting an unfolding or gradual development

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[173] Ibid., 384.

[174] Ibid., 292-93.

rather than a sudden emergence of a new behaviour or other striking change."[175] In their qualitative study of individuals who experienced psychological change and recovery following a significant life problem, Higginson and Mansell identified a process which was similar in all the cases:

> There was a time when participants felt stuck with their problem and unable to visualize a future. This was followed by a stage in which participants gradually began to face up to and accept their problem and in which moments of insight and significant process occurred, enabling them to understand the problem in a more adaptive way. Following full recovery, participants understood the experience to have changed them for the better [...].[176]

It is noteworthy that although the overall process was conceived as gradual, they still identified "pivotal moments" during that process.[177]

In view of the increasing divergence of theories and programmes within psychology, Prochaska and Di Clemente searched for common principles of change. By studying how individuals change, both on their own and in formalized treatment such as therapy, they sought to develop an integrative model of change which they have called "the trans-theoretical change model" (TTC).[178] Does their model truly represent a trans-theoretical perspective on change? The model attempts to identify the processes and stages of psychological change. An important caveat is that the overall purpose is practical: to determine which strategies can fruitfully be applied at each stage. In an attempt to synthesise psychodynamic and behavioural approaches to understanding change, the TTC circles in on three verbal and two behavioural processes respectively: consciousness-raising, corrective emotional experience, increasing choice alternatives, changes in conditional stimuli and contingency management. The model places most emphasis, however, on delineating the stages of change: pre-contemplation, contemplation, determination, action, maintenance, termination. The model gives a useful

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[175] Todd F. Heatherton, and Patricia A. Nichols, "Conceptual issues in assessing whether personality can change," in *Can Personality Change?*, ed. Todd F. Heatherton and Joel L. Weinberger (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 1994), 8.

[176] Sally Higginson, and Warren Mansell, "What is the mechanism of psychological change? A qualitative analysis of six individuals who experienced personal change and recovery," *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* 81, no. 3 (2008): 323.

[177] Ibid., 324.

[178] James O. Prochaska, and Carlo Di Clemente, "Trans-Theoretical Therapy: Toward a More Integrative Model of Change," *Psychotherapy Research & Practice* 19, no. 3 (1982): 276-88.

overview of these stages. However, there are two problems with this model: in how it conceives the processes of change and in the outcome of change.

What are described as "processes of change" turn out to be more akin to strategies for change. The outcome of change is narrowly conceptualized in terms of behaviour and action. Furthermore, in its focus on therapeutic strategies for intervention, there is insufficient account of transitions from one stage to the next and what happens during the process of inner change.

Two of the strategies Prochaska and Di Clemente focus on for increasing awareness, is giving feedback on defense mechanisms, and increasing the client's awareness of alternatives in making choices. 'Catharsis' is designated as a change process that effectuates a transition from contemplation to determination: "it often takes a corrective emotional experience to get clients to commit themselves to the arduous task of changing their habit patterns."[179] They base their understanding of catharsis "on a hydraulic model of emotions in which unacceptable affects such as anger, guilt or anxiety are blocked from direct expression. The damming off of such emotions results in pressure from affects to be released in some manner, no matter how indirectly, such as anger being expressed through headaches."[180] The hydraulic model of catharsis is taken over from Freud's theory. Thus, if the emotions can be released more directly, then the reservoir of energy is discharged. The TTC distinguishes between two sources of catharsis: corrective emotional experiences and dramatic relief from observation."[181]

In their comparative study of therapeutic change patterns, Rice and Greenberg argue that what is lacking in psychotherapeutic conceptions of change is in-depth "descriptions of these moments of change together with the patterns of client-therapist interactions that form their context."[182] Thus they identify the need for research that will "focus on the discovery and understanding of different classes of change episodes."[183] They pinpoint the need to identify different classes of change, and descriptions of the moments of change in context; also, to determine what is the client's part of the change process. We may conclude from this that there is no adequate model of different kinds of changes and how they happen in interaction. There

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[179] Ibid., 285.

[180] Ibid., 279.

[181] Ibid., 279.

[182] Laura N. Rice, and Leslie S. Greenberg, eds., *Patterns of Change: Intensive Analysis of Psychotherapy Process* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1984), 13.

[183] Ibid., 291.

may be kinds of *alloiosis* which are not adequately represented in terms of the Jamesian framework or the TTC.

Summary

A central element in many of the studies on transformative aesthetic experiences is that of "self-interpretation" or self-implication. Hermeneutically speaking, we may say that many of these studies have identified a virtuous circle between interpretation of text/art-work and self-interpretation. This is a mode of transaction with the work that is characterised by deep engagement in terms of affective involvement and process of meaning-making. Both Ross' and Colaizzi's study emphasise that transformative reading experiences must be studied in the context of the life of the reader. Colaizzi, furthermore, identified a temporal structure of these experiences: in order to understand them one must look at what happens before, during and after the act of reading. However, none of these studies relate exclusively to reading of fiction. Studies of transformative experiences of reading imaginative literature on their part have yet to study how such experiences may lead to lasting change. Kuiken and Miall identify a self-transformative engagement they call "expressive enactment" that alters the self during reading. This hybrid mode is far more complex than the concept of 'identification' will allow. They find that self-modifying feelings may be closely related to life-circumstances and crises. Moreover, they employ the classical concepts of katharsis and the sublime in order to understand the experiences, thereby also modifying our understanding of these concepts. Only in recent years have studies of the phenomenon of being moved emerged. This is a complex experience that may not be fruitfully understood within a paradigm of aesthetic emotions. Being moved is related to a witnessing position and is closely connected to antecedent critical life-events. Furthermore, it is closely tied to evaluations of personal relevance. There are no comprehensive models that incorporate the relationships between critical life-events, expressive modes of engagements, being deeply moved and the process of meaning-making that integrates these experiences into a permanently altered self-understanding.

Studies of life-change primarily rely on narrative inquiry. Between entire life narratives and single event narratives lie the *critical event narrative*, involving a personal event memory that includes a critical situation or phase prior to a turning point and a process of resolution. Such memories are themselves transformational: they do not accurately reflect what actually

happened then. Stories of life change may draw upon a number of discourses and genres. Central metaphors for positive life-change stories are the classical ones of 'redemption' and 'epiphany'. And within studies of discontinuous transformation, this metaphor also carries great significance, along with foundational classical concepts like catharsis, the sublime, and epiphany. Existing models of change may not comprehensively include all kinds of qualitative psychological change.

There are thus two significant knowledge gaps as far as transformative reading experiences go. We must study the relationship between life-context, mode of engagement with a particular work and the process of being changed on the one hand. Moreover, we need to find out how being deeply moved may lead to permanent change, understood as integrated into the life-narrative or self-concept. My conclusion is therefore that there is a need for an idiographic approach which explores in depth a variety of individual transformative fiction reading experiences, in the context of the lived experience of particular readers. Moreover, this inquiry could profitably take a narrative approach, building on the structure of before-during-after identified by Colaizzi. However, it should also seek to incorporate an important element from Kuiken et al.'s approach: the think-aloud responses to particular passages, so that the unfolding of the reading experience can be explored. Given the insistence of classical concepts in discussions of transformative aesthetic experiences, the research strategy must include these in its pre-understanding. As such, a hermeneutic inquiry that seeks to understand how affective concepts and experiential accounts mutually modify and enrich each other, will be required.

As part of such an inquiry, it is thus necessary to clarify the meanings of the pervasive concepts related to transformation: katharsis, the sublime, and epiphany.

Chapter 3. Clarification of Classical Affective concepts

Since studies of transformative aesthetic experience and inquiries into narratives of life-change draw upon classical concepts it is necessary to discuss the textual sources of these concepts, as these will be relevant to my own interpretive strategy. No affective terms have received greater scholarly attention during the history of literary and aesthetic criticism than the concepts of katharsis and the sublime. Moreover, in the modern period epiphany has come to occupy a central place. The shifting meanings of these concepts must be traced so that the terms can be clarified and restored in the encounter with the transformative experiences recounted by actual readers.

Katharsis

The amount of scholarly discussion the term *katharsis* has occasioned is inversely proportionate to its place in the *Poetics*; it is invoked only once, in this subordinate clause. It is impossible to establish what Aristotle *originally meant.* In a review of modern critical versions of *katharsis*, Kenneth C. Bennett remarks that the concept diverges from its original interpretations and that a survey of the classical scholarship is confusing. For instance, one modern philosopher who, in discrediting the concept, bears witness to the confusion, is Adorno:

> The Aristotelian notion of catharsis is an outmoded piece of mythology, hopelessly inadequate for understanding the impact that art does have. Where the Greeks saw an extraneous impact at work, the subsequent spiritualization has shifted the locus of catharsis to the interior of art works themselves: through the interaction between law of form and material content they effect their own catharsis. […] Under the aegis of Aristotle's authority, classicism for more than two thousand years had falsely viewed catharsis as a means to endow art with dignity. Actually, the doctrine of catharsis had already inaugurated, in principle, the manipulative domination of art that came into its own with the advent of the culture industry. We have every reason to doubt that the salutary effect envisaged by Aristotle was ever a reality, for substitute gratification has always been attended by the repression of instincts.[1]

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[1] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (London: Athlone, 1997), 338-339.

For Adorno, there is an opposition between aesthetics and the instrumental manipulation aiming for salutary effects. But it is by no means sure that Aristotle saw it like that. Nor is there sufficient grounds for claiming that the experience of "salutary effects" is not realistic. Bennett recommends that the concept be *purged* "of its accreted meanings," and declares a "decent, thoroughgoing skepticism concerning Aristotle's intent. What we, as critics, need to do first is overcome the urge to deal with catharsis at all when commenting on tragedy, to give up the obligatory nod to Aristotle." [1] Although one may agree with the diagnosis of the situation, there is no need to adopt the drastic measure suggested. The concept can be clarified, the uncertainty of its original meaning notwithstanding. In my view, there are four main interpretative problems related to the notion of *katharsis*: (i) What is the most adequate translation of the term? (ii) Is the concept primarily psychological, aesthetic or ethical? (iii) Why does Aristotle include it in his definition? And (iv) is *katharsis* specific to tragedy or drama, or can it be generalized to other art forms? I have structured my discussion of the concept accordingly.

Purgation, purification or clarification?

Let us look at the definition of the meaning of the word katharsis. It is the noun of the verb *kathairein,* which means 'to clean', 'to cleanse'. Therefrom hails the two most common translations of katharsis: 'purification' and 'purgation'. These represent the two most prominent critical readings of the passage, although there is a third alternative: 'clarification'. The major critical interpretations differ according to whether they see fear and pity as being purged and cast off; or as purified, where the unwanted disturbing bit is removed.

In his *Politics*, Aristotle talks about the healing and kathartic use of music to free the mind from disturbance. The tradition of interpretation that follows Bernays argue for a "purgation" interpretation, saying that the benefit that tragedy brings is that "it makes the audience happier (or more stable) by relieving them of the demoralizing feelings of pity and fear."[2] But G. F. Else discounts such a view as untenable, arguing that there is nothing in the *Poetics* to indicate that tragedy serves the function of providing therapeutic purgation. The Katharsis clause instead refers to how the tragic plot works: "the spectator or reader of the play is the judge in whose sight the tragic act must be 'purified', so that he may pity instead of

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[1] Kenneth C. Bennett, "The Purging of Catharsis," *The British Jnl. of Aesthetics* 21, no. 3 (1981): 211.

[2] Ibid., 7.

execrating the doer."[3] Golden interprets katharsis to mean 'clarification', thus emphasizing the cognitive aspects of the literary response. Later critics such as the philosopher Martha Nussbaum also subscribe to the clarification concept. Golden argues: "there is good reason to believe that tragic catharsis will emerge, convincingly, as that moment of insight and clarification toward which it is the essential nature of art to strive."[4] Thus tragedy clarifies events and afford an understanding of the universal relationships exemplified by the *praxis*. When we arrive at understanding of the relation between the hero's *hamartia* and his destiny, we are released from pity (for undeserved suffering) and fear (of arbitrary misfortune). Sparshott criticizes the theories of Else and Golden. Why, if tragedy is a means to cognitive pleasure and insight, did Aristotle deem it incumbent to insert "a clause that reduces the tragic effect to a mere emotional dynamics"?[5] He cites another passage, in which Aristotle says the spectator should 'shudder and be sorry', to provide further proof that such interpretations allow no weight to the actual pity and fear of readers. However, it should be noted that Else's account emphasises that katharsis encompasses both the cognitive domain and the emotional: "the 'special pleasure' of tragedy […] is neither simply intellectual nor simply emotional, but has its roots in both realms. It is a pleasure springing from emotion, but an emotion authorized, and released by an intellectually conditioned structure of action. The emotion flows unimpeded because when we feel it we feel it as justified and inevitable."[6] The passions, through being structured, may become acceptable. I find this a very important point. The audience thus undergoes and processes affective patterns they might normally, in the world of action, be expected to flee from. Furthermore, *katharsis* may include both the meanings of purification and purgation within its metaphoric range. According to Eva Schaper,

> The medical and religious functions referred to by 'catharsis' in general Greek usage are not at all that remote from each other, if one remembers the Pythagorean merging of semi-religious and semi-scientific notions in the idea of purification, or the Orphic cult mysteries which preserve traces of pre-scientific, that is, pre-physiological, medical practice. 'Purifying' does not exclude partial purgation; in purification something may be ejected, as in distillation, though something remains. And medical purgation need not be thought as evacuation only: the 'purged' organism is usually understood as having been purified. The

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[3] Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963): 437.

[4] Leon Golden, "The Purgation Theory of Catharsis," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 31 (1973): 478.

[5] Francis Sparshott, "The Riddle of Katharsis," in *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye,* ed. Eleanor Cook, Chaviva Hosek, Jay Macpherson, Patricia Parker and Julian Patrick (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 20.

[6] Else, *Aristotle's Poetics,* 449.

religious sense of 'catharsis' can in any case be held to be a metaphoric extension of a basically chemical sense of 'purification', and in such a metaphor allusion to purgation need not be denied.[7]

The affect of katharsis, is, according to Schaper, felt with peculiar intensity; moreover, it is a mixture of intellectual understanding and emotional response to the tragedy that can only be called "an aesthetic response, and it is in this sense that 'aesthetic emotion' and 'aesthetic understanding indicate the same phenomenon."[8] Schaper therefore argues that catharsis is a term of aesthetics and not of psychology. By this assertion she must be taken to mean that whereas the psychological places katharsis in the reader's response, aesthetics ties the response to the stimuli as well: katharsis is "between" text and reader. Schaper writes: "the emotions felt by audiences or spectators and the complex reactions to fiction are functions of the work qua work, that is to say, bound up with the formal nature of the artefact."[9] Here, Schaper is responding to a much debated issue in the critical history of the concept.

Psychological effect or aesthetic formal feature?

Papanoutsos, reviewing the history of different critical understandings, finds that these may be divided into three groups: "the 'moral', which is the oldest; the 'psychological' and the 'aesthetic', the most recent,"[10] all of which may represent valid interpretations of Aristotle. According to Zeller, up until the time of Lessing, the moral understanding was universal. *Katharsis* was supposed to have a good effect on the spectators' emotions, habituating them to feel and act in an appropriate manner.[11] However, Bywater notes that Milton in his preface to *Samson Agonistes* interprets the passage in terms of homeopathic medicine.[12] Thus, according to Milton, tragedy is of power

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[7] Eva Schaper, "Aristotle's Catharsis and Aesthetic Pleasure," *The Philosophic Quarterly* 18, no. 71 (1968): 134.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 141.

[10] E. P. Papanoutsos, "The Aristotelian Katharsis," *The British Jnl. of Aesthetics* 17, no. 4 (1977): 361.

[11] Eduard Zeller, *Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics*, trans. B.F.C. Costelloe and J.H. Muirhead, 1897 (Reprint, Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011).

[12] Ingram Bywater, "Milton and the Aristotelian Definition of Tragedy," *Journal of Philology* 27, no. 54 (1900): 267-75.

by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions, that is to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirr'd up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in Physic things of melancholic hue and quality are us'd against melancholy, sow'r against sow'r, salt to remove salt humours.[13]

Although Milton here uses the verb 'purge', his interpretation might equally involve a purification process. The main point of Milton's view, however, is that he stressed the affective aspects of the response to tragedy. Modern interpretations tend to emphasise either the psychological effect on the spectator/reader, or the aesthetics of the form of tragic drama. This raises the important question of whether katharsis resides in the experience and response of the audience to the tragedy, or whether it is an aspect of the plot and thus located in the play itself. Papanoutsos asserts that "it is unanimously maintained that the definition refers to the emotional state of the audience […] that witnesses the performance and is moved by the tragic spectacle."[14] Furthermore, he holds that by the end of the tragedy, "we are not the same persons as at the moment when we were being choked by pity and shaken with fear; the passions that now hold sway over us are no longer common pity and fear but qualitatively different emotions that can only be imparted by the magic of great art."[15] Beardsley, on the other hand, citing Goethe in support of his contention, is a proponent of the latter view: "the concept of catharsis is a structural concept – it belongs to the formal analysis of the drama itself – rather than a psychological one."[16] However, Beardsley does not acknowledge that the Romantics, by emphasizing the importance formal aspects of tragedy, did not neglect the affective response to the work. It is entirely possible, then, that it may be both structural and affective.

To what is Aristotle's concept a response?

It is likely that Aristotle's use of the term must be understood, *a la* Collingwood, as a response to a prior debate in Plato, who held a positive view of katharsis and a negative view of tragedy and its impact on our passions. In view of the many scholarly explanations of Aristotle's

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[13] John Milton, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose* (New York: Random House, 1950), 454.

[14] Papanoutsos, "The Aristotelian Katharsis," 361.

[15] Ibid., 363.

[16] Monroe C. Beardsley, *Aesthetics from Classical Greece to the Present: A Short History* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 66.

katharsis, Sparshott remarks: "What is really puzzling is not the difficulty of finding an acceptable explanation; it is the presence of the inexplicable term."[17] In the *Sophist*, argues Sparshott, Plato "offers us something like a formal definition of the word: *katharsis* is a general term applied to all forms of discrimination in which the good (to be kept) is separated from the bad (to be discarded)."[18] We see here that katharsis is closely related to *krinein.* Moreover, such a process is at the same time a purification (of the good) and purgation (of the bad). For Plato there are two kinds of katharsis, one on the level of the body, and one on the level of the soul.

In Book X of the *Republic*, Plato is concerned about poetry's appeal to the less rational parts of human nature. Poetry has a terrible power to corrupt even the best of characters, according to Plato:

> When we hear Homer or one of the tragic poets representing the sufferings of a great man and making him bewail them at length with every expression of tragic grief, you know how even the best of us enjoy it and let ourselves be carried away by our feelings; and are full of praises for the merits of the poet who can most powerfully affect us in this way.[19]

It is not primarily the failure of poetry to represent reality accurately that is the bone of contention for Plato, but rather poetry's affective power itself. Plato denies the moral-educative and rational value of the aesthetic experience.

> The only poetry that should be allowed in a state is hymns to the gods and paeans in praise of good men; once you go beyond that and admit the sweet lyric or epic muse, pleasure and pain become your rulers instead of law and the principles commonly accepted as best.[20]

Instead, Plato maintains that we must "train our minds to banish grief by curing our hurts and rectifying our mistakes as soon as we can." Socrates' companion, Glaucon, is willing to renounce his passion for the affective experience of literature unless it be shown that poetry brings lasting benefit to human life and human society. Concerning the experience of pity in relation to tragedy, Plato thinks that by identifying with the feelings of others, we become less rational and attached to our emotions:

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[17] Sparshott, "The Riddle of Katharsis," 20.

[18] Ibid., 15.

[19] Plato, *The Republic,* trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 383.

[20] Ibid., 384.

> Very few people are capable of realizing that our feelings for other people must influence ourselves, and that if we let ourselves feel excessively for the misfortunes of others it will be difficult to restrain our feelings in our own. [21]

Sparshott speculates that Aristotle inserted the clause about katharsis because he foresaw "a way of defending tragedy against the attack of the notoriously Pythagoreanizing Plato," and argues that the katharsis passage responds to Plato's charge: "the claim that through pity tragic imitation purges or purifies pity gives the lie direct to Plato's thesis[…]."[22] If Plato's critique is the context for Aristotle's katharsis reference, argues Sparshott, "a beneficial or deleterious change in the dynamics of emotional life is certainly an issue in that context. A quasi- medicinal interpretation of *katharsis* is therefore not out of the question."[23] The argument embedded in Aristotle's passage is thus that the katharsis that Plato called for and deemed good, is in fact brought about through the emotional effects: "it is only through emotion that emotion is purified."[24] In *Phaedo* Plato advocates a katharsis in which the motivational system based on the animal part of our nature is replaced by one reflecting our spirituality. Aristotles' katharsis, on the contrary, leads to a "change in the quality of life, the value of which lies in experience and does not depend on the metaphysics of soul and body."[25] Sparshott argues that Aristotle referred to katharsis to justify how we can take pleasure in the representation of misfortune. So that tragedy, "having the very peculiar structure and range of subject matter that is preferred for it, must exist and be cherished because it bears some beneficial relation to emotions felt to be weakening, or threatening, or degrading, to individuals or society."[26] However, katharsis is still a riddle, Sparshott maintains. A writer writes movingly of moving incidents in order to move the reader, he says, but wonders "how exactly is this essential emotional response related to the purgation or purification that is postulated? […]"[27] What grounds are there for claiming that this is a transformation, "rather than an immediate surrogate response whose significance and

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[21] Ibid., 384.

[22] Sparshott, "The Riddle of Katharsis," 18.

[23] Ibid., 22.

[24] Ibid., 23.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 25.

[27] Ibid., 27.

effects are as transitory as they are immediate?"[28] In my view, the best way of addressing that question is to ask actual readers about their experiences of being moved by dramatic narratives and their descriptions of this process.

Should katharsis be restricted to Tragedy or drama?

Schaper writes: "In art forms other than tragedy, catharsis is effected through other emotions of response, for other art forms not only employ other devices, but in their fictional statements are concerned with other aspects of human life."[29] However, if there are special features of the tragic in particular or drama in general that affect katharsis, then it becomes highly problematic to generalize katharsis to other art forms, as Schaper does. Keith Russell has developed a theory of the principal affective categories that structure our responses to literature. He argues that there are three principal affective categories, each of which are connected to one of the three traditional main genres. In his system, derived from the relationship of catharsis to drama, there is an equivalent category in relation to the lyric and to the epic: *kenosis* and *kairosis* respectively. Thus, he posits the following relations: "As katharsis is to the dramatic, so kenosis is to the lyric, and so kairosis is to the epic."[30] The genres are seen as interpretive genres, modes of relation that are "constitutive of the understanding of a text".[31] The concept of kenosis, 'self-emptying' ("a fundamental ability of the self to be transformed"[32]), is transposed from its theological context, inspired by a similar transposition of 'kairosis' performed by Frank Kermode. Russell argues that the kenotic "amounts to a pattern of transformation. The initial, or given identity, is firstly emptied (seen as of no account), and then replaced with a new identity that implies a relationship with the initial identity."[33] Through its affects literature engages the question of identity; this is Russell's central thesis. "It is because we are 'moved' by literature

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[28] Ibid., 28.

[29] Schaper, "Aristotle's Catharsis," 141.

[30] Keith Russell, *Kenosis, Katharsis, Kairosis: A Theory of Literary Affects* (Phd Dissertation, University of Newcastle, UK, 1990), 46.

[31] Ibid., x.

[32] Ibid., 26.

[33] Ibid., 44.

that the affective retains its power; we remain subjects."[34] I follow Russell in attaching such value to these theological and rhetorical concepts in order to understand the affective structures of literary understanding, and his fundamental strategy of building upon the notion of catharsis to identify affective categories for each genre. However, I do not think he adequately represents the different genres, nor do I think his interpretative scheme of relating kenosis to the lyric is very convincing. His conceptual scheme lacks sufficient concrete application. It is an odd move to tie kenosis to the lyric, rather than relate the lyric to ekstasis, as for instance Frye does. Moreover, if lyric were tied to ekstasis, this would enable the more logical move of connecting kenosis to the epic, since, as Russell argues, the epic is fundamentally about character. His work forms a useful point of departure for a theory of fundamental transformative affective patterns, but such a theory should be grounded in actual experiences of transformation.

I find it useful to distinguish between *catharsis,* a lay psychological term carrying many connotations and applied to many phenomena extraneous to the dramatic genres, and *katharsis* as a technical concept in relation to dramatic texts. There seems to be something about the affective category of katharsis which makes it resistant to collocation within a specific domain of either the moral, the psychological or the aesthetic. This may very well be to do with the problematic aspect of equating *pathemata* with emotions. In my contention, it may be more fruitful to start out from the experience of being moved as a basic category and field of inquiry. Schaper makes a very important point regarding the emotions experienced by the spectator: "we do not simply take over or copy the emotions which are fictionally presented to us; we respond to the total structure of fictional events with emotions of our own, not with emotions caught by infection. Such emotions bring about the cathartic transformation of felt involvement into aesthetic joy."[35]

To sum up, a kathartic process is embedded within the dramatic structure, and an appropriate affective response to this structure involves being moved and thus undergoing a process of purification of feelings, wherein unwanted elements are purged and meanings are clarified. Hence, katharsis is an affective category that belongs to dramatic art; but following Frye's lead, one must allow for the possibility of a particular kind of *comic* katharsis. Moreover, following Russell, there may be corresponding affective categories in relation to other genres of literature.

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[34] Ibid., xiv.

[35] Schaper, "Aristotle's Catharsis," 142.

The sublime

The hypsotic

"Without a strong impression nothing can be sublime," says Edmund Burke. The strong impression is thus a necessary, although not sufficient, condition for the sublime experience. Perhaps we must also incorporate another element, if the sublime as transformative experience is to leave a permanent impression: a revaluation of the self. To Burke's famous words we may therefore add Rilke's injunction: "*Du musst dein Leben ändern.*" In order to throw light upon this complex experience referred to in theoretical (Konecni) and empirical (Kuiken et al.) accounts of transformative aesthetic experience, we must go *ad fontes*, to the *locus classicus* of the sublime: Longinus' *Peri Hypsous.* O'Gorman, arguing that this work "has not received substantial treatment by scholars of rhetoric,"[36] emphasizes that what we associate with the concept of the sublime may not be the same as what Longinus called *hypsos,* warning us that such a conflation may bring "unwanted modern and postmodern denotations and connotations that have come to circulate around the concept."[37] I will follow O'Gorman's advice, and instead try to establish what the essence of the *hypsotic* may be, and how it relates to another fundamental term of Longinus': *ekstasis.*

In his analysis of the discourse of the sublime, the American philosopher Guy Sircello finds that it often becomes impenetrable, because it endeavours to "articulate the extraordinary and stupendous in the very throes of confronting it."[38] This problem of how to articulate such an experience that exceeds rational language is not new. In the oldest extant work about the sublime, Longinus distances himself from previous treatises on the subject.[39] Longinus says that a systematic treatise requires two principal qualities: A definition of the topic, and a description of the *metodos*, the path, one will follow in order to arrive at the sublime. What is Longinus' topic, and which road does he walk upon? *Peri hypsous* is, according to Richard Macksey, not a discussion about the high style: "He is concerned, rather, with certain

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[36] Ned O'Gorman, "Longinus's sublime rhetoric, or how rhetoric came into its own," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2004): 72.

[37] Ibid., 86.

[38] Guy Sircello, "How Is a Theory of the Sublime Possible?" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 4 (Autumn, 1993): 549.

[39] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (London: CSI Publishing, 2014).

distinctions of conception and expression, with the sources and effects achieving a state of elevation that he calls *ekstasis* (transport, in the quite literal sense: a state of being 'carried outside' oneself)."[40]

Longinus describes five sources of *hypsos*: a noble soul with the capacity to conceive great thoughts; the ability to have enthusiasm; using the appropriate rhetorical figures; a noble diction with apt choice of words and use of metaphors; composition, i.e. order, rhythm and prosody. The first two necessitate in-born talent, the latter three are abilities that can be acquired through learning. The sublime thus depends on both *physis* and *tekhne*, according to Longinus. Using examples from both Hesiod and Homer he demonstrates how one may represent the supernatural and precipitate awe in the recipient. In my view, it is appropriate and useful to distinguish between *hypsos* as the aesthetic term designating formal qualities of the text, and *ekstasis* as the affective category designating the reader's response to the *hypsotic*.

Let us look at two passages in *Peri Hypsous*, where Longinus is concerned with the effects the sublime produces in the recipient:

> [T]he Sublime, wherever it occurs, consists in a certain loftiness and excellence of language […]. A lofty passage does not convince the reason of the reader, but takes him out of himself (*ekstasis*). That which is admirable ever confounds our judgment, and eclipses that which is merely reasonable or agreeable. To believe or not is usually in our power; but the Sublime, acting with an imperious and irresistible force, sways every reader whether he will or no. Skill in invention, lucid arrangement and disposition of facts, are appreciated not by one passage, or by two, but gradually manifest themselves in the general structure of a work; but a sublime thought, if happily timed, illumines an entire subject with the vividness of a lightning-flash, and exhibits the whole power of the orator in a moment of time. (Ch. 1)

> It is natural to us to feel our souls lifted up by the true Sublime, and conceiving a sort of generous exultation to be filled with joy and pride, as though we had ourselves originated the ideas which we read. (Ch. 7)

The sublime, says Longinus' translator Boileau, is really not something to be proved and demonstrated; it is something wonderful that grips, hits you and make you feel.[41] And when we read the two passages above, we are instantly struck by how many and various are the affective words they contain: *ekstasis* ("takes him out of himself"), "admirable" (*thaumaton*), "confounds" (*ekplexis*), lifted up (*eparetai)*, generous exultation, joy, pride. Most theories of the sublime hold that it "combines conflicting emotions: fear and awe, horror and

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[40] Richard Macksey, "Longinus Reconsidered," *MLN* 108, no. 5 (1993): 916.

[41] Paraphrased from Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Om det sublime* (Viborg: Akademisk Forlag, 1994), 55.

fascinations."[42] However, the listed terms span a large part of the emotional spectrum. Does Longinus describe different stages of a process taking place in the recipient; does he convey two different reactions, listing overlapping words to circle in these reactions; or do the statements contradict each other, containing mutually exclusive states? The relationship between these two passages may be understood in three different ways, with each placing emphasis on a particular rhetorical figure. One may see the relation as paradoxical: the shock and the joy are seemingly mutually exclusive. Alternatively one may read the passages based on *analekteon*: Longinus is heaping several concepts on top of each other in an attempt to cover as much of the experience as possible. Then again, one may read the passages as a conjunction of the phases of the unfolding of an ecstatic process. Suzanne Guerlac adopts this position, understanding Longinus to describe two main phases: "But this 'transport' occurs in two phases, first a sense of being 'scattered', but then of being 'uplifted with a sense of proud possession… filled with joyful pride."[43] In my view, all three are tenable. However, I think that the two passages describe different aspects of ekstasis that may be produced by an encounter with *hypsos.*

Whereas *ekstasis* in the first passage is described as a quality which proceeds from what is supernatural (*ta hyperphya*) via *ekpleksis* to wonder (*ta thaumasion*), in the second passage it is depicted as an elevation, where the recipients are lifted up (*eparetai*). Thus it is not only the effect of an aesthetic shock, the *ekpleksis*, that is central to the ekstasis. The verb 'lifted up' (*eparetai*), according to Too, "foregrounds the idea of *ekstasis*, of shifting from one place to another, while the use of the passive voice denotes the surrendering of the listener's agency to the sublime in order that this individual might paradoxically reidentify him- or herself as the agent of the sublime."[44] Thus, it is possible to argue that the ecstatic effect of the *hypsos* stems from the very movement from *ekpleksis* to *eparetai*, or that these are two different forms of *ekstasis.*

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[42] Van Eck, Caroline, Stijn Bussels, Marten Delbeke, and Jürgen Pieters, eds., *Translations of the Sublime: The Early Modern Reception and Dissemination of Longinus'* Peri Hupsous *in Rhetoric, the Visual Arts, Architecture and the Theatre* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 292.

[43] Suzanne Guerlac, "Longinus and the Subject of the Sublime," *New Literary History* 16, no. 2 (1985): 275.

[44] Too, Yun Lee, *The Idea of Ancient Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 190.

Ekplexis and Eparetai

O'Gorman contends that throughout the *Peri Hypsous* "a vigorous spatial schema is collected around the treatise's key terms *hypsos* and *ekstasis*, such that rhetoric is conceived in vertical terms."[45] It was common in Greek texts that *hypsos* denoted a spatial dimension: "it is […] a key word in Euclid's geometric schema. In histories like those of Thucydides, *hypsous* is usually employed when describing walls, mountains or other tall structures,"[46] and the feeling of being before a great height. When Longinos wants to demonstrate that there is a *techne* that can achieve *hypsos*, he emphasises the imitation of the objects of nature, such as the earth being torn open (ch. 9) or the height of the heavenly bodies (ch. 35). O'Gorman therefore concludes that "hypsos turns attention to magnitude."[47] It is a logical move that the hypsotic be synonymous with the mathematical and dynamic sublime, vastness of size and force respectively.

Astonishment is central to Burke's theory of the sublime. About the effects upon the state of the soul caused by the sublime, Burke says:

> The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. ... Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect.[48]

Furthermore, this astonishment is closely connected to terror, according to Burke: "Indeed, terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime."[49] Thus, when he identifies the concept that tie these together, he points to *thaumos:* "Several languages bear a strong testimony to the affinity of these ideas. They frequently use the same word, to signify indifferently the modes of astonishment or admiration and those of

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[45] O'Gorman, "Longinus' Sublime Rhetoric," 75.

[46] Ibid., 75.

[47] Ibid., 77.

[48] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) *Primary Source Edition* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press Public Domain Reprints, 2013), 95-96.

[49] Ibid., 97.

terror. *Thaumos* is in Greek either fear or wonder."[50] Burke proceeds to offer several examples of how language shows that fear and wonder are closely related emotions. He associates astonishment with the experience of nature. With the elaboration of the theory of the sublime, the concept is transferred from rhetoric to nature. There is a risk that something significant is lost in such a move. There may be a significant difference between the *thaumaton* of nature and the *ekpleksis* of rhetoric.

What is the difference between *thaumaton* and *ekplexis*? According to Nadia Scippacercola it is one of degree only. She distinguishes between seven different types of fear, where *thaumaton* is a stronger feeling than *ekplexis:* "*thaumasiotēs* (stupor) is hyperbole for consternation (*ēkplēxis).*"[51] Yet at the same time she says that "*ēkplēxis* (consternation) is the fear caused by the appearance of an unusual fact." Thus it is in the encounter with the unusual, the surprising, that we experience *ekplexis*. The word *ekplexis* is translated in diverse ways, and also carries several different meanings in Greek works.[52] In translations of the passage from Longinus we find 'confounding', 'spellbinding', 'amaze' and 'shock'. Translations of the word in other texts vary along a continuum: surprise, astonishment, stupor, consternation, terror, shock. An element of surprise thus seems to be an integral part of, and precondition for, the emotion of fear. According to Paul Ekman's research on emotions, surprise can only be precipitated by unexpected events. Surprise is the most transient of all emotions, only lasting for a few seconds before "we figure out what is happening, and then surprise merges into fear, amusement, relief, anger, disgust and so forth, depending on what it was that surprised us, or it may be followed by no emotion at all if the event was of no consequence."[53] *Ekplexis* can thus be understood as the outcome of one such merger: surprise and fear. I think it is useful to distinguish between two forms of surprise: negative surprise, in which a positive expectation is not met, producing a fearful reaction; and positive surprise, in which a negative expectation is not met, but the event turns out to be positive. Thus, *ekplexis* would be the fear produced by negative surprise. *Thaumaton* relates to the wonder stemming from not rejecting this *ekplectic* experience.

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[50] Ibid., 97-98.

[51] Nadia Scippacercola, "Horror: What have the Ancient Greeks Taught Us?" *inter-discplinary.net* (2013), 7.

[52] For an overview, see Lisa Kallet, *Money and the Corrosion of Power in Thucydides: The Sicilian Expedition and its Aftermath* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[53] Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed* (London: Phoenix, 2003), 148.

For Burke as well as for Kant the sublime is an aesthetic category characterised by a safe distance from the phenomenon. Schiller, on the other hand, contended that the sublime could not be restricted to a comfortable aesthetic domain.[54] He argued that an experience was truly sublime only if one's life was actually endangered by the mighty natural forces. He therefore distinguished between the theoretical and the practical sublime. Still, the emphasis is on the natural sublime. Can there be such a collapse of the distance between phenomenon and recipient within the rhetorical sublime?

In his analysis of the Tragedies of Aischylos, Sean Gurd argues that Aischylos did not strive for *mimesis*, but *ekplexis*. "*Ekplexis* designates the process of physically striking something out of something else – frightening a person out of their wits, for example. Aeschylus aims for an effect which strikes spectators out of themselves."[55] Gurd creates a dichotomy where *mimesis* and *ekplexis* designate two different relations to the sign. In *mimesis* there is a stable representation of a world. We are led to feel fear and compassion. This reaction, says Gurd, depends on a distance to what is told: "plays about Athens caused too much fear in the Athenian audience, but plays about Thebes, by virtue of their distance from the audience's situation, were recognised as representations"; thus the performance could have a cathartic effect, "bringing the citizen back to himself, so that he may participate more reasonably in the administration of the city."[56] The ekplektic story, on the other hand, was marked by a fundamental insecurity. The representation is unstable and threatens to break down. This means that the signs "do not have commerce with some fictive or transcendental world that is safely removed from the here and now. Rather, they interact directly with the place and time in which we live."[57] The image comes alive, the story becomes terribly and terrifyingly real. We can no longer maintain the safe distance to what is told. According to Gurd, it is therefore when the sign turns into perceived reality that the moment of *ekplexis* occurs, as the divide between *semiosis* and *physis* is transgressed or exceeded. In his account, *ekplexis* is thus inextricably bound to the rhetorical sublime. The ecstacy is not elicited by the dynamic or the mathematical sublime, but by the surprising collapse of distance between sign and reality. In addition to Schiller's distinction between the theoretical and the practical sublime, we now have two kinds

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[54] Friedrich Schiller, *Poet of Freedom. Vol. 3* (Washington, DC: The Schiller Institute, 1990).

[55] Sean Gurd, "Aeschylus terrorist," *Journal of Human Rights* 3, no. 1 (2004): 100.

[56] Ibid., 101.

[57] Ibid.

of practical sublimity: a collapse of physical and semiotic distance respectively. However, I think Gurd's theory is too simplistic: it fails to distinguish between what is essentially a magical belief, where the statue comes to life, causing a traumatic reaction of petrifaction in the perceiver, and the shock that leads to the recipient's *thaumaton*, as described by Longinus. What Gurd describes comes closer to *cataplexis* than *ekplexis*.

In the second passage Longinus says that we are lifted up and filled with pride and joy. This is not just a relief that fear has passed, or a recognition of the limits of the Imaginative Faculty. Why are we filled with pride and joy? We feel that we are part of what has been created, there is no distance between orator and listener. The ecstatic swaying turns us and lifts us up. I think it is precisely this movement, nearly kinaesthetic, which is at the core of the ekstatic.

I concur with Kuiken et al that it is beneficial to distinguish between two forms of experience relating to the sublime – or, rather, to *ekstasis.* Looking at the history of reception of the sublime, I contend that most theories of the sublime privilege the first passage's insistence on the shock, concentrating the *ekstasis* around *ekpleksis* and *thaumaton*, leaving out the second passage's *eparetai* and 'as-though agency'. I think that theories of the sublime have tended to concentrate on the terror-aspect of the *ekstasis*, to the neglect of the elevation into pride and joy. To sum up, it is useful to distinguish between the *ekplectic* (what is usually meant by "sublime") and *epairetic* forms of *ekstasis*. Therefore, the sublime may best be understood as *one form* of *ekstasis* in the encounter with the hypsotic. *Hypsos,* then, designates specific formal features of texts that can affect *ekstasis.*

Epiphany

Epiphanein and to exaiphnes

Epiphany (from the Greek *epiphaneia*, 'manifestation, striking appearance') is defined as "a sudden manifestation of the essence or meaning of something."[58] However, if we study its etymology, a more *fitting* definition would be "a fitting manifestation, a conspicuous

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[58] Cf Merriam Webster's online dictionary: www.m-w.com/dictionary/epiphany.

appearance building on the characteristics of a situation."[59] James Joyce, although he did not invent it, brought this theological concept into the literary orbit. In *Stephen Hero*, epiphany is a sudden manifestation that breaks with habitual perception. Stephen would pass the Office clock "time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture. Then all at once I see it and I know at once what it is: epiphany."[60] Karl-Heinz Bohrer suggests that Joyce in *Stephen Hero* makes "suddenness" the "mode of appearance of meaning" not only in modern fiction but in modern art.[61] Irene Hendry, in her analysis of epiphanies in the works of Joyce, says that the most common technique is a sudden revelation of character "through an apparently trivial incident, action or single detail which differs from the others making up the story only in that it illuminates them, integrates them and gives them meaning."[62] The epiphany has long been understood as a central trait of modern fiction, not just in Joyce, but in works by Woolf, Conrad, Proust and Faulkner, among others. M. H. Abrams identified it as springing out of nineteenth-century lyric poetry, its origins traced to Wordsworth's "spots of time". Sharon Kim considers epiphany "more as a form of being than as a form of time, shifting the kaleidoscope from the 'sudden' to the manifestation'. When viewed as a manifestation, epiphany presents an unusual form of vision that does not rely upon a metaphysical mechanics of perception."[63]

In his study *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*, Morris Beja distinguishes epiphany from visionary insight based on two criteria. The criterion of *incongruity* stipulates that the epiphany is irrelevant to the object or incident that elicits it; the criterion of *insignificance* holds that the epiphany be elicited by a trivial object or incidence. In other words, the epiphany is out of proportion to what precipitated it.[64] Robert Langbaum, in "The Epiphanic Mode in Wordsworth

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[59] See http://biblehub.com/str/greek/2015.htm: *epipháneia* (from 1909 */epí*, "*on*, fitting," which intensifies 5316 */phaínō*, "show forth, appear") – properly, a *fitting manifestation* (literally, "an epiphany") […] (*epipháneia*) literally suggests an appearing that builds on (Gk *epi*) on the characteristics of a particular situation. Accordingly, 2015 */epipháneia* ("*conspicuous* appearing") emphasizes the *fitting impact* Christ's *visible* appearance will have on the *entire* world.

[60] James Joyce, *Stephen Hero* (Norfolk, CN: New Directions, 1963), 211.

[61] Karl-Heinz Bohrer, *Suddenness: On the Mode of Aesthetic Appearance,* trans. Ruth Crowley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 216.

[62] Irene Hendry, "Joyce's Epiphanies," *Sewanee Review, LIV* (1946): 461.

[63] Sharon Kim, *Literary Epiphany in the Novel, 1850-1950: Constellations of the Soul* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[64] Morris Beja, *Epiphany in the Modern Novel* (Seattle: Washington University Press, 1971), 16-17.

and Modern Literature", makes great claims for the importance of epiphany in romantic poetry, calling it "the Romantic substitute for religion."[65] He echoes Beja, but expands upon his view by listing the following four criteria as essential to the epiphanic experience: (i) the criterion of psychological association – it must be a real sensuous experience; (ii) momentaneousness – the epiphany only lasts a moment, but leaves an enduring effect; (iii) suddenness; and (iv) Fragmentation or Leap – "the text never quite equals the epiphany; the poetry, as Browning put it, consists in the reader's leap"; and (iv) "emotional predisposition is required if the reader is to make the epiphanic leap."[66] What is interesting here is that Longbaum shifts from focusing on textual features to the active contribution of the reader. Longbaum argues that epiphany is an "inevitable concomitant" of realistic fiction and poetry, since "the reader must be relied on to transform the details into visionary significance […]. When the transformation does not come off, it is because the author has not supplied the necessary structure for transformation."[67] For an objective epiphany to take place, argues Wim Tigges, "there must be a larger context to set off the triviality of the epiphanic image."[68] He is here following Beja's Joycean conception, where epiphany occurs as the result of an encounter with a trivial or insignificant thing or event. But Bidney, in his definition of epiphany as "a moment that is felt to be expansive, mysterious and intense" explicitly rejects the criteria of triviality. Nichols defines epiphany as "momentary manifestations of significance in ordinary experience."[69] Much of the disagreement revolves around the difference between the trivial and insignificant on the one hand, and the ordinary on the other.

Epiphany has been explored in a number of works within literary criticism. See for instance: Martin Bidney, *Patterns of epiphany: From Wordsworth to Tolstoy, Pater and Barrett Browning* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997); Stanley J. Coen, «What will become of epiphanies? A psychoanalytic reading of James Joyce's 'The Dead'," *Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies,* 2, no. 2 (2000): 119-128; David Hayman, "The purpose and permanence of the Joycean epiphany," *James Joyce Quarterly* 35/36, no. 4 (1998): 633-55; and Sandra H. Johnson, *The space between: Literary epiphany in the work of Annie Dillard* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1992).

[65] Robert Langbaum, "The Epiphanic moment in Wordsworth and Modern Literature," in *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Experience*, ed. Wim Tigges (Atalanta, GA: Rodopi BV, 1999), 59.

[66] Ibid., 44.

[67] Ibid., 40.

[68] Wim Tigges, "The Significance of Trivial Things: Towards a Typology of Literary Epiphanies," in *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Experience*, ed. Wim Tigges (Atalanta, GA: Rodopi BV, 1999), 11.

[69] Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987).

From the brief review of these sources we can see that the concept has travelled some distance from its denotative origin. The s*uddenness* of the experience has become the core experiential referent. In my view, the concept labours under the burden of excessive baggage, and needs to be differentiated. In Plato's dialogue *Parmenides,* we find a different term to designate suddenness. Here the sudden moment is defined as the unexpected event (*to exaiphnês*) when something turns (*metaballein*) into its opposite (*enantiodromia)*. The moment that marks this turning can only be isolated in the very abruptness with which something takes place. As such, the moment is *atopon*, it doesn't 'take place'. According to Spyridon Rangos, the word *exaiphnês* "is used to describe the sudden conversion of the soul from one order of reality to another, its passage from the immanence of perceptible bodies, ethical activities, artistic productions, and scientific truths to the transcendence of Platonic Forms". Furthermore, ascension to a Form is an abrupt occurrence that disrupts the smooth succession of time: "[…] though occurring *in* time the event effects a *rupture* from temporality as ordinarily perceived: it opens up a vision of eternity."[70] *Metaballein* signals the "shifting from a state to a process (such as from being-at-rest to be-moving-in-space)."[71] *Exaiphnes* has the meaning of unexpected appearance, and *aiphnes* has the same root as *phanein.* Thus we may say that the sudden unexpected manifestation of something is properly an *ekaphany*. Therefore, what is meant by the use of the lay term *epiphany* is technically more precisely designated as *ekaphany*. So where does this leave *epiphania?* The fitting manifestation can only come about as the result of a process of searching, where the most precious is found in the least likely of places. Thus epiphany marks the *metaballein* of the insignificant into the most significant. To sum up, we now have derived two different concepts: ekaphany and epiphany.

The analytic clarification of these concepts forms part of the pre-understanding with which we will approach the interpretation of the readers' life-changing reading experiences.

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[70] Spyridon Rangos, "Plato on the Nature of the Sudden Moment, and the Asymmetry of the Second Part of the Parmenides," *Dialogue* 53, no. 3 (2014): 539. Doi:10.1017/S0012217314000912.

[71] Ibid., 543.

Part Two: Method of Inquiry

Chapter 4. Methodological Considerations

The empirical and the logics of inquiry
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Chapter 4. Methodological Considerations

The empirical and the logics of inquiry

In their introduction to the research methods of psychology, Schacter et al. assert that "empiricism is the essential element of the scientific method." They trace the roots of empiricism to schools of medicine in ancient Greece. According to the authors, the sick person had to choose between two kinds of doctors:

> dogmatists (from *dogmatikos,* meaning 'belief'), who thought that the best way to understand illness was to develop theories about the body's functions, and empiricists (from *empeirikos,* meaning 'experience'), who thought that the best way to understand illness was to observe sick people. The rivalry between these two schools of medicine didn't last long, however, because the people who chose to see dogmatists tended to die. It is little wonder that today we use the word *dogmatism* to describe the tendency for people to cling to their assumptions and the word *empiricism* to describe *the belief that accurate knowledge about the world requires observation of it.*[1]

The several other schools of medicine in ancient Greece - such as the Pneumatists and the Methodists - notwithstanding, this account initially sounds innocuous: One ought, lest people risk dying, to base one's beliefs and practice on experience rather than dogma. Agreed. However, Plato regarded experience as the basis of *doxa*, and thus opposed to true knowledge, *episteme.* So it is evident that empiricism must involve *more than* trusting to experience. As Schacter et al. emphasise, scientific method involves steps to avoid the "erroneous conclusions that simple observation can produce."[2] Experiencing is not enough in itself. Data must be produced in a systematic manner. Moreover, one must have sound ways of drawing conclusions from the data. Scientific method (the procedures and activities for selecting, collecting, organizing and analyzing data and reporting findings), according to Danermark et al. mainly revolves around different modes of inference and is "essentially a matter of switching between different levels of abstraction, but it is also about relating these levels to one another. […]The

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[1] Daniel L. Schacter, Daniel T. Gilbert, and Daniel M. Wegner, *Psychology: European Edition* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 40.

[2] Ibid., 40.

ability to switch between abstract theorizing and observations of concrete reality, without yielding either to arbitrary theorizing or to short-sighted observation, is at the core of social science working procedure."[3]

Thus, empiricism involves both experiencing and inferring: particular ways of data production and particular ways of reasoning. However, Schacter et al. seem to equate the empirical, experience, with *observation.* Are there not other viable conceptualisations of experience? I suggest that empiricism must mean a theory of *modes of systematic experiencing.* These are the ontological assumptions of our notion of the empirical. In addition to the empirical aspect, the essence of scientific method is of course the *logic of inquiry,* or modes of inference. Therefore, there must be a *logicism*, a theory of sound modes of reasoning, of drawing inferences. The study of interrelations of modes of experiencing and reasoning constitute the foundations of methodology, the study of justifications of methodic choices in relation to ontological and epistemological assumptions. According to Grix, methodology is principally concerned with the logic of enquiry and "in particular with investigating the potentialities and limitations of particular techniques or procedures. The term pertains to the science and study of methods and the assumptions about the ways in which knowledge is produced."[4] For Howell, methodology is the study of research strategies that outline the way in which research is to be undertaken, and does not define specific procedures.[5]

"The ideal of science," says the phenomenologist Cairns, is "systematised propositional knowledge about the world based upon the highest possible evidence."[6] The aim of science is not simply to attain true knowledge, but *justified* true knowledge. Thus, the essence of scientific method is to justify knowledge claims by means of combining the empirical and the logical in relation to the research question. So we may reformulate Schacter et al.'s assertion: *The essence of the scientific method is the interrelation of the empirical and the logic of inquiry*. Thus, we must endeavour not to impose narrow pre-conceptions on what constitutes an empirical

[3] Berth Danermark, Mats Ekström, Liselotte Jakobsen, and Jan C. Karlsson, *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 117.

[4] Jonathan Grix, "The generic terminology of social research," *Politics* 22, no. 3 (2002): 179.

[5] Kerry E. Howell, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology* (London: Sage, 2013).

[6] Dorion Cairns, and Lester Embree, "The Transcendental Phenomenological Reduction: Husserl's Concept of the Idea of Philosophy," in *Phaenomenologica (Series Founded by H.L. van Breda and Published Under the Auspices of the Husserl-Archives),* vol. 207, *The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl*, ed. Lester Embree (Dordrecht and New York: Springer, 2013), 6.

approach, and what constitutes valid modes of inference. If we restrict empiricising to observation or testing, and logics of inquiry to induction and deduction, we end up with a prejudiced notion of what scientific inquiry is. Furthermore, if we restrict our concepts of reliability and validity to notions of replicability and representativity, we distort the true meanings of these concepts of justification.

The empirical is tied to two modes of experiencing: testing and observation. There are however, two different ways of testing or trying something out. One is by means of *experiment*, in which we can systematically isolate variables. The other is by means of *examination*, in which we must systematically investigate a state of affairs by gathering and triangulating various sources of information, and reflexively analyse our own vantage point. Are there also two ways of conceptualising *observation?* Or, rather, is observation itself a particular conceptualisation of attending to experience? 'Observation' comes from 'ob' + 'servare', meaning 'attending to' by being placed 'in front of' or 'before'. There is a fundamentally different way of attending to something, which I will name *subservation.* When we subject ourselves to something, we are not gathering information, but are rather undergoing the contemplation of that something: it acts upon us. Thus, when talking to people about their experience, I can either gather information about something, and relate it to other sources of information or observations, in order to *examine* a state of affairs - or I can listen attentively to fathom the depth of their subjective experience, which is to *subserve* that experience in order to appropriate the meaning of it. This experiencing has its own systematicity, which I will elucidate in the section on Data Production in the Method chapter. These two modes of attending, observation and subservation, imply different ontologies of experience. What this means is that there are four fundamental ways of empiricising, of ontologising experience: observation, experiment, examination and subservation.

Logics of inquiry are traditionally either deductive or inductive. But Charles Sanders Pierce introduced two other terms: retroduction and abduction. Are these two names for the same inference, or for different parts of one inferential process, or do they point to two different modes of inference altogether? I will attempt to show that abduction is not a logic of inquiry, but an inferential process that may take us in either of two directions: *retroduction* is leading back from data to an underlying mechanism; *anteroduction* is leading forward from a new concept to a realisation of meaning. There are two kinds of hermeneutic logics of inquiry in interpreting texts: retroductive and anteroductive. Although Gadamer dismisses the notion of hermeneutics as a method, I shall argue that implicit in his notion of the fusion of horizons, as

well as in Ricoeur's 'hermeneutics of restoration', is a definable mode of inference that is essentially anteroductive.

I will argue that a narrative approach to data production rests upon subversation, and a narrative approach to data interpretation necessitates an anteroductive hermeneutics. Hence, *the hermeneutically oriented method of narrative inquiry that I will call Intimate Reading uses a research strategy that combines subversation and anteroduction.* I define Research Strategy as the combination of an empiricisation - an ontologisation of experience – with a logic of inquiry - the fitting of a mode of inference to a process of data production and analysis - in relation to a research question that springs out of a considered problem statement. In this chapter I will discuss four principal problems that pertain to my research strategy:

a)   The development of the research question, and its implications for my approach.

b)   What assumptions are involved in subversation?

c)   What is anteroduction and how is it related to hermeneutics?

d)   How can a narrative approach meet the demands for reliability and validity?

The development of the Research Questions

According to Flick, the "first and central step" in developing a research strategy, "but which tends to be ignored in most presentations of methods, is how to formulate the research question(s)."[7] Mason concurs, emphasising that it is through this process "that you will be connecting what it is that you wish to research with how you are going to go about researching it."[8] Punch argues that "a well stated research question indicates what data will be necessary to answer it."[9] According to Wildemuth, a good research question has these attributes:

> It is clear, unambiguous and easily understood;
> It is specific enough to suggest the data that need to be collected during the study;
> It is answerable, in the sense that it is feasible to collect the needed data;
> It is interconnected with important concepts and phenomena; and
> It is substantively relevant to the field.[10]

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[7] Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 105.

[8] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 19-20.

[9] Keith F. Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014), 74.

[10] Barbara M. Wildemuth, *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science* (Santa Barbara, CA and Denver, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 2017), 15.

Blaikie goes further, claiming that "the way a particular research question is worded can have a significant influence on how much and what kind of research activity will be required."[11] In his view, formulating research questions "is the most critical component of any research design, [which] makes it possible to select research strategies and methods of data collection and analysis with confidence."[12] Hence, much hinges upon a correct analysis of the nature of the question I am going to ask. Thus I regard the formulation of the research question as an interpretive process in deciding upon a strategy for how to solve the research problem; this interpretive process is made on the basis of the problem statement. Hernon delineates several components of a problem statement: a lead-in, a claim for originality based on a literary review, and justification of a study's value.[13] Hence it is apparent that the development of the research question springs out of a consideration of the problem statement as it has been circled in in the introduction and the literary review. The literature review revealed that there are several kinds of life-changing reading experiences, that they involve crises, being moved and different kinds of changes, and that they involve progressive modes of engagement with a text. What we do not yet have is a systematic, in-depth knowledge of how these elements are interrelated and how they are experienced in particular encounters between a reader and a work.

According to Malterud, so-called qualitative inquiry may produce knowledge on three different niveaus:

(i)   Understanding of variety, commonalities and typical qualities.
(ii)   Concepts that give us precise descriptions and names.
(iii)   Theoretical models that provide insights into possible connections and relations.[14]

My aim is to arrive at (iii) via (i) and (ii). So how may the research question best be framed to give us knowledge on all these three niveaus?

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[11] Norman Blaikie, *Designing Social Research: The Logic of Anticipation*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 58.

[12] Ibid., 57.

[13] P. Hernon, "Components of the Research Process: Where do we need to focus attention?" *Journal of Academic Librarianship* 27, no. 2 (2001): 81-89.

[14] Kirsti Malterud, *Kvalitative Metoder i Medisinsk Forskning: En Innføring*, 3rd ed. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2011), 82.

According to Blaikie, there are three fundamental questions: 'what' questions, 'why' questions' and 'how' questions. These correspond to the "three main categories of research purposes: description, explanation/understanding and change."[15] Blaikie explains it thus:

> What questions require a descriptive answer; they are directed towards discovering and describing the characteristics of and patterns in some social phenomenon.[…]
>
> Why questions ask for either the causes of, or the reasons for, the existence of characteristics or regularities in a particular phenomenon. They are directed towards understanding or explaining the relationships between events, or within social activities and social processes. […]
>
> How questions are concerned with bringing about change, with practical outcomes and intervention.[16]

In investigating the phenomenon Life Changing Experiences of Reading Imaginative Literature (LCERIL), what is it I want to find out? I am not aiming to find out how one can intervene in people's lives to bring about such an experience, thus the third question seems ruled out. Do I want to know the reasons for or causes of LCERIL? Then I would have to look into possible mechanisms in the brain or in the real world or society. One can imagine several possible explanations in terms of either neuropsychological processes, social dynamics or discursive formations. But this is not really my concern here, either. On the one hand, I do wish to establish the characteristica of LCERIL in terms of kinds, commonalities and essence. Therefore, the research question should be a what-question: 'what is a life-changing reading experience?' On the other hand, the implications of such a question tend towards an inductive research strategy in which different readers' statements are categorised in order to arrive at a general description of the phenomenon. I want to know the fullest possible realisations of the life-changing reading experience, what it means in relation to a particular person's life. This necessitates an idiographic approach in which the experience is studied as a whole.

Now, if Blaikie is right about the importance of correct RQ formulation, it is imperative that he gets his ontology of questioning right, too. Blaikie acknowledges that other methodologists enumerate more than three basic questions, but argues that all other questions can be reduced to one of these three. Is it possible to distinguish fundamental questions simply on the basis of the question words themselves, without reference to verbs? What is the fundamental nature of the *how*-question? The way Blaikie presents it, 'how' could be reduced to 'by what means'. But 'how' may also be related to state or condition, as in 'how are you?'

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[15] Blaikie, *Designing Social Research,* 59.

[16] Ibid., 60.

Moreover, it may be related to signification, as in 'in what *sense*?' So what is the essence of *how*? Even if we grant that 'how' relates to process and change, we cannot determine that it is inherently restricted to instances of *bringing about* change. *Praxis* has two aspects: action and passion. *Therefore, 'how' has as much to do with how something is experienced as with how it is done.* To ask 'how?' is thus either to ask how we can change something, or how we are changed by something. In order to study people's experiences of change, we must ask "how may this be experienced?" questions, concerned with the role of the patient. Unlike the 'how to bring about change'-question, which can be reduced to a 'by what means', the question of how something is experienced cannot be modified into a what-question. The uniqueness of the 'how' is that it is related to people's lived experience. To ask how people have experienced something is a fundamental question different from the other three. It is not a question aiming to describe, explain or predict. It aims to understand how something was experienced in the context of that person's life, and as such treats experience as a unity. It is an essentially narrative question demanding an idiographic approach. It differs from the what-question in that it does not seek to inductively generalise in order to describe commonalities across individual accounts. It is concerned with particular experiences. In seeking to understand how people experienced something of importance, I wish not merely to describe their experiences, but *to learn from them*. In other words: the goal of the inquiry is to appropriate the meaning of their experiences.

What initially looked like a *what*-question upon closer examination is as much a *how*-question. At the same time, this *how*-question, if truly asked, springs out of an originary *who*-question. As Dilthey said, "we explain nature, but we *understand* persons." First of all, in dialogue we attempt to understand the person through empathy. The idiographic interpretation is always in relation to the primacy of *who,* but cannot stay within its sphere. Thus, the *how may it be experienced* question grows out of a concern for *who,* traverses a *what* in order to appropriate a *how*. In an ideal world it would be possible to ask a *whow*-question. However, the question can be broken down into a series of sub-questions. Hence I have landed on this formulation:

How may reading a work of imaginative literature be experienced as life-changing?

The subsidiary research questions are:

What kinds of Life-Changing Fiction Reading Experiences are there?

What is the relationship between life-crises, affective experiences of being moved, and life-changes?

What characterises the readers' transaction with the works of literature?

Subservation

The implications of a narrative approach

The central research question not only has implications for the kind of data to be produced, but also for how they are to be interpreted. In attending to how something may be experienced, we need to listen to the whole experience of the participant, and interpret the whole of the experience. According to Polkinghorne, "Narrative is the form of hermeneutic expression in which human action [and passion – my emphasis] is understood and made meaningful."[17] Furthermore, narrative is fundamentally about processes of change. Narrative, says Polkinghorne, "does not focus on how one event is predicted or deduced from another, but on how *change* from 'beginning' to 'end' takes place."[18] Thus a *narrative approach* may be said to involve

> an approach – one that emphasizes the examination of the storied nature of human recounting of lives and events – and to the sources themselves – that is, the stories that people tell in recounting their lives … and the significance of context for the unfolding of events and people's sense of their role within them. It is the ways that people organize and forge connections between events and the sense they make of those connections that provides the raw material of narrative analysis.[19]

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[17] Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 145.

[18] Ibid., 117.

[19] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 553.

A narratively oriented inquiry must, in the words of Hiles and Cernak, "begin with a narrative approach to data collection that is reflected in the research question, the research design and strategy for interviewing."[20] Furthermore, such an inquiry entails a "conscious examination of the paradigm assumptions, selection of research strategies, selection of participants, and decisions made in collecting the data, conducting the interviews, and in analyzing the data and interpreting the findings."[21] What are the paradigm assumptions associated with a narrative approach?

According to Riessman, narrative inquiry has been informed and influenced by a variety of paradigms: Ricoeur's phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. But "the particular theoretical perspective that guides each of these approaches may not be shared by the narrative scholar"; it is a cross-disciplinary field that "has realist, postmodern and constructionist strands."[22] Although "some narrativists reject the idea of lived experience or a world behind the narrator (that is knowable)", and others perform thematic analyses only, it is fair to say that the majority would occupy a middle ground, and that narratively oriented inquiries belong to the interactionist paradigm. Hiles and Cermak contend that "narrative inquiry does have its roots in a social constructionist perspective, but it does also entail a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive view that incorporates both a rich description of the socio-cultural environment *and* the participatory and creative inner world of lived experience."[23] They therefore surmise that narrative data have a "double signature": both social constructionist and phenomenological. I contend instead that the 'signature' of subservation as method of developing narrative data is hermeneutic in orientation.

Pinnegar and Danes delineate four aspects of the narrative turn: a change in the relationship between researcher and researched; a move towards the use of words as data; a change in focus from the general and universal towards the local and specific; and acceptance of alternative epistemologies. Thus, "we become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular

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[20] David Hiles, and Ivo Cermak, "Narrative Psychology," in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, ed. Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton-Rogers (London: Sage Publications, 2008), 152.

[21] Ibid., 152.

[22] Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (London: Sage, 2008), 13.

[23] Hiles and Cermak, "Narrative Psychology," 151.

context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry."[24] But what do they mean by "narrative knowing"? Bruner proposes a distinction between narrative reasoning and rational thinking, each a primary mode of thought, to be regarded as "two modes of cognitive functioning, two modes of thought, each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality. The two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another."[25] Likewise, Charles Taylor argues that "we understand ourselves inescapably in narrative." This Narrative Knowing thesis is central in what has become the narrative paradigm. However, in a critique of the two central tenets of such a paradigm, that human experience *is* narratively formed, and that self-understanding comes through developing a life-story, the philosopher Galen Strawson argues that this is not necessarily so.[26] Accordingly, the paradigmatic assumptions of narrativity cannot be endorsed.

Subservation and epoché

In my view, the phenomenological *epoché* in no way implies the belief that one can set aside all one's prejudices or presuppositions. That would merely be naïve. Nor is it about what is "in" consciousness, thus resting on a distinction between 'in here' and 'out there', appearance and reality, in a repetition of neo-kantianism. Neither does it posit a subject over and against an object. Husserl is aiming to provide a foundation for the sciences in which different forms of inquiry can come to the fore. Now, if none of the versions of phenomenology accurately reflect Husserl's project, but are tendentious interpretations of it, it follows that I may offer my own understanding.

So what is *epoche*? Epoche is the bracketing of *a particular way of relating to the world*: our *naturalistic* assumptions. What must be bracketed is precisely the assumption that there is an inner and an outer dimension, that reality is found out there or made by us.[27] Therefore, to

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[24] Stefinee Pinnegar, and J. Gary Daynes, "Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative," in *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, ed. D. Jean Clandinin (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 7.

[25] Jerome Bruner, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 11.

[26] Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity," *In Ratio (new series)* 17, no. 4 (2004): 428-52.

[27] In "Phenomenology and Anthropology" Husserl states: "But in the final analysis everything depends on the initial moment of the method, the phenomenological reduction. The reduction is the means of access to this new realm, so when one gets the meaning of the reduction wrong, the everything else also goes wrong. The temptation to misunderstanding here is simply overwhelming. For instance, it seems all too obvious to say to oneself: 'I, this human being, am the one who is practicing the method of a transcendental alteration of attitude

assume that an interview reflects the world out there, *or* the inner world of interviewee, *or* language, or the social discourse formations of which both interviewer and interviewee are a part (and thus a reality constructed in the interview), is simply to *not* engage in the epoche. An epoche suspends the very question of tracing utterances back to a *reality*. Thus, examination and subservation differ with regards to epoche. Examination is based on an ontology of realism (whether this be positivist, depth, critical or reality as socially constructed). Social constructionism is sometimes erroneously taken to be idealist. This is a categorical mistake. Social constructionism makes positive assertions about the nature of social reality: it is constructed. As such, it is a form of nominalism. Subservation is based on an *idealist* ontology. This kind of idealism makes no positive assertions of a "higher" reality. Nor does it deny that there is a reality or realities. It simply states that the expression, sharing and understanding of experiences is meaningful and worthy of appropriation. In Gadamer's words, an idealist ontology is not to be taken in the sense that one "denies the existence of the external world, but in the sense of affirming that our understanding is able to grasp the real kernel, and that there is an ultimate identity of the subjective approach and reality, a common rationality in consciousness and being."[28] Thus, my research strategy of subservation entails a hermeneutically oriented narrative inquiry.

What has not been properly established in the literature on narrative methods of inquiry, is what kind of logic of inquiry should be used. For instance in *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, there is no mention of the logic of abduction and retroduction. Correspondingly, the concept of narrative has no place in Blaikie's overview of elements of a social research design. What logic of inquiry is implicated in my research question? How does one arrive at idiographic interpretations of life-changing reading experiences? And how can one infer from particular life-changing reading experiences to a comprehensive system of relations between different affective experiences?

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whereby one withdraws back into the pure Ego; so can this Ego be anything other than just a mere abstract stratum of this concrete human being, its purely mental being, abstracted from the body?' But clearly those who talk this way have fallen back into the naïve natural attitude. Their thinking is grounded in the pre-given world rather than moving within the sphere of the *epoché*." Quoted in: Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 147-148. For a thorough critique of problems related to Phenomenological hermeneutics and philosophical hermeneutics as approaches to empirical inquiry, see: Leena Kakkori, "Hermeneutics and Phenomenology Problems When Applying Hermeneutic Phenomenological Method in Educational Qualitative Research," *Paideusis* 18, no. 2 (2009): 19-27.

[28] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Man and World* 17 (1984): 316.

The anteroductive logic of inquiry

I will next seek to elaborate a distinct logic of inquiry involved in this research strategy. But I will first determine the *direction* of the research strategy for arriving at the meaning of people's life-changing reading experiences. A narrative of such an experience implies a series of seven transformations from the act of reading

1) Remembering this reading experience as life-changing
2) Telling the researcher about this in a dialogic exchange
3) Recording the dialogue
4) Transcribing the record of the dialogue and producing a text
5) Critical selection of texts for interpretation
6) Interpreting the texts idiographically
7) Appropriating the meaning of these interpretations

From one stage to the next, there is a transformation of meaning. Not only is the experience changed in remembering it, it is changed in the dialogue of the telling, changed again in turning the transcript of the record into text and subsequently interpreting it. I am not concerned with what is lost at each point, or with what *really* happened. With each step, something essential is distilled and carried forward to be *realized,* or appropriated. Meaning is carried forward towards a telos: a system of relations of meanings. This is literally a process of *anteroduction.* What each step involves, in itself and in relation to the others, has not been adequately addressed, neither in narrative approaches nor in qualitative approaches in general. In other words, anteroduction has not been fully elaborated as a logic of inquiry in its own right. I will develop the implications of anteroduction as logic of inquiry in interpreting texts, and as a mode of inference in comprehending the system of relations between interpreted texts. What is important to note is that no paradigm exists that incorporates all the phases listed above. Any attempt to equate this process with what is loosely termed a "hermeneutic-phenomenological approach" falls short of the mark. Ricoeur's hermeneutic arc encompasses processes 5) and 6) predominantly. The transition from the oral transmission of a significant event to an authoritative text via attentive listening, recording and transcribing, is the province of *philology*. This has been neglected in qualitative scientific discussions of justificatory processes and criteria. Philology is the study of *reliability* of textual editions. Hermeneutics is the study of the

validity of inferences drawn from critically selected texts.[29] But what study exists for *transduction,* the overall conclusions drawn from a comparison of these interpretations? I believe this is the true providence of phenomenology, as far as it attempts to describe essences and to see the universal in the individual. Essences are "the web of ideal possibilities and relationships that constitute a particular domain of experience."[30] As such, Husserl conceives of phenomenology "as a realm of a priori ideal meaning structures which provide the necessary structural links between empirical psychological acts on the one hand and the realm of ideal entities […] on the other."[31]

Explicating logics of inquiry: the problem of abduction

Blaikie defines logic of inquiry as "the logic used to generate new knowledge."[32] Danermark et al. use the term *mode of inference*: "logical inferences and also thought operations, different ways of reasoning and thinking in order to proceed from something to something else."[33] They shy away from the term logic, because all four modes of inference do not rely on formal logic. They use the concept of inference to denote various thought operations which are neither formalized nor strictly logical conclusions, but "suggest a form of argument advancing from one thing to something else, e.g. arguing from individual observations to gain knowledge about general basic structures."[34]

> In order to test the validity of different modes of inference, to understand their possibilities and limitations, we must know their fundamental structure. Scientific inference is partly about following formalized, strict rules for logical argument and argumentation. The principal resource demanded of the researcher is the ability for logical reasoning. But scientific inference, in the sense of thought operations, also involves different ways of reasoning, interpreting and drawing conclusions without following strictly formalized rules. Here the researcher's powers of abstraction, as well as imagination and creativity, can be crucial.[35]

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[29] This view entails that hermeneutics is not a research *method*. Nor is it a "philosophy", however, as implied in the "philosophical hermeneutics" of the Heidegger-inspired Gadamerian tradition.

[30] Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 108.

[31] Ibid., 109.

[32] Blaikie, *Designing Social Research,* 9.

[33] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences,* 73.

[34] Ibid., 76.

[35] Ibid., 79.

Danermark et al. state that there are four modes of inference: deduction, induction, retroduction and abduction.

> [T]he different modes of inference/thought operation … are foundational for the processes by which we in science develop, test and apply concepts and theories. Earlier, it was common procedure to differentiate between a deductive and an inductive approach when considering the relation between theorizing and empirical research. This is limiting. Retroduction is a key form of thought operation in theorizing and theory generation. When theories are used as guiding frameworks for interpretation, this is a mode of abductive inference which is an indispensable feature of much social science research.[36]

These are the same four logics of inquiry defined by Blaike. He claims that the choice of logic of inquiry depends on whether we attempt to answer research questions "by collecting data and generalizing from them, by finding a suitable theory that will provide the hypotheses to test, by searching for underlying causal mechanisms, or by seeking social actors' meanings and interpretations." It is clearly the latter approach that I must take. But what does one do once one has obtained peoples' meanings and interpretations? Generalising from the collected data is the inductive strategy, testing a hypothesis the deductive one. Discovering underlying causal mechanisms is the strategy of retroduction. These strategies clearly involve a logic of inquiry. But what inferences are to be drawn from the social actors' meanings? According to Blaikie,

> The starting point is the social world of the social actors being investigated: their construction of reality, their way of conceptualizing and giving meaning to their social world, their tacit knowledge. This can only be discovered from the accounts social actors provide. Their reality, the way they have constructed and interpreted their activities together, is embedded in their language. Hence, the researcher has to enter their world in order to discover the motives and meanings that accompany social activities. The task is then to redescribe these motives and meanings, and the situations in which they occur, in the technical language of social scientific discourse. Individual motives and actions have to be abstracted into typical motives for typical actions in typical situations. These social scientific typifications provide an understanding of the activities, and may then become ingredients in more systematic explanatory accounts.[37]

The strategy is one of obtaining typifications. However, is Blaikie right in calling this "abduction"? Blaikie's fourth strategy cannot properly be called a strategy or logic of inquiry. Seeking social actors' accounts is not a logic of inquiry; it is rather an approach to data collection. It may be compatible with different 'logics': qualitative induction (finding common categories in various statements), hypothetico-deductive (are these accounts expressions of the same phenomenon), or different hermeneutic approaches. Abduction aims "to discover why people do what they do by uncovering the largely tacit, mutual knowledge, the symbolic

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[36] Ibid., 149.

[37] Blaikie, *Designing Social Research,* 19.

meanings, intentions and rules, which provide the orientations for their actions."[38] "Therefore," claims Blaikie, "it is to the process of moving from lay descriptions of social life, to technical descriptions of that social life, that the notion of abduction is applied."[39] Uncovering reasons why something is the way it is may properly be understood as retroduction, however. Blaikie enumerates three stages of the abductive strategy. The first stage is to report the meanings and motives social actors give, and stay as close as possible to the account given by the social actor. However, if one stops at this point, says Blaikie, "abductive logic has not really come into play," as the researcher must go through one or two more stages:

> The first of these, and the second stage in the sequence, is for the researcher to abstract or generate technical concepts from these lay concepts. While this technical language removes the researcher somewhat from the social actor's world, it is necessary to constrain the process of generating social scientific concepts in order to maintain a close connection with it. Social actors need to be able to recognise themselves and others in the researcher's account.[…]
>
> At the third stage, the understanding obtained in the second stage can be taken in at least two directions. One is the refinement and further elaboration of this understanding by the continuing use of the Abductive research strategy, perhaps with other social actors in the same context, or by moving into similar or contrasting social contexts. The other possibility is to take the understanding obtained in the second stage and translate it into a form that can be used either in the Deductive research strategy or a version of the Retroductive strategy. This would involve supplementing understanding derived from the social actor's point of view with further input from the researcher's point of view.[40]

There is no description here of a particular mode of inference or reasoning. How does one "generate technical concepts"? What Blaikie describes here is a making of abstractions based on lay concepts. This is usually understood as qualitative induction in the literature on method. In "seeking social actors' meanings and interpretations" qualitative researchers are often concerned with "collecting data and generalising from them." In other words, the seeking is the method of data collection, but the logic of inquiry is hence one of qualitative induction. Blaikie's account is based on the methods devised by Grounded Theory and Phenomenological inquiries, for whom a principal concern was to evade "the risk of 'forcing' data into previous conceptual categories, that is, not being inductive enough."[41] Bendassolli argues that "the analytic core of many qualitative data analysis methods is the cycle composed of data coding,

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[38] Ibid., 89.

[39] Ibid., 90.

[40] Ibid., 90-91.

[41] Pedro F. Bendassolli, "Theory Building in Qualitative Research: Reconsidering the Problem of Induction [50 paragraphs]," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 14, no. 1, Art. 25 (2013): 5.

categorizing, and conceptualizing processes. I argue that this analytic cycle exposes the tensions inherent in the process of developing inductive theory from empirical data."[42] Thus, going from lay terms to abstractions is a bottom-up process, where particular terms and concepts are subsumed under larger categories and so-called "analytic generalisations" are developed. For proponents of qualitative induction, of course the major problem is 'generalisability', the problem of external validity: how to justify generalisations based on a small number of instances. Moreover, the belief that one can have theory-free abstractions is highly problematic. I assume this is the reason Blaikie has chosen to call this strategy 'abductive'.

Blaikie claims that abduction is now advocated as the appropriate mode of inference in theory construction in interpretative social science. Danermark et al. view abduction as a form of re-contextualisation used for the scientific process by which we interpret and give meaning to specific occurrences and phenomena, "taking our starting point in some form of interpretative framework. General theories can be used as such interpretative frameworks. Such interpretative frameworks contain fundamental social assumptions and cannot be subjected to decisive empirical tests."[43] Hence, whereas Blaikie indicates a move from specific data to general types, Danermark et al. point to an inference from a general theory to specific occurrences.

However, in Grounded theory, abduction has a different status. According to Charmaz, "we grounded theorists begin with a systematic inductive approach to inquiry, but do not stop with induction as we subject our findings and tentative categories to rigorous tests."[44] Because this is an iterative approach, going back and forth between analysis and data collection, researchers engage in "abductive reasoning when we come across a surprising finding during inductive data collection. Then we consider all possible theoretical accounts for this finding."[45] Thus, abductive reasoning is seen to advance theory construction.

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[42] Ibid., 24.

[43] Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences,* 146.

[44] Kathy Charmaz, "Grounded Theory Methods in Social Justice Research," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage, 2011), 360.

[45] Ibid., 361. This view of abduction is seconded by Jan Svennevig: "Both modes of inquiry [induction and deduction] involve a crucial element of *abduction*, that is, an inferential step from some initial puzzling fact to some hypothesized state of affairs (proposition, rule) that would explain it."[45] Jan Svennevig, *Getting acquainted in conversation. A study of initial interactions* (Dr. Art. Thesis, University of Oslo, Oslo, 1997), 81. Teddlie and Tashakkori argue that "abductive logic is a third type of logic that occurs when a researcher observes a surprising event and then tries to determine what has caused it… It is the process whereby a hypothesis is generated, so that the surprising event may be explained." C. Teddlie, and Abbas Tashakkori, "Mixed Methods Research: Contemporary Issues in an Emerging Field," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research,* ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (London: Sage Publications, 2011), 296.

There are, then, diverging versions of what abduction is in the literature on social research methods. Moreover, some researchers use the terms retroduction and abduction interchangeably.[46] Hence there are two major problems to be solved. Firstly, what are the retroductive and abductive modes of inference? Are they two distinct modes, are they synonymous, or is abduction a step in a retroductive process? Secondly, what logic of inquiry is adopted in interpreting the meanings of people's utterances? If we can clarify the first problem, then we may also determine the nature of the fourth logic of inquiry.

Pierce and the development of abduction

Charles Sanders Pierce introduced the terms retroduction and abduction. As his thinking evolved, however, he worked out various elaborations of the concepts in which their meanings altered. The Peircian scholar Maryann Ayim argues that retroduction, which in her view is the logic of discovery - "all actual discovery falls within the retroductive stage of inference"[47] - has had "little recognition and less understanding."[48] Conversely, Chiasson argues that "Pierce's concept of abduction is still poorly understood."[49] She argues that Pierce used the two concepts interchangeably, but suggests that abduction be understood as a mode on inference which constitutes an aspect of the overarching logical method of retroduction. McKaughan states that there exist two diverging interpretations of Pierce's abduction. The first view McKaughan terms the Generative Interpretation, in which abduction is "a recipe for generating new theoretical *discoveries*." The second view, the Justificatory Interpretation, sees it is "a mode of reasoning that *justifies* beliefs about the probable truth of theories."[50] Both views are problematic in that

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[46] See for instance Bjørnar Sæther, "Retroduction: An Alternative Research Strategy," *Business Strategy and the Environment* 7, no. 4 (1998): 246, where they are treated synonymously: "According to Alvesson and Sköldberg retroduction (or, in their terminology, abduction) is suited to finding theoretical patterns, or deep structures, that if valid will help in conceptualising the empirical and deductive patterns that are observed in a single case."

[47] Maryann Ayim, "Retroduction: The Rational Instinct," *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society* 10, no. 1 (1974): 34.

[48] Ibid., 41.

[49] Phyllis Chiasson, "Abduction as an aspect of retroduction," *Semiotica* 153, no. 1/4 (2005): 223.

[50] Daniel J. McKaughan, "From Ugly Duckling to Swan: C. S. Pierce, Abduction, and the Pursuit of Scientific Theories," *Transactions of the Charles S. Pierce Society* 44, no. 3 (2008): 447. McKaughan makes a claim for a third view, that abductive reasoning leads to judgments about the *pursuitworthiness* of theories. I do not find his argument particularly convincing or important, and therefore not "pursuitworthy" in my further discussion.

they only account for some of Pierce's statements, according to McKaughan. If McKaughan is right in his assertion that "clarifying the notion of abduction is the fundamental problem of contemporary epistemology,"[51] then the problem clearly also involves clarification of retroduction. In all probability, Pierce did not himself arrive at a clear conceptualisation.

The pragmatic model of inquiry[52] is based in classical logic, as Aristotle in fact identified three distinct modes of reasoning: deduction, induction and abduction. The latter form of inference can only bring about approximate knowledge, in contrast to the certain knowledge of deduction and the probabilistic knowledge of induction. It requires attention to context and purpose, and is thus based as much in rhetoric as in formal logic. However, there is a great tension inherent in Pierce's definition of abduction. 'Abduction' is the most literal translation of Aristotle's *apagoge,* 'leading away'. However, 'retroduction' specifies a *direction* of inference, a leading back from the data to an antecedent or underlying causal mechanism. According to Sayer, retroduction is the "mode of inference in which events are explained by postulating (and identifying) mechanisms which are capable of producing them."[53] Just by studying the words, we can see that 'abduction' leads us away from where we are, while 'retroduction', in leading back to, leads us in a definite direction. Two attempts to clarify these terms have been made by Chiasson and Fischer respectively.

If modern researchers were to accept her definition of abduction as an aspect of retroduction, says Chiasson, then "we could finally begin the task of developing effective operational definitions for abduction and retroduction."[54] She elucidates three different uses of the term 'abduction' in Pierce's writings: (i) as a response to an anomalous fact that results in a hunch about the probable cause; (ii) as the aesthetic process of *musement,* which follows no rules; (iii) an inference which is not psychological but is deduced mathematically from the categories. Thus, the term seems to encompass a confusion of logical and psychological elements. Hence Chiasson raises the question: "How can either of the first two senses of abduction be reconciled with Pierce's contention that abduction is a logical form and not

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[51] Ibid., 446.

[52] John Dewey defined inquiry as "the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole." (John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1938).We see that this "pattern of inquiry" bears a distinct similarity to the "hermeneutic circle". Or rather, "hermeneutic circle" is an imprecise way of referring to modes of inquiry in interpretation.

[53] Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (London: Routledge, 1992), 107.

[54] Chiasson, "Abduction as an aspect of retroduction," 223.

psychological – aren't surprises, guesses, and musing psychological processes?"[55] Chiasson emphasises the need for "rescuing the terms abduction and retroduction from their mistaken synonymy and place them into service appropriately."[56] Studying the etymology of the words, she finds that "retroduction is intended to be a deliberate and recursive process involving more than the making of an abductive inference," while abduction "fits well with the concept of moving away from a particular course of topic, as one would when responding to an anomaly or surprising fact."[57] I agree with this. A surprise is a discovery of not-knowing: Things are not what I thought they were. One's thought process is lead away from its current track. What Pierce therefore meant, argues Chiasson, was that "within the full process of engendering a hypothesis (which is certainly a retroductive process), resides the subordinate process of noticing an anomaly and getting an explanatory hunch (by means of abduction)."[58] This leads her to define abduction as "certain patterns of qualities and relations among qualities resulting in abductive inferences, which can be ascertained to some degree by extracting these from heuristic representations of those qualities."[59] Such representations can provide forms and models, and the formation of systems of propositions, argues Chiasson. She proceeds to define abduction as a *method*: "abduction is the method by which qualities as potentialities are noticed, related and formed into meaningful relationships […] it is the method by which the aesthetic ideal is expressed."[60] Chiasson emphasises that all three inferencing modes (abduction, deduction and induction) interact during the engendering of a hypothesis. Therefore she suggests that retroduction includes all three in a process of abductively "bringing a new idea up", "using deduction to explicate and demonstrate to oneself aspects of that idea", using "induction to evaluate and secure that idea".[61] Retroduction has now become a process consisting of three different modes of inference. This conclusion is not convincing, and does not follow from her first assertion.

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[55] Ibid., 225.

[56] Ibid., 225.

[57] Ibid., 226.

[58] Ibid., 228.

[59] Ibid., 234.

[60] Ibid., 236.

[61] Ibid., 238.

Fischer argues that although abductive reasoning is strictly speaking not a logically correct inference, it is still a scientifically viable mode of reasoning. (He does not refer to retroduction, and it is therefore unclear whether he treats it as synonymous with abduction or no.) He attempts to deal with the operational core of logic by focusing on the operational aspects of knowing as inferring. If, claims Fischer, "inferring can be understood to be the rule-governed progression from A to B, from the One to the Other, then all the processes classified as processes of understanding necessarily involve rule-bound inference."[62] Fischer draws up the following formula of the three modes of inference:

Deduction: From Rule/law (A) via case (B) to result/observation (C).

Induction: From Result/observation (C) via case (B) to rule/law (A).

Abduction: from result/observation (C) back to Rule/law (A) and then to case (B).

Fischer gives two examples of the latter mode of inference. The first example: (i) the road is wet (observation); if it rains, the road will become wet (rule); it has been raining (case). The second example: (i) Person X has red spots all over face; (ii) If X has measles, then his face is covered with red spots; (iii) X has measles. Both examples have the same structure, of leading back from observation to rule and then inferring the case. Such reasoning from effect to cause is fallacious in traditional syllogistic logic, but I think it constitutes the very form of the rhetorical proof known as enthymeme by *semeia* (sign), in which one must provide the missing premise. However, what is evident about these examples is that neither observation represents a surprising fact or anomaly (which Chiasson defines as essential to abduction). They are not unexpected in the context, and one reaches for the nearest or most plausible hypothesis. The hypothesis of measles is based on previous inductive knowledge, and as such is an instance of phronesis, of applying expert judgment. This may be a retroductive inference, if retroduction is to lead back from observation to rule, but *there is no element of abduction.* What is evident is that for a result or observation to be surprising, it must disconfirm a previously (tacitly) held hypothesis. For instance, if looking more closely the spots are not actually red, we realise that it is not a case of measles. Then what is it? Now we must find a new rule. I thus believe there is a circle involved, which we may well call hermeneutic. It is surprising that what we initially thought were red spots are not-quite-red spots, but something slightly different. We are led away from our current conception, and realise that we must form a new one. This is an

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[62] Hans Rudi Fischer, "Abductive reasoning as a way of worldmaking," *Foundations of Science* 6, no. 4 (2001): 362.

inference: I infer that there is an 'empty place', the need for a new hypothesis. Thus, what Fischer simply presents in syllogistic form as a C-A-B movement cannot essentially illustrate abduction. Rather, we would have to illustrate it in the following circular form: B – C – A – B. It is when we discover that something is not the case (the surprising fact is the mismatch between observation and presumed rule), that abduction is necessary. Thus, we see that abduction is a moment in retroduction, and that there is a hermeneutic circle (from B to B).

Now, if we agree with Chiasson's first proposition, that abduction is a part of retroduction, we may develop this further, by stating: the retroductive logic of inquiry leads back from data to an antecedent or underlying cause. Sometimes one discovers that the existing explanations only lead to anomalies. Then abduction comes into play: we must infer that the invention of a new rule is necessary. Finding the new rule is the free-play of musement. Fischer asserts that the foundation of hermeneutics is abduction. According to Fischer, abduction "creates the framework which makes it possible to attribute a singular meaning to signs." Furthermore, the interpretation of signs, he maintains, "is always abductive, or in other words: the fundamental constructive principle of all semiotic interpretation is the finding or inventing of a hypothesis."[63] Because the act of semiotic understanding can "consist only in the attribution of meaning through a – his/her – frame of reference (encoding rule). Therefore abductive inference is the basic principle of all hermeneutic procedures."[64] Fischer suggests that abductive inferences, although they violate logic, are rational, and that they "may be interpreted as creative changes of the semantic content of concepts or conceptual systems […] as is the case with all 'paradigm changes'."[65] When a new 'major premise' is invented, new and different standards are constructed. These "are not true or false in themselves but only more or less useful in the realisation of particular interests or goals."[66] Fischer has indicated two avenues for abduction: discovering new mechanisms or creation of a conceptual system. I think only the first direction may be called retroductive. Looking closely at Pierce's own developing definitions as they evolved in the course of his thinking, it may be possible to find the description of an additional inferential direction.

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[63] Ibid., 372.

[64] Ibid., 373.

[65] Ibid., 376.

[66] Ibid., 376.

In Pierce's formulations from 1878 and 1883, abduction and induction are both described as inversion of a deductive syllogism. He understood abduction to be the inference of a Case from a Result and a Rule, while induction was the inference of a Rule from a Case and a Result – just as Fischer has illustrated. Thus, the formula of abduction marked "the process by which a confused concatenation of predicates is brought into order under a synthesising predicate."[67] Pierce gave the general formula as:

Result: S is M1 M2 M3 M4
Rule: P is M1 M2 M3 M4
Case: Therefore, S is P.

Here, a single predicate that embraces all the facts is found which explains them. However, in 1900 Pierce came to see that this definition did not designate abduction. Because it was actually a process of generalising about characters rather than things, this is better understood as *qualitative induction.* In light of this, we can also see that a research strategy that aims to take statements from several participants and subsume under a synthesising predicate follows a logic of inquiry that is qualitative induction. Although Pierce came to treat abduction as no longer constrained by the framework of the syllogism, it still had a definable and definite logical form:

The surprising fact, C, is observed;
But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,
Hence there is reason to suspect that A is true. (CP 5.189, 1903).[68]

This is the formula of retroduction: reasoning that leads back from a consequent to its antecedent. The logic is: We need A in order to make sense of C. Or: C makes best sense in the light of A. However, in 1908 Pierce gives a different, inverse definition or formula:

If A were true, C would be observable.
A is true.
Therefore, C is observable.[69]

The curious thing about his last formula is that it is not *retroductive.* Here we are not going from C back to A. Nor is it deductive, in that it does not take a case and a rule and finds the

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[67] Charles Sanders Pierce, *Studies in Logic by Members of the Johns Hopkins University,* ed. Achim Eschbach (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1883. Reprinted: Foundations of Semiotics, vol. 1. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1983).

[68] Cited in Internet Encyclopedia of philosophy. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource: http://www.iep.utm.edu/peir-log/#SH2c.

[69] Ibid.

result. Instead, we are moving *forward* from A to C. If we have A, by derivation or by invention, and A is true – which can only be determined analytically, then we can determine new particulars. This mode of inference, being inverse to that of retroduction, can therefore only be called *anteroductive.* Now if we are to present this formulaically, we may say that instead of the B – C – A – B of abduction in retroduction, we have B – A – C – B. The abduction of anteroduction likewise involves a hermeneutic circle. Our initial understanding is that Y is a case of X. However, on closer inspection, there are also dissimilarities between them. Hence, Y is only a case of X if we alter the meaning of X. In analytically redefining X, in developing a new rule, we may then see C in a new light. We see that it is a case of B`. It is important to note that, just as Fischer argues that abduction is at the root of hermeneutic procedures, there are two different hermeneutic procedures: that of leading the text back to its origin, or leading it forwards to its destination.

If my interpretation of Pierce's evolving formulations is correct, he elucidates four distinct modes of inference: qualitative induction, retroduction, anteroduction and abduction. Whereas the former three represent logics of inquiry that can be made into research strategies, abduction cannot be a research strategy as such. Abduction is an inferential step that is a necessary element in the retroductive and anteroductive logics of inquiry. We now have four modes of inference: deduction, induction, retroduction, anteroduction. These can be described as differing configurations of proposition and justification. Deduction combines analytic proposition and a priori justification. Induction combines synthetic proposition and a posteriori justification. Retroduction combines synthetic proposition and a priori justification. Anteroduction combines analytic proposition and a posteriori justification. Of course, for Kant the combination of analytic and a posteriori was paradoxical and he discounted this possibility. Nevertheless, anteroduction is a logical possibility.[70] But it depends on a hermeneutic circle. In carrying forth a concept to interpret a meaning, I discover that the concept does not quite fit. I

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[70] The most familiar example of the analytic a priori of deduction is that of "all bachelors are unmarried." We can use this example to illustrate the analytic a posteriori of anteroduction. 'Bachelorette' is a term used in American English for a single, unmarried woman. The term is *derived* from the word bachelor. In older English, the female counterpart term was 'spinster', but this had negative connotations. It was experienced as necessary to see unmarried women in a new light. Hence, a new term is derived from a set of logical possibilities, which only acquires meaning when we are a posteriori enabled to see unmarried women in a new light. This process differs from the social constructivist account precisely in that it is an encounter with a necessity that precipitates the *derivation* of a new concept.

must then analyse the concept to derive new conceptual definitions. This is an analytic process. I then carry the new concept forward in order to interpret the sign. In the abductive moment, in the dialogue between texts and concepts, I find that there are experiences for which no concepts fit, and so I create a new concept. This new concept allows me to make a posteriori new observations about a phenomenon. In retroduction, we abductively come across a surprising fact. In anteroduction, we abductively discover a disharmony in the system of conceptual relations.

I have already used an anteroductive mode of inference twice. The first instance was in introducing *subservation.* There are two empirical modes: observation and testing. But testing has two different aspects: experimenting and examining. Then I asked: does the same thing hold for observation – are there two different aspects? Looking into the etymology of the word, one finds that it signifies an act of attending to something and a position in which one attends. From this one may create the possibility of a different position in attending to something. Rather than standing before an object, 'ob', in attending to it, we place ourselves under it, we subject ourselves to it. Thus, we have derived subservation analytically. It is a particular way of relating to the other in dialogue. This conceptualisation will allow me to see particular aspects of an interview that changes my experience of it. (This will be discussed in a later section.) The second instance is that of anteroduction itself. First of all, a conceptual confusion was identified, a disharmony of relations. We had one inference 'leading up' (induction), one 'leading down' (deduction) and one 'leading back' – and the anomaly of abduction, 'leading away'. Aesthetically, we "ought" to have a 'leading forward', an anteroduction. Hence, when studying the different formulations of Pierce, this analytic of anteroduction allows us to a posteriori see his last formula as an expression of anteroduction. The formula is old, described by Pierce; its use as a mode of inference is much older still; what is new is merely the analytic term. But it allows two things: the development of an anteroductive research strategy and an anteroductive logic of inquiry in acts of interpretation.

The retroductive logic of inquiry is a leading back from observations to an underlying causal mechanism, where one chooses the best one of a range of alternative hypotheses. This inference to the best possible explanation is a mode of "reasoning from consequent to antecedent."[71] However, to be something more than an enthymeme, there must be an element of abduction. We may discover that there exists no known hypothesis that can account for the

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[71] Pierce quoted in Fischer, "Abductive reasoning as a way of worldmaking," 369.

surprising facts, and so conclude that a new hypothesis must be found on a different ontic level. Such a discovery and subsequent looking elsewhere is an abductive inference. If the retroductive inquiry is to lead beyond case study into the development of new theory, this abductive stage is necessary. It is only by comparing different instances that one may abduct to an explanation on a different ontic level. An obvious example of such retroduction is Freud's discovery of the unconscious through inferring from several cases.

In the anteroductive logic of inquiry, there is a leading forward from a new rule, derived from the patterns of relations of concepts, in order to interpret actual observations and realise the meaning of the concept through the actual instance. This is analogous to what is known as "case-based reasoning", which implies "adapting old solutions to meet new demands; using old cases to explain new situations […] or reasoning from precedents to interpret a new situation."[72] However, to be something more than an instance of *paradeigma*, an analogy between a case and a previous case, there must be an element of abduction. Upon closer inspection, the case, although similar, turns out not to be identical. The rule and the observation do not quite fit. This means we need to analyse the rule again, to define the concept more precisely or derive new concepts. This is a process of reflexively changing one's preconceptions. In carrying the new concept forward in application to the instance, we arrive at a more precise understanding of the case, but also of the system of conceptual relations of which it forms part. As Chiasson says, this means we perceive "certain patterns of qualities and relations among qualities resulting in abductive inferences, which can be ascertained to some degree by extracting these from heuristic representations of those qualities."[73] Such representations can provide forms and models, and the formation of systems of propositions, argues Chiasson. She proceeds to define abduction as a *method*: "abduction is the method by which qualities as potentialities are noticed, related and formed into meaningful relationships […] it is the method by which the aesthetic ideal is expressed."[74] In my view, however, this is the abductive part of anteroduction.

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[72] Janet L. Kolodner, "An Introduction to Case-Based Reasoning," *Artificial Intelligence Review* 6 (1992): 4.

[73] Chiasson, "Abduction as an aspect of retroduction," 234.

[74] Ibid., 236.

Anteroductive hermeneutics in Gadamer and Ricoeur

Both retroduction and anteroduction lead us away from our preconceptions to arrive at new understanding. In both cases there is a hermeneutic circle. They take us in opposite directions, however. Either we may go from data/observation/text back to the underlying cause or mechanism, or we may go forward from an analysed conceptual system to the realisation of the meaning of particulars. An understanding of these two logics is fundamental to qualitative or hermeneutic approaches that seek to theorise from particular instances. One is not seeking to find a common quality or general rule of which all instances are examples. Instead, one takes patterns of relations between particulars and infer from them back to an underlying cause, or these patterns of relations allow one to comprehend a larger 'overlying' conceptual system. Whereas retroduction is the logic of inquiry involved in answering a *why* question, anteroduction is the logic of inquiry involved in answering a *how* question. In fact, the logic of inquiry in retroduction takes the form of a *whence* question: leading the text back to its origin; the logic of inquiry in anteroduction, on the other hand, takes the form of a *whither* question: leading the text forward to its destination, its realisation in the reader's appropriation of its meaning.

Ricoeur, in an attempt to outline "the contours of the hermeneutic field" distinguishes between two opposite forms of hermeneutics: a hermeneutics of faith and a hermeneutics of suspicion.[75] The former is akin to hermeneutics in the classical sense, whereas the latter is the modernist stance of Nietzsche, Freud and Marx. The former conceives of the interpretative process as being one of distilling and elucidating the intended meaning of the author, the latter seeks to discover meanings that lie hidden within a false or self-inadequate consciousness. Is it justified to equate the former with anteroduction and the latter with retroduction? Not quite, in so far as the hermeneutics of faith or suspicion imply ideological stances. Only if one discovers signs of an underlying mechanism, rather than posit it beforehand, can there be a retroductive hermeneutics. Conversely, only if one comprehends the meaning of the text in relation to a changed pre-understanding, can there be an anteroductive hermeneutics. In my view, both the hermeneutics of faith and the hermeneutic of suspicion belong to a realist ontology. Whether one traces the text's meaning back to an author's intention or to a mechanism outside the author's consciousness (social, material or unconscious factors), one engages in retroductive hermeneutics which attempts to answer the question of *whence?* Interpretation in both instances

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[75] Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An essay on interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970).

involves establishing the text's true point of origin. In my view, both Gadamer's and Ricoeur's hermeneutics point in the opposite direction, towards the question of *whither?*, *i.e.* to anteroduction, although without naming it.

Of course, Gadamer in his orientation towards a philosophical hermeneutics de-emphasises hermeneutics as a method, and sees it as a way of being ("understanding is the original characteristic of the being of human life itself").[76] Gadamer states that hermeneutics is "an attempt to understand what the human sciences truly are, beyond their methodological self-consciousness, and what connects them with the totality of our experience of the world."[77] However, he does not argue against method: "not in the slightest prevent the methods of modern natural science from being applied to the social world. […] Nor did I propose to revive the ancient dispute on method between the natural and the human sciences. It is hardly a question of different methods. […] The difference that confronts us is not in the method but in the objectives of knowledge."[78] I find Gadamer's conception of method confused. A method is the way one seeks to attain the objective of knowledge. Moreover, in his hermeneutics he does imply a methodic logic of inquiry. Gadamer, in describing the process of the fusion of horizons, stresses that interpretation must navigate between the twin dangers of Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand is the risk of reducing the other to the same, where our preconceptions match the text. On the other hand is the risk of treating the text as alien, where it lies outside the bounds of our horizon altogether. "The interpreter dealing with a traditionary text tries to apply it to himself. He must relate the text to his situation if he wants to understand it at all."[79] We may schematise the process thus: firstly, there is an initial understanding based on analogous reasoning - this element of the text is similar to X, however, it is also dissimilar. I am hence required to reconsider my preconception, and revise it. This is tantamount to a reconceptualization. I then carry this forward to meet the text again. And in realising its meaning, I have at the same time modified the horizon of the text as well as my self-understanding. This logic is essentially anteroductive.

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[76] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 250.

[77] Ibid., xxii.

[78] Ibid., xxvi.

[79] Ibid., 321.

Ricoeur comes very close to identifying hermeneutics with a distinct logic of inquiry: "Hermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts."[80] According to Ricoeur, hermeneutics has always had a double filiation: to struggle against misunderstanding and lack of clarity on the one hand, and, following Schleiermacher, to understand the author better than he understands himself on the other. It is this latter filiation which is changed in contemporary hermeneutics: instead of a psychological transposal into the mind of the author, the focus of attention is turned to the reader. "The text must be unfolded, no longer towards its author, but towards its immanent sense and towards the world which it opens up and discloses."[81] This unfolding towards can only be revealed as a carrying forward towards its destination in application or appropriation. Ricoeur uses a spatial metaphor to signify this relation: "to interpret is to explicate the type of being-in-the-world unfolded *in front of* the text."[82] It is not something that lies *behind* the text, but is *ahead* of it, towards which we must move: anteroduction. Hence, whereas both Dilthey and the hermeneuticists of suspicion unfold the text back towards its author or its underlying origin, we see that Ricoeur's orientation is anteroductive. Ricoeur upholds the doubleness: interpretation is both the struggle to establish the immanent sense of the text and to appropriate meaning, where "understanding is not concerned with grasping a fact but with apprehending a possibility of being."[83] Ricoeur takes his starting point in Dilthey, but changes the dichotomy of explanation-understanding into one of explanation-interpretation. Then he derives a new foundation for explanation, based on linguistics rather than natural science: "explanation is no longer a concept borrowed from the natural sciences and transferred to the alien domain of written artefacts; rather, it stems from the very sphere of language."[84] His project is to establish a complementary interrelation between explanation and interpretation, showing how it is their interplay that leads to understanding:

> We can, as readers, remain in the suspense of the text, treating it as worldless and authorless object; in this case, we explain the text in terms of its internal relations, its structure. On the other hand, we can lift

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[80] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 43.

[81] Ibid., 53.

[82] Ibid., 141.

[83] Ibid., 56.

[84] Ibid., 157.

the suspense and fulfil the text in speech, restoring it to living communication; in this case, we interpret the text. These two possibilities both belong to reading, and reading is the dialectic of these two attitudes.[85]

The explanation seeks to analyse the text's signifying function: "The sense of the [text] consists in the very arrangement of the elements, in the power of the whole to integrate the sub-units; and conversely, the sense of an element in its capacity to enter into relations with other elements and with the whole of the work."[86] What is important to note, however, is that "explanation is nothing if it is not incorporated as an intermediary stage in the process of self-understanding."[87] Ricoeur then arrives at the following end-point for the interpretation of a text: "in the self-interpretation of a subject who then understands himself better."[88] Initially, says Ricoeur, the text "had only a sense, that is, internal relations or a structure; now it has meaning, that is, a realisation in the discourse of the reading subject." By regarding sense-making as only a necessary stage on the path towards understanding, it becomes "possible to situate explanation and interpretation along a unique *hermeneutic arc* and to integrate the opposed attitudes of explanation and understanding within an overall conception of reading as the recovery of meaning."[89] To interpret is then to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself *en route* towards the *orient* of the text. In other words, one asks *whither* does the text lead us. But this appropriation must be postponed until the termination of the process, it is "the anchorage of the arch in the ground of lived experience."[90]

This hermeneutic arc takes us through several stages: a preliminary structural analysis of the internal relations of the text in comparison with other texts; an interpretation of the text's meaning, and an act of appropriation where the interpreter relates it to his or her horizon. The aim is not to recover the originary experience of the readers with who I enter into dialogue; I do not intend to establish 'what really happened then'. Rather, I seek to realise the meaning of the lived experience through a dialogue with my horizon of understanding. I implicitly ask: Whither does the expression of this experience take us? As such, the logic of inquiry is

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[85] Ibid., 152.

[86] Ibid., 156.

[87] Ibid., 159.

[88] Ibid., 158.

[89] Ibid., 161.

[90] Ibid., 164.

anteroductive. The inferential process of going from the contemplation of a series of idiographic interpretations to the elaboration of a theory in the form of a comprehensive system of relations is the final and abductive stage of such a logic. The anteroductive research strategy is the *methodos* for answering the *how may this be experienced*-question. The process of data production, collecting, editing and selecting narratives for interpretation, rests upon *subservation*. The process of data interpretation rests upon an anteroductive hermeneutics. The abductive inferential process of theory-building involves a self-reflective interpretation, an interpretation of the idiographic interpretations in relation to my horizon of understanding of aesthetic affective experiences and the deep structures of literature.

Questions of reliability and validity in relation to an anteroductive research strategy

Essentially, scientific method is everywhere and always the same: collecting, selecting, and analysing data, and 'bringing home' the findings. Collecting, selecting and presenting the data is the process of *data production*. Analysis of data is the process of *data reduction*. And relating the findings to a context (either to the real world or the world of ideas) is *data transduction*. Each of these processes, to fulfil epistemological requirements, must answer to a fundamental demand. Data production must be reliable, and the selection must demonstrate construct validity. Data transduction must have internal validity, and the reduction must have external validity. All attempts at evading these requirements run the risk of having truth claims dismissed as unjustified. This has nothing to do with positivism or the natural sciences. However, to claim that reliability is the same as replicability or that validity is the same as exact knowledge, is simply to be narrow-minded.

What is the essence of *reliability?* The notion of replicability is a local interpretation of reliability. Data production is reliable if you have *access to* the same object of interpretation as I do. If only the researcher(s) have access to the data, then the production is not reliable. This does not mean that the raw data must be presented to you, but they must be objectively *re-presented*. Reliability can mean one of two things: I provide you with the means for replication. Then you obtain data under the same set of circumstances by going out there. Or, I show you how I developed the data, and re-present all the data to you. Then you have indirect access to

the same data as I do. I must show how I went from having no data to *these* data, i.e. how the data are *produced*. 'Pro-duction' means 'to bring forth'. Thus it has a double meaning: developing data (collecting and re-presenting) and bringing them forth for inspection. If the data production is reliable it enables you to re-produce this process; not necessarily in an act of replication, but mentally retracing the steps. So in the context of interviews with participants, reliability means that you are shown a re-presentation of the entire dialogue. This does not mean that you must either be present in the room during the dialogue, nor that you be able to listen to the recording. It does not mean that you are provided with the transcript as such, it means that you are provided with a *text* that re-presents the dialogue. In this text, no utterance has been deleted or added. But the transcript has been modified into written language, i.e. turned into sentences with punctuation. But, would not a transcript that represents as much accurate information about speech as possible be the most reliable? No. If you read such a transcript, you will not get a proper characterisation of the person. It weakens the ethos of the speaker. I must endeavour to represent the speaker as ethically as possible. In the context of a narrative approach, to present the transcript in all its minutiae is not an accurate representation. A transcript is suspended communication, frozen between the dynamics of the oral dialogue and the fixed textual representation. In the context of an interview, reliable data does not mean that the person's utterance is an objective recalling of what really happened. Nor does it mean that the researcher's influence can somehow be subtracted to arrive at objectivity. It does not mean that the recording captures everything that passed between the people in the room. It does not mean that every sound on the recording be turned into a sign in the transcript. It does not mean that the text to be interpreted is the transcript itself. What it does mean is this: In presenting the text to you, the entire dialogue is re-presented in written form. So in addition to presenting the text, I must show you how the transcript was transformed into scripture. In doing so, I will have produced consistent and reliable data. The data is the given, what is given for interpretation. As such, these data are *real*, they are here. Data does not mean something that was out there. 'Data' does not mean 'found', as it is taken to mean in a positivist approach. Nor does it mean 'made', as it does in a constructionist approach. 'Data' means given: what is given to us, researcher and reader, for analysis and interpretation.

What is the essence of *validity?* That any inference, whether inductive, deductive, retroductive or anteroductive, is *well grounded in the data*. Hence, internal validity means that the analysis or interpretation stays as close to the data as possible. In interpreting a text, this amounts to *close reading*. Construct validity is the making sure that we do not compare apples

and oranges. External validity does not necessarily entail generalisation to other situations in time and space. It means that the interpretations are related to an external context, whether that be "the world out there" or to a set of concepts and ideas, a theory, in a manner which has a demonstrable logic of inquiry.

Much of the attempts on the part of qualitative researchers to establish their difference from the natural sciences is based on natural science's misappropriation of the concepts of reliability and validity. However, researchers have attempted to come up with their own criteria of justification. In a study of the various criteria introduced by qualitative researchers, Tracy lists the following: catalytic validity, empathetic validity, crystallisation, tacit knowledge and transferability. She concludes that the "cornucopia of distinct concepts stand in marked contrast to the relative consensus in the quantitative community that good research aims for validity, reliability, generalizability and objectivity. However, our vast array of criteria can also bewilder those new to the field."[91] Therefore, Tracy attempts to introduce a parsimonious set of universal criteria for evaluating the quality of the research. She enlists a set of eight criteria: worthy topic; rich rigour; sincerity; credibility; resonance; significant contribution; ethics; and meaningful coherence.[92] However, I fail to see how such criteria can be evaluated. For instance, what is a "worthy topic"? Sincerity and ethics are sine qua non conditions of any kind of endeavour. I firmly believe that any scientific procedure must be justified in terms of reliability and validity.

When the method is one of subservation, the justificatory processes may be conceptualised as follows:

(i)   Ensuring that data production is reliable is the province of philology, the study of establishing authoritative textual editions of orally transmitted significant experiences.

(ii) Ensuring that the critical selection of texts for interpretation and the interpretive inferences drawn from them are valid, is the province of hermeneutics.

(iii) Ensuring that theorising from the idiographic interpretations meets the criterion of external validity, is the province of phenomenology.

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[91] Sarah J. Tracy, "Qualitative Quality: Eight 'Big-Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 16, no. 10 (2010): 837.

[92] Ibid., 840.

Thus, in procedural terms, an anterodutive research strategy must ensure that these demands be met:

(i) There must be a definite method of subservation in interviews; all data to be interpreted must be presented to the reader. Answering these two demands ensures that data production is reliable.

(ii) There must be a clear rationale for the critical selection of data. Answering this demand ensures construct validity, so that instances may be compared. A clear logic of inquiry for idiographic interpretations must be worked out. Answering this demand is a question of internal validity.

(iii) There must be a mode of inference for relating the idiographic interpretations to each other and to a wider context. External validity is a matter of answering this demand.

It is the procedures related to solving these problems that constitute the method of Intimate Reading. The mapping of my *methodos* – the research design and choices undertaken before, during and after interviews – will be presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. Intimate Reading

Data Production: The Philological Arc

Participants: Recruitment, ethical considerations

Research design overview

The data collection design was uniform: to recruit 15-20 participants for a single-session in-depth interview in a secluded environment; estimated length 90-150 minutes. The participants were to be specifically instructed to bring the literary work in question to the interview. Interviewing was chosen as method of data collection because few documents of transformative reading experiences of general readers exist. A single-session format was chosen due to both practical constraints and theoretical considerations. The theoretical considerations will be discussed in the next session on interview method. This section deals with choices pertaining to recruitment and selection of participants and the ethical considerations of the study.

Sampling in interview-based qualitative research

The psychologist Oliver C. Robinson has, on the grounds that sampling has not been subjected to thorough methodological discussion in textbooks, developed a clear and useful guide to sampling in interview-based qualitative research. His framework divides the sampling procedure into four components: (i) setting a sample universe by means of definite inclusion and exclusion criteria for potential participation; (ii) selecting a sample size; (iii) devising a sample strategy; and (iv) sample sourcing. He argues that these four concerns must be made explicit for a qualitative study to be trustworthy.[1] There are, in my view, two problems related to the concept and practice of sampling in interview-based studies. Firstly, sampling is tied to

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[1] Oliver C. Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11, no. 1 (2014): 25-41.

the concept of *generalisation.* However, not all qualitative studies aim to generalise. In my view, generalisation is only an aim in inductive research strategies. Secondly, sampling implies that the selection is made from a population in order to determine data *collection.* Hence it deals with *who* one should collect data from/about. It does not encompass the critical dimension of qualification of the data collected. In qualitative studies one ought to distinguish between sourcing participants and critically selecting qualified data. Problems of validity may arise if critical selection is understood to be a one-step procedure related to data collection. Therefore, the concept of sampling is problematic. Using a term from Heidegger, we may say that the concept should be put "under erasure": it is insufficient, and yet one must use it as it is an integral part of the research nomenclature.[2] I will use "sampling" to designate the process of recruiting participants. However, I will use "critical selection" to designate the process of judging which transcribed interviews meet all the inclusion criteria for an LCFRE, a construct that can only fully be defined after a preliminary comparative analysis of all interviews. In my view, such construct validity can only be determined *a posteriori*, as the data collected must be subjected to qualification through a critical selection procedure.

The *sample universe* is Robinson's term for what is often referred to as 'target' or 'study population', comprising the totality of people who may be sampled. Inclusion and/or exclusion criteria draw a boundary around the sample universe. Robinson emphasises that this boundary "provides an important theoretical role in the analysis and interpretation process by specifying what a sample is a sample *of*, and thus defining who or what a study is about."[3] I contend that there must be a critical selection process of the data to be presented for interpretation. Thus critical selection in interview-based studies should involve both collection and selection of data. It is therefore a two-stage process, involving critical decisions both prior to and after collecting the data. Therefore 'sample universe' refers to the population from which one may recruit, whereas 'selection universe' refers to the totality of transcribed interviews from which narratives may be selected for idiographic interpretation. If the sample is homogeneous, says Robinson, "any generalisation from the study is made cautiously to that localised sample universe," whereas a heterogeneous sample means that "any commonality found across a diverse group of cases is more likely to be a widely generalizable phenomenon."[4] The source

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[2] See Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude,* trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[3] Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-based Qualitative Research," 28.

[4] Ibid., 27.

of homogeneity may be either (i) demographic (specific age range, gender or ethnic group); (ii) geographical; (iii) sharing a common physical characteristic; (iv) psychological (common trait or ability); or (v) life-history homogeneity ("resulting from participants sharing a past life experience in common"[5]). Hence, I will operate with a life-historic source of homogeneity, asking potential participants 'has a work of literature changed your life?' Thus, any adult person who answers affirmatively forms part of the sample universe of my study.

Sample size is influenced by both theoretical and practical considerations: "a provisional decision on sample size at the initial design stage" is required, according to Robinson, and research that has an idiographic aim "typically seek a sample size that is sufficiently small for individual cases to have a locatable voice within the study, and for an intensive analysis of each case to be conducted."[6] A much-debated issue is how many participants is needed. Kuzel maintains that six to eight participants are sufficient in qualitative research.[7] Morse suggests that a minimum of six study objects is desirable,[8] while McCracken proposes that as few as eight interviews will suffice to cover the substantive content of a new domain.[9] According to Smith et al., in phenomenologically oriented inquiries there is a guideline of 3-16 participants.[10] In case-studies, N = 1 can be a justified strategy.[11] In line with my view of sampling as a two-stage process of sampling and selection, I believe that there are two different sizes: the number of recruited participants/interviews, and the number of interviews subsequently selected and presented for interpretation. The number of participants is primarily a matter of extrinsic constraints; subject to availability and time constraints, the researcher recruits as many participants as possible. I deemed that it would be realistic to recruit 15-20 persons; concomitantly, I would not have time to process more data than 15-20 interviews. The number of interviews selected for interpretation depends on a process of qualification of data, and

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[5] Ibid., 28.

[6] Ibid., 29.

[7] Anton J. Kuzel, "Sampling in Qualitative Inquiry," in *Doing Qualitative Research*, ed. Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992), 31-44.

[8] Janice M. Morse, "Designing funded qualitative research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: 1994), 220-235.

[9] Grant McCracken, *The Long Interview* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1988).

[10] Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*)London: Sage, 2009).

[11] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 4th ed. (London: Sage, 2009).

cannot be determined before all data have been subjected to a preliminary analysis. As I will show, from the total of 16 transcribed interviews I selected 6 narratives for interpretation as qualified LCFRE narratives.

When selecting *sample strategy* there are two main options in qualitative research: convenience sampling or purposive sampling. Convenience sampling is simply finding convenient cases who meet the required criteria of the sampling universe and selecting the first ones until the requisite number of participants is obtained. This means that generalisation is problematic. Purposive sampling seeks to ascertain that particular categories within the universe be represented in the final sample. Purposive sampling may be divided into two kinds, according to Robinson: cell, quota and stratified sampling on the one hand, and theoretical sampling on the other. The latter differs because "it takes place during the collection and analysis of data, following sampling and provisional analysis of some data."[12] It is originally associated with Grounded Theory. In Case Study, *intensity sampling* can be used: "this aims to locate an *information-rich* case, chosen specifically to be insightful, comprehensive, articulate and/or honest."[13] For my procedure, this implies that stage one consists of convenience sampling. However, the second stage, of critical selection, is purposive. It may be regarded as intensity selection, selecting those narratives that correspond to the defined construct by satisfying criteria for inclusion. Hence I have used convenience sampling, but theoretical/intensive selection of LCFRE narratives. These first of these two separate stages will be explicated in the following. I will discuss the procedure of critical selection in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Robinson's final phase is that of *sourcing*. Sourcing relates to the ways one recruits participants. "As well as practical and organisational skills, this stage of sampling requires ethical skills and sensitivity" to ensure informed consent.[14] Robinson stresses that one must beware of self-selection bias: if extensive intimate self-disclosure is required this may lead to obtaining a sample that are more open than the general population. He has found that women are more likely to participate in such inquiries than men. The self-selection bias, concedes Robinson, "is not possible to circumvent in interview-based research, as voluntary participation is central to good ethical practice."[15] Therefore all the researcher can do is take note of the

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[12] Robinson, "Sampling in Interview-based Qualitative Research," 34.

[13] Ibid., 35.

[14] Ibid.

possibility for bias. This is of course very important if the intention is to generalise to a population, but not decisive in an anteroductive strategy, in which there is no such generalisation. In the following, I will first discuss decisions related to participation and ethics, before I discuss how I critically selected six narratives of LCFRE.

Recruitment Strategy

The sourcing strategy I adopted was to use as many different channels of communication as possible.[16]

Table of strategies and participants sourced

a) Inviting myself into lectures in literary studies to address audience (Sonja, Katherina)

b) Put up poster in libraries (Marco)

c) Contacted person directly after reading about them in the media (Esther, Anjali)

d) Via friends and social media (Emma, Nina)

e) Serendipitous encounters through attending events related to literature and reading (Camilla, Tess, Marge)

f) Via Gatekeeper: Access to The Reader Organisation's network in the UK (Jane, Sue, Veronica, Eleanor, Paula, Agnes, Damian, Brian)

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[15] Ibid., 36.

[16] Upon presenting the proposal for this project, it was pointed out as a potential weakness of the project that I might find it difficult to get access to this population. However, I had already found three persons who consented to participation – one person through a social event, one through reading about her in the media and one through inviting myself into a lecture hall to address the audience. Based on this "pilot sourcing" I was confident that I would attain my target of recruiting 15-20 people. This proved to be the case. A decisive factor was the Gatekeeper source: by working as a volunteer at The Reader Organisation and taking their Read to Lead Course necessary to be a facilitator of shared reading groups, as well as volunteering at a Summer Camp in which I met other volunteers who were avid readers, I was fortunate in that I gained access to a large network of people who love literature and shared reading. It is worth noting that only one person was recruited through advertisements. Direct approaches, where I either address an audience or contact a person whom I know have had an LCRE, or go via a friend/gatekeeper who knows of such persons, are more effective. Such personal, face-to-face invitations clearly work the best.

In total I had contact with 27 readers, of which 23 were female and four were male, who reported transformative reading experiences. Four of these readers, although initially willing to participate, unfortunately 'got off the hook' because of time constraints or hesitation.[17] Five of them I declined to interview in this context, as they did not meet the principal inclusion criterion: *The life-changing reading experience must have been brought about by a particular work of imaginative literature* (novel, drama, poetry, short story, prose; all subsumed under the category of 'fiction'); they reported works of non-fiction.[18] Hence I interviewed a total of 18 participants, of whom 15 were female and three were male. Two of those interviews, although highly fascinating and information-rich, insufficiently met the inclusion criterion to merit transcription; they told me of their general experiences of reading.[19] All interviews were conducted in Norway or the UK in the period January – December 2015; except the interview with Sonja, which took place in 2014.

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[17] These four readers, two female and two male, had been changed by the following novels: Sigurd Hoel: *Syndere I Sommersol*; Terry Pratchett: *Snuff*; Marcel Proust: *Remembrance of Things Past*; Isabel Allende: *City of the Beasts.*

[18] Several people approached me because they had had life-changing experiences with stories, books or song lyrics. Among these were the songs of *The Smiths*; an autobiography of a born-again religious person; a film based on a novel; a narratively oriented computer game; a book by Simone de Beauvoir. These persons were not interviewed in the context of this study. Without hesitation I would consider Morrissey's lyrics as poetry, and up there with Dylan, Cohen and Springsteen. However, considering the fact that The Smiths were such a social phenomenon in the mid to late 80s, it may be difficult to determine to what extent it was the lyrics, and not the music or social semiotics, that were most influential. Having said that, at a future date I intend to carry out an inquiry into how The Smiths have changed people's lives. Films and computer games may both be narratives, but are not included in the category of imaginative literature; neither is Simone de Beauvoir.

[19] Both narratives were about how *literature in general* had changed the reader, and were therefore excluded. Brian told me of a lifelong love-affair with literature, in which a plethora of works were cited, quoted and interpreted. I learned so much from that dialogue; his infectious enthusiasm and cornucopia of knowledge was very inspiring. Tess's story was equally fascinating, albeit for vastly different reasons. Her life-changing experience was not so much through reading a particular work as through *entering into the universe of the novel.* She has made a project of visiting the very locations inhabited by the protagonist of novels she loves. On one occasion this brought her to the Shetlands, in which she experienced significant events in her life. Thus her project has been life-enrichening and changed her. I interpret this as using the book as an information source rather than a transformation source. However, this would make for an interesting research project in its own right. Incidentally, I met another person who had read a serial novel in which a character discovers that she has a rare brain tumour. This reader, who had long been suffering from a mysterious ailment, instantly intuited that she might suffer from this very tumour; this was subsequently confirmed by the surgeons and her life was accordingly saved.

Participants who met inclusion criteria

A list of participants' ages and the books they stated had changed them

Esther	late 50s	Inger Hagerup: *Episode* (poem)
Camilla	late 30s	Marguerite Duras: *The Lover* (novel)
		Goethe: *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (novel)
Veronica	early 30s	D. H. Lawrence: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (novel)
Nina	mid 40s	Mary O'Hara: *My Friend Flicka* (novel)
Jane	late 50s	Doris Lessing: *Shikasta* (novel)
Sue	late 40s	Matthew Arnold: *The Buried Life* (poem)
Sonja	early 20s	Samuel Beckett: *Worstward Ho* (prose)
Katherina	early 20s	Karine Nyborg: *Ikke rart det kommer kråker* (short stories)
Emma	mid 20s	Stephen Chbosky: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (novel)
Anjali	late 40s	Camilla Collett: *Amtmannens Døtre* (*The District Governor's Daughters)* (novel)
Marge	Late 50s	Mrs Oliphant: *The Days of My Life* (novel)
Marco	40	James Ellroy: *The Black Dahlia* (novel)
Paula	late 20s	Enid Blyton: *Adventures of the Wishing-Chair* (novel)
		William Blake: *The Tyger* (poem)
		Sylvia Plath: *The Bell Jar* (novel)
Agnes	early 50s	Charlotte Perkins Gilman: *Mr Peebles' Heart* (short story)
Eleanor	ca 35	Robert Pirsig: *Lila. An Inquiry into Morals* (novel)
Damian	late 20s	Alexander Pope: *Essay on Man* (poem)[20]

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[20] See Bibliography for which editions of these works were used.

These 16 interviews were transcribed. The age range of participants was between 21 and 69 years of age. Most of the transformative experiences happened in late adolescence or early adulthood. There were four exceptions: Beth was in her late 40s when she encountered *Mr Peebles' Heart*. Sue was in her mid-40s when she read Arnold. Nina has read the book at different ages throughout her life, but her transformation happened when she was in her early 40s. Paula's reading experiences took place in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. This picture, in which transformative reading experiences are concentrated to predominantly two periods, late adolescence or mid-life, accords with the findings of Appleyard, who in his account of the different developmental stages of readers, states that these are the life-stages in which such changes are most likely to occur.[21] Interestingly, this table reveals the broad range of literature that is conducive to life-changing experiences. There is in this table a mix of old and new, high-brow and middle-brow, prose and poetry, realistic and fantastic representations.

Ethical considerations

Ethics involves more than complying with regulations; ethical considerations must always permeate the entire inquiry. Hence I think it is pertinent to bear in mind the following words from the Danish theologian Løgstrup's 1956 book *The Ethical Demand*, in which he expounds on a radical demand built into our experience of meeting another person:

> Our life is so constituted that it cannot be lived except as one person lays him or herself open to another person and puts him or herself into that person's hands either by showing or claiming trust. By our very attitude to another we help to shape that person's world. By our attitude to the other person we help to determine the scope and hue of his or her world; we make it large or small, bright or drab, rich or dull, threatening or secure. We help to shape his or her world not by theories and views but by our very attitude towards him or her. Herein lies the unarticulated and one might say anonymous demand that we take care of the life which trust has placed in our hands.[22]

This should be the qualitative researcher's underlying attitude. Still, there are specific demands one must comply with. Influential guidebooks on qualitative methods converge on four fundamental ethical principles the researcher must abide by: (i) informed consent; (ii) confidentiality; (iii) consideration of the consequences of participation in the study and (iv) secure data protection procedures.[23] I have at all times sought to adhere to these principles. The

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[21] J. A. Appleyard, *Becoming a Reader. The Experience of Fiction from Childhood to Adulthood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[22] Knut E. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1997), 18.

[23] David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2010), 152-178. See also Uwe Flick, *Designing Qualitative Research* (London: Sage, 2007).

Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics (NESH), in order to ensure that the rights of human participants in research studies are protected, demand that any research project in which personal information is obtained must be submitted to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) for mandatory approval before any interviews can take place. Accordingly, the plan for this study was reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Research Ethics Board. No recruitment or data collection was undertaken until I received official NSD approval; an informed consent form was given to each potential participant prior to the interview.[24] In order to gain participant support, I emphasised that they were participating in a study as well as explained the purpose of my research.[25] Also, I have assigned pseudonyms to all participants and altered their countries or cities of residence in order to protect their privacy and ensure confidentiality. Moreover, the data have been kept secure.[26]

Participants were not required to disclose sensitive information. No explicit questions about background information or information about third party were asked. Because all interviews were about positive life-changes, the risk of an adverse reaction post-interview was deemed to be small. All participants were told that they could contact me if they had further information they wanted to give, or if they wanted to withdraw from the study or needed to talk about their reactions to being interviewed. Three participants contacted me; two of them to tell me that they felt it had been a very positive and rewarding experience. The third person had additional information: she had found a copy of the letter she had sent to the author to express her gratitude for the work. One participant explicitly, without my request, granted me permission to use her real name.

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[24] Please see appendix.

[25] As pointed out in for instance John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry &Research Design: Choosing among five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013).

[26] All audio-recordings were transferred unto a password-protected computer kept in a locked office, to be erased upon completion of project, and audiofiles were subsequently deleted from the recording device. I obtained permission from NSD to receive help from a qualified transcriber to transcribe some of the interviews. These audiofiles were transferred from my personal computer onto a memory stick and delivered personally to the transcriber. Name of person interviewed was not disclosed to the transcriber. Audiofiles were marked by number only. Upon transcription, the transcriptor deleted the data from her password-protected computer. This person has signed a declaration of confidentiality.

Preparations for interviews

Upon arranging each interview, I obtained two pieces of information: the person's name and the title and edition of the book they had read. I prepared for the interview by reading the book beforehand. There were, however, three instances in which such preparation did not occur. In the interviews with Brian and Tess, several books were discussed. And the interview with Marge was spontaneously undertaken without preparations. Therefore Marge's story, although fulfilling other inclusion criteria, was ultimately excluded. Prior to each encounter, I wrote a memo in which I recorded my impressions of the literary work and considered my anticipations of the dialogue-to-be. This is a labour-intensive method; some of the works were several hundred pages long. So arranging interviews, informing participants, preparing for the interviews, conducting them and writing post-interview memos took considerable time. I estimated an average of one week's work per participant, before interviews were transcribed and data processed. Accordingly, I decided that extrinsic constraints would limit the number of participants to 15, maximum 20.

I prepared a list of questions, not to be used in interviews, but simply to document my own preconceptions. Based upon personal experiences, vicarious experiences and literature review, I drew up the following list of questions:

What has this book meant to you?

What was your life like before this reading experience? And afterwards?

How did you come across this work of literature?

Tell me about what it was like to read this work.

What were the most significant parts of this work for you?

What change did reading this book bring about for you?

Was this change unexpected?

Have you told anyone else about your experience?

I presupposed that with the interview method to be adopted, all these and other queries would be answered by the interviewee (see section on Interview Method).

Bracketing preconceptions

As argued in the previous chapter, I do not take *epoché* to mean a bracketing of all preconceptions. In terms of preparing for the interviews, I intended to reflect on my preconceptions by means of preparing a list of questions. This was not an interview-guide, but simply a guide to my own presuppositions: what I was aware of being curious about. What I attempted to bracket was the notion that I was going to *elicit stories* of life-changing reading experiences. I would endeavour not to be evaluating their experience as we spoke. Thoughts like "is this really a life-changing experience?" and "Is it detailed enough?", although these might appear in consciousness at certain junctions, were to be suspended. Such suspension may be understood as "defusion": In a scientifically-based intervention programme called Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Russ Harris defines defusion as a cognitive strategy involving "looking *at* thoughts rather than *from* thoughts; noticing thoughts rather than being caught up in thoughts; and letting thoughts come and go rather than holding on to them."[27] My attention would go towards the other's experience and the person's expression of that experience, as fully as possible. I identified two kinds of intrusive judgments that I would attempt to suspend, as they would get in the way of attending to the other's experience: *Am I performing my role well enough?; Is the person 'coming up with the goods?'*

Moreover, I reflected on the importance of the context of the interview. I have considerable experience of interviewing people in various contexts: as a journalist and as course instructor responsible for student intake interviews, and I also have ample experience as counsellor and careers advisor. This experience is of course very helpful for conducting research interviews, and yet it is important to be aware of the distinct objectives of a research interview. It must be distinguished on the one hand from therapeutic contexts, on the other hand from interviews in which one is looking for specific answers to questions. As Kvale says, "Although the research interviewer can learn much from therapeutic interviews, it is important to distinguish between the different forms of human interaction. In therapy the main goal is the change of the patient, in research it is the obtaining of knowledge."[28] Considering the fact that the interview method diverges from questioning for specific information, I have decided not to regard or refer to the interviewee as 'informant'. Instead, I have chosen the neologism 'intimant'. This term was chosen in accordance with the overall term chosen to designate the

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[27] Russ Harris, *ACT made simple* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 2009), 97.

[28] Steinar Kvale, "The Psychoanalytic Interview as Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1999): 105.

method: 'intimate reading'. There are four reasons for this choice: (i) the term is partly synonymous with close reading, and my method involves close interpretation of particular narratives; (ii) the term is antonymous with "distant reading", the approach developed by Franco Moretti for comparing segments of many texts and which may serve as a common denominator for coding-based approaches to data analysis;[29] (iii) the persons interviewed reveal intimate experiences; and (iv) in communicating an experience which goes deeper than what can be conveyed in words, the expression is an *intimation* of their experience. I will come back to this in my discussion of interview approach.

By arranging to meet in a comfortable, quiet and secluded setting, I aimed to create a safe and non-intimidating climate for participants.[30] All of these steps were meant to ensure an ethical foundation for my study.

Interview Method

I have chosen to conceptualise my method of interviewing as *subservation*: inviting the participant to tell me of their experience, and subjecting myself to this telling. The aim of subservation is not to obtain information about something. It is 'paradigm'-neutral, in that it neither asks persons for *descriptions*, nor aims to *elicit* stories from the interviewee. The aim is to facilitate *intimation*.[31] In intimation, the interviewee speaks from an embodied utterance position. Intimation involves more than the interviewee's conscious expression and the interviewer's conscious understanding. By intimation is meant the interviewee's communication of their lived experience, encompassing both telling and reflecting; there may be an *implicit* level of communication not directly expressed in words and perhaps not even fully in the person's awareness, and the response of the interviewer to this expression can only

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[29] See Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature," *New Left Review* 1 (2000): 54-68.

[30] Max Van Manen, *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2014). Although the dialogic relation can never be symmetrical, at least one must attempt to achieve the greatest possible conditions for an open dialogue.

[31] Cf. https://www.etymonline.com/word/intimation: "mid-15c., 'action of making known,' from Middle French *intimation* (14c.), from Late Latin *intimationem* (nominative *intimatio)* 'an announcement,' noun of action from past participle stem of Latin *intimare* 'make known, announce, impress' (see *intimate* (adj.)). Meaning 'action of expressing by suggestion or hint, indirect imparting of information' is from 1530s."

be an approximation to the full meaning of the communication. The interviewee does not have a ready-made story to convey, nor is one 'co-constructed' in the dialogue. The interviewer's main task is *active listening.* What Balint says of listening in the doctor-patient dialogue also holds for intimation in dialogue: "While discovering in himself an ability to listen to things in his patient that are barely spoken because the patient himself is only dimly aware of them, the doctor will start listening to the same kind of language in himself."[32] As interviewer I attempt to reflect my unfolding and evolving empathic understanding back to the intimant, while at the same time facilitating a shared reading of significant passages from the literary work in question. The aim is to enable the intimant to speak *from* and *within* the felt emotional reality, expressing it as their emotional truth. The facilitation of intimation and the authentic responding to its expressions is to *subserve* the intimant; this necessitates that I as interviewer *subject* myself to their experience as it is lived in the interview. I must *respond* to the person's intimation. The 'instrument' of subservation is the interviewer's empathy.

Subservation and empathy

A central proponent of open-ended, person-centred interviewing is the cultural anthropologist Robert I. Levy. According to Hollan, Levy distinguishes between interviews that regard the interviewee as *informant*, an expert witness of some external context; and the interviewee as *respondent,* "as an object of systematic study and observation in in him- or herself."[33] The person-centred interview oscillates between these respondent and informant modes. In such an approach, the interviewee is an observer who reports to researcher, or is the object of observation. Although my approach is open-ended and person-centred, it is precisely this double notion of observation from which I wish to distance myself by introducing the concept of *subservation.* Unlike in observation, where the researcher's presence can influence objectivity and create bias, in subservation the researcher's presence is vital, aiming to have a *positive* influence on the interviewee's communication.

Blaikie argues that an important choice for the qualitative researcher is what stance to take towards the participants: "what the relationship will be between the researcher and the

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[32] Michael Balint quoted in Josie Billington, *Is Literature Healthy?* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), 65.

[33] Douglas Hollan, "Setting a new standard: The Person-Centered Interviewing and Observation of Robert I. Levy," *Ethos* 33, no. 4 (2005): 463.

researched."[34] Set apart from the position of detached observer are five other positions that belong to different methodologies: *empathic observer*, which aims to understand "the subjective meaning of the social actor; *faithful reporter*, the aim of which is "allowing the research participants to speak for themselves"; *mediator of languages*; which involves active reflexivity from the research; *reflective partner*, which has an emancipatory aim and may also change the researcher; *dialogic facilitator*; which emphasises dialogue and minimization of bias.[35] If one strips these stances of their methodological presumptions, they may all be regarded as aspects of subservation: empathy, faithful representation of the participant's voice, mediation as interpretation of participant's expression, a reflective partner that responds to the person's communication, and a facilitator of dialogue. How is this stance evidenced in an interview setting?

Riessman, in explicating how the research can facilitate storytelling in interviews, singles out three factors that are not technical, but which are all about *empathy*: giving up control; emotional attentiveness; and the ability to listen. The interviewer may have a semi-structured approach, but must be willing to deviate from agenda: "Creating possibilities in research interviews for extended narration requires investigators to give up control, which can generate anxiety. Although we have particular paths we want to cover related to the substantive and theoretical foci of our studies, narrative interviewing necessitates following participants down *their* trails."[36] Although the emphasis is on open questions, "the specific wording of a question is less important than the interviewer's emotional attentiveness and engagement and the degree of reciprocity in the conversation"; this is closely related to the third factor: "We must also learn to listen attentively."[37] Despite the significance of listening, this complex process is not central in the social scientist's professional training. When we learn to listen in an emotionally attentive and engaged way, says Riessman, "we expose ourselves and enter the unknown with new possibilities and frameworks of meaning"; this is "hard work, demanding as it does an abandonment of the self in a quest to enter the world of another; and it takes time."[38] I share Riessman's view of the centrality of these factors. However, I wish to emphasise

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[34] Blaikie, *Designing Social Research*, 50.

[35] Ibid., 51-52.

[36] Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences,* 24.

[37] Ibid., 24.

[38] Ibid., 26-27.

that the aim is not solely to facilitate storytelling; although stories may be told, the aim is to facilitate the communication of the interviewee's lived experience. Thus, the aim is not to *elicit* or *co-construct* stories.

Miller and Glasner claim that it is possible to transcend the objectivist-constructivist dichotomy. They will not accept the proposition that interviews do not yield information about social worlds. They suggest that "narratives which emerge in interview contexts are situated in social worlds; they come out of worlds that exist outside of the interview itself."[39] They hence maintain that "a strength of qualitative interviewing is the opportunity it provides to collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds."[40] The interviewer therefore takes up an active role: "Of paramount importance regarding how (and how much) we present ourselves is the influence this presentation has on interviewees' ability and willingness to tell various sorts of stories."[41] Holstein and Gubrium share the same position; their aim is to strike a balance between constructionism and symbolic interactionism "as a way of re-appropriating the significance of substance and content to studies of interviewing."[42] They propose an active interviewing, conceiving of the interview as "an interpersonal drama with a developing plot."[43] I believe there is a fundamental ambiguity here: one collects stories, is active in their making and the interview itself is a dramatic plot. I do not regard the interview as an interpersonal drama. In my view, what emerges and evolves in the interview dialogue, partly facilitated by the interviewer, is an intimation of experience that involves dramatic elements as well as description and reflection. The *narrative* is the end-product of the data production process, represented as the dialogue between intimant and listener.

Hydén also emphasizes the centrality of empathy in qualitative interviews, saying it enables the interviewee to express thoughts and feelings that were previously unarticulated or outside awareness.[44] Watson has criticized the use of empathy as "a tool and a goal in

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[39] Jody Miller, and Barry Glassner, "The 'inside' and the 'outside': Finding realities in Interviews," in *Qualitative Research. Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2004), 131.

[40] Ibid., 137.

[41] Ibid., 130.

[42] James A. Holstein, and Jaber F. Gubrium, "The Active Interview," In *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice,* ed. David Silverman, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2004), 142.

[43] Ibid., 149.

[44] Margaretha Hydén, "Forskningsintervjun som relationell praktik,» in *Kjønn og fortolkende metode: Metodiske muligheter i kvalitativ forskning*, ed. Hanne Haavind (Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2000), 147-68.

qualitative research," saying that the claim to perfect understanding fails to recognize *difference.* However, no illusion of perfect understanding is implied in the concept of empathy; in fact empathy presupposes acknowledgment of this fact.[45] There are many diverging conceptions of empathy. According to C. Daniel Batson, the notion of empathy is used to refer to several distinct phenomena: Knowing another person's internal state, including the thoughts and feelings; adopting the posture or matching the neural responses of an other; coming to feel as another person feels; intuiting or projecting oneself into another's situation; imagining how another is thinking and feeling; feeling (distress) for another person who is suffering.[46] All these uses pertain to empathy in interviews, except the last one. In my view, this last phenomenon is more accurately designated as compassion. Furthermore, compassion should include feeling for another person's enjoyment as well as suffering, in as much as suffering is normally taken to involve affliction. Personally I find the person-centred counsellor Carl Rogers' understanding of empathy useful: "to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto *as if* one were the person, but without losing the 'as if' condition."[47] In this view, there is no claim to total immersion. Another vital aspect to Rogers' understanding of empathy, is the dialogic: "It means frequently checking with the person as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his or her inner world. By pointing to the possible meanings in the flow of another person's experiencing, you help the other to focus […], to experience the meanings more fully, and to move forward in the experiencing."[48] One must tentatively communicate back to the intimant one's understanding of the emotional meanings of their expressions. What does this emphasis on open-endedness, facilitation and empathy mean in praxis?

The phenomenologist Claire Petitmengin has elaborated an interview method that enables a person to become conscious of his or her subjective experience of felt meaning and

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[45] For instance, in her phenomenological investigation of the nature of empathy, Edith Stein emphasises that empathy is the givenness of foreign subjects and their experiences. See Edith Stein, *The Collected Works of Edith Stein.* Vol. 3, *On the Problem of Empathy,* trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1989).

[46] C. Daniel Batson, "These Things called Empathy: Eight Related by Distinct Phenomena," in *The Social Neuroscience of Empathy*, ed. Jean Decety and William Ickes /Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 4-8.

[47] Carl Rogers quoted in: Barbara Temaner Brodley, "Observations of Empathic Understanding in a Client-Centred Practice," in *Empathy.* Vol. 2, *Rogers' Therapeutic Conditions: Evolution, Theory and Practice,* ed. Sheila Haugh and Tony Merry (Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire: PCCS Books, 2006), 17.

[48] Carl R. Rogers, *A Way of Being* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980), 142.

describe it with precision, on the rationale that "a substantial proportion of our subjective experience unfolds below the threshold of consciousness."[49] Our most intimate experience, says Petitmengin, is difficult to access and therefore requires inner effort: "not only do we not know what we know, but that we do not know that we do not know."[50] Her aim is to enable the other to become conscious of his or her present on-going inner experience, and to increase the participant's introspective expertise. That, of course, was not my aim. However, there are certain facets of the technique she elaborates that are of great concern to my method, in as much as she intends to "enable the interviewee to access an intimate dimension of himself."[51] Firstly, Petitmengin emphasises the importance of maintaining the interviewee's attention. There must be "a 'container' for the attention of the interviewee [to] help him to remain within the boundaries of the experience being explored."[52] Furthermore, the interviewer must enable the interviewee to relax and enter into the experience. Thirdly, when the person digresses, she must be gently led back to refocusing through regular reformulation by the interviewer of what the subject has said. This can also be done through asking a question. Moreover, the interviewer must "guide the interviewee towards the 're-enactment' of the past experience."[53] When the person is brought into the 'evocation state', she is in contact with her past experience. Whereas Petitmengin regards the re-enactment as a Proustian experience of vivid recollection of all details, I understand the 'evocation state' merely to involve an affective memory, where the feelings associated with the reading experience are once more re-membered as the person becomes aware of the kinaesthetic and felt sense of her experience. In this state of evocation both the description of memories and the reflections on the experience are deepened. Petitmengin contrasts her technique with Rogers' approach: although both are non-inducive, hers is clearly directive. It is directive in always bringing the other back to the experience, and yet non-inducive in that the interviewer does not know what he is looking for but must remain open to what comes. The essence of Petitmengin's approach can be summed up thus:

> The interviewee must […] abandon for the duration of the interview his usual shell, agree to relax and enter a state of vulnerability. For him to allow himself to be guided in this dimension and carry out this intimate effort in the presence of the interviewer, he must feel the interviewer totally present, attentive and open-minded. The sense of security thus generated allows him the slowness, the time of silence, the

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[49] Claire Petitmengin, "Describing one's subjective experience in the second person: An interview method for the science of consciousness," in *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 5, no. 3-4 (2006): 230.

[50] Ibid., 234.

[51] Ibid., 254.

[52] Ibid., 239.

[53] Ibid., 244.

latency, and the absence of an immediate answer, which enable the emergence in his consciousness of the pre-reflective dimension of his experience.[54]

As indicators of an embodied utterance position (the state of evocation), Petitmengin highlights concrete and detailed verbalisations on the one hand, and several non-verbal features on the other. These include: the direction of the eyes (taking her eyes off the interviewer and looking 'into space'); slowing of speech and increased silences; and gestures that are not meant to transmit information but to establish contact with inner experiencing.

Biographic-narrative interview method

I decided to develop an approach that combines elements of Petitmengin's non-inducive direction of embodied utterance with a biographic-narrative interview method, and shared reading of significant passages. As part of my training for interviewing, I took a course with the social scientist Tom Wengraff, who has developed a method he calls *Biographic-Narrative Interview Method* (BNIM). I was initially drawn to this method because it is inspired partly by Carl Rogers' non-directive dialogue method, as well as focusing on in-depth listening to the person's experience. Wengraff's approach "restricts interviewer interventions initially to a single (narrative) initial question" and restricts subsequent interventions to a particular type according to a definite narrow procedure.[55] Thus one may say that the two central concepts of his approach are: the single question aimed at inducing narrative (SQUIN); and pushing for particular incident narratives (PINs). This interview method relies on dividing the interview into two sessions. In the first session, the only question from the researcher is the SQUIN: "Please tell me your life story," or "Please tell me about your experience of X". During this session, the interviewer notes down the topics that the interviewee talks about. No further questions are to be asked in session 1, but one can use "facilitative non-directional support" in order to enable the interviewee to tell their story.[56] Wengraff has found that most interviewees will not just go on telling unless encouraged. The interviewer must listen *actively* by giving verbal and non-verbal acknowledgment of receiving what is being told. This involves posture,

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[54] Ibid., 254.

[55] Tom Wengraff, *Qualitative Research Interviewing: Biographic Narrative and Semi-structured Methods* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Dehli: Sage, 2001), 111.

[56] Ibid., 122.

eye-contact and intonation and the use of 'hmms.' One may tentatively offer words to mirror the person's experiencing. "Such words might fit or they might be useful by provoking the interviewee into getting a better self-expression for themselves."[57] One must allow silences, so that the interviewee can continue talking about the topic, or introduce a new one. Only after a break, in which one reviews the topic noted down, in session two, can a semi-structured interview take place. However, this must be performed according to a strict format: one attempts to elicit more narrative material about each topic. The way of doing this is to "push for PINs". This means that one must ask specific "questions pointed at narrative" rather than mere open-ended questions that may "allow narrative."[58] For instance, if one of the topics raised in session 1 was 'my mother,' then a question that only *allows* narrative would be something like 'can you tell me more about her?' or 'what are your feelings about her?' A PIN, on the other hand, would ask: 'Can you remember any event involving your father'. The way such a PIN is introduced, is by repeating something the person said about that topic in session 1: 'you said… , can you remember/tell me in detail how that happened?'

BNIM specifically aims to *elicit* stories. The aim of PIN-questions is to "discourage a non-narrative response, such as the production of a theory, an argument, an unhistorical description, a justification, a declaration of values, an expression of felt emotions."[59] I did not wish to discourage such "non-narrative response". In fact, I regard reflection, declaration of values or expressions of emotions as integral parts of narrative. The narrative consists of more than representations of action. I therefore did not strictly adhere to the format. In my view, the principal aim of PINs in BNIM is to move the interviewee from an iterative to a singulative mode of narration.[60] Iterative narration tells of something that usually or often happens, whereas the singulative focuses on particular incidents. As such, one could say that Intimate Reading starts at the equivalent of Wengraff's session 2. In responding to the question "has a book changed your life?" the intimant is already at the beginning going to tell me about a particular incident she has experienced. I accordingly opted for an open-question "allow narrative" approach rather than an exclusively "story-pointed" one. A strict adherence to Wengraff's approach would not be possible owing to the decision to include the reading of significant

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[57] Ibid., 129.

[58] Ibid., 125-130.

[59] Ibid., 127.

[60] See Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 113-160.

passages into our dialogue. However, the main reason I reject the strict "story-pointed" procedure is that it is too 'mechanical'; it prevents a more fluid and spontaneous dialogue in which I attempt to communicate my empathic understanding to the intimant.

Hence, what I take from the method is principally the SQUIN. Therefore, I do not regard my interview method as 'semi-structured'. Conventionally, qualitative interviews are differentiated along one dimension only, ranging from *structured* to *unstructured* - based upon the number of questions prepared beforehand. In my view, this continuum must be supplemented by another: that of *form*. An unstructured interview need not be formless (which would be tantamount to a normal conversation). Instead, it may have a definite, although intangible, form. The structure I attempted to create in my interviews was one of *concentration*: a mutual focus upon a literary text. The form I attempted to create was one of *deepening:* facilitating a gradual move from talking *about* the experience, to talking *from* and *within* the experience. This 'forming' involves a gradual usage of softer voice tone, slower pacing and silences to facilitate emotional deepening "because an ordinary voice implicitly signals that the speaker is not attuning sensitively to the delicacy of the listener's experience."[61] These elements are not explicitly apparent in the transcript, nor the textual narratives.

Shared Reading of Significant Passages

The challenge for me was to develop an interview form in which I could invite the intimant to tell me about their reading experience in the context of their life-situation, and at the same time invite a dialogue around the literary work that they had cited as life-changing. *How does one bring the book into the interview?* The sociologist Dempsey discusses the use of stimulated recall in interviews as a technique to bring informants "a step closer to the moments in which they actually produce action," or experience something, by "jogging memories."[62] This is done by playing back to the participants a recording of themselves engaging in interactions. My approach can of course not involve such stimulated *recall*. Instead, by inviting the intimant to read out loud passages that she deemed significant in her reading experience, I intended to facilitate 'stimulated remembrance': the affective memory of the experience would be re-

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[61] Bruce Ecker, Robin Ticic, and Laurel Hulley, *Unlocking the Emotional Brain: Eliminating Symptoms at Their Roots Using Memory Reconsolidation* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 51.

[62] Nicholas P. Dempsey, "Stimulated Recall Interviews in Ethnography," *Qualitative Sociology* 33 (2010): 349-350.

vitalised, so that they could speak *from* and *within* the experience. In practical terms, this was similar to certain elements from a shared reading session: invite the participant to read out loud and to relate the work to her own personal experience. I would gently respond with my own comments to their responses or alternatively point to other aspects of the passage read. If the intimant did not explicitly comment upon the passage read, but merely communicated deictically by pointing to the passage as important, I would interpret that passage as saying something about the person's experience. Thus, the indicated passages were intimations of the experience of the interviewee.

Discussion of examples from the interviews

The intention to facilitate an embodied utterance position and shared reading of passages can never be carried out perfectly. However, the main thing is that the subservation is *good enough* so that there is real intimation of the lived reading experience. The typical *form* of the interview can be described as follows. I would initiate the dialogue by presenting the SQUIN (please tell me about your reading experience) and either immediately or gradually invite the intimant to read significant passages from the work in question out loud. During the initial telling, the intimant would give a short version of what happened, and then wait for cues from me. During this initial stage I would sometimes ask clarifying questions. This initial stage is merely preparatory for the intimation; we are 'settling in' to the experience. In this stage, I will ask the occasional question of clarification (pertaining to when and where). It is only after the first passage from the work has been shared through reading out loud, that the deepening into embodied utterance and the state of evocation can happen. I choose to regard this initial stage as an 'orientation sequence', in which intimant and listener attunes to one another and to the dialogue at hand. Typically, the intimant feels the need to provide "some background" before they are ready to 'enter' the literary work and its affective memories. Both Esther and Veronica explicitly chose to do so. The only exception is Jane, who jumps almost straight in, giving the most rudimentary outlines of background before reading from *Shikasta*. After this initial stage, I will attempt to respond to what the intimant says primarily in two ways: (i) "facilitative non-directional support" through reflecting back what they have said or tentatively offering an interpretation of what they have told me; (ii) gently directing them back to the text before us. We would each have a copy of the same text. The seating arrangement was ideally one of chairs positioned at a 120 degree angle, to allow the intimant a non-focused looking into 'inner space' without feeling under scrutiny. The movement between (i) and (ii) is the very 'forming' of the

interview. It is a difficult dialectic: allowing the person room to remember and reflect, so that she could bring into awareness new remembrances or make reflections that enabled her to see her experience in a new light; endeavouring to 'moor' the remembrances and reflections as close to the literary work as possible. I do not claim to have achieved this optimally in any of the interviews, and in some of them I failed. I do, however, firmly believe that the six selected narratives reflect good-enough subservation. A quick numerical analysis of these 6 narrative as presented here (several of my non-verbal introjections have been edited out) reveal that the lowest number of exchanges of speaker-role occurred in the interview with Veronica. I also believe this interview to be the most well-conducted one, the one that best approximates the twin ideal of facilitative non-directional support and mutual concentration on specific passages leading to a deepening shared reading.

Esther

The main challenge in the interview with Esther was related to (ii) above: bringing her back to the poem. Before she read the poem out loud, I had already asked four probing questions ("When did you start to do that?"; "Before you started the gymnasium, what did you read?"; "Had you read anything else by…"; "Did you have that feeling immediately?"). Such questions clearly break with then BNIM approach, but I believe they can be justified in the initial phase of the interview. They serve twin purposes: clarification/orientation, and gradually zooming in on the poem. The other responses can be read either as questions or as propositions, in which I attempt to communicate my empathic understanding of what she communicates. The principal purpose of these responses is supportive: to encourage her to continue to bring her experience closer to the present. These are tentative formulations that seek to reflect her meaning, and ideally should be so unobtrusive that she continues to focus 'inwards'. One of them goes a bit further towards the interpretive: "In Børli's poems, two of your loves - the woods and words - met?," but Esther affirmed this suggestion.

After the reading of the poem, I understood Esther to be in an evocative state. However, I then offered a clearly suboptimal response, inviting her out of this state and into reflection: "In your essay you describe literature as a form of theory of passion. I find that interesting with regards to Hagerup. The word 'heart' seems to be found in nearly all her poems. The language of the heart, is that what it is?" Why did I bring her out of her immersion like that? Was I eager to show that I had read her essay and all of Hagerup, to demonstrate that I had prepared well

for our meeting? Quite possibly. She evidently takes my interpretation on board, but it was not a good choice on my part, as it lead her away from her embodied utterance to bring in an intellectual perspective. I then had to bring her back to the poem. I believe my question here is different from the subsequent one: "Does that mean that the encounter with poetry, with fiction, is a form of dialogue?" This question also invites reflection, but it springs much more directly out of what she has said, and can therefore be justified as staying close to her evolving embodied cognition. A suboptimal intervention regarding the shared reading of the poem is that I was too concerned with my clever notion of the 'sixth stanza' rather than coming out with a personal response to the couple's conflict. Therefore, the directive dimension of the interview could clearly have been better.

Camilla

Camilla evidently feels a need to protect herself initially, and seems to seek a green light before going into the experience: "But this will sort of be very personal, because one needs to somehow explain why." It is therefore important to reassure her that it is okay. It is imperative early on to convey to the intimant an attitude of what Rogers terms "unconditional positive regard." I subsequently summarise what she has told me, before inviting her to tell me more. I ask two clarification questions, which although not strictly necessary did produce opening responses. Subsequently there emerges a critical point. Camilla says she allowed her "little" crisis to evolve too far. She is clearly concerned with establishing a distance between her experiencing I (in crisis) and her narrating I (ironic "little"). I was unsure at this early stage of the interview how far into that experience I could go. Therefore I ask for her permission to go into sensitive territory, thus giving her the opportunity to draw a boundary. After Camilla has started reading passages from the texts, I perhaps am too careful, asking several probing questions rather than just "resting" in the text. Alternatively, I was mirroring Camilla's eagerness to reflect on her experiences. However, in asking her: "So by someone putting your thoughts into words, they are objectified for you, and that drives a wedge between you and the thoughts, between thoughts and actions?" I am leading her into abstract territory. Once again, this is too clever' and risks taking her away from her experience. However, later on, in talking about her own novel, I venture an interpretation that I felt she embraced with both enthusiasm and gratitude: "Would it be possible to conclude that your protagonist has that loneliness because she has not had the kind of readerly experiences you've had?" I was quite pleased with this, as I believe it articulated a connection for her which she had as yet not verbalised.

<u>Veronica</u>

Veronica had actively looked forward to relating her experience to me, and hence not much time was needed to establish safe ground before venturing into reading. I made a few introjections – nods, "hmms" and "yeahs" – which I have deleted from the presented narrative. I believe this part of the interview was close to optimal: I just needed to stay attuned to her experience, as I felt sure that she spoke from a position of embodied utterance. My question "since your mother died?" is not really a clarificatory question, but rather an (overly eager) attempt to communicate that I understood that her mother's death must have been so hard to deal with. Then follows a very interesting moment: Veronica becomes aware of a pre-reflective felt sense in her body. I was uncertain how to meet this. My response was suboptimal, asking for her to explain where the tingling comes from: "What happened there? Did the tingling come as you were talking about this now?" I should have just stayed silent, allowing her to be with the tingling sensation. She responds: "Yeah, I could feel a nervous energy, like a flutter in my stomach. Just like a remembered feeling, of what that was like." After that, I allow a lengthy silence. But after a while she goes on reading from the book. That was probably a missed opportunity, and yet it was a difficult choice as this is not a therapeutic dialogue.

A much better response occurred as she used the expression "weird and gruesome" after reading it in the passage from the text. I decided to merely repeat those words back to her, allowing her to enter more deeply into her experience. Another good response was the one that validated her experience of the physical aspect of reading and simultaneously shared in her experience: "It's… a physical thing, isn't it, reading?" I believe this was a successful attempt at communicating empathic understanding. Furthermore, allowing her 'space and to rest in a contemplative silence brought up the important intimation of her experience of *The Winter's Tale,* which proved to form a very significant part of her experience.

<u>Nina</u>

For me, the most wonderful thing about the interview is that Nina's reading experience *is still continuing.* She discovered new aspects of a book that she has read so many times before, as she shared significant passages with me. That was a very moving experience, and part of why I came to love this book. Nina is courageously sharing her intimate experience in the interview; not just what happened in the past (her experience with the religious community) but also what is happening now, in revealing new discoveries about the book. Nina, like several of the other

intimants (such as Esther and Sue) have tears in her eyes after reading from the book. I believe it is important to include this information in the narrative, as I take it to be a clear sign that she is speaking form a 'state of evocation'.[63] The strength of this interview is that throughout it stays close to the literary work. However, there is one very problematic moment when I ask a speculative question about her childhood: "I don't know if you'll be able to answer this question. I understand that you have felt a need to protect and hide your inner world […] Where do you think this need to protect yourself comes from?" And yet, Nina proceeds to relate how the experience felt to her, rather than just intellectualising it. The interview with Nina was the longest, partly because she had so much to tell me, but also because I allowed myself and her pauses in which we rested in silence.

Jane

I had read an article somewhere about Jane's life, and so it was perhaps tempting to hear about all of her life from childhood to the present day. Another factor is that when someone is used to telling their life-story, it can be challenging to facilitate pre-reflective experiencing. Moreover, because *Shikasta* is such a vast novel with many layers, I found it difficult to achieve concentration around the text. Hence, re-direction to the novel could have been better. What makes this narrative stand out from the rest, is the fact that Jane evidently did not need to "warm up" at all, but plunges right into the literary work. The best responses in this interview are those occasions when I summarise what Jane has said: "you said…", and gently invite going further into the experience. There are several suboptimal responses, one of which is highly questionable:

> I suppose you could always redefine it as a spiritual experience. But then you're still faced with the same problem. I suppose this is what William James is trying to work out as well.
>
> **Jane:** Yeah. (*pause*). Hmm.

I do not know why I said this – to demonstrate my familiarity with James? Or to establish some common ground? However, it is not a productive proposition. Jane takes a moment to reflect on it, but then just lets it lie. When I made this response, Jane had just exclaimed: "Oh. It's a hard thing to understand." I could have picked up on the emotional meaning of what she said here. This is clearly an example of failed empathic understanding. Such failures are not fatal,

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[63] See also Literature Review and the studies on weeping and 'feeling like crying'.

however. If the climate of trust has been established, and there is a willingness to listen, the intimant will usually put you right, or, if she is in a state of evocation, simply ignore your response in order to continue to attend to her experiencing.

<u>Sue</u>

The curious thing about the interview with Sue was that it was as if she already knew that the aim of the interview was to enable the intimant to speak from a position of embodied utterance, for she lamented that she was not now in the same state as she had been the first time I heard her speak about *The Buried Life.* However, I believe she clearly regained her state of evocation upon reading the entire poem out loud. Sue very clearly wanted and needed time and space to go in search of the right expressions. She continuously attempts to tune into her felt sense. Curiously, upon reading the poem, she is moved to relate her encounter with the woman in prison. This was unexpected, but important. As it was my understanding that Sue did not do so in an effort to deflect attention away from her own emotional experience, I gathered that this encounter had been important for Sue in two ways. Firstly, it allowed her to pass on her own powerful experience to someone else, and secondly the anecdote metaphorically also said something about Sue's own life. As an example of a good responding on my part, I point to this: "So when you read the poem, did that strengthen that feeling?"; it picks up on what she has said and at the same time redirects her to the poem. There are some rather questionable interpretations on my part, however, such as for instance this one:

> **Thor:** Maybe I'm over-interpreting, but it's almost like this poem describes your journey from being on the other side of the world to engaging in shared reading.
>
> **Sue:** Yeah, perhaps. I'm not sure if I'm…
>
> **Thor:** in the sense that it seems to go from a deep despair to...
>
> **Sue:** Hmmm… Yeah.

My interpretation is too fanciful and too eager to take over her narrative. She politely refuses it. I personally love *The Buried Life* too, which is not necessarily a strength in the interview, as I can become too keen to point her attention to things that I care about. Yet I do feel that there is a moment of meeting in our interview, as we share some of the significant verses of the poem.

I asked nearly all the intimants whether they thought the literary work had *saved* their life. Why is that? In the first two interviews I conducted, the person used this verb spontaneously. I felt it was unproblematic to ask other intimants the same. In cases when they

rejected this interpretation, they offered an alternative. It was a productive question, in that it precipitated good reflections in which the intimant had to contact their felt sense in order to check whether it felt right, and then search for a more fitting alternative. It is interesting that nearly all participants understand 'to save' quite literally as 'to rescue,' as an existential verb signifying 'overcoming the urge to end one's life', whereas I take it to mean 'to resolve a psychological crisis.' The question clearly invited the intimant to evaluate her experience.

Transcription, editing and presentation of narratives

In discussing the "difficult interpretive decisions" involved in transcribing interviews, especially translated interviews, Riessman raises the following question: "[…] How to represent narratives from these conversations?"[64] It is precisely this question I will discuss in this chapter. I regard the narrative representation of an interview as a matter of turning transcript into text. The aim of this section is to discuss procedures and choices related to the transcription of interviews, to the editing of these transcripts, and to how the narratives presented were produced by adding elements from pre- and post-interview memos to the edited transcripts. This three-stage process is ultimately a philological procedure of transforming the witnessing and recording of an oral narrative into an authoritative textual edition presented for interpretation.

Oliver et al. argue that despite being a central and pivotal element in qualitative data collection, "transcription practices remain superficially examined."[65] They suggest that the constraints and opportunities of transcription choices be reflected upon, and reflected into, the research design. Such reflection is necessary for "creating trustworthy qualitative data."[66] According to Oliver et al., transcription practices can be placed on a continuum of two dominant

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[64] Riessman, *Narrative Method*, 42. "Transcriptions are by definition incomplete, partial and selective – constructed by an investigator," argues Riessman (50). I only partially agree with this constructionist view. They may under no circumstances be a transparent reflection of the recorded interview. However, to say that they are "constructed" is simply bad language use. Many transcripts aim to be as *complete* as possible. Even a denaturalised transcript is not a *construction*.

[65] Daniel G. Oliver, Julianne M. Serovich, and Tina L. Mason, "Constraints and Opportunities with Interview Transcription: Towards Reflection in Qualitative Research," *Social Forces* 84, no. 2 (2005): 1273.

[66] Ibid., 1280.

modes: *naturalism*, which attempts to represent every detail, verbal and extra-verbal, of the communication; and *denaturalism*, which removes all non-verbal signs and involuntary vocalisations. They find that these two extremes correspond to ontological assumptions of realism and constructivism respectively, and are used for different research purposes. Conversation analysis uses a highly naturalised transcription, whereas denaturalised forms of transcription grew out of an interest in the informational content of the interviews and were used for instance in ethnography, grounded theory and critical discourse analysis. A main problem related to the continuum is that "choosing a naturalised approach could provide detail that might obfuscate the substance of the interview […]. A denaturalised approach could result in *white-washed* data."[67] With the former approach, participants may be represented in an insensitive way, whereas with the latter data may be lost or distorted. The authors recommend that in order to solve this dilemma two versions of the transcript can be retained: The first would be a naturalised version for the purpose of in-depth analysis, the second would be a denaturalised version used for member-checking and content analysis. I have appropriated this form of thinking, but conceptualise it as a two-stage process of (i) transcription, and (ii) editing from a manuscript matrix consisting of transcript, recording and memos - rather than as two versions of the transcript.

In my view, a major weakness in methodological discussions about transcription is the unquestioned assumption that transcription is a *final* stage, the text on which interpretation is based – and that one presents excerpts from the transcript to the reader. I regard the transcript as a necessary intermediate stage on the way to the full presentation of the data. The transcript is a suspended communication, halfway between recorded oral communication and a written document, a text. A text is, according to Ricoeur, "any discourse fixed by writing."[68] Thus data production consists of interview, recording, transcription, editing of transcript and memos, and presentation of textual narrative. I suggest that instead of two versions of the *transcript*, one operates with two distinct stages: the semi-naturalised transcript is turned into a 'denaturalised' script, or text which contains the whole narrative. The first stage is one of accurate transcription, using an appropriately fine-grained level of naturalism. This is also an act of interpretation, as all information recorded cannot possibly be represented in a transcript. The second stage is an editing of the transcript, in the process of which the transcript is made into a written document

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[67] Ibid., 1281.

[68] Paul Ricoeur, "What is a text? Explanation and understanding," in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences,* trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 145.

that is denaturalised. Why is this necessary? If the transcriber opts for a highly denaturalised transcription straight away, too many interpretive choices are left unreflected upon. The critical reader will have no means of checking how one went from recording to a text. To attempt faithfully to represent as much of the interaction as possible makes the researcher aware of interpretative choices. Presenting a naturalised transcription rather than a written text is problematic for reasons of ethos: the speaker comes across as a less-articulate and reflective person than how she or he was perceived in the oral dialogue context. The ethos of the intimant is best reflected in a denaturalised script. By "cleaning up" the transcript and editing it, the intimant is represented not in an idealised way but corresponding to my impression of the person in the interaction. Appropriating a term from Polkinghorne, we may call this "narrative smoothing."[69] In actual terms, this means that I take up a position at the denaturalism end of the continuum when it comes to the end data product. It is by showing how the data were transformed at each stage, that *reliability* is ensured.

I will present excerpts from the transcripts to show the level of detail represented, and to show which choices were made in editing them and denaturalising them. It is impossible to include the transcripts in their entirety. I have selected an excerpt from two of the six transcripts. I have chosen one interview with an English speaker and one with a Norwegian speaker, picking the two interviews that represented the greatest difficulty in turning into text: the interviews with Sue and Nina, respectively. As will become immediately apparent, if I were to present the transcripts in their entirety, they would be rather unreadable. Moreover, the speakers would come across very differently from what they did in the actual dialogue with me in the interview situation. A naturalised transcript in fact distorts the speaker's 'voice': if a person comes across as less articulate than what she really is, she will be perceived as less knowledgeable. Editing the transcript is in fact an exercise in *rhetoric*, in so far as the speaker's ethos must be protected, *logos* must be rendered faithfully, and the figures of *pathos* must not be smoothed out. Importantly, the speaker's ethos in the interview situation must be reflected in the text. The principal challenge in transforming the transcripts into texts is to distinguish between redundant utterances and significant expressions. I will in the following present an excerpt from the transcript of the interview with Sue, juxtaposed with the corresponding text passage, before discussing the major alterations and their implications. Thereafter I will do the same vis a vis Nina's interview. I have chosen excerpts that I think are "representative" of the whole, in so far

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[69] See Donald E. Polkinghorne, "Narrative Configuration in qualitative analysis," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 8, no. 1 (1995): 5-23.

as they illustrate some of the typical decisions I have made. Of course, this choice can be criticised: why only take excerpts from these two interviews, and why just these excerpts? The answer is on the one hand practical: further excerpts would have been subject to 'the law of diminishing returns'. On the other hand, these two interviews were the most difficult to textualise, and therefore most clearly reveal the challenges in the translation of transcript into scripture, or textual narratives.

For clarity, I have presented the excerpts on adjacent pages so as to facilitate comparison.

Transcribing and editing: two examples

Example 1: Sue's interview

<u>Excerpt from transcript of interview with Sue</u>

Interviewer: Thank you (short pause) what was it like to read it here and now?

Interviewee: it's quite a long time since I've read it in its entirety actually hmmm erm good (pause) yeah it's, I mean, there's lots lots more in it really you know, that, bits that I didn't remember or erm it kind of feels erm, you know it still, it still has the same kind of power really, for me, you know? (long pause)

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: Yeah it's a – I mean, I think, you know, I, I've kind of come to this kind of feel, the sense that, that, that of, you know (pause) because I've had the experience of, of reading with lots of people now and and I've had the experience of witnessing people have a – I suppose similar response to a piece of writing you know, so like, you know, the, the woman in the, the article that I wrote about it, in the prison?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: you know the Bluebird, I mean you know just that kind of really sort of, having that kind of profound experience?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah!

Interviewee: Erm and so I've come to feel like that there is kind of something for everyone, you know, or maybe there is more than one thing, I'm sure there is, but erm you know, but there are kind of bits of writing that kind of have this sort of power to resonate, to move you, you know, they're kind of er, they, they're kind of tuned in, you know, they're they're they're the right tune for you and then, so then when, and when you get one of those, it's kind of like it's just, I don't know, everything sort of fits you know and you can't, you kind of can't, you can't kind of hold yourself back, like, you know, the woman in, in the prison for instance, she had no interest in joining with me or being with me, or you know, she was resisting every step of the way, until that poem came out, and she just couldn't help herself, you know, ha, so I think, I mean often when I'm, you know, when I was running groups all the time, that's what I'd be thinking, what does this person need? What does this person need? What can I, you know, what what can I bring that's going to kind of, you know, get past the kind of, what's going to be the, the bolt shot back, you know?

Thor: Thank you. What was it like to read it here and now?

Sue: It's quite a long time since I've read it in its entirety, actually. Hmmm, I mean, there's lots more in it really, bits that I didn't remember. But it still, it still has the same kind of power for me, you know? (*Tears in her eyes. She pauses*)

The woman in prison

I've come to this feeling that, the sense that… Because I've had the experience of reading with lots of people now, and I've had the experience of witnessing people have, I suppose, a similar response to a piece of writing… I wrote an article about an experience a woman in prison had with the poem Bluebird by Bukowski. Where she had a profound experience with the poem. So I've come to feel that there is something for everyone, or maybe there's more than one thing, I'm sure there is. There are bits of writing that have this sort of power to resonate, to move you. They're kind of tuned in, they're the right tune for you and then, when you get one of those, it's like, I don't know, everything sort of <u>fits</u>. And then you can't hold yourself back. Like the woman in the prison for instance, she had no interest in joining with me or being with me, she was resisting every step of the way, until that poem was brought out, and she just couldn't help herself, you know. So when I was running groups all the time, that's what I'd be thinking, what does this person need? What does this person need? What can I bring that's going to get past the… what's going to be "the bolt shot back"?

The psychologist Russell T. Hurlburt, in reflecting on his interviews with people describing moments of inner experience, discusses the effects of "undermining expressions" that take attention away from the experience. Among such "undermining expressions" he lists e.g. 'like', 'I guess', 'you know'. He argues that such expressions generally "undermine confidence in descriptions."[70] As is evident in the transcript excerpt, there is a high frequency of "I mean", "you know", "I think", "like", "kind of". These expressions can undermine the speaker's ethos. However, I did not really notice them much as we spoke together *during the interview*. They become significantly more *obtrusive* when transcribed. Why does she use them? Hurlburt argues that they may be understood either as "subjunctifiers," signs that the speaker does not really believe in what she says, or as "ornaments," habitual expressions that may reflect socio-linguistic factors in the language environment to which the speaker belongs.[71] As Sue displayed the same expressions in another context in which I met her, I think it is safe to assume that in Sue's case, these are "ornaments," habitual expressions. Hence, I chose to remove most of them. If presented with this semi-naturalist transcript, Sue might have been negatively surprised and perhaps objected to being represented in such a way. However, the problematic aspect is that sometimes she will use these expressions as signals that she is thinking, actively searching for the right word or phrase. In these instances, such expressions are not merely ornaments, but 'tools' or 'handle-bars' to help her get a grip on her thought. Therefore, it was an interpretative issue when to include such markers. In these instances, they are not *undermining* but *mining* expressions, mining for the right expression of thought that resides on the periphery of the field of awareness.

A second interpretative issue is representation of syntax. A naturalised transcript would not contain any commas or full stops, instead each pause would be measured in milliseconds. In semi-naturalised transcripts such measurements may be substituted by simpler means of representation. However, unless these transcripts are read *out loud,* one cannot realise them as communication. As such, a transcript reads much like a *scriptura continua.* In his study of late antique manuscripts and the practice of silent reading, Paul Saenger shows how the *interpuncta* that were put between words in the classical period, disappeared from the second century

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[70] Russell T. Hurlburt, *Investigating Pristine Inner Experience: Moments of Truth* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117. This work is highly recommended for all scientists using interview methods. It challenges many presumptions about subjective experience and consciousness.

[71] Ibid., 120-124.

onwards, to leave the reader to make sense of unseparated text, *scriptura continua* .[72] As the book contained no punctuation, the Roman reader, "reading aloud to others or softly to himself, approached the text syllable by syllable in order to recover the words and sentences conveying the meaning of the text."[73] Only in the seventh century was word separation reintroduced. According to Saenger there were several early word-spacing formats and punctuation marks used to break up the *scriptura continua.*

In turning the first statement of Sue into three full sentences, I have had to approach the transcript syllable by syllable whilst re-listening to the recording, in order to interpret the *scriptura continua* and turn it into written text. I kept the "hmmm" to signify that Sue is pondering at this point. The decision to render the third sentence as "But it still, it still has the same kind of power" is neither straightforward nor obvious. Sue does not in fact use the word "but" – it is an interpretation on my part to use this disjunction. In the transcript, the repetition of "still" looks like a sign of hesitancy, whereas it may also be taken as a marker of pathos. The latter alternative is brought into the foreground more clearly in the written text, although both alternatives are viable.

The general concern regarding the ethos of Sue was to represent her as a person who has to *feel* her way into her thoughts, who takes the time to look for the right metaphor or phrase. Moreover, she does not come across as a person prone to exaggeration. Therefore I decided to include a certain number of the "mining expressions", such as "I guess" or "kind of". These expressions are not simply habitual, nor do they betray lack of confidence in one's assertions. The overall impression of Sue was of someone who was almost physically *moulding* her expressions; groping, kneading, extracting words to clothe her lived experience. I have in this excerpt deleted three of my introjections of "yeah". They add nothing to the unfolding meaning of the narrative. However, they were important in the unfolding of the dialogue in the actual interview. I refer to the section on interview method for a discussion of different types of responses and their significance.

The amendments from transcript to written text are not restricted to deletions and contractions, however. I have added an explicit reference to the author of the poem *Blackbird*, and altered the phrasing considerably. This is a contentious decision, but I thought it was the

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[72] Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).

[73] Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982): 371.

most efficient way of rendering her implied reference to our mutual background knowledge. Moreover, in parentheses I have included a reference to a non-verbal sign: *tears in her eyes.* This of course does not appear in the transcript, but was interposed afterwards. It is taken from the post-interview memo where such emotional reactions and the points at which they occurred were noted. It is significant because it illustrates that she is being moved by the re-reading.

Furthermore, I have added a heading, "the woman in prison." I have done that at a juncture in which Sue takes a pause lasting several seconds, before launching a new theme. This is another decision that foregrounds that the dialogue is placed in a narrative frame. I have also amended the neutral designations 'interviewer' and 'respondent'. At the time of transcription, I had not yet decided upon which pseudonyms to use, nor had I decided to conceptualise the interviewee as 'intimant.'

What does not transpire from these excerpts are two fundamental decisions: I have not edited the order of segments in the unfolding dialogue. The discourse corresponds to the order in which events were related in the interview. Also, the entire dialogue is included except for initial chit-chat and practical stuff relating to the completed informed consent form that the intimant would give back to me before the start of the interview proper. This is the same for all the interviews. In some interviews, there was a break midway through. What should be apparent to any reader from this comparison of transcript and text, is that there is a whole variety of interpretive choices being made in every passage. However, if I had presented a naturalised transcript, the reader would then be confronted as if with a *scriptura continua*, and would have had to realise it as text. What is important is that the reader should be given an informed insight into how the transformation has been carried out.

Example 2: Nina's interview

Excerpt from transcript of interview with Nina

Interviewer: so that, that [is something you see have discovered recently? Mhm]

Interviewee: [That I see now]. And the way that, that it has been – that this whole attitude – it is something about the attitude in the book and - that in a way this attitude has been there. That understanding of life, yeah. That this is an enormous process, that, it has kind of, it has been there the whole time regardless of whether I have put it into words or not. So it has a lot to do with that, that – that I sought that book (sniffles). I reckon. Let me see. I need to see if I can take a breather, and then I can (words are muffled, sounds of rummaging). Did you like it, then?

Interviewer: yes, I did, very much (short pause) I was in fact, I was surprised by it because when you spoke, told me about it the first time, then I thought, alright it's a book about horses, it's probably a girl's story about horses, but when I started reading it I liked it from the first page I think… It turned into a very special reading experience, where I was at the same time imagining you reading it and wondering how that was for you.

Interviewee: (nods, smiles). (Pause lasting several seconds). Yes, and also it is a, well – I may as well tell it to you, actually this is a very special book – the story of the book itself, because of when I was – it is a bit touchy, this – but that is ok. I am used to talking about my inner stuff and that, so it's not a problem for me. Ehm (pause, on verge of weeping). When I was 16, I joined a group of Christians, they were a bit too Christian - it was a group of youths where it was very much – and I, something about it attracted me about it, there was a togetherness that was different from the rest of the world. But it just got stricter and stricter. It started off as a nice youth club, and a commune that we lived in, but then, but then it, well- gradually it got to be so that we we had to, we were not allowed to have anything but God.[74]

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[74] This is a literal translation from the Norwegian. I did not in fact first translate the transcript literally into English in this way, but went from the Norwegian transcript to English text:

Intervjuer: så den, den [ser du nå i ettertid? Mhm]

Intervjuede: [Den ser jeg nå] Og liksom det at, det at den da har – at denne holdningen – det er noe med holdningen i boken og - at liksom den holdningen har vært der. Liksom den livsforståelsen da. At dette er en vanvittig prosess, det, den har jo liksom, den har jo vært der hele tiden uavhengig av om jeg har satt ord på den eller ikke. Så det er nok mye av det som gjør at den – at jeg søkte til den boka (snufser). Tror jeg. Skal vi se. Så skal jeg se om jeg kan puste litt, også kan jeg (ordene blir til hvisking mens hun ordner med noe). Syns du den var fin da?

Intervjuer: Ja, jeg syns det. Veldig. Jeg ble jo, jeg ble overrasket fordi når du snakket, nevnte, den første gang så tenkte jeg ja vel, en hestebok, at det sikkert var en sjangerbok for jenter. Men da jeg leste den likte jeg den allerede fra første side, tror jeg. Det ble en veldig spesiell leseopplevelse, hvor jeg samtidig tenkte på deg og undret meg over hvordan du leste den.

Intervjuede: (Nikker og smiler) (flere sekunders pause) Ja, og så er det jo, altså – kan jo like gjerne fortelle det, altså det er jo en spesiell bok – historien om selve boka, fordi at da jeg var – det er jo touchy ting dette her da, men det gjør ikke noe. Jeg er veldig vant til å snakke om mine indre ting og sånn, så det er ikke noe farlig. Ehm (pause, på gråten). Da jeg var 16, så kom jeg med i en kristen gjeng, som var litt for kristen. Det var jo en sånn ungdomsgjeng hvor det var veldig sånn – og jeg, det var et eller annet som trakk meg til det, for det var et felleskap som var litt annerledes enn verden. Men det ble strammere og strammere. Begynte med en sånn

<u>Excerpt from corresponding passage of Narrative of Nina</u>

Thor: So that is something you discovered recently?

Nina: Yes, I see that now. It's something about the whole stance, the attitude that pervades the book. That understanding of life. The enormous process of turning things around. This awareness has been there the whole time, regardless of whether I have put it into words. It is what made me seek that book. Let me take a breather… (*Pause*). Did you like the book?

Thor: Yes, much more than I had thought. I really loved it.

Sacrificing one's self

Nina: This is a special book for me. I may as well tell you the history of the book itself. It's a bit touchy, this, but it's ok. When I was 16, I joined a group of Christians. They were a bit too Christian. Something about this youth milieu attracted me, there was a togetherness that appealed to me, difficult to find elsewhere. But it just got more and more confined and strict. It started off as a nice youth club, and we lived in a commune. But gradually it evolved, to the point where one was not allowed to have anything but God.

The use of parentheses to mark overlapping speech in this excerpt is a naturalist device. Because the occurrences of overlap are so infrequent in the interviews, and bear little significance on the understanding of the dialogue, I think it is unproblematic not to carry this feature over into the text. Nina asks me a direct question in this dialogue, therefore I must include my response in the text. However, since I am not the protagonist here, I have decided to include only the essence of my response. This is a contestable decision; it was made to ensure that the total text would not considerably exceed the other five in length. Furthermore, what I tell Nina here is what I had already told myself in the pre-interview memo, which was subsequently edited into the narrative as part of the intro. Hence the information was redundant here. Another feature that has been deleted in the transition to text are the parentheses (*sniffles*) and *(on the verge of weeping)*. Why exclude these when I have included the parenthetic reference to tears in the excerpt from Sue's narrative? In the latter case, I take Sue to be moved

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hyggelig ungdomsgjeng med kollektiv og sånn, som vi bodde i, så, men så ble det altså – til slutt så ble det rett og slett sånn at vi skulle, altså vi skulle ikke ha noe annet enn Gud.

by the poem, whereas in this case with Nina her reaction testifies to the emotional gravity of her memories. Nina says that it is not a "problem" for her to talk about this. However, her sniffles are not an attempt to communicate non-verbally with me – she is trying to restrain that reaction so as to be able to render her experience faithfully. Therefore I have not included it in the text. What is more, the narrative itself contains sufficient pathos to influence the reader.

I should point out that in translating from Norwegian to English certain interpretive choices must also be made. For instance, in the Norwegian transcript Nina uses the same word thrice, also putting emphasis on it: *holdningen.* This word may be rendered in English as 'attitude', 'stance' or 'bearing', depending on context. I have chosen to use 'stance' in the first phrase, 'attitude' in the second, in an attempt to convey my understanding that she means *both* of these. I have throughout sought to restrict such translational 'liberties' as much as I could, rendering the English text as close to the literal meaning of the Norwegian as possible. However, a translation will not be the *same* as the source language text. Another perspicuous problem in translating the transcript into text, is the prevalence of non-sequiturs. This of course is a very common aspect of oral dialogue which remains a background feature of communication until it is foregrounded in a transcript. Nina will start off in one direction, and then change tack mid-utterance to launch another train of thought. In my impression, Nina has an intense communication style: there is so much wanting to be said, and one thing is associated with another, hence she will try to express two thoughts simultaneously. This means that her style is not very 'linear'. How can this be faithfully rendered, while at the same time creating a grammatical order and keeping the sense intact? By using a combination of hypotactic and paratactic elements I have tried to clearly render the logos and at the same time convey the intensity of experiencing going on. I do not claim that my choices are optimal, merely that they are good enough to transmit to the reader a felt sense of Nina's communicational content and style.

Presentation of narratives

In going from transcript to text, another narrative layer was added. Instead of presenting the narrative as a dialogue in which the intimant is the narrator and I am the narratee, I have added a narrative frame. This frame consists of an *intro* and an *outro*, plus section headlines. Technically speaking, such a frame is an extradiegetic level of the narrative; it is outside of the level of dialogic exchange in which the intimant is an autodiegetic narrator and I am the narratee

– the intradiegetic level.[75] Why have I chosen to include the extradiegetic element? It was done in an attempt to reflect the fact that I made pre- and post-interview memos in which I noted my principal expectations and impressions. By including the extradiegesis, where I am a homodiegetic narrator, I wish to represent that I have prepared for the meeting, and that it continues to 'live' after we have said goodbye. It is a way of showing that I am not a 'neutral observer,' without exaggerating the importance of my presence. I am not sure that this was the right decision. I could have simply excluded this extradiegetic dimension, and provided the same information in my interpretation of the narrative. In these extradiegetic introductions I attempt to synthesise the information I possessed prior to the interview, as well as my response to the work in question, and the location and time/atmosphere of our meeting. In the outros I attempt to convey the immediate impression and concerns I had following the interview.

According to Polkinghorne, there are two ways of using narrative data and including them in the research report. Either one uses "paradigmatic" analytic procedures to produce categories out of the common elements (coding-based approaches), or the researcher produces a narrative, as in a case study report.[76] I find this dichotomy far too coarse. What both these approaches have in common, is that *excerpts* or *segments* of a participant's story is included into the researcher's discourse – either to exemplify a category or as direct quotes in the reporter's scientific report. My approach belongs to neither of these types. I present the *entire* dialogue as a narrative, and subsequently interpret this as a whole text. I find it to be a general problem in qualitative studies that the reader is presented with quotes from participants, as if they could unproblematically be taken out of context. Moreover, such quotes are used to *illustrate* a point, and presented as if the utterance was transparent and not in need of interpretation. Thus presenting the intimant's whole narrative is an integral part of subservation.

Philology and the manuscript matrix

"Edited texts," argues Stephen Nichols, are "rational products of philological endeavour."[77] He advocates a "new philology" that returns to the medieval origins of philology in a manuscript

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[75] See Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980). This is a simplification of Genette's position. He would refer to the actual dialogue as a meta-diegetic level; however, as he admits, this runs counter to the usual logic in how the prefix meta- is employed. See pages 227-234.

[76] Polkinghorne, "Narrative Configuration", 5-23.

[77] Stephen G. Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* 65, no.1 (1990): 2.

culture. In the "old" view of philology, represented for instance by Auerbach, philology was seen as a Renaissance enterprise to collect and edit manuscripts of the ancient world. Philology represented a technological scholarship made possible by print culture, aiming to move away from the multiplicity and variance of a manuscript culture in order to achieve exactitude based on a fixed and transparent text. In the manuscript culture, according to Nichols, adaptation or *translatio* was central: "the continual rewriting of past works in a variety of versions, a practice which made even the copying of medieval works an adventure in supplementation rather than faithful imitation."[78] Integral parts of medieval text production were images and annotations of various forms, "rubrics, captions, glosses, and interpolations."[79] What Nichols terms the "manuscript matrix" contained different systems of representation, such as commentaries in the margins. The scribe "improved" upon the original manuscript rather than engaging in a "straightforward act of copying;" thus the scribe "supplants the original poet, often changing words or narrative order, suppressing or shortening some sections, while interpolating new materials in others."[80] I believe that the transformation of the interview into a textual narrative is an example of such a "new philology." The transcript along with the recording and memos constitute the manuscript matrix to be interpreted, and from which the edited text is created. The text supplants the transcript, the recording, and my memos, to produce a narrative. Several different texts could be created from this matrix, just as a variety of different transcripts can be created from the same recording. What is important is not arriving at the single correct and transparent text, but arriving at *one* justified version, which I authorise through explicating my decisions. This version then becomes the authoritative text which any interpretation must refer to.

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[78] Ibid., 3.

[79] Ibid., 7.

[80] Ibid., 8.

Critical selection of narratives for interpretation

The source of homogeneity in my study is of course the past life experience the participants must have in common: that of a life-changing experience of reading fiction. The inclusion criteria are thus only two: that the person be of adult age and that she or he has read a work of imaginative literature (poetry, novel, novella, short story, drama or what may be loosely called fiction). All 16 transcriptions satisfy those criteria. These are all narratives of life-changing reading experiences of imaginative literature. However, for both practical and theoretical reasons, there must be a process of critical selection of narratives. Firstly, it is impossible within the scope of this study to perform an in-depth idiographic interpretation of 16 different narratives. Secondly, the construct of LCFRE must be defined precisely, and the data qualified. This does *not* imply that some of these experiences are "better" or "more authentic" than others. It simply means I must ensure that narratives selected be narratives of the same thing. I will illustrate this problem through discussing an example from an influential textbook on phenomenological method by Amedeo Giorgi.

In his elucidation of the use of the phenomenological method in qualitative inquiry, Giorgi exemplifies the application of the method in relation to the phenomenology of jealousy. He interviewed two people to ask them about their lived experience of jealousy. From the two collected narratives he attempts to describe the structure of the phenomenon. I am not intending to criticise the method, nor the theory, he expounds – only his example. It transpires that one of the two narratives he has collected may more properly be termed a description of *envy* than *jealousy.* Of this Giorgi says: "In the scholarly literature a sharp distinction is made between jealousy and envy. […] While these distinctions make sense formally and in the abstract, the data show that the two emotions can be lived confusedly in one situation."[81] I contend that what the data show is that Giorgi may be comparing apples and oranges. One of the interview subjects does not distinguish between the two emotions, and accordingly tells a story of a significant event in her life. In my view, this narrative, although just as "interesting" as the other, should be excluded from the description of jealousy. This is a matter of construct validity. If some of the narratives gathered are in fact about a different phenomenon, then one must select those narratives that best approximates the defined phenomenon. According to Giorgi, "this finding

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[81] Amedeo Giorgi, *The Descriptive Phenomenological Method in Psychology: A Modified Husserlian Approach* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2009), 204.

raises the question of why these two emotions can be confused in a concrete situation."[82] That, however, is a different matter. The confusion is a surprise finding that should be accounted for, but then the research question must be altered or expanded. It is not the responsibility of the interviewee to satisfy the construct criteria of the researcher. This is an analytic process to be undertaken a posteriori. This problem has not been discussed in qualitative research literature. It is naively assumed that interviewees speak about the same phenomenon. Although one has a homogeneous life-history sample, this is no guarantee that persons will describe the same phenomenon. One must therefore find a way of ensuring *construct validity.*

Psychologists Angus and Greenberg define autobiographical reasoning as a narrative structure or schema that organises "the ever-unfolding cacophony of lived experience into bounded episodes that by definition have a beginning, middle and end, and enable perspective taking and reflection." [83] They regard the self as being continuously constructed in a self-organising process and emerging from more basic elements:

> Embodied emotional experiencing and narrative organisational processes are both fundamental components of a higher order synthesis that ultimately determines who we create ourselves to be. Constructing a sense of self involves an ongoing process both of identifying with and symbolising emotions and actions as one's own and constructing an embodied narrative that offers temporal stability and coherence."[84]

Angus and Greenberg have developed a taxonomy of different kinds of stories that, although it refers to a therapeutic context, I find useful for a preliminary analysis of the 16 narratives. All of the 16 stories of the intimants belong to the category of "self-identity change story": a positive transformation in overall narrative plotline of their life story and view of self. As such they are all stories of life-changing reading experience. However, Angus and Greenberg find that some stories are "empty stories": they are not told from a place of feeling. Moreover, some stories are "broken": there are conflicting plot-lines. The person may tell a story of positive change, yet at the same time there is another plotline pointing to standstill or negative change. Also, not all stories have "unique outcome": it can be difficult to ascertain what the actual consequence of the experience was. An "untold story" is one that has not yet been told. There is also a category of "unfinished story", which still has not arrived at resolution. Finally, there

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[82] Ibid., 204.

[83] Lynne E. Angus, and Leslie S. Greenberg, *Working with Narrative in Emotion-Focused Therapy. Changing Stories, Healing Lives* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2011), 25.

[84] Ibid., 25.

are incoherent stories, which the reader struggle to make sense of the internal subjective experiences in relation to events.[85] I used this taxonomy as a sensitising point of departure when performing a preliminary analysis of the 16 narratives. I would consider an interview as empty if there was not a sufficient 'deepening' of the intimation (see section on interview method). I would consider the story to be broken if I was not sure that the change should only be ascribed to the book. I would consider that the story did not have a unique outcome if I could not sufficiently comprehend the nature of the change. I would consider the story unfinished if the person was still in crisis or in a process of transformation. I would consider the story to be incoherent if I could not sufficiently fathom the subjective experience of the intimant.

The construct of Life-changing Fiction Reading Experience

When undertaking a preliminary analysis of the 16 narratives, it became apparent that there was variation with respect to the following eight factors:

Proximity: how close to the work does the dialogue take us? Does the intimant point to specific passages and discuss the work in depth in the interview? Or does the intimant speak of his or her story without much reference to the work? For instance, there are some intimants who do not "weave" the book into their narrative to any significant degree.

Ascription: When reading the narrative, is it reasonable to attribute the life-change to the reading of the book rather than to contextual factors? Naturally, any life-change will objectively be multi-determined. However, if for instance the reader is at the same time in counselling, so that the advice from other sources may be deemed to be of equal significance, then the change may also be ascribed to the counselling context.

Concentration: If the dialogue diverts too much away from the life-changing reading experience, then the narrative is not sufficiently concentrated. For instance, if the intimant talks too much about an exciting future project and very little about the life-changing experience itself, then the interview may be excluded.

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[85] Ibid., 109.

Coherence: The narrative must have sufficient coherence. If I during the interview or in reading the transcript afterwards find it difficult to gain a sense of coherence as to what the life-change is all about, or to understand what the person means, the narrative must be excluded.[86]

Integrated memory: The reader must have represented the reading experience as life-changing prior to the interview. For example, one of the intimants reported that it was only upon seeing the question posed by my poster, 'has a book changed your life?', that he began to think of his reading experience as life-changing. The experience of life-change should not be 'co-constructed' in the interview.

Resolution: The reader must be judged to have achieved a stage of resolution of crisis, so that the experience is 'complete.' Thus if the person says the reading experience helped her through her depression, and yet at the time of the interview she is still receiving psychiatric treatment, then the crisis may not be fully resolved.

Love of the book: The reader must still harbour strong positive feelings associated with the book. If the intimant has largely forgotten about the book, merely regarding it as instrumental in bringing about change, then the work itself may not have made a lasting, deep impression. The reader must intimate that she or he has been deeply moved by the book.

Shared reading: I must have read the work in question prior to the interview, in order for me to be able to follow the intimant in her reflections on significant passages.

Based on a consideration of these factors, which of course are not 'hard' criteria, I developed the following construct of an LCFRE narrative:

A narrative is of an LCFRE if the work of imaginative literature is proximal in the dialogue; the change can unequivocally be ascribed to that work; the dialogue is highly concentrated on the experience; the narrative is coherent and intelligible; the experience was already integrated in memory as life-changing; the crisis has been resolved; there is a lasting love of the book; and the person has shared the affective experience of reading significant passages from the work in our dialogue.

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[86] According to Angus and Greenberg (109) markers of narrative coherence include: A clear sense of the beginning, middle and end of the story; Descriptions of the internal subjective experiences; An explicit understanding of causes or factors that contributed to conflicting emotions, actions and intentions of self and others; and finally, an inner felt sense of resolution.

Only six narratives fully met these criteria, and were therefore selected for idiographic interpretation. The narrative of Sue is about a reading experience that happened in a shared reading group. Naturally, the group environment will have impacted on the experience. However, as her story revolves around her meeting with the poem, and not on the discussion with the group, I have treated this narrative as an LCFRE like the others. Camilla's narrative contains two separate works of fiction. However, both are proximal in the dialogue and were part of the same transformative experience and were both read during a particular life crisis. These six narratives will be presented in full in the next chapter. In the following, I will give a brief presentation of the ten narratives that were excluded from idiographic interpretation, and the rationale behind this choice.

Summary of the ten excluded narratives and rationales for deselection

Sonja's story

Sonja had started a BA-programme in graphic design at a prestigious institution. She struggled with feelings of insecurity and lack of self-confidence. She feared that all the other students were more creative than her, and that she was unable to cope with the workload. Hence, she was on the verge of dropping out of the college. When she confided in a friend, she was enthusiastically advised to read Samuel Beckett's book *Worstward Ho.* The friend quoted these famous words from the book: "Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better." Sonja read the book and then adopted this saying as a form of mantra. She even had it tattooed on her arm. Always keeping in mind these words helped her to overcome her insecurities and go on to succeed in her studies as a graphic designer. Sonja read and loved the book, and the change in her outlook was significant. Still, I am left unsure as to whether it is the work itself or merely the quoted lines that was of primary importance to Sonja. After all, this work is not only oblique, but as a whole is not very uplifting. For instance, the sentences that follow the quoted lines take on a much more pessimistic tone: "Fail worse again. Still worse again. Till sick for good. Throw up for good." What I did not know at the time, but only discovered later on, is that precisely these lines have become something of a self-help "meme" and repeatedly quoted out of context.[87] I do not wish to argue that Sonja only read parts of the

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[87] According to Mark O'Connell "those six disembodied imperatives have in their strange afterlife as a motivational meme come to much greater prominence than the text itself. The entrepreneurial class has adopted

book or misinterpreted the whole. In fact, reading is a creative act in which one sometimes appropriates parts of a text and inscribe it in new contexts. However, her friend's well-meaning quoting of Beckett may have had as much influence as the actual work. Therefore, it is problematic to determine the life-changing experience as predominately facilitated by an act of reading. As such, I have found it best to exclude this narrative from my LCFRE construct.

Damian's story

This is a fascinating and deeply moving story. Damian grew up with his mother and was especially close to her. When he was a young boy his mother was hospitalised with a life-threatening illness. She was in a coma for several weeks. On her bedside table was a book by Alexander Pope, containing the poem *Essay on Man*. Having to leave his mother in hospital, as he went home Damian took the book with him. Although he found the poem difficult to understand, he kept reading parts of it. The poem helped him cope with the tumultuous and difficult feelings about losing his mother. His mother miraculously recovered a short time after, and whenever Damian has been in a difficult situation since, he has returned to the poem for guidance and inspiration. However, when reading the narrative I find it partly unintelligible owing to Damian's indirect, diffuse style of communication. I do not gain a clear impression of what his actual experience of the poem was like. This does not mean that his story is incoherent, merely that the transcript has a degree of unintelligibility that made me decide to exclude it.

Anjali's story

Anjali is of Indian family, a second generation immigrant to Norway. In her youth she endeavoured to obey her parents' wishes and values, which were at conflict with those of her peers and the culture in which she grew up. When she encountered Camilla Collett's novel *The*

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the phrase […]". He even states that a Grand Slam winning tennis player has tattooed the quotation on his body. See: Mark O'Connell, "Fail Better. How Samuel Beckett became Silicon Valley's Life Coach," January 29, 2014 in Slate, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/2014/01/samuel_beckett_s_quote_fail_better_becomes_the_mantra_of_silicon_valley.html. Ned Beauman claims that one of the most highlighted passages on Amazon's kindle website is from a self-help book which quotes these Beckett lines, and argues that "*Worstward Ho* may be a difficult work that resists interpretation, but we can at least be pretty sure that Beckett's message was a bit darker than 'just do your best and everything is sure to work out in the end'. Yet it is only because Beckett's name is attached to the quotation and because lots of people think of him as a sage without quite knowing what he stood for that it has spread so widely. It would not have survived as an authorless proverb." See: Ned Beauman, "Fail Worse," February 9, 2012 in The New Inquiry, https://thenewinquiry.com/fail-worse/

District Governor's Daughters, a naturalist novel regarded as an early feminist work about gender issues and the institution of marriage, she realised that Norwegian women also have had to face the same issues that she was confronted with. Anjali has published her biography in which she tells her story and the role of this reading experience in her identity formation, and perhaps therefore did not feel a need to recount her experience in an interview. For whatever reason, I failed to create concentration around the life-changing reading experience, so that much of the talk related to reading in general and to future projects to enable women immigrants to access Norwegian literature. As such, the narrative is an example of an 'empty' story.

Paula's story

Paula grew up in a remote village, in a low-income family where no one had been to university or read much literature. Her mother was very religious and gave her a strict upbringing. Paula told me of several books that had changed her. As a child, Enid Blyton's *Adventures of the Wishing-Chair* has provided a means of escape into a fantastic world of the imagination and acted as an imaginary friend. In secondary school her teacher introduced her to William Blake's poetry, and *The Tyger* made a deep impression upon her. She realised that she loved poetry and would like to study it. She went on to university to take a degree in literature. In her young adulthood Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* gave her great comfort in a period of depressive loneliness. Paula also cited two further works: Jeanette Winterson's biography, *Why Be Happy When You Can be Normal,* and Keats' *On Looking into Chapman's Homer*. Because she talked about so many works, we did not manage to talk about Plath's work, which was the one she had cited before the interview, in sufficient depth. Besides, I interpreted her narrative predominantly to be one of progressive change - a successful class journey rather than an LCFRE per se.

Eleanor's story

Eleanor left her home to go to university in a city far away. At university she underwent a crisis of faith and went through a process of questioning her values upon taking a course in social psychology. Eleanor has always been an avid reader. Via her reading circle, in which they read Robert Pirsig's well-known *The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,* she came across another philosophical novel of his, *Lila. An inquiry into Morals.* After reading this book, Eleanor made a moral choice to become a vegetarian. Moreover, she decided to change her career plan to help

make the world a better place. Although this was clearly a life-changing reading experience, Eleanor said that she could not really remember much from the book itself, and that she did not hold it in very high regard as a work of literature. Since the work itself has not left a lasting impression on her, I decided to exclude this narrative.

Emma's story

Emma had a tough childhood. She was continually subject to abuse and bullying from other school children. In late adolescence she was diagnosed with a mild form of Asperger's syndrome. She was rather isolated in her teens. When reading *The Perks of Being a Wallflower,* she discovered a fellow outsider in the novel's protagonist. Emma says the book gave her a "surrogate adolescence" that helped her with her own coming-of-age. Her story is deeply moving, and *Wallflower* clearly made a profound and lasting impression on her. She contacted me again to say that she had found a copy of a letter that she sent to the author, Stephen Chbovsky. Therefore we did a second interview which focused on this letter. Considering the fact that her narrative is not based on a single-session interview, I have decided to exclude it from the presented narratives. However, given that I have also been in contact with other readers who have written letters to the authors of life-changing books, I have decided to perform a separate study of this phenomenon at a future date.

Katherina' story

Katherina has been struggling with periods of serious depression since her late teens, and have been hospitalised on two occasions and received psychiatric treatment. She says she does not know what caused her depression. A friend gave her a book of short stories by the Norwegian author Karine Nyborg, *Ikke rart det kommer kråker.* In one of the stories, the female protagonist undergoes traumatic experiences and suffers from depression. Katherina says that reading this story gave her a "depression vocabulary." It helped her to find words to describe her feelings and moods. However, because her story is somewhat "unfinished," as her depression has not yet fully lifted, I have decided to exclude this narrative.

Agnes' story

Agnes has intermittently suffered from depression in adulthood, and lost her mum at a very early age. She felt trapped prior to her reading experience, as she had been burdened for years with the responsibility of taking care of her demented in-laws. Reading Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, *Mr. Peebles' Heart*, made her decide to take action in order to carry out a life-long ambition. In the story, Mr. Peebles is a depressed man careworn from having to look after other people. Agnes says: "the whole feeling of someone being down at heart and doing their duty, that was what resonated with me." His sister-in-law, a doctor, empathises with his plight, and 'prescribes' travelling, urging him to go abroad for two years. She successfully disputes all his objections, gradually overcoming his resistance, so that he finally decides to go. He comes back much changed, and for the better. Agnes has always harboured a wish to live in Paris, but kept finding excuses for why she could not go. Reading about Mr. Peebles and "how he came back happier and healthier and improved his relationship" reignites her dream, and she gradually overcomes all her excuses. Moving to Paris for a period, she is revived. The trip also has a symbolic significance, because that is where her father lived when he met her mother. Gilman's short story invites a straight identification with the protagonist, and almost appears to be written with a conative purpose: to inspire readers to realise their dream. The emphasis is on the process of persuasion employed by the doctor, rather than on the complexity of the interior life of the protagonist. I did get the impression that Agnes loved this story for its own sake. However, Agnes was in a therapeutic support group when she read the story, and shared her dream of Paris with the other members. They strongly encouraged her to go, and cheered her on. Consequently, the social factors may also have been decisive in giving Agnes the courage to follow Mr. Peebles' lead. Furthermore, the positive experience of living in Paris may also inspire Agnes to make further changes, so her transformation may be unfinished.

Marge's story

I met Marge at an event at The Reader Organisation. She had just graduated with a degree in forensics, and was an avid reader of English literature. When I told her about my project she expressed great interest and volunteered to tell me about her own significant reading experiences. We found a secluded place and as I had a voice recorder I decided to tape our conversation. Around 15 minutes into the interview - after she had initially said that although she loved literature and had enjoyed many profound reading experiences, none of them had been life-changing - Marge suddenly, and to her own surprise, it seemed, exclaimed: "Actually,

I *have* had such an experience!" She went on to tell me about the time when she was a young single parent, taking evening classes so that she could one day fulfill her dream of going to university. She was really struggling to cope with the twin demands of childcare and education and having next to no money. She felt on the verge of giving up. Marge told me that reading Mrs. Oliphant's semi-autobiographical novel, *The Days of My Life,* had given her the strength to carry on with her resolve. Mrs. Oliphant's own story is inspirational. She was a lone parent raising many children and managing at the same time a prodigious literary output. There are two reasons why I have excluded this narrative. Because the interview was impromptu I had not prepared by reading the book. Secondly, Marge had not internalized the experience as life-changing prior to the interview.

Marco' story

Marco happened to see the poster I had put up in the local library in the town where he lived. Upon seeing the question, 'has a book changed or saved your life?' he was immediately intrigued and brought to reflect upon his life. Then he remembered the time he read *Black Dahlia,* James Ellroy's crime noir novel. Reading this novel helped him decide against following in his brothers' footsteps, both of whom were criminals. Ellroy's authorship helped Marco sublimate his fascination with crime and evil. I considered selecting this narrative for in-depth interpretation. However, I got the impression that serendipitously watching a tv programme about Ellroy's life, which made him want to read the novel, had nearly as much impact upon him as the novel itself. Consequently, one may ascribe as much significance to the story about Ellroy as to the novel. Furthermore, I am not fully convinced that Marco's story has a resolution. But I have included Marco's narrative in the appendix, so that the reader may be given a specimen of the excluded narratives to enable comparison with the selected ones.

I must emphasise that the critical de-selection of these ten narratives by no means implies that these are not stories of profound life-changing reading experiences. The exclusion is not based on the degree of change or quality of engagement with text. Nor does exclusion mean that these interviews are not 'information-rich'. Each of them is fascinating in its own right. What is the case, however, is that the six selected narratives fulfill the entire list of inclusion criteria developed in the preliminary comparative analysis. These data are *qualified*,

and are therefore the *best* data for idiographic interpretations and subsequent theory-building. But my understanding of these ten narratives of course also inform my six interpretations.

Criteria of reliability

In the method of Intimate Reading, data are *produced*, not simply collected. Data production involves both development of data (collection, editing and selection) and presentation of data to be interpreted. There are two principal conditions of reliability of the data production: that the process of going from recording to text via transcript is exemplified and explicated sufficiently to be judged as trustworthy and consistent; secondly, that each narrative accurately represents all the relevant data from the interview. The reader should be able to re-produce these texts, by virtually retracing the steps I have taken in transforming the experience from expression to recording to transcript to text. Often in qualitative inquiry one finds employed the concept of inter-rater reliability. Would reliability be improved if more than one researcher had either transcribed the recordings, or interpreted the transcripts to produce the texts? In my view, there is no *one* objective transcription or translation into text. What is important is that the reader be able to ascertain which decisions were made and the rationale behind them. From the perspective of information-gathering, it is clear that information is 'lost' in the transformation of experience into memory; from memory into expression, from expression into recording, from recording into transcript, from transcript into text: one ends up with poorer or more impure information than one *originally* might have had. However, from the perspective of meaning-making, it is about distillation of the essence of the experience. It is not a case of losing or distorting information, but of producing transformation towards meaning.

Hence, the method of Intimate Reading emphasises *two criteria of reliable data production*: that the reader be given sufficient insight into how the data were *developed*, and that the reader is *presented with* all the data from which idiographic interpretations will be made.

Data Interpretation: The hermeneutical arc

The data interpretation part of Intimate Reading may be represented in terms of a simplified version of Ricoeur's hermeneutical arc.[88] The first phase is explanatory; an analysis of the internal structural relations of the narratives, achieved through distanciation. Secondly, there is an understanding phase of interpreting narratives ideographically, to realise their meaning as lived communication by following the path of thought opened up by the text. Thirdly, there is a stage of appropriation of the meaning of these interpretations in relation to the interpreter's altered horizon of understanding of the reading experience, moving beyond idiography to build a theory of Pathematics. The restoration of meaning is not a tracing back to an originary intention or experience, but a moving forth to its meaning for us here, now. This arc is a process of anteroduction.

Analysis of narrative structure

Riessman operates with four analytic approaches that are not mutually exclusive, but complimentary. *The thematic narrative analysis* focuses on what is said, rather than how it is said. *The structural form of narrative analysis* focuses on how a story is told. "Because it takes language seriously, structural narrative analysis provides tools for investigators who want to interrogate how participants use speech to construct themselves and their histories."[89] When emphasis is shifted towards the way the story is related, issues of content do not disappear but there is rhetorical awareness of the use of narrative mechanisms for increasing the persuasiveness of the story. The *interactional analysis* places emphasis on the dialogue between

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[88] Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, trans. by John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[89] Riessman, *Narrative Methods*, 103. Hiles and Cermak combine six different perspectives: *Sjuzet-fabula, holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, categorical-form* and *critical narrative analysis*. The fabula consists of bounded motifs that are fixed by the story being re-told, while the sjuzet consists of unbounded motifs, defined as not essential to the story but determining how the story is being re-told." ("Narrative Psychology," 154). This classical formalist distinction is analogous to Riessman's distinction between the thematic and structural approach. The next four perspectives are variations on this. The last perspective, the critical narrative analysis, looks at the function of the storytelling: What sort of account of her life is the interviewee offering? How does she position herself? The focus is on the psychosocial context, "on the active constructing processes through which the individual subjects attempt to account for their lives" (160). This perspective seems to share many of the assumptions of Riessman's *dialogic/performative approach*.

the teller of a story and the listener. Stories are composed and received in contexts. Although the co-construction of meaning, reflexivity and intersubjectivity is foregrounded, content and form are not marginalized: "Simply put, if thematic and structural approaches interrogate 'what' is spoken and 'how', the dialogic/performative approach asks 'who' an utterance may be directed to, 'when' and 'why', that is, for what purposes?"[90] Riessman's fourth approach is *visual analysis*, where images make up the data to be interpreted, alongside words, in terms of narrative. This approach can be related to Genette's narratology, in which there are three principal narrative levels: story (what happened), discourse (how are events represented) and narration (what is the situation of utterance).[91] They do not seem concerned with *interpreting* the meaning of the speaker's experience. They are not oriented towards the hermeneutic of restoration, although there is a constructivist/hermeneutics of suspicion orientation. I conceptualise such narrative analysis as the first stage of the hermeneutic arc, that of explanation of the internal relations. It is therefore merely preliminary to the idiographic interpretations.

> For Riessman, the central aspect of narrative analysis is to
>
> Interrogate intention and language – *how and why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers. For whom was *this* story constructed, and for what purpose? Why is the succession of events configured that way? What cultural resources does the story draw on, or take for granted? What storehouse of plots does it call up? What does the story accomplish? Are there gaps and inconsistencies that might suggest preferred, alternative, or counter-narratives?[92]

Riessman seems to subscribe to a hermeneutics of suspicion here, which I do not share. However, I engaged in a critical narrative analysis of the interviews in the process of selecting the six narratives for interpretation, and in editing them for presentation. In comparing the 16 transcripts, one could say that I excluded ten of them on the basis of a hermeneutics of suspicion; they were precisely those instances in which Riessman's questions were prominent. Moreover, I narrativised the edited transcripts by introducing an extradiegetic level. Therefore narrative analysis was part of the data production process. Furthermore, in my approach there is also an explanatory stage of structural analysis prior to the idiographic interpretations. In a comparative analysis of the six narratives, a common structure became apparent: that of *crisis*

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[90] Ibid., 105.

[91] Genette, *Narrative Discourse*.

[92] Riessman, *Narrative Methods,* 12.

– mode of engagement – resolution. This structure, based on that identified by Colaizzi, became the orienting principle for my interpretations.[93]

In *Narratives in Social Science Research*, Czarniawska adopts an analytic perspective which concentrates on plot – how the person develops connections between events.[94] Plot is central to Polkinghorne's definition of narrative: *"narrative* refers to a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot."[95] The 'logic' of plot is that one can see how events unfolded in light of given circumstances, and therefore, claims Polkinghorne, a narrative "does not focus on how one event is predicted or deduced from another, but on how change from 'beginning' to 'end' takes place."[96] Thus a narrative does not contain an analytic perspective of causal explanation, but a *katalytic* one in which an eliciting event is experienced as leading from one state of being to another. Todorov gives the following definition of a plot:

> The minimal complete plot consists in the passage from one equilibrium to another. An 'ideal' narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical.
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> Consequently there are two types of episodes in a narrative: those which describe a state (of equilibrium or of disequilibrium) and those which describe the passage from one state to the other. The first type will be relatively static and, one might say, iterative; the same kind of actions can be repeated indefinitely. The second, on the other hand, will be dynamic and in principle occurs only once. [97]

Thus the minimal plot is a tripartite structure containing a beginning, middle and end: before, during and after the disequilibrium. The plot of the six narratives may accordingly be said to consist of a disequilibrium (set against a background of equilibrium), which I have defined as a crisis. Subsequently there is an "action of a force directed in the opposite direction": the reading experience. This leads to a new equilibrium which is different from the first, represented by the resolution to the crisis. Typically, the readers also provide a 'background', what happened before the crisis, and what happened after the resolution. (There is one possible

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[93] See literature review for discussion of the 'reading structure' Colaizzi describes.

[94] Barbara Czarniawska, *Narratives in Social Science Research* (London: Sage, 2006), 84.

[95] Polkinghorne, "Narrative Configuration in qualitative analysis," 5.

[96] Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing*, 117.

[97] Tzvetan Todorov, "The Grammar of Narrative," in *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 111.

exception to this: Jane's story, in which the reading may be understood to have brought about the disequilibrium. See the interpretation of Jane's story for a discussion of this.) The most commonly cited narrative structure of stories is that developed by Labov and Waletzky in their analysis of oral narratives.[98] That a story is about to be told is signaled by an *abstract,* which alerts listeners to the prospect of a story and functions to raise their interest and perhaps also indicate what kind of genre the story belongs to. Next comes the orientation sequence, which introduces us to the time and place of the action and the main characters. Then the plot begins to unfold through the advent of an *eliciting event*. In Todorov's terms, the complicating event is the passage from equilibrium to disequilibrium. It is because something out of the ordinary has happened that the story gets told. This event invokes a response, bringing about a complication of events, moving towards an eventual *resolution.* In addition to this sequence, there is also *evaluative* sequences, in which the storyteller expresses an attitude towards events. The narrative ends with a coda, which expresses what has been learnt from the events; the teller will usually expect the listener to share the perspective implied in this lesson. This is an ideal or usual sequence; in actual fact, an element may be missing, or the structure will be more complex owing to dialogic responses or further stories being embedded within the story, for instance.

Hence I decided to structure my interpretations accordingly; I divided them into three parts: (i) crisis; (ii) transaction with the literary work; (iii) resolution. The consequence of this is that in addition to the syntagmatic axis of before – during – after, I could develop a paradigmatic axis in which I related the different crises, transactions and resolutions to each other. In my preliminary analysis I also employed the analytic distinction so central to narratology: the distinction between discourse and story. In the autodiegetic narrative of the intimant, there is a distinction between narrator and character: narrating I and experiencing I. This distinction if fundamental in their narratives. What happened then is not the same as what is told now. Whereas Wengraff's approach is to push the narrator towards the experiencing I, in my approach the oscillation between telling and reflecting is allowed; the reflections and evaluations of the intimant are seen as integral to the narrative. I will exemplify this distinction with reference to the narrative of Camilla.

A noticeable feature of Camilla's narrative is her reflective inclination. She will move from description or narration to general reflections rather quickly. There may be several reasons

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[98] William Labov, and Joshua Waletzky, "Narrative analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 7 (1997): 3-38.

for this: On the one hand, there is a self-protective tendency. She wishes to "explain what I mean" and she initially has an apologetic tone: "But this will sort of be very personal, because one needs to somehow explain why, why they were so significant at the time." There is a shift from first person to the impersonal "one needs to." She may regard her role as one of explaining rather than just telling, she may be unsure what I want or whether I will be able to receive what she will give me. She may also feel a need to protect her feelings. Elsewhere she talks about how the reading experience must be protected, because recommending the book to others leaves one vulnerable. Still, her reflections are more than deflections from speaking about what happened. Over and beyond taking a keen interest in reflecting on reading and literature, and in making general psychological observations, she engages in meta-cognition, discovering and developing her own thinking and actively attributes meaning in her act of autobiographical narration.

It is instructive to look at her response to my question "So you took the initiative to split up?" First of all, this may not have been a very good question; it follows hot on the heels of another clarificatory question requiring her to explain herself. Perhaps it would have been better for me to remain silent after she talked about the "head-buried in pillow phase." Staying with the silence, the smile may have turned into sadness and we could have moved more deeply into how the loss was experienced. In any case, she moves from recounting what she had said in the situation, into the distancing position of the narrating I. Subsequently, she proceeds to make a general philosophical reflection on the subjective perception of time, and then assumes a reflexivity regarding her present judgment, before she briefly returns to the experiencing I. She is straddling several levels and moving from iterative to singulative narration. But the general impression her style creates is that she is more concerned with exploring what it all means to her now, than with delving into what she felt then. My understanding is that this tendency is primarily due to her viewing the narrative act, the interview, as an opportunity to reflect – a room for thought, and only secondarily is it due to a personal/situational disposition to be defensive-protective towards her own feelings.

When it comes to talking about important reading experiences, she says frankly: "when you reveal your thoughts you find yourself exposed, it feels so risky to do that. And so I think that these two books … it's hard to talk about them." Although this is said in a context of discussing social relationships in general, it also pertains to the interview situation itself. Yet, later on, in a meta-cognitive moment, she discovers that "I think I was right, because I felt encouraged right now, just talking about it. I managed to articulate what I sometimes feel when

I read … a will to live." Thus, in my view, her "feeling of being exposed to the risk of revealing myself," which is prominent in her narration, is still secondary to the ongoing attempt to reflect on her experience. In the narrative act of the interview, she must tolerate the risk of exposure and simultaneously resist explaining what can only be pointed to, the most significant passages in the novels, if she is to be able to discover the "right now" of articulating truth, of *listening to herself as she is telling her story*. Importantly, although her narrative may be said to contain a full story, with a symbolic resolution in the form of her composing her own novel, she does not come to the interview with a ready-made narrative. It is always in the process of being created: "in a long-term perspective I want them to be part of the story of me, and how I managed to overcome difficulties. That's for certain." She can envisage a future point where this story would be an integral part of her narrative.

Another important aspect of the discourse – story distinction concerns the order of events in relation to the order in which they are told. As part of the preliminary analysis I would reconstruct the chronology of the events recounted in each of the narratives, to get a clear conception of the plot. For instance, in the case of Jane, the discourse commences with Jane relating something of her reading experience, before she analeptically relates a significant childhood memory. On the story level, however, the chain of events may be summarised thus: Jane had a difficult childhood, and found meaning and solace in reading literature. After having outgrown two life-philosophies, first that of her family and local community, and then that of her peers and contemporaneous zeitgeist, there is a readiness for change. It is at this time she finds Shikasta. She loves and trusts Lessing, yet she is shocked by the truths she encounters in Shikasta. The ensuing Big Dream, although exhilarating, leaves her scared: She feels compelled to act upon the vision the book has given her. She must start all over, as everything now matters. Her first attempt at finding an answer is to ask Lessing for advice, and tries out her solution. However, she realizes she has to find her own way. She spends many years integrating the vision, articulating her worldview of a Visionary Realism. On the basis of this, she discovers her purpose, and develops Shared Reading.

As regards the terms 'story' and 'narrative', which are often used interchangeably in discussions of narrative method, I propose the following distinction based on Genette's narratology: The narrative comprises narration, discourse and story. The story is what the reader actively imagines in the act of reading. Therefore, the aim of the idiographic interpretations is to understand the person's story by interpreting the discourse. In interpretation, I seek to restore the texts to living communication.

Idiographic interpretations of the narratives

The terms idiographic and nomothetic were introduced by the philosopher Wilhelm Windelband to differentiate between to scientific approaches. Although they were meant to designate approaches typical for the humanities and natural sciences respectively, what is important is that whereas the nomothetic aims to derive laws to explain types or categories of objective phenomena, idiographic approaches attempt to understand the meaning of unique and often subjective phenomena.[99] Allport imported the terms into psychology, where the idiographic approach endeavours "to understand some particular event."[100] Both approaches are common in the social sciences under a variety of different terms. Mason distinguishes between two ways of representing the findings: *contextual analysis* and *cross-sectional analysis*.[101] Riessman operates with the terms *case-centred* versus *category-centred* models of research. Narratively oriented inquiries represent the former, as narrative researchers keep a story 'intact' by theorizing from the case rather than from component themes or categories across cases:

> Narrative study relies on extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units, rather than fragmented into thematic categories as is customary in other forms of qualitative analysis, such as grounded theory. This difference … is perhaps the most fundamental distinction: in many category-centred methods of analysis, long accounts are distilled into coding units by taking bits and pieces – snippets of an account often edited out of context. While useful for making general statements across many subjects, category-centred approaches eliminate the sequential and structural features that are hallmarks of narrative. Honoring individual agency and intention is difficult when cases are pooled to make general statements. I believe, however, that category-centred models of research (such as inductive thematic coding, grounded theory, ethnography and other qualitative strategies) can be combined with close analysis of individual cases. Each approach provides a different way of knowing a phenomenon, and each leads to unique insights.[102]

Bryman points to two criticisms of the coding approach to qualitative data analysis: the problem of a fragmentation of data, so that the narrative flow of what people say is lost, and secondly, losing the context of what was said: "By plucking chunks of text out of the context within which they appeared, such as a particular interview transcript, the social setting can be lost."[103] Miller

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[99] See Hans Thomae, "The nomothetic-idiographic issue: Some roots and recent trends," *International Journal of Group Tensions* 28, no. 1 (1999): 187-215.

[100] Gordon W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological interpretation* (New York: Holt, 1937).

[101] Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2002).

[102] Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, 12.

[103] Bryman, *Social Research Methods,* 553.

and Glasner also underline that the researcher can fracture the stories being told: "The coding, categorization and typologizing of stories result in telling only parts of stories, rather than representing them in their wholeness."[104]

There are similarities between narrative inquiry and grounded theory, but the difference lies with methods of coding in grounded theory, and the case-centred commitment in narrative analysis. As Kathy Charmaz says, grounded theory "take segments of data apart, name them in concise terms, and propose an analytic handle to develop abstract ideas for interpreting each segment of data."[105] By contrast, Clandinin et al. emphasise that narrative inquiry deals with "individual case study narrative life stories," attempting to capture the "temporal developments of lives, of the unique histories of people."[106] Riessman specifies four differences between grounded theory and narrative inquiry:

> First, the two methods differ on the place of prior concepts in the analytic process (generally eschewed in the early stages in a grounded theory study). Prior theory guided inquiry in all the narrative exemplars, at the same time as investigators also searched for novel theoretical insights from the data. Second and most important, (narrative) analysts preserve sequences, rather than thematically coding segments. In narrative analysis, we attempt to keep the "story" intact for interpretive purposes, although determining the boundaries of stories can be difficult and highly interpretive….Third, most narrative investigators attend to time and place of narration, and, by historicizing a narrative account, reject the idea of generic explanations. Finally, although the size of the unit of text to be coded in grounded theory can vary considerably… the objective is to generate inductively a set of stable concepts that can be used to theorize *across* cases.[107]

Given that the term 'case-centred' can be confused with a case-study approach (used in naturalistic environment context), I use the term idiographic.

Each of the six narratives were interpreted based on the narrative analysis of the previous stage of the arc. I sought to preserve the uniqueness and particularity by presenting the whole narratives, so that these may be read separately before one reads my interpretations. In interpreting each narrative, I first sought to explicate the *crisis*, using knowledge from empirical and theoretical psychology. Each crisis was discussed and objectified in the light of previously identified psychological situations of inner turmoil, and then named.

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[104] Jody Miller, and Barry Glassner, "The 'inside' and the 'outside': Finding realities in Interviews," in *Qualitative Research. Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman, 2nd ed. (London: Sage, 2004), 127.

[105] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 45.

[106] D. Jean Clandinin, *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* (London: Sage, 2007), 633.

[107] Riessman, *Narrative Methods,* 74.

Esther's crisis was amplified and objectified by reference to research on the consequences of marital discord, and then named a crisis of *conflict*. Camilla's crisis was amplified and objectified by reference to research on bereavement and grieving, and then named a crisis of *loss*. These two crisis were grouped under the same umbrella: interpersonal/situational crisis. Veronica's crisis was amplified and objectified by reference to research on attachment and separation, and then named a crisis of *attachment*. Nina's crisis was amplified and objectified by reference to research on identity development and diffusion, and named a crisis of *identity*. The two crises were grouped together under the same umbrella: developmental/psychodynamic crises. Jane's crisis was amplified and objectified by reference to theories of frameworks and research on conversion, and the crisis was named as a crisis of *faith*. Sue's crisis was discussed in terms of research on *depression*, and named accordingly. These two crises were both grouped as spiritual/existential. Based on these pairings of crises, I decided to present the six narratives in that order. The crisis were named in technical terms, although more experience-near terms such as 'inner exile' for identity crisis and 'loss of soul' for depression could have been used. This choice was made because all these crises have in fact been objectified in psychology. This hermeneutical operation can be conceptualised as a process of translating lay terms into technical terms. Whereas Blaikie thinks of this as abduction', I think it comes closer to what the philosopher Føllesdal calls "the hypothetico-deductive method applied to materials that are 'meaningful'. (HDMAMM)."[108] Although I strongly disagree with Føllesdal's equation of this method with hermeneutics per se as he argues that HDMAMM "is used wherever interpretation takes place," it has relevance in relation to this particular aspect of my interpretations. Føllesdal sets himself the following problem in order to demonstrate HDMAMM: "to identify one of the persons of a play" (the Stranger in *Peer Gynt).[109]* Føllesdal first explains what the method implies: Forming an hypothesis about the referent/signified, then find the consequences of this (by looking at all the relevant parts): can the hypothesis account for what is said about the stranger in the play? If not, find new hypothesis. We should seek to falsify our hypothesis: "are there other hypotheses which fit in at least equally well with all the data and are simpler?"[110] When one interprets such a text, says Føllesdal, "one proceeds hypothetico-deductively. We set forth an hypothesis concerning the

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[108] Dagfinn Føllesdal, "Hermeneutics and the Hypothetico-Deductive Method," *Dialectica* 33, no. 3-4 (1979): 319-36. I will hereafter refer to the Hypothetico-Deductive method applied to meaningful material as HDMAMM.

[109] Ibid., 328.

[110] Ibid., 324.

text or possibly the work as a whole and test this hypothesis by checking how its consequences fit in with the various details of the text."[111] It is this back-and-forth that Føllesdal considers to be the hermeneutic circle.

I followed this procedure in interpreting each crisis. In my view, the crises I identified fit in well with the various details of the text and account for what the intimants say about their life-situation upon encountering the book. This does not mean, however, that this is the only valid interpretation. I am convinced it is the best one, but a different researcher could interpret the crises differently (indeed, a different researcher would not necessarily agree with the preceding narrative analysis either).

While the *crises* were hypothetico-deductively explicated in psychological terms, the *transactions* with the literary work, and the consequent *resolutions* to the crises, were conceptualised using both classical-literary terms and psychological theories. Why the use of such different languages/discourses/terminologies? On the one hand, it is meant to signify a movement from an objectified to a subjectivised self-relation. On the other hand, the transactions with the literary work could not be captured adequately in the language of psychology alone. Instead, the language of the participants and that of the classical tradition were found to mutually enrich and modify each other. This movement involves a change in mode of inference, from a hypothetico-deductive to an anteroductive one.

HDMAMM is merely an explicatory stage of interpretation. It does not lead to an *understanding of the whole*. As discussed in the chapter on methodological considerations, understanding rests upon the hermeneutic circle of moving between part and whole, whole and part. Whereas Føllesdal, by reducing hermeneutics to HDMAMM claims that "there is no fundamental methodological difference between natural sciences and humanities,"[112] Mantzavinos argues that the hermeneutic circle "serves as a standard argument for all those who raise a claim to the autonomy of the human sciences."[113] Mantzavinos discusses the nature of the problem of the hermeneutic circle. He rejects the ontologising version of Heidegger. Moreover, he rejects arguments that the circle is a logical or methodological problem. Instead, says Mantzavinos, the hermeneutic circle is an empirical phenomenon. To solve the problem

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[111] Ibid., 327.

[112] Ibid., 319.

[113] C. Mantzavinos, "What Kind of Problem is the Hermeneutic Circle?" in *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: Philosophical Theory and Scientific Practice*, ed. C. Mantzavinos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 299.

of this circle is to determine the cognitive operations and activities involved in linguistic understanding. According to Mantzavinos, the circular understanding in interpretation is a matter of an acquired skill-set one developed through experience with texts. Therefore he concludes that the hermeneutic circle "describes an empirical phenomenon, which can be studied within the framework of psycholinguistics and other empirical disciplines."[114]

In my view, the hermeneutic circle is a methodological problem; as such it is both a logical and an empirical phenomenon (methodology is precisely the study of the interaction of the logical and the empirical). The classical argument for the autonomy of the human sciences is based on Dilthey's distinction between explanation and understanding. The method of the human sciences must in part be psychological, in that it interprets *people*'s meanings. However, according to Ruben, there is "no plausible distinction between understanding and explanation, in advance of a thesis about the irreducible differences between […] the natural and social sciences."[115] Because we cannot assume that these are different ideas, he concludes, they can be used interchangeably. Indeed, in the social sciences, they seem to be used interchangeably. For instance, Elster claims: "for explanatory procedures, the mechanism is what matters. It provides understanding, whereas prediction offers at most control."[116] He seems to imply that explanation leads to understanding. However, in arguing for discovering causal mechanisms, he is in fact stating that retroduction leads to understanding. Logically, there are two ways of leading into and away from the circle of hermeneutics: retroductively or anteroductively. Empirico-psychologically, the process that corresponds to retroduction and anteroduction is understanding; the process corresponding to deduction and induction is explanation. So what is the difference between explanation and understanding in empirical psychological terms of cognitive operations? In my view, the difference can be explained by reference to Piaget's dichotomy between assimilation and accommodation. The founder of constructivism, Piaget articulated operations by which information from the environment and ideas from the individual interact and result in internalised structures developed by learners. Piaget identified the twin processes of assimilation and accommodation as central to this interaction as we build up new knowledge from our experiences. When persons *assimilate* new information, they incorporate it into an already existing framework without having to change that schema. Assimilation may

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[114] Ibid., 309.

[115] David-Hillel Ruben, "Comment: Going in Circles," in Mantzavinos, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences,* 312.

[116] Jon Elster, *Explaining Social Behaviour* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 29.

occur when the experience is aligned with the internal representation of the world; it may, however, also occur when one fails to alter a mistaken notion. *Accommodation*, on the other hand, it the process of reframing one's internal representation of something to fit new experiences. It involves a changed representation.[117]

Hence, understanding may logically be understood as the result of either retroduction or anteroduction, and experientially as the result of accommodation. How was this process performed in my interpretations? According to Gadamer,

> A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.[118]

I come into these interpretations with particular expectations. As became apparent in the literature review chapter, when empirically investigating transformative experiences and stories of change, the traditional horizon cannot be circumvented. Thus the classical concepts of the sublime, catharsis and epiphany were seen to be integral to the researchers' discussions of their findings and frameworks. When approaching the reading experiences of the six readers, I work out a "fore-projection." The first step into the hermeneutic circle is to project a meaning for the whole *as soon as* some initial meaning emerges. This can only be a provisional understanding, a first stage.

In interpreting Esther's narrative, an initial meaning of her reading experience emerged: based on my fore-knowledge, I related her experience of "sudden realisation" to the concept of epiphany. This is an act of analogous reasoning: her experience is like that of moments of insight described as "epiphanic." The next step, however, is to return to this concept. It does not have a clear meaning. I am comparing to partially unknowns. Upon closer comparison they are both similar and different. I must therefore proceed to *analyse* the concept of epiphany. From this analysis, I discovered that as this concept has travelled from its original context into lay discourse, it has accrued several connotations and layers of meaning. I found accordingly that a new concept should be morphologically derived from epiphany and *to exaiphnes.* Thus I

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[117] See Jean Piaget, and Margaret T. Cook, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (New York: International University Press, 1952). I base my understanding of constructivism and Piaget's theory on Barry J. Wadsworth, *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective development: Foundations of Constructivism* (New York: Longman Publ., 2004).

[118] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 267.

found that what is often termed an 'epiphany' technically speaking is an *ekaphany*. The next step was to carry forward the concept of ekaphany as a more precise term, in the light of which Esther's affective experience was understood. At the same time, I would not have been able to derive the term without entering into dialogue with the particular experience narrated by Esther. Thus the analytical concept of *ekaphany* was realised *a posteriori*. Her experience could not be assimilated into the schema of epiphany without doing violation both to the denotation of the term nor to Esther's experience. Hence, there is a circular process of arriving at ekaphany via an initial understanding of Esther's experience, and of elucidating previously inadequately understood aspects of her experience in the light of this new concept. The carrying forward of the analytically derived term, which awaits its meaning until it has been determined in relation to a concrete experience, is anteroduction. Having derived the concept of ekaphany, epiphany was now restored to its narratively embedded meaning of looking for the most precious only to find it in the lowliest and least expected of locations. Hereafter, this concept was carried forward to understand the "deep thread of knowing" that Sue said she had been following. It was her whole story that could be understood to be an epiphany. For me, this very discovery was an *ekaphany*: I realised what an epiphany really was. As such it did change my horizon of understanding.

Based on my interpretation of Camilla's experience it became apparent to me that the quarrel over the right translation of *katharsis* points to different aspects of an underlying process, in which there is both purgation, purification and clarification. I prefer using the k-spelling, to avoid all the Freudian connotations of catharsis. In my view, the process of katharsis is not about "getting rid of emotions" to return to homeostasis, but marks the long process of working through one's crisis to hopefully be able to represent it as meaningful within one's entire life-story. Furthermore, I decided to find names for the various 'life-shapes'. The idea of the shape of a life was derived from the interview with Jane. In thus giving name to something intangible and imaginary, I wished to arrive at an understanding of the person's narrative in relation to their whole life.

My initial understanding of Jane's reading experience based on my fore-knowledge, was that hers was a "sublime" reading experience: it was shocking, it was instantaneous and it had great ramifications for her life. This understanding is useful as a first step: it sensitises one to some aspects of her experience. However, "sublimity" is a much-used term in aesthetics and the subject of various and divergent contestations with philosophical aesthetics, while at the same time it has entered common parlance; thus leading a double life. In going back to

Longinus, I decided it was wise to avoid using the term altogether, instead attempting to derive precise meanings for *hypsous* as the "hypsotic." I subsequently derived two kinds of *ecstatic* experiences.[119] What is essential about the ecstatic is that it *throws* the person 'off course', there is no guarantee that this experience will be successfully integrated, and it may take long time. As such, I found that it was intimately connected with the experience of metanoia. In understanding the whole, the mode of engagement and the resolution had to be understood in relation to each other, and in relation to the crisis. I do not claim that my understanding of either the hypsotic, epiphany or catharsis is objectively correct or the only correct one. What I do claim, is that it is a valid one. I have discussed and analysed the concepts and related them to concrete instances. Neither am I claiming that the transactions or resolutions could not be understood in terms of different concepts. Indeed, it would be a sign of the richness and value of these narratives if their interpretation can be realised differently.

Another example of this process can be found in my interpretation of Nina's story. The term nostalgia was problematized as being based on a superficial reading of the *Odyssey*, and *nostos*, understood as arriving safely at one's destination after courageously venturing forth, was taken to designate the resolution to a crisis of identity, which may also be conceptualised as 'inner exile.' However, I liked the idea of giving 'experience-distant' technical names for the crises, while the modes of engagement and resolutions were concepts from the literary tradition, as it metaphorically describes the intimant's journey into a more intimate self-relation. An aim was to develop understanding of *varieties* of life-changing fiction-reading experience.[120] I therefore found Aristotle's concept of qualitative change, *alloiosis*, conducive. It connects *being moved* and *change.* Accordingly, I conceptualised the six resolutions as varieties of the same phenomenon, LCFRE. In using concepts from both classical literary texts, philosophical texts and religious discourse, I wish to signalise that *psychagogia* precedes the division into discourses and scientific fields. To name the resolutions, I did not invent any new terms. I carried forward traditional concepts. Unlike with nostos, I did not have to extricate the term from its self-estrangement in common parlance. However, there is a hermeneutic circle involved. A term like 'thumos' has no clear signified, but it has a referent which can be connected to fuzzy concepts like 'felt sense' and thus revitalise some of the classical heritage.

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[119] Inspired also by Kuiken et al.'s distinction between sublime disquietude and sublime enthrallment, see literature review.

[120] A work that has inspired me greatly is James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. I find the title of this work significant: it is not a variety of experiences that James is interested in describing, but differing manifestations of the same essential experience.

This was an important rationale for choice of terms: to make explicit that we stand in a tradition of which we are not fully aware, while much of the attempts to introduce affectivity and embodiment into concepts of thinking clearly point back to occluded metaphoric connections from the classics. Part of an anteroductive strategy is therefore to revitalise classical terms, texts and procedures. The interpretive strategy was anteroductive: to arrive at an understanding of the whole story of a particular event, and to see this particular event in the light of the classical literary tradition. This was the way into the hermeneutic circle. But it was also the way out of it: after comparing two partly unknowns, my cloudy horizon and the narrative of the reading experience, I must modify both in order to realise the meaning of the narrative. Having analysed the concepts, I carry them forward in an encounter with the narrated experience, thus concretising the concept and placing the particular experience in a dialogue with tradition. Ideally this should be a fusion of horizons.

Appropriation: Towards a theory of pathematics

In this part, I will discuss the rationale for the following inferences: (i) filling in the empty spaces of the 'system of relations': kenosis and metable; (ii) proposing that there be six transformative affective patterns; and (iii) circling in the mode of engagement and ways of being moved as "reading by heart.' Furthermore, I will discuss briefly what kind of theory I purport to present.

In qualitative research, the demand for external validity has posited great problems. There is a tendency to equate external validity with generalisability. The question of the external validity of case studies as a problem of generalisability has been discussed by Flyvbjerg.[121] He argues that case studies produce context-dependent knowledge, and when cases are carefully chosen and subjected to critical reflexivity, can produce major developments in scientific knowledge. Moreover, studying atypical, extreme or paradigmatic cases is often necessary to extend theory about a general problem, and may uncover social practices that are taken for granted. Flyvberg furthermore points to how case studies can reveal everyday situations and

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[121] Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five misunderstandings about case-study research," *Qualitative Research Practice*, ed. Clive Seale, Giampietro Gobo, Jaber F. Gubrium and David Silverman (London: Sage, 2004), 420-34.

test how something occurs in social life, providing depth rather than breadth. Also, case studies focus on narrative detail, and important insights can be gained from the complex and sometimes conflicting stories of actors in the field. Therefore, contends Flyvbjerg, generalising from case studies may not even be desirable in some instances. The qualitative researcher Sandelowski argues for the possibility of theorising from a single case, maintaining that "regardless of qualitative methodology or sample size, qualitative research is quintessentially about understanding a particular in the all-together."[122] She argues for the value of studying particulars, and that one can compare across individual instances to produce "idiographic generalisations"; it is a "false charge that qualitative findings are not generalizable"; accordingly, qualitative researchers "are obliged, first and foremost, to make sense of individual cases."[123] Only after one has made individual interpretations may one "move to cross-case comparisons to construct taxonomies, generate and test hypotheses and theories [.]"[124] She argues that one should not let generalisation be the exclusive province of quantitative, nomothetic investigations. However, she puts forth no explanation for how such generalisations should be made. Onwuegbuzie and Leech have studied the manner of generalisations used in qualitative research. They found that "many qualitative studies, if not most, involve making one of two types of generalisations: analytic generalisations or case-to-case transfer."[125] They define analytic generalization as the application "to wider theory on the basis of how selected cases 'fit' with general constructs."[126] However, the concept of analytic generalisation is vague and has application only within the naturalistic frame of case study. Generalisation is always the result of induction. The concept of generalisation has no relevance for my study. In my view, external validity is a question of how one goes from having described one's findings to placing these within a larger framework. Abduction does not lead to generalisation. In retroduction there is not generalisation, but hypostatisation. And in anteroduction, one aims for essentialisation. The seeing of the universal in the particular belongs to an idealist ontology. In

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[122] Margarete Sandelowski, "One is the liveliest number: The Case Orientation of Qualitative Research," *Research in Nursing & Health* 19, no. 6 (1996): 525.

[123] Ibid., 526.

[124] Ibid., 526.

[125] Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie, and Nancy L. Leech, "Generalization practices in qualitative research: a mixed methods case study," *Qual Quant* 44 (2010): 883.

[126] Ibid., 883.

the anteroductive strategy, the final step is abductive: leading away from the variety of individual instances of LCFRE to discovering the universal pattern of which they form part.

Riessman makes it clear that although the narrative analysis is case-centred, it can still generate general concepts. Whereas the statistical approach generalizes from population-based samples, case study involves generalization to theoretical propositions, contends Riessman: "Making conceptual inferences about a social process … is an equally 'valid' kind of inquiry with a long history in anthropology and sociology."[127] She argues that this is a different kind of inference to the inductive one. However, she does not specify what kind of inference this is. Given that the narrative method involves working from prior theoretical concepts to case-centred analysis to theoretical generalization, can we describe this mode of inference as *abductive*?

The abductive moment in my research came about as I contemplated this variety. I discovered that each of the transactions with literary works belonged to different genres or deep structures, and that these constituted *transformative affective patterns*. It was only by comparing the different interpretations, and relating them to Frye's theory of four basic mythic patterns, that these patterns emerged. In this light, I interpreted Esther's encounter with *Episode* in terms of the comic, and Veronica's in terms of the ironic. This was a surprise discovery. Because the six interpretations are presented linearly, this moment is obscured. Only in the light of subsequent interpretations did it become apparent that the transaction with *Episode* could be interpreted as an instance of the comic. The anteroductive direction of the abduction is apparent. When systematizing these patterns, there were two 'empty places': the affective category that could encompass both the ironic and romantic pattern, and the genre to which the ekplektic ekstasis belonged. Hence, these places demanded filling. In my view, the concept of *kenosis* was the 'best fit,' and was accordingly appropriated. As for the neologism *metable,* morphologically derived from 'parable' and 'metaballein', it became anteroductively a lens through which one could see deep similarities between for instance platonic dialogues and the parables of the New Testament. Danermark et al. emphasise that the abductive inference involves both creativity and imagination.[128] As such, there may be a close link between Pierce's

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127 Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*, 13.

128 Berth Danermark, Mats Ekström, Liselotte Jakobsen, and Jan C. Karlsson, *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

abduction and Husserl's process of imaginative free variation, in which invariant aspects of an intuitive experience are opened up.[129] As Husserl says in the Cartesian Meditations:

> Perhaps we begin by fictionally changing the shape or the colour of the object quite arbitrarily […] In other words: Abstaining from acceptance of its being, we change the fact of this perception into a pure possibility, one among other quite 'optional' pure possibilities – but possibilities that are possible perceptions. We so to speak shift the actual perception into the realm of non-actualities, the realm of the as-if.[130]

How can one justify going from one instance of each of these transformative affective patterns to saying they are *universal* responses to human crises? Would this not be a type of generalisation, and one that is unwarranted? From the vantage point of a realist ontology, it would be. But these are ideal patterns, essences of phenomena. Of course, it would be possible to find a seventh instance that is unique and unlike any of the others. In this case, would not the proposition be disproved? Insofar as it is unique, it is irreducible. But we are here talking about a system of relations among crises, genres and affections that is only partly established empirically. It is only relationally that the universality of each pattern can be determined. There is a movement from the particular to the universal that is being made in a comparative relation of concepts, to create a conceptual whole. There are the particulars, the concepts and an abstract system of relations. However, all postulates and propositions are meant as *contributions* to a theory: they are in need of further elaboration and research.

Simons claims that one can generalise from the single case: "If we study the singular case in sufficient depth, and are able to capture its essence – what makes it unique – in all its particularity, I believe we will also discover something of universal significance."[131] Simons regards this as paradoxical: "the more you capture the particulars […], the more likely you are to discover something universal."[132] I believe Simons is right: contemplating deeply the particulars may lead to a discovery of the universal. However, this is not generalisation, but an

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[129] The philosopher David Morris indicates as much, in his comparison of Husserl and Pierce in relation to Bergson. He states that abduction and eidetic reduction use intensive variation as opposed to the extensive variation in inductive generalisation. See Davis Morris, "Bergsonian Intuition, Husserlian Variation, Piercian Abduction: Toward a Relation Between Method, Sense and Nature," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 43, no. 2 (2005): 267-98.

[130] Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns from 1929 original (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 104.

[131] Helen Simons, "Interpret in Context: Generalising from the single case in evaluation," *Evaluation* 21, no. 2 (2015): 181.

[132] Ibid., 181.

essentialisation. As Simons says, the aim is to get to the *essence* of something. This claim that the universal is seen in the individual is also at the very core of Husserl's concept of eidetic seeing and the eidetic reduction. According to Husserl, the *eidos* of something is its essence, and gives it its meaning and possibilities, and essences can be understood without our necessarily inferring the concrete existence in the actual world.[133] The phenomenological intuition of essences requires a move from the individual experience to the contemplation of its essence. Husserl, according to Dermot Moran, posited that "a singular experience, appropriately regarded, could yield absolutely evident insight and *universal* truth."[134] The manner in which this is achieved is not a generalisation, but is to be made "from within the immanence of the experience, disregarding the issue of actuality" in order to grasp the essence of the phenomenon.[135] This science of essences, Moran maintains, has "nothing to do with actual existence, but moves in the sphere of pure possibilities."[136] What is at issue regarding the transformative affective patterns is not their existence, but their *insistence*: whether they are essential in understanding transformative reading experiences. It is a common conception in phenomenologically oriented qualitative inquiries that the task is to get participants to describe their subjective experience. In my approach, the participants are neither asked to describe their experience, nor to provide stories, but simply to relate their experience. It is the *researcher* who performs the descriptions of the essences. It is I who have described the six transformative affective patterns of tragic and comic katharsis, romantic and ironic kenosis, lyric and metabolic ekstasis, achieved through a reflective process of contemplating their essences from within the individual experiences.

In proposing a mode of engagement called "reading by heart", am I not generalising from the six interpretations? I do not think so. The six modes of engagement are all distinct. Reading by heart is not a common denominator, but a metaphor that brings these part-aspects together into a larger configuration. The concept of reading by heart is theoretically derived from the medieval reading practice of *lectio divina* and the notion of learning by heart, of interiorizing a learning experience and remembering it. Thus there is an anteroductive

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[133] Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, 70.

[134] Dermot Moran, "Husserl's Discovery of the Reduction and Transcendental Phenomenology," in *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 134.

[135] Ibid., 134.

[136] Ibid., 135.

transaction between this concept and the comparative understanding of the individual modes of engagement.

What kind of theory is *pathematics*? Denzin proposes that there are five different levels of theorising in the social sciences: ad hoc classification; categorical systems or taxonomies; conceptual frameworks; theoretical systems; and empirical-theoretical systems.[137] In this scheme, the theory of pathematics would straddle the levels of conceptual framework and theoretical system. A conceptual framework develops propositions about relationships between concepts, whereas a theoretical system combines a taxonomy and conceptual scheme into an abstract theoretical argument. Furthermore, Denzin differentiates between four different niveaus of scope a theory may have. My theory thus is a combination of a middle-range theory and a formal theory. A middle-range theory has not been deduced from an overarching theory, nor is it mere empirical generalization. It comprises a limited set of assumptions 'in between' these levels.[138] A formal theory posits that universality can be developed and the phenomenon understood in terms of a few psychological principles. However, perhaps the development of my theory can best be understood as an instance of what Layder terms "adaptive theory".[139] Adaptive theory combines the use of pre-existing theory and concepts with those generated from data interpretation in the conduct of empirical research, in a process of continuous cycles of engagement. Adaptive theoretisation endeavours to harness the creative synergy between 'received' or 'preconceived' theories and 'emergent' theory, and depends also on the intimate connection between the development of a theoretical framework and the collection of empirical data. Layder identifies a type of concept he calls 'bridging' concepts that link the subjective and objective dimensions of phenomena.

Blaikie argues that one should not use the terms 'theory' and 'model' interchangeably. He suggests that whereas a theory "is an answer to a specific research question," a model is a "general theory with a strong ontological component."[140] The former may be proved wrong, but a model can "usually only be judged incomplete, misleading or unproductive."[141]

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[137] Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act in Sociology* (London: Butterworth, 1970).

[138] See Robert King Merton, *On Theoretical Sociology* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 68.

[139] Derek Layder, *Sociological Practice: Linking Theory and Social Research* (London: Sage 1998), 37.

[140] Blaikie, Designing Social Research, 150.

[141] Inkeles cited in Blaikie, Designing Social Research, 150.

According to Blaikie, abduction may produce conceptual models based on ideal-types.[142] I prefer to regard pathematics as a theory rather than a model in spite of its ideality and the abductive movement beyond answering the specific research question in the propositions put forth.

In hermeneutical terms, Ricoeur speaks of appropriation as the altered self-understanding of the interpreter. The dialectic between received/preconceived horizon of understanding and the theory emerging from engagement with the data can be conceptualised as an anteroductive hermeneutic circle. In interpreting ideographically, there is both a hypothetico-deductive and an anteroductive aspect. In developing theory from these interpretations, there is both an abduction and an eidetic reduction.

I began the dissertation with the declaration of a *fiat.* I believe that the "let there be…" is the phenomenological formula par excellence. It simply says that the phenomenon appears to me as LCFRE. I cannot determine which came first: the concept or concrete instances; I suspend this question. I cannot determine whether the phenomenon is 'out there' or 'in here.' It has appeared *as* LCFRE. It is to the researcher the phenomenon has appeared as such, and it is ultimately the researcher who describes the essences, in an act of reflecting on one's own interpretations of particular instances. Thus, this formula points to both the starting point and end point of the journey of my inquiry: my account of subjective experience.[143]

And now, to the subject matter itself: the varieties of life-changing fiction-reading experience.

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[142] Blaikie, Designing Social Research, 156.

[143] Cf. Shaun Gallagher, and Dan Zahavi, The Phenomenological Mind (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 19: "A subjective account of experience should be distinguished from an account of subjective experience."

Part Three: Narratives and Interpretations

Chapter 6. Six Readers Re-membering: Intimations of life-changing reading experiences

Narrative One: *Esther's Episode*
Narrative Two: *Camilla's Sorrow*
Narrative Three: *Veronica's Bruise*
Narrative Four: *Nina's Life-long Friend Flicka*
Narrative Five: *Jane's Visionary Reading*
Narrative Six: *Sue's Buried Life*

Chapter 7. Varieties of Life-changing reading experience

Interpretation of Esther's story: *From Discord to Concord*
Interpretation of Camilla's story: *Feeling Felt*
Interpretation of Veronica's story: *Listening to the Heart*
Interpretation of Nina's story: *The Nostos of MySpace*
Interpretation of Jane's story: *The Big Bang and the View from Above*
Interpretation of Sue's story: *Remembering the Body's Song*

Chapter 6. Six readers re-membering: Intimations of life-changing reading experiences

Narrative One: *Esther's Episode*

I happened to read an essay Esther wrote for a Norwegian magazine about youth, identity issues and relationship problems. I was struck by her mentioning how important poetry in general, and Episode *in particular, had been to her own development. So I contacted her and told her about my project, and asked whether she felt the poem had changed her life. She confirmed this and consented to an interview. I had read some of Hagerup's poetry before, but enjoyed the opportunity to read up on it. I found* Episode *very moving in its simplicity and truthfulness. I drove out to her home on the outskirts of a large town in the eastern part of Norway. She greeted me warmly. The interview took place in her study, surrounded by all her books.*

Thor: I've brought the poem. Would you like to read it for me?

Esther: Fantastic! Yes, I would. Should I perhaps find the book in which I first encountered the poem, though?

Thor: Yes please, that would be great.

Esther: Right. This book of poetry is the one we used in school. This must have been in 1967. We had to read Wergeland and Welhaven and all that. Which was nice. Look, the book opens almost of its own accord onto that particular page! I'm not sure how old I was then, I must have been 16 or 17, when I was in the gymnasium. One is quite green at that age, haha. The poem made a really deep impression at that time. Should I say something about why it did?

Thor: Please do.

Kitchen sink drama

Esther: I grew up in the 50s. I was born in 1951, into what was then a typical family, where mum was a housewife and dad went to work. And he came and went, as men did in those days. She was, I would say, placed by the kitchen sink by coercion. Because she did not really want to stay at home. She had an education and wished to work, but that was entirely out of the question. She had studied at a college of commerce, which was regarded as a good qualification then. And she had several years of experience from the accountancy department in the little town where she lived. So when she met my dad she had in fact more intellectual capital than he did. She was also an avid reader. However, when people got married then, and they got married in 1947, it was very common in the post-war years for the female to become a housewife. And she had to move in not just with him, but his mother, too. This was forced upon her. Which was terrible for her, I think. As I was born, they finally moved into their own home. I think they were quite happy those first few years in their new home, before the great disappointment happened. It registered quite profoundly in her life, being a person who was meant to just stay in the house and clean and cook and tidy up. An awful life, really, for a lively soul such as her. Awful. So she would read a lot, but she was terribly angry and resentful for much of the time. *Frightfully* angry, and sad, I think. But the two of them had the kind of marriage that is very difficult to grow up with as a child, because they communicated so poorly with each other. They would scream at one another, or they would stay silent for weeks on end. And that was *very* frightening, I must say. I remember my sister and I, we would talk about it a lot: "What's the point of such a miserable relationship, why are they together?" and stuff like that. In between, there'd be bright moments, when my dad played the guitar and they sang. Then we were happy, because it felt like a clearing in the woods and we could just *be* – things were all right then. But then another thundercloud would form. And he always went fishing. Every weekend during the summer, on those long summer evenings, he would be off on a fishing trip. Leaving her there, on her own. So that was a massive let-down and caused much bitterness in her life. Also, and how can I put it, they were brought up in emotional ignorance, like so many others of that generation. They did not understand their own emotions at all. They could not understand themselves, and they could not understand each other. They were prejudiced, conformist and terrified of making mistakes. So they were concerned with not standing out, with not showing self-regard. A real peasant mentality. When you grow up in a home environment like that, then as a child you learn nothing about what you feel. They wouldn't know anything about that, and besides there was a culture of

obedience in those days. They would go: "Shhh!, be quiet!", "Far from it", "That's rubbish", dismissing our feelings and perspectives. If we as children had beliefs or opinions that did not accord with theirs, that is the reaction we were met with. They were scared of everything that was strange or different. And as we moved into the 1960s, for them the changes were scary. The advent of rock and the hippie movement in the States, and the Beatles – all this was terrible. Horrid music and unacceptable hairstyles. There must have been a lot of anxiety in the parental generation. So there was no help to be had when it came to working out one's feelings; "What's going on inside me, am I angry or sad or scared?" No help at all.

Thor: So they could not acknowledge or validate your emotions?

Esther: No. And just imagine how important that is for children and their development. But when you think about the generation before them again, they *really* received no help from their own parents. My mother grew up in an orphanage. I don't think she had much emotional comfort there. My dad had a mother who would just sew all the time and a dad who drank, so there was not much guidance to be had from them. So to all intents and purposes they were still children themselves, who no one had looked after properly. When they had children of their own they didn't know how to do it.

Led into the world of books

So, what can you do, when you're lucky enough to be born after the war and education is available to all? You can read books.

Thor: When did you start to do that?

Esther: As soon as I had learnt to read. I could sing all the lyrics in the songbook when I was three, but I didn't know how to read. They would point to the picture, and then I would sing the song. I remember I was longing to be able to read it myself. The first book I took out from the library was when I was five. It was called The Golden Book, about a family of mushrooms in the woods. I've never forgotten that, getting a library card and opening that book. That was big for me. I grew up in a small town in the Eastern part of Norway, where I spent the first eleven years of my life. So I was five when my reading life began. And my mum would read to me, aloud. She sang and recited nursery rhymes and read aloud. She was very good at that. I haven't given that much thought, actually, but that's something that she did very well. She led me into the world of books. That was brilliant.

Thor: She made it come alive for you?

Esther: Yes. And she was an avid reader herself as well. I noticed a book just here on this shelf now, this is the sort of stuff she would read: Susan Lennox. Books about women who suffered, you know. And David Graham Phillips, these were on our bookshelf when I was a kid. This one's from 1950.

Thor: Opening it at random now, it says here: "Are you going to go on with this life? She asked". So this must have resonated with her?

Esther: Oh, yes. Reading about a woman who is unfairly treated, and placed in a difficult situation. There were many books like that on her shelf, which I went on to read as soon as I was able to. Clearly, this was *her* life. She found solace there, I think, in literature. Because she was so stuck in a rut. Because she could not go on to receive further education or continue to work, it was brought to a halt. It simply stopped. At a fairly young age I must have thought: "I am not going to end up like that."

I was five when my sister was born. I don't know whether all the shouting and screaming had started at that stage or whether they were still all right. However, I read a book called Bobby Bear Runs Away. It's about a bear who feels that he is treated unfairly. He then runs away from his nan and Lotte. The dog runs away with him, because he has been locked up in the cellar for being naughty. I remember thinking that is a *very* good idea. I remember thinking: "no one else has parents as stupid as mine". I packed a knapsack, and proceeded to walk out of the town, all the way to the hospital. I regretted not having brought a lunch bag. But then I walked into the woods and found something to eat. Kids in my day knew what we could eat in nature, so I found fresh green spruce shots and green leaves. But then I heard the screeching of car brakes, and before long my dad had found me. He was not angry, though, just silent. When we got home I was treated to cakes and cocoa. So it paid off, haha. I was only five then. They probably didn't handle it too well having another child to look after, so I think it was just too much for them, for my mother.

Thor: Which meant the older child was neglected a bit?

Esther: Yes, then she was invisible, and must have felt she didn't belong. So she ran away. After that things were much better for a while, haha. I think they realised that they had not handled things very well. They were much kinder afterwards. Like Bobby Bear, I was comforted when I came home. So that book inspired me at the time. It didn't save my life, of

course, but it inspired me to protest. That's the first time a book made a deep impression on me. Other books would follow.

Thor: Before you started in the gymnasium, what did you read?

Esther: Comics and books for boys, Tarzan, Davy Crocket. There wasn't much for girls then. Until Nancy Drew came along, finally. Later on, Norwegian authors came into my life. First Johan Borgen and then, regrettably, Jens Bjørneboe. One should not offer Bjørneboe to vulnerable young people. That's not good. After I started the gymnasium I read all of Bjørneboe, *History of Bestiality* and *Jonas* and all that. Which was not good for me. This was not literature that saves, rather it served as confirmation that the grown-ups were bad and the world was terrible.

Thor: Because you had no resistance against it?

Esther: None at all. It confirmed a negative worldview, a negative self-esteem. All the negative things were just absorbed. I had a feeling that everything was hopeless. Bjørneboe was a very depressive writer. And young people would take all of it to heart, we believed him.

I took much solace from Hans Børlie. I have always loved the woods, having grown up next door to it. Børli really saved me, actually. Because his writings were warm. His poetry was full of warmth, in contrast to Bjørneboe with all his hopelessness. There was a sense of hope in everything Børli wrote. I read to bits the little collection of poems I got when I joined the Monthly Book Club when I started the gymnasium. I've still got it here, his Selected Poems. Let me see, what year's this from? It must have been in the late 60s that I got this. At that time it probably wasn't the forest poems that interested me most. And some of them I found too difficult. Like the one called *Words and Life*, which I have appreciated more as I got older and understood what he meant. But one that I particularly loved then, was the poem *Distance*. I've bookmarked it: "I watch the sky on a spring night, the flight of snipes. What wonder. The greatest star is just a tiny thing, a birch leaf can cover it. Distance - distance is what makes the eternal bearable. How good that such a wide shade is cast by that which is small and near." I felt that was lovely. I thought about it a great deal. If one were to think about all the terrible stuff all the time, one wouldn't be able to go on living. I found that he described those feelings so well. And *On a Night in June*, too - with them two sitting on the stairs, saying they have to hurry up and be together, because life for us humans is so short. Things like that I just loved. His universe was a human one. And he … connected the human and nature. Bjørneboe didn't do that. He just entered the emotionally black, whilst Børlie

managed to place the human within nature in a way that really appealed to me. And whenever I am stressed or exhausted, I go out wandering in meadowland or woodland. Picking mushrooms in the woods is what I love best. What Børli tried to communicate really resonated with me. So there I found a poet who could help me.

Thor: In Børli's poems, two of your loves - the woods and words - met?

Esther: Yes, precisely. Just so. And – how can I put it – that was much *healthier* than the depressive style of Bjørneboe. Apart from them, I would read a lot of female authors. I read Amalie Skram and Torborg Nedreås. They weren't exactly jolly, either. At the time I read a lot of poetry – Mehren, Vesaas, Hauge. In those days one would really delve into an author's works. Concentration came easier than in our day and age, what with the constant stream of stimuli and distractions. Once a week I went to my local library and took out all books by an author – Remarque, say. "So that's where you're at just now, then?" the librarian would say.

Episode

There was also a lot of misery connected to Inger Hagerup, actually. She wrote this poem, *Episode*, while she and her husband were struggling severely, I learnt later on. It just seems so, so autobiographical. It simply can't be something that she just invented. This is not about the couple next door, that's for sure. It's about *her*, just cut straight out of her own life. But reading it, it was not dangerous in the same way as Bjørneboe, because it gave me such a profound insight. It made me able to understand the complexity and contraries of my parents' terrible marriage.

Thor: Had you read anything else by Inger Hagerup before you found Episode?

Esther: Yes. All her children's stuff and her nursery rhymes. Then all of a sudden I discovered that she was about more than that: In fact she wrote marvellous poems for adults! That's when she opened another door for me. I remember seeing her in a new light, thinking why hasn't she been more highly regarded? But that's how it was: she was female, and she wrote in rhymes. And she probably drank too much wine as well... So it was something people looked down their noses on a bit. What she wrote was pure genius, however. Afterwards I read all of her work. *Episode*, though, that was – how can I find the right word – that was *enlightening*. It really was. It enlightened me about those two poor souls at home. My parents.

Thor: Did you have that feeling immediately?

Esther: Yes, I think so. I learnt it by heart, it meant so much to me. Quity simply. I had an instant illumination: "Yes, this is them! Two forsaken people." "Oh, my God!, is that how it is?". And I also thought: "So *I am not the only one* to have experienced something like this. It can't be just them two who are like that. It must be universal." Yes, I realised that this experience must be common to all people. All of a sudden I could see them as they were, as human beings. As two vulnerable people. That there was a reason why they were like that. And that there was a depth there; something went on beneath the surface behavior. I could see this, because the poem describes precisely how they would act.

Esther reads the poem out loud:

EPISODE

Det var på ingen måte noen trette.
Aldeles ikke, sa han. - Takk for mat
Og ordene falt høflige og lette
og blinkende av gammelt, islagt hat.

Og: Velbekomme! svarte bare hun.
Så skjøv hun stolen inn til spisebordet,
mens hennes smale, sammenknepne munn
bygget en uforsonlig mur bak ordet.

De stod et lydløst øyeblikk på vakt
og lette begge etter nye våpen,
den spisse setningen de skulle sagt,
den aller siste beske, lille dråpen.

Hun følte ordene bli giftig til.
Den gule fryden ved å kunne såre
slo ut i henne, hensynsløs og vill.
Da strøk hans fingrer rådløst gjennom håret.

Og plutselig ble hennes øyne fulle
i en avmektig, uforklarlig smerte.
Hun merket dypt bak hat og nag og kulde
den spente streng fra hans til hennes hjerte[1]

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[1] It was by no means a quarrel. / Absolutely not, he said. – Thank you. Lovely meal. / And the words fell polite and light / And gleaming of old, iced-in hatred. // And: You're welcome! Was her reply. / She pushed the chair up to the dining-table, / While her narrow, compressed mouth / Built an implacable wall behind the words. // They stood silent for a moment, on guard / While both were searching for new weapons, / the cutting phrase they should have thrust, / The ultimate bitter, tiny drop.// She felt the words gestate, venomous. / The yellow delight at wounding's might / sprung up in her, ruthless and wild. / Then his fingers stroked through his hair, helplessly. // And suddenly her eyes were full / of an impotent, inexplicable pain. / Deep below hatred and grudging cold she sensed / the tensed cord from his heart to hers. (My translation).

As she finishes, she has tears in her eyes. It is a highly charged moment, and we sit in silence for a good while.

It is fantastic, you know, to be able to write this. It is absolutely moving. It moves me. I guess I must have felt so sorry for them. A realization went through me: "poor mum and dad. They must be suffering so." The poem helped me over – into that experience. The weird thing is, and you'd best not write this – well actually you may, no harm in it – when I was 17, just after I had read the poem, I still didn't know that my mum had grown up in an orphanage, because she'd never told me. I had no idea at all why she did not have any family relations. The shame was too great, you know. Every single Christmas a lady came round with a large bouquet of flowers. And every year I'd ask her: Who are the flowers from? Oh, just somebody she knew. In actual fact it was from her half-sister. She had always felt so guilty, since their mother had kept her, and put mum away in a home - because she could not keep them both. So my mum always felt rejected. Always felt rejected and cast aside. Chosen away. She has always felt inferior and full of shame because of it. She couldn't find the courage to… My dad knew about it, but neither my sister nor I knew. We knew nothing. Everything to do with her family and upbringing was shrouded in utter secrecy. Not a word was spoken of it.

Thor: A secret life?

Esther: A secret life! And she didn't know who her father was. That was a secret that was never disclosed. Not even on her deathbed did her mother divulge who the father was. So my mum did not know who she was. Literally speaking, you know. Imagine, it would make anyone weird, that. But then, one day, when I was 17, just after I got home from school, she broke down in the kitchen. She told me the story, because she had decided to tell me before I turned 18. I remember that I had read about children who are cast aside, and children who are abused, and children who suffer and orphans and everything. So I just said: "But why didn't you tell me? Did you think we would renounce you because of it? It wasn't *your* fault!" She thought of course that there was something wrong with her, that that's why they'd put her there. So then she broke down when she realised that it wasn't to do with her, that we didn't love her any less because of it, but that's what she had thought the whole time. In all the years since she had us, she believed she must keep it a secret. For if we found out about it, we would reject her. And this was at her core, she had a massive issue to do with rejection. And, you know, when you are not told anything about your parents' backgrounds, and you do not

understand, then obviously they become alien to you. So because of that incident and the poem, I gained a much better insight into who she was as a human being. And that made it much easier for me to deal with the anxious-laden bitterness of this chain-smoking, furious mum. Whom I had previously judged, thinking, "What the hell is up with you?" So then everything fell into place and connected, with help from Inger Hagerup and with my mum's subsequent confession. Which must have happened just after I read the poem, when I think about it. Things clicked. And that was quite life-saving for an adolescent who can't work herself or her parents out at all.

Thor: You had a feeling that everything made sense, knowing what was under it all.

Esther: Yes, indeed. This was a very, very helpless mother. Who didn't understand herself, who didn't know why she was placed where she was. And who almost never had had any contact with her own mother. And this was to be kept secret. No one must know, it was too shameful. Shame, shame, shame. It also made me understand more of that fear of being different, the fear of being wrong, and the extreme conformism. She did all she could not to stand out, by being always dignified, always neatly dressed, always speaking proper. She had to be immaculate. Lest anyone "arrest" her. All this I began to understand then, although that would take many years and I had to move out and start my own life. Which I did as soon as I could. Because it was still a burden to live in the conflict zone between my parents. Her silence and anger, and having to listen to all her moaning and complaining about how awful he was. He was almost frightened of his wife, he was. And she would scream at him what a coward he was. So we had to cover our ears on occasions, to protect ourselves.

Thor: In your essay you describe literature as a form of theory of passion. I find that interesting with regards to Hagerup. The word "heart" seems to be found in nearly all her poems. The language of the heart, is that what it is?

Esther: Yeah, wow. Now researchers have found out that heartbreak causes actual damage to the heart. If you suffer from lovesickness or you've been betrayed and you feel that your heart is about to break, it's almost as if it literally does. It does make you ill.

Thor: In the poem it says "and suddenly…" It's the language of the body. He is despairing.

Esther: When he, he puts his hand to his head, yes, and strokes his fingers through his hair. Then suddenly she becomes aware that he is not out to hurt her. He doesn't understand much either, and really he feels quite helpless, doesn't he. And so she no longer feels the urge to say

the poisonous things she had intended to. I saw very little of that with my parents. Not much reconciliation. There were these intermittent flashes where dad brought his guitar out and they sang some old jazz tune, which they were both very fond of. But there were long, protracted periods of silence and bitterness that exhausted my sister and me. The silences and the smoke-filled bitterness and the stinging remarks wore us down. So they were moments of happiness and relief when suddenly there was a form of reconciliation. A physical relief: "Ah!" As if the stress and tension would leave our bodies too. Because we had been walking on eggshells. Tip-toeing around the home, in an atmosphere of impatient rustling of newspapers and sighing and moaning. It's very stressful for a child or an adolescent. It makes you tied up in knots. And so it's a wonderful relief on those rare occasions of release. And that's what happens in the poem. In the last stanza.

Thor: What about that tensed cord? It can only be pulled so far?

Esther: Yes, but that's when they feel – and this is something that I only thought much later, not when I first read it – what she feels then is the emotional tie between the two, which is a tie that holds them, it has not been torn asunder despite all the pain they have undergone. And *that* is what I realised was the case with my parents too. My sister and I, we discovered that if we said something to attack their relationship that could be a very smart strategy. If we said: "Goodness me, you are always bickering and arguing. We have never heard anyone else as bad as you." Then they'd go, "What, I've never! What impertinence." And she would say to him: "Have you ever heard such nonsense?" and he'd agree with her and all of a sudden they would be a united front. United against an external attack. Then we would chuckle and be pleased and go to our rooms. We did that almost on purpose just to get some peace. When we criticised them they would respond with: "You have no idea how lucky you are to live in a house where one is able to let off steam and express things!" As if they were able to do that, but they must have thought so. "You have no idea how good it is to have parents who can argue and make up."

Thor: Because they saw this in relation to their own upbringing?

Esther: Yes, they compared it to their own past experiences, when the culture of obedience was more extreme. In that respect they had a fair point, of course.

Thor: I find it fascinating how she has this sudden insight in the poem, and you have a sudden insight about your parents when reading this.

Esther: They were in need of compassion. That's what I suddenly understood. They weren't to blame for it! There *was* love there. And this love was very hard to understand for a young person. Is this love, all the shouting and the silences and the black, black moods? Can there really be something warm, true goodness, underneath it all? Yes, there was. And that's when I realised: "There is a good reason why they are together". It has helped me ever since. When I have been working with couples who apparently hate each other's guts, when one of them screams: "I hate you!" – I never believe that to be the case. That affect is a form of camouflage emotion. "Deep below hatred and cold" there is that emotional chord that binds them. But what surfaces there is their primary emotions. The enormous sorrow and grief over all the time they have spent being nasty to each other. It falls away, all her… Because the secondary emotion, that is the anger and contempt. The urge to say something cruel to him, you know. That is a result of all the sorrow and disappointment that's been built up, perhaps because the love has never been met. Naturally, in this poem she is unable to say: "I love you, and it's a terrible shame that we are acting like this. It's just that I get so upset and disappointed and hurt, you see. And then I react with anger and bitterness and enmity." She cannot say that.

Thor: No, the poem does not have a sixth stanza.

Esther: She just cannot say it.

Thor: You don't imagine that she will afterwards?

Esther: No, she won't. And neither could my parents. They did not have that emotional awareness. They didn't know how they felt. Thus they assumed that all the secondary emotions, what is visible - anger, irritation, boredom, exasperation – that that was what it was about. But it wasn't so. My dad was terribly frightened of an angry woman, what with his own mother having been such a monster. Not a monster, of course, but very domineering. He was a very obedient, subservient boy.

Thor: So they mutually reinforced each other's weaknesses?

Esther: Terribly so. So when his wife turned out to be verbally combative as well, he'd leave the house. If she batted an eyelid he'd be off like a shot, to go fishing. And as soon has he retreated, that activated her feelings of contempt. That he was a coward who couldn't face things, and who had never stood up to his own mother. Who had let his wife live with her mother-in-law for so many years, trapped, inactive. She felt he'd trapped her. Every time he

withdrew, it activated her "coward!"-response. All this was revealed to me when I read the poem. "Oh, my God, this is what's going on!"

Thor: So then you could see the perspectives of both of them?

Esther: Yes, that he was avoidant. How could he not be, always having been told what to do. And mum could be very venomous, which had to do with the contempt she felt regarding the perceived cowardice. Whereas he didn't know what else to do.

Thor: When this realization came to you, do you think it gave you the room to explore who you were and your own feelings aside from those connected to your parents?

Esther: Yes, it did. And I remember no longer having to be so angry with them. The anger would return, of course. I was angry with them hundreds of times after that, but each time I could acknowledge that they were two poor souls tied to each other, without sufficient emotional awareness. When my mum died, in 2000, there was of course no bitterness or anger left in me. She complained throughout her life, but she was very ill. And she suffered from a lack of self-understanding and self-compassion, which pained us to witness. My dad's avoidance strategy was so fundamental that when he passed away at the age of 94, he didn't have a care in the world. Nothing ever got through to him. What saved his life was that river he'd retreat to every summer and every Sunday. The flyfishing really was a therapy for him. While she was sat at the kitchen table, smoking filterless South State, fuming. That was not therapeutic. She did not have a release valve. Although she did lots of charity work, for the housewives' association, raising money, that kind of thing. And she was well respected. She was a tough woman. She'd help people in need and she'd defend people. She was brave. I can remember on the bus if old ladies or pregnant women didn't get a seat, she would make sure they did by telling everybody off. She was tall and imposing.

The language of the heart: Psychology versus literature

I was lucky, being an avid reader, because of that poem and many of the things I read later on. I went on to study psychology, because I thought: "I have to find out why people act the way they do. What on earth is driving them? What is going on with human beings?"

Thor: So you had a real existential need to understand the driving forces in people?

Esther: Yes, to understand the psyche. However, that psychology degree was not very good at throwing light on this. It was a massive disappointment in that respect, to be honest. It was mostly about behaviourism and cognitive psychology. There was hardly anything about feelings, about emotions. Rats, and Skinner, and things like that. I think we had one slim volume on Motivation and Emotion, that was all. And of course there was all that Freudian claptrap, which did not appeal to me. That tiny children should have these terrific sexual fantasies – I thought: "that just cannot be the case. What a load of nonsense." It just made me angry, so I rejected it. Consequently I missed out on some of the clinical training, since I did the social clinical programme on language and communication and systemic theory. I did not learn about emotions there either. So then what do you do? Yes, you read. I kept reading literature until my eyes were sore, running down the library. There was no other way.

Thor: So that's where you found the language of the heart, in fiction?

Esther: Yes, it was there I found it, the language of emotions. The word "love" was not a part of psychology. I find that a lot of poets and novelists have more wisdom when it comes to these matters. I would go so far as to say that I learnt hardly anything that's of use to me as a psychologist, in the department of psychology. I learnt far more from literature and from conversation with friends. Long and deep conversations, hundreds of conversations with friends.

Thor: Does that mean that the encounter with poetry, with fiction, is a form of dialogue?

Esther: It absolutely is. It really is a form of dialogue, where you taste it, chew on it, digest it. And you talk with it. You don't talk with the author, because when you are young you're not concerned about the person who wrote it. You are just reading the work, and it is the person in the book that is alive to you. That there is a person named Steinbeck, you do not care about that. I wasn't bothered about finding out about his life. Who was he? Didn't interest me, but what he wrote in *Of Mice and Men*, and the *Grapes of Wrath*, that was of intense concern. So I think it's the persons, the characters, that you're concerned with when you're young, not the authorship. That's only as you get older, at least that's how it is for me. You have a dialogue with the characters in the books, an exchange. As you read you shout out inside yourself: "No, no, no!"; "Stop being so bloody self-destructive!"; "Don't be such a coward, come on!"; "You have to break free, be courageous!"; "You mustn't put up with this"; "You can be free!" There's a lot of that. You care about the characters, and you address them and talk to them. Yes, that's what it's like.

Thor: As if it were a real person?

Esther: As if it were a real person, yes. Without your being psychotic and not being able to distinguish. The wrath and anger at the world and its injustice, I remember how furious reading Uncle Tom's Cabin made me as a child. We were so angry with those people who hurt Tom, and with the white people. It made us very aware of racial discrimination, which was politically very important then. Later on women's literature would become very important for me, as well. But my degree in psychology, it didn't give me that much. It could explain group dynamics and cognitive processes, attribution and things like that. Which of course is crucial for understanding the mind. But it didn't help me understand relationships, and love. There was also little developmental psychology. Our hero John Bowlby, we learnt very little about his work. I loved reading about his research on attachment, and Mary Ainsworth's studies of children, but there was not enough emphasis placed on this. It wasn't until way into the 1970s that one stopped hospitalizing children without their parents. But this research had been done in 1951. So to graduate and go out there and practice as a psychologist with so few tools was no easy task. I had to find my own way. I had a lot of knowledge, admittedly, but I knew so little about my own feelings, and how I reacted when in a situation with people in great distress. How to deal with that?

Emotion-focused therapy: the subtext of Episode

Thor: The poem represented a life-saving moment for you in your adolescence. But also, when considering your vocation as a couples' therapist, it has followed you throughout your adult life. Has the poem accompanied you into the therapy room?

Esther: Yes, all the way, you know. It's exactly what I work with. It informs my work. I have developed, in collaboration with others, a course for new parents, where the poem is used. A lot of nurses around this country read this poem in their work with young couples, young parents who are angry and exhausted and can't get through to each other. I don't read the poem out loud to people, but I have used it when training therapists. Inviting them to look at the ending of the poem.

Thor: I wonder what the next stanza would be like, maybe it would be a good exercise to have them write that.

Esther: That's a good idea, because that is how I work. I work according to Emotion-Focused Couples Therapy. There I encourage each partner to articulate these feelings. Then we record them, and they have to watch it afterwards. For instance, I will get her to say: "When I withdraw, it's because I get frightened". And then I get him to say: "When I get angry, it's because you pull back from me. I think you don't love me anymore." So we work a lot with that. And I also work with what I call subtext. What is underneath the surface expressions. The primary emotions are the subtext. So instead of saying that "this is the primary emotion," I will say that "this is the subtext. If you regard what we see, the anger or the irritation or the defense, as the headline, then what we cannot see, the sadness, sorrow, shame, feeling abandoned, lonely, invisible, is the subtext." That's a concept I use. So in this case the subtext is her sorrow and his helplessness. When she sees his helplessness, her aggressiveness dissipates, as well as her desire to be contemptuous. That's what's referred to as 'softening moments'. In therapy we create and bring about softening moments.

Thor: And they enable people to find other ways to interact?

Esther: We call that "corrective emotional experience." Quite simply. Where you suddenly realise that the other person is not indifferent. In the poem she may consider him ungrateful and indifferent. He eats his food and then leaves the table. When she realizes that his withdrawal is due to helplessness rather than apathy, immediately her need to wound him goes away. Then she is able to feel: "I do love you. What I am afraid of is your retreat. I take that as a sign of your not caring about me." That is a softening moment, when she suddenly sees his underlying feelings. And the unmet attachment needs beneath that again. We conceptualise this using the metaphor of a loop. The notion of a vicious circle is insufficient to explain why people act like that. It is like a loop. If he is avoidant, and she is pushy and contemptuous, then his manifest behaviour elicits her underlying feeling of loneliness, the primary emotion, but it will come out as contempt and anger. And when he sees her contempt and anger, it elicits fear and shame in him, which makes him withdraw even further. He will then think: "she doesn't care about me anymore, and no matter what I say or do it will be wrong, so I may as well just retreat." When he does so, that again will elicit feelings of desperation and separation anxiety in her, which come out as shouting and complaining. And so on it goes, like the infinity sign. So we work to uncover what is beneath this. At the very bottom lie the unmet attachment needs and identity confirmation needs. It produces great anxiety when the person we are attached to does not acknowledge our identity. It is as if we disappear. We are evicted into darkness. That is a great psychic danger.

Thor: In your essay you talked about armoured hearts. Do the softening moments melt away the armouring?

Esther: Hmm. Yes. It takes nothing for the armour to melt. We naturally assume that it is very hard to penetrate an armour. But it is not difficult at all. It is just a protective shell, and the very moment you realise that you don't need the protection, when your brain realizes that you are not in danger, then it just falls away. As if it evaporates. So the notion that you have to break through the armour by force is erroneous. The more you beat the armour the harder it gets. If the other recognises that you wish them well, then the armour glides off. It may of course return, because this is not a permanent state. But the person has had a corrective emotional experience. I had an experience like that with my husband yesterday. We had a conflict, but managed to repair it after a couple of minutes and we could both laugh. It only took us minutes, whereas it would have taken my parents weeks.

Literature as corrective emotional experience

Thor: So the poem does the same thing as the therapy, it provides a corrective emotional experience? So the poem becomes an objective correlate: "Oh yes, there is someone else who feels as I do"?

Esther: Yes, that's right. I think that is very important. It was crucial for me when I was young and reading, that I was not the only person in the world to have strange feelings. I was not alone in being anxious, angry, confused, feeling abandoned etc. So in families where you don't get adequate help to understand your feelings, and there are a lot of families like that even in today's society, then reading is a way of gaining greater affective awareness. It was for me at any rate. Both affective awareness and solace and recognition, and maybe also courage to act differently. I think when you understand more about yourself, you also become a better person. You become kinder to your husband, warmer in relation to the people you work with, kinder to your kids. So by understanding more, you becomes more caring, more empathic. As a young reader, it's mostly about consolation, recognition, identification - and then as you get older it's about corrective experiences, and learning, and expanding the empathic space. At least that's how I think it's been for me. And another important thing: self-compassion. To be able to feel: "Poor me, who was in that state." To be able to forgive one's own follies. For instance, I thought that I was very tough when I was young, but later I realised that really I was quite frightened. It was just a secondary emotion: "I don't mind, it

doesn't affect me at all." But reading has broadened my horizon. I think I have become a better partner and a better human being by reading literature. I understand myself better.

Thor: If I understand you correctly, you're saying that first you experience empathy from the book, and then that makes you more empathic towards others? That sounds like a loop, too?

Esther: Hmm. Yes. Empathy with oneself and with other. Yes, like a good loop. Much more positive than the one I described, which is very bad.

Thor: To sum up, then, literature has saved your life?

Esther: Yes, it has, in a way. I would say so. In a way. Because I think that if I hadn't read so much, my foundation would have been smaller and less solid. I would have had a poorer understanding of life. I am forever in debt to libraries, for giving me access to all these books. And this poem, *Episode*, helped me to understand my parents and myself, and the complexities of love.

In the car on the way back, I have time to reflect on Esther's story. My first impulse is to try to evaluate the interview: Did I listen carefully enough? Did we get close enough to the poem? But soon my worries give in to my fascination with the actual story. To think that she read Episode *nearly fifty years ago - and she has carried it in her heart ever since! She said she "learned it by heart"; I find that such a telling expression. I am astonished: her life story is a circular journey around this poem! What at first was a personal truth that helped her understand her own parents and get to grips with her own identity, has accompanied her into the therapy room, where she is trying to help people read its 'subtext', to sense the tensed cord and to move and be moved from discord to concord.*

Narrative two: *Camilla's Sorrow*

I met Camilla at a book launch where she read from her debut novel. Afterwards, while discussing her book, I happened to mention my project, whereupon she immediately responded: "That's happened to me! Actually, there were two books that saved me." In a time of great crisis she had read Duras' The Lover *and Goethe's* The Sorrows of Young Werther. *She volunteered to participate in my project. Although I had previously read both novels, it was long ago (I must have been around the same age as her when I first read them) so I decided to reread them. I conjectured that her experience was to do with a problematic love relationship. I also read her novel, without being able to see an obvious connection to the works of Duras and Goethe. The interview took place in my office on a snowy February afternoon in Oslo. We made cups of tea. After a bit of chit-chat Camilla gets us started on the interview.*

Camilla: Could you please briefly tell me, in relation to your interviews, is the focus on people's personal experiences with a book that has been vitally important, or is it more on general reflections about the books?

Thor: No, what I am after is your personal reading experience and your self-experience. So what I would like is for this interview to be as open and free as possible. So please just tell me about your experience.

Camilla. Sounds good. But please ask me questions too, because then it's easier to bring stuff up. I can be very messy when I try to explain what I mean, so you may have to ask me several times over. I didn't know how to prepare for this interview, but then I thought: "Well, I am just going to talk about how it felt to read *The Lover* and *Sorrows of Young Werther*." I have brought both works. I leafed through them earlier. That made me think: "Oh, I have underlined far fewer passages than I had assumed." I didn't reread the books before coming here, I was apprehensive about doing so. If you've read something that was absolutely "Oh, Bloody Hell!" (*laughs*), then you're afraid of losing that. It all depends where you're at at that particular time. So I didn't want to spoil the experience. I was surprised to find that I had not underlined as much as I thought, or as I would do these days. But then I thought that perhaps that's because this book (*holds up The Lover)*, I can tell you that, I read it in one go in my

bed. I was suffering from love sickness. This one (*points to Sorrows)* too was more or less one continuous reading, although I was not lying on my bed with that one. So yes. But this will sort of be very personal, because one needs to somehow explain why, why they were so significant at the time.

A devastating loss

Thor: Of course. Please just tell me whatever you think is relevant. You said you were suffering from a broken heart. Could you please tell me about the circumstances?

Camilla: Hm. Yes. It must have been 2010. It was my first, major break-up. The great, classic lovesickness. Which I can now talk about with huge distance, but which for me then was… I really, really had it deep. It just got to me, like this (*places hand on chest*). After all, I was only – how old was I? - I was 22 then, which I reckon is very young (*smiles*). I mean, at 22 one ought to be aware that things are not completely forever, but still I think I just… it was the first real, hard-hitting smack in the face I'd had as an adult. Albeit there had previously been some tough experiences on the family level. This relationship was meant to become my foundation. A foundation that I thought I had managed to build up, that I suddenly realised would not last forever. For me it was devastating. I don't know why it was so hard to understand then, but I just could not come to terms with it. And for me it is unnatural for a relationship to end at all, whether it be a friendship or whatever. So it simply – everything just crashed open. And this may be a bit banal, but I at least think that one goes through a decisive event at some point in life, and it need not be the worst thing in objective terms. But then, suddenly, something is shut, a door is opened. And it seems you cannot close it again. You just learn, however, to live with it. The significance of the event is more than just "Oh, the relationship to this person has ended." I think it has to do, at least in my case, with having to face yourself and your own inner self at a much deeper level. And that is always scary. So, I can't quite recall at what stage during this process that I read these books, but The Lover was very early on anyway. In the head-buried-in-pillow phase (*smiles*).

Thor: Shortly after the break-up?

Camilla: Yes, or… Just after I realised that maybe I regretted it, and it was irrevocable.

Thor: So you took the initiative to split up?

Camilla: Yes, well, although in a way it was him who – I perceived that he did not want to take it any further, so I said: "Should we just decide to end it then?" (*laughs*). And now, now I can laugh about it, because it's now all so remote. Everything does become remote very quickly, I feel. And I reckon in one's early twenties, a short duration of time can still carry so much weight, because the changes happen at a greater pace. Or so I find anyway. Especially around 21 or 22. I am still only 26, but even so, I feel that already things have stabilised inside my head. I know that might all change again (*laughs*), but there are certain fundamental aspects about oneself, that I feel one discovers in those early twenties. And that's good, I think. I had thought that I was a person who was not easily shaken. Or rather, I am quite good at pretending to be fine even when I am not. But this perhaps was the first time that I was completely unable to pretend. Which felt like a real defeat. It made me a loser in my own eyes. And I think that is also a major part of why these books took on that crucial significance. Because I guess I was searching for a way to claim back ownership of the situation. Also I had lost the ability to be alone, and I have always enjoyed being by myself. I have never been bored. I was never bored, as a child or an adolescent, nor these days. But suddenly it became a torment to be left alone, I had lost that ability. And one tries to be on one's own initially, perhaps because one thinks that: "Socialising is too much of an effort, I can't bear to talk to anyone." Maybe it was not a good idea to be left too much alone, either. But I think these two were some kind of salvation, however. (*pause.*) Speaking from the vantage point of my own little crisis, which I may have allowed to evolve too far… It was an immensely tough time, and these things just took me over. There were several things happening concurrently.

Thor: If I may ask you, how far down did you go?

Camilla: I got a lot of comfort from thinking that I could take my own life. I found it a delicious thought. I did contemplate suicide. But in retrospect, it's hard to say. But I think I must have found that helpful. The worst point occurred about six months after, in the summer of 2011. Not only because of July 22nd, but a childhood friend of mine committed suicide. So there were many things on top of each other, that combined to exacerbate my despair. And it is so strange to look back on, because from a distance it is as if not real. As if I don't believe myself when I say it, but that is how it actually was. I don't know what would have happened if another negative event, rather than reading Sorrows, had occurred. Still, I maintain that these books have been essential. My reflections about them have accompanied me ever since, they have been present inside me. And there is a help in that too: reflecting on why the

reading experience was such a powerful one. That makes me realise my own feelings and needs in the present.

Reading The Lover

Thor: You said you read *The Lover* very shortly after the break-up. Should we perhaps talk about that one first?

Camilla: Regarding *The Lover*: I think it must be said that often it's a case of… the book becomes part of the history I create in retrospect, of how things got better. That's how it is. Because I don't think I could have said that as I lay on my bed reading. Even though I remember vividly lying there. I know that a friend enters the room and says: "Camilla, what are you up to?" And then I respond: "Reading *The Lover* (*puts on sobbing voice)*". Then she says to let her know if there is anything she can do for me. And I simply say: "No, I just want to go on reading." And she left me alone. I can recall that scene so clearly, so viscerally. I don't think it is ever a straightforward case of "there, now everything's been fixed." But the book forms part of my story about how I made myself better. Of how I managed to turn things around.

Towards the very end he phones her, there is a scene where he phones her back:

Years after the war, after marriages, children, divorces, books, he came to Paris with his wife. He phoned her. It's me. She recognized him at once from the voice. He said: I just wanted to hear your voice. She said: It's me. Hallo. He was nervous, afraid, as before. His voice suddenly trembled. And with the trembling, suddenly, she heard again the voice of China. He knew she'd begun writing books, he'd heard about it through her mother whom he'd met again in Saigon. And about her younger brother, and he'd been grieved for her. Then he didn't know what to say. And then he told her. Told her that it was as before, that he still loved her, he could never stop loving her, that he'd love her until death. [P. 123]

He says he still, that in a way he still loves her and will continue to love her, and then… It is all so simple. In so many settings it would have been banal, but not with Duras (*smiles*). And I think that goes for so many of her texts: I experience her sentences as so straightforward that they almost could have been embarrassing, if you took them in isolation. However, in those particular settings one has the experiences that it is as if the only time something true has been said. However, it is way too difficult for me to explain why it is like that, I think. But at least in this passage, he phones her and says: "It never ended", or "I still love you, and I always have", which conforms exactly to the romantic notion of love. But then, when it is said *here*, by *her*, in *this* sentence, then I just go "Yes, please. I will carry that away with me and believe

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in it." And even if it comes to an end, I may just think that "well, but it does not really end. Nothing ends." (*smiles*). And then I take comfort in that, in someone else saying it. Because one cannot trust *oneself* and one's own judgment. That is not worth anything. That is not enough, not good enough. So you need to hear it from them. It does not suffice that I say "that's how it is". I need someone to back me up.

Thor: An echo or recognition from someone?

Camilla: Mhm. Yes, at any rate – I reckon that no relationship really ends, because how can it? You do remember them, and they meant something there and then, and they have shaped you in some way or other, ergo they continue to live. And at some level they still exist. But who am I to say that? If had been ninety years old I could have said it, but when I have Marguerite Duras to back me up, then I can think: "Now I've made an evaluation that I can live with. Then that can help me come to terms with my life, which may make other losses easier to bear. But I need, I need someone else who can support me in my judgment. Or who initiates that appraisal of events. I think that often those books that are experienced as absolutely essential - which these two definitely have been for me, they have been essential in the shaping of who I am and for my enjoying a good relationship to myself today - they initiate a process. I think one often regards the events that started off a process as crucial and decisive. The process of getting better, or overcoming sorrow and grief, or being reconciled with loss after a break-up. Life is just one process after another, all the time. And all these processes are precipitated by something. I believe you remember that eliciting factor. So that if a break-up sets off a process, I think the books start you on an inner journey which is about mentally and emotionally processing something difficult. For me, that could not be any other form of art.

Thor: So only literature – no other art form or even another person?

Camilla: Yes, especially not another person. It's tricky, there are so many factors that obstruct, that I need to have removed, if – it is all about being reconciled with one's own inner life, and I think that must often happen in solitude. It's hard to do that in a social setting, in a conversation, although it is important to talk about things. The deepest reconciliation, though, must happen on your own. But it's possible to talk with the book, because it's made of words. I believe one needs words in order to understand. At least for me, a picture would not give the same understanding. People are probably different, but I need language to arrive at a self-understanding. Doesn't everyone look for some kind of salvation, and you can find it many

places? Whereas others may find it elsewhere, for me it's literature that does that. Only literature has truly understood me, or told me something that has expanded me. Because you also look for that expansion. You want to be able to have new thoughts and feelings. I remember seeing a performance of The Brothers Karamazov. Everyone else found it very dull, which I can understand, because it was long and slow and very quiet, it was heavy going. But when I came out of there I just felt "ah, my brain has exploded!" "Now, this is it, this is now." It is so rare that one encounters that newness, a new way of understanding, of viewing one's own existence. I was all dizzy, going "Oh, I don't know what to do, there are so many things just tumbling around inside me." I recall going cross-country skiing with a teacher of mine the next day. I simply had to ask: "What with you being a grown-up and that, do you ever feel that you'll never experience anything new?" All of a sudden I had this fear that it just stops, and increasingly seldom will new thoughts appear. I think that that kind of newness is something that is brought on by having a child, for instance. Only the great events can *really* change a mindset. But perhaps that type of crisis, that I experienced, comes into it here. Although I mean it is a bit awful to say that a book can only change your life when it is *bad*. Because it might happen that it could lift it up even from a good state. But that's how it works for me. If I look back on my life, on the real markers of my identity, it would exclusively be the negative or painful events. They are like engravings.

Thor: Does that mean that if you had been happy all the time you would not have read *The Lover*?

Camilla: No. I think I could have read it because it is "Good Literature". I often do that these days. I will read something, but on a much more stylistic level, thinking: "This is a beautiful passage, and I can appreciate its qualities, but it does not concern me." That's even happened with some of Duras's other books: "This is interesting. Well done. Well crafted." But I have not been moved by it.

Thor: But what about the protagonist in The Lover? How far does she venture, in retrospect, when she looks back on their relationship, towards saying that she really loved him? Is there room for thinking she misinterprets her own feelings?

Camilla: Hmm. Maybe. But for me it's also about who is hoping that's the case. Who is that good for. He says that someone else would have stopped loving her, that he will love her till he dies. I think I felt then that it must have been very important to her too, although in a different way. She might have thought it was love, she was so young, but then it wasn't really.

She's just fifteen. So the way she experiences her own feelings, it's harder to say what they are and what's real. Well, of course her feelings are real, but how deeply did they go? She seems to have moved on more easily than he did. Something has really changed within her too, so it's been highly significant for her, but maybe more in the formation of a self than in experiencing true love.

Thor: So you were in a crisis. How did you find this book? You were searching for something, but did the feeling of being saved come unexpectedly upon you?

Camilla: Hmm. A bit difficult to… but *The Lover*, it was him who gave it me. I can't remember whether he'd read it himself. Maybe we were meant to read it together, I don't know.

Thor: Do you think the fact that it came from him gave it an extra importance?

Camilla: No, I don't think so, because he gave me other books that I simply couldn't be bothered with. But in this particular instance I knew what the book was about. So I guess I must have thought: "Ok, let's just try and see what it is like." Also, it's only a short novel. I think I needed that at the time, it felt like something I could manage. And maybe also the title, the fact that it is called *The Lover*. And I had not read anything else by Duras then.

Thor: When you began reading it, how soon did you get a feeling that this was something special?

Camilla: I seem to remember that that happened quite quickly, because I just kept reading as I lay there. Many times, if I feel bad, I can't really manage to concentrate, but that time I did. I needed it, I really wanted to go on reading it. And I had to finish it. So it must have happened early on, I think. But hard to answer that as it was a long time ago now. I remember the images in my head, that I made, because they may not even be in the text, you know? I remember her on a ferry by the flood. I have a very clear image of her being on a boat, the two of them on a boat. I'm not sure whether that's really in the book or something I have made up myself. But I can see those two on the boat, and I can see images of her family, her mother, her brother. And the white dress she's got on, her hat. But I cannot recall any particular stylistic aspects. When I told my friend, the one I was living with at the time, that I was coming here, she said that she had read *The Lover* after I had told her how good it was. And she had thought: "No, this book, it's simply too much, too…," but then suddenly it had occurred to her that "yes maybe that's how Camilla is feeling now." Maybe you need to be

able to link it to your own, or someone else's life, in order to really understand it. Especially with a text like that, which is so straight to the bone, even though it leaves a lot unsaid.

Thor: That resonated with my experience of having read the books with the other person in mind, it gives the reading experience an extra dimension. So I think perhaps I can understand some of her experience, when she read it thinking of you.

Camilla: Hmm. Yes, I think that's possible. And if you start to talk about a book you've read, one that's been very important to you, where you have discovered a truth, and the other person has a great distance to that text to which you have such a personal relationship, that distance can be very painful. Then when you reveal your thoughts you find yourself exposed, it feels so risky to do that. And so I think that these two books, because I read them during that period, it's hard to talk about them. Because it is so long ago, and now one feels like a different person, but also because of that feeling of being exposed to the risk of revealing myself. If you tell someone: "You have to read this, it's fantastic!", and you give them your copy with underlinings and all, then you're bound to feel that "ah, I should not have let you see that!" Especially if that other person is not receptive to it. And that's the wonderful thing about these novels: They just receive you, and there is no risk of being exposed to that kind of misunderstanding.

Thor: You are received by the books. It's risky, because you become vulnerable when you reveal all it's meant to you while the other keeps an analytical distance.

Camilla: No one wants to be perceived as an emotionally naïve simpleton. If the other has found it complex and interesting, and you have too, then that's somehow ok.

Thor: What was the most important thing about *The Lover*?

Camilla: Like I said, I haven't reread it. But the ending stands out. And also one time when they are sleeping with each other, let's see if I can find it…

> I look at him. He looks back, apologizes, proudly. He says: I'm a Chinese. We smile at each other. I ask him if it's usual to be sad, as we are. He says it's because we've made love in the daytime, with the heat at its height. He says it's always terrible after. He smiles. Says: Whether people love one another or not, it's always terrible. Says it'll pass as soon as it gets dark. I say he's wrong, it's not just because it was in the daytime, I feel a sadness I expected and which comes only from myself. I say I've always been sad. That I can see the same sadness in photos of myself when I was small. That today, recognizing it as the sadness I've always had, I could almost call it by my own name, it's so like me. (p. 48).

It's the way they look at each other, I remember feeling that it contained so much suffering. The pain of the other's gaze upon you, and then you see something disconcerting in those eyes. I can't recall precisely what I thought. But it didn't need to say so much more than that. It spoke for itself. (*pause*). Perhaps one also wants to attribute the role of life-saver to something. Especially when I have books as my sanctuary. They have always been there, they are *mine*, somehow. That is the room I have created for myself. And so the books as objects, it becomes necessary to attribute a meaning to them, I believe. So both because I did experience that they can have this meaning of being life-saving, and also that they are my helpers and best friends. And I want them to be, to have that position. However, I don't think I am attributing to much significance to them, not to these two books. I cannot pretend to myself that they have had this import. I wouldn't have been able to do that, but in a long-term perspective I want them to be part of the story of me, and how I managed to overcome difficulties. That's for certain.

Thor: Is this book something you carry inside, and that you can recall in other difficult situations and profit from?

Camilla: I would say so. *The Lover* was the first of Duras's books I read, and I think I read all her books with that one in mind. It is there as a raw and vital source that gives life and energy to the others. I feel affection towards the other books because I love *The Lover*. The other books are nourished by it. So that I can give Duras the role of a kind of heroine. Not that I would reread these two books in another crisis. I think then I would rather read poetry. Poems you can read over and over, whereas a novel is too connected to a context, too dependent on it. It's too fragile to transpose it to another context.

Thor: You want it to be tied to that time?

Camilla: Yes, and the experience of it. It is so intimately bound up with it, so to connect it to something else would feel impossible. Because they have changed me. So then it's a bit uncomfortable to go into that again. It's both uncomfortable and embarrassing to meet one's former self, and your own comments in the margins. I don't go to a novel with the intention of finding solace or comfort. I would rather seek out a poem.

Thor: What qualities does poetry have to make you do that?

Camilla: I think poems in a way are more elastic in terms of the situation you're in. So perhaps that means it's easier to read them from a different vantage point in a new situation. Also because they're short. And you're looking for a particular kind of language.

Reading Sorrows

Thor: So what I hear you're saying, is that you have choices about what story to tell about yourself. To a certain extent you can determine how central these books are to that story. But the experience itself is the same, and genuine.

Camilla: Yes, there and then it was. It was. And that's not something to be dismissed. And I think that is why I am so reluctant to read *Sorrows of Young Werther* again. Because I know that in its subject matter and style it is very direct and grand and romantic. It glorifies both death and love and all that goes with it. So that if I were to read it at the wrong time, it would not get through to me, I wouldn't take it on board. In the same way that when you have a broken heart, all love songs like Rihanna and Beyonce with the "I love you, come back to me" kind of lyrics, they make you go: "yes! That is exactly how it feels! Just so!" Whereas under normal circumstances I would respond with "Christ, can you not write better lyrics than that, pull yourself together!" So I am fearful that the book will just become like one of those pop songs, it only appealed to me when I was in that particular state. And it is curious with *Sorrows*, the whole thing about it precipitating a wave of suicides all over Europe when it came out. For me that is very strange, because I feel exactly the opposite: for me, the book prevents just that. It is as if, by reading about the extreme in the novel, I myself can be released from the extreme. By it being put into words by someone else that, "I understand how this will be experienced, but because I do this, you don't have to do it yourself."

Thor: That's similar to the function that novel had for Goethe himself?

Camilla: That's right, yeah. When he – his friend - has taken his own life. He himself, Goethe, doesn't do that, but he writes this book instead. And that, I think, is also how I… I just think it is far too simplistic, I just don't realise how you can read that novel and feel that it affirms suicide. That it encourages you to go and do that. Because this novel does not do that.

Thor: Could you please tell me more about that, why for you it's the other way round, that it helps you survive?

Camilla: Hmm. For instance, the preface says:

Everything I could discover about poor Werther's story I have diligently gathered together and lay it before you now and know that you will thank me. His mind and his character will compel your admiration and your love, and his fate will compel your tears.

And you, amiable soul, feeling driven as he was, draw comfort from his suffering and let this little book be your friend if by chance or by some fault of your own you can find none nearer.

It says unequivocally that if you feel driven like him, you should draw comfort from the story. And by admiring and loving him, you will feel comfort. I mean, that is how I seem to function, at any rate: I feel that it helps to see my own thoughts reflected, but it does not have to have anything to do with my actions. Do you understand? And when he… my feelings then, how things felt for me at that time, was that I had no reason to live. That state of mind one is in then, or that I felt I had come into, was that there was no hope. And so I could share in his hopelessness. But still there is a distance to the action. I want, I am looking for, a kind of distance to my own thoughts. So maybe that's what the book's thoughts are for – they are my thoughts, but I am able to view them from another perspective. By doing that I can manage to get a handle on them, not having to be trapped in them. And I guess it's like that with all literature: One just needs someone to formulate what one has lost one's way in.

Thor: So by someone putting your thoughts into words, they are objictified for you, and that drives a wedge between you and the thoughts, between thoughts and actions?

Camilla: Hmm. In this situation at least, I think that it was crucial to gain a certain distance from myself. What I experienced was that it reflected how I was thinking. Precisely by being similar, it opens up the distance, do you see what I mean? There is a sort of mirroring there. That is something one is often looking for. It mirrors me, and at the same time it enables me to see my situation – no, not my situation - my inner thoughts, rather, from outside. Then I can reflect on them, rather than just be in them. Moreover, in the book the action has been performed, so that one can read everything else in the light of this outcome. Perhaps that gives one a perspective on how deep and real one's own suffering actually is.

Thor: So are you saying that on a symbolic level you have lived through that, and that the novel has "done it for you," and then you don't have to do it?

Camilla: Well, that is what I've been saying, in a way. I think perhaps it is so. But also that it has been confirmed: "my feelings are real, and should be taken seriously." And that is no

matter of course, because one feels rather silly when one experiences these profound emotions. Or at least I do. One often *feels* a lot, but there is a perception that that is not permissible, somehow. That people will say: "No, come on, pull yourself together and get on with it!" But it shows us that our feelings are fundamentally difficult. And even though it is just an ordinary lovesickness, it shows us this heartbreak. First of all, it speaks of love in a beautiful language, and secondly it shows how love can have such consequences for the individual. This makes me feel that my emotions have been met and taken seriously. I reckon that is easier to do in a novel than when you talk to another person. Because talking to someone is difficult, it is not a given that the other has the same vantage point as you, the same viewpoint. But in this case the vantage point is the same, in a way. Perhaps one has been searching for someone who is in the same situation, so that one may ask: "What did you think and feel when you were there? What was this experience like for you?" The novel can do that without my having to give something away. And it is very liberating, and quite wonderful, not having to do that. Because sharing one's inner life is strenuous. Not having to do that, yet still receive consolation is a great thing. One is lucky to be able to be consoled through a novel, actually. You can remain silent at the other end, not having to say anything.

Thor: A unique encounter where you feel met, yet…

Camilla: Yet I don't need to give anything. And there are very few other situations where you don't need to give something back if you want to receive solace. So if I came to you and said: "Oh I feel absolutely terrible!" then I would have had to explain what had happened, or why I felt that way. And then we, then I would have wallowed and got lost in the maze of my own thoughts. I do of course think that sometimes it can be healthy to talk about matters, but there are times when that is just experienced as adding to the confusion. And also, the sense that once something has been said, once it is out there, it cannot be retracted. It has a finality, you have stated what things are like. Whereas here, in the meeting with the text, you are set free: your experience is not distorted, your experience remains intact – and at the same time your reading *is* your experience of it.

Thor: You said the novel gives you permission to feel your emotions, and it also verbalizes those emotions.

Camilla: I think I sometimes feel that – or what I love about reading – I feel that by sharing what I feel with someone else, it somehow is perverted because it is too close. Especially the touchy things. For instance, it is difficult to just say to someone: "I feel I want to kill myself,"

to throw that in someone's face. But in a book you can say that. And then the recipient can take that on board in solitude, without having to deal with the sender. I find that a relief. Because the closed room of taboos inside oneself can be verbalized. And thereby easier to deal with. It is easier to carry it because it exists inside someone else too. One does not wish to be alone, in the isolated sense. One just wants to be left the space to encompass the knowledge.

Thor: I hear you describing a particular type of intimacy, where you can be yourself entirely and where someone has shared their inwardness, where there are no demands, no judgment.

Camilla: Mm. Yes. Because if this had been – if you need to – perhaps one wants to talk to someone who has experienced the same as oneself, in order to find out "how did you live with that?" If, however, Goethe and I had sat here now talking to each other, then we would have to relate to one another, whereas here, in the novel, you can let go of the persons and just concentrate on that matter. So that we can share our experiences without having to deal with each other. I do not in any way believe Goethe had me in mind, but even so we are allowed to say together – "Oh my God, well that wouldn't have worked on a daily basis." I just looked at something I had underlined, something as simple as this passage from the May 17th entry:

Alas that the friend of my youth has gone – alas that I ever knew her. I might say to myself, you are a fool, you are searching for something which is not to be found on earth. But I found her, I felt the heart and the generous soul of her in whose presence I felt myself to be more than I was because I was everything I could be. Dear God, did even one of the powers of my soul go unused then? In her company could I not open up all of the wonderful faculty of feeling with which my heart comprehends Nature? Our conversation was a ceaseless weaving of the finest sensibilities, and in the play of our wits, going further and further, even to the point of licence, we expressed our unique selves. And now! – Oh, the years she had ahead of me brought her sooner to the grave. I shall never forget her – her steadfastness, her heavenly patience.

"In whose presence I seemed to be more than I really was, because I was all that I could be": And then the two of us can sit there and talk about it and say it out loud, and we are allowed to be bloody serious then. It will be taken in earnest, not like inane chatter, which so easily would have been the case had one simply spoken it aloud to oneself or to another person. That would have disturbed and distorted it. Whereas here it is allowed to stay a bit sacred. That this feeling is so, and let it be left in peace. Then it can be lifted up into something that has meaning, something that matters, something that ought to matter. And that is a difficult thing. (*pause.*)

In *The Lover* I feel that it's not so given who wins and who loses. There is more pain on both sides. I am not saying that Lotte – because she is sort of my – I think she does love Werther, but not in that passionate way. At least she does not let herself do so. I feel that she is the sort of person who is able not to give in to that.

Thor: Werther seems quite convinced that she really loves him, but we are just given his words.

Camilla: Yes, but he also says that he thinks so many people just live externally, they do not embrace their emotions, and they don't live them completely. And I think that might be the case with Lotte, she controls herself somewhat. And that might be the liberating thing about Werther: he takes the emotions that you also feel, and lives them out to an extreme degree. So that if you feel a bit trapped in the self-controlling way, which holds true for most of us, then it is absolutely wonderful to witness someone who dares to freely give vent to it all: "I LOVE this person!" Exclamation mark, exclamation mark.

Thor: Werther is supposed to have precipitated a wave of suicides across Europe. But perhaps there is another wave too, that hasn't been reported on: all the depressed readers who didn't commit suicide because they had read the book.

Camilla: The Go On Living Wave. After this book came out, there was a huge wave of people who wanted to live! A massive wave swept over Europe, everybody wanted to live at that time! A very singular event (*laughs*). No, but...

Thor: You said that *The Lover* initiated a process, did *Sorrows* complete it?

Camilla: Maybe, but it also goes on, inside. And that I think is a massively important argument for why a book can help you. Simply because you cannot "take the temperature" on what the book has done to you right afterwards, you need time to be able to gauge that. It continues to live inside you, it tags along with you. It initiates something, but that does not mean that its role is completed. And when you return to the book or to the memory of it, it is like re-encountering yourself again. I saw a theatre performance of Sorrows. And I felt: "Yes, there it is. It has been so important. Important for me." It confirms who you have been, and the communication between the book and me is maintained. I could feel that it was still with me, and it was easy to bring it forth within me.

Thor: So the reading doesn't finish when the book is closed. You go on living with the book.

Camilla: Yes, it's similar to what I was saying about an interpersonal relationship, it does not end, because it is the same type of reflection you carry with you. The books become part of your own meaning-making, your own identity. I had a really close friend at school, who meant a lot to me then and formed part of my feeling of identity. Then she took ill, and she started behaving really badly towards me, and we lost touch. Yet I still often think about her, she is still with me. The *feeling* of a book can stay with me for so long, even when the concrete memories of details have faded.

The profundity of these reading experiences and writing her own novel

Thor: Did it take you by surprise, that a reading experience can have such profundity?

Camilla: Well, yes. Because with these two books it was the first time that I had taken something in so uncritically. I think I had turned off that critical mindset, and it just felt good to read like that, to be taken in completely. And not as an escape from reality. I didn't want to escape. I wanted to get closer to reality. I just don't get the idea about escapist reading. Perhaps some readers will tell you that literature can save their life because they could escape from things. I am sure that need is real. The standard thing about escapism through reading women's romances. But in my case that is not what I am aiming for. I don't want to get away, I want to arrive. Often I think literature can be more real than so-called reality. Because social reality is often experienced as not all that real, after all. Or rather, things become more real when you have them verbalized, and presented and focalized. There are aspects of reality I can choose not to recognize, because it's much bigger… I don't know what I am trying to say now – or: I do know, but not how to say it. This story here, for instance, if that had really happened objectively speaking, and which it probably has many times, then there are so many thought processes that you don't need to partake in. And then they are less real. When you have participated in the experiences, in the thought processes, then you have somehow experienced it. And if you have experienced it, it must be real. Have you read *Stoner*? That felt as real reality, I kept saying: "Yes, yes, yes" because I felt that that's how it is. You understand the motives and feelings of the different characters, and their situations and longings, not just the protagonist's. And they are experienced as very important, at least I did, they were real persons who existed inside that book, and you followed them over a long time-span. They were real, not static. So they feel more real to me than you do, because I have never been allowed access into your inner experience and thought processes, have I? So I

know Stoner better than I know you. He is more real to me than you are (*smiles*). Please don't be offended…

Thor: Not at all. You said you don't want to escape from reality. You want to get into reality, into your own being, through literature. What is it about you that makes you want to do that?

Camilla: It's the only thing that really interests me. To find out what life is really like, how people think and feel. How to understand others. The book must be relevant. When I feel awful I don't want to read positive stuff. I want to read about the bad things, about someone who is even worse off.

Thor: I gathered that you feel a need to protect the reading experience. Not wanting to reread the book could be a way of keeping it intact. Perhaps keeping it holy?

Camilla: My secret sacred space? Yes, for me many books are holy. Nothing else is, that's for sure. A kind of reverence for them, which might sound completely corny if you don't love reading fiction: "Yeah, right. You go on fooling yourself, love." But many of us may have this relation to a book that has been important. It's been read to bits, the pages all tattered, they have been turned so many times. I need to protect that space, and it did feel uncomfortable thinking that I was going to talk about them. I maybe have a need for this holiness, too. A great reading experience is sacred, the space in which you become absorbed in the book. I feel a peaceful stillness inside. My head becomes focused and directed towards a particular point. That feels very relaxing and comforting. On those occasions when I could read, despite being all fucked up, I felt it really helped me calm down and be grounded. That feels good. In that kind of crisis, to have a book to comfort you - if you are lucky enough to find one - it gives you a focus that you can't find for yourself. That is very helpful. It organises the chaos, or forces you to maintain a focus. When things are difficult, when you're going through a crisis, although that word is so massive, it is something about shutting out all stimuli and sense impressions and just concentrate on a voice inside your head, a focus point for your whole body. You rest completely in that one thing. You are in that voice, a focus for your mind and body. That is so good. And I need that if things are really difficult. It's not simply a case of books making life a little bit better when things are hard. Books actually save lives. And I think they can prevent suicide. I do. (*pause.*) I think every novel has the potential to change lives, if it read at the right time. And that was also a real motivation behind me starting to write my novel.

Thor: Do you think that could happen to a young person reading your novel?

Camilla: Yes, well, if they… If they need saving I hope they come looking. But I don't know if my book… but then again, for me it's a case of when I feel terrible I don't want to read a positive book. I want to read about the bad stuff. I want to read about someone who is worse off, suffering more than me. And it can be somewhat frightening to write something so… demotivating, so bleak. Because I think my novel is very… I think it is almost a depressed text. Which makes me worry about the reader: "Aw, do I really want to inflict that on her?" But personally I think it's the other way round: a text that is not positive about life can give me more strength.

Thor: A special aspect of your novel is that the protagonist does not engage in any self-reflection, she does not seem to be in touch with herself at all.

Camilla: Yes, I wanted to explore what happens when you take away that reflective language from someone. She does not have the ability, but also there is a defense mechanism in it for her, a way of surviving. She has learnt to deal with things by creating distance to her feelings. But then you're left helpless as a human being, lonely and unable to communicate. So she surrenders to her resignation. And I wanted through her to throw light on the experience of a generation of young people who in a way are not relevant in the world, and who have resigned. Hence the political implications of the title.

Thor: Would it be possible to conclude that your protagonist has that loneliness because she has not had the kind of readerly experiences you've had?

Camilla: Exactly, *that's just it*! (*pause*). If I had not had my language, then where would I be? Much of being saved is through having the words to understand. And as regards saving lives or not, it would have been extremely painful to address what is difficult if you were not allowed to accompany the characters, to be allowed to experience and understand, so it is crucial that the work in its own way provides that access. It does not have to be in an explicit manner, but there must be a form given to experience that you yourself have not been able to make, to transform some of your own stuff.

Salvation

Thor: You use the word 'transform'. Would you say that this reading experience has been a kind of transformation? From one state to another, from one self-understanding to another?

Camilla: I think it initiated it at any rate. The whole process was not instantaneous, it took a long time. The character's suffering is both frightening and comforting, and it helps to move you from doubt and despair to belief. Perhaps that is more like encouragement than being saved. One feels saved in the sense of having been lifted up. You are like this author or narrator or character. Because you are similar, you are there with him or her. So you are not alone, you are now part of a special community. A form of friendship. I guess the way I was changed was that I was given courage. I think that's what it is: encouragement. The courage to live can become very strong in me as I read. Courage is the only word that can describe this feeling state. It's not a courage to perform a particular action. Just a courage to be. To go on living. A courage that is created by the fellowship with the book.

Thor: So through the experience of this kind of kinship, you are comforted and encouraged, and it gives you the possibility of coming to terms with your own feelings. And thereby you get courage to live. Is that a correct interpretation?

Camilla: Yes. Although it is a bit different in how the process unfolds as regards these two books. Whereas *The Lover* initiated that process, *Sorrows* was more of a continuation, a sense of "You see me, and now we are together. I can walk on together with you, because that is possible." Because Werther's feelings are so strong, as strong as mine, then my feelings must be real. I have *the right* to feel this way. It can be hard to admit and accept that one feels something so strongly. Without being defeated. We can go out into the world with that feeling intact. The importance attached to it by the narrator means there is a kernel of truth there. These feelings belong to that kernel. Because we have been close to that kernel, we can carry that experience with us. Maybe. I think that was right, because I felt encouraged right now, just talking about it. I managed to articulate what I sometimes feel when I read: that even though you are fed up with it all, a book can give you a specific courage, which is a will to live. Suddenly you *want* to be here, you want to communicate. If I have that intimacy with the people in the text, then we face the world together. And we can be exempt from the judgmental gaze of others, because I have been seen by the friends in the book.

With *The Lover*, it was not so much about gaining courage. It was more to do with recognizing that "yes, love is so difficult. And it's so bloody awful that things break up." I needed to see that in and through her sensitive, but hard language. It was mirrored in the language, the feeling. When you are in despair, then you get to the core of things more easily. And suddenly things seem clearer. And you can say: "Ok. Maybe I did love him. It's as simple as that." It can be very liberating to find a style of language that is so direct: "I always

loved her." It is so concrete and limpid, and yet it encompasses great depths of feeling, within the simplicity of the sentence. So I think I felt my head being cleared out when I read it. As if all the muck surfaced and was cleared out. But it is not as if everything is on the surface in this style. There are many pockets. It can be interpreted in a variety of ways, at the same time having that directness. Unsentimental, yet romantic. It seems hard, but it uses the word love, and it allows itself to be emotional. It enabled a crucial experience for me: "Ok, now some of your underlying feelings have been made explicit," allowing me to start there, to accept my feelings.

Thor: So it holds up a mirror for you to begin to…

Camilla: To see myself from. The books have served different roles for me, but they have both made the painful solitude into a good and nourishing solitude. That room of solitude that you have to enter if you are to get over something, if you are to move on. The books make that room of solitude habitable. And they made me come to terms with my feelings. I have experienced this strongly, and it is a form of salvation.

I see Camilla out, and then sit down to reflect on what she has told me. I am impressed by the quality of her reflections, at the same time I am worried that I did not get enough descriptive detail. Was she being protective of her experience? Possibly; yet her enjoyment of the opportunity to explore what her experience meant, and her ability to strive to find the right words, struck me as equally valuable. In order to gain a better understanding of her story, I feel that it is important to read very closely the passages that she had underlined and we had read together.

Narrative Three: *Veronica's Bruise*

Veronica got in touch with me after someone had told her about my project. She said that reading Lady Chatterley's Lover had made her decide to break out of an unhappy relationship. With that information I sat down to read the novel. Imagining what her reading must have been like, whilst at the same time remembering my own previous reading of the novel, was an immensely rich and moving experience. Our dialogue took place in a quiet and pleasant meeting room in her office building, on a blustery morning in November. My first impression of Veronica was of a warm, outgoing and confident person.

Thor: I appreciate your being willing to share your experience with me.

Veronica: My pleasure. I've been quite excited about it, actually. When I heard about your project, I thought, oh yeah, brilliant. Actually I've never done it before. I first read the book a number of years ago and I wish I'd had the readerly understanding that I do now, to be able to process it a bit better. So, yeah, I'm looking forward to it.

Thor: Good! As you know, I want to find out how books can change readers' lives. So therefore, I'd just like to basically hear about your reading experience. It's up to you where you want to start. But one way we could start is, if there's a passage that you remember particularly well, if you could please read that for me.

Veronica: Initially let me just give you a bit of background, then. The reason that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* really resonated with me is that I read it for the first time about maybe nine or ten years' ago, something like that, when I was in my mid-twenties. I was in a long-term relationship in which I felt very trapped and at the same time had resigned myself to the fact that this was just what life was going to be. I was going to end up getting married, and I probably wouldn't be happy forever, but it was just… that was real life, and maybe romance was a bit of a fantasy. You know, this is what reality was going to be.

And then I read this book. I think it followed on from having read *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, which was another wonderful book for how I could sort of break free. Not necessarily by, you know, having an affair with the gamekeeper, but just wanting to be

proactive and actually put myself on a different path. And it massively has. So the relationship broke up many years later, well, about a year after that.

And yeah, I just, I feel really free, now (*smiles).* And I can imagine that maybe if it wasn't for the book, if I'd continued on that path then I probably would be married now, have some children, just be unhappy and feel trapped, so I really feel quite lucky that this book found its way to me when it did, at the right time.

We each open our copy of the novel, and start looking at significant passages together. Veronica reads a passage out loud, and then reflects on its significance, before moving onto another passage.

"And it frightened her"

Clifford looked at Connie, with his pale, slightly prominent blue eyes, in which a certain vagueness was coming. He seemed alert in the foreground, but the background was like the Midlands atmosphere, haze, smoky mist. And the haze seemed to be creeping forward. So when he stared at Connie in his peculiar way, giving her his peculiar, precise information, she felt all the background of his mind filling up with mist, with nothingness. And it frightened her. It made him seem impersonal, almost to idiocy. (p. 52)

The way that she reacts to him, her feeling that she's looking at him like he's an idiot, I remember almost seething, looking at my partner and thinking, Oh my God, he's an idiot. What stupidness am I going to marry? But even then it was "I'm going to marry." I couldn't see myself being strong enough to get out of it. I just felt even more trapped, because I could see myself still going ahead with this.

I'd been in this relationship for about three years, and that was my second ever boyfriend. It was the first time that I'd ever really felt that I was in a grown up relationship, you know. I'd had a boyfriend when I was around eighteen, but that just felt like a bit of a first love and I knew it wasn't ever going to be forever. But this guy I thought was my guy. We'd made plans and there was going to be a family, and things were definitely set. There was a future that I thought was going to happen for me, and was planned out to a certain extent. Initially they were joint plans, very much so. Then I realised that I still wanted those things but not necessarily with him. I definitely wanted a family, I wanted some stability, I wanted to feel settled and content. I think initially I saw him as a vehicle to be able to get those things, and have that with him. And then as things changed between us, I realised that

those things I still wanted, but not with him. We went on holiday together for the first time and went to stay with some family of mine in France. For both of them it was their second marriage, and they got married when they were a bit older, and then had children. I remember looking at those two as a couple and thinking, oh that's so wonderful and they've got such a great life. And then I looked at my partner, just realising I'm never going to have that with you, even if I get the house and I have the children and we move abroad. The connection isn't going to be there, and again that's similar to Connie. She has all these things, she's intelligent, she has a good education and she's well raised, she comes from a good background, so she has all the things that you'd think an independent smart-minded woman could ask for. And she marries well, but still, even with all those trappings, it's not there.

"Slowly, slowly the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise"

And dimly she realised one of the great laws of the human soul: that when the emotional soul receives a wounding shock, which does not kill the body, the soul seems to recover as the body recovers. But this is only appearance. It is really only the mechanism of the reassumed habit. Slowly, slowly the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise, which only slowly deepens its terrible ache, till it fills all the psyche. And when we think we have recovered and forgotten, it is then that the terrible after-effects have to be encountered at their worst. So it was with Clifford. Once he was "well", once he was back at Wragby, and writing his stories, and feeling sure of life, in spite of all, he seemed to forget, and to have recovered all his equanimity. But now, as the years went by, slowly, slowly, Connie felt the bruise of fear and horror coming up and spreading in him. For a time it had been so deep as to be numb, as it were non-existent. Now slowly it began to assert itself in a spread of fear, almost paralysis. Mentally he still was alert. But the paralysis, the bruise of the too great shock, was gradually spreading in his affective self. And as it spread in him, Connie felt it spread in her. An inward dread, an emptiness, an indifference to everything gradually spread in her soul. (pp. 52-53).

It's about her husband's war experience, which is like a bruise. The bruising and the almost like aftershock coming through, it really stuck with me. It's in a very, very deep place and then, slowly over time, the colours start to show and that's when it really comes out. Initially you're here, letting you get on with things and you're OK, but then the stuff that is deeper, that has gone deeper, takes longer to come out. That I think would describe the trauma afterwards of these bruises coming to the surface. And that was the real pain, that was the real hurt coming to the foreground in my relationship. My mum had died when I was twelve, and that happened a long, long time ago, but then in my mid-twenties, my mum's Will stated that that was the time that we had to sell the house, when the youngest had turned eighteen, and divide up all of the estate. So I was going through all of that, it was incredibly painful. I felt like I was grieving all over again, it was very, very raw, and very upsetting for me. And I didn't feel that my partner supported me enough, or really understood. He wasn't there for me in the way

that I would have liked, and that for me was just something that I almost couldn't get past. We couldn't really get through it because it made me think, although this situation isn't going to happen again in our relationship, something similar might. And if this is how we deal with our problems, or you deal with my grief, then this isn't going to work long-term. The grief was the big thing for me and that for me was the connection about the bruise. Although I'd suffered the grief of my mother many, many years beforehand, it was that bruise, it was coming to the surface now. Well, if he couldn't handle that part of me, then we weren't going to make it.

After my mother died, I was raised by her sister, my aunt. She was a maiden aunt, never married, never had any children of her own, didn't do the best job, but you know, did all that she could. She was estranged from my father who lived abroad and was a sea captain. And he would come home and, yeah, be abusive in his own way and then go off. When my mother died we didn't have any grief counselling. It wasn't handled very well I think by the family as a whole. They come from Irish stock and it was just… you get on with it, you don't discuss it. So it was very much me finding my own way.

So I had a lot of different things going on within my past, and my partner had almost this idyllic home life with one younger brother, a mother and father that were still together and still very happy. His mum was a retired primary school teacher, which is what I was doing at the time, just qualified as a teacher, and his dad was a museum curator and they lived in the Wye Valley and had this beautiful country life and it was just so very different from my own upbringing. I think when he first saw my family, he couldn't understand how we were that way with each other. And rather than maybe either not saying anything, or maybe trying to be diplomatic, he just was very negative and would say negative things about my family or moan to me about them, which I just didn't find helpful.

We had to sell the house at the start of the year, that's when the proceedings begun. It was all done by May. Then we went to stay with his parents for the holidays. His mum told me this story about how she had read *Lady Chatterley's Lover* many years ago. It had fallen out of a bag when she was on the train in London, but because it was such a scandal at the time to read it, she daren't pick it up, and had walked away from it. And I thought that's such a funny story, I'll have to read this book. So that was the reason why I ever first picked it up. I was reading it just to see if it would be quite funny, or how risqué it was going to be. And actually, the sexual parts they're part and parcel in a certain way of the connection between the two, but it wasn't anything that I ever remember about it or take from it, it was just very much her sort of escape and the enlightenment that she gets. I was reading it in Leeds, also on

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the train quite a lot, as I was travelling back and forth for the weekends. I'd go back to Bristol a lot just to see my family and to see my sisters who were over there, and I guess deal with the aftermath of splitting up the house. So there were lots of pressures and stresses and strains. And as I struggled with my emotions and what was going on, I just felt this gulf grow between us. My partner had come with me for a lot of visits while we were physically emptying out the house and doing all that stuff, but then afterwards he stayed in Leeds and I would be travelling over on my own, and so that's when I would do a lot of my reading, on the train. I find that trains in particular, I can't read on the bus because it makes me nauseous, but trains are just very good thinking spaces for me.

"She felt she was being crushed to death"

Connie really sometimes felt she would die at this time. She felt she was being crushed to death by weird lies, and by the amazing cruelty of idiocy. (p. 120)

In the beginning there's her growing disdain for her partner and her wanting to get away. And, you know, she starts off by having the affair with the guy that comes round at the beginning, I can't remember his name. And she's not particularly emotionally attached, but it's fine and it sort of serves a purpose there. Even then she knows that's maybe not enough, but she starts off by trying to tell herself that'll be enough and if I just do this, then I can still stay with Clifford and it'll be fine. And we don't have to be a partnership, I can just function with him as a pair and then I can tell him when I've met someone else. And I guess for me, you know, I could see that as well, I would think maybe we're not going to be close forever, but he's intelligent and we can have a conversation and whatever. But then even that slipped away from me. So in the book it goes from that being enough, to her then meeting Mellors. And the way that he almost changes something inside her, the way that her feelings then sit. Her emotions sit differently within her stomach and she reacts to things differently. There's a part where she's almost become a bit of a zombie, everyone's quite worried about her and it looks like she's quite ill and her sister comes along to intervene, to take her away. And again, that was something that I could connect with. With all the other emotions that were happening, I fell into a depression, so I had that sort of fuzziness around me where I was just getting through and could do my day to day stuff, but just felt quite numb, to the outside world.

My partner knew that I'd had counselling in the past and that I was depressive. But it was not something that he'd ever experienced first-hand, so I think he found it difficult to understand. Once I started to take medication, I think he felt that that would then make it go away and it'd be all right very quickly. Obviously that's not how it works, but once I'd got to the point where I'd tried to talk to him a few times, and we hadn't communicated effectively, for me then I just felt that part shut down. I thought well I'm not going to try anymore, because it's not going to get me anywhere. So again that was another way of distance coming between us.

Connie is thinking that if she has a child, then that will fix things. And there was a point, when we moved house, where I did wonder if that would be an option. Maybe if I just brought a new life into the world it would give me something to love and make things better and bring a positive out of a negative. Connie thinks that that could be an option, but then at the same time she realises that it could be quite a terrifying thing, just to have the child for the sake of a child, and not to have it as something born out of love. She describes it here as feeling like she's being crushed, and I can remember my dark patches, just feeling like a sort of physical weight on me, and feeling that everything that I said was a lie. That I was merely pretending, oh aye, yeah, I'm fine. Wanting to speak to people without being able to express myself fully. It was like a physical <u>weight</u>, it was like a <u>weight</u> on my chest, just within me, that I was carrying around. Which I guess was sadness, depression and whatever, really feeling like Connie does in this passage.

It does feel a bit idiotic when you're depressed, or there's a sadness that you know that you should logically be able to reason yourself out of, but you can't help the way that you feel. And if you're depressed or if you're in your dark place, you know when you think: if I just tell myself enough times that I'm OK with things, then I'll be happy.

Thor: So if you can understand why you're unhappy then logically you should no longer be so?

Veronica: Yeah.

Thor: But that doesn't work?

Veronica: No, no. And then it's getting to the root of the bruising, as it were, and really, just thinking deeper, and digging deeper. I think the tablets that I was on and the lifestyle that I was living served the purpose of just numbing those outward feelings, but never really

addressing what the root of it was. And therefore the cycle continued, and then I felt more stupid and more of an idiot for not being able to get myself out of this rut that I was in.

Thor: So you were hammering yourself over the head with a…

Veronica: Yeah, really punishing myself. Not forgiving myself for feeling that way, and not being able to forgive other people for not understanding, or not wanting to be with me, or not wanting to help me get out of it.

Thor: It's a very dark place to be?

Veronica: Yes, it was a very dark place. I think I've had numerous bouts of depression throughout my life, and I'd say that was…

Thor: Since your mother died?

Veronica: Since my mother died, yeah, and I'd say that's one of the darkest. Because at that age, it was probably the first time that I really had an understanding of what depression was and how it made me feel. Looking back I think I'd probably suffered depression through my teens as well, after her death, but hadn't understood it. I thought it was just hormones, it was anger or it was just rage at whoever was bringing me up. The understanding wasn't there then, but at this point in my mid-twenties, I could understand what it was. And I was able to read around the subject and do research and find all these things out. None of which were actually effective in changing the way that I felt, however. I could see that a big part of the trapped feeling that I had, came from this relationship that I was in and feeling that I was almost on a set path of unhappiness, and wasn't able to come away from it. Hmm, ooh, I feel tingly now.

Thor: What happened there? Did the tingling come as you were talking about this now?

Veronica: Yeah, I could feel a nervous energy, like a flutter in my stomach. Just like a remembered feeling, of what that was like. I know I don't feel like that now, I can still remember the pain, I remember the kind of physical sensations of it, mmm, yeah.

"Weird and gruesome"

Connie always felt there was no next. She wanted to hide her head in the sand – or, at least, in the bosom of a living man.

The world was so complicated and weird and gruesome! The common people were so many, and really so terrible. So she thought as she was going home, and saw the colliers trailing from the pits, grey-black, distorted, one shoulder higher than the other, slurring their heavy ironshod boots. Underground grey faces,

whites of eyes rolling, necks cringing from the pit roof, shoulders out of shape. Men! Men! Alas, in some ways patient and good men. In other ways, non-existent. Something that men should have was bred and killed out of them. Yet they were men. They begot children. One might bear a child to them. Terrible, terrible thought! They were good and kindly. But they were only half, only the grey half of a human being. As yet, they were "good". (p. 172-173)

Veronica: In this part they talk about one England blotting out another, a part of the industrial age changing, and the new England's taking over, and that changing aspect of the land and the feeling of the people. Here it compares this to, or I compared this to, Connie.

That part for me was like there just being no next. When I was on my path, then I thought that I couldn't get off it. Just not being able to see more than a couple of years' ahead. Almost not wanting to have the foresight because it wasn't something that I wanted to really think about, or connect myself to. And being unhappy in my relationship, being unhappy because of my depression, it was very much just like your world closes in. So your concept of friendships, and other interactions around you, become numb. The physical feeling was numbed. And seeing men as being an answer potentially to happiness and to finding a way out, but also being a way to make you feel more trapped and crush you, and not that you'd be who you'd need to be, that was weird and gruesome.

Thor: Weird and gruesome.

Veronica: Yeah, I guess anything, if you think about it in so much detail, can become that. On my first reading it I found it quite a romantic book, just because Connie and Mellors are so absorbed in one another and they have this little hideaway. It is just those two against the world and nothing can really get them. That seemed quite a nice idea, haha, to be able to just hide away. Maybe if you did have a grand estate with acres and acres and acres, you could just have your little life and not let the world affect you, but that's not real, is it? It's not real life, even in this with Connie having to go into the real world, going to the pits, going to the village and interact with different people. You can't, you can't escape. Now that I'm reading it again, I notice more Mellors, and his awareness of the outside world. He knows that it may not end well and that there's going to be problems. And that regardless of how much they care about each other, he's always going to be a gamekeeper and there's this class divide between them. I think I'd maybe glossed over that a little bit more in my first reading because I was so, just thinking about myself as Connie and feeling trapped and wanting to escape. But, I guess, I didn't want to think about the reality of the world outside, hmmm.

"but with a hopeful heart"

> *Well, so many words, because I can't touch you. If I could sleep with my arms round you, the ink could stay in the bottle. We could be chaste together just as we can fuck together. But we have to be separate for a while, and I suppose it is really the wiser way. If only one were sure.*
>
> *Never mind, never mind, we won't get worked up. We really trust in the little flame, and in the unnamed god that shields it from being blown out. There's so much of you here with me, really, that it's a pity you aren't all here. Never mind about Sir Clifford. If you don't hear anything from him, never mind. He can't really do anything to you. Wait, he will want to get rid of you at last, to cast you out. And if he doesn't, we'll manage to keep clear of him. But he will. In the end he will want to spew you out as the abominable thing.*
>
> *Now I can't even leave off writing to you. But a great deal of us is together, and we can but abide by it, and steer our courses to meet soon. John Thomas says goodnight to Lady Jane, a little droopingly, but with a hopeful heart.* (p. 335-36).

Veronica: At the end of the book, you know, you're hopeful of them two going off and having a child together and doing their own thing, but you're aware that it probably isn't going to be an easy ride.

Thor: It's quite an open ending isn't it?

Veronica: It's hopeful. Certainly this third version anyway is hopeful. And that was another thing, you know, realising that, OK, it was going to be tough for me to break away and forge a new path, and it would be painful, and that would be the reality, but, that that wouldn't be forever. And it would be better to have a few years of pain with the happier future, the longer term, than to just carry on being unhappy for a longer period. I remember thinking gosh if I come out of this relationship, then I'm going to be probably late twenties, maybe early thirties before I find a new partner and is that going to be too late if I want to have a family, do I need to just do it now, while I'm the right age? And I thought, no, it's better to be single when I'm thirty as opposed to divorced when I'm thirty-five, and then start all over again. And that was a real active choice for me to make: Potentially cause pain now, but pain for the right reason and with a good ending forever down the line. I think that's what Connie's aware of, or maybe not aware of, I think maybe Mellors is more than she is. He's proud of her, at the end, and wants people to know about her, and not just being this kind of secret that's kept in the little hut. That feeling of relief, when you make up your mind about something, once you've made a decision, even if it's not actually happened yet, just the choice has been made.

Thor: Can you remember when that relief came, when you had that particular feeling?

Veronica: I think it was when I finished the book, and was just digesting it. And then the feeling arose: OK, I know what I need to do now. This is something different, I feel

differently now. And I can remember putting it down and, the way I do with a book, I tend to just, I guess I cradle it and hold it a bit, haha, especially if it's been a good one, it's just that kind of instinctive, you want to bring it up to your chest.

Thor: It's… a physical thing, isn't it, reading?

Veronica: Yes. And if there's a particularly good passage I'll almost like stroke the page, haha, and obviously connect with it. When I went travelling, I was away for a month and I put a few books on an iPad, thinking oh that'll be easier, and then just didn't read them because I just want the book. It's not the same, doesn't smell the same, doesn't feel the same, you get the same information, but the feeling's different. When you think, what it physically does to you… I'm trying to think. It's like when I meditate. When I'm going to meditate, you get in a certain place, and you get in a certain position and there are certain kinds of physical things about yourself and your environment that are created, for that space to happen at its best. And for me when I'm reading, just the act of, I guess, sitting a certain way, or physically picking it up, the way that I physically hold myself, the physical process of turning the pages, makes me physically feel that I'm in it. The way that I can touch the page if something good happens, the way that I can sort of close it and turn it away from me. If it's electronic, or if it's something that I'm just looking at, it just feels more 2D, I can't get my hands into it, and maybe that's something kinaesthetic, I don't know. Books are just made to be held, aren't they? Holding a book, that just feels good, doesn't it?

So, yeah, afterwards, when I was digesting it, the days after I'd finished it, and just feeling, feeling a noticeable difference within me, from how I had been at the beginning of the book, to coming to the end. And that does happen with other stories that I've read since, and then I guess it sort of fades off, it peters out, but that's almost the thrill I think of it as well, when you finish it, and a sadness, when I'm reading a book that I love. And with this book, I sometimes plough through certain passages, because I'm really keen to know what's happening and I'm absorbed and I want to find out what's coming next. However, when you get to the final few chapters, I find that my pace really actively slows down, because then I don't want it to end yet, I'm not quite ready for the story to finish. And much as I wanted to find out what would happen with Connie and Mellors, I didn't want them to not be in my head anymore, so I wanted to slow it down and go back and read certain bits again.

Thor: You said at the start that the first time you read it, you were so caught up with Connie, or concerned for her, and then you realised that, hey, I should feel the same way about myself, is that right?

Veronica: Yeah, absolutely. I can remember almost wanting to shake the book, come on Connie, you can do it, sister, gearing her on to just get away, just get out!

Thor: So it was a physical response where you…

Veronica: yeah, just like, argh come on woman, what are you doing? And I guess that was just my own frustrations being projected. I remember there being a real kind of crystallising moment for me, thinking if I can want this for a fictional character, then surely I can want it for myself. And that it shouldn't just be, pardon me, a fantasy or like a 'maybe one day', or 'I'll get there in the end'. I realised that if I was going to make any changes, then it would have to be by my own hands, by my own doing. There wasn't going to be a wonderful man to whisk me off and make me feel differently about myself, it had to come from me and from within. And it helped me find that, I'm not saying straightaway, but it certainly gave me the spark to make me to want to go and find it for myself and see what that would look like.

It wasn't for a few months afterwards that I decided to terminate the relationship, but the decision for me internally had been made, that this wasn't good enough and that I had to do something. I wasn't sure exactly what it was at that point, but my willingness to tolerate the status quo sort of evaporated, and something solidified in me about wanting to make a change. It manifested itself I guess initially in me just being a little bit more distant, a bit grumpier, not as willing to just let things wash over me, or let things go. I became more assertive, certainly, and making my position felt, expressing things that I was unhappy about. Which came as a bit of a shock to my partner, because I think I'd been quite submissive up until that point and maybe just whimpered a little, but never really vocalised what I was thinking. When I did, initially it had the desired reaction, and I felt that we kind of connected a bit better, because we were more honest. I subsequently realised that that really wasn't enough, however. Just talking about it wasn't going to change the things that were fundamentally wrong between us, and that I still needed to go.

We broke up about six months after I'd read the book, and then ended up getting back together, about two months after that, and then split up for good. So the first time we broke up it was quite amiable, and it was kind of agreed that it wasn't quite right. I think he thought that I was just having a funny half hour, and that I would then change my mind. And then

when we broke up for the second time, it was very - what's the word? - unfriendly. So we haven't spoken since.

Thor: After the intermittent period when you tried to get back to the relationship finally ended, where you frightened then, or did you feel lonely?

Veronica: All of the above I think. Yeah, it was very scary, it was very lonely. When we broke up it was very difficult, there was a complete shut down. Obviously we'd been together for about three and a half years by that point so, it was quite a big divide. We still lived very near to each other, and still had lots of shared friendship groups that then had to see us separately, so it was very, very painful. I'd say probably for about ooh, like a good year, it was very difficult. I was very sad, I found work very hard. I'd just qualified as a teacher, so I just threw myself into my work and buried myself a little bit, but still held on to the idea that this was just a rough patch, and it was all going to be worth it because I'd be able to come through it, later down the line, and be better for it. And even though it was incredibly painful, and because I tortured myself for a bit when we kind of ended as well, because I'd been the one to call it. I am a hundred percent certain that I'm better off now than I would have been. I do think back sometimes, gosh, if we had stayed together, where would I have been? I know we'd be married and really unhappy, I'd still be a teacher probably, a head somewhere really stressed and having a horrible time. Yeah, I'm really thankful that I found that book, or it found me.

The book awoke me and enabled me

Thor: You said that your partner at the time didn't have empathy with your situation, your feelings, but then you had that empathy with Connie, wishing for her to be happy.

Veronica: Yeah, I was really rooting for her.

Thor: And your empathy for her, you could then transfer to yourself?

Veronica: It helped me see myself, something I may not have before, or not be able to recognise anyway. I certainly felt frustration and unhappiness and I guess anger, at certain points, but I couldn't see past that. That was what my emotion was, but feeling hopeful for Connie, and wanting better for her, that certainly made me want that for myself. It helped me understand it, almost like a mirror, like it reflected back into real life. Yeah, and it almost just seemed like such an obvious thing as well. You know, when you have that realisation, of

course, come on, why can I feel it for her and not feel it for me? I think that was part of my depression and not being able to feel good about myself or feel that I was worthy. I felt that Connie deserved happiness, but maybe before reading it I didn't feel that I did. I felt like I just deserved to keep going with what I was doing. Hmm, so Connie's a great girl, haha. For me she is anyway. I remember talking to my sister about *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and she doesn't like it. I said I think she's really great and there's some great ideas. I was really surprised, impressed, by how much more I took from the book than I thought I would.

Thor: So there's a feeling of gratitude that you found each other. And it certainly sounds as if that book has changed your life.

Veronica: Massively, I do believe so, definitely. I think it's serendipity, I guess, how certain books just come to you at the right time. They find you or you find them. Perhaps if you read the same book a year later, or a year beforehand, it wouldn't have the same impact, but just sometimes that kind of connection happens and it can't be copied, there's nothing else like it. So, yeah, I love this book, I cherish it and I'm really, really happy that I'm enjoying it as much the second time round, even though I'm getting very different things from it.

Thor: When I speak to people about the nature of the change, they use different verbs. Some readers say that the book saved their life, some people say it shaped their life. What about you?

Veronica: I feel like the book… mmm, what's the right word? …. *Awoke* something within me. I'm not going to give it all the responsibility, because I feel that I need to take some of it myself, haha, but it certainly awoke something in me. Is the word "enlightened"? Perhaps. Would that work without sounding too religious? It enabled me to find something inside that I didn't think I still had or didn't have the ability to find. Yeah, it awoke something within me. That's a few verbs there, sorry. Awoke and enabled, I think, yeah, that's great.

Thor: So if I offered you the verb, saved, then that wouldn't feel right?

Veronica: mmm, no, not saved. It makes me think that if something saved me, then that's the only possibility, that there's nothing else that could have done the job, but I'm not sure if that's the case. In that it enabled and awoke something within me, it certainly helped my life for the better. I'm very grateful to it, and to D H Lawrence, God Bless him. I'm not actually religious, but yeah, it's wonderful. And I'd love to know if this book has had a similar impact

on anybody else. I wonder, I'm not sure it would have, but again it's such a personal thing, isn't it?

After a lengthy pause Veronica tells me about another profound reading experience that occurred several years later.

"A Winter's Tale"

Veronica: Years later I read *The Winter's Tale*, which I'd never read before. I had glossed over it in school as a text, but never sat down and read it for pleasure. We'd studied Macbeth for GCSE and that just, argh, took all the fun out of anything for me. But I chanced upon it and there's a part at the end where, I can't remember the names now, Hermione comes back to life and it's the first time that she's seen her daughter. And it was around about the time of the anniversary of my mum's death and it had been twenty one years this year. As I read it, I just completely lost it, tears just rolling down my cheeks, couldn't hold myself together. I could just completely relate to the mother, to see her daughter for the first time and then imagining myself, what if my mum could come back to life and if I could just see her for one day and just have that in a meeting with her. And whoa, all this emotion just came out. I was crying so much. I've had counselling for a number of years to deal with my grief and my loss and my upbringing, and it's just so rare, even in a counselling session, to have that release and have that connection. To think that an equally strong emotion can come from just reading fiction, without there being a psychotherapist or a psychologist there is such a powerful thing, and I really wish that more people could get to it. To actually experience it, and to feel it within you, is something that I think is quite hard to shake off, and it makes me want to learn more about it, so that I can understand it better, looking into research and dig deeper.

Thor: What would you like to find out then, how you can have such a strong connection with literature?

Veronica: I think the psychological theory behind it, what happens in your brain, what are the kind of electronic impulses that are happening when you're reading that, is it influence making, is it memory, what kind of connection? I would love to understand more about the theory behind it, of reading, and how that works and what it physically is that's going on inside us, but I think that's how my brain works, I just like to know all the facts.

Thor: You said that you can see a psychotherapist or you can read a work of literature, how come reading *The Winter's Tale* can work better?

Veronica: I think when you're in therapy, you're either being asked questions, which you then have to consider and think about and process, and you're maybe trying to juggle, is this the right answer? Is this really what I think? Are they going to judge me, or what? What judgements are they making based on what I'm saying? You are aware, even if they say that you're not, you are aware that you're very vulnerable and kind of giving things up that you're maybe not sure if that's even what you really think. Whereas with reading *The Winter's Tale*, it's almost like the kind of realisations that you make about yourself or your feelings, they rise up unannounced. You're so involved in the story, and being with the characters, and your mind's eye is just picturing a story, it almost gives you that distance to think about yourself, not in the third person but just from a different perspective and slightly further away. But looking at it through the eyes of the characters, and I think it's often easier, for me anyway, to think about other people than about myself. You're very good at giving advice to other people but then you never take it yourself, do you? People can often come to you for advice and I'm very good at helping people and talking things out, but then doing it for myself is often very different. So just having that other person to channel it through maybe takes away some of the danger, takes away some of the risk. And even if you can't say this is really painful for me, it is possible to say that must be really painful for her, or I can understand how that would feel. Some of the words as well that was in *The Winter's Tale*, there's one line where Hermione comes alive and she doesn't go to her husband that's banished her and thinks she's dead. Straightaway, she goes to the daughter and is like, how can this be? How can you be my daughter? How have I not seen you? It's just, yeah, that would be your first thought. I think it might be just a feeling of agreement, a feeling of shared consciousness, a feeling of recognition. So that as you recognise something that a character or person in the book is feeling, it enables you to register that within yourself that maybe you wouldn't have before. I feel like it's a place to enable your own realisations to come through, almost like a gramophone: something that just amplifies what's inside. Because even when you're trying to be conscious and self-aware and observe, that still takes practice, that's not a natural way of going about things, whereas just reading a story feels natural, because from infancy you're used to stories. We use traditional tales, it's part of language acquisition, it's part and parcel of our life, even if it's stories that you hear about your aunts and uncles and mums and dads, when they were children, stories are just part of humanity.

Rereading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Veronica: Re-reading the book, it brings it back up to the surface. Reading it again, it's perfect, just as if it all fell into place. I didn't think I would read it again, because I was worried about what it would be like.

Thor: To try and protect that experience perhaps?

Veronica: Yeah, absolutely. So that exhalation when you finish a book and that buzz in everything being in your mind, yeah, there's a worry that it won't be the same or it'll be a bit different. There's a, oh what is it? There's a turn of phrase, I think it's something in Italian, and it literally translates as, cold cabbage or something like that. It indicates when you have a relationship with somebody or like an old flame or, and then you try to go back to it and reignite that, and it just doesn't work, it's just never the same, and it's like trying to re-heat cabbage, you can't do it. And I think that's the worry for me, if I go back to a book that I've connected with very strongly, there's the worry that it won't be the same or that it will taint the wonderful memories that I had from it before.

I just had a feeling, however, that it was a good time to read it again, and so I did. I spent my birthday on a beach in Mexico reading it. And just even reading the introduction, just falling in love again with the characters and with the story. And it just felt perfect to come back to it. I was a bit nervous at first, because I knew that I'd had such a strong reaction to it the first time around. I felt a little bit nervous that perhaps it wouldn't connect with me in the same way, or that I wouldn't enjoy it and then it would sort of taint my memory or my experience. I was worried that if I didn't enjoy it again, then it would just completely take away from the love I'd had for it the first time, so I was really excited and pleased to get those positive feelings again when I read it. And just straightaway, when you're reading, you can feel a smile come across your face, yeah, it's great. Haha. I'd kept reading and then stopping and just exhaling and going, yes this is why, this is why, and for different reasons. I certainly connect with it differently the second time round as well. Initially I was very much connecting with Connie's perspective, and then this time around seeing or understanding a lot more kind of his perspective and his disappointment with the violence and the war and the more kind of political aspect of things. I don't really think that I connected with that as much, I was very much just the emotional female, that part in it was my kind of go to, and now I can see more in all of the characters that come through.

Thor: The second time you read it, do you pay more attention to how it's written, to the style?

Veronica: Hmm, a little bit. I found the introduction to this very interesting because it talked about the three versions, whereas I've only read the one, so I was more aware of that. I am interested in the characterisation a little bit more, and seeing more of the other characters come to life for me. As I said before, I was very much Connie focused. Connie was my protagonist that I was channelling it all through and experiencing it through, whereas now, when I'm reading I can sympathise with the other characters more. I've got more empathy for Clifford, I don't particularly like him, but I can understand why he is the way that he is. And I certainly feel more of a connection with Mellors as well. I see that he's probably got so much more appealing for me now in this second reading than he was in the first time, I can see that they're a good match and that he empowers her. I see the same vulnerabilities about being scared about who they are, and about going forward. The introduction, by Mark Surer, talks about the importance of isolation, which I certainly hadn't picked up on when I was reading it the first time. Being older and having to do a lot of reflection, that's something as well that just seems to make sense now, which I would never have connected with the first time round. I think it's absolutely vital to have this quiet space that you need to reflect and to process feelings and emotions. Just to gain your perspective on the world around you, and certainly Mellors is doing this. He's living on his own in the little hut and it might be deemed initially as him kind of escaping because he doesn't like the society he's had to come back to after the war, but actually, it's him recognising the importance of just having some time to yourself. Maybe not forever, but there will be periods when you just need to have nobody else around you, and I think that's important, in the modern day as well, to have those gaps, to have those quiet points, to go away and just have your own mind for a little while. Which is what I was doing when I was travelling, to get some headspace. D H Lawrence I love, and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was the first book by him that I'd read. And again, being afraid to read the same one, I read others of his since, so I do like his style, I like his prose. But this is the first time I've gone back to the same text, and if I honour that I want to read the other versions, to see. But then there are so many great books out there, there's not enough time in the day, is there?

Thor: Sadly, no. So taking a step back, what's it been like to talk about this here and now?

Veronica: I've really enjoyed it. It's very helpful, it's helped me to gain more of an understanding. It certainly brings the book to life for me, it enthuses me to read more and to

just absorb it all. And it just helps me understand. Vocalising something helps you process and helps you think things through, and connect with stuff that you probably wouldn't if you were just thinking about things internally. So I've loved it, yeah, thank you.

After the interview is over, I go for a long walk, mulling over in my mind the immediate impressions Veronica's story has made on me. I am left with many questions, yet I feel certain about one thing: any initial scepticism as to whether the novel had liberated her or just seduced her into seeing herself as trapped, has been dispelled. And I imagine that D H Lawrence, had he been able to listen in, would not only have shared my conviction that Veronica was truly empowered by what Lady Chatterley's Lover had awoken in her, but would also have felt understood by her.

Narrative four: *Nina's Life-long Friend Flicka*

An acquaintance put me in contact with Nina. My Friend Flicka *had meant so much to her, and she was willing to meet me and tell me about it. I had never heard of the book beforehand, and was surprised I enjoyed it so much. I imagined that she must have read it as a young girl, and that the memory had stayed with her ever since. Our meeting took place in my office one afternoon in February. I made us tea, and we sat down in comfy chairs. We talked for a long time.*

Thor: Could you please tell me all about your relationship with *My Friend Flicka.*

Nina: It's a bit difficult. I don't quite know how old I was when I first read it, but I was a young child. Let me have a look at the book – it says it was printed in 1973. It may be that one of my brothers had it first. So I don't know when it came into my hands, but it's like it's always been there. My mother loved reading out loud, she had taken lessons, but I preferred reading on my own. I am born in 1967, so I must have been seven or eight. Perhaps my mother read it to me the first time. But I clearly remember reading it when I was nine, ten, eleven, twelve. I can't recall what it was like arriving at a particular chapter, for instance – the feeling of "oh, what's going to happen now?" I have a general memory of the world of the book, a world of horses, which was my dream world. Where I grew up, only the rich people had horses, so that was beyond even thinking about as something that would come true. My cousin and I would play at having a ranch full of horses. It's not that I really wanted to live on a ranch in Wyoming, it was just a different world to dream about. But now that I live in the countryside, I can remember all the little descriptions of scenery and animals which at the time would merely serve to colour my reading experience; they now happen before me all the time, making me think sometimes that "Oh, I live in Flickaland."

But to get to the essence of what this is about, I would say it's a classic coming-of-age story, about arriving at something, about overcoming something, on both the inner and outer level. And I think it was that process, and the fact that for Ken the inner world was so important, he was a dreamer. In spite of this, he managed to achieve something that I didn't: He fought for his dreams on the outer level. He could sit at the breakfast table and say out loud to his father: "I want that horse." He had the courage to express his deepest wish. Even

though sometimes he dared not look his father in the eye, and they would fall out. As if it was a continuous falling in and out of grace, so to speak. For me it was the greatest heroic tale I could possibly read. Not that I was fully conscious of this at the time. I wouldn't have told myself this at the age of 11. But it was the combination of admiring him for the richness of his inner life which was entirely his own, and that, incredibly for me, he could share it with his mother. He'd tell her about his feelings. His mother understands him very well, almost guessing his thoughts, and at the same time she pulls him towards reality, represented by his father. He gets so happy when he can fulfil some of his father's expectations. It's not looked upon as a fault that he is a dreamer, because that is who he is at the deepest level. At the same time, he manages to lift himself up into the reality of the outer world. That double movement, for me, was essential. And I think that on a general level that is what literature can do, it brings out what we carry on the inside, the stuff we think we are all alone with. The realisation that "ah, this exists out there for someone else, too: Someone has written it down." And at the same time it is just fiction.

The great struggle

There's much more to it than that, of course. That's why I have returned to it over and over again, I reckon. Because I have carried this inner struggle. I have always had a rich inner life, but I have believed that I had to shut it off from the world. That it would be lost to me if I tried to reveal it to someone. When I face the world I have to put all that to the side and be someone else. This has been a crucial life-issue for me during the last 10 or 15 years. I have based myself on the premise that in order to be in the world I must play according to the rules. Which means that all the things you dream about, all the things you can imagine, they are not valid. So the book gave me immense support for the way I saw the world. That it was a valid way of being. And at the same time it made me realise that it is possible to come out with the things one has inside. It's not as if Ken climbs up on a rock and declares to all the world the contents of his inner images, but he does stand up for himself and his true wants. After his pneumonia, which almost becomes a kind of purification, he manages to bridge the gap to reality. Let's see what it says on page 230 – it's strange isn't it, because I still return to this book – where it says about his illness. He's been out watching the stag – you probably won't remember all these details – but he's been out looking for a stag. That is when he decides to… to come back to the world:

But sometimes, kneeling beside the child's bed, the sight of him made hot tears sting her eyes. It was not only the sickness of his face, the fever, the difficult breathing and dry, bluish lips, it was the utter weariness of him. It had been too much for him, this summer, this desperate striving to alter the pattern of thought upon which his life formed itself.

What a great struggle that is! And it makes me think, "yes, he… yes, he…" I read myself into it, you know (*in tears*). How he has all the time been thinking that – or I don't know, because he also has fought his corner – at least *I* have been thinking that my inner life is something I must keep to myself. I cannot come out with it and just be myself. It's good that it says this specifically. It is such a massive struggle to change the patterns of thought that your life has followed. But this is something that I noticed only recently. It didn't register in the same way when I was twelve, I don't think. It's a new discovery.

Thor: So that is something you discovered recently?

Nina: Yes, I see that now. It's something about the whole stance, the attitude that pervades the book. That understanding of life. The enormous process of turning things around. This awareness has been there the whole time, regardless of whether I have formulated it in words. It is what made me seek that book. Let me take a breather… (*Pause).* Did you like the book?

Thor: Yes, much more than I had thought. I really loved it.

Sacrificing one's self

Nina: This is a special book for me. I may as well tell you the history of the book itself. It's a bit touchy, this, but it's ok. When I was 16, I joined a group of Christians. They were a bit too Christian. Something about this youth milieu attracted me, there was a togetherness that appealed to me - difficult to find elsewhere. But it just got more and more confined and strict. It started off as a nice youth club, and we lived in a commune. But gradually it evolved, to the point where one was not allowed to have anything but God. You were to smash up your rock'n'roll records. These boys who were 20, they told me how this music corrupted me. We were not to trust our own will, and the life of the body was sinful. You didn't have to burn your books, because books were not as bad as music; music was of the devil. "There is no end to all the books being written," it says in The Ecclesiast. I had been dreaming about writing books ever since childhood. And I love music. So it meant I had to do rather severe things against myself. In fact, I burnt this book in the stove in my own house when I was 18 (*in*

tears). I sat down and pondered: What is my dearest treasure? Because we were to sacrifice our most valuable possession. In the Old Testament it says "Go sacrifice the best, and the next best of your livestock." This conscience, which took possession of me, also conquered my home turf. Until then I had been good at leading a double life where I would be able to feel free in my own home, at least. But now even that was taken over. No one witnessed me do it, although I felt sure that somehow someone would see it. It was my own choice. But it must have been done in an attempt to become good enough. Because I went to this book to draw strength, rather than go to the Bible, I simply had to burn it. So I threw it onto the fire, hoping this would make me a better person. It didn't work, needless to say. So this copy I've got here - it's the same edition - was given to me by my cousin many years later. Prior to that I did procure another copy, but of a different edition. She has written this greeting on the title page: "Of love and theft" (She's a Dylan fan): "Dear Nina. I stole this book from my sister many years ago. It has endured a lengthy existence in a cellar, and survived a flooding. I have dusted down every page and tried to piece it together as best I could. It now deserves a better destiny, and I want nobody but you to have it. Happy Birthday." What a wonderful gift that was (*in tears*). Her gesture of generosity and empathy was important. She knew my story. A different edition is not the same thing at all, it *had* to be this particular one.

Thor: So it matches the original edition you had as a child?

Nina: Yes, the same as the one I burnt. So it has become almost a symbol. That I was willing to sacrifice the most precious part of me. And that I have been able, bit by bit, to reclaim it, to piece things together. That was the gift I received. It's quite a profound experience.

Thor: To regain your book?

Nina: Yes. It is a long process to take back ownership of oneself.

Thor: So you went from sacrificing the most precious to reclaiming yourself.

Nina: I loved music, listening to it and playing music with my brother. My home was full of books and music. But I destroyed my records. So when I moved out, I didn't bring any books or records. The very things that meant the most to me. That really *were* me. They were my wells, my sources. It was explicitly said that we should cut ourselves off from our sources. I don't think I understood how much comfort I derived from those sources, how it had kept me alive in a way. Being a creative soul, they were my conversation partners, and of immense importance. That is also why it is fantastic to speak about this here today, because I have

missed it. I mean, I have had plenty of books and music since, but to be inside that sphere. When that is cut off, then all that remains is the interpersonal game-playing, which depletes me. In the Old Testament it says: "If your brother, or your friend, or your wife say that we shall worship other gods, then do not spare him but smite him down." I underlined that with an orange marker. If my brother invited me to a concert, it created an enormous inner dilemma for me. "If I do that, then I am worshipping false idols." It must have created a lot of damage. I wanted to play in a band, like my brothers did. I read about double tracking on the Beatles for Sale album, and I was fascinated. I wanted to learn about these things.

When my brother turned 50 I went up on stage and performed 'This is my life' to great applause. And after that I had the feeling of "Yes! Now it is mine." It's all been like a long-distance love affair with my own life, almost. The theme of my life. So I think this book has been quite like a bridge. The fantastic thing about the book is that regardless of anyone else acknowledging its significance, it is out there. Someone has given a voice to this. Someone writes about it, so it is not just me. That is wonderful. Instead of just being locked inside one's own private dilemma, it can be shared. I have in some ways been struggling with my own place in the world all the time while reading it, and simultaneously finding it delightful to read it. The voice who relates the sorrow, whether it's in music or literature, it becomes both sadness and solace simultaneously. The language is the solace. There doesn't have to be a happy ending to the book, because it's the language, the telling, which gives consolation. There are other, more recent, books I could have chosen, but I reckon my relationship with books was born with this one. (*Pause).* Please feel free to ask me questions, I like that. I will go down my paths anyway.

Thor: Yes, I will. I want to give you the room to both talk and reflect. My understanding of what you have said is that Ken represents what you felt was your situation, and he points to a way forward, he represents the courage you need.

Nina: Actually, yes. I didn't articulate that, because I wouldn't have dared to, but yes. He is a real hero, that such a sensitive person can also be an active agent in the world. Literature is more than just fiction, it is something very intimate. The book made me respond: "Is that really possible?" Can one really lift up something so… all that you think you're alone with? And the wonderful thing about literature and music and art is that it creates such a delight as well. It is not like reading a self-help book. You become someone else, somehow. It is like dancing, in a way, a particular way of moving. You are permitted to draw threads to yourself, but at the same time you are allowed to let yourself go, to dissolve into it, to dance with what

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comes. You don't think throughout that "Oh, that is just like me." You actually get away from that, but those threads just *are* there. You simply know that. There is a great freedom in it, I find. You receive recognition of yourself. All my life I have been after a sort of "It is ok that you exist. That you are you. It is ok that you draw from the wellsprings you do." If only one could realise that once and for all. Then one would have been much more serene. But it is so good to experience it. To go into the library, find a book and open it, and just go: everything's just fine." A strong experience.

Ken's transformation

Thor: Surely we can say that Ken goes through a transformational process. How does he manage this, after being very ill?

Nina: Yes, it's a transformation. I haven't thought so much about his period of illness. It's not really then that it happens, although it forms a backdrop. So many things have happened to him this summer, and he can't just jump from one thing to the next. He has to let all this sink in. It is too much for him, and it also involves him thinking that his foal will die. And his father is God, the ruler of his universe. There is nothing to be done about that. One can dream, but if the father decides that the horse must die, then die it must. This is of course also in relation to myself, but I think that when so much have happened to him, it also demands a lot from him, to be able to change with it. It's some struggle. So that when he, of course he gets very ill from being submerged in the water, but also… The closest he can get is to sneak out the night before to the horse. He cannot say "No, dad. Please let's not shoot the horse." That is not a possibility, but what he can say is "Can we wait until tomorrow?" Yes, ok. He does have the freedom to do that. Because he has more influence over Gus than over his dad. And then he goes to bed, only to sneak out later. This is the limited room to act that he has got. And as fate wills it, it so happens that not only does he sit with her, but he actually saves her life. The dramaturgy here is excellent. He has shown great courage, in relation to his perception of his role in life. He has dared a lot when he managed to postpone the shooting and also sneak out at night when the others are sleeping. He cannot do more than that. And when he has done what he may, Fortune lends him a helping hand. The enormous strain on him – having lost her and got her back, over and over again. The father opposing it. They take her in, but she turns ill. A classic plot, in a way. And when that man comes to buy those prairie horses, he says "I can fit another horse onto the car." And then his father asks him:

"Do you want me to sell Flicka too?" Then Ken says "no, I want to keep her." Then his father responds: "If you say you really want to keep her, we will do." He is fair like that. Which is a good thing. Because it's so hard for Ken to look his father in the eye and declare his wishes. A big achievement for him. So I reckon that with all that has passed, and everything he's been through, he must, if he is to move on, he has to have a period of inward turning. The illness actually helps him in this respect. He was supposed to have gone back to school in three days, which would have been absolutely impossible. Then he would have just collapsed and broken down. He would have failed, he would just have sat there in his dreamworld, and been all confused. The illness is a real help. And it also does something to his parents, to his father. So I think the transformation happens before that, but it takes root during the period of illness. It makes him able to carry his new identity. That's what it does. He is able to hold and encompass that courage. It is magnificent when his dad takes him outside and…. I mean, I have had three years where I was incapacitated, just lying on the floor, barely venturing outside. And suffered from terrible anxiety every time someone tried to contact me. So I know something of what it is like. How he is unable to take the world in. The world is too much with him, it's overwhelming. I can recognize that. He has protected himself from the hardness of the world outside, and against his father. He has used his dreams to protect himself against reality. Those inner images can be a fantastic resource when they get channeled, for instance into art. But they can also be an escape. A fantastic way of dealing with the world. Ken has managed to negotiate reality by just staying there in his dreams. In a way, he has also been courageous before, even though it may not have been a conscious decision. Early on in the story he is just stood watching the foals run away. And then his dad reproaches him: "Why didn't you turn them?" He didn't because he was lost in dreams. He is not so terrified of his father as to be totally submissive, he allows himself the liberty of being distracted. He has the strength not to do what he is told. There is a power in that to, albeit negative. Because it was the only way of escape from the strict regime, the constricted world. He didn't plan to do it, it just happened, but he let it happen. I think his daydreams are also a form of creative activity. Imagining things is a form of recognition of your own creativity. By entering those dreams he is opposing his father's wishes. He knows that. It's not as if he is thinking "I am strong because I have my dreams and I don't do what dad wants me to." But still there is a will there. The will not to be formed by others. I can recognise some of myself in that. It is a potentiality, because it is not given any kind of form. What he gains by dreaming is lost in his father's estimation of him. But it is from this part of himself that he finally takes the courage to stand up to his father and say: "Yes, dad. I want her." He must have had another room inside than

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the one that has been socialised into the family. And I think that is where the transformation is. The teacher says something about the daydreaming, let me find it. On page 231 there is a dialogue between Rob and Nell about what Mr Gibson had said about Ken having a brilliant mind.

"Did you know it, Nell – that Ken is brilliant?"

"I suspected it."

"What on earth made you think that? He has always failed at everything – till this summer."

"Well – " Nell spoke slowly, thoughtfully, "a dreamer – you know – it's a mind that looks over the edge of things – the way Ken can do what he calls 'getting into other worlds'; gets into a picture; gets into a drop of water; gets into a star – anything –"

Rob sat looking out of the window.

He doesn't have any response to that. But it is marvelous that she has seen it.

Thor: What enables her to do that?

Nina: I reckon it's because she's a bit like that herself.

Thor: Yes, the book relates how she can be lost in looking at things, but she has the ability to gather herself when needed.

Nina: That is right. She has the healthy balance. She is such a fantastic character, you know. Yes. And he has told her much more about these things than he has to his father. Nell's been important to me, really. She has a great role, because to a large extent she acknowledges Ken's perception of reality. At the same time, and this is crucial too, she *lets* him be, she leaves him in peace. She has tremendous respect for him. She's not always hot on his heels to check on him, in that "How are you now?" or "Are you lost in that picture now" kind of interfering way. So I think she has a very fine way of involving herself in his life, recognizing his individuality. And she is not, she has her own issues: in the following books she becomes more fragile: It's quite strange in a way, there are marital problems and she develops a form of anxiety. Interesting that that is part of it too. That was not what I was most concerned with then. But it does make me think about who this author is, and what her life is like. So Nell develops. No, I think she is very good to and for him, because she lets him be a dreamer. And I think he knows that she knows.

Thor: So he can trust her with his secrets?

Nina: Yes, and sometimes she just asks him. There is a passage somewhere, where he is not even surprised to learn that she knows. She's always guessed his thoughts. But she never invades him, thankfully.

Thor: An interpretation on my part: The way she relates to him, is that the way the book relates to the reader?

Nina: Yes, it's… That is a good question. Yes I think it is. I think you are right. Because the thing is that the holding places we find in literature and music, it is up to us to regulate the distance. We can come and go, and that's vital. It is not the case that if all people were good to each other we would not need these books. We need the human aspect in them, but also that they are not people. There is a freedom in that.

Thor: So reading is not a substitute for interpersonal relationships?

Nina: Sometimes perhaps it can be. But it has its own unique value. If I only had people to relate to, I would end up very confused and depleted, and if I only had books I would of course get lonely. But you put it well. Nell is in that way. Obviously she has a closeness that a book cannot have, but still. You are allowed to grow into it, she doesn't try and keep him overly attached to her, holding him back, and neither does she try to tear him out of his dream world, the way his father does. The father wants to force him to grow up. She is there for him. And if she had been too tied to him, she may have become scared to see him change.

Thor: Early on in the book it says that both boys are astonished that Nell can tell their father what she wants. Even though he gets angry, she does not give in. Do you think Ken draws courage from that?

Nina: Hmm, I do reckon it becomes a kind of a bridge for him. Mother can speak to dad. And mother speaks to me, ergo… A little bridge over to the father. Especially when Ken says he wants that horse. Rob just says: "I hoped you would make a sensible choice." Whereas Nell just pretends not to know that horse, treating it like any other choice of horse. That is a beautiful moment. A conscious counterweight to Rob.

Thor: What do you think about the portrayal of the father?

Nina: One understands very well why Rob has this power. He is impressive in a way, with a magnificent personality. And he is described respectfully too, I think. In a way which gives us an insight into the society in which they live. He has been to West Point, so they must address him as "sir". Actually, I believe in him as a character. Nell is fantastic, almost better than any

mother can be, but Rob needs her. I think one needs both parents. I think you need one parent who fully validates you, and one you must stretch towards. He knows in many ways that he has his mother's recognition, but there is also a lot of anxiety in wanting to be good enough for dad. But if father is a just man, and his actions make sense, then it is a real test of manhood, or test of personhood, to stand upright in front of dad. Because when you go out into this world, you don't meet mothers everywhere, only fathers. It is great if someone does understand you, but it may well be that no one does. There will be people who don't see your soul and understands you, who will demand something from you. I do not perceive Rob to be inhuman or unfair. He is not unrealistic in the demands he places on his son.

Thor: And he is not implacable, either?

Nina: No. He also undergoes a certain development, in that he does not go out and shoot the horse when he realizes that Gus has failed to do so. I would say that his parental project, so to speak, does make sense. The importance of being brave, and I think Rob must be very proud of his son, when he makes a choice. "You know what I think about selling her, but what do you think?" And then Ken says: "I want her." It's not the choice he would have made, but he has let Ken make that choice. He is proud of his son for showing courage, I think. If you have a mother like Nell, then perhaps you can handle having a father like Rob. She becomes a sort of interpreter between the two, she says: "But you must realise that Ken will thrive on the responsibility." She understands these relationships much better, and she can conceive solutions that please both father and son. She's not asking Rob to simply give in to Ken's whims. She is asking him to meet Ken's real developmental needs. Ken needs something to really care for. Not just to be commandeered around the farm, and to be punished for not managing things right. He is a dreamer and will never be as good as his brother when it comes to dealing with affairs and practicalities. But if you give him that chance to grow, and this is something that I am thinking here and now as we speak, it is a fabulous message she gives her husband when speaking on Ken's behalf, it is not just a way of protecting Ken's fragility but of enabling him to grow into a human being. That he has the opportunity to use his dreams, to actualise some of them, that he has to find a way to dream realistically. In dreams everything is perfect. The dream is pure. But you dream about a reality. You must struggle to tolerate the real. All the good things in life demand struggle. It's a transformation. You must be able to tolerate that reality is imperfect.

Thor: So it is not about renouncing the dream, but of finding a way to bring it into the world by acknowledging that you must let go of perfection?

Nina: Yes. My dream has been to be on stage, as a musician. And that is great, I love being on stage. But it is the whole process of getting there. There are loads of people you have to deal with. Phone calls and practicalities. All this took me a long time to overcome. There is something anaesthetic about dreaming, or it is a privileged situation. There are so many things you don't have to deal with then. Then you create the whole story yourself. Nell has a wonderful attitude, whether it is by instinct or deliberation. She does not bow to Rob's demands. She wants Ken to become responsible, but she also wants him to be happy. Rob seems to think that happiness comes as a result of mastery. He is a bit more instrumental in outlook. That's what I reckon, and I haven't really articulated that before. That is the great thing about this conversation. I think he needs at least one period of illness to manage this transformation. At first he was just dreaming about having the horse and stroking it. But when he gets full responsibility for her, and she turns ill because of what's happened, then that's a different kettle of fish. The first thing he says to her is: "We didn't mean to kill you." He is looking after her, that's why he is not moving. And it is the boy who draws the conclusion, not the father. The boy says that he is responsible for her. He's been allowed to articulate that himself. Ken wakes up, and then I think he realises. His dad has talked to him about strength of spirit and acting like a man, trying to communicate this in a good way. So then I reckon Ken realizes that that is what it means to own something. Acknowledging the sense of responsibility. He doesn't exactly think that, but probably experiences it nevertheless. In his new life, so to speak, having chosen the object for which he is responsible, rather than just having responsibility thrust upon him, he is in an entirely new position. Rob takes many things for granted, he doesn't realise how privileged his background is. Nell has something to teach everyone in the helping professions. If you are allowed to use your own inner motivation, then you can achieve so much more.

Thor: Another thing is that Nell sees that Ken also is similar to Rob.

Nina: Yes, he is just as stubborn and unruly. The way it comes out is different. Nell almost sees too many things. She is such a special person. And perhaps that is the very strength of the book: When you come back to read bits of it, over and over, this universe is always there, even if your own family and all else is far away and all your points of contact dissolve. Ken and Rob and Nell are always sitting there at the kitchen table, and the horses are grassing till all eternity. In all turbulent periods for me this has been like a place to come home to when I have been run down. "Ah, yes, here I am." Can you imagine? I know what they are going to say, still it is delicious to read it again.

Thor: So you don't have to reread the whole book?

Nina: I have read it all several times. So I can just open it at random.

Where does the need to hide come from?

Thor: I don't know if you'll be able to answer this question. I understand that you have felt a need to protect and hide your inner world, whereas Ken can share it and reveal his deepest wishes. Where do you think this need to protect yourself comes from?

Nina: Oh, that is a huge question. I think it has something to do with what Hanne Ørstavik says: "There must be someone there who can mirror the child's perspective." It's to do with the way I grew up. Because when I joined the group of Christians, it was not the first time I experienced something like that. Not everyone would have joined this group. I entered a place where people said: "This is the way things must be here." It never occurred to me to express my own views of God. I thought, if I am to belong here, then I must be like them and believe what they believe. Whereas Ken manages to preserve himself, saying to himself that "this is what dad wants, but I must also be myself." I haven't been able to do that. It was ill fortune that I joined that group, but it was also ill fortune that I grew up to believe I must be like that. My dad was very much a realist, earthy and sensible. He was not an authoritarian. My maternal granddad was very authoritarian. Good job my mum married someone who never was angry and aggressive. Quite the opposite, if there was something he couldn't deal with, he would just go quiet. He just would not respond, assuming that to be a neutral position to take. It was mum I trusted to when it came to personal things, although she had her problems. And I could trust my dad when it came to all material things. If he said he would be home at 4:30, then he would be. Everything was in order and very reliable. Later on I understood that not everyone's home was like that. He was a university professor, worked in the Museum of History. He recognized me for my cleverness. I used to do a lot of work for him. I couldn't talk to him about feelings. I would talk to mum about literature. But he had a better grasp of reality. So he sort of demanded that I had that too. I got the impression that I must always be ready to deliver. And if there is something he doesn't like, then I must sense that and not speak about that. That is how I experienced him, I cannot say that that is what he was really like. So what I said about Rob was quite empathic of me, because I found it really hard to accept that in my own dad. My mum could get quite hysterical and had a lot of anxiety, which freaked my dad out. If she began to cry, my dad wouldn't ask her how she was, it was more

like "it's not that bad, get over it." I never saw him console her. So I think I must have realised that my mum was frail, and decided not to upset him. I loved my mum, but I saw that it was difficult, that he was uncomfortable, so my job was not to make him uncomfortable. Then he could be a better dad for me. That was heavy work, I tell you. So I must have been very glad that Ken in a way surpassed that. Although my dad was not very similar to Rob. When they shouted for Ken to come downstairs, he would be lost on the landing, looking at that picture. Even if he got told off for it, that was a real reaction. Whereas with me, if they called out "dinnertime!" I would immediately get up. Even though I might be reading this book. But we always had a very friendly and inviting dinner table, especially when my brothers were home. My parents were not strict. But when something happened to them, then I had to accommodate that. Not the other way round. Of course if I had really cried out for help, they would have come. They were not negligent. But emotionally they did not really see me. I must have made a rule for myself: "If you release what is inside you, then the world will collapse!" I think I must have felt too strong, too much for them.

My dad strongly wanted me to become a correspondent travelling the world. But I couldn't. I dared not tell the stories from my own standpoint and perspective. I had been to Bosnia, experienced a terrible amount of things. My mum said I ought to publish articles about it. But I was not capable of doing that. I could not write for the public – imagine if anyone thought it was erroneous? It just made me so frustrated and furious. I had all these experiences, yet dared not tell them to the world. It has been a massive struggle. My parents thought it was terrible that I joined that group. I was baptized as a 16 year old, but did not tell my parents as they would have disapproved. I prayed to God: "dear God, don't let me will what I will." We were not meant to go to university, that was not God's will. So I found a job as an au pair, the only way to fulfill my dream of moving out and have my own home. When I eventually did start studying at university, it was after one of the others paved the way. He said: "Well, we can sit here and wait for God, but in the meantime I think I'll go and get a degree." Half a year later I did too. I went on to study Spanish at Uni. And then I wanted to travel and do social work in Spain. I chose to work at a Christian orphanage. My group actually collected money on my behalf. I stayed for a year. Then started to study Russian after I came back. The group began to dissolve as central members left. Gradually I began to realise that I was free to decide for myself what to do. It was terribly frightening. Apropos Ken's incubatory period, it was no easy matter saying "Now I can do what I want." I had some incredibly rootless years. I bought a small apartment. How do you go about living your

own life? I didn't know. And I still lived this double life. If I brought someone home, then the minute they left the door I no longer knew them. I didn't share anything of myself. Then at 32 I enrolled in a one-year creative writing course in a different town, a great experience. I loved talking about literature and texts. But it was only towards the very end of the year that I was able to write anything. It was a boarding school, though, which was very problematic for me. I couldn't keep on living in parallel worlds. I got a boyfriend there, but in the dining hall I would pretend not to know him. Through this course I was confronted with myself, and met things in myself that I had not touched before. Quite a journey. So when I got back after that year, I entered a real crisis. I could barely move for three years. It was only at the age of 38 that I discovered I was a musician. Which is a fair while ago now, almost ten years. I started playing music. Before that I was almost immobilized, spending my time on a carpet on the floor. If I attempted to get up, all the thoughts would flood over me. As long as I remained lying there, I had mercy. If I stood up, the relentless churning started. The thoughts were so painful.

Thor: It felt painful.

Nina: Yes, very painful. Because everything else would well up. I had to stay down to just keep myself together. But then I somehow found a way. I asked myself: "What *is* all this stuff inside me? If I have kept so much stuff pent up, what is it made of?" What then transpired were complaints and grief. And on the other side of that, creativity. After a lengthy period of recreation, walks in the woods, looking out onto the sea, talking to the flowers, I started making music. Initially, I couldn't talk to anybody about this. For fear of destroying it if I shared this with anyone. Imagine that. My inner life became much more real to me. Before I joined the Christian collective, my inner life was a natural part of me. But then this conscience burrowed its way into my innermost privacy, to the extent where it controlled even what I dared to articulate to myself, inside my head. That's why I burned the book, and smashed up my records. Do you understand?

Thor: Yes, I do…

Nina: It's one thing when an authority says you're not allowed to listen to music, and you then do it surreptitiously. It's another when you yourself is the one instigating the ban. My inner life was bombarded by the Christian collective. Sometimes they would say wonderful things, other times horrible stuff, and I got all confused. However, what happened when I took ill, and hit the ground, was that I reconquered that inner space. This was crucial to me. I

carried on these conversations with myself to sort my thoughts out. So if the phone rang I would suffer acute headaches, because it made me think I had to let go of the interior processing. And I refused to do that. So after a while people would stop contacting me. And even now I will sometimes be startled when the phone rings. Anyway, I managed to conquer an inner space for myself. It was fragile at first. And then I registered my account on MySpace, where I could use a pseudonym. I didn't want to use my own name, because I associated it so strongly with the girl who had helped her dad with his manuscripts. On MySpace I could just be myself, be a musician. It was fantastic. It was a community of musicians at that time. I would wake up one morning, log on and be greeted with a message like: "Your stuff is fabulous! Your song really inspired me! Greetings from Australia!" Wow. My music had meant something to a Latin-American living in Australia. That was huge. Gradually I gained the courage to share this with other people. I was *terrified* that this would be crushed, when I came forward with it.

Thor: It just struck me now: MySpace truly meant "my space" to you…

Nina: That's right. (*Pause*). I seldom read on trains, for instance, or in public places. It is too existential a thing for that, because something happens when I read. It's a way of working through my own inner stuff. I want to be by myself. I need to be able to let myself go, to weep or whatever. I'll read for a while, and then something will happen inside me. And if I am surrounded by people, then that movement will not have enough space. So I have a very intimate relationship to books. Sometimes I wish I could just read and let it just pass. Just to pass time and relax, not think so much. But I seek out those books that give that kind of existential experience.

The innermost question

I think I did happen to read this book a bit too much, at times. It gave me solace, but then I would cling onto it rather than summon the courage to act. I would stop myself from taking action almost before I knew what my intention was. I would just hold tight. But then I had an inner voice that told me: "Now you are stopping up on purpose." It's about knowing the dividing line between needing to recuperate and just wanting to escape. I wouldn't be happy if the only thing I'd done all these years was read this book. However, it is a valuable thing to have something to hold onto. "At least I've got you." Then the act of reading is just about

wanting to stay where you are. Other times I discover new things in it. For instance, when I needed to cry I would turn to page 144.

Thor: When you needed to cry you opened the book?

Nina: On page 144. It's a bit of a strange story. I still cry a lot, but I think there is something about me that gives me a physiological need to shed tears. I need it to reduce tension. Crying is very restorative. I suppose that my whole life I have been interpreting things psychologically, looking for psychological causes for my feeling states. But I have found out that I have a skeletal problem which means it is difficult for me to stand straight, giving me physical difficulties when it comes to breathing. Maybe this made me feel insecure and unsafe. I still need to cry, even when I don't feel sad or there is a reason to be sorrowful. As a child there were many things I felt sad about without knowing it. I didn't know the reason why, just that I wanted solace and release, so I turned to page 144. Should I read it to you?

Thor: Yes please, that would be lovely.

Nina: Let's see. We'd best start on page 143, then. She is baking, and Ken enters the kitchen. At the bottom of the page, where it says: "If Flicka's really loco" – can you find it?

(*Reads*).

His appearance shocked Nell. The look in his eyes was direct, almost staring – nothing like Ken. He was looking at her now to drag facts from her.

That's it! I hadn't thought about that before, but *there* is that firmness. Now he is really intent on finding out.

Thor: You discovered this just now?

Nina: I discovered it now.

Thor: "The look in his eyes was direct…"

Nina: "Almost staring – nothing like Ken."

Thor: "Nothing like Ken". So here we see things from Nell's perspective? She's thinking that…

Nina: Yes. He *wants* to know. It is incredible. "He was looking at her now to drag facts from her." There you are.

(Proceeds to read on from there).

"Well, Kennie?"

"If she's loco?"

"It's a bad lookout for her, then, isn't it?"

There was a long silence. He struggled. "If she *really* is, Mother – "

"If she really is, Ken, then not all the king's horses and all the king's men – ". Nell didn't finish, but flung the dough out on the table, floured the rolling pin and began to roll it out.

Ken watched her, hooked on that terrible IF.

"Mother, is there anything you want – *terribly*?"

Nell paused, looking out of the window, then began rolling the pin lightly over the dough again.

"Kennie, there's something I've wanted – *terribly* – for a long time."

"How long?"

"Since a few years after you were born."

"But Mother! I didn't know you *wanted* anything!"

"Most everyone wants something, dear –"

"But not you, Mother. You're grown up, and married and you've got Dad and us – why, you're finished –"

Nell laughed. "And I shouldn't be wanting still then, if I'm finished, should I? But people do, Kennie."

"Everyone? Always, Mother? Don't you ever get really finished?"

Nell again put down the rolling pin, and stood with a far-away look in her blue eyes. "I wonder. Sometimes for a minute or two."

That brief experience of peace and fulfillment that came, she thought, now and then unexpectedly and unaccountably. Why should one, at a certain moment, be held in the stress and ceaseless striving and wanting? And the next be almost swooning in desireless bliss – open, drinking, basking –

"Mother –"

"Well?"

"*Do* you? *Will* I?"

"Will you what?"

"Get through wanting?"

"What do you want now, Kennie?"

There was a feeling in his chest that his breath was too much for it and crowded it.

"Mother, I do so *want* Flicka to be all right and not loco."

Nell looked at him, rolling the dough thinner and thinner.

In his eyes she saw a question. He was asking if it wouldn't come true, if he wanted it hard enough; and his face was strained in anguish.

Right now, she thought, narrowing her eyes against the tears that came so quickly, stinging them, *right now* – to let him know, once for all, that wanting and wishing can't buck a fact.

"Perhaps she isn't loco dear, we don't know yet for sure. But if she is, Ken," her words came slowly, "*wanting* won't change it."

Ken turned away and walked out of the kitchen with his chin tucked down into his neck.

"Come back when the cookies are baked, dear," she called after him. "There'll be some hot, crisp, brown, crumbly ones –"

She went on rolling out the dough, cutting the cookies, putting them on tin sheets in the hot oven. But she had really gone away with Ken, up the Hill, into the woods, face down on the pine needles, hands clawing at the ground, salt tears burning –

"No, Kennie – not all your love and longing – not all the wishing and wanting –"

But she didn't know that Ken was seeing the deep hollow shaft of the mine on the hillside, with a horse going down into it – not Rocket.

He couldn't stand it. There must be a way out… there always had been…

Ken turned over on his back and looked up at the sky. It was close, it was a deep blue, but not opaque; it looked as if you could go into it, farther and farther… Thinking this way, just drifting, he began to feel better. There were well-trodden paths in his mind that led out and away from the real, and on and into limitless worlds of fancy. He stopped thinking about Flicka. Stopped thinking about anything real. In that other world of fancy, there were colts and fillies too. He wanted the make believe colt that couldn't hurt itself, that could fly over six-foot fences, that needn't be broken and trained, *that couldn't be loco*, that would carry him on its back as easily as a bird carries one of its own feathers… He began to feel comfortable and free… this was the way… this was the way…

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The boy lay motionless, his eyes wide, his gaze straight upwards into the blue. The lines of strain on his face relaxed. His mouth was slightly open, his expression faintly smiling.

It is fantastic. It is wonderful to read it aloud. What really moved me when I read this - it is a sad subject, of course, but what I think was my dream in all this, was that one could talk like that with a parent (i*n tears*). That there would be someone who would come – that one could really ask about it. Because I didn't know what my questions were, so it was like a secret dream for me. I was of course immersed in the story itself. But in addition there was a secret dream: Imagine if one could formulate one's innermost, deepest question, and then be met with a response like that. Also, I was allowed a glimpse inside Nell. I think that is a vote of trust in young readers, that we are permitted access to her perspective. Another thing that strikes me about it – lest I kill it with talking too much – there are so many significances to this scene – I thought that "a situation is not so difficult if one can share with someone that it is difficult" (*in tears*). "If you can tell somebody that things are difficult, then they are no longer so threatening." When you have spent so much time dreaming, there is much you have not lived, in a sense. I believe that… there is an incredible happiness in that meeting, between the two. It is lovely to witness that she accompanies him in her thoughts: "But she had really gone away with Ken, up the Hill, into the woods." That's where he's gone. "But she didn't know that Ken was seeing the deep" – I mean, it's just what I said earlier. She accompanies him, in her thoughts, as far as is possible - but not all the way. Because you can't do that with another person. And then he switches on his world of fancy, it's fantastic how he does that. And then, "the lines of strain on his face relaxed." That is in fact what I experience. I have so much tension pent up in my body. Always have had. And when I open a book, when I need to read, that is what I experience: the release of tension. I am tempted to call it the Nell-gaze, the look of acknowledgment, that the *great* reality inside me that I love, it does exist. It is great. So I have been given this. It is weird to have something like this.

Thor: Thank you for reading it to me.

Nina: I thought it was important to include this bit, but I didn't want to do it straight off. It was good to read it towards the end of the interview.

Has the book saved your life?

Thor: Would you go so far as to say that this book has saved your life?

Nina: Hmm. That has to be a hypothetical question. At least I can say that, during these last few years and when I was younger, it has made unbearable times bearable. I can go at least that far, to say that it made things bearable. I think I am too much of a coward ever to have taken my own life. I have dreamed of dying, but never been tempted to go beyond the brink. But it has carried me through unbearable times as an adult. As a child, it was something to hold on to. It has been someone to turn to in all kinds of situations. Or, in those situations when I needed someone. I do believe that a life-giving message can save you. I have a rough draft of a novel I wrote many years ago. It's about a girl who loves music, but is utterly confused. She's around 17-18, on her way to a religious service. There is a verse in a Psalm which goes: "When the disquiet thoughts in my heart grow many, your solace brings comfort to my soul." Fantastic, I think. In her congregation there is a pair of twins, of whom only one is a Christian. She visits the other one in his home, and he plays Janis Joplin's *Little Girl Blue* to her. When she listens to this song, tears well up in her eyes, and her hand reaches out to him. She can't say anything, she just sits there. But she receives such great solace from the song, as they listen to it together. And yet she cannot recognize it as solace, because it does not come from God.

Thor: So she cannot receive the consolation?

Nina: Well yes, she can. But she cannot admit that she does. She cannot say thank you to him. Afterwards she is going to the service, and they'll tell her to search for the source of purity, and free herself from the impure ones. But it is precisely in these impure sources that she has found consolation. Now I have reclaimed the right to find my sources where I need them. A massive difference. In the Gospel of Thomas, it says that: "If you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you." Whereas in our group, you had to remove what was inside you, and replace it with their version of God.

As a musician it is of course nice when someone says that I play the piano well. But one time this person came up to me and said: "When you played that I could experience the world, and that is a rare thing for me." That makes me happy, because I know how much music and literature has given me. A meeting where presence can be felt, where all the noise and distraction and misunderstandings and intentions clear away. When I was fifteen Pink Floyd's The Wall was very important to me, and then later I told myself that it was sinful to listen to it. It was as if they sang it to me and for me. And many years later I would start to sing those songs myself. Then I could sing that message to myself. So I think art can save

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lives. The mirroring experience of art is absolutely vital, I think. To save a life – it is not just on a physical level. A friend of mine told me his mother had wanted to top herself, but a man had intervened and talked her out of it. In my experience, I too killed myself when I was 17, although not literally. I killed my soul, and installed a being-good-mask instead. And since then I have been working to restore, to reinstall, those original parts. So being dead can have different meanings. And it's just not for my own sake that it is a shame that I haven't had the courage to live. But for the people around me as well. If you don't reveal yourself, you also make it harder for others to do so. I don't think I would be dead now if it weren't for this book. But I would have been even more lonely as a child. And with all that that does to you over time. I would have been less able to listen to myself, to have self-belief, and to have hope that I could find myself at last. I wouldn't have harboured the hope that there is a way for me, without this book. So it has supported me and changed me.

Thor: I must say that this is a remarkable story. That you destroyed the book that meant the most to you, only to regain a copy many years later. Thank you for generously sharing this with me.

Nina: Yes, it is a strange story. It is good to talk about it. When you ask me about it, it is as if the canvas expands. A good question can somehow extend the frame. I feel strong for having done this, and am grateful for the opportunity.

Afterwards I am amazed: this book has accompanied her all her life – loved, burned, regained. And yet she still discovers new things in it. I cannot help but think about the biblical associations. About Abraham's reprieve from sacrificing the most precious. And about some words from Matthew 16:25. Whoever loses her life, shall regain it.

Narrative five: *Jane's Visionary Reading*

While doing voluntary work for the Reader Organisation, I met the Director and founder of the Shared Reading model. Jane told me that literature had transformed her life. She immediately accepted my invitation to participate in the project, and also offered to help me find other people to interview. She said that reading Shikasta*, by Doris Lessing, had been an awakening, and that it had changed her whole world-view, literally overnight. When I read the novel, I found it difficult to get into at first. As it were, I found it rewarding once I had worked my way into it. I was familiar with aspects of Jane's story, having read an article about her prior to our meeting. The interview took place in a room in the attic of the Georgian mansion that is the home of The Reader.*

In medias res: The Encounter with the Book

Thor: I am very happy that you are willing to take part, and also very excited to meet you. I always read in advance the book the person has stated was important for them. So I brought this along. (*I produce my copy of Shikasta*). What I want is for you tell me all about your experience. Also, if there is a passage that you remember, that stands out, would you like to read it for me, please?

Jane: Yes. There are quite a lot of passages. The first bit is in Doris Lessing's introduction, which is called *Some Remarks*, at the very beginning, and when I read this for the first time I was absolutely… an atheist. I don't think I would even describe myself as an agnostic, I just think I didn't like the idea of religions or God. I loved Doris Lessing and had been reading her novels for many years, so when I came across this paragraph, I was really shocked by it, and also deeply affected:

> Shikasta has as its starting point, like many others of the genre ["that's Sci-fi"], the Old Testament, it is our habit to dismiss the Old Testament altogether, because Jehovah, or Jahve, does not think or behave like a social worker. H. G. Wells said that when man cries out his little 'gimme, gimme me, gimme' to God, it is as if a leveret were to snuggle up to a lion on a dark night. Or something to that effect.

> The sacred literatures of, of all races and nations have many things in common. ["And then it goes on:"] Almost as if they can be regarded as the products of a single mind, it is possible we make a mistake when we dismiss them as quaint fossils from a dead past.

So when I read that, I felt as if I was being asked to consider, at the deepest of levels, the very basis of everything I thought I was. And at the same time, while that was quite frightening, I also absolutely recognised something in it as true. Because I didn't... believe in God or have any of the apparatus that religious people must have, mental apparatus I mean, I couldn't really think about it, I just <u>felt</u> it. So I didn't have the equipment to think the thoughts, it was beyond my ken, but the sense that "as if a leveret were to snuggle up to a lion on a dark night", I just thought: "Hmmm, that's true". If I and all humans are that leveret, the little soft creature, there is a lion (*laughs*). And I'm afraid of that. And I felt: "Wow, this is making me think something I've never thought before". So even that was a massive change. And I think reading it took place on a bus, between getting on the bus in the city centre, by the Philharmonic Hall, and getting off at Princes Road. So in that short distance… (*laughs*). I started reading, and then I came to this bit, and these are also just so, so real. The other thing is, there's a dedication in this at the very beginning, and this was the first bit of it I read, which I also thought, wow, mmm, this is true:

For my father, who used to sit, hour after hour, night after night, outside our house in Africa, watching the stars. 'Well,' he would say, 'if we blow ourselves up, there's plenty more where we came from!'

And I love that because I've always been interested in space, and I do believe that there is life in other parts of the universe, or I... no, I don't even know if I believe it, but I think it must be, because it's so vast. So I just like that and I like the sense that we're not the only chance, though it may be better for us if we thought we were. Then, going to the novel itself – I am still on the bus - I probably read about down to the bottom of the first page maybe. And at this part, the other bit I would have as a significant passage - there are millions of things in here that I sort of have in my memory - but this one, Johor is talking about the colonies:

I have been sent on errands to our Colonies on many planets. Crises of all kinds are familiar to me. I have been involved in emergencies that threaten species, or carefully planned local programmes. I have known more than once what it is to accept the failure, final and irreversible, of an effort or experiment to do with creatures who have within themselves the potential of development dreamed of, planned for… and then – Finis! The end! The drum pattering out into silence…

And I don't think I knew it at the time, but I think I've worked it out since then... I was reading this as I was in the first year of University, I think, but it might have been the year before, when I was just thinking about going, and I'd be about 23 or 24. By the time I was 27 my mother had died of alcoholism, she was 51 when she died.

A very hungry person

My mother was the daughter of a docker. She went to public school after she got a scholarship. She loved reading, trashy novels as well as classics. During my childhood, before things became too bad, she read to me. One of my most vivid memories is of her pulling her hair down over her face and then recited the witches from Macbeth: "Where the place? / Upon the heath / There to meet with Macbeth". We would all scream and hide behind the couch. I was the oldest of four children. My parents divorced when I was ten. So I grew up in a poor and quite chaotic single-parent family. My local library in Toxteth became a refuge. When I was twelve they let me take out adult books. I remember really getting into Beckett. I loved *Happy Days*. I think I knew that somehow I was in that story. I recognised it. So from way back my reading has been about making sense, although I didn't realise it at the time.

So she was in the high throes of the end of her life by the time I read this. She lived next door but one to me and I had a lot to do with her. I'd recently had a conversation with her about her dying. Basically, I thought she'd been drinking so heavily for 15 years it was like a form of suicide, it was like "I'm going to drink myself to death." Though she spoke about it more in terms of pleasure and a lifestyle choice, but really, it was suicide. So I was very conscious that that was happening, and my three younger siblings were still teenagers, and conscious that their lives were all turning into lives that were connected more to smoking dope and drinking than to going to school. And so when I read that, I was very, very moved by it. I suppose I was imagining as part of the story, I was thinking about galaxies and alien life forms and so on, but at the deepest level, I was thinking: "Hmm, yes, this happens. Life, some lives fail, and they fail to achieve their potential". And that certainly is the case of my mother, and it was, I think, also the case of my siblings.

Thor: You were fearing that they would go down the same road.

Jane: Yeah, and even for me, you know, would my life also do that. I don't think I had any of that in proper consciousness, but I do now think I knew it. So it didn't feel like a pleasure to read it, well it did in a way, but it was more like a very *hungry* person, finding something they really needed to eat.

Thor: Like you just *had* to read?

Jane: Yeah, and further down, where is it… Yeah, this bit:

This is a catastrophic universe, always, and subject to sudden reversals, upheavals, changes, cataclysms, with joy, never anything but the song of substance under pressure, forced into new forms and shapes.

So that sentence, again I felt I, wow, I recognised it was just true: It is catastrophical, or it was to me then at that age, that my life had been full of sudden reversals, upheavals, changes, cataclysms. I wasn't aware of joy being… "the song of substance under pressure," but when I read it I thought: "Yes, when things are under pressure, they *are* forced into new shapes." I don't know, weirdly it both allowed the terror of some of my experiences of life, and the possibility: Here I was, about to start at University and what became a complete change of life. So the book and where I was in my life came together at exactly the right sort of point to interact with each other and make a major change.

Thor: You said you'd already read books by Lessing, and you loved those. So you had a sense of…

Jane: I *trusted* her.

Thor: You *trusted* her. So does that mean that even though you found that kind of uncomfortable to read…

Jane: It was more like going, *huh!!!* (*Laughs*). It was like a shocked recognition.

Thor: Let's say that you'd picked that book up and it was not by Doris Lessing, but some geezer you hadn't heard of, do you think it would have felt like that?

Jane: Yeah, it might have, because if it was exactly written like this, I think some of those sentences would still have got me. And I think it may have been that in a sense my life was at a point of change anyway. I'd been living in a feminist commune, and I'd been ordering my life through the ideas of feminism and to a certain extent things to do with Marxism and socialism or anarchism. Though nobody who was part of that world would ever have thought of me as a real member of it, because I was too disaffected and anarchistic (*laughs*), and naughty, but that was the framework I inhabited. Before that I'd had the framework of my family which was about… (*exhales*) Enjoy yourself, drink, eat, be merry, for tomorrow we die. That was the philosophy in our house. And so those political frameworks I inhabited from about the age of 18 onwards, gave a different kind of structure and meaning, but I didn't *really* believe in them. I believed in some things about feminism, but I certainly didn't believe in some of the Marxist stuff. And anyway, the commune had come to an end, and I suppose that left me in a strange place where I knew I wasn't going to go back into 'eat and drink because tomorrow we die'. I had a child. I knew I'd done well in one of my 'A' levels, I had been to college, had a teacher who'd said to me, "hey you're clever," so something was going to

change. And maybe I was just ripe to… maybe if I'd met an evangelical Christian preacher, I might have gone for them, who knows. I don't know. But luckily, I got this.

Thor: So this was then like a third kind of worldview, after 'eat, drink, be merry' and feminism.

Jane: Hmmm, yeah. And Doris had been in the feminist, Marxist world, obviously with the *Golden Notebook*. But she'd also had all those sort of weird, slightly mystical, slightly sci-fi books like *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, which is about, really, the truths that come through nervous breakdown. Which I'd absolutely also just thought: "Wow, all this is *true!*" So there were things about understanding what a life might be, that were already happening, that were changing anyway. I already liked sci-fi, so it was easy for me to read it, and I was so excited by it.

The Big Dream: Everything matters.

And then I got home, and I can't remember what time of day it was, but anyway, after my daughter had gone to bed and it was evening, I just sat and read the whole book, haha, from cover to cover. And it was, you know, 3 o'clock in the morning or something by the time I'd finished.

Thor: You were completely immersed in it?

Jane: Yeah. And then I had this very, very weird dream. I just stayed up all night to finish it, and then went to sleep. And I had this dream that I was looking down on my daughter's school playground, but from quite close to it, so maybe 20 feet up in the air onto it, and so I could see all the children, maybe speeded up, moving about, and then I just went higher up, and then I could see the cars in the streets round it, and then higher than that, and then I could see the whole city, and then, haha, I could see the *whole* world, and, and then the whole *universe*, haha. And it was really exhilarating and terrifying. I don't remember what else happened. It has just made me think now, I wonder if I wrote it down. I might have done at the time, I might have it in a journal somewhere, what the rest of the dream was. But that's all I can remember, that sense of going up and up and up, and it getting bigger and bigger and bigger and being able to see all, still see all the parts of it.

Thor: And you can remember feeling in the dream both exhilaration and fright as well?

Jane: Yes! So when I woke up in the morning, I was, partly through the reading and partly through the dream, my mind had *shifted*. And then I was really *scared.*

Thor: That's the kind of dream you only have a couple of times in a life, isn't it? So you were scared of it all?

Jane: Yeah, and I was scared because if the book is true, if it *matters* what each individual *does* in their life, which is really the premise, *then what would I do*? So, I was scared that I didn't know how to even interact with people anymore, that if everything mattered, if I'd gone from a state of either nothing mattered, so enjoy yourself, or political determinism to now *my* individual acts all mattered, every single one of them, I was really scared to even go to the shop to buy bread. Because I was thinking: "I can't go out, to the shop or anything, because I don't know how to behave in this new universe, I don't know how to…" That's why I say it was a bit like a religious conversion, because it was, it did feel vulnerable. And when they say in religious settings, "born again," and things like that, the main feeling I remember of that is of immense vulnerability. Of being like somebody with very soft skin, or no... And as if I would have to learn how to *be*... I don't think I went out, I don't know. I don't know how my daughter got to school, I can't remember. I'm going to go and look at my old diaries, because I may have written all that down, but it's interesting that I can't remember.

Thor: Yeah, you had that feeling of soft skin, like everything is open and…

Jane: And as if it might hurt me or I might hurt it. It was as if a great deal of, I suppose, moral thinking would have to come about or even moral *practice* maybe. That literally I'd have to learn how to do it, if everything mattered, and if how I conducted myself mattered. It's like starting again, and everything you did you'd have to think, have I done that right? Was that right? Normally of course, one has a kind of continuation through life and people teach you what is right, and you act, but this is like having to start again as an adult. I would just have to find out what the rules were. So it was very frightening, and I just thought, well, the only thing I can do is, I'll write to Doris Lessing and just say "hey, can you help me, please?"

Thor: So that is what you did?

Jane: I did. I wrote her a letter. You know, she was a Sufi, that was her religious practice, and I wrote to her and said: "I know you're a Sufi…" I can't remember what was in my letter, but it was, you have a teacher, are you my teacher? Is this what I have to learn? Can you help

me? What shall I do? And so she wrote back, after a few days, I think within the same week. I don't know, but I feel as if I was still indoors all that time, that may not be true, that may be a strange memory. And she said: "No, I'm not your teacher, I'm just a student and not a very good one. I'm a writer, for God's sake, pull yourself together. Grow up. You remind me of myself when I was young, very hysterical." It was quite a sort of cold water…

Thor: Not what you expected?

Jane: I didn't know what to expect. I really didn't know, I don't know what I wanted. I wanted her to take notice of me, that this thing had happened to me. Which she did, though it was a strict response. And later I got to know her, and that was a big part of her character, haha. She said: "I'm a student of Idries Shah, you should read his books, I'll send you some money for them, if you can't afford them. Just concentrate and get serious and get on with it," that was basically the gist of the letter. I hadn't read any books by Idries Shah, and I was very attracted to the idea of Doris Lessing sending me money, I thought that would be a nice relationship, haha. But I also thought, that's not a good start to my new life, is it? So I'll go down the library and see if there's any books in there, which of course there were. And I got them all out and read them all and just thought no, this isn't it, this is not for me. It might work for her, but it doesn't answer what I want and need. So then I just got on with reading, and reading other things. I was at University and I began - without at first realising it, but gradually with more consciousness - looking for other things that connected to the things I'd learnt in this book. And so for example when I got onto reading George Eliot, it was clear to me that there was a relation between the two things. In *Middlemarch*, it's all about *vocation*, about finding what you are meant to do, and Dorothea even says to Will about her religious ideas, "Oh I don't want to tell you about it, you'll say they're Persian," or something. And I remember thinking, "oh that's like her with her Sufism," and me sort of thinking, no I don't want to *solidify* it in any way. I really identified with Dorothea as somebody who had to find a way of *being*, but I also identified with people in the book like Fred Vincy, who's just, you know, morally dubious and weak. So this book, *Shikasta*, gave me a kind of prism to read a lot of other things and eventually that became my PhD. So in a way I wrote about what, for me, leads up to *Shikasta*, which I didn't know when I read *Shikasta*. Because I did it the other way round, I read this, and *then* I read English Literature. But actually, you can see that something like this starts way back and it starts as she says really with the Old Testament, and it's in everything, but I didn't know that, then... (*smiles*).

Necessity: Integration of the Vision

Thor: Just to clarify one point, you said that everything matters, that means that it must matter to someone, or some being.

Jane: Good point, mmm.

Thor: And then you mentioned George Eliot.

Jane: I really waiver between whether I believe in God or don't believe in God. So when you, as soon as you say Someone, I just think, I don't believe in that, I don't believe in *Someone*… If it was more like a kind of pattern, or... principle or direction of energy, or underlying template, or structure, maybe I find that easier than something personal. I have wished I could become a Christian, but I can't, something in me gets just like a horse, just won't jump. But I… when I look at earth, I think there are underlying patterns of goodness and wholeness, and connectivity and things like that. And I know that includes dying and rats eating ladybirds and things that you'd think are bad, but I don't know whether they are… I think the experience of beauty must somehow be connected to human beings and what we can *do* with ourselves. So usually now, when people would - if anybody would - ask me, do you believe in God, I usually say yes, just because I definitely believe something, I just don't know what it is. I think it's better to believe than not to believe – well, it is for me at any rate - and that's partly to do with behaviour. Also the thing I would like about being a Christian is that it'd be quite good for me to be someone who was committed to living by some rules, I'm not very good at that by myself. One of the rules that's in *Shikasta* is the rule she calls the need, the Necessity.

What the Natives were being taught was the science of maintaining contact at all times with Canopus; of keeping contact with their Mother, their Maintainer, their Friend, and what they called God, the Divine. If they kept the stones aligned and moving as the forces moved and waxed and waned, and if the cities were kept up according to the laws of the Necessity, then they might expect – these little inhabitants of Rohanda who had been no more than scurrying monkeys half in and half out of the trees, animals with little in them of the Canopean nature – these animals could expect to become men, would take charge of themselves and their world when the Giants left them, the work of the symbiosis complete. (p. 40).

I think that was one of the things I recognised in the book, each according to the need or you do it according to the Necessity. And still, thirty years on or more, I think that's true.

(*Long pause*).

Thor: You said this book gave you like a prism, and your searching and reading afterwards have been a matter of…

Jane: Collecting more stuff into that container, yeah. In a way one of the best things about that have been religious poetry, which before this I couldn't read. I would just think "oh, not relevant to me, don't want to be doing that". But since maybe about five years after this, I've been reading George Herbert, Milton, Dante, and they are, in many ways, bigger than this and *better*. So yeah, I love it, and I wouldn't like to say it wasn't the best, because it was my *darling*, but the *Divine Comedy's* the same story, in a different way. So I feel as if what the book did for me was open an area of life and thinking of human experience that was closed, and then I went in and found it was full of this amazing stuff in there. And reading George Herbert for many, many years has probably done more than anything to make me understand what God might mean to people who believe in God, and when I'm reading George Herbert, that's the closest I get to being... I don't think it's still a Christian, it's a *believer*.

Thor: Is there a particular poem by Herbert?

Jane: Yes, there's *The Flower*: "And now in age I bud again, / After so many deaths I live and write; / I once more smell the dew and rain, / And relish versing: O my only light, / It cannot be / That *I* am *he* / On whom thy tempests fell all night." That feeling, that you've been through hell, and in time it was only a few hours, but it was forever, wasn't it? That's a real human experience, and I love the way that the poem *suffers* the experience and imagines a pattern that makes sense of it. That imagination of the pattern is a wonderful thing. And I also like the *Temper*, where he goes from a kind of resolution at the end of *Temper I*, to suddenly begin *Temper II* with something like, "it cannot be!" And I'm thinking: "oh you've just solved it in the first one,"haha, and then immediately can't, it's gone broken again. That's fantastic, the relation between those two. I like the Affliction poems, "broken in pieces, all asunder, Lord hunt me not." And sometimes when I'm teaching that I'll think about trying to take people to understand what *Lord* means in that poem, if you don't believe in God; well, it means *necessity* or the *truth* or *reality*. They're fantastic.

Thor: With this book in hand, so to speak, you come into literary studies, and there's already a book that's blown you open and in a sense given you a key to all kinds of literature. How was that experience, then, where things were formalised?

Jane: The first two years at University were very difficult for me, because much of the study was sort of unreal. And I kept thinking, oh I don't like this, I think I'll leave, and then being

afraid to leave. I didn't want to be someone who just always started things and didn't finish them, which is what I'm like, and it then was very much what I was like. And then, in the third year, Brian Nellist became my teacher. His whole life has been made by books. I don't know whether he'd say he was *changed*, every book probably changes him. But he's a great person. I suddenly realised: I'm going to learn something here, and then suddenly I really wanted to do it. I worked my socks off in the third year; I'd found a way to do the thing I was interested in, through his inspired teaching. He always just gives you the opportunity to see if there's anything for you. He presents everything as if he *loves* them, everything. Later I found out there were some other things he'd taught me that he didn't love, and I was really shocked. And he said: "But I have to do that, so that you can if you want to, because if I told you that I don't think much of this, what would happen? You would immediately not read it." I thought, hmmm, that's a good way, *love things*! And while he's doing it, he does love them, he looks through everything that's *good* about it and gives it to you. So that was a great experience and it taught me also how to be a good teacher, I think, how to be a good reader: Try and find things you *love*. I brought this book, *Shikasta*, to Brian at that point, during the third year of University, and got him interested in it.

Thor: Because you were talking passionately about it?

Jane: Yeah, and saying: "This is *Shikasta, Shikasta!*" And then, I don't know, it just became obvious that I would probably do a PhD. I was in an amazingly lucky, unusual position, I think, which was that I had a *real* problem that I wanted to work on. It was not theoretical, it was not academic, it was *my* genuine line of thing I needed to find out about, and so the PhD was very, very *real* to me: what *do* I think about this? It was a real experiment for me of where, whatever this is, *where* is it? And where can I see it elsewhere? And how do you get there? And why is *Middlemarch* connected to it? It was three years of really being able to stay in one place and think through all the thoughts that had arisen that night when I had the terrible dream. The PhD, *Visionary Realism: From George Eliot to Doris Lessing,* became the combing out of lots of strands of it into, I suppose, an order or a *framework* by which I could *be*. And it was immensely useful and you know, even now, I'm still proceeding on the basis of what I did in that PhD. What a *lucky* girl! To have that chance.

Thor: It's as if this is sort of a kernel or bundle of energy, and you spent a lot of time just unpacking it.

Jane: Yes, so, yes, almost like *what is religious experience*? The PhD is essentially what happens to God if humans don't believe in God? What happens to religious experience if culturally you don't believe in God. Surely the religious experiences of everybody are the same wherever we come from, or whatever our cultural background. Is there an underlying reality? You know, I wrote about, for example, in *Middlemarch*, the conversion experience where Dorothea tries to, and does in fact momentarily, convert Rosamond to being good. It just doesn't last, it can't last. If that whole experience had been conceived within a religious framework, somebody could have made that same experience into an evangelical understanding of life, couldn't they? However, George Elliot is trying to think without God. I was interested in, does religious experience go away if we don't believe in it, or is it still there? I suppose I didn't make it explicit in the PhD, but as we speak now I suddenly think: "Well of course I was writing about my own experience, really." Was it a religious experience? I think anybody would say it was, though if you don't *believe* in religion, oh God, it's a hard thing to understand.

Thor: I suppose you could always redefine it as a spiritual experience. But then you're still faced with the same problem. I suppose this is what William James is trying to work out as well.

Jane: Yeah. (*pause*). Hmm.

Thor: So if you were to find the right verb for describing what your reading experience has meant to you, would you say it has changed your life, or saved your life, or something else?

Jane: (*Pause*). It was part of a saving, but there's probably more than a 50/50 chance that I would have saved it anyway, somehow. I think I was on the route to saving my life, the book certainly became a big element of that, but I think it seems better to say something like it's *made* or *shaped* my life. In that I think I would have still had my life, and I think I would have... done something with it. But it wouldn't have been what I *have* done. The book made me realise that there is a spiritual dimension to life, and it made me see that you have life for a purpose, and you've got to find out what that purpose is, and then you've got to *do* it. So I think it's given me a very, very strong sense of purpose, and that purpose has *made* my life. Not just with the Reader Organisation, although the Reader's a massive expression of that now. But before I started the Reader, I just had a private life as a part time teacher and a reader and writer.

(*Pause)* One of the other things I really remember loving in the book is the festival of the child, do you remember that part?

Finding the Purpose: Shared Reading

(She reads excerpt from "ILLUSTRATIONS: The Shikastan Situation [This Report by Johor seems to us a useful addition to the Illustration]. Archivists.")

While even a few years ago this festival was entirely for the children, the economic pressure of the tourists has operated so that there are entertainments and food and drink for the adults as well. This year, for the first time, there were television cameras, and because of this, everything was more elaborate than usual. When the statue had been taken in and put away into its cupboard, dancing begins again, and continues until midnight.

This is a pleasant enough festival, and offers much needed relief to people whose lives are hard indeed. It has not become much more elaborate since the report of Emissary 76, four hundred years ago. But we must expect that while tourism lasts, every year will show new feats of imagination.

There is no use left in this festival from our point of view. I could not prevent myself wondering as I observed these scenes, what would happen if I were able to stand forward and relate the real origins of the festival. (Pp. 208-209.)

Jane: It starts with the Canopean saying each child has a lot of potential, this child can become anything, but it ends up as a sort of strange European Christian thing where they parade round with a child on a pedestal. I love that sense that way back, there was a real piece of information in it, and now we just have these vestiges of ceremony, or, I love that child potential thing.

There was a moment in the summer school, the first time we did the summer school here two years ago, where one of the little boys who's aged twelve had to be given Ritalin every day. And it was my job to do that. In the morning the social worker gave me a packet of pills, and said you must give it him at 12 o'clock. And then I had to do that. (*pause*) (*tears*). That's made me feel sad. That seemed like a moment from a book like this, where it's small, it's not going to change the world in any way. It was good for him to come to the summer school, if we didn't give him the Ritalin he wouldn't be able to come, nor we to have coped with him. But, it was *wrong*. It was wrong in the larger sense that that child needs something else, something that I and his social workers and everybody can't give him. Anyway, that boy is one of the children who is now getting one-to-one reading through the Off the Page project with volunteers. And the lady who's reading with him really likes him. I got a message two weeks ago, saying - he can't read or anything - we've been reading the Witches from Macbeth

this week, and he really loved it. And I can remember trying to even make him look at a picture book, during that beginning, two years ago. So that feels like *something*.

I started the Reader in 1997 with the *Reader Magazine*, and that was really an expression of something that was happening in teaching at the University. I was teaching alongside my colleagues, Angie Macmillan and Sarah Coley. I don't think we've got the first edition here because it's very rare now. No, it was a little sort of homemade looking thing. We were teaching in this particular way, the way that has partly come out of this book, and partly come out of Brian's philosophy, reading as a way to understand yourself and your life, or everything - personal reading. Behind our idea of teaching was always the question: Can it help? We'd been doing that for, I don't know how long, and I kept thinking we're doing something really *good* here, people should know about it. At the same time literary theory in the main part of the School of English was the big thing, with people all going round strapped up in this apparatus of theory, and we were just sort of weird ladies on the sidelines. So the idea was to start the Reader to try to get what was in the classes out more visible. Though probably that was the worst possible idea of getting that stuff out: through a literary magazine which has always had about 200 to 500 subscribers, every one of whom obviously already is interested in it and believes in it. But during that period of life, from when I got married in the early 80s and I had done my PhD, I was just reading and teaching and writing. Teaching twice a week, not being a member of the department, I never went to a staff meeting, I never had any formal connection with anything at all. I was like a hermit, really. I had my children and my husband, saw Brian on a Friday night, didn't really have any social life, didn't want any. I just wanted to read and write. During that period, from 1983 to 1997, I was writing novels. I wrote five novels over a 15 year period, and that was my main activity. When I realised I'd never get of any of these novels published, I thought I'll just stop writing them. And then I just found I couldn't stop writing. I started writing poetry. What I now think is that that whole period, that 15 - 17 year period, was assimilating ... the Big Bang. And that was something to do with, I don't know what, whether that's… Well anyway, it's your *inner* self, that's what was being made in that time. It's almost as if there's a whole massive thing, and then there was this long period of building up energy or…. yeah, let's call it energy - and then eventually starting up the Reader. When I thought: "I'm not going to be a writer, just stop doing this," that energy and the backlog of energy, the full battery if you like, fully charged now, just immediately began to come into this. And I think this is a much better expression of passing on the Big Bang, the energy of the Big Bang. Though in many ways - until we had this

conversation – I've done it without realising the connection of it and without making a lot of that very explicit. (*Pause*). I don't know if it's just myself, but I'm really interested in that story and I would like to *write* it one day. It's an interesting story, I think.

Thor: Yes it is, it is a very interesting story.

Jane: I'll write it when I retire, haha. When I did well in my Degree and I was top of my year, it's the first time I was ever very successful at anything I'd ever done. At school I was nothing, and I hardly had any qualifications when I went to University. It was the absolute bare minimum to get in. So realising that I could be very good at something was an amazing and immensely encouraging thing. Finishing the PhD, which I did in three years flat, I finished the PhD at the end of August, had my son on the 16th of September, and I'd been thinking all the time that if I don't finish this before I have that baby, I'll never finish it, I must finish it. So that was a wonderful practical piece of discipline. That was the first major piece of writing I had ever finished and I'd been writing since the age of ten, always starting stories, and novels and so on, and never, never finishing them. I guess that must have been a sore point in me, though I didn't really know it was. But I knew when I finished the PhD, wow, this means something, now I could finish a book, couldn't I? So then I started writing the first novel almost straightaway. It was an achievement to me to write those five books, and to finish them, every single one of them is finished.

Thor: Have you had any of them published?

Jane: No. I tried to get all of them published, but they're probably not very good, and they were definitely not very marketable. I'm sure there are worse books that are published, but those worse books are sellable, haha. Whereas mine were probably poor attempts to be George Elliot, in my own time. Not fashionable, nobody wants to read it, plus whatever was their own deficiencies. But I wanted to write them, and in fact probably needed to, and they also were a part of the response to this. Almost as if what the books became were a series of human situations, where moral problems were what I needed to work out: If this, then what? If you don't wash the dishes, then what? Even at that silly level, then what? So, it was good for me to do all that working out, and it helped me realise I was somebody who could finish things, even though it didn't become a life as a writer. When I started The Reader Organisation properly, I mean the actual work of the organisation, I think that 15 year apprenticeship as writing those novels, and working out those problems, has really helped me with this. I was learning to believe in, and to build, structures. To think, you can take an idea

and make it into a thing; you, Jane, you can do that. And now it's almost as if in some way the moral problems are the real people that I'm working with. Where you think, oh what am I going to do about the fact that X is always late for work, yet when they get here they're good? That's one of them, isn't it? So it's still part of the *Shikast*a story. So I suppose the reverberations then, of the book having *made* or *shaped* my life, those reverberations are interestingly now all in this organisation in lots of ways. So that's a powerful thing, isn't it? (*Pause.*)

Recognising the Signature

The best thing in it, from my point of view, is the *Signature*. They are given the Signature and it can flash, and as soon as you show it, people recognise it:

And I gave her the Signature, saying they must regard this as more important than – but what? Life? They did not have that conception: the thought of death as an ever-present threat was not in them. This came from Canopus, I said. It was the very substance and being of Canopus and must be guarded at all times, even if they were to lose their lives doing it. Thus I held Death before them, using it to create in these creatures a sorrow and a vigilance where there had been none. Sais put the Signature reverently into her belt and kept her hand there on it, as she stood in front of me, her eyes on my face, listening. When they reached a settlement, I said, she must first of all speak of Canopus, and if the word was enough to revive old memories and associations, and if her hearers could listen because of that word alone, then she could give her message and go. Only if she could get no one to listen, or if it seemed that she and her father might be harmed, then she might show the Signature. And when they had been everywhere, and spoken with everyone even hunting bands they met, or solitary farmers or fishermen in the forests or by the rivers, then they must bring the Signature back to me.

And then I spoke to her carefully and slowly about the concept of a task, something which had to be done – for I was afraid that this might have lapsed from her mind altogether. This journey of hers, I said, the act of making it, and carrying the Signature and guarding it, would develop her, would bring out in her something that was buried and clouded over. (P. 85).

I believe there is a sort of signature, though it's sadly not a physical object, but people do recognise it, when you show it to them, haha. I think that we are here *to know*. I don't mean intellectually, a lot of our knowing is in our gut, in our heart. You've already got your feelings, sometimes you just haven't got any language for them. Something happens to you in shared reading, a sudden moment – a feeling of recognition, of seeing written down something you had as nameless (and therefore in a sense unknown), taking some form in the visible world, so you can begin to know it. And there is something so important about that – it's a form of consciousness. There is a big thing to be done intellectually for humans – which I think George Eliot's already done, but no one has noticed – which is to make sure that we understand that *feeling* is the deepest form of knowing. That's what literature does for us. It makes us feel, so we can know. I think one of the beautiful things about shared reading is that

it has a bit of signature in it. I was in Amsterdam at a conference a few days ago talking about it, and you can see as you begin to tell people about it, some people really recognise something, it's like something they already know and then you tell them.

Thor: So The Reader Organisation has grown from the start from one group in a Library, then spread across Merseyside, across this country and then into Europe, how does that feel?

Jane: It's amazing. It has grown out of and from the wonderful compost of sadnesses, breakages, losses and terrors of my own real life and the lives of others I have known. I was in Belgium earlier in the year, I went over because they had organised a get together and training weekend for their volunteers. I think there were about 30 of them at a residential place in the country. I read in a group with some people there, and just listening to each person saying, oh, I'm a school teacher and I do this on Saturday mornings, in a poor district of my town, I work in prisons and I do this as part of my job, I'm a psychiatrist, and I use it with my patients, and so on, I was just thinking, Christ, these people are all *really* doing it! It was a powerful, moving feeling of just thinking, whoa! It doesn't feel particularly connected to me, it feels more like people *recognise* the *thing*, and that's a lovely feeling. It's like having unearthed a little bit of reality that, I think, we'd just forgotten about. I think humans did already know it, because I think that's what for many hundreds of years the Bible was, people *shared* it, and other sacred text books, but I mean because we're Europeans let's say the Bible. It was read aloud, people all knew the same stories, people all knew Daniel in the lion's den, people all knew Ruth, and it's a terrible loss, a loss of the cohesiveness, not having a body of shared stories. And I think it's almost as if we've just *stumbled* into a way of having that, so it feels great, haha, it feels really good.

Thor: So do you think, then, that what they recognise, is the signature of literature?

Jane: Yes, how well you've put it. (*Pause*). I suppose, it's a funny thing because I remember once I'd gone to lobby at one of the political conferences, and somebody I was speaking to said to me: "I hate the idea of sharing reading, reading's private." And I bet a lot of people who are keen readers probably feel that, and I know in groups people who are very good readers already find it quite difficult to get into the same gear as everybody else. Sometimes you can see people really struggling with that, and I wonder about that, about the sort of individuality of reading as it has largely been for most people, and the strangeness of making it a social activity. I think we haven't been very good at making more of that somehow, and

it's a very different experience. (*pause*) Lots of readers are solitary, and maybe people who are struggling with social connections go into books, don't they? Well, I know I did.

Thor: Maybe it's more to do with protecting something because you fear that some people want to step on it or misunderstand or whatever.

Jane: Yeah, and also the actual experience is an individual experience, so it happens to you, even in the group. And when you're a private reader, or a private religious person, I would imagine, when I'm reading George Herbert by myself, the experiences of one soul or mind with the other thing. What's amazing sometimes in shared reading is that you witness that extremely *intimate* experience. (*Pause*). And actually some of my best reading experiences now come in groups, rather than by myself, because I think I'm more able to concentrate in the group. I'm just thinking about last week when I was reading some George Herbert with some colleagues, that the responsibility and desire to make the good thing happen, which if it was just me by myself at home might happen, but I don't think I would concentrate as hard, because I have to make it happen for all these people. Is that like being a musician or something? If you're a performer, a Yo-Yo Ma, you would have to practice at home all the time by yourself before you gave it to everybody, wouldn't you? And yet the giving, the doing it… I don't know, that's interesting.

Thor: Your life-changing reading experience has led to so many other people's lives being touched by literature. That is very inspirational. Thank you so much for sharing.

Jane: That's great, I've really enjoyed talking with you. And thanks for the opportunity to think it through. Definitely over Christmas I'm going to look up those old diaries, and just see if I was writing all the time at that point. I'd be amazed if I haven't written something about it. Won't it be weird if it's different than I remember? That sometimes happens.

As I walk out of Calderstones Park, I turn back and look at the stately Georgian Mansion. It seems to me that the entire place, housing such a large organisation of people dedicated to sharing literature, is connected to a Substance of We Feeling. It is as if I have had a meeting with a Canopean: I feel uplifted, both because I have listened to Jane's story but also because I have witnessed the materialisation of her vision. And, thinking of all that she has told me – the childhood memory of the mother reading aloud to her children against the backdrop of hardship, trouble and neglect; the readiness for change described as a hunger for truth and

meaning; the propitious encounter with Shikasta *on the bus and the ensuing dream that left her vulnerable; the shocked recognition of a world-shattering ineffable truth; audaciously asking Lessing for an answer to the question how to live?, only to acknowledge that the Sufi solution was not her solution; the undergraduate professing the wonders of* Shikasta *to her professors and going on to achieve a PhD on her own terms; writing five novels in order to work out a personal solution to life's exigencies; ultimately finding her life's purpose after she put the pen down, spreading shared reading and the love of literature across Merseyside and far beyond – I say to myself: yes, this* is *an interesting story.*

Narrative six: *Sue's Buried Life*

I met Sue through the Reader Organisation, where she works as project manager and facilitator of shared reading groups. In a course for volunteers on how to lead reading groups, she related to us her decisive encounter with a poem by Matthew Arnold, The Buried Life. *As she read parts of it out loud, it was evident that her memories of the reading experience were still salient, bringing tears to her eyes. I felt really moved by the poem and the concerns it raises. Afterwards I told her about my project, and asked her whether she be willing to take part. The interview took place in Sue's home. She made us cups of tea and we sat down in her lounge to talk.*

Sue: I was thinking that in a way - because this started from when you were on the Read to Lead course, when we read an extract of it, from "but often in the din of strife" - that that was kind of the story, you know, so it's a shame that the tape wasn't on then, really. I felt full of feeling at that time. Because we were talking about this issue of breakthroughs, and I still felt strongly about it; it had such an impact on me. I can't remember what I said.

Thor: But the feeling was very present then.

Sue: Yes. This poem, I first heard it on my Read to Lead course which was in January 2009. The group facilitator read it out loud to the group. I can't remember how many of us there were, there might have been sixteen of us or something like that. It took place in a beautiful manor. It was just a lovely place to stay, it was a five day residential course, so we were there for five days together. I don't know what day this happened, it wasn't early on actually, it was quite a bit late through the course. And I just really, from the moment she started reading, that very first sort of section, I had a strong, strong feeling for it. And I think partly that was because it just felt so current, even though I know he was writing in eighteenhundredsomething. I don't know when he was writing, but it's quite a long time ago. Still, that first bit, it just somehow really resonated with me, about this idea of two people just struggling, you know, in this relationship. And so already I was kind of captivated.

Thor: Right from the start.

Sue: Yeah, right from the start. Partly because of what the subject matter was, you know that very first bit where he's talking about this mocking war, war of mocking words, and he's, you know, he's crying, he's got tears in his eyes: "Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet! I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll." So that, just the fact of that, but there was something about the fact that he was feeling this two hundred years' ago, or whenever it was, that had a big, big impact on me as well.

The possibility of what poetry might do

Thor: There were two feelings at the same time? That it was like he was speaking to you now?

Sue: Well, yes, like it… it felt very, very current, you know. I felt I completely understood this experience that he was writing of, the experience of struggling to communicate with someone you love, that actually you're in this sort of passionate, this important relationship, but for whatever reason you can't make it work, in terms of your communication. So that really struck a chord with me. But then also the fact that it was happening, well, two hundred years' ago or something, that seemed really important as well. And I think for me that was important because I hadn't been someone who read poetry. It was really my first real contact with poetry. I mean, when I first found myself being in a situation where I actually had to pay attention to it. I have a group of very close friends, in some ways I am closer to them than to my own family. That's the most home I ever feel, when I am with these women. They are really into poetry and when we go away at the weekends, we go as a group of sort of seven or eight people, they're all reading it, and I'm ignoring it, because it's never resonated or had any meaning for me. They'd bring along their latest poetry find, and I would wish we could do something else altogether. Poetry just felt like a waste of time to me. But if my friends valued something, then that would make me curious, because then I would think it must have some value. I just couldn't overcome the hurdle. I had never given it a chance, but something about just that very first bit of this poem, it felt like it changed everything really.

Thor: It changed everything?

Sue: Well, it felt like it just changed everything, that suddenly I was awake to this possibility of what poetry might do. I mean it did feel that big actually, yeah. (*Pause*). Obviously I've been reading poetry now for seven years, you know, and a lot of poetry. I read a lot of poetry

because I've been reading poetry with people in groups. And initially when I started I knew almost nothing about how to do it, I didn't even know how to read around the punctuation or the comma. Honestly, I knew nothing, but as I've kind of gone through it, I've got more and more tuned into it and I can probably read it fairly well, and I can even understand some stuff that I would never have been able to understand in my way of looking at it. I've grown tremendously, and I can't imagine my life without poetry now, you know. I don't even want to think about my life without poetry now. So yeah, I just think it was the most magical, amazing stuff. Although I do find it difficult to read, you have to really work at it, and I find it much easier to read in a group, and to have that kind of group experience of it.

Thor: Relating to it together?

Sue: Yeah, yeah, and other people struggling with it and working it out, I love that process. Hmmm, so that first little bit of it really was powerful, and then it just carried on really.

Thor: Would you like to read the poem for me now?

Sue: OK, the whole one, all of it?

She proceeds to read the poem, slowly, meditatively, with restraint, trusting the words to carry the emotion.

The Buried Life, by Matthew Arnold:

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there's a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;

I knew they lived and moved
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?

Ah! well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordain'd!

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 't is not true!
And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey

A melancholy into all our day.
Only—but this is rare—
When a belovèd hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caress'd—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

Thor: Thank you. What was it like to read it here and now?

Sue: It's quite a long time since I've read it in its entirety, actually. Hmmm, I mean, there's lots more in it really, bits that I didn't remember. But it still, it still has the same kind of power for me, you know? (*Tears in her eyes. She pauses*)

The woman in prison

I've come to this feeling that, the sense that… Because I've had the experience of reading with lots of people now, and I've had the experience of witnessing people have, I suppose, a similar response to a piece of writing… I wrote an article about an experience a woman in prison had with the poem Bluebird by Bukowski.[1] Where she had a profound experience with the poem. So I've come to feel that there is something for everyone, or maybe there's more than one thing, I'm sure there is. There are bits of writing that have this sort of power to resonate, to move you. They're kind of tuned in, they're the right tune for you and then, when you get one

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[1] In this poem, the speaker says: "there's a bluebird in my heart that/wants to get out/but I'm too tough for him,/I say, stay in there,/I'm not going/to let anybody see/you. […] but I'm too clever, I only let him out/at night sometimes/when everybody's asleep./I say, I know that you're there,/so don't be/sad./then I put him back,/but he's singing a little/in there, I haven't quite let him/die." - Charles Bukowski, "Bluebird," in *The Last Night of the Earth Poems* (New York: Ecco, 1992).

of those, it's like, I don't know, everything sort of *fits*. And then you can't hold yourself back. Like the woman in the prison for instance, she had no interest in joining with me or being with me, she was resisting every step of the way, until that poem was brought out, and she just couldn't help herself, you know. So when I was running groups all the time, that's what I'd be thinking, what does this person need? What does this person need? What can I bring that's going to get past the… what's going to be 'the bolt shot back'?

Thor: Do you think you sense what that happens?

Sue: I don't know, I'm not sure if you can predict it, but you can sometimes feel it, or get a sense of it. I think sometimes you can. I know the feeling when you get it right, so I know what that feels like, and often I feel that you can tune in, and get a sense of what people need. I don't always know the right piece of writing, but sometimes I do, or sometimes I hazard a guess. And I take it along and try it, to see what happens.

Thor: So you think it's the right poem for the right person at the right time?

Sue: Yeah, kind of. Hmmm, I do feel like that can happen. That if you knew enough poetry you could. For me it doesn't feel like an intellectual kind of process so much as a sort of feeling, an intuiting process of coming to understand something about that person and then tuning into them. Perhaps knowing a little bit of their story in some way, that might of course be essential. I didn't know that that poem would do that for her, but I did know that the things I had been taking weren't working, and I did know I had to completely change tack, which is what I did that week, and it worked really beautifully, so…

Your whole body is going to sing with it

Thor: Would you say that your experience with this poem is important to you in recognising those break-through moments?

Sue: I think so, yeah, because if you've had that experience of being moved by something then I suppose you, well *I*, would like other people to have that experience, for sure. And I think it is a deep thing. I was going to say it does change you, in some way, in a good way. And what I mean by change is, it does make you a different person, it helps you access some part of yourself that you… that has been a bit buried.

Thor: A buried part.

Sue: You know, a bit that's unknown, or kind of… *un-resonated*. That hasn't been…. the strings haven't been played, or something - like an instrument that's not been used fully, so… Well, I don't know if that's the right metaphor, I'm struggling to find the right kind of metaphor, really.

Thor: You said un-resonated?

Sue: Hmm, some sort of deep - or because what it feels like is that, when that happens, you - even if you don't tell anyone else, it's like you can't *not* experience it if you get a piece of writing that does that to you. You're just going to, your whole being is going to, <u>sing</u> with it.

Thor: Sing with it, yeah.

Sue: Well, it's enlivening, isn't it, it's life-enhancing, you know. I mean you can try and block that, you can try and avoid it or block it, to not have it, but actually that takes quite a lot of energy. So you could just accept it, haha.

Thor: And you felt very able to accept it, then, when it happened?

Sue: Yeah, yeah. I didn't feel any inclination to block it. But I'm thinking of the woman in the prison for instance, who had been very blocking for weeks and weeks, you know, and then this bit of writing comes along, and she just couldn't stop herself, because it just resonated so deeply, and it was so profoundly moving for her. So even though up until then, every time I'd meet her, everything had been rubbish or been boring or crap… I guess what I'm trying to say is that she could have resisted that, but it was so powerful, she couldn't, haha. Does that make sense?

Thor: Yeah, that's an interesting formulation, because she's blocking, she's got a resistance, and then suddenly something…

Sue: So powerful and so resonant, so in tune with what it was that she's in need of. All of her defenses are just gone, you know, and it's quite interesting, because - I'm obviously not in that prison anymore, but one of our colleagues is, and this woman ended up back in prison for a variety of reasons. She'd left when I was there, and then she came back, and so now she's back in the group again. And she was the same sort of sour-faced, resistant person. She'd had a really, really difficult life, this woman, I mean a horrendous kind of life story. And then, apparently, she said to the facilitator, Jo, there's only one poem I like, and Jo, who knew about the Bluebird thing, said, oh, what's that then? I've got it in my room, she said, so Jo said why don't you go and get it, and we'll have a look at it. So she went to her room, and she

had a copy of it. I'd actually laminated her a copy of it, as a little bookmark. So she had that, and she brought it back, and read it out in the group. And then again, from then on, she was right there, in the group, able to be. So, yeah, I think it's just incredibly powerful.

Thor: Interesting, because you said "able to be", so that poem enabled her to be?

Sue: Yeah, absolutely. It enabled her to be in that group in a positive way, in a way that was an act of… she became an act of presence rather than a sort of blocking presence, you know.

Thor: You said you were struggling to find the right words to describe it, and you said that it resonates with, and enhances, your life. Does *The Buried Life* brings you in touch with a depth inside yourself?

Sue: Well, I think there are things in here that have been concerns of mine for most of my life, really. So there are things in this poem that are things that have interested me or, you know, worried me, or have been problems for me. So when I read, when I heard this, and it was read out, for the first time ever, I thought… The idea that someone could be writing about something that was of such concern to me, it's kind of…. well it was mind blowing, really. I suppose because I hadn't read much poetry, and I'd never read anything that kind of personal.

Thor: So you had no expectations that this would do anything for you, but you were open and willing, so to speak?

Sue: No expectations at all. I was there, I went on this course and evidently it was going to be part of my work, even though I hadn't understood that before I went on this course. So I was put on this course basically because of the role I was in. I had never participated in shared reading before. I was living in London at the time. I was completely ignorant, you know.

Thor: How did you come to be on the course?

Sue: Because I got this job, within the library service, to set up these groups. The library service had decided that they were going to have this, what they called Bibliotherapy service, and they'd chosen this model, and then I'd applied for the job, and just happened to be in the right place at the right time. All really, really fortunate, when I look back on it now. I just think, you know, there is a God, haha.

Thor: So that's how you best can express it, there is a meaning, a God, someone led you here?

Sue: Yeah, absolutely.

Thor: Did that feeling arise in you, or grow in you, before you read the poem?

Sue: No. Well in a way. I mean, when I got the job, I was just hugely relieved because I was very new in the UK, I'd only been here a few months, having moved from Australia, and I was struggling to work out how I was going to be here. I didn't even really know that I wanted to be here, I was just here, for a variety of reasons. And then I got this job and I remember, when I got the job, my sister was in hospital, she'd had a very serious accident and she'd been flown to the UK. I was in the hospital with her, and I received the call that I'd got the job, and I actually just burst into tears because I was so relieved, and delighted. And then, within five or six weeks after I got the position, I was on this course. I was relieved to have the job and I wanted the job, although I didn't really entirely know what it was. I was very keen to do it, and I thought I could probably do a reasonable job at that. It was like the job was made for me, even though I didn't really understand what it was about, if that makes sense. And yeah, six weeks later I was on the course, so it's more looking back and at the time I wouldn't have said there is a God. Looking back I think how incredibly fortunate I've been to be able to this, you know, it just doesn't get much better really, does it? In a way it feels like a whole lot of things were leading to this, a combination of things in my life made it all make a lot of sense.

Thor: Maybe it's a leading question, but I just get a feeling that the whole ground had been prepared for this meeting between you and Matthew Arnold?

Sue: Yeah, well, in a way. I suppose it's a meeting of me and shared reading and Matthew Arnold. It was a particular moment and that experience of reading this, of realising that there really was stuff in here. This idea of reading, that the important things in life are in this, are in here - that there's power in it. If I hadn't had the experience with *The Buried Life* on that course, I'm not sure if I would have really entirely got what this was about, what this whole shared reading thing was about. So it concretised it for me, I was made aware of the potency of it, the power of it. I remember after I'd read it, I emailed it to a very close friend of mine, and another thing I did was, I started to think about people who were 'on their own line'. Because I felt like I had this need to identify people who had managed to do it, because you know, some people do manage to do it. You know, to be themselves - being on your own line, this idea of being your truer self, expressing who you are in the world rather than just being some kind of carbon copy of yourself. So I went through this little phase of trying to identify people who had managed to do that.

A bolt is shot back somewhere in your breast

Thor: He says towards the end, "A man becomes aware of his life's flow"…

Sue: "A man becomes aware of his life's flow," oh yeah, of his life's flow, yeah. There's quite a lot of sadness in here as well. This stuff about can I not even sort of have…. "But we, my love! - doth a life, doth a like spell benumb Our hearts, our voices? - must we too be dumb?" It's like he's almost… I mean, can we not even, if we love each other enough, can we not break through this, whatever this thing is that wouldn't let us communicate with each other.

Thor: Because he says as well that "Alas! Is even love too weak to unlock the heart, and let it speak?" and there seems to be so much despair in that.

Sue: Yeah, even though you love this person, deeply love them, you know, you still can't… Just - separateness is still, always there. Hmmm, 'And many a man in his own breast then delves, But deep enough, alas! none ever mines. And we have been on many thousand lines, And we have shown, on each, spirit and power; But hardly have we, for one little hour, Been on our own line, have, have we been ourselves –' I mean he's quite hard on; I'm not entirely sure that's true for me, but there's something about the being authentic, you know, being who you really are. And I think that has been a big thing for me in my life, trying to not being some kind of… cipher, or copy, trying to sort of work out what's important for me, what I really think.

Thor: So there's a struggle to find out who you are, and how to be that, in your world?

Sue: Yeah, not just to do what everyone does, but to actually work out what is important for me and, if I was to do anything, what would it be? Rather than just go along. And I've always been a bit like that, I've never really followed the crowd. 'But hardly have we, for one little hour, Been on our own line, have we been ourselves –'... I don't know, I'd like to think I have been myself. Unless I'm not understanding what he's meaning entirely, it's not like I entirely agree with it, but I think there are people who just do what's expected of them. But I don't feel like I've been one of those people, or, I have been at times in my life, probably lots of times, but I've also been someone who's gone against the grain a lot. And I tend to admire people who do their own thing.

Thor: Yeah. And he does find, although he says it's rare, that "Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear"…

Sue: Hmmm, yeah…

Thor: "And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know." So that line there is to me what the authentic self would be, wouldn't it?

Sue: Yes. "A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast." *Bolt. Shot. Back* - I've never really understood what a bolt shot back means, but it sounds so… *right.* I think it's like, I imagine it to be a shock, a shocking awakening. Like a sort of an aha-moment, a sitting up moment. Or a… it was like a bolt was shot back somewhere in *my* breast

Thor: It seems you have a clear felt sense of what that means.

Sue: Yeah, I think I've got a felt sense of it, but I would find it a bit hard to describe as well. "And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again," that's that awakening of the deepest part of yourself, the bit of you that just… if things aren't used, or noticed, they can just sort of fade away, can't they? So a lost pulse is like something that's there, but it's getting weaker and weaker because it's not ever attended to. Hmmm, so it's not putting something new into him, it's not putting within, he's reawakening something that is there already, it's always there.

Thor: So you recognise something rather than find something new?

Sue: Yeah, hmmm. I think that's definitely what this is about, it's not about putting something new in and it's all there, but it's just about whether you are using it or paying attention to it, or, or whether it's kind of fading away. And then there is this bit: "But often, in the world's, yeah, most crowded streets, But often, in the din of strife, There rises an unspeakable desire after the knowledge of our buried life; A thirst to spend our fire and restless force In tracking out our true, original course;" - So it's like something that's in us, that's always been in us, that's just buried, the buried life, hmm.

Thor: He says that there is a true original course, it's just a matter of tracking it, of finding it – would you concord with that?

Sue: Yeah, yeah. I would, because if I think about people who… When a baby's born, it's like this incredible kind of creative force, and I mean some of them are going to end up in prison, but it's not because there's something in them that's wrong, actually they could just as much end up being, I don't know, some kind of genius. So I think it's in there, but things happen to all of us or, you know, life's hard, isn't it? And that stuff gets laid over, and buried deep often. And the woman in the prison, I reckon it's buried really deep. She had her experiences in her young life, she was only about twenty-four, I think. From what I can

gather, what I was told, her mother basically pimped her out, at about eight, and at twelve her mum gave her heroin. So it's just really, really laid over, but even then, even with that, those kind of experiences she's had in her life, still, this bit of poetry, it touches something absolutely essential in her.

Thor: Would you say that, before you encountered this poem, you felt "an unspeakable desire after the knowledge of your buried life"? Or was it after you read the poem you realised that?

Sue: I think I probably always had that. But that's why it's so powerful, because it's not that I got that from here, it's powerful because someone was speaking about this thing that I always felt. I mean, if I hadn't felt that, and I was reading about it, I'd find that probably interesting and maybe exciting and everything, but it wouldn't feel like it does feel for me, because it's someone speaking about something, writing about something, that's strongly felt. So it's as if it was more powerful because it's something I'm already being aware of. When I read a poem or something where I'm learning or finding something new, something I hadn't known before, or a different kind of experience to what I had in my own life, that's great and really interesting, but it doesn't have the kind of resonance that something like this has.

Thor: When you read this, "a bolt is shot back somewhere in your breast", is that how it felt?

Sue: Yeah, it was, really. But, I mean, when I remember, I remember first reading it and I think I probably cried, I would have been not particularly wanting people to see that, because it was quite a big room, and there was probably twenty-plus people sitting there, it was quite a large group, because there were staff as well. Most of us had been there a few days together, but I didn't feel particularly close to anyone. Yeah, I think I probably did have a weep actually.

Thor: Did anyone pick up on that, or ask you how you felt?

Sue: No, well, it just felt so personal, I actually didn't want anyone to see or notice. I did feel a bit shocked, and I think I didn't really want to talk about it, because there was nobody there that I knew very well. It just felt very, I felt like it was, oh, that it was touching a really tender place. It felt precious. I felt quite protective with myself at the time. When we read it in the group, we didn't spend as much time on the poem as I would have liked. I would have been happy to have a lot more time on it, yeah, but I also would have quite liked not to have anything else be read for a while, so that nothing else took up space in my head, I just wanted this to be there.

Thor: So that feeling of shock, because it was unexpected, that this poem brought…

Sue: I don't think I'd ever had that experience from reading anything before, even novels and stuff which I'd obviously enjoyed. I liked reading but I'd never had that kind of reaction.

Thor: So after this slight shock, were you frightened of the strength of your response?

Sue: No, no, not at all. No, it was like a… it was more like a relief. You know, like I felt a bit less mad, haha. I felt a bit more normal. (*Pause*.) When I'm thinking back to that time, it's almost seven years ago now, and I had only been in the UK for about three or four months at that point, I'd come here because I'd gotten into quite a severe depression. I almost needed to shock myself out of it, so I gave up my job and just, you know, came over. I didn't really know what I was doing, but I was following some kind of deep thread of knowing. It absolutely felt like the right thing to do, I knew it was the right thing to do, but I had no idea what I would do when I got here, I just knew that I was coming, I had a one way ticket, a tiny amount of money. And so I arrived, and I got a bit of work care giving. But I just couldn't do it, you know, I just had to stop doing that as quickly as possible. And this job came up with the library service. I've never worked in a library, it wasn't like I was a librarian or anything, but just a combination of things meant that I ended up getting it. And that was partly why the emotion when I got the job was so strong. I just burst into tears because it was so overwhelming to have this job; it meant I wasn't going to be doing this care giving anymore, it was quite well paid, and I was going to be doing this amazing thing that I didn't really know what it was, but I knew that I had what it would take to do it. I had this feeling because I knew it involved running groups, and I'd done about ten years of psychodrama training, so I had a lot of experience of running groups. I just had this sense that I'd be good at that. I was still really in this depression, actually, and it took probably about a year of being here before it really lifted properly. I don't know, something about this poem connected in with that in some way. I'm not quite sure how, but it just felt so enlivening. I mean, with a depression it's like everything is dampened, and there is this weight on you, and it is hard to have anything that really excites you, so I felt this excited me. It was like this broke through all of that.

Thor: So it was a breakthrough that helped to lift you out of that?

Sue: Yeah, I think so. It was enlivening and energising, you know. Anything that did that was a crucial thing, because a lot of the time I did feel like I was wading through treacle, it was so hard to have forward motion.

Thor: When you told me that, I got goose bumps from thinking about the courage to pack in your job and to just travel to the other side of the world, not knowing what…

Sue: Well, it was that or kill myself.

Thor: That's how it felt?

Sue: That's how it felt, it really felt like that. I'll either finish my life now, or I will give this a go, and if that doesn't work, well then I can still kill myself. I mean, I'm joking about it now, but I was in a very difficult place, and so I just decided I'll give this a go, because nothing can be worse than what it is right now. Nothing can be worse, and it might even be better. So it was kind of brave, but in a way it didn't feel brave at the time. Because when things get really, really tough, it's almost like all you can do is just live minute by minute, and just make decisions minute by minute. And I only made the decision to leave eight to ten weeks before I came, so it wasn't like I'd planned it for a year or anything. I just had the thought, oh I could do that, it came to me one day, and then I just started getting ready to go. I had to pack up my house and rent it out, and make sure I had enough money, buy a ticket, you know, just do that kind of stuff. And then I came, and I mean it wasn't easy. That first year was really quite tough, being here away from everybody, obviously I knew nobody, I've got no family here or anything like that. But actually, the amount of energy it takes and effort it takes to create a life, it was like the shock I needed. It was a very helpful thing, to have to struggle so hard in a strange place, to struggle with making money and finding a place to live. I would have sunk otherwise, if I didn't do it. And I didn't really want to sink, I guess I didn't want to, so having to deal with the day to day living of my new life – because before I didn't really have to think about it, I had my life, had my work - it was a really, really good thing to do.

Thor: I can imagine the relief then to have that phone call.

Sue: For the job, yeah. I feel like I've always been really, really lucky. I don't know if everybody has this, but I suspect not, in fact I'm pretty sure not, but I've always known, like when I make a good decision I know, or when something's right, I know it.

Thor: So that knowing must come from the very depth of you, yeah?

Sue: Yeah, I think so. I've tuned into that as I've gotten older, but even when I was quite young, I've had this ability to know what's good for me and what's not so good for me, and to make decisions. Well, I haven't always made great decisions but even when I've been making

bad decisions, I've known somewhere inside myself that that it's not a good decision, you know, does that make sense?

Thor: I think it does. So when you read the poem, did that strengthen that feeling?

Sue: Yeah. You know, the thing about being on your own line, that was probably the main line for me. The beginning bit was really important, the very beginning of the poem when he's talking about that relationship, that really got me and caught me and got me in, but actually, the line that really had the most impact for me was the one about being on your own line. "But hardly have we, for one little hour, been on our own line, have we been ourselves" - those two lines really were the lines that stuck out the most to me, even more than the bolt shot back. Because, I don't know, something about that just felt really important, just knowing what your line was, and actually being on it, rather than going along someone else's line, or falling off your own, or not even realising that you're not on it, you know. And it was different in that being on our own line, that was the bit that really stuck out to me, hmm.

Something that I will always carry with me

Thor: Maybe I'm over-interpreting, but it's almost like this poem describes your journey from being on the other side of the world to engaging in shared reading.

Sue: Yeah, perhaps. I'm not sure if I'm…

Thor: in the sense that it seems to go from a deep despair to...

Sue: Hmmm… Yeah.

Thor: And it ends with…

Sue: It ends quite hopefully, doesn't it? I mean, he does come back into some happy place.

Thor: I like that line where he sees "the meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze". A very visceral feeling of light and air and being out in the open again.

Sue: Yes – "A man becomes aware of his life's flow, And hears its winding murmur": It's like he's connected into something greater, like he's part of what…. like his life flow is part of the life flow of nature, hmmm. Wonderful, I love it. The fact that the poem has travelled such a great distance in time, adds to its power. It makes it timeless, you know, these ideas are timeless, they're about being human rather than being a twenty first century person, and that

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just feels important really, I don't quite know why. I feel like I know this guy, that's the feeling. I actually haven't really read many of his other poems, which is a bit foolish you know, but it'd be quite good to read a lot more of his stuff. I feel like I would, if I met him, I'd really like him. I don't know if I would, but there's something in this poem that communicates his innermost being. I don't think you can write a poem like this otherwise. It feels like it must really come from someone's real heart, the innermost place of a person. I mean, people can create art and still not be people that you might want to have at your dinner table, but something about this feels different, because this feels so true and authentic to me. I don't know, I could be very wrong. I can't see how someone can write this stuff and not really, really embody it as well. He says, "And long, long we try in vain to speak and act Our hidden self, and what we say and do Is eloquent, is well – but 't is not true!" You can be eloquent but still full of bullshit. I get a feeling with this poem that it is eloquent in its way and it's a beautiful poem, but still it just seems, given the time, very close to how you would actually speak, you know. It's all just pouring out of him really.

Thor: Yeah, pouring out is a good word, because he's talking about that stream and the river and the flow and sort of subterrain. How did it feel when you took this experience with you into the next poem you read?

Sue: Well, I started to look out for things that would have a similar impact. But I don't think I've had that kind of experience again. I mean there are lots of poems that I really, really like now, and there's some poems that I really love, but I'd struggle to name another one to match that. I don't have a technical background, I'm such a feeling person, I don't really go on the intellect of the how the poem's constructed or put together or what's a good poem or what's a bad poem, for me it's just really about feeling.

Thor: What I gather from what you've said, is that this poem has changed your life.

Sue: Yeah, it sounds a bit twee, maybe, but it has.

Thor: Other people have told me the book saved their life. Would you say so too?

Sue: Hmm, I wouldn't say it's saved my life, no. Because… I wouldn't say it's saved my life, I keep on using the work impact, it's had a really significant impact, definitely. Has it changed my life? It has really, because it's opened me up to the power of the written word, so in that respect it has really. I don't know if it's saved my life, I wouldn't go so far as to say that, I mean, I think my life was already on a sort of upward trajectory by the time I read it. A

number of things had happened, even just getting on the plane and coming here, you know. That was like a saving in a way. It's a whole combination of things that have been really helpful. But the poem has really helped me. I love it, because – I mean I love it for itself and I think it's a great poem – but it also has a special resonance for me in that it opened something up in me. Something that I will always carry with me. So I don't think of it so much as saving my life, I think of it more as, I don't know, <u>reminding</u> me of something important, getting back to sort of excavating something "from the soul's subterranean depth."

Afterwards, as I step out into the din of the street, there are two voices inside my head: one of worry, one of wonder. I question myself: did we manage to recreate that 'fullness of feeling', our original shared moment, in the interview? And even if we did, was it too messy, too scattered? But foremost in my mind is the thought of Sue following her deep thread of knowing. Also, I think of Matthew Arnold. If he could have overheard our dialogue, how would it have felt to him, to know of Sue's experience, to realise that his words had found their way to her, 'pursuing with indiscernible flow' their way across centuries and continents?

Chapter 7. Varieties of Life-changing reading experience

Interpretation of Esther's Story: *From Discord to Concord*

Introduction

In the following I will argue that Esther's experience of her parents' troubled marriage is connected to significant reading experiences that took place prior to encountering *Episode*. The external discord is severe enough to make Esther suffer an internal conflict constituting a crisis. I will discuss her reading experience in terms of a metamorphosis: just as the visage of the poems' character is transformed, so is her view of her parents. This discovery of a metamorphosis leads to a recognition of the underlying truth about her parents' union. This recognition is a special kind of *anagnorisis:* it is deeply affective and strikes Esther as a sudden revelation. I propose that this revelation be conceptualised as an *ekaphany.* I contend that this *ekaphany* is brought about by a comic katharsis where her confusion and despair is dispelled, allowing her to achieve a sense of inner reconciliation with her parents. The transformative reading experience motivates her quest to learn the language of emotions. This search takes the shape of a 'voyage and return', in which Esther looks for a way of helping people recognize the truth of their relationships. When she eventually discovers it in the form of Emotion-Focused Couples' Therapy, with its focus on the subtext of vulnerability, it also marks the return to *Episode*. I contend that the life-long return to, and development of, the transformative affective images and patterns embedded in the poem in her work as a therapist, means that Esther's story is shaped around *metamorphoses.* The poem and the experience of reading it is still alive and active, lending a profound meaning to Esther's remark that she "learned the poem by heart." Her mode of engagement may be said to be a kind of 'readerese'.

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Bjørneboe versus Børlie

Esther immediately accepts the invitation to read the poem aloud. She does, however, offer to "say something about why" the poem "made a very deep impression at that time." This offer could partly be made in an attempt to compose herself and defer the emotionally charged moment of reading, but more likely she feels the need to provide background information so that the recipient may understand what was at stake for her, and thus be enabled to empathise with the depth and ramifications of her realisation. As such, it has the function of an orientation sequence about 'that time'. The implicit assumption is that before we can understand the reading experience itself, we must know what situation she was in when she encountered the poem. What, then, does Esther deem relevant to provide sufficient orientation? There are two main aspects: firstly, her parents' marital discord and its effects on her; secondly, her reading history as a series of significant experiences. These two strands seem to be intertwined: not only is there conflict between her parents, but she experiences a conflict between two poets and their opposed worldviews.

The parents' conflict is narrated from the perspective of the mother, who is portrayed as "terribly angry and resentful." It must have been very difficult not to takes sides in the parents' conflict, and her mother is to a certain extent presented as the protagonist of the story. This mirrors the narrative structure in the poem, where *She* is the focaliser in the last two stanzas. Her mother's story is contextualized in terms of gender issues, and we are told her "secret story." Esther emphasises two important consequences of growing up in this "conflict zone": it was "very frightening" and she could not understand "the point of such a miserable relationship." Moreover, she repeatedly emphasises that the feelings this frightening atmosphere instilled in her - "anxious, angry, confused, feeling abandoned" – were ones she could not process: "when you grow up in a home environment like that, then as a child you learn nothing about what you feel." Thus, she thought she was "the only person in the world to have strange feelings." Esther cannot recall the onset of the intensification of the conflict, but it appears that in the course of her first few years she internalised a relatively secure attachment pattern. She relates a significant childhood memory: her elopement. "The first time a book made a deep impression" was when Bobby Bear "inspired her to protest." She could not have run

away from home without having faith that she would be alright, and clearly she evidences strong coping resources. Interestingly, she seeks shelter in the woods.

An internal conflict between two worldviews is configured in the form of an opposition between two poets of great importance to her: Jens Bjørneboe and Hans Børlie. Bjørneboe gave her "a feeling that everything was hopeless," although he did not so much instill this feeling as "confirm a negative worldview" that was forming in her at the time.[1] Børlie on the other hand, gave her hope. His distance from human affairs through communion with nature offered a respite: "If one was to think about all the terrible stuff all the time, one wouldn't be able to go on living." Børlie "managed to place the human within nature" for her. There are at least two ways in which this worldview conflict can be connected to the parental conflict. When she escaped from the place of hopelessness and conflict, she went into the woods, where the complications of human relationships recede into the background - precisely the experience Børlie confirmed in his poems. Alternatively, it is almost as if Bjørneboe and Børlie come to represent one parent each: the fatalism and depressiveness of her mother is reflected in Bjørneboe, while the retreat into the vast stillness of the outdoors, her father's strategy, is represented by Børlie.

Deleterious consequences of inter-parental conflict

Naturally, we have no means of establishing the objective level of the frequency and intensity of marital conflict in Esther's home. However, given Esther's account of her upbringing, both in terms of the emphasis placed on the parents' relationship and her descriptions of how it affected her, it is entirely reasonable to conjecture that the subjective impact was highly significant. Interparental aggression and conflict is common and has deleterious consequences not just for the marital dyad, but for the entire family.[2] Children who are exposed to such

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[1] Jens Bjørneboe also had a life-changing reading experience, albeit not of the redemptive kind. In his autobiographical novel *The Silence*, he writes: "Then there's something else, which keeps popping up. It happened thirty-eightyears ago, and changed my whole life. I was fifteen years old at the time, and it was all because of a book. I read it through in one day; it wasn't that long. It was a thin book with contents of a descriptive sort; and even though I had been quite depressed in the previous fourteen years as well, still I can say that since reading this book I've never been happy again, or only for brief moments […] It may be the most important book I've ever read, and it put an end to my childhood." Jens Bjørneboe, *The Silence,* trans. Esther Greenleaf Mürer (Chester Springs, PA: Dufour Editions, 2000), 164. The book in question was Wolfgang Langhof's account from the German concentration camp Sachsenhausen, *The Peat Bog Soldiers.* The immediate impact of the war on many Norwegian writers of that generation was major.

[2] E. Mark Cummings, and Patrick T. Davies, *Children and Marital Conflict* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994).

conflict have been shown to have a higher incidence of emotional and behavioural problems.[3] Children's coping responses to such stressful events as marital discord are linked to the level of their psychological adjustment, having a severe negative impact on self-worth and leading to externalizing behaviour and proneness to depression. Bishop and Ingersoll found that this link is a stronger predictor of adjustment than for instance non-traditional family structures.[4] Rogers and Holmbeck investigated the moderating effects of children's cognitive appraisals and coping strategies on their adjustment to interparental aggression. They found that problematic beliefs about interparental conflict (such as blaming one parent, fear of divorce and abandonment, feeling of personal responsibility) and ineffective coping strategies were related to greater maladjustment, particularly resulting in negative self-worth and depression. They "expected that children who lived in highly conflictual homes but who had adaptive appraisals and coping strategies would have relatively better emotional and behavioural functioning than their counterparts who had problematic beliefs and ineffective coping strategies."[5] Their hypothesis that perceived peer availability and the use of social supports could buffer the negative effects of the parents' conflict received tentative support. The study does not define what is included under the term "social support," but it is unlikely that reading fiction and poetry is one of them. However, Esther's reading experience may well be counted as a coping strategy and adaptive appraisal. It is quite clear from Esther's account that she did harbor "problematic beliefs" such as fear, guilt and despair – to an extent where we are justified in describing her situation at the time as a crisis. The parental conflict holds her back, where all the energy needed to focus on the challenges of the psycho-social stage of development is not available to her. [6] Emotions of fear, guilt and confusion are likely to result from being reactively embroiled in the

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[3] John H. Grych, and Frank D. Fincham, "Marital conflict and children's adjustment: A cognitive-contextual framework," *Psychological Bulletin* 108, no. 2 (1990): 267-90.

[4] Sue M. Bishop, and Gary M. Ingersoll, "Effects of marital conflict and family structure on the self-concepts of pre- and early adolescents," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 18, no. 1 (1989): 25-38.

[5] Mary Jo Rogers, and Grayson N. Holmbeck, "Effects of Interparental Aggression on Children's Adjustment: The Moderating Role of Cognitive Appraisal and Coping," *Journal of Family Psychology* 11, no. 1 (1997): 125-30.

[6] In Erikson's classic theory of Psychosocial development, a person passes through eight distinct stages in their development of personhood. The theory is based on the epigenic principle: Each stage is built upon successful resolution of the challenges of the previous one. The fifth stage, identity versus role confusion, must be negotiated before the young person can find their role in adult society. See: Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968). Erikson's theory does not account for how crisis resolution takes place. But it is a reasonable conjecture that the "problematic beliefs" stemming from interparental conflict will jeopardise the transition.

conflict. However, alongside these problematic beliefs she also had bountiful coping resources in the form of reading and seeking the comforts of nature.

Thus her crisis can metaphorically be represented as *Bjørneboe versus Børlie*: an internal struggle between despair (negative self-worth and lack of belief in self-efficacy) and inner security.[7] She cannot protect herself from "the negative worldview" as long as she views the most important relationship in her world as "terrible", and she has to suffer the "burden" of living "in the conflict zone". How is the destructive parental relationship of "shouting and screaming" played out? Her dad, having grown up an obedient and subservient boy under a domineering mother, was frightened of his angry wife. The wife was tough, brave and imposing. Her strategy of being "verbally combative" would make him hide in silence or go off to "that river he'd retreat to every summer and every Sunday." This in turn would activate her feelings of contempt and make her more confrontative, "fuming" and "venomous." According to John Gottman's research on predictors of negative future trajectories of marital relationships, facial expressions of negative emotion, particularly one of fear on the husband's face and one of contempt on the wife's, is a primary indicator of divorce. Habitual negative ways of expressing one's emotions lead to stable destructive patterns in interactions. Critical angry blaming on the part of one spouse will be followed by an avoidance of emotional expression and withdrawal by the other (what Esther later on refers to as the negative "loop").[8] Susan Johnson has found that whereas in secure relationships "protest at perceived inaccessibility is recognized and accepted," insecure attachment responses are organized along two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance.[9] Based on Esther's portrayal of her parents, it is reasonable to conjecture that these two responses correspond to that of her mother and her father, respectively. Of the first strategy, Johnson says:

> When the connection with an irreplaceable other is threatened, attachment emotions, particularly anxiety, can become hyperactivated. Attachment behaviours become heightened and intense; anxious clinging, pursuit, and even aggressive attempts to obtain a response from the loved one escalate. Even when the loved one responds, the response may not be completely trusted, and a heightened emotional sensitivity

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[7] It is important to note here that her evaluation of Bjørneboe is not shared by everyone. There are bound to be many Norwegians of that generation for whom Bjørneboe was felt as a real help in coming to terms with problems relating to identity, depression or conflict.

[8] John Gottman, "An agenda for marital therapy," in *The Heart of the Matter: Perspectives on Emotion in Marital Therapy*, ed. Susan M. Johnson and Leslie S. Greenberg (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1994), 259-96.

[9] Susan Johnson, "Extravagant Emotion. Understanding and Transforming Love Relationships in Emotionally Focused Therapy," in *The Healing Power of Emotion. Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice,* ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 264.

to relationship cues may remain. This response can be momentary or it can become chronic and develop into a habitual way of dealing with emotions and engaging the partner.

The second strategy for dealing with the lack of safe emotional engagement, especially when hope for responsiveness has been lost, is

> to try to deactivate the attachment system and suppress attachment emotions and needs, focusing on external tasks and avoiding attempts at emotional engagement. … If this affect regulation style becomes generalized, it effectively cuts off the person from an awareness of his or her emotional responses and needs and shuts out the partner.[10]

Johnson notes that these two basic affect regulation strategies – the anxious heightening of emotion eliciting hypervigilant behaviours, and the detached avoidance – tend to pull for confirming responses from a partner. Thus, these are the experiences Esther brings to the reading of the poem.

It is reasonable to suppose that underneath her despair, accentuated by her reading of Bjørneboe, there was self-confidence and assertiveness that could not be accessed. My understanding of her crisis is thus that the despair is a secondary emotion produced by the fright and loneliness stemming from the fighting atmosphere, and masks the primary emotional adaptability needed to answer the demands of identity development. Underneath the reaction of hopelessness, there seems to be secure attachment. Shaver and Mikulincer note that people who are securely attached can "reappraise situations, construe events in relatively benign terms, symbolically transform threats into challenges, hold onto an optimistic sense of self-efficacy and attribute undesirable events to controllable, temporary or context dependent causes."[11] After her reading experience, Esther evidently was enabled to do just that.

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[10] Ibid, 264.

[11] Philip R. Shaver, and Mario Mikulincer, "Adult attachment strategies and the regulation of emotion," in *Handbook of Emotion Regulation,* ed. J.J. Gross (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 450.

TRANSACTION WITH THE LITERARY WORK

Metamorphosis

Esther's reading experience took place in a classroom. One may imagine a panoply of different responses made by the students to the reading of *Episode.* Perhaps one student will have related the poem to the poet's own life and marriage, another will have accurately placed it in terms of era and genre. A third may have analysed its stylistic features, perhaps even relating the form to the content: how the alternating feminine and masculine rhymes appear to mirror the subject matter. Perhaps also the students were well-versed enough in modernist aesthetics to appreciate the openness of the poem's ending. Perhaps they saw the poem as a springboard for discussion of gender issues and the sociopolitical context of the poem. All this without the poem necessarily having left a *deep impression* upon them. Nor could the teacher know that among the schoolchildren there was one girl who was forever changed by the experience. How did the reading of the poem make her "able to understand the complexity and contraries of my parent's terrible marriage"? What is the content of her revelatory realisation?

When reading the poem, the experiencing I's initial impression is: "Yes, this is them! Two forsaken people." The interaction described in the poem mirrors that of her parents closely. We cannot know at which point during the reading process this moment of recognition took place. But we can imagine that this occurred before the last stanza. Her appraisal of the couples' - and by extension her parents' - situation is that they are "forsaken people." What is meant by "forsaken"? They have not abandoned each other; they are not so much forsaken by the other as they are together in their forsakenness: they are left to their own devices, without anyone to help them. As Esther remarks of her parents: "They did not understand their own emotions at all. They could not understand themselves, and they could not understand each other." She describes the next moment in her realisation thus: "Oh, my God! Is that how it is?" Through experiencing the poem, she has gained an inside perspective. Whereas before she was "very angry" with them, and did not understand "the point of such a miserable relationship," she can now feel how it must be like for them to be in this marriage. "All of a sudden I could see them as they were, as human beings. As two vulnerable people." This change of perspective may be called a metamorphosis: the parents' appearance has changed for her.

In her article "Emotion in Romantic Partners: Intimacy found, intimacy lost, intimacy reclaimed", Marion Solomon describes transference by recourse to the metaphor of "putting

old faces on new people."[12] It is as if each partner puts a mask on the face of the other, distorting their true identity by changing them into a character in an inner drama stemming from the past. Thus, their interaction pattern, consisting of his withdrawal and her angry pursuit, bears a resemblance to certain transformations famously depicted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. When Apollo acts condescendingly towards Cupid, he retaliates by shooting two arrows "of contrary purpose: one is for rousing passion, the other is meant to repel it." The first "smote to the core of Apollo's being" and caused him to fall in love, the second was "implanted in Daphne's bosom," and made her flee "from the very thoughts of a lover."[13]

Apollo pursues her, but Daphne rejects him. When Apollo persistently pleads, Daphne cries out to her father, the river, for help, and he responds by transforming her into a laurel tree. Only thus can she survive. In the story of Io, the young nymph tries to flee from Jupiter, but he rapes her. To evade the suspicious Juno, he turns Io into a "snow-white heifer".[14] Juno then demands Io as a present, and appoints Argus to keep watch over her. Upset by Io's suffering, Jupiter sends Mercury to kill Argus. Is it too fanciful to suggest that it is as if Esther's father withdraws from his wife by appealing to the river, whereas she becomes like Juno, angry that he prefers the company of the nymphs and dryads of nature to hers, castigating and trying to change him?

In Ovid, these myths contain a second transformation. Eventually, Io is transformed back into a nymph. And Apollo, realizing that he cannot have Daphne, transforms his disappointment by turning the laurel into a symbol. *Episode* may be interpreted as such a relation of a double metamorphosis of the two characters. One can imagine the first metamorphosis having taken place prior to the narrated scene, where they go from showing open love for each other to retreating into fixed roles of defensiveness. Then, suddenly, a world opens up behind this pattern. Esther's transport is analogous to the movement within the poem: She goes from only seeing a persona with a cold and stiff mask, a solid armour, to seeing the human being behind the mask, as it suddenly melts away and leaves exposed the vulnerable person underneath. Instead of two opponents who seem less than fully human, the objects of fear, anger, scorn and contempt, her parents are transformed into two rounded characters in

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[12] Marion F. Solomon, "Emotions in Romantic Partners," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 250.

[13] Ovid, *Metamorphoses,* trans. David Raeburn (London: Penguin, 2004), 29.

[14] Ibid., 36.

their separate identities, worthy of compassion, understanding and love. Her parents' manifest behaviour is now understood as just the surface level of their relationship, hiding a great depth: "That there was a reason for why they were like that. And that there was a depth there, that something went on under the surface behaviour." The realisation that "went through" her presumably tied her perceptions of their interaction to a meaning she had felt but had not connected to previously: "Poor mum and dad. They must be suffering so." The softening moment that Esther the therapist sees between partners is also what takes place in Esther as she is reading, with regard to how she related to her own parents. The anger makes way for compassion, and therefore opens up for forgiveness: "They were in need of compassion. That's what I suddenly understood. They weren't to blame for it!" She no longer blames them, because they are forsaken: The discord is not their fault. They cannot truly see each other, but only the projection of a mask created by their own past experiences.

Ekaphany and anagnorisis

Esther describes the effect of her reading experience as "absolutely *moving*"; giving her "a *profound insight*"; "*an instant illumination*"; it "was *enlightening*". "A *realisation* went through me". "All this was *revealed* to me when I read the poem." (My emphasis). There are several knowledge-words here related to inner vision: insight, illumination, enlightenment. What was shrouded in darkness is suddenly brought to light. But this is not merely a cognitive realisation. It is also an *affective* experience, as she employs metaphors of depth and movement: she was deeply moved, and the realisation "went through" her. "To realise" means to become fully aware of, to bring into concrete existence and to make the potential actual. When we become fully aware of something, we take a potential truth and turn it into concrete actuality, and we take a general truth and make it personal.

Intuitively, it would seem apposite to call Esther's "instant revelation" an 'epiphany', in accordance with McDonald's findings from his study of "epiphanic experiences."[15] The antecedent state he describes as marked by "periods of anxiety, depression and inner turmoil" ties in with Esther's experience. And her reading experience did lead to "an acute awareness of something new, something that the individual had previously been blind to." And it was a momentary experience which resulted in "an experience of profound change and

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[15] Matthew G. McDonald, "The Nature of Epiphanic Experience," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 48, no. 1 (January 2008): 89-115. This study is discussed in the Literature Review part.

transformation" for Esther, "made significant and enduring by the ascription of personal meaning."[16] The precondition for her epiphanic leap is the depth of the emotional significance for her of her parents's interaction. [E]motional predisposition is required if the reader is to make the epiphanic leap,"[17] Longbaum declares. It is unclear what he means by "emotional predisposition" – whether this is an innate trait or an antecedent emotional state. However, it is reasonable to assume the latter. Longbaum argues that epiphany is an "inevitable concomitant" of realistic fiction and poetry, since "the reader must be relied on to transform the details into visionary significance […]. When the transformation does not come off, it is because the author has not supplied the necessary structure for transformation."[18] Esther does seem to imply such a leap: "The poem helped me over – into that experience". Clearly, there are strong resemblances between the descriptions of epiphany and Esther's experience. Furthermore, Irene Hendry remarked that with regard to epiphanies in modern narratives, the most common technique is a sudden revelation of character "through an apparently trivial incident, action or single detail,"[19] which is precisely the device employed by Hagerup in *Episode.* However, in these descriptions of epiphany there is little emphasis placed on the bodily-affective component so marked in Esthers' account. Besides, as I argued in my clarification of the term, the emphasis on suddenness is a connotative meaning of epiphany. Therefore, Esther's account is in fact more accurately designated as an *ekaphany:* It is a sudden, unexpected appearance that carries strong affective components.

Esther says later on in her narrative, that in the rare moments of happiness in the home, the children experienced "a physical relief. 'Ah!'. As if the stress and tension would leave our bodies too. Because we had been walking on eggshells." And this kind of "release" is "what happens in the poem. In the last stanza." Implicitly, a part of the affective experience of reading was a physical release of tension. "There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. To the cognition of the brain must be added the experience of the soul," wrote Arnold Bennett in his journal in 1897. We may know something to be true, but we have to feel its force – before that it is not *our* truth. Although

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Robert Langbaum, "The Epiphanic moment in Wordsworth and Modern Literature," in *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Experience*, ed. Wim Tigges (Atalanta, GA: Rodopi BV, 1999), 44.

[18] Ibid., 40.

[19] Irene Hendry, "Joyce's Epiphanies," *Sewanee Review, LIV* (1946): 461.

elicited by a trivial incident, the sensuous experience of the fingers stroking through the hair, it enacts a metamorphosis. Metamorphosis is inevitably an affective-bodily experience. The poem says: "then his fingers stroked through his hair," not that *he* stroked his fingers. As if the fingers acted without his conscious knowledge or consent – seemingly appearing out of nowhere.

What is "the necessary structure for transformation" that the author has supplied Esther with? She says that "the poem describes precisely how they would act." The poem's title, *Episode*, may carry two different meanings. The etymology of the word is given as

> directly from Greek *epeisodion* "an episode," literally "an addition," noun use of neuter of *epeisodios* "coming in besides," from *epi* "in addition" (see *epi-*) + *eisodos* "a coming in, entrance" (from *eis* "into" + *hodos* "way"). Transferred sense of "outstanding incident, experience" first recorded in English 1773.

From this 'addition', we can see how it has come to connote a passing incident of no great consequence in a person's life. Its actual denotation, on the other hand, is of a narrative unit within a larger dramatic work – the material contained between two choric odes in the Greek drama. It is precisely these two meanings that are played upon, and played out, in the poem.

The poem's opening line is an ironic statement, denying that it is in fact a quarrel: "It was by no means a quarrel." Who makes this statement? This is an instant of free indirect discourse. The words seem to be the narrator's, but whose perception is it? It could be focalised through the *He* person, and thus directly continued in the next line, in which the denial is clearly coming from him: "Absolutely not, he said." However, it may also be her judgment, which he then responds to. If the focalisation in the opening line is attributed to her, then they both agree that it is not a quarrel. Then, ironically, the poem starts with pseudo-agreement. Thus, we have an *in medias res* opening: an open conflict must have preceded this scene, and now the two revert to familiar reactive patterns in the wake of the argument. The polite words mask feelings of animosity. He retreats into silence, cutting off communication by denying that there is a conflict. For an instant, it seems that they will leave it off there, as her mouth is "compressed." However, that is merely an interlude while they are both "searching for new weapons." She is preparing an attack, looking for ammunition in the shape of venomous words, when she has her *ekaphany*. (This moment perhaps makes us having to read the third stanza again: it was focalised through her, and thus it was her assumption that he was also preparing an attack. However, we do not know what goes on inside him at this point. He may no longer be looking for "a cutting phrase.") Why the *in medias res* opening? It means that there is an untold scene preceding the narrated one, something that occurs prior to the poem and which the reader must

surmise, and by implication it therefore hints that there may be a succeeding scene, also to be completed by the reader's imagination – in other words, the poem is an episode within a larger, untold drama

The fingers stroking the hair could have been merely a "coming in besides," and simply have been a passing incident that confirms the habitual aspects of their cohabitation – there will be many more episodes like it. However, it is transformed into a moment of utmost significance through her ekaphany. Because 'there is no sixth stanza', the poem does not explicitly tell us the outcome of her ekaphany. Will she be able to communicate it to him, and how will he respond to this? Whether her internal change will precipitate a lasting change in their marriage can only be determined by the reader. The ekaphany as such only marks the potential for reconciliation. If they miss the opportunity opened up by the ekaphany, then the ekaphany is reduced to a mere "episode"; if they grasp the opportunity to turn the tide, then *Episode* becomes an *episode,* the turning point in a dramatic structure. In Aristotelian terms, there is *anagnorisis*: she recognises his true identity – he is still the person who loves her. A famous example of such an anagnorisis of the loved one occurs in *The Odyssey,* as the identity of the hero is recognized despite his disguise, through a small detail.

Whether there be *peripeteia*, a reversal of their fortunes, from being caught in a "vicious loop" to entering a virtuous cycle of increased intimacy and (relative) harmony, the poem thus seemingly leaves undecided. If the poem is read as a lyric, it is concerned with the moment of ekaphany. However, if the text is understood as a narrative unit within a larger drama, it may be interpreted as a turning point in their relation – in which case this episode will be followed by another 'ode', where love replaces strife. Seen in this light, the poem is made into an episode in a comedy. Given the title and the narrative structure, the second reading is perhaps more likely. In this case, the *peripeteia* is a natural consequence of the *anagnorisis*: It has made such a deep impression upon her that she will have to act upon it and communicate it to her husband. However, Esther is adamant that this will not happen: "in this poem she is unable to say: 'I love you, and it's a terrible shame that we are acting like this. It's just that I get so upset and disappointed and hurt, you see. And then I react with anger and bitterness.' She cannot say that." When I asked whether she will be able to do so *after* her sudden realisation, Esther rejects this possibility: "No, she won't. And neither could my parents." It is important to note here that Esther also perceives a difference between her parents and the couple in the poem. Commenting on the turning point in the poem, she says:

> Then suddenly she becomes aware that he is not out to hurt her. He doesn't understand much either, and really he feels quite helpless, doesn't he. And she no longer feels the urge to say the poisonous things she had intended to. I saw very little of that with my parents. Not much reconciliation.

The statement is equivocal. Here she indicates that the poem ends with reconciliation. She seems to say that there was no evidence of anagnorisis manifest in the parents' relationship, because the poisonous things continued to be said – therefore reconciliation could not take place. On the other hand, the lack of reconciliation does not exclude the possibility of anagnoristic knowledge of the "tensed cord" of love, only that they were unable to act upon it. Esther says that the emotional tie that binds them "has not been torn asunder despite all the pain they have undergone. And that is what I realised was the case with my parents too." It is unclear here what is immediately realised and what she "only thought much later." What is evident is that the experiencing I realises three things through her ekaphany:

> "I realised that this experience must be common to all people […] I am not the only one to have experienced something like this."
>
> "I could see them as they were, as two vulnerable human beings."
>
> "There was a reason for why they were like that."

Thus, the realisation that the elements of forsakenness and vulnerability, and latent feelings under the surface behaviour, are *normal*, changes her. When asked if this change gave her "the room to explore who you were, and your own feelings aside from those connected to your parents," she confirms this. Anger gives way to compassion; problematic beliefs regarding her own isolation are replaced by feeling connected to the common lot. Thus, the secondary feelings of despair and confusion dissipate, leaving her no longer adumbrated by the shadow of her parents' relationship, but free to venture forth in search of her own separate identity. My interpretation of Esther's reading is thus that although she explicitly denies reconciliation and a leap out of the "loop", this is based on her real-world knowledge of typical interactions. The *effect* the reading experience has on her is an affective realisation of the comic pattern: the move from confusion and discord to union.

Comic Katharsis

The form of comedy has two different tendencies, according to Northrop Frye: on the one hand towards irony and satire, on the other towards romantic comedy. In the former, the emphasis is on the blocking characters, in the latter it is on the scenes of discovery and reconciliation.[20] We may say that Old Comedy represents the former, whereas the latter is represented in the comic tradition established through Menander's New Comedy. In Menander, the transport from confusion, contempt and despair to joyful reconciliation is the primary plot structure. In this genre, the central characters are ordinary people with their follies and problems in marriage and relationships. Identity confusion over what is a mask and what is the true self is resolved - or dissolves - to be replaced by clarity and union in love. Of the characters in comedy, Frye remarks: "it is more frequently a lack of self-knowledge than simple hypocrisy that characterizes them."[21] The fundamental movement of comedy is from illusion to reality, hence the importance of creating and dispelling illusion: "The plots of comedy are often complicated because there is something inherently absurd about complications."[22] The comic ending, according to Frye, is generally manipulated by a twist in the plot, and will often "involve metamorphosis of character." Psychologically, says Frye, the ending of comedy "is like the removal of a neurosis or blocking point and the restoration of an unbroken current of energy and memory."[23]

It is my argument that it is precisely through this comic form that we may understand not simply the poem's dramatic structure, but also the "necessary structure for transformation" that brings about Esther's ekaphanous anagnorisis. The dialectic of emotional development in romantic partners described by Solomon, "intimacy found, intimacy lost, intimacy reclaimed," is the dramatic structure of *Episode*. This reflects the tripartite structure that, according to Cristopher Booker, characterises the comic form. At first the characters live under the shadow of confusion and despair because they are shut up from one another. Gradually, there is a tightening of the knot: the discord deteriorates until the pressure of darkness is at its most acute and everyone is in a nightmarish tangle. Suddenly the resolution happens: with the coming to

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[20] Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 166.

[21] Ibid., 172.

[22] Ibid., 171.

[23] Ibid., 171.

light of things not previously recognised, perceptions are radically altered. Shadows are dispelled, the situation is transformed and the characters are brought together in a state of joyful union.[24] This structure is clearly borne out for instance in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a play that takes much inspiration from Ovid. Hermia and Lysander initially love each other, but under the shadow, in the enchanted forest, confusion is created and nobody can see each other clearly. In the resolution, confusion dissolves and there is a return to love. William Carroll, in his study of Shakespeare's comedies, argues that "although metamorphosis is not exclusively a comic theme, […] few critics have considered metamorphosis as central to a definition of comedy."[25] According to Carroll, metamorphosis is different from mutability and maturation. It requires that somebody recognisably changes their nature. The explicit change may be man turning into animal, but it may also be the assumption of a mask of disguise, or a psychological shift. "Above all, metamorphosis prompts questions of identity. The boundaries transgressed, the shapes dissolved, may be physical and external – man to wolf, woman to water – but the equally frequent inner transformations may be more significant than the outward ones."[26] Carroll says that masking and disguise dramatises how identities can shift, collapse and reform, and that "disguise always constitutes an encounter with the metamorphic"; therefore it "does not merely represent metamorphosis: it *is* metamorphosis."[27]

Although there is "not much reconciliation" between her parents, the poem allows her to experience the transport from confusion to clarity: the veil of illusion is lifted, and the lost intimacy can be reclaimed. She can imagine a different outcome to the "realistic" one she has witnessed in her family home. The ekaphany leads to a comic anagnorisis. It is brought about by (re-)metamorphosis; suddenly and abruptly, a twist in the plot occurs that leads to a special form of insight: one can see the face through the mask. The revelation of the true identity is "deeply sensed." The ekaphany is a deeply affective experience. The hardening mask of coldness, bitterness and hatred that had previously transformed the lovers into personae less than fully human, melts away to reveal the underlying emotion of love and restore the vulnerability and openness of the characters. This recognition may be understood to affect a

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[24] Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why we tell stories* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2004), 107-152.

[25] William C. Carroll, *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 37.

[26] Ibid., 25.

[27] Ibid., 26.

katharsis in Esther. "Sympathy and ridicule" is purged, leading to a purification of the underlying emotion of joy. By "ridicule" we must here understand the way Esther saw her parents: as caricatures, living in a pointless marriage, the subjects of blame. By "sympathy" we must here understand the resulting secondary emotion of despair: growing up in this atmosphere of hostility, it is hard for her to differentiate her feelings about self and world from those about her parents. According to Susan Johnson, one of the originators of EFT for couples, an attachment theory perspective is adopted vis a vis partners in conflict:

> many extreme emotional responses in distressed couples as primal panic or secondary reactive emotions to this panic. This approach differs from other perspectives, wherein these responses might be seen as signs of immaturity, a lack of communication skill, a personality flaw, or a sign of 'enmeshment' in the couple's relationship.[28]

Thus, rather than judging the response, one meets it with empathy. When judged, these responses may be met with contempt, and seen as ridiculous – or with fear, and seen as threatening. In both cases there is confusion. The difference in the two attitudes of empathy and judgment may be said to correspond to the difference in perspectives before and after Esther's katharsis, in as much as the latter is evidence of implicit "ridicule" – the persons are judged as base and inferior.

Through the metamorphosis, these feelings are revealed to be only secondary, as no longer belonging to her, and can be cast out. The "joyful" feeling is one of being freed up to find one's role in society. Moreover, Esther manages to mobilise her creative resources. This crisis is now turned into a quest to "understand the psyche": "I have to find out why people act the way they do. What on earth is driving them? What is going on with human beings?" It is as if Esther has to go in pursuit of "the sixth stanza" or write the subtext to the poem.

Expressive enactment

Gradually she realises that "the language of emotions" can only be learnt through dialogue: through conversations and reading literature. Her two-fold description of her way of reading literature is interesting in its complexity. On the one hand, she relates it as a dialogue with the characters in the book: "you address them and you talk to them." Esther states that for her, "reading is a way of gaining greater affective awareness." And the talking she engages in with

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[28] Johnson, "Extravagant Emotion," 264.

characters is highly affective: an inner shouting of support, admonition, encouragement: "'Stop being so bloody self-destructive!', 'You musn't put up with this!'" As if they can hear her, and respond to her, "as if it were a real person". This is how "care about the characters" shows itself, in active intersubjective engagement. It is reminiscent of 'motherese', the manner in which mothers talk to their babies in communication of affect.[29] They wholeheartedly engage in dialogue, attributing mental states and feelings to the baby, long before the baby has acquired language, as if the baby understood every word and in fact responded in kind. This is what the developmental psychologist Daniel Stern refers to as "infant-elicited social behaviour."[30] What mothers have always known, that the baby is born with awareness specifically receptive to subjective states in another person, was put forward as the theory of innate intersubjectivity when researchers found that mother and infant, as early as two months, "while they were looking at and listening to each other, were mutually regulating one another's interests and feelings in intricate, rhythmic patterns, exchanging multimodal signals and imitations of vocal, facial and gestural expression."[31] Furthermore, the regulation of this primary human communication, argues Trevarthen and Aitken, "depends on an innate 'virtual other' process in the infant's mind."[32] This virtual other in the mind finds its correlate in the mirror neurons of the brain. Gallese et al. argue that present evidence of mirroring neural systems for "reading" another's intentions, linguistic expressions, emotions and somatic sensations points to "neuronal mechanisms whereby the observation of another triggers an automatic and unconscious 'embodied simulation' of that other."[33] From this we can conjecture that Esther experiences an embodied simulation of these characters by engaging in an affectively tuned

[29] 'Motherese' is a term that "has historically referred to the prosodic exaggerations that are typically found in mother's speech to their infants and young children," according to Robin P. Cooper, Jane Abraham, Sheryl Berman, and Margareta Staska, "The Development of Infant's Preference for Motherese," *Infant Behavior and Development* 20, no. 4 (1997): 477. Mothers use rising pitch contours to engage the alert infant in interaction, and falling pitch contours to soothe a distressed infant. The primary functions may thus "be the elicitation and maintenance of the infant's attention and the communication of affect," argues Anne Fernald. See: Anne Fernald, "Four-Month-Old Infants Prefer to Listen to Motherese," *Infant Behavior and Development* 8, no. 2 (1985): 181-95. However, motherese can be said to include more than prosody.

[30] Daniel N. Stern, *The First Relationship: Infant and Mother* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 24.

[31] Colwyn Trevarthen, and Kenneth J. Aitken, "Infant Intersubjectivity: Research, Theory, and Clinical Applications," *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 42, no. 1 (2001): 5.

[32] Ibid., 5.

[33] Vittorio Gallese, Morris N. Eagle, and Paolo Migone, "Intentional Attunement: Mirror Neurons and the neural underpinnings of interpersonal relations," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 55, no. 1 (2007): 131-76.

'virtual other' process that may be termed 'readerese'. Not only is the *readerese* experience of dialogue marked by a bodily affective attunement, it is also figured metaphorically in terms of the body as a process of eating: "you taste it, chew on it, and digest it." We are reminded here of how she described the manner in which the realisation occurred to her: it "went through her." Although there is sudden illumination, it must also pass through the whole system and be digested. Perhaps we can therefore say that her journey after she leaves her home, is one of digesting the entire reading experience.

Ascription of meaning to the reading experience

An important element of Esther's narrative is her mother's secret story. Her mother's disclosure closely coincides in time with the reading experience: "which must have happened just after I read the poem, when I think about it." That "things clicked" in a way that "was quite life-saving for an adolescent" is attributed to both factors: "So then everything fell into place and connected, with the help from Inger Hagerup and with my mum's subsequent confession." Thus, when asked whether literature has saved her life, she replies: "Yes, it has, in a way. I would say so." How are we to interpret the qualification or reservation implied by "in a way"? I think this must be read in the light of her opening move, when she says she will "say something about why" the book created a deep impression. She uses the word "why", but does not proceed to explain why – she tells the story of her upbringing. It is not presented in causal terms. The background is presented as an antecedent state. And the mother's secret story is presented as a concomitant factor of great importance. My interpretation is that she must reserve herself against a causal relationship: Her upbringing was not the cause of the reading experience, and the reading was not the cause of her being saved. The logic of narrative is a different one, the transformational sequence is catalytic rather than causal. When she relates the enlightenment the poem gave her, Esther says: "I could see this, because the poem describes precisely how they would act." She switches from the past tense to the present, probably without being aware of it. This slide, however, I find deeply significant: the poem not only spoke the truth about the experience *then*, all those years so long ago, but still does, *here, now*. It is where the experiencing and narrating I meet in union. Not only is the plot of her life story circular – she leaves the interparental conflict of the home to become a couples' therapist, and finds a therapeutic language informed by *Episode* – but also the telling of it. When Esther the narrator relates her previous experiences, they are inevitably coloured by her looking at them through

the theoretical lenses of EFT. Her reading experience, her narrative and her therapeutic practice are all embedded within the same figurative matrix.

I note her formulation when remarking on the difference between reading Bjørneboe and Hagerup's poem: "it was not dangerous in the same way as Bjørneboe, because it gave me such a profound insight. It made me able to understand the complexity and contraries of my parents' terrible marriage." Interpreting this passage is problematic; her judgment of Bjørneboe conveys that she sees the danger as residing *in* the poem, it's an objective aspect of his work, whereas with *Episode*, Esther clearly portrays her own active contribution in creating meaning. Does she mean that poetry, when it gives the reader a profound insight, cannot be dangerous? Or perhaps she means that Bjørneboe only touched the surface of things, her "problematic beliefs," and not her heart. Therefore, reading Bjørneboe only reinforced her previous understanding, whereas Hagerup revealed the subtext. When asked whether the profound illumination happened immediately, Esther replies: "Yes, I think so. Because I learnt it by heart, it meant so much to me." From her words it seems as if she says that the illumination happened because it was something she learned by heart – that she read it with her heart. What she probably means, however, is that because the poem was so important to her, she decided to memorise it. Still, even though it meant so much, it does not naturally follow that one wants to commit it to memory, as she has kept that volume of poems after all. Sadly, the meaning of the expression has changed in the course of history. Today it carries the meaning of rote learning, of mindless repetition until something finally sticks to the wall of memory. ***To learn by heart*** was used by Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde* (1374), and must have been proverbial long before that. For the ancient Greeks believed that knowledge resided in the heart; the heart was the seat of memory and intelligence. "To record" etymologically has the same meaning: to engrave upon the heart. She needs to interiorise it, to keep it in her heart. She also described the realisation as "going through her." Normally one would say that it touched the heart, as if the heart was on the receiving end. But here the heart has been active, she has placed all of herself into the poem. She learnt it by heart because she had read it with her heart and from the heart. Over and beyond her appraisal of the reading experience as "profound", her life bears witness to the truth that this poem has been learnt by heart.

RESOLUTION

The quest for "the language of emotions"

The plot of Esther's story of what happens after the transformative reading experience assumes the shape of a quest, what Booker terms "The Voyage and Return."[34] She ventures forth in search of the key to understanding the psyche, to learn the language of the heart. At first there is great disappointment: she does not find it where she expected, in the psychology graduate programme. "I did not learn about emotions there either." When Esther finally discovers the "language of emotions," Emotion-focused therapy for couples, this turns out to be a kind of "subtext" to Episode. It now transpires that the poem "is exactly what I work with. It informs my work." Thus, she went on a quest and eventually discovered that she was already in possession of the treasure. The focus of the therapeutic process is to effectuate "softening moments" – the metamorphosis of the armour, the mask, into open and vulnerable persons in dialogue. The EFTC-theory envisages the relationship as consisting of two layers: a surface one of secondary emotions, and a latent one of primary emotions. Esther has translated the psychological concept into a literary one of "subtext", what is "underneath the surface expressions." She goes on to articulate one of the main theoretical underpinnings of EFT: "At the very bottom lie the unmet attachment needs and identity confirmation needs."[35] She encourages each partner ("For instance, I will get her to say: 'When I withdraw, it's because I get frightened'. And then I get him to say: 'When I get angry, it's because you pull back from me. I think you do not love me anymore.'") to experience what the *She* person in the poem does: that behind the overt behaviour there is a "tensed cord". A central procedural premise is one analogous to Aesop's fable of the Sun and the Wind.[36] "The more you beat the armour the harder it gets. If the other recognizes that you wish them well, the armour glides off." The

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[34] Booker, *Seven Basic Plots,* 87-107.

[35] These two systems, the attachment system and the identity system, will be thematised in relation to two of the following stories, those of Veronica and Nina, respectively.

[36] Cf. Aesop's Fables, Harvard Classics (1909-1914), downloaded from http://www.bartleby.com/17/1/60.html : "THE WIND and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger. Suddenly they saw a traveller coming down the road, and the Sun said: "I see a way to decide our dispute. Whichever of us can cause that traveller to take off his cloak shall be regarded as the stronger You begin." So the Sun retired behind a cloud, and the Wind began to blow as hard as it could upon the traveller. But the harder he blew the more closely did the traveller wrap his cloak round him, till at last the Wind had to give up in despair. Then the Sun came out and shone in all his glory upon the traveller, who soon found it too hot to walk with his cloak on."

armour is a "protective shell" that will "just fall away as if it evaporates" when softening moments are created. Esther talks of the negative loop, where the armoured partners will react to one another in an Ovidian game of pursuit and withdrawal and countermoves. The metaphors of armoury, shells, gliding off, evaporating, are all visceral. The softening moment is an ekaphany, brought about by metamorphosis. Two armoured warriors dissolve into two naked lovers, disarmed by the recognition of each other's vulnerability. It is important to note here that "softening" is a visceral term, a bodily felt term, not a visual one. A metamorphosis is a change of bodily aspect, and it registers affectively, in and through the body.

The originator of EFT for couples, Leslie S. Greenberg, writes that "expression of underlying vulnerable emotions was seen as central in changing interaction and in re-establishing the couple's emotional bond."[37] It is quite remarkable how closely connected the theory of hardening and softening, of evaporation of illusion and the removal of secondary emotion to reveal primary emotions, correspond to the comic plot. The role of the therapist is cast as one of precipitating softening moments and of guiding the couple to a *peripeteia*: a reversal where they get out of the negative "loop" and into a virtuous cycle of open communication. According to Frye, a comedy often

> begins with some absurd, cruel or irrational law […] which the action of comedy then evades or breaks. Compacts are as a rule the conspiracies formed by the hero's society; witnesses, such as overhearers of conversations or people with special knowledge […] are the commonest devices for bringing about the comic discovery.[38]

It is indeed absurd, cruel and irrational, the almost lawful repetition of the negative loop of marital conflict. People with special knowledge, the therapist, is here the device that brings about comic discovery, the ekaphany of the softening moment that leads to the anagnorisis of the other's true identity.

Episode gives shape to Esther's life. It was a transformative reading experience when she first read it, but we may also say that her adult life has been about translating the affective patterns embedded in the poem, and helping other people to discern these patterns at work in their relationships. I referred to the anagnorisis of the loved one's true identity as a kind of metamorphosis. What kind of shape unfolds in Esther's story, how may we conceptualise its

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[37] Leslie S. Greenberg, *Emotion-Focused Therapy,* Theories of Psychotherapy Series (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2011), 7.

[38] Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism,* 166.

plot? In order to see the true image of the other, one must come to occupy a different vantage point. And Esther, through EFT, came to find a particular vantage point from which to regard emotional interaction. Through her work she helps couples see the underlying patterns of their interaction, thereby recreating the experience of metamorphosis she experienced. I therefore suggest that the master trope that organises the emplotment of her story is *metamorphosis.* Throughout her life, she has come back to the experience of *Episode,* and helped other people realise the perspective inherent in its dramatic structure.

Summary

A significant part of Esther's narrative is devoted to relating the parents' conflict and its effects upon her. These experiences were activated upon reading the poem, and her reading experience can only be understood in the light of them. Her crisis was marked by the reading of Bjørneboe: his works confirmed the "problematic beliefs" of her despair. Reading *Episode*, where the characters can be said to undergo a metamorphosis through the sudden recognition experienced in the final stanza, Esther has an *ekaphany*: a sudden, unexpected revelation of profound affective importance, as a result of attention to detail, that leads to an anagnorisis: she comes to recognise her parents as fully human, vulnerable people. She understands that there are reasons why they interact the way they do. This deeply affective realisation enables her to turn her negative emotions of anger and despair into compassion, thus freeing her from their shadow and enabling her to move on. I have argued that this ekaphany brings about a comic catharsis: the secondary feelings of sympathy (being under their shadow) and ridicule (only judging the surface level of their behaviour) are cast out, thus purifying the emotion of joy as inner harmony is restored. The theory and practice of EFT is processed in literary terms, and is informed by her reading of the poem. This marks the resolution point of her story. This deeply integrated framework again informs the telling of her story, in a virtuous cycle. Thus her story is shaped around the creation of the metamorphosis experience. Her way of reading is characterised by a deeply affective form of dialogue that I have termed 'readerese'. Her ascription of the role the poem has played in her transformation is symbolised by the expression "in a way": acknowledging that change is multi-determined, but inextricably tied to *Episode.* Thus both the telling and the tale is an enactment of "reading by heart."

Interpretation of Camilla's Story: *Feeling Felt*

Introduction

Of the six narratives that I present, Camilla's is singular in that her life-changing reading experience is a composite one, consisting of two different books. *The Lover* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* form integral parts of one process: "Whereas the Lover initiated that process, Sorrows was more of a continuation." The story of this process is one of overcoming grief, and the subsequent creation of meaning out of this experience: "about being reconciled with one's own inner life." In this chapter, I shall endeavour to understand that "process." I intend to do so by first examining the nature of what Camilla calls her "crisis." She must come to terms with her loss, and what that loss means to her. I will attempt to analyse how the *Lover*, enacting a belated affective recognition of the deep bond of love, allows Camilla to come to terms with "reality": her heart has been broken and she is now confronted with the fear of facing her inner self. As her despair deepens, it culminates in the reading of *Sorrows*, which becomes a turning point. Camilla offers two main appraisals of how sharing in the suffering of Werther allowed her to find "the courage to be": the novel gave her a double perspective on her thoughts, and gave her permission to experience her feelings in depth. I will argue that her reading is a kathartic experience. I will attempt to understand how the form of the novel allows her to hold and symbolise her sorrow which results in a *therapon,* a symbolisation of the loss. Her affective experience is one of 'feeling felt' through a fugal-like progressive reiteration of the emerging affective theme of sorrow. Significant passages in the novels may represent a 'holding-ground' for her affective mentalisation, which allows her to embrace her self-feeling. I propose that this mode of engagement be called *agkalilexia.* I will also consider how her own novel can be understood to form part of this story of reconciliation with her inner self, and that this movement from coming to terms with loss to creating a symbolic expression for the loss of contact with one's feelings, may be regarded as a form of *katamorphosis.*

Two contrasting ontologies: casting a spell vs. a meeting of hearts

That two very different novels can form part of the same story of change is remarkable in itself, but that it should be precisely these two works is especially noteworthy, given their reception history. As noted in the first interpretation, Esther judged Bjørneboe's *oeuvre* to pose a moral

danger to young people. Similar concerns have been voiced against both these novels. *The Sorrows of Young Werther,* of course, is infamous for allegedly sparking a spate of suicides. And in her influential work on melancholia, *The Black Sun*, Julia Kristeva argues that "Duras' books should not be put into the hands of oversensitive readers."[1] Duras, in addressing the question *how can one speak the truth of psychic pain?* employs, according to Kristeva, an "aesthetics of awkwardness": The manner in which suffering is depicted in her novels "takes hold of us and carries us to the dangerous, furthermost bounds of our psychic life."[2] This is because her works, dealing with pain, distress and malady, do not create a distance: "They do not point to it from afar, they neither observe it nor analyse it for the sake of experiencing it at a distance in the hope of a solution […]." On the contrary, says Kristeva, "the texts domesticate the malady of death, they fuse with it, are on the same level with it, without either distance or perspective. There is no purification in store for us at the conclusion of those novels written on the brink of illness."[3] As such, her novels are non-cathartic, concludes Kristeva.

In another passage, Kristeva employs strong figural language: "Death and pain are the spider's web of the text, and woe to the conniving readers who yield to its spell: they might remain there for good."[4] According to the dictionary, "the term 'spell' is generally used for magical procedures which cause harm, or force people to do something against their will."[5] This rhetoric of casting a spell on young readers who are oversensitive and conniving, is not very different from the language of "Werther fever" or "mania" surrounding Goethe's novel, where "impressionable young readers" were warned of its spell. Goethe's novel became an almost immediate media event, spreading to various countries, with "more than 20 pirated editions published within 12 years," according to the historian of reading Frank Furedi. Many people copied the fashions of Werther, and there was an industry devoted to producing merchandise. This sensation gave rise to fears that the novel would be dangerous to the public and could legitimate suicide. Furedi terms it a "compelling cultural myth" and says there is "a striking absence of empirical evidence" for the "epidemic of suicide" apparently induced by

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[1] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia,* trans. Leon S. Rudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 227.

[2] Ibid., 258.

[3] Ibid., 227-228.

[4] Ibid., 229.

[5] Online Etym. Dictionary: http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=spell

Goethe's novel.[6] And although Thorson and Öberg maintain that "the Werther literature indicated that at least a few imitation suicides actually occurred,"[7] the more likely cause of any such suicide would have been the media and cultural phenomenon emerging in the novel's slipstream. Indeed, the term "Werther effect," coined by American sociologist David Phillips in 1974, designates imitative acts resulting from the suggestive influence of accumulated media attention surrounding suicides. Research have found only partial support for this effect.[8] Moreover, in a review of the relationship between strictly *fictional* portrayals (mainly through film and tv) of suicide and imitative acts, Pirkis and Warwick Blood conclude that there is even less evidence for such effect than is the case for non-fictional reporting.[9]

In sum, there is scant evidence to support the claim of imitation. There is, however, ample indication of a pervasive critical pattern: the notion that young readers must be protected from themselves, as they lack critical distance, on account of oversensitivity as well as failure to take precautions. Thus, they are supposed to fall under the spell of the text and will be morally damaged, unable to return to rationality. This pattern will manifest itself when there is a combination of two factors: the character acts immorally or comes to a bad end; and the narrator's stance does not provide a stable distance from which to judge the character. Terms like "fever," "mania" and "spell" suggest that literature can be infectious, it is like a *pharmakon* or a virus that will attack an insufficiently strong immune system. The ontological supposition is that fiction is dangerous because the reader has insufficient grasp of reality/rationality. However, this fear itself seems to be uncritically adopted through cultural percolation stemming from the platonist heritage.

Kristeva says that Duras provides no katharsis. Many critics have said the same about Werther. According to Christopher Booker, Goethe's novel is not truly tragic, as Werther is merely the victim of a malevolent fate, "a foolish, immature young man, in the grip of an adolescent infatuation he has not the self-awareness or self-control to resist. Since we see much of the story through his own eyes, as its narrator, we are invited to identify with him as a

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[6] Frank Furedi, "The Media's First Moral Panic," *History Today*, November, 2015, 48.

[7] Jan Thorson, and Per-Arne Öberg, "Was there a Suicide Epidemic After Goethe's Werther?" *Archives of Suicide Research* 7, no. 1 (2003): 71. DOI: 10-1080/13811110301568.

[8] James B. Hittner, "How Robust is the Werther effect? A re-examination of the suggestion-imitation model of suicide." *Mortality* 10, no. 3 (2005): 193-200. Doi: 10.1080/13576270500178112.

[9] Jane Pirkis, and R. Warwick Blood, "Suicide and the Media. Part II: Portrayal in Fictional Media," *Crisis* 22, no. 4 (2001): 155-162.

romantic hero, so idealistic that he is prepared to sacrifice life itself for his noble dream of love."[10] Presumably, it is the readers who accept this invitation that will succumb to its spell and be led astray, unable to remain objective.

Camilla's story presents a very different view. Although she jokingly makes light of my suggestion of the "go on living-wave," she says explicitly that she thinks these novels "can prevent suicide." She says: "I think that every novel has the potential to change lives, if read at the right time," implying hereby that such change is in a positive direction. When reflecting on the experience of reading Goethe's novel, she says: "if I were to read it at the wrong time, it would not get through to me, I would not take it on board." She implies that a crisis makes one more open, and therefore the book will make a deeper impression. In one of the most influential clinical books on grieving, Colin Murray Parkes says:

> Psychological transitions are the times when we reassess our picture of the world and our means of being a part of it. They are experienced as impinging upon us but their effects include major changes in the heartland of the self. At such times we are uniquely open both to help and to harm.[11]

Against the notion of the young reader as "oversensitive" and susceptible to sorcery, Camilla presents a diametrically opposed viewpoint: the young reader who is both resourceful and vulnerable, and engages with the text in a deeper way than normal because of her situation. These views are not symmetrical', i.e. opposing evaluations of the same object or process. Rather, they are based on different ontologies. On the one hand, a view of reading in terms of cause and effect; on the other hand, a view of reading as a katalytic relation. Camilla's stance is that reading is necessary ("I needed to read it") because it affords a sacred space where solitude can become nourishing, allowing us to process our thoughts at a higher level and our feelings at a deeper level. In her view, when reading from a critical distance she is unable to be moved by the book: "I can appreciate its [stylistic] qualities, but it does not concern me." She says that the reader must be receptive to it, and vice versa: "the wonderful thing about these novels: they just receive you." The language of concern and mutual reception is a far cry from that of magic and mania.

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[10] Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots,* 400.

[11] Colin Murray Parkes, and Holly G. Prigerson, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), xvi.

CRISIS

Now and then: The narrating and experiencing I

Camilla distinguishes sharply and explicitly between now and then, straddling two positions, that of the *narrating I* ("I can now talk about it with huge distance"; "now I can laugh about it, because it's now all so remote") and the *experiencing I* ("I really, really had it deep. It just got to me"). Furthermore, however, there may be different subject positions within each of these two. The narrating I wants to demonstrate that she can now view events in their proper perspective and with a certain ironic distance ("my little crisis"), at the same time she seems anxious to ensure that I understand that for her then, it was a big crisis. That, in fact, even though the break-up "need not be the worst thing in objective terms," the subjective consequences were severe. The size of the loss and the degree of suffering do not form a 1:1 scale. Moreover, it was difficult for the experiencing I to accept and understand the significance of the loss, as she could not quite trust her own feelings. Thus, we have at least four positions: the person who is devastated, but at the same time does not really understand why this is so; the narrating subject with two conflicting needs: on the one hand protecting something precious and fragile, and on the other hand welcoming the opportunity to reflect on what her experiences meant, and may mean, to her.

Loss

Camilla initially described herself as suffering from "lovesickness," which I fed back to her as "a broken heart." She calls it "the great, classic lovesickness" – using the discourse of the narrating I, from which position the experience can be contextualised and objectified within a codified cultural discourse. However, the term "broken heart" comes closer to the language of the experiencing I: "the first hard-hitting smack in the face as an adult"; "For me it was devastating"; "everything just crashed open" – these appraisals all signify a brutal bodily blow that breaks something. Such descriptions of emotional reactions in physical terms is very common in cases of loss and bereavement.[12] She then employs a curious, seemingly oxymoronic, metaphor in order to embellish: "But then, suddenly, something is shut, a door is

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[12] Cf. Larry Cochran, and Emily Claspell, *The Meaning of Grief: A dramaturgical Approach to Understanding Emotion* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

opened. And it seems you cannot close it again." Two opposite internal movements happen concurrently: shutting and opening. A door that is flung open and cannot be closed leaves you exposed to the outside and unable to protect yourself: "I had thought that I was a person who was not easily shaken. Or rather, I am quite good at pretending to be fine even when I am not. But […] I was completely unable to pretend." Thus, the open door could symbolise that she cannot keep her façade – her devastation is open for everyone to see. The shutting may signify that something is over – a closed chapter, but it may also point to a shutting down of something inside: the will to live, or the numbing of certain feelings. It could also mean shutting off: she no longer has access to an important part of her inner self. The metaphors therefore signify both the severity of the blow and the difficulty of admitting it to herself and to others; that although she could not hide it from others, she at the same time found it hard to share these feelings with others. Thus, the ambivalence of the narrating I may also be reflected in the experiencing I: she too may have tried to maintain a rational distance to it.

She is suffering from a broken heart. In order to heal it, or accept the loss, she must first admit that it *was* love. She says that she initiated the break-up, because she realised that he "did not want to take it any further." This of course does not diminish her loss, but it may have made her grief more complicated. Perhaps because she took the initiative, she may have tried to rationalise things by telling herself that it was not such a big deal after all, that it was not love. Thus, the experiencing I is not able to realise that it is a terrible loss. Her suffering presents her with a real psychic challenge: "The significance of the event is more than" the loss of a love, it entails "having to face yourself and your own inner self at a much deeper level. And that is always scary." Because it is scary, there will be two opposite psychic tendencies: not wanting to face herself, just close the door – or facing the pain of going into that deeper level. Thus her loss represents a crisis situation: it creates major stress which endangers mental health, and disrupts customary functioning and imposes a need for psychological work which takes time and great effort.[13]

I understand her challenge as two-fold: first, she must concede that it was love, and that she is devastated by this. She must begin "searching for a way to claim back ownership of the situation." Then she must allow herself to grieve the lost love. She does not refer to previous experiences of bereavement and grieving, except for mentioning that she has had "some tough experiences on the family level." Camilla describes the experience she went through as a

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[13] According to the definition of crisis cited in the introduction: Gerald Caplan, *An Approach to Community Mental Health* (London: Tavistock, 1961).

"process of getting better, of overcoming sorrow and grief, of being reconciled with loss after a break-up." This understanding of grieving loss as a process is reflected in the scientific literature about bereavement.

Grief

"I thought I could describe a state; make a map out of sorrow. Sorrow, however, turns out to be not a state but a process. It needs not a map but a history," wrote C.S. Lewis in his work of mourning his lost wife.[14] Indeed, there are many stage or phase models of grief, beginning with Freud's concept of 'grief work'. Such models imply that one task should be completed before the next one begins. Depending on the theory, four to twelve stages may be described. All models of grief assume a significant loss of something. A well-known model is Kübler-Ross' theory of five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.[15] And J.W. Worden refers to four tasks of mourning: Accepting the reality of the loss, experiencing the pain, adjusting to life without the loved one, and finally investing emotional energy in a new direction.[16] Such stage models have been criticised for their linearity, for creating blueprints and maps to be followed. As Lewis found in his experience, grief cannot be mapped out in stages, but can only be understood retrospectively, in its history. Having lived through it, meaning may be created. In their phenomenological study of grief, Cochran and Caspell argue that grief, as a lived experienced, has a *dramatic structure* with a beginning, middle and end. "Grief begins with a loss that is so significant it is as if the person has died." [17] The middle is marked by an intensity

> likened to a force or power which threatens to engulf the person. To avoid loss of control and to show others one has control, a person begins to struggle against the intensity of the experience.[…] The very struggle to stay functional creates an isolation that intensifies and magnifies loss, an experience that cannot seemingly be shared. Alone, one is left to work it through.[18]

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[14] C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976).

[15] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Scribner, 2007). It is worth noting that Kübler-Ross' model springs out of studies of patients with terminal illness, rather than studies of loss of loved ones.

[16] J. William Worden, *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for Mental Health Practitioners*, 4th Ed. (New York: Springer, 2008).

[17] Cochran and Claspell, *The Meaning of Grief*, 95.

[18] Ibid., 101.

Yet at the same time, there is a wish to surrender to the power of the experience. "Always, there is the conflict between holding grief in check and letting go."[19] Gradually, grief becomes not just an experience to endure, but takes on a search for meaning. Eventually, according to Cochran and Caspell, there is a "culminating experience" that results in a transformation: "one walks away different, freed, without the same burden, and with a conviction that the worst is over, that grief can be lived with."[20] The end of grief signals not a return to one's past life, but a reorientation and a deeper sense of meaning. "As grief recedes, becoming less of a preoccupation, a person comes to appreciate the experience as a turning point, a critical marker in one's life."[21] However, all these models may obfuscate the significant fact that this process will not always develop, it may be halted – leading to disturbance and mental illness. To be able to arrive at such a turning point is an achievement, not a natural given.

TRANSACTION WITH LITERARY WORKS

Reading *The Lover*

Camilla read this book "in one go on my bed," at a "very early stage of the process" that she calls "the head-buried-in-pillow phase." Retrospectively, she can regard her grief as a process. Before going on to talk about what it was like to lie on that bed - "I remember vividly lying there" - she qualifies reflectively: "I think it must be said that often it's a case of… the book becomes part of the history I create in retrospect, of how things got better. That's how it is. Because I don't think I could have said that as I lay on my bed reading." I get the sense that it would perhaps have been easier for Camilla to tell her story using a third person narration with free indirect discourse, where the double perspective is implicit – or to switch between third and first person like the narrator in The Lover does. Camilla is probably operating on three different levels here: vividly recalling "that scene so clearly, so viscerally"; reflecting on her experience; occupying herself with the act of narration itself.

Research on grief oriented by developmental psychology converges on a theory in which mourning is represented as phases that sometimes run parallel, recur and overlap. John

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[19] Ibid., 101.

[20] Ibid., 103.

[21] Ibid., 107.

Bowlby enumerated four such phases: numbness, yearning, despair, and recovery.[22] These are more or less the same as those found by Colin Murray Parkes in his study of adult grief. According to Parkes, "the most characteristic feature of grief is not prolonged depression but acute and episodic 'pangs'. A pang of grief is an episode of severe and psychological pain. At such a time lost people are strongly missed and the survivors sob or cry aloud for them."[23] The phase of yearning and protest is marked by pining, "a persistent and obtrusive wish for the person who is gone, a preoccupation with thoughts that can only give pain." In answer to the question why one should experience such a useless and unpleasant emotion, Parkes finds that "pining is the subjective and emotional component of the urge to search for a lost object."[24] Both animals and humans engage in this behaviour, crying and searching in order to recover the lost one. Pining involves separation anxiety, and there is a marked element of fear, according to Parkes: "The subjective accompaniment of the alarm reaction", restless hyperactivity, has the "specific aim of finding the one who is gone. But bereaved people seldom admit to having so irrational an aim and their behaviour is therefore regarded by others, and themselves, as 'aimless'."[25] Parkes refers to Darwin as the first to investigate the biology of grief. In his study of the visible expression of the emotions, Darwin regarded the facial expression of grief as a compromise between the urge to cry aloud and the counter-urge to suppress such 'inappropriate' and 'ineffective' behaviour. Perhaps Camilla's metaphoric shut-open can be related to this doubleness. Something has been shut off or shut down, a deep connexion. At the same time there is the problematic reaction to not being able to suppress the yearning.

According to Nagy, for the ancient Greeks the process of mourning or grieving relied on the expression of the emotion of sorrow through lamentation, called threnody. The word *penthos* signifies the sorrow or sadness expressed through lament. "How, then, is grief or sorrow or sadness expressed by lament? It is by *crying* and *singing* at the same time." [26] Nagy cites anthropological studies of such laments, where the lamenting woman expresses her feelings of losing control and order: "A sense of disorientation sets in […] the lamenting

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[22] John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*. Vol. 3, *Loss, Sadness and Depression* (New York: Basic 1980).

[23] Colin Murray Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 43.

[24] Ibid., 44.

[25] Ibid., 50.

[26] Cf. Gregory Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013), 690.

woman's memories modulate from the present to the distant past."[27] Ethnographic research on laments shows how sad songs centering on the loss of loved ones can modulate into love songs – and conversely, love songs can modulate into laments, especially in the case of love songs that revolve not only around the loss or death of lover, but also on the loss of love itself. Nagy makes the point that love songs and laments express the two emotions of sorrow and love together. "And why should a traditional love song be sad? The reason is that most traditional love songs are preoccupied with the theme of *unrequited love*."[28] The *penthos* must find some form of symbolic expression. Grief is turned into sorrow through the meaning-making of threnody.

Commenting on the first passage she has selected, the very ending of the novel, Camilla says "he still loves her and will continue to love her, and then… It is all so simple." Camilla remarks of Duras' style that her sentences are so "straightforward that they could almost be embarrassing, if you took them in isolation." But, *taken together*, "it is as if the only time something true has been said. However, it is way too difficult for me to explain why it is like that, I think." She says she *thinks* it is too difficult for her to explain – does that mean that she reckons her explanatory powers are inadequate, or does it mean an active choice being made there and then *not* to explain, lest it be explained away? I am inclined to think the latter. I do not think she needs to explain, however; she has already shown it by pointing to the passage in which the statement is made, and by saying it felt true. This kind of emotional truth cannot be explained. She can point to it without knowing why it is so. The truth lies as much in the syntax as in the content. The passage begins with a great leap in time, "years after the war" and a subsequent summary of events in between, economically rendering the gravity of the passage of time. The last three sentences, which only report indirectly what he said, and says nothing of her conscious reaction, implicitly state that it has great impact on *her*, the girl. As Kristeva remarks of the lover, "the young French girl and her Chinese lover are from the start convinced of the impossibility and condemnation of their affair, and as a result the girl convinces herself that she does not love him."[29] After running out of things to talk about, her lover's true speech comes out. But the reader is only given a summary of this most important moment. The "then" of the antepenultimate sentence is repeated in the following one, and subsequently the "told

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[27] Ibid., 79.

[28] Ibid., 80.

[29] Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 241.

her" is repeated in the last sentence, giving a great weight to it all.[30] In the final sentence, with its four variations on the same theme, the truth gradually sinks in, but without being subject to deliberative processing. It is as if each "told" and "that" is like a blow – thus echoing the devastating blow experienced by Camilla. The *telling* has a fatality to it – it *was*, and *is*, love.[31] The utter gravity of the syntax, with its staccato clauses in telegrammatic style, coupled with the *en passant* rendering of the content, evokes much more than we can translate into discursive language. There is the belated realisation of what things meant, there is the inability to express what one feels, and there is the fact that a relationship can be held so lightly and yet be the most profound relation of one's life. The truth is not *in* the sentences; but in the *movement* from one to the other Camilla feels that Duras has spoken the double truth: the relationship has ended; love goes on. "But it does not really end. Nothing ends." Wherever this kind of double truth occurs, it is seems to be clothed in an 'as if'. Camilla ironically, in a sarcastic-caustic tone, conveys her experience: "one cannot trust oneself and one's own judgment." I understand this as implying that she had doubted that her feelings were real: how can this be love if I rationally decided to end it? The passage provides a means of affective mentalisation for Camilla. She needed Duras' authoritative language (authoritative because it speaks the truth) to be able to trust her own feelings: yes, it is irrevocably over, it is in the past, and yet it will always be: it *was* and *is* love. Thus, it is only in the light of the narrator's belated realisation, in the form of a series of emotionally charged repetitions that Camilla, feeling their accumulative affective impact, can recognise what the loss has meant to her. This movement of gradual realisation corresponds to Kuiken et al.'s finding from the study of bereaved persons, in which the reader "repeatedly returns to a theme in the poem that, through its successive variations, is gradually woven into the imaginative life that accompanies her grief and into her reflections about the loss."[32] This is what Sikora et al. refer to as "progressive realization," which manifests "as a reiteration of an emergent affective theme" with a fugue-like shape.[33]

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[30] A different passage in the novel reads: "She might answer that she doesn't love him. She says nothing. Suddenly she knows, right here, at that moment, knows he doesn't understand her, knows he never will, knows he hasn't the means to understand so much perversity." (40-41). There is the repetition of the verb, each addition elaborating slightly on the previous clause. And between two "knows" is placed the most important bit: "right here, at that moment". The knowing precedes the known.

[31] It is worth referring to William James' famous quote here: "We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold"*. William James, *The Principles of Psychology,* Vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1950), 245-56. The inconspicuous word *that*, when repeated like this, starts to feel like a "thud", an accumulated affective charge.

[32] Don Kuiken, Don, David S. Miall, and Shelley Sikora, "Forms of Self-Implication in Literary Reading," *Poetics Today* 25, no. 2 (2004): 191.

Camilla does not say very much more specifically about reading *The Lover*, except that she "needed it," and that she can remember certain images. However, she makes this comment on the second quoted passage: "It's the way they look at each other, I remember feeling that it contained so much suffering […] I can't recall precisely what I thought. But it didn't need to say so much more than that. It spoke for itself." Once again, the text, in what Camilla calls a "straight to the bone" and straightforward" style, must speak for itself. Camilla says she can remember what she *felt*, not what she *thought*. The passage does not explicitly convey any suffering. The characters share a sadness, the very sadness of separateness - and thus different sadnesses. They have divergent understandings of the cause and locus of the sadness. She corrects him; his attributing the sadness to the circumstances does not correspond to her seeing it as a manifestation of her deepest self. What brings them together sets them apart, but it is perhaps the sadness of his gaze upon her that allows her to look at herself and take ownership of, and really feel, her own inescapable sadness.

In summarising her experience of reading *The Lover*, Camilla says it was "to do with recognising that 'yes, love is so difficult. And it is so bloody awful that things break up.'" So we are left with no further embellishments of her experience of reading this novel. Duras' style – "simplicity of the sentence," "concrete and limpid, and yet it encompasses great depths of feeling" - allows her to say: "'Ok. Maybe I did love him. It's as simple as that." (We could almost read this sentence literally: It is as simple as "that," the feeling of that). She no longer needs to defend herself against her own emotion: "So I think I felt my head being cleared out when I read it." In the wake of the break-up, Camilla experienced a lot of secondary emotions that served to protect herself against the impact of the loss. Perhaps she tried to rationalise and minimise the importance of the relationship ('No, something is not really *shut')*, furthermore she judged herself severely for not being able to maintain her usual self ('no, I am not really unable to close that *open door').* This raises "fear and pity": she discovers that beyond the loss of the relationship, she must face the fear of being reconciled with her inner self.

Camilla concludes that "it enabled a crucial experience" for her: "'Ok, now some of your underlying feelings have been made explicit', allowing me to start there, to accept my feelings." Before she can begin the process of accepting her feelings, they must have been raised into awareness. This crucial experience therefore "initiates a process" for her. My interpretation is that through admitting "how it is" - her heart is broken by unrequited love - she can begin to

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[33] See Literature Review Chapter for discussion of this study.

grieve the loss. The fact that it was a rational decision to terminate the relationship does not deter from the gravity of the loss. Nonetheless, her situation deteriorates further as more negative events happen, and the thought of suicide becomes "delicious." Even if *The Lover* did not offer a kathartic experience, it opened up for one in the shape of *The Sorrows of Young Werther.*

Reading *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

Camilla points to the editor's preface as a point of entry to understanding how for her the novel can "prevent suicide." The preface explicitly encourages the reader to regard the book as a friend if "you can find none nearer." What kind of friendship is offered - is it as a substitute for real-life friendship, or a special kind of friendship that only a book may provide? According to Martin Swales, the preface implies that "to have no close friend other than this book is to court danger."[34] In Camilla's case, however, the relation to the book is qualitatively different from what she would find in a social relation. There are certain dangers involved in an ordinary friendly dialogue: the experience may be distorted. She relates three ways in which this can happen: (i) having to explain herself, she may get "lost in the maze of my own thoughts"; (ii) it cannot be taken back, "you have stated what things are like"; and (iii) she has to worry about protecting the other person's feelings and about "throwing that in someone's face". This is the nature of the social contract; a normal dialogue rarely offers the opportunity for a "sacred space" for emergent thinking and exploration of feelings, without the need to worry about how the recipient will be affected and how you will be perceived. The relation to the book enables a special kind of self-relation: "One does not wish to be alone, in the isolated sense. One just wants to be left the space to encompass the knowledge." What does it mean to have a space that can encompass the knowledge?

To account for her experience of reading *Sorrows*, Camilla labours to explore two different aspects of this "drawing comfort from his suffering." On one level she attempts to get hold of how the book offers a "distance to my own thoughts": "So maybe that's what the book's thoughts are for – they are my thoughts, but I am able to view them from another perspective! By doing that I can manage to get a handle on them, not having to be trapped in them." It seems to be a double perspective: the book allows her to be both inside and outside her own thoughts. The book formulates what she is thinking, allowing her to think her thoughts. In her study *Is*

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[34] Martin Swales, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 81.

Literature Healthy? Josie Billington argues the case that literary reading "is a person's life as he or she cannot fully *think* it, until the right book comes along."[35] Literary language has "the power to hold thoughts which humans feel it would almost kill them to contain in themselves."[36] A book "can have thoughts that humans *cannot* have."[37] A narrative can - through form, syntax, perspective - articulate thoughts that belong to a character but which that character, being immersed in a predicament, cannot yet formally think for herself. Thus, by sharing in these emergent thoughts, we may be able to reflect on our own emergent experience. Camilla's understanding of how she "draws comfort from his suffering" is through the paradoxical statement: "precisely by being similar, it opens up the distance." She then catches herself in process, correcting her initial formulation: "no – not my situation – my inner thoughts, rather, from outside. Then I can reflect on them, rather than just be in them." Thus it is not by providing a different representation of reality that offers a corrective perspective on her objective situation, but by granting her the means of symbolising her thoughts to herself, that this reflection comes about.

On another level, the book confirms that "my feelings are real, and should be taken seriously." The novel, through its extreme action, makes it permissible to "experience these profound emotions," casting aside feelings of being silly. Both these aspects appear to be reflected in the passage she has chosen, the May 17th entry. She had originally *underlined* this passage. Why would she underline passages when reading for pleasure? To underline is a form of embodied cognition, an attempt to incorporate what one reads; needing to re-read, to go over again, tracing what one has just read, noting it as especially important now but also for future reference. As if she were saying: "Look, future self, pay attention to this: I *was* here." After having read the passage out loud, Camilla repeats one sentence, albeit only quoting the last clause of it, which seems to encompass the very essence of romantic love. "The two of us can say it out loud": Only in *her* lover's presence could Camilla be all that she could be. She and Werther can share this feeling. If she had said that to a friend in a social setting, justifications may have been needed. Here, that feeling can be left in peace. But she is not merely, like Werther, remembering being in the presence of the other, but she can now, by being in the presence of this verbalisation, be more than she was. Goethe verbalises what this relationship means. The sentence, when read in its entirety, is intriguingly complex. Superficially regarded,

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[35] Josie Billington, *Is Literature Healthy?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 111.

[36] Ibid., 31.

[37] Ibid., 44.

it seems to border on the clumsy, with its repetitive "I felt … I felt…"[38] As if the utterance was much like any common oral utterance, not well structured and not quite in control of itself. But when we re-read it, it seems to contain the deepest truth of the whole novel: Werther needs his heart to be held in someone else's heart. Curiously, its repetition of felt – felt is echoed in what the neuropsychologist Daniel Siegel says is "the essence of two people being intertwined," namely *feeling felt*:

> Feeling safe comes along with being receptive and relaxed, open to others and to our own experience as it unfolds. Being seen gives a feeling of being real, of being connected, of not being alone. When we are safe and seen, when we have the sense of 'feeling felt' and being psychologically held in mind by another, we develop a sense of inner security. In many ways, we have linked the differentiated mind of another within our own: We have integrated a secure relationship into the fabric of our psyche."[39]

I cannot "open up the wonderful faculty of feeling" unless there be someone who can hold and witness this opening up. Siegel uses the verbs 'intertwine' and 'link', Goethe uses 'weave'. The fabric, the psychic text(-ure),[40] is more like a nest than a web. And the structure of Goethe's syntax is like an embedded nesting. The sentence contains two clauses – (1) *I felt her heart and generous soul*; (2) *In her presence I felt myself to be*…- where the second is embedded, nested, in the first.[41] However, in the novel, it is almost as if the syntactic structure becomes too heavy. When Camilla simply repeats the second clause, it is as if she is already operating from within its presence. But it is in the very leaving behind of the initial phrase that Werther's tragedy can be placed.[42] When this beloved person of his youth dies, he can no longer feel that

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[38] In the German original, there is not this recurrence: "ich habe das Herz gefühlt, die große Seele, in deren Gegenwart ich mir schien mehr zu sein" – I have felt the heart, the grand soul, in whose presence I seemed to myself to be…" Thus, it is not simply in her mere presence that he becomes who he is, but in feeling, in having present to himself, her heart.

[39] Daniel Siegel, "Emotion as Integration: A Possible Answer to the Question, What is Emotion?" in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice,* ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel and Marion Solomon (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 155.

[40] The concept of psychic texture being woven, is central to the thinking of psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas. See: Christopher Bollas, *Being a Character: Psychoanalysis and Self-Experience* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

[41] An interesting parallel to this can be found in ee cummings' well-known poem: i carry your heart with me(i carry it in my heart) where the nesting of heart within heart is enacted on the syntactic level, through the use of parenthesis and putting this parenthesis where there should be an empty space. See E. E. Cummings, *Complete Poems 1904-1962*, ed. George James Firmage (New York: Liveright, 2016).

[42] Martin Swales, in his critical monograph, regards the novel as tragic: "*Werther* is also a tragic novel in that it traces not simply the sickness of one man […] but also the tragedy of the human spirit in one of its most adventurous aspects. Seen in this way, Werther's is an acute, restless and knowing mind, and his capacity for reflection blights his ability to live: his decline is an indictment of man's disunity." Swales, op.cit., 111. I share his view that it is a tragic novel, but connect the tragedy more specifically to Werther's melancholia – what

heart; his own heart is no longer carried. And without it, what is most important in him cannot live. Unable to symbolize this loss, and integrate this heart within his own, he is forced to attempt to recreate her presence in the person of Lotte. It is as if he is now reduced to merely saying "in her presence I feel myself to be…" The telling of the relationship with Lotte is nested within this prior relationship, which is only mentioned before he has met Lotte, and after he has seen her for the last time.[43] This is a thought which, to paraphrase Billington, Werther cannot think for himself. Camilla's own "only in his presence"-emotion can now be nested within this symbolic structure: she can both experience the depth of the loss and hold the loss. In Camilla's evaluation: "It is easier to carry it because it exists inside someone else too." When that happens, "it can be lifted up into something that matters, that ought to matter. And that is a difficult thing." To lift that experience up into something that matters is to symbolise it and give it value.

Camilla, when sharing these passages from the two novels, primarily communicates their significance through *deixis*: pointing to them and pointing them out. I interpret these pointings as *intimations*. I have interpreted her mode of engagement through interpreting the form of thinking embedded in the sentences. So the movement of the syntax in the end passage from the *Lover,* and in the "feeling felt"-passage from *Werther*, I understand to be what Philip Davis calls "holding-grounds" for Camilla. Davis uses the term "holding-ground" to designate deep places for contemplation within literary language, in which the shape of thought is embedded and enacted within syntax, and where function-words are as important as verbs and nouns.[44] In my understanding of the term, the holding-ground enables the reader to think her thoughts, to experience her feelings to allow for affective mentalisation.

To designate Camilla's mode of engagement with these two novels, marked on the one hand by the fugal-like progressive reiteration and on the other by using the text as a holding-

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Freud would term "the impossible mourning for the maternal object." Cf. Kristeva, *Black Sun,* for an account of melancholia as unsymbolisable grief.

[43] The second passage is on page 104: «I had a friend, in my helpless youth she was everything to me, she died and I followed her corpse and stood at the grave as they lowered the coffin and the ropes hustled down beneath it and hurried back up again and the first shovelful of earth thudded down and the fearful box resounded fully and ever more dully until at last it was covered. – I prostrated myself at the graveside – into the innermost part of me seized, shaken, terrified, and torn, but all without comprehending what was happening to me – what will happen to me." There are seven occurrences of 'and' in one sentence, showing how this experience seems to be happening again now as he himself is about to die. It is a loss that has not been mourned. Without this prior unsymbolisable grief, the novel would not have been fully tragic, as it makes his *Liebestod* inevitable.

[44] Philip Davis, *Reading and the Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

ground or nest that holds, embraces and supports the reader's (self-)reading, I propose the neologism *agkalilexia* (from agkaliazo: 'to embrace', 'to hold').

RESOLUTION

Therapon

Camilla reckons that the liberation and release that she experienced with *Sorrows* is connected to its tragic end, the enactment of its plot: "And that might be the liberating thing about Werther: he takes the emotions that you also feel, and lives them out to an extreme degree." The reason for this is that "it is *as if*, by reading about the extreme in the novel, I myself can be released from the extreme. By it being put into words by someone else that 'I understand how this will be experienced, but because I do this, you don't have to do it yourself." In struggling to verbalise her complex experience, Camilla does not dismiss my interpretation ("has the novel 'done it for you'"?), but she seems to use it to advance further: "Well, that is what I have been saying, in a way. I think perhaps it is so. But also that it has been confirmed: my feelings are real, and should be taken seriously." She has been permitted to experience these profound emotions, without having to judge or censor herself, on two levels: that of the beautiful language, the form of the novel, and also in its plot, showing "how love can have such consequences for the individual." It is precisely in holding, and weaving, these two aspects together, that Camilla experiences the release. In my understanding, this experience is closely connected to the experience of *therapon* by means of tragic katharsis.

Gregory Nagy, in his study of the *Iliad*, argues that the "oldest recoverable meaning of the word *therapon*" is "attendant, ritual substitute."[45] So that when Achilles refers to Patroklos as his personal *therapon*, he is not just his friend and attendant, "it means that Patroklos is doomed to die as the other self of Achilles. Thus, the word carries two meanings: Patroklos is the 'attendant' of Achilles on the surface, but he is his 'ritual substitute' in the deeper meaning of the master Narrative."[46] Nagy, in his review of the prehistory of the word *therapon*, argues that "it had once meant 'ritual substitute' and that it had been borrowed into the Greek language from Anatolian languages of Indo-European origin in the later part of the second millennium

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[45] Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero*, 147.

[46] Ibid., 148.

BCE […]". It must be understood in the context "of an Anatolian ritual of purification that expels pollution from the person to be purified and transfers into a person or animal or an object that serves as a ritual substitute." The act may be accomplished "either by destroying or by banishing the victim, who or which is identified as another self, *un autre soi-même.*"[47] The identification of self with the victim serving as the other may assume a variety of forms, and operates on homological principles. Of the periodic rituals of purification, Nagy cites two models. The festival of the Babylonian New Year centred on the sacrificial killing of a goat. There is also the ritual of the scapegoat described in the Bible, Leviticus 16:8 (the *tragos pempomenos* of the Greek Septuagint). Nagy argues that the intimate closeness of the ritual sacrifice, intimate because the victim must die for you, is "matched by an alienating distance, marked by pollution, separating the king from his substitute."[48] An important point is that for the purification to work, the therapon must be "near and dear" to the king. Nagy goes on to relate *therapon* to *therapeuein*: "By now we can see that *therapeuein* in the sense of 'maintain the wellbeing of, take care of, care for' and in the special sense of 'heal, cure' is in fact related to the idea of a ritual substitute who maintains the well-being of someone whom he serves by standing ready to die for that special someone. That is the therapeutic function, as it were, of the therapon."[49] Thus, therapy, in the sense of healing, making whole, depends on purgation of an unwanted part. But this can only be enacted by a *friend*, a near and dear one. This differs from the ordinary understanding of scapegoat, who comes to represent all that is other. Thus, the therapon is not a scapegoat, a *pharmakos*. A scapegoat is the object of projective identification; the bad stuff that I do not want to recognize in me is loaded onto the scapegoat, who is then sent out into the desert (It could be argued that Werther becomes a scapegoat within his bourgeois society: in a society where people are not to give in to their passions, someone must act them out. Thus he is a scapegoat on the level of his society, on the level of the novel a therapon).

Werther's fate is tragic: the catastrophe is inevitable, given the *hamartia* of his "impossible mourning" and the *peripeteia* of trying to regain wholeness through the presence of Lotte. Within the genre of tragedy, katharsis depends on the hero being someone we care about, whose fate raises both fear and pity in us and lets us live through them to arrive at a purified grief. For all the talk about fear and pity in conjunction with the tragic, it should be

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[47] Ibid., 148-149.

[48] Ibid., 152.

[49] Ibid., 165.

emphasised that the principal and primary emotion connected with the tragic is *sorrow*. Camilla says: "The character's suffering is both frightening and comforting, and it helps to move you from doubt and despair to belief." The purgation of fear and pity makes grieving, the purification of sorrow, possible. It enables the symbolisation of the loss.

How is *therapon* related to tragedy and catharsis? In the *Sophist,* Plato uses katharsis as a general term applied to all kinds of discriminating (*krinein)* between what is to be retained and what is to be discarded, in either ridding the body of impurities or the soul of vice and ignorance. And Bernays, in his interpretation of Aristotle's clause, argues that it can have a medical application (removing waste from the body), or the ritual removal of pollution from the person of a criminal, but concludes that Aristotle had the former in mind.[50] We could perhaps say that these two correspond to the *therapon* and the *pharmakos* respectively. However, the important distinction to bear in mind is between getting rid of something one does not want to own, and shedding that which no longer has a function. There is a difference between saying: "I do not want this, this is not part of me" and saying "I can now cast this off because it is outworn." We can argue that the aesthetic pleasure afforded by the therapon of Werther consists in this end being experienced as fitting, that it could be no other way. The fear and pity that was raised is thus cast out, purged, and we are left with two feelings concurrently: aesthetic pleasure of completion – it had to be - coupled with the purified/clarified sorrow for the person we loved and admired. Only now that he is dead do we no longer feel fear and pity for him, but can mourn him. This sorrow is contained within the plot with its feeling of pleasure of rightness in inevitability. The *penthos* and the *therapon* are held together within its form. Perhaps we could say that the purgation of fear and pity through the *therapon* allows for the purification of sorrow and the retrospective clarification of the process of grieving. Is it not possible to say that the pining phase that was referred to earlier, the very centre of grief, is characterized by emotions of fear and pity?[51] These emotions are raised, and must be overcome, for grief to run its course.

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[50] Jacob Bernays, "Aristotle on the effect of Tragedy," in *Aristotle on Aristotle, 4: Psychology and Esthetics*, ed. J. Barnes, M. Schofield and R. Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1979), 154-165.

[51] Francis Sparshott points out that Aristotle, in his *Rhetoric*, does not regard pity as principally other-directed: "'Let pity be a kind of distress at an evident evil of a destructive or distressful sort that overtakes someone who does not deserve it'." Francis Sparshott, "The Riddle of Katharsis," in *Centre and Labyrinth: Essays in Honour of Northrop Frye,* ed. Eleanor Cook, Chaviva Hosek, Jay Macpherson, Patricia Parker and Julian Patrick (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 31.

Her novel: symbolisation of an uncarried heart

"Often I think literature can be more real than so-called reality… When you have participated in the experiences, in the thought processes, then you have somehow experienced it. And if you have experienced it, it must be real," says Camilla. This is what Josie Billington, with reference to Wilfred Bion, terms "the really real": "The truth that is the object of our thinking – the thing in itself, the really real […] cannot be truly known except by experience or discovery."[52] The *therapon* is the very realisation of being held, of a container that can hold the experiencing of inner thoughts and feelings. "In that kind of crisis, to have a book … it gives you a focus that you can't find for yourself. That is very helpful. It organizes the chaos, or forces you to maintain a focus… You are in that voice, a focus for your mind and body. That is so good." Camilla's conclusion is

> I guess the way I was changed was that I was given **courage**. I think that's what it is: **encouragement**. The **courage** to live can become very strong in me as I read. **Courage** is the only word that can describe this feeling state. It's not a **courage** to perform a particular action. Just a **courage** to be. To go on living. A **courage** that is created by the fellowship with the book.

The word courage is repeated seven times in this passage. It starts off with "I guess," moves on to "I think," before she settles on this as "the only word." Then she must nuance further, until she arrives at the essence: "just a courage to be." Poignantly, the word courage is connected to the heart, to having a heart, a whole and healed heart, that can hold one's inner experiencing.[53] If that is what literature can do, move the reader from despair into courage, by turning a "painful solitude into a good and nourishing solitude" through fellowship with a therapon, then perhaps it is a "form of salvation."

From being devastated, via acknowledgment of the severity of her loss, to therapon – the symbolic holding of her feelings - Camilla has managed to navigate through her crisis. This enables her to imaginatively explore, in her own novel, the consequences of not having tools of navigation in a crisis. Her novel, which for reasons of protecting her anonymity I cannot reference or discuss in detail here, has, as mentioned in the interview, one marked and consistent

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[52] Billington, *Is Literature Healthy?*, p. 16.

[53] *Courage:* "heart, innermost feelings; temper," from Vulgar Latin **coraticum* (source of Italian *coraggio*, Spanish *coraje*), from Latin *cor* "heart," from PIE root **kerd-* (1) "heart" (see *heart* (n.)) which remains a common metaphor for inner strength. In Middle English, used broadly for "what is in one's mind or thoughts." Online Etymological dictionary: http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=courage

feature: the absence of subjective inwardness. The character is unable to do for herself what Camilla can: experience her feelings. In revising her novel, this was an explicit strategy on Camilla's part: eradicating all remnants of emotional self-attunement. Given that her transformative reading experience has been about mentalisation of affect and exploration of her feelings with the help of literature's symbolic language and form, is this a surprising narrative strategy? I found that reading this novel was a disturbing experience, precisely because there is no narrator who provides the thoughts the character cannot think for herself. It is taken away from her, the protagonist, and from us, the readers. Given the novel's larger thematic context, about political hopelessness - young people on the move with bleak future prospects and loss of connection - it becomes a powerful statement about what happens in a society where there is no sacred space, where the art of listening is threatened. I regard the novel as a form of threnody. The novel's emotional anti-gravity is created by the character's lack of a "heart that can carry her heart." There is no nest for her, and so she cannot rest anywhere. The novel may be said to combine the hopelessness of Werther and the tough, simple language of Duras, taking the latter to an "extreme." My interpretative question ("…your protagonist has that loneliness because she has not had the kind of readerly experiences you've had") was met with instantaneous confirmation in a mixture of enthusiasm and relief: "Exactly, *that's* just it!" And, after a pause, Camilla arrives at what is perhaps the very essence of her literary experience: "there must be a form given to experience that you yourself have not been able to make, to transform some of your own stuff." A symbolic container, that can carry the reader's heart, the inner experience of emergent thoughts and feelings.

Thus, we see that Camilla has courageously achieved wholeness by re-membering the lost love. Her way of making meaning out of this experience has been to find a symbolic form to investigate what happens to a person who lacks the means for affective mentalisation, whose cry cannot be turned into song. In moving from grieving her own loss to finally creating a novel about a character who is not "feeling felt," who symbolically represents a simplified and exaggerated portrayal of Camilla's former self, Camilla has created a form of threnody. This movement into symbolization may perhaps be called "katamorphic." *Katamorphosis* signifies the change to a simpler relation with the environment and simplification of structure.[54]

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[54] *Katamorphosis* was coined by the biologist I. I. Shmal'gauzen in 1939, to signifiy despecialisation (loss of specific adaptations) and transitions to a non-motile or 'hidden' mode of life.

Summary

Over and against the view of reading as seduction Camilla presents a story in which it is the very depth of emotional engagement with the character and the narrative style that allows one to develop "distance" to one's own thoughts and find the room to symbolize feelings. The text, rather than a sticky web from which there is no escape, becomes a nest, a "space that can encompass" - through its form, syntax and plot - her emergent self-understanding. Camilla has described a long and arduous process of coming to terms with herself after a critical experience of loss, in which it is difficult to separate the respective roles of the two texts. I understand it as a dialectic process, where *The Lover* came to symbolise an acceptance of *her* reality, and *Sorrows* helped her transform that reality, through a process of grieving, to help her create meaning from her experience. The tragic qualities of the novel are essential to this transformative experience. Werther becomes for her a *therapon,* carrying her through pining and despair towards *penthos,* a purified sorrow. The symbolisation, through the novel's form, of Werther's experience as embedded within a deeper melancholia for which he has no language, enables Camilla to gain a structure in which she can understand the meaning of her own experience of loss: to feel a heart in which she can feel her own heart. Through a process of such affective mentalisation the reading experience leads to a *therapon* for Camilla, a regained wholeness as the lost object of love is symbolically incorporated. Her own novel may be read as a lament for people who are unable to "feel felt," a form of threnody. Camilla's story, in tracing the movement from coming to terms with her own loss to imaginative symbolisation of a character's reduced ability for affective mentalisation, may be understood to have a *katamorphic* shape.

In order to arrive at this understanding, what I have attempted to do in my interpretation, is to read the text passages pointed to in the novels as intimations of Camilla's own experience. I have connected her experiential language of the "blow," and the metaphor of shut-open, to the indicated passage in *The Lover*, where realisation comes in the form of accumulated small 'thuds' enacted in the movement from one clause to another at the novel's finale. This progressive realisation of 'feeling felt' is fugue-like. I have attempted to connect the syntactical "nesting" of hearts in the *Sorrows* passage with her description of a "space that encompasses the knowledge" of her double experience of deeply sharing and exploring emotions of sadness and sorrow by means of the neologism *agkalilexia.*

Interpretation of Veronica's Story: *Listening to the Heart*

Introduction

This interpretation will address four main issues: the nature of Veronica's crisis prior to and during the reading experience, her account of her process of transaction with the novel, her interpretation of the kind of change she has undergone, and what role she ascribes to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in the configuration of her story. I will argue that Veronica's *problem*, that of finding the strength to escape from the entrapment of a confining relationship, only masks a deeper crisis: an emotional bruise that can no longer be held at bay by avoiding contact with her underlying emotions. Initially, it would appear that her reading experience is predicated upon identification with Connie, so that we could understand it in terms of Jauss' sympathetic mode of interaction, in which compassion for Connie leads to Veronica's readiness to act. However, I will endeavor to demonstrate that this term cannot capture the complexity of her "moments of crystallization," as such an interpretation leaves out what Kuiken et al. refer to as the fourth level of feeling: the self-modification through expressive enactment of a deep affective theme within the life-crisis. An essential element of her mode of engagement with the novel is the visceral and a bodily form of knowing. This mode may in my view best be conceptualised as *enkinaesthetic*. What appears to be a rather straightforward case of deciding to take action, may only be a surface manifestation of a deeper change having taken place. I will argue that Gendlin's phenomenological theory of felt sense corresponds closely to the ancient Greek notion of *thumos* as found in Homer and Plato, and that this "listening to the heart" is what Veronica is enabled to do. The meaning of her story must be understood in relation to her serendipitous discovery of the book, and how the reading experience opens up for another transformative experience many years later, when reading *The Winter's Tale*. The latter enables her to heal her bruise, by metaphorically "bringing her mother back to life." Therefore the plot of her story has the shape of an *anamorphosis,* a turning back to heal the "bruise," the wound of childhood separation from the primary caretaker.

CRISIS

Initial interpretation: Admitting that she is trapped and finding the strength to leave

Veronica's opening summary of her experience is that she was "in a long-term relationship in which I felt very trapped." Before reading the novel she had resigned herself to her fate. The book made her realise how she could "break free," like Lady Chatterley, by "wanting to be proactive and actually put myself on a different path." She decides to terminate her relationship, which turns out to be a good decision. This process of admitting and solving a problem through commitment to action seems to fit nicely into the trans-theoretical model of change elaborated by Prochaska and Di Clemente.[1] Veronica's relation may be understood as the progression from pre-contemplation (not yet having admitted to a problem) to dedication by comparing herself to Connie: from "growing disdain," to admitting the "lack of connection," to weighing up the pros and cons of leaving ("it would be better to have a few years of pain with the happier future in the longer term, than to just carry on being unhappy"). This process takes her to the stage of determination ("a real active choice for me to make"). A few months later she takes action ("it wasn't until a few months afterwards that I decided to terminate the relationship, but the decision for me internally had been made"). She must then pass through a difficult maintenance stage: "We broke up about six months after I'd read the book, and then ended up getting back together about two months after that." According to Prochaska and Di Clemente, this kind of relapse is common - most people need to reaffirm their commitment and re-enter upon the course of action before the change is solidified. Thus, when they finally "split up for good" Veronica goes through a very difficult period "for about a good year." The successful outcome of the action-maintenance sequence leading to completion is understood to be predicated upon the person's self-efficacy.[2] Efficacy expectations are internalised cognitive-affective resources that can be used to maintain commitment in the face of obstacles: the more effective the individual sees herself in dealing with difficulties, the more likely she is to resist relapse. Veronica has the internal resources that enable her to stay firm in her decision. "I just threw myself into my work and buried myself a little bit, but still held on to the idea that this was just

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[1] See Literature Review Chapter for explication of the model. James O. Prochaska, and Carlo Di Clemente, "Trans-Theoretical Therapy: Toward a More Integrative Model of Change," *Psychotherapy Research & Practice* 19, no. 3 (1982): 276-88276-288.

[2] Albert Bandura, "Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change," *Psychological Review* 84, no. 2 (1977): 191-215.

a rough patch, and it was all going to be worth it because I'd be able to come through it, later down the line, and be better for it." However, our understanding of Veronica's inner process of change is restricted by viewing it through this framework. It is not the entrapment in a bad relationship itself that is Veronica's deeper concern. It is through the relationship that Veronica's underlying issue becomes apparent to her: the "bruise" surfaces to manifest an inner crisis of insecurity. As such, breaking free is a necessary dialectic step in order to face the crisis: the emotional wound, which she has carried since losing her mother, can no longer be "numbed." Greenberg and Goleman differentiate between two different core affective schemas, one related to identity and the other to attachment.[3] Likewise, Sidney Blatt divides personality development into two fundamental themes, relatedness and self-definition.[4] Daniel Stern also point out that in infants there is a system of self-organisation that differs from the attachment system.[5] A crisis related to attachment does not have to be pathological, but can arise from the early loss of the primary caretaker. According to neuropsychologist Jaak Panksepp, who has researched the fundamental affective systems, the grief system will be activated when the child is separated from its mother, and when this loss is permanent will also activate the fear system.[6] The child will experience great psychic stress related to the loss, but this will be exacerbated by the absence of another caretaker who can regulate the emotional pain related to this loss. The activation of the attachment system is meant to solicit required help in order to regain security and regulate the emotional stress of the loss. When this fails, it can lead to a core emotional schema of fear of being alone. Such attachment insecurity will result not only in fear of being abandoned, but also in other secondary emotions such as rage. Judging by Veronica's account of her childhood after the loss of her mother, it seems there was no one else to give her adequate support in coming to terms with the loss:

> After my mother died, I was raised by her sister, my aunt. She was a maiden aunt, never married, never had any children of her own, didn't do the best job, but you know, did all that she could. She was estranged from my father who lived abroad and was a sea captain. And he would come home and, yeah, be abusive in his own way and then go off. When my mother died we didn't have any grief counselling.

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[3] Leslie S. Greenberg, and Rhonda N. Goldman, *Emotion-focused Couples Therapy: The Dynamics of Emotion, Love and Power* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2008).

[4] Sidney J. Blatt, *Polarities of Experience: Relatedness and Self-definition in Personality Development, Psychopathology and the Therapeutic Process* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2008).

[5] Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Human Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

[6] Jaak Panksepp, and Lucy Biven, *The Archeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co, 2012).

It is therefore understandable that she has a deep insecurity in her relationship: will he be able to support me emotionally?

"Slowly, slowly, the wound to the soul begins to make itself felt, like a bruise"

"I couldn't see myself being strong enough to get out of it," Veronica says. She does *not* say that she was not strong enough at the time. She knows now, in light of subsequent events and in retrospect, that she did possess the strength and the self-efficacy. What her formulation appears to imply is that she is not in touch with the part of herself that listens to the impulses that come from within. Veronica experienced a conflict of needs: "I definitely wanted a family… some stability… to feel settled… I saw him as a vehicle to get those things." She needs the stability that she's never had; given her account of her early loss of her mother, the absent father and the emotionally cold atmosphere at her aunt's, it is a reasonable conjecture that she has not been allowed to develop secure attachment in an empathically attuned relationship to her primary caregivers. Her partner is not seen as an individual in his own right, but as "a vehicle" to shore up her own insecurity. The other horn of the dilemma is that she has an inner need to break free and become her own person: "to feel differently about myself." There are thus two opposing deep needs of her psyche: she must come to terms with the fundamental emotional wound of losing her mother, as well as the insecurity and loneliness stemming from growing up without a family; she must also become her own person, being able to rely on her own feelings so that she can establish true connection with others.

The *bruise* of her mother's death is coming to the foreground for Veronica: "I felt like I was grieving all over again." It is the bruise coming to the surface that brings it home to her that there is no real connection with her partner: "The grief was the big thing for me… If he couldn't handle that part of me, then we weren't going to make it." He seems unable to receive and validate her core experience. Like Connie, Veronica subsequently falls into a depression, increasing the distance between them. Her attempts at communication fail, thus "for me then I just felt that part shut down. […] I am not going to try anymore." In the passage quoted from the novel, Connie only dimly realises the psychic law of the bruise. The word "realised" is ambiguous here: it could mean 'to cause (something) to become real' rather than 'to understand or become aware of'. Her *life* realises it, because all her experiences point to it. It may something she knows without being able to put into words. It is something her body knows. Connie is suffering from the effects of the bruise; they affect her outlook: everywhere she sees

the lack of "a manifestation of energy" (p. 53). It is only later, when she has fallen in love with Mellor, that she can see something different: "Shall I tell you what you have that other men don't have, and that will make the future? […] It's the courage of your tenderness, that's what it is." To which Mellor responds: "Ay!" he said. "You're right. It's that really. It's that all the way through." (p. 307). He feels true empathy from her here; what she says resonates deeply with him, as if she has formulated something that he knew but had yet to verbalise. He is able to recognise this as truth precisely because he has the courage of his feelings, that is, he can listen to what his feelings tell him. And in this, perhaps, lies Connie's enlightenment: instead of lamenting the (lack of) manifestation of spiritedness, she can now recognise and feel that which allows spiritedness to emerge, the very seat of spiritedness. She learns to listen to and trust her heart.

Let us note here that Lawrence was deeply concerned with the sense of touch and interoception - his focus on physical intimacy and sensuality has its roots in a desire to restore an emphasis on the body, and bring it into balance with what he judged to be Western civilization's over-emphasis on the mind through the dehumanising effects of modernity, industrialisation and instrumentalisation. His emphasis on vitality, spontaneity and instinct springs from this concern with emotional health and its dependency on contact with a bodily way of knowing. His treatment of sexuality was thus a part of a larger picture. "I always labour at the same thing, to make the sex relation valid and precious, instead of shameful," Lawrence wrote in one of his letters.[7] Sexuality is thus not the main aspect, but a vital part of a full life. This larger picture was connected to his religious experience: "[…] primarily I am a passionately religious man, and my novels must be written from the depth of my religious experience."[8] He felt that a sense of wonder is our sixth sense, and "it is the natural religious sense":

> My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and a bridle. What do I care about knowledge. All I want is to answer to my blood, direct, without fribbling intervention of mind, or moral, or what-not.[9]

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[7] D. H. Lawrence, *The Letters of DH Lawrence*, Vol. 6, March 1927 – Nov. 1928, ed. James T. Boulton and Margaret Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 8.

[8] D. H. Lawrence, *The Letters of DH Lawrence*, Vol. 2, June 1913 – Oct. 1916, ed. George J. Zytaruk and James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 165.

[9] D. H. Lawrence, *The Selected Letters of DH Lawrence*, ed. James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 53.

When we look at the narrative structure of *Lady Chatterley's Lover,* we see that it most closely corresponds to the ironic type of *mythos* delineated by Northrop Frye. The ironic mythos "attempts to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealised existence."[10] Connie must escape from a world in which common sense is lost, dominated by the coarseness, brutality and coldness of rationality brought about by war, modernity and civilisation. The novel is not romantic in that it sets up a better, authentic world in contrast. The woods in which she meets up with Mellor is a transitory realm, a place to which Mellor has retreated in escaping from the lower world of the real. The ironic lies in the distancing from the world of Connie's husband, which represents the social order. The ironic perspective sees this world as "full of anomalies, injustices, follies and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable."[11] This is not a life-sustaining order and she must escape from it. According to Frye, the hero must escape from such a world without being able to transform it. Moreover, the hero can only negate this world, not knowing what the alternative to which she turns will be.

TRANSACTION WITH THE LITERARY WORK

Connection

Veronica regards her situation as "similar" to Connie's. In the first passage quoted, Clifford seems to Connie "impersonal, almost to idiocy". And Veronica remembers looking at her partner, thinking "he's an idiot". Furthermore, relating an anecdote to illustrate her realisation that something is wrong in her relationship, she concludes: "The connection isn't going to be there, and again that is similar to Connie." She enumerates several other parallels:

> "Connie is thinking that if she has a child… I did wonder if that would be an option";
> Reading about Connie's illness: "again, that was something I could connect with";
> Like Connie, she feels "crushed";
> "I compared this to Connie";
> "thinking about myself as Connie and feeling trapped and wanting to escape."

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[10] Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism,* 223.

[11] Ibid., 226.

Her evaluation of Connie is that she "is a great girl… For me she is anyway." She indicates several times that she processes the story through Connie's perspective: "Initially I was very much connecting with Connie's perspective." Her understanding of this is that "I was very much Connie-focused. Connie was my protagonist that I was channeling it all through and experiencing it through…"

From these excerpts we see that the main verb she uses for her relation to Connie is "to connect." There are enough similarities for the two of them to connect on an emotional level. To connect implies an active process of joining, tying two parts together in order to establish a relation and close interaction. This kind of joining together may be otherwise described in terms of the Ancient Greek verb *symballein*, which means 'to put together'. This term forms the root of 'symbolic', and designates an act of uniting, joining and converging. Thus, the two parts are not identical, but "fit together" and form a unity. Veronica never uses the verb "to identify with". Still, it would seem apposite to understand her connection in terms of Jauss' theory of interaction patterns. Veronica's story may be viewed as an example of a progressive sympathetic identification with the protagonist. Sympathetic interaction is characterized by compassion for an imperfect heroine: "By sympathetic identification, we refer to the aesthetic effect of projecting oneself into the alien self," according to Jauss.[12] Furthermore, this process "can inspire feelings in the reader that will lead him to a solidarization with the suffering hero," and thus the reader "can recognize the scope of his own possibilities." The identification is progressive if it evokes moral interest in the form of a readiness to act, through the reader's solidarity with a specific action.[13] If it had been regressive, it would instead have led to a tranquilizing self-confirmation by means of a sentimental engagement only. Veronica takes action to terminate her relationship through an active engagement with Lady Chatterley's project to break free from her entrapment.

However, the term "identification" remains vague – in Jauss' account as well as in other ones. Jauss' "pendulum movement" bears a clear resemblance to the dialectic of immersion and

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[12] Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics: Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 3, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 172. There is however a problem with this: Jauss understands "the readiness to act" in terms of taking pro-social action on behalf of others, based on compassion. It would seem that it is only through "admiring interaction" that the action would only be related to one's own behaviour, where the protagonist serves as a model one can emulate. It is quite clear in Veronica's case, that her process is not one of admiring emulation.

[13] Ibid., 59.

reflection described by Christina Vischer Bruns.[14] However, both sides of the pendulum, identification/immersion and reflection/distance, remain rather ambiguous terms that adumbrate a plethora of phenomenological experiences. Identification may entail a feeling of sameness or similarity, and may pertain to situation, predicament, personality, values, worldview or project, as well as to how the narrator relates to the character. It is not just that Connie acts and intends in certain ways, but the narrator is attuned to her experiencing so that one gets the sense that the narrator knows Connie better than she knows herself.

Veronica quotes at length from the passage about the bruise. Who does she identify with here? She does not comment upon the narrative technique used by Lawrence in this passage. But it is perhaps significant that in the second sentence the narrator reverts to the present tense. He appears to slip out of free indirect discourse here, thus reverting to speaking in his own voice. He is the one formulating the psychic law. It is almost as if the narrator himself chances upon the discovery of this law through empathizing with Connie. The narrator's statement, "and when we think we have forgotten" seems to be a statement directed to the implied reader above the head of the character, a universal law that would include every reader.

Moreover, does the reflective distance point of the pendulum swing involve reflecting on the discursive and stylistic aspects, or on the nature of the identification itself? I find that Kuiken et al.'s concept of metaphoric self-implication comes closer to Veronica's transaction with the text.

Self-compassion through discovery of compassion for fictional character

In the following passage Veronica makes a general reflection about her reading experiences:

> You're so involved in the story, and being with the characters, and your mind's eye is just picturing a story, it almost gives you that distance to think about yourself, not in the third person but just from a different perspective and slightly further away. But looking at it through the eyes of the characters, and I think it's often easier, for me anyway, to think about other people than about myself. You're very good at giving advice to other people but then you never take it yourself, do you? People can often come to you for advice and I'm very good at helping people and talking things out, but then doing it for myself is often very different. So just having that other person to channel it through maybe takes away some of the danger, takes away some of the risk. And even if you can't say 'this is really painful for me', it is possible to say 'that must be really painful for her', or 'I can understand how that would feel'.

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[14] Christina Vischer Bruns, *Why Literature? The Value of Literary Reading and What it Means for Teaching* (London and New York: Continuum Books, 2011).

In a similar vein to how the narrator declares that Connie "realised one of the great laws of the human soul," Veronica seems to have come upon another such great "law," akin to the one stated by Diogenes Laertius: "When Tales was asked what was difficult, he said, 'to know one's self'. And what was easy, 'to advise another'."[15] It is as if she is looking at herself through the eyes of the characters. Self-empathy must be channeled through another person or fictional character: "even if you can't say this is really painful for me, it is possible to say that must be really painful for her." This channeling appears to alleviate a risk, a "danger." What is this danger? This is something that perhaps I should have probed further into during the interview. Is it the danger involved in acting upon your own advice (making the wrong choice), or that of misunderstanding one's own feelings, an inability to 'know one's self'? Or does it have to do with the very intersubjectivity of the formation of the self, and the psychic danger involved in not experiencing empathic attunement from the environment?

We observe that Veronica describes herself as "really rooting for" Connie, and she can remember going "'come on Connie, you can do it, sister', gearing her on to just get away, just get out!" Her appraisal of this is couched as follows: "I guess that was just my own frustrations being projected." Then, significantly, Veronica experiences a moment of truth: "I remember there being a real kind of crystallising moment for me, thinking that if I can want this for a fictional character, then surely I can want it for myself. […] I realised that if I was going to make any changes, then it would have to be by my own hands, my own doing." When I invited her to elaborate on this, she says:

> It helped me see myself, something I may not have before, or not be able to recognise anyway. I certainly felt frustration and unhappiness and I guess anger, at certain points, but I couldn't see past that. That was what my emotion was, but feeling hopeful for Connie, and wanting better for her, that certainly made me want that for myself. It helped me understand it, almost like a mirror, like it reflected back into real life. Yeah, and it almost just seemed like such an obvious thing as well. You know, when you have that realisation, of course, come on, why can I feel it for her and not feel it for me? I think that was part of my depression and not being able to feel good about myself or feel that I was worthy. I felt that Connie deserved happiness, but maybe before reading it I didn't feel that I did. I felt like I just deserved to keep going with what I was doing.

She implies that there is no direct identification of a sameness-relation. First she feels hopeful for Connie, she feels compassion for her. Then, remarkably, in an act of metacognition, she catches herself in this act of compassion. And she realizes that this way of relating to Connie is

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[15] Diogenes Laertius, *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, Vol 1, Books 1-5. Loeb Classical Library No. 184, trans. R. D. Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925).

something that she is not as yet able to do for herself. This complex operation seems to involve more than just a pendulum between reading about Connie and relating it to herself. Veronica employs the commonplace simile of "almost like a mirror". It is as if Veronica's actualisation of Connie creates an inner entity that has reflexive compassion for her, in a double movement. The element of metacognition, of recognizing the pendulum movement in full swing, so to speak, is what leads to the discovery of the need for self-compassion. Not a straightforward identification with the character's project, followed by a desire to do the same thing, but recognition of the need to listen to herself, through recognition of empathy with the other. This is not simply a back-and-forth movement between identification and reflection, it is a turning point: Veronica reads her own reading, and then interprets what implications this meta-cognitive act must have for how she relates to herself. (Let us bear in mind, however, that her description of this is also a "reading": there may well be a gap between experiencing and narrating I). It as if Veronica's internal *dia-logos* follows this movement:

> *Connie and I are similar: None of us are happy.*
> *I really want her to be happy, she deserves it.*
> *That means I have compassion for her.*
> *If I can have compassion for her, I ought to have compassion for myself.*
> *How would this self-compassion manifest itself? I am making myself unhappy if I stay in this relationship. I owe it to myself to finish it.*

Veronica does take action, and she does say her reading was channeled through the perspective of Connie. However, the decision to leave, and the concomitant action-maintenance sequence it precipitates, may not constitute the essence of the life-change. Ending the relationship may just have been a necessary, but not sufficient, step, needed for her to be able to develop an inner security. And perhaps the interaction paradigm leaves vital aspects of Veronica's reading process unaccounted for. Veronica declares that what she took from the reading of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was "her sort of escape and the enlightenment she gets." So far, I have thematised her experience in terms of the process of *escaping* from entrapment by deciding to act. But what kind of *enlightenment* does Connie, and Veronica, get? When Veronica subsequently makes the following appraisal of her experience: "It awoke something within me," what is this something?

Veronica's understanding of Connie's encounter with Mellor is that "he almost changes something inside her, the way that her feelings then sit. Her emotions sit differently within her stomach and she reacts to things differently." I think this interpretation is crucial for an understanding of Veronica's transformative reading experience. What does she mean by

emotions sitting differently in the stomach? Reflecting on her experience of reading *The Winter's Tale,* Veronica evaluates this as "a feeling of shared consciousness, a feeling of recognition":

> So that as you recognize something that a character or person in the book is feeling, it enables you to register that within yourself that maybe you wouldn't have before. I feel like it's a way to enable your own realisations to come through, almost like a gramophone: something that just amplifies what's inside. Because even when you're trying to be conscious and self-aware, that still takes practice.

This is an interesting formulation: "to enable your own realisations to come through." As if they are located/stored elsewhere, but you need something to let them come through to you, to be able to hear the signals; as if the sound of that voice inside you is barely audible, and needs to be amplified. Is this not a different form of knowing than the metacognition that enabled her to act self-compassionately, one that is predicated upon having practice in listening to one's own realisations?

The bodily aspects of reading

Upon finishing the book Veronica could feel "a noticeable difference within me, from how I had been at the beginning of the book, to coming to the end." As she is digesting the experience, another feeling arises: "OK, I know what I need to do now. This is something different, I feel differently now." She now *knows*, on a deep emotional level, what must be done, because she *feels* differently. And this knowing brings another shift with it: "That feeling of relief" once the choice has been made.

Throughout, Veronica employs a viscerally-oriented discourse to describe important aspects of her reading experience. For instance, the physical environment of the reading act is important to her: "trains are very good thinking spaces." When I agree that reading is a physical experience, she relates that she will stroke the book if it is good, and that holding a book feels good. She talks about digesting the reading experience, and that her pace slows down towards the end. The engagement with the characters has a visceral manifestation: "I can remember almost wanting to shake the book." She confirms that her response was physical through her use of non-verbal utterances: "argh, come on woman, what are you doing?!" Moreover, she describes the "exhalation when you finish a book." About re-reading it, she said she could "feel a smile come across your face."

During her depression, she "felt numb." When Veronica describes how she experienced her depressive state, she employs a physical metaphor: "like a weight on my chest." She uses "weight" three times, literally putting weight on this word through her emphasis. And, remarkably, as she is telling me about this "dark place," she can contact a "remembered feeling" of the physical sensations of what it was like: she catches herself "feel a nervous energy, like a flutter in my stomach." She is clearly now in contact with a deeper part of herself, whereas previously there was simply a heavy weight on this chest region. Veronica's interpretation of Mellor's effect on Connie could also hold true for her own process: the reading experience "almost changes something inside her, the way that her feelings then sit. Her emotions sit differently within her stomach and she reacts to things differently." Self-compassion manifests itself in this ability to listen to herself differently. What is this ability, and what part of herself does she listen to?

The felt sense: on the edge of awareness

In an attempt to "carry forward some of Merleau-Ponty's crucial insights"[16] the American phenomenologist E. T. Gendlin has elaborated a process which he terms "focusing": how we can learn to contact, at the very edge of our awareness, a special kind of internal bodily awareness. The term he uses for this awareness is "felt sense." According to Gendlin, Merleau-Ponty "greatly enriches and enlarges what can be meant by 'perception'. He finds the body's interaction and intentionality prior and presupposed in perception."[17] Thus, Merleau-Ponty's achievement was that he "rescued the body from being considered merely as a *sensed* thing among other sensed thing (as it still is in physiology). For him the body, sensing from inside, is an internal-external orienting center of perception, not just perceived, but perceiving."[18] Gendlin aims to build on this theory in order to "understand how the body can think beyond anything ever formulated before – how it senses on the edge of human thinking." Steps towards change come when a person focuses on an unclear "felt sense," one's bodily awareness of the ongoing life experience. A felt sense is the body's sense of a particular problem or situation. According to Gendlin, "the felt sense comes in the middle of the body: throat, chest, stomach,

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[16] Eugene T. Gendlin, "The Primacy of the Body, not the Primacy of Perception," *Man and World* 25, no. 3-4 (1992): 341.

[17] Ibid., 342.

[18] Ibid., 349.

or abdomen"[19] and for most people can be difficult to contact. It constitutes the centre of personality, residing "between the usual conscious person and the deep, universal reaches of human nature, where we are no longer ourselves. It is open to what comes from those universals, but it feels like 'really me'."[20] The process of focusing on the felt sense may lead to a "body shift": "a distinct physical sensation of change, which you recognize once you have experienced it."[21] Focusing is different from merely getting in touch with one's emotions, as it concerns a different kind of inward attention to what is at first sensed unclearly. The experience of something emerging into awareness from this felt sense is one of "relief and a coming alive."[22] Veronica's resolve does not stem from a rational deliberation of alternatives, but from arriving at a deeply felt sense of knowing what to do: as she has finished the book and is "digesting" it, "then the feeling arose: OK, I know what I need to do now. This is something different, I feel differently now." She can feel "a noticeable difference within me, from how I had been at the beginning of the book, to coming to the end."

At first the felt sense is a wide and vague feeling, before the core of it reaches awareness; concomitant with the awareness is a shift, something is now different inside. A felt sense does not come to one in the form of thoughts or words, but as a single and whole - albeit complex and puzzling - bodily sensation. Therefore, says Gendlin, it is difficult to describe in words: "It is an unfamiliar, deep-down level of awareness that psychotherapists (along with almost everybody else) have usually not found."[23]

How does this gradual deepening process, which follows Connie's own, to the point where there is a clear felt sense of what to do, tie in with the movement thematised earlier, of self-compassion through an act of metacognition? There appears to be two different, and somewhat contradictory, processes recounted. The turn of perspective in which Veronica discovers that what she can do for Connie, she also must do for herself, is described as a "crystallising moment." The other process is something arrived at after the reading experience

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[19] Eugene T. Gendlin, "The Client's Client: The Edge of Awareness," in *Client-centered Therapy and the Person-centered Approach: New Directions in Theory, Research and Practice*, ed. R. L. Levan and J.M. Shlien (New York: Praeger, 1984), 79.

[20] Ibid., 82.

[21] Eugene T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (London: Rider, 2003), 7.

[22] Ibid., 8.

[23] Ibid., 33.

has been digested. The time of the "crystallising moment" is not specified, but it is a fair assumption that it occurred during the act of reading or before the "digestion" of it. Thus we may assume that they occurred at different points in time. The metacognition was the result of sympathy: of hoping that Connie would escape. The feeling different within is the result of a complex process: of an empathy with Connie's deepening experience: a realisation that once the bruise has been acknowledged, one can start to develop contact with the bodily awareness.

The felt sense that brings Veronica in contact with a deeper part of herself is a meditative mode of engagement with the work that lies beyond the aesthetic pendulum of identification and distance that Jauss identifies as the progressive movement of interaction. A concept which might encapsulate the affective-visceral involvement of one's deeper self-modifying feelings, is Susan Stuart's *enkinaesthesia*. Enkinaesthesia emphasizes the direct and non-dual/blended experience of the other, as well as the background dimension that makes transaction possible. This dimension is primarily affective and kinaesthetic, since we mutually understand the intentionality of actions through our motor capacity. Stuart's concept encompasses two concomitant processes:

> the neuromuscular dynamics of the agent, including the givenness and ownership of its experience, and (ii) the entwined, blended and situated co-affective feeling of the presence of the other(s), agential (for example, human, horse, cat, beetle) and non-agential (for example, cup, bed, apple, paper) and, where appropriate, the anticipated arc of the other's action or movement, including, again where appropriate, the other's intentionality. When the 'other' is also a sensing and experiencing agent it is their - in this case, the pair's - affective intentional reciprocity, their folding, enfolding, and unfolding, which co-constitutes the conscious relation and the experientially recursive temporal dynamics that lead to the formation and maintenance of the deep integral enkinaesthetic structures and melodies which bind us together, even when they pull us apart. Such deeply felt enkinaesthetic melodies emphasize the dialogical nature of the backgrounded feeling of being.[24]

Thus we may say that through a process of enkinaesthetic engagement with the work, which leads to a crystallisation through the experience of felt sense, Camilla achieves an ability to *listen to her heart*.

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[24] Susan Stuart, "Enkinaesthesia: the essential sensuous background for co-agency," in *Knowing without Thinking: Mind, Action, Cognition and the Phenomenon of the Background*, ed. Zdravko Radman (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 167.

RESOLUTION

Thumos

In Plato's conception of the tripartite nature of the human soul, *thumos* is the white horse that, along with the black horse of the appetites, must be guided by the charioteer of Reason.[25] There seems to be no modern equivalent of the term *thumos.* In *A Study of Thumos in Early Greek Epic*, Caroline P. Caswell shows that it is difficult to "adequately express what was intended by the Greek. And yet the uses of *thumos* are so varied, covering almost every important aspect of inner human experience."[26] For Plato, *thumos* was closely associated with the courage to conquer and endure fear and pain of all sorts, and not simply related to anger. However, according to Barbara Koziak, modern interpreters of Plato "often script *thumos* into a submersed narrative of anger, justice, manliness and the military life," and she criticises interpretations that translate *thumos* as "spiritedness" expressed in "anger against violations of one's honour or as a desire for recognition."[27] Koziak's conjecture is that such a narrow view may be based on a superficial understanding of the *Iliad*, which of course famously opens with the emotion of rage and anger. According to Koziak, Achilles undergoes a transformation: "where Achilles was liable to the pathologies inherent in the dominating emotion of anger among heroic warriors, in the last book a calm settles [...]. Now a surprisingly empathetic compassion, a sharing of sorrows turns Achilles' *thumos* [.]"[28] Translations of the Iliad reveals how our own psychological vocabularies impact on our understanding of the emotions depicted. This has been demonstrated by Alasdair McIntyre in a review of the famous scene in which Achilles considers whether to draw sword against Agamemnon when the latter threatens to seize Briseis.[29] As Achilles is deliberating, "he weighed in *phrenes* and *thumos* these two

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[25] In his dialogues *Phaedrus* and *The Republic* Plato allegorises *thumos* as one of the three constituent parts of the human psyche. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato depicts *logos* as a charioteer driving the two horses *eros* and *thumos*. In the *Republic* (Book IV) the soul is partitioned into *noos* ("intellect"), *thumos* ("passion"), and *epithumia* ("appetite""). To its appetitive part are ascribed bodily desires; *thumos* is the emotional element in virtue of which we feel anger, fear, etc.; *noos* is (or should be) the controlling part which subjugates the appetites with the help of *thumos*.

[26] Caroline P. Caswell, *A Study of* Thumos *in Early Greek Epic* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 1.

[27] Barbara Koziak, "Homeric Thumos: The Early History of Gender, Emotion, and Politics,"*The Journal of Politics* 61, no. 4 (1999): 1069.

[28] Ibid., 1070.

[29] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 17.

courses" (1.193). George Chapman, in his 16th century translation, represents Achilles' reaction as a conflict between two thoughts in his 'discursive part', whereas Alexander Pope depicts a battle between reason and passion in his 18th century version. In Fitzgerald's modern translation, Achilles is torn between conflicting passions. However, the conception of *thumos* depends on an integration of emotion and reason: it entails a configuration of affect, sensation, feeling and deliberation.

In her study of psychological conceptions in Greek poetry and philosophy, Shirley Sullivan has found that *thumos* is "the most prominent psychic entity" in the epics of Homer. Sullivan says that *thumos* can be both an agent, a location or an instrument within the person. It is a vibrant source of energetic action and a seat of vital energy that can fill a person: *Thumos* is "placed like other psychic entities in the chest, it is able to inspire, direct and guide the person"[30]; "very often does it 'order', 'stir up', 'urge on' or 'drive' someone."[31] In Homer, outside forces and agents can often affect *thumos* "as it proves open and vulnerable. We see the person very much heeding *thumos*, sometimes needing to control it, and even talking to it directly." *Thumos* can encompass and contain all the emotions. But it is also related to cognitive activity, as a person can ponder things, make plans and consider choices in his/her *thumos*. Athena says she knew in her *thumos* that Odysseus would return home. According to Sullivan, "*thumos* is the location where possibilities become apparent and it contributes to the decision that is formed;"[32] and in a poem of Archilochus "we see *thumos* connected with knowing or realizing a truth."[33] *Thumos* overlaps with other entities such as *noos, phrenes* and *ker*. *Phrenes* and *thumos* are both often translated as 'heart'. Gregory Nagy, in his investigation of key terms in Homer's epics, consistently renders *thumos* as 'heart'.[34] However, *phrenes* normally encloses *thumos*, in order that *thumos* act appropriately. Caswell accords with this view, stating that "when the *thumos* is not contained in the *phrenes*, the intellectual function is impaired and the

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[30] Shirley Darcus Sullivan, *Psychological Activity in Homer: A Study of Phren* (Ottawa, Canada: Carleton University Press, 1988), 55.

[31] Ibid., 58.

[32] Ibid., 56.

[33] Ibid., 62.

[34] See Gregory Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero in 24 Hours* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

emotions become uncontrollable. Hence no doubt the later semantic developments of *thumos* which came to be thought of as violent emotion *per se*."[35]

Such a conception of *thumos* is, in my view, essential for an understanding of Lawrence's novels, and for Connie's experience in particular. Curiously, the modern reduction of 'heart' to 'spirited anger' as analysed by Koziak, seems to be paralleled in the narrow view of Lawrence as being primarily concerned with spiritedness, vitality and the appetites. Connie's "enlightenment" may be said to consist of a realignment with her *thumos*, as she learns to listen to and trust her heart. Accordingly, Veronica appears to undergo an analogous deepening process. I believe that what Gendlin describes is a form of awareness closely akin to that described in terms of *thumos*. The felt sense may be another way of formulating the "*phrenes*-encompassed" *thumos*.

Hora: in the fullness of time

There is an intriguing complexity in ascription of agency and meaning in Veronica's account of the encounter with the book:

> "And I can imagine that maybe if it wasn't for the book… so I really feel quite lucky that this book found its way to me when it did, at the right time."

> "Yeah, I am really thankful that I found the book, or it found me."

The book found its way to her – what does she mean by that? She sought one thing ("I was reading it just to see… how risquè it was going to be"), and found another. She was motivated by curiosity, but perhaps also other, unconscious motives. Her mother in-law had started it, but had to "walk away from it": that story itself fascinated her and pulled her into the book's orbit. The book found her - as if it were an agent. In other words: as if it were the intention that she read that book at that time. Retrospectively, it feels as if she was meant to read it. And it happened "at the right time": she was ripe to receive this experience, and can now be thankful that it happened. While one may intuitively relate this notion of "the right time" to the concept of *kairos,* I think it may more precisely be designated as *horatic.* In his philological review of the etymology of the word "hero" in ancient Greek epics, Gregory Nagy discusses the meaning

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[35] Caswell, *A Study of Thumos*, 50.

of the word *hora*, the precise moment when everything comes together for the hero. *Hora* means "season, seasonality, the right time, the perfect time; beauty". According to Nagy, *hora* "stood for natural time in a natural life, in a natural life-cycle. The English word *hour* is derived from ancient Greek *hora*, as in the expression 'the hour is near'." Hera, the goddess of *hora*, "was the goddess of seasons, in charge of making everything happen on time, happen in season, and happen in a timely way."[36] This seasonality is also the mark of maturity and of ripeness.

The encounter is felt to have come about through a combination of fate, grace and luck. Veronica uses the word *serendipity* to describe this experience:

> I think it's serendipity, I guess, how certain books just come to you at the right time. They find you or you find them. Perhaps if you read the same book a year later, or a year beforehand, it wouldn't have the same impact, but just sometimes that kind of connection happens and it can't be copied, there is nothing else like it. So, yeah, I love this book, I cherish it…

The word serendipity has somehow *found its way to* into the common vocabulary. It was coined by Horace Walpole in 1754, based on his interpretation of a fairytale, *Peregrinnagio de tre giovani figliuli del re di serendippo*.[37] The [New Oxford Dictionary of English](#) defines serendipity as "the occurrence and development of events by chance in a satisfactory or beneficial way, understanding the chance as any event that takes place in the absence of any obvious project (randomly or accidentally), which is not relevant to any present need, or in which the cause is unknown." According to James L. Schulmann, in his introduction to a major scientific study of serendipity, the concept is difficult to define: "Serendipity can be about finding something of value while seeking something entirely different or it can be about finding a sought-after object in a place or manner where it was not at all expected. The word is always about what Walpole called 'happy accident', but the exact mixture of wisdom and luck […] varies."[38] It seems to designate a complex phenomenon of fate, luck and sagacity intertwined. It depends on the capacity to creatively connect the finding to other things as much as on luck, and it may feel as if one was fated to discover it, or that grace was operative, thus giving rise to

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[36] Nagy, *The Ancient Greek Hero,* 32.

[37] Walpole describes in a letter to a friend how he found this word when reading a fairytale about three princes. The princes, however, do not make a happy discovery by accident. They happen to be able to solve a problem because they have paid attention to things along the way.

[38] James L. Schulman, "Introduction," in *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity: A Study in Sociological Semantics and the Sociology of Science*, ed. Robert K. Merton and Elinor Barber (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), xiv.

feelings of gratitude. It is important to note that she did not approach the book looking for a solution to her problem. Her motivation was primarily what is loosely termed "reading for pleasure." Yet she did happen to read it during a time of crisis: she was travelling back and forth on the train, having to deal with sorting out the property left by her mother. When she was in a state of readiness, the right book came to her. She acknowledges that the reading experience could well have been different had it occurred a year earlier or later. At the same time, she also thinks that she could have had the change experience without this particular book.

Anamorphosis

On being asked whether the book saved her, she responds: "no, not saved. It makes me think that if something saved me, then that's the only possibility, that there's nothing else that could have done the job, but I am not sure if that's the case." The question is a productive one, in that it precipitates an instance of contra-factual thinking. Furthermore, she does not ascribe the facilitation of change to the book alone: "I'm not going to give it all the responsibility, because I feel I need to take some of it myself, haha." Thus, it is evident that she acknowledges that a different facilitative agent or crystallising event could have precipitated the change, and that the change must be ascribed both to the unique qualities of that work, and to her sagacious capacity to utilise that reading experience. Robert Merton asserts that "the word serendipity sums up well that prevalence of unknown causes for unanticipated results."[39] As Veronica emphasises, the results of her reading were highly unanticipated. And the causes of her change cannot be known, all we can do is to interpret her relation of how it happened. Within the narrative configuration created in Veronica's story, we see that her decision to break out of her relationship is a resolution of the crisis. At the same time, it enables her to face a deeper crisis. The resolution of the crisis of the wound left by the loss of her mother occurs only much later, in the form of her story about *The Winter's Tale*. This story was told by Veronica unbidden, and for her was closely linked to the bruise in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. In the account she gives of this reading experience, there appears to be a homologous movement to the one described as "the crystallising moment." Here, Veronica seems to experience love for herself through imagining not what it was like for the daughter to see her mother again, but, in a turn of perspective, for the mother to finally see her lost child again. Let us look at what she says: "I could just completely relate to the mother, to see her daughter for the first time, and then

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[39] Ibid., 238.

imagining myself, what if my mum could come back to life and if I could just see her for one day and just have that in a meeting with her." What does she mean by "have that"? What she is expressing here is not so much a desire to have her mother back and to tell her something; rather, she is relating to Hermione's perspective: what it is like for the mother, sprung back to life, to see her daughter. She is experiencing the encounter from the vantage-point of the mother: imaginatively entering into, and tuning into, what it must be like for her to see her own daughter. "How can you be my own daughter? How have I not seen you"? Then she can transfer this experience to her own life: what would it be like for her own mother to see Veronica again? For Veronica now to empathically imagining her mother missing her as well, releases something in her. The sorrow is released through imagining the mother's, rather than her own, grief. This is not simply a case of thinking about an imaginary scenario, this is living through the experience, an expressive enactment of a sharing of love that has evident healing effects. This is a resourceful, creative act: by relating the play to her own inner experience, she manages to address her own need by imagining her mother's love for her. My interpretation of her encounter with *The Winter's Tale* is that it allowed her to finally heal the bruise of the loss of her mother. Thus, this experience brings to completion the change initiated by reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Without the prior act of self-compassion, she might never have had this healing encounter. And without the healing encounter, she would not have been able to construct a coherent narrative of positive life change. The healing of the bruise through reading *The Winter's Tale* was made possible by the acknowledgment of the emotional pain underlying her relationship insecurity, discovered in reading Lawrence. It was by turning back to her old wound that she could free herself from what trapped her. As such, her story has the shape of an *anamorphosis,* a turning back to bring up what was hidden. Anamorphosis implies a perspective requiring the viewer to use special devices or occupy a specific vantage point (or both) to reconstitute the image. The word 'anamorphosis' is derived from the Greek prefix *ana-*, meaning 'back' or 'again', and the word *morphe*, meaning 'shape' or 'form'.

Her change story was not simply about ending an unsatisfactory relationship, but about beginning the process of restoration of *thumos*.[40] An essential part of the integration of the

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[40] This can be brought more clearly into focus if we compare and contrast Veronica's story with that of another intimant, Agnes. Agnes's situation is similar, in as much as she has intermittently suffered from depression and having lost her mum at a very early age. Furthermore, she felt trapped prior to her reading experience, as she had been burdened for years with the responsibility of taking care of her demented in-laws. Reading Charlotte Perkins' short story, Mr. Peebles' Heart, made her decide to take action in order to carry out a life-long ambition. In the story, Mr. Peebles is a depressed man careworn from having to look after other people. Agnes says: "the whole feeling of someone being down at heart and doing their duty, that was what resonated with me." His sister-in-law, a doctor, empathises with his plight, and "prescribes" travelling, urging him to go

experience into her life-story was the actual re-reading of the book. This was something she was wary of, feeling the need to protect the experience as if it may be "tainted" or ruined by going back. What she discovered, however, was not only an enriched understanding of the book, but the resolution of her own story.

Summary

This interpretation of Veronica's story focuses on four major aspects: the complex composition of Veronica's crisis, an understanding of her visceral-affective mode of engagement with the novel, the nature of the change she underwent, and how the events are narratively configured. I think her crisis has two levels: a surface level of entrapment and the need for escape into freedom, and a deeper level of the emotional bruise that is "coming up and spreading." This is a core emotional scheme related to attachment insecurity. Her bodily mode of engagement I have chosen to call *enkinaesthetic*. Although her reading experience may partially be understood in terms of a progressive sympathetic interaction pattern, I think that the "crystallising moment" she describes has a complexity that the dialectic of immersion-identification and distance/reflection cannot encompass. It is similar to the metaphor-like self-modification that Kuiken et al. term 'expressive enactment'. She reflects on her own empathic immersion, and then relates this reflection to the way she relates to herself, thereby discovering her need for self-compassion. Alongside this, there is another process taking place: by relating to the narrator's empathy for Connie and for Mellor, she is gradually brought to a deeper recognition of a felt bodily sense of awareness, of being able to listen to the heart. As such, we can say that her change does not merely consist in "escape," the determination to terminate the relationship. More importantly, the discovery of *thumos* is the principal affective realisation of her reading experience. In the configuration of her story, the eliciting event has a complex

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abroad for two years. She successfully disputes all his objections, gradually overcoming his resistance, so that he decides to go. He comes back much changed, and for the better. Agnes has always harboured a wish to live in Paris, but kept finding excuses for why she could not go. Reading about Mr Peebles and "how he came back happier and healthier and improved his relationship" reignites her dream, and she gradually overcomes all her excuses. Moving to Paris for a period, she is revived. The trip also has a symbolic significance, because that is where her father lived when he met her mother. This short story lacks the complexity of Lawrence's novel. It invites a straight identification with the protagonist, and almost appears to be written with a conative purpose: to inspire the reader to realise their dream. The emphasis is on the process of persuasion employed by the doctor, rather than on the complexity of the interior life of the protagonist. I did not get the impression that Agnes loved this story for its own sake, in the way Veronica did. A non-fiction text could have had the same effect. The reading experience did not invite Agnes to change her relation to herself.

ascription: the book is seen as part-agent, and she is co-responsible for the change. Furthermore, it is only in the light of a later experience of healing the bruise, that the initial reading experience is assigned meaning. Upon re-reading the novel, Veronica finds that the reading experience has been integrated into her life-story. Veronica's story, in moving from the discovery of *thumos* through reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, to healing the bruise in her encounter with *The Winter's Tale*, has the shape of an *anamorphosis*. She had to turn back to face her emotional wound and "meet" her mother again before she could move on.

Interpretation of Nina's Story: *The Nostos of MySpace*

Introduction

This narrative is the only one to thematise an accumulative experience of re-reading. Nina has returned to *My Friend Flicka* time and again in the course of her life. It has been a companion for forty years, "making unbearable times bearable." The book represents thus not merely a significant reading experience, but has itself taken on 'symbolic' meaning. It represents a circular journey of having found "a source of strength," losing this source through a dramatic sacrificial act, and then regaining it. Central to Nina's life is the "great struggle" to find her "own place in the world," and "the enormous process of turning things around" in order to achieve this. Like Ken's story, "a coming-of-age story, about arriving at something, about overcoming something," Nina's is a story of a quest: to overcome, by healing the split in her psyche, and to arrive at a point where she can express herself in an authentic and creative manner.

I will first look at the nature of Nina's crisis, showing how it can best be understood as an inner exile, an identity crisis made up of four distinct stages: foreclosure, diffusion, moratorium and achievement. These correspond to the various life-phases she recounts: conversion and apostasy, the "terribly frightening rootless years," being "confronted with herself" during a writing course at the age of 32 and subsequently having to withdraw from the world for years, before finally realizing that she is a musician. I understand her protracted crisis of diffusion to be due to rumination owing to her experience of poor self-esteem and unattainable ideals for herself. Only by turning inward, a type of moratorium I will refer to as *katabasis*, and in which the repeated readings of *Flicka* is essential to her self-restoration, does she achieve identity – symbolised by the metaphor of MySpace. Through the katabasis, she manages to build a bridge between two poles of her self. I suggest that this repetitive and accumulative reading process leads to what Kohut calls "transmuting internalisation." Such a deepening attunement to the work through repeated readings I propose to call *palilexia*. Finally, I will discuss her story as a quest for *Nostos*, by looking at the history of the concept of nostalgia, and its origins in the *Odyssey*. The plot of her story is that of finding the Book, losing it and regaining it, and as such I understand it to have a circular shape and therefore represent an odyssey.

IDENTITY CRISIS: INNER EXILE

The great struggle: "This desperate striving to alter the pattern of thought upon which his life formed itself"

> I have carried this inner struggle. I have always had a rich inner life, but I have believed that I had to shut it off from the world. That it would be lost to me if I tried to reveal it to someone. When I face the world I have to put all that to the side and be someone else. This has been a crucial life-issue for me during the last 10 to 15 years.

Nina expresses fear that the most precious part of her would become lost if it were brought into the world. She experiences the need to keep this part of her intact. Nina knows that in order to "build a bridge" from the continent of Dream over to the land of Reality, the inner life must be shared with somebody, it must be both validated and subject to revision in dialogue. But if she does this, it may be put to death or destroyed; this risk is too great to take, as reality is ruthless. We note in this passage that Nina says she *has* had this inner struggle: subsequently she changes to the present tense: "when I face the world." Is this because she still carries this belief, or is this a case of using dramatic present tense? I judge it to be the latter, as she again reverts back to the past tense: it *has* been a crucial life-issue. It is only now that this has been resolved: This use of dramatic present tense reveals that it is only in the last 10-15 years that she has become aware of this inner splitting, and started the arduous search for a way to reveal her true self to the world. And yet, a deeper part of her has known this all along: "This awareness has been there the whole time, regardless of whether I have formulated it in words. It is what made me seek that book." Retrospectively she can see that "All my life I have been after a sort of … recognition" that has not been forthcoming. Tragically, there can be no such recognition unless she reveals herself. Instead, she adopts a false self: "in order to be in the world I must play according to the rules," concluding that her dreams and imagination "are not valid." It is only now, through "a new discovery," that she can see that her journey has been about "the enormous process of turning things around." I understand her great struggle to be one of identity crisis. She must find a way to overcome her split between the false self and the inner dreamer, in order to arrive at identity achievement.

Erikson's model of psychosocial development, an epigenetic model in which each stage occurs only when the previous one is completed, was the first theory to recognise the criticality of identity development. According to Erikson, "there is no feeling of being alive without a

sense of identity."[1] This fifth stage of his model, if negotiated successfully, should lead to identity consolidation, a person's self-definition consisting of the goals, values and beliefs to which she is committed. Failure to complete this stage results in role confusion, an inability to settle on an identity; this is characterized by vague commitments and a feeling of being disconnected from one's inner self, as well as low self-esteem. As Nina says of her former self: "When I face the world I have to put all of that [rich inner world] to the side and be someone else." Samuel and Akhtar have developed an assessment inventory of identity consolidation. They argue that identity consolidation, by which term they probably intend the identity status of achievement, depend upon sufficient "psychic structuration having taken place in an individual."[2] They delineate the following significant features of structuration: subjective self-sameness; consistent attitudes and behaviour; stable body image; authenticity; and temporal continuity. Identity diffusion will thus show up as low scores on these dimensions. Of particular relevance in relation to Nina's self-description are the features of subjective self-sameness and authenticity. An unstable self-image is revealed in affirming such statements as "I feel like I can't put the different parts of my personality together," and lack of authenticity in statements such as "I feel like I am living someone else's life rather than my own"; "I imitate others rather than act like myself."

Later researchers on identity developments have extended and expanded on Erikson's theory to elucidate both process and content variables.[3] Marcia, in a seminal study of the process of identity formation, conceptualised and operationalised Erikson's theory as a dialectic between exploration and commitment that could produce four different *identity statuses*: foreclosure, diffusion, moratorium and achievement.[4] Achievement is the result of going through a period of exploration that leads to firm commitments. In diffusion there is no focused exploration and there is lack of commitment. Individuals in identity diffusion are described as less autonomous and more sensitive to external pressure compared with persons in the other statuses. According to Waterman, such diffusion may be accompanied by negative emotional

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[1] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis.* New York: Norton, 1968.

[2] Steven Samuel, and Salman Akhtar, "The Identity Consolidation Inventory (ICI): Development and application of a Questionnaire for assessing the structuralization of Individual Identity," *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 69, no. 1 (2009): 53.

[3] For an overview of these developments, see: Seth J. Schwartz, "The Evolution of Eriksonian and Neo-Eriksonian Identity Theory and Research: A Review and Integration," *Identity* 1, no. 1 (2009): 7-58.

[4] James E. Marcia, "Development and validation of ego identity status," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 3, no. 5 (1996): 551-58.

states such as pessimism, apathy, boredom, unfocused anger, alienation, anxiety, confusion and hopelessness.[5] Moratorium, whilst also low on commitment, is an active search for alternatives that may lead to commitment choices. Foreclosure is commitment without preceding exploration. Exploration is the process of finding relevant information about oneself and the environment so that one can make a decision about an important life-choice. In the views of Marcia and Waterman, foreclosed individuals tend to adopt others' goals and beliefs, and may fear to question these. Commitment is the degree of personal investment in a given choice.

In a meta-analysis of developmental patterns of identity status change, Kroger et al. found that although most studies point to progressive forms of change in identity status over time, which tend towards achievement, there also occur anomalous patterns of regression and stasis. Moreover, it is not the case that identity crisis is resolved by the time of young adulthood: "assessments of identity status change showed that relatively large mean proportions of individuals had not attained identity achievement by young adulthood."[6] A mean proportion of 0.36 remained in identity diffusion between measuring points. Kroger et al. distinguish between three types of regressive development: disequilibrium (from achievement to moratorium); rigidification (from exploration to rigid closure); disorganisation (from any status to diffusion). There are several factors that may impinge upon these movements. The conditions that may facilitate or impede progressive development, suggest Kroger et al., are a combination of one's specific life experiences with "individual personality factors, such as one's degree of identification with a parent or significant others, openness to new experiences, one's level of resilience, general level of ego strength and other such factors."[7] There are individual differences in how this diffusion is experienced. Zacares and Iborra emphasize the importance of self-esteem in managing the challenges in identity development, indicating that "the variability of self-esteem is more likely to be the factor that impinges most on adaption."[8]

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[5] Alan S. Waterman, "Identity development from adolescence to adulthood: An extension of theory and a review of research," *Developmental Psychology* 18, no. 3 (1982): 341-58.

[6] Jane Kroger, Monica Martinussen, and James E. Marcia, "Identity status change during adolescence and young adulthood: A meta-analysis," *Journal of Adolescence* 33, no. 5 (2010): 694.

[7] Ibid., 696.

[8] Juan Jose Zacares, and Alejandro Iborra, "Self and Identity Development during Adolescence across Cultures," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 2nd ed., vol. 21, ed. James D. Wright (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 434.

Another study found evidence of stability in identity diffusion in adulthood (at ages 27, 36 and 42).[9] Fadjukoff et al. argue that instead of looking at movements in and out of status categories, one must analyse individual trajectories that involve both progressive, stable and regressive aspects. Moreover, these trajectories take place within different domains. However, there is disagreement and variance in how overall identity is constituted. In their study of cultural contexts and their influence, Zacares and Iborra argue for inclusion of more levels and domains, focusing on both gender and ethnicity.[10] Based on Schwartz's integrative review of neo-Eriksonian identity theories, one may say that identity comprises at least seven domains: occupational, intimate relationships, lifestyle, political, religious, gender and ethnic.[11] An important distinction is made by Waterman between instrumental/pragmatic choices and personally expressive ones. Waterman holds that personal expressiveness be considered as a third dimension of identity development alongside exploration and commitment.[12] I think this is an important adjunct vis-à-vis Nina's sacrifice. The demand for personal expressiveness, that one's commitments be an ideal reflection of one's true self, may paradoxically cause rumination and hinder commitment. Perhaps the personal expressiveness-demand may lead one to focus everything within one domain, or trying to develop in too many domains simultaneously. Alternatively, the emphasis may be on commitment within domains that are estimated negatively within a given cultural context.

Initially, we may adopt this framework of identity statuses as representing four stages of Nina's struggle towards identity achievement. Her conversion and sacrifice of her own will may be understood as a foreclosure of identity exploration. Although it may have been an attempt at moratorium, in effect it turned out to be a foreclosure. Her subsequent apostasy, a gradual defection as the group dissolved, may be understood as a diffusion experience causing great distress. Her moratorium was instigated by being "confronted with myself" in the creative writing course, instigating a three-year period of "real crisis" during which she could "barely move for three years." Her identity achievement then happened at the age of 38, when she

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[9] Paivi Fadjukoff, Lea Pulkkinen, and Katja Kokko, "Identity Processes in Adulthood: Diverging Domains," *Identity* 5, no. 1 (2005): 1-20.

[10] Zacares and Iborra, "Self and Identity Development during Adolescence across Cultures," 432-438.

[11] Seth J. Schwartz, "The Evolution of Eriksonian and Neo-Eriksonian Identity Theory and Research: A Review and Integration," *Identity* 1, no. 1 (2009): 7-58.

[12] Alan S. Waterman, "Personal expressiveness: Philosophical and psychological foundations," *Journal of Mind and Behavior* 11, no. 1 (1990): 47-74.

"discovered that I was a musician." Berman et al. have studied a condition they label "identity distress": those instances in which identity development is highly problematic, "a tumultuous time of existential anxiety and depression, fraught with fears and uncertainty". They label this a crisis. They have found that identity distress is highest during moratorium, in the active phase of exploration. Commitment was found to be negatively correlated with identity distress.[13] However, although there clearly is distress during moratorium, there can also be great distress due to the inability to enter moratorium, as evidenced by Nina's "terribly frightening rootless years."

Carlsson et al. refer to the anomalous, regressive movement patterns as "the dark side of identity development." In their study they explored qualitatively what long-term identity diffusion means to people. Among their findings was that "individuals who stay in long-term identity diffusion […] may be described as their lives are on hold, as if their unwillingness or inability to form and maintain a sense of identity prevents them from wholeheartedly investing themselves in anything that move them forward in life."[14] They also indicate that these individuals experience little increase in meaning-making and therefore "engage in very little identity work."[15] However, is it not possible that people stay in diffusion and experience great distress in spite of engaging in soul-searching and constant identity work? Several studies differentiate between those who are troubled and those who are not. According to Luyckx et al. troubled individuals show ruminative tendencies and psychological distress. It is the striving for identity itself, and the concomitant rumination, that causes distress, rather than the diffusion itself.[16] Beyers and Luyckx found that ruminative exploration is a major risk factor for maladjustment: "Adolescents high on ruminative exploration experience difficulties with active and purposeful exploration of alternatives. When confronted with identity questions, they brood and worry constantly without being able to close down this exploration process and make strong commitments."[17] They also identify a second risk factor: reconsideration of commitment, in

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[13] Steven L. Berman, and Marilyn J. Montgomery, "Problematic Identity Processes: The Role of Identity Distress," *Identity. An International Journey of Theory and Research* 14, no. 4 (2014): 241.

[14] Johanna Carlsson, Maria Wängquist, and Ann Frisén, "Life on hold: Staying in identity diffusion in the late twenties," *Journal of Adolescence* 47 (2016): 227.

[15] Ibid, 227.

[16] Koen Luyckx, Seth J. Schwartz, Michael D. Berzonsky, Bart Soenens, Maarten Vansteenkiste, Ilse Smits, and Luc Goossens, "Capturing ruminative exploration: extending the four-dimensional model of identity formation in late adolescence," *Journal of Research in Personality* 42, no. 1. (2008): 58-82.

which unsatisfactory commitments are compared with possible alternatives. They conclude that "a clear differentiation needs to be made between adaptive forms of exploration and maladaptive forms."[18] In my view, both these maladaptive forms, one relating to exploration and the other to commitment, are connected to rumination. Rumination results in ineffective exploration and in commitments that are not allowed to take root and grow. In my understanding, the concept of rumination is essential in understanding Nina's lengthy diffusion phase after the apostasy. Let us look at Nina's account of her conversion experience and how it affected her. Whereas a successful conversion experience may be regarded as achievement of identity, Nina' story of "de-programming" indicates that in her journey it only resulted in a foreclosure of exploration.

Conversion and apostasy: a failed foreclosure leading to diffusion

Nina's account of her conversion emphasises that she gradually became the victim of psychological coercion. Yet her initial motivation was social: "Something about this youth milieu attracted me, there was a togetherness that appealed to me, difficult to find elsewhere." At the same time, "my parents thought it was terrible that I joined that group." There is a clear act of rebellion involved. She makes an active choice. It appears that there was no form of coercion in her upbringing, neither mother nor father were authoritarian. Nina says that for a while she was "good at leading a double life." I take this to mean that she initially obtained something valuable; she had a sense of belonging to the community, without having to fully commit to the beliefs and values of the group leaders. "But it just got more and more confined and strict … one was not allowed to have anything but God"; "This conscience, which took possession of me, also conquered my home turf." She succumbed to psychological coercion, and internalised the beliefs of the group. It is noteworthy that Nina uses the passive form in elucidating these commands: "It was explicitly said that we should cut ourselves off from our sources", and "we were to sacrifice our most valuable possession." She portrays her subsequent journey as one of de-programming this coercion: "I too killed myself when I was 17, although not literally. I killed my soul, and installed a being-good-mask instead. And since I have been

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[17] Wim Beyers, and Koen Luyckx, "Ruminative exploration and reconsideration of commitment as risk factors for suboptimal identity development in adolescence and emerging adulthood," *Journal of Adolescence* 47 (2016): 170.

[18] Ibid., 176.

working to restore, to reinstall those original parts." She needed to belong, but did not think it was possible to have both togetherness *and* her own personal will and beliefs.

According to Long and Hadden, there are two general models that attempt to account for why people join unconventional religious groups. In sociological research, the social drift model, which emphasizes willful deviance on the part of the novice, takes precedence; whereas in psychology there has been more reliance on the 'brainwashing' model, which looks at the coercive means and deprivations employed to exercise mind control over new converts. Long and Hadden argue that both models carry partial truths. The coercion model studies how members are stripped of their identities, their willpower is corroded, they become dependent on group and they are programmed with beliefs: "Converts are thought to be so radically and permanently transformed that only 'deprogramming' will sever their allegiance to the cult."[19] According to Snow and Machalek, there are several shortcomings in the coercive persuasion account: "It is inconsistent with the finding that most conversions are voluntary and occur in the absence of confinement" and there is a high incidence of defection. Moreover, this model is primarily based on information from ex-converts who have been de-programmed. "Accounts of apostasy are no less retrospective or transformative than accounts of conversion, and they are therefore no more reliable as sources of data."[20] The social drift model, on the other hand, holds that people convert "gradually, even inadvertently, through the influence of social relationships, especially during times of personal strain. Conversion is viewed as precarious and open to change in response to shifting patterns of association."[21] Implied in the social drift model is the view of conversion as a compensatory move: "an attempt by the individual to solve serious personal problems or to deal with disintegrating intrapsychic conflicts."[22] Nina's identity diffusion after leaving the group may therefore be due to two different factors: withdrawal from the emotional investment, and suffering from having internalised "their God," both factors leading to rumination. Why may Nina's reference to the "conscience which took possession of me" be equated with rumination? In his theory of meta-cognitive therapy, Adrian Wells refers to a maladaptive cognitive attention style the central aspect of which is rumination,

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[19] Theodore E. Long, and Jeffrey K. Hadden, "Religious Conversion and the Concept of Socialization: Integrating the Brainwashing and Drift Models," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22, no. 1 (1983): 1.

[20] David A. Snow, and Richard Machalek, "The Sociology of Conversion," *Annual Review of Sociology* 10 (1984): 179.

[21] Long and Hadden, "Religious Conversion and the Concept of Socialization," 1.

[22] Brock Kilbourne, and James T. Richardson, "Paradigm Conflict, Types of Conversion, and Conversion Theories," *Sociological Analysis* 50, no. 1 (1989): 5.

characterised by automaticity of negative thoughts and beliefs, "difficult-to-control repetitive negative thinking" that is "marked by engaging in excessive amounts of sustained verbal thinking and dwelling in the form of worry and rumination." [23] Such rumination, locking attention on to warding off negative thoughts, clearly go at the expense of exploration.

Sacrificing the source of strength: Burning the book

"Before I joined the Christian collective, my inner life was a natural part of me. But then this conscience burrowed its way into my innermost privacy, to the extent where it controlled even what I dared to articulate to myself, inside my head. That's why I burned the book… Do you understand?"

On telling me why she ended up burning the book, Nina imploringly asks me: "Do you understand?" I answered affirmatively. And yet, did I really understand? My "yes" was probably first and foremost an acknowledgment of the severity of her crisis. Also I felt I could understand that only by an injunction from an outside force would she sacrifice her most precious possession. Still, the reasons for burning the book are complex. On the one hand, her understanding points to a process of psychological coercion. On the other, she describes it as her own choice. One may argue that it is only when the person comes to feel that it is her own choice that the internalisation process is complete, and that therefore it is mere compliance with a group norm. It is possible, however, that Nina was hoping to be truly converted by going through this ritual?

Nina says it was "because I went to this book to draw strength, rather than go to the Bible, I simply had to burn it." Does she burn it to penalise herself for having worldly pleasures – or does she burn it in the vain hope that the Bible subsequently will take on the role of source of strength? She has already smashed up her records and thus fulfilled the obligation to get rid of sinful things. Hence it is reasonable to conjecture that she performs the sacrifice in the hope of receiving a greater reward, of being "purified": "So it has become almost a symbol. That I was willing to sacrifice the most precious part of me. And that I have been able, bit by bit, to reclaim it, to piece things together." According to Derrida, "sacrifice supposes the putting to death of the unique in terms of its being unique, irreplaceable, and most precious."[24] Nina does

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[23] Adrian Wells, *Metacognitive Therapy for Anxiety and Depression* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2009).

[24] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1995), 58.

it in the hope of "becoming a better person." Nina does not perform the sacrifice to live up to the demands of a punitive Superego. It is done in order to overcome an inner divide, by sacrificing one pole of the self. Nina "wanted to play in a band", but this was impossible as it would amount to "worshipping false idols." Why did she find herself in this impossible dilemma? She is afraid to express her own views, both in the group and later when being unable to publish anything: "imagine if anyone thought it was erroneous?"

Nina relates this coercive belonging to a personal vulnerability: "not everyone would have done this." Is her conversion an "escape from freedom" or is it an attempt at repairing a felt deficit, an "active pursuit of a self-transformation"? By finding togetherness and relinquishing personal responsibility, one manages to defend against the disintegrating tendency. Both models account for parts of Nina's experience. However, they seem to miss an important aspect. Nina may precisely have been hoping to be changed through joining this group. A number of social scientists have posited a "seekership" orientation that predisposes certain people to conversion. These seekers "are more likely to undergo conversion precisely because they are in active pursuit of just such a self-transformation."[25] As such it is not merely a defensive coping strategy meant to solve a tension-inducing life-problem, but rather a quest for development and meaning. The group gives her a sense of belonging and togetherness. But many affiliations can fulfill this function – why did she choose to convert? She must have been seeking more than belonging. One may conjecture that this 'more' is a purpose in life, a direction. According to Paloutzian et al., "the weight of the evidence from a number of studies is that many if not most converts to one of the new religions do so for serious reasons that correspond to the personality issues of self-identity and improvement."[26] Thus there arises the possibility that Nina was not only seeking togetherness and willing to adopt "their God" in order to obtain it. She was actively exploring a way to overcome the painful condition of her inner divide.

My question "where do you think this need to protect yourself comes from?" may not be a particularly good question, as it seems to invite speculation. She cannot be fully aware of the roots of her needs. Still, the question acknowledges that after an experience of apostasy and sacrificial burning, *she* will have expended a great deal of psychic energy and thought on asking *herself* that question – why she "grew up to believe I must be like that. Predictably, she relates

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[25] Snow and Machalek, "The Sociology of Conversion," 180.

[26] Raymond F. Paloutzian, James T. Richardson, and Lewis R. Rambo, "Religious conversion and Personality Change," *Journal of Personality* 67, no. 6 (1999): 1062.

it to her parents' interactional styles. She says she had to accommodate the feelings of her parents, "not the other way round": "emotionally they did not really see me." And so she must always "be ready to deliver." Her account is centered around a deficit: a lack of self-esteem and clear values and purpose. She is afraid of expressing herself, lest she be criticised: "imagine if anyone thought it was erroneous? It made me so frustrated and furious. I had all these experiences, yet dared not tell them to the world." When we put together her account of her childhood and her subsequent conversion, we have a picture of a fragile self-structure.

In my interpretation, Nina's conversion was an attempt to shore up the fragile self-structure by a compensatory strategy. She attempted to merge with the group and its unrealistic demands for perfection, thus giving in to archaic idealisation needs. At the same time she felt the need to deny her ambitious needs for making music, due to her low self-esteem. Her decision to join the group and try to merge with their beliefs and standards, at the same time denying her own ambitions and creative needs, may be understood as a lack of self-cohesion. It is a compensatory strategy, in which her need to merge is so strong that she refrains from any expression of dissent. Moreover, it is an attempt to avoid her own needs for creativity. Kohut's theory of the self as a mental-affective system or process that organises a person's subjective experience in relation to a set of developmental needs, emphasises that self-cohesion is dependent upon certain self-object needs being met. Consolidation of cohesiveness provides a sense of identity and permanence, and enables self-regulation. The process towards cohesion takes place along three axes: the mirroring axis, the idealisation axis and the alter ego-connectedness axis. Adequate mirroring allows for a stable sense of self-esteem, ambition and creativity. The idealisation process leads to a system of values and ideals. The connectedness axis refers to the ability to form authentic relationships and become part of larger groups.[27] These three configurations serve to maintain a healthy self and are mobilised in service of restoring cohesion when the self is depleted. If these self-object needs are insufficiently met, the self-structure will be fragile. As a result, the ability to express one's true feelings, formulate realistic goals and develop a sense of connectedness will be underdeveloped. In experiential terms, such fragility means that the person will "become focused on their deficiencies, extremely vulnerable to criticism and failure, and overwhelmed by negative emotions, pessimistic thoughts, and feelings of alienation and loneliness."[28] When parents fail to satisfy

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[27] Heinz Kohut, *Self Psychology and the Humanities: Reflections on a New Psychoanalytic Approach* (New York and London: WW Norton & Co., 1985).

[28] Erez Banai, Mario Mikulincer, and Phillip R. Shaver, "'Selfobject' Needs in Kohut's SelfPsychology. Links with Attachment, Self-Cohesion, Affect Regulation, and Adjustment," *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 22, no.

these needs well enough, powerful archaic needs will remain. "The psyche continues to cling to a vaguely delimited image of absolute perfection."[29] This means that these needs must either be expressed in an unmodified form or be denied. For instance, the person may have a strong need to "identify with a powerful other" rather than "develop her own system of ideals and goals and maintain a sense of direction in life."[30] In an empirical study designed to measure insufficient structure along the dimensions of grandiosity and idealisation, Robbins and Patten found that not being able to value one's own importance and lacking goal directedness was significantly associated with low self-esteem and problems in identity formation.[31]

TRANSACTION WITH THE LITERARY WORK

Katabasis

Nina says of *My Friend Flicka* that "it's a classic coming-of-age-story, about arriving at something, about overcoming something, on both the inner and the outer level… And I think it was that process that was so important to me." Together Nina and I look at Ken's transformation process, and by doing so implicitly also discuss hers: "This is of course also in relation to myself." One must arrive safely at one's destination, and in order to do so one must overcome many perils and suffer much pain. It takes her many years and many returns to the universe of the book to accomplish that process of finding the courage to undertake such a journey for herself. "It was the greatest heroic tale that I could possibly read." In Ken's story she finds her own challenge plotted, in terms of Ken's starting point and his arrival. Nina identifies with his personality: "for Ken the inner world was so important, he was a dreamer." In this they are similar. But the difference is that he has the means to overcome the challenge of healing the split between dreamer and responsible agent: "he managed to achieve something that I didn't: he fought for his dreams on the outer level… he had the courage to express his deepest wish."

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2 (2005): 224-60. In this study, the authors found empirical evidence for Kohut's tripolar conception of self, although the study was based on subjects' self-reports.

[29] Ibid, 228.

[30] Ibid, 227.

[31] Steven B. Robbins, and Michael J. Patton, "Self-psychology and career development: Construction of the Superiority and Goal Instability Scales," *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 32, no. 2 (1985): 221-31.

Thus, initially, she can identify with his way of being in the world, and she can daydream about having his courage. This is her go-to source of strength, prior to sacrificing the book. "Is that really possible?" is an expression of admiration and wonder, but first and foremost of Hope. Without hope, nothing is possible. Nina has Hope, this book is her book of hope, her Bible, so to speak. Ken is like her, she is not alone. And he has found a way, therefore there is hope! The book validates her sense of self: "You receive recognition of yourself"; "so the book gave me immense support for the way I saw the world. That it was a valid way of being." The dreamer is who she is, not the false self that she has tried to be. "And also it made me realise that it is possible to come out with the things one has inside." The book shows her that she does not need to give up on her inner self, nor that she must give up on forming an identity, but that she can arrive at a point where she can be herself. My understanding is that these two different gifts occur at very different stages on her journey. The book all along has been a support-system, but it is only with the advent of her crisis of "lying on the floor" that she realizes the possibility of coming out with who she is inside. Upon regaining the book, her reading of it evolves and deepens, as she comes to understand where Ken gets the courage from, and what it takes for him to transform himself. Nina's view of his courage shifts from being something he has and she doesn't, to being something that he *gains*, and by imaginatively empathising with that process, she can gain it too, and "find myself at last." For there is another aspect of Ken's situation which she finds to be crucial: in addition to "admiring him for the richness of his inner life," there is the fact that "incredibly for me, he could share it with his mother." Nina emphasises that Ken really needs a period of withdrawal, "to let it all sink in." "I think the transformation happens before that, but it takes root during the period of illness." This is necessary after "the enormous strain" of his "great courage" in coming out with what he wants. Ken's withdrawal is in fact a moratorium. I think Nina sees her own period of "lying on the floor" as a similar "letting it all sink in."

The protagonist's descent to the Underworld to confront forces of death or to gain knowledge is one of the richest motifs of classical literature, being at the core of the epic tradition from *Gilgamesh*, *The Odyssey* and *The Aeneid* to the *Divine Comedy*. The *katabasis* is related to both initiatory themes and the theme of quest. Raymond J. Clark divides katabasis narratives into two traditions: The "fertility tradition," which concerns the descent to bring back a lost divinity of vegetative life, and the "wisdom tradition," the descent to acquire knowledge about the ways of the dead. The hero contemplates the fates of those whose lives are ended, and

consults them on matters pertaining to his own future.[32] Nina's (and Ken's) moratorium may be said to constitute a katabasis. She is "on the floor" for three years, disconnecting from the outer ('upper') world of day. She has to contact a part of her that has gone underground, that is hidden from her normal self. This katabasis has a two-fold function: to bring back a lost part of her, her "inner life that was a natural part of her," and also to learn about her destiny, how to journey forward towards identity achievement. I think it is instructive in this regard to consider the *Nekyia* episode in the *Odyssey*. Odysseus receives different kinds of knowledge about his home from meeting different visages: Circe, Anticleia and Teiresias. It is a gradual piecing together, "bit by bit," of the resources he needs in order to manage his return. According to Clark, "in heroic mythology a *catabasis* may happen once in a lifetime at most."[33] According to Judith Fletcher, who argues that catabasis is a powerful metaphor of maturation, the renewal or achievement of identity is "a recurring feature of catabatic narratives and one that has obvious parallels with coming-of-age stories."[34] Rachel Falconer argues that the katabatic imagination is central in the Western tradition; it constitutes a "worldview which conceives of selfhood as the narrative construct of an infernal journey and return."[35] Falconer maintains that in classical catabasis "the descent to Dis or Hades is about coming to know the self, regaining something or someone lost, or acquiring superhuman powers or knowledge." This descent culminates in "the collapse or dissolution of the hero's sense of selfhood."[36]

What is the transformation that ensues? "It makes him able to carry his new identity." Ken manages to *bridge* two needs: he is able to assume responsibility and prove himself to his Dad, whilst at the same time realising his dream of having his own horse. Previously, however, he had "used his dreams to protect himself against reality." This was a regressive, compensatory strategy: "it was the only way of escape from the strict regime." Now, Nina has all along been able to recognize this strategy in herself. The essential difference lies in "the Nell gaze." Nina says that "what made me seek the book" was the related to its "understanding of life" and "the

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[32] Raymond T. Clark, *Catabasis: Vergil and the Wisdom Tradition* (Amsterdam: Grüner, 1981). These traditions are not exclusive, however. Clark fails to emphasise that there are myths that combine them, such as the Hymn to Demeter.

[33] Ibid., 77.

[34] Judith Fletcher, "The Catabasis of Mattie Ross in the Coen's True Grit," *Classical World* 107, no. 2 (2014): 244.

[35] Rachel Falconer, *Hell in Contemporary Literature: Western Descent Narratives since 1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 2.

[36] Ibid., 3.

enormous process of turning things around." In the passage on page 230 that she quotes, it is Nell who acknowledges Ken's "desperate striving to alter the pattern of thought." Nell deeply understands Ken's inner world, and "incredibly for me, he could share it" with her. At the same time she "pulls him towards reality, represented by his father." It is this double role, dream sharer and reality-softening negotiator, that allows her to *bridge* the two poles of Ken's self so that he may both "arrive at something" and "overcome something." The book shows her two vital things: that she has given up on her most precious self, the Dreamer, in a desperate attempt to fit in. And that there is hope, she can regain that part and be herself; the book has been "like a bridge." The metaphor of the bridge is repeated twice: Nell "becomes a kind of bridge for him… There forms a little bridge over to the father."

There is a divide between two worlds: Ken's dream world and the reality of the father. Ken is, initially, subject to the sirens' song of his inner world, and to the fear of his father's harsh demands and expectations. He learns to take responsibility for the horse, earning the respect of his father and at the same time harnessing his dreams of freedom. Rob learns, reluctantly, to see that Ken "is brilliant." Nell is "the bridge" between these two worlds. "She becomes a sort of interpreter between the two." There are two immense psychic dangers: one, of adapting to this reality by giving up and renouncing the world of dreams. Second, of refusing the world of reality by staying within the dream world. These dangers are the Scylla and Charybdis of ego development. The first leads to an over-adapted false self cut off from the source of inner vitality and meaning, the second to a pathological condition of maladaptation based on maturity fears, where adulthood signifies losing the most precious part of oneself. A bridge over troubled water is needed. A bridge has two ends: at the one end of the bridge, there is the sharing of one's nascent dreams and ideals so that they can be moulded and given shape and concretised. At the other end, the Demand must also be softened: you need not be perfect. Thus both worlds must be modified and transmuted. Over time, Nina's view of Ken and of Rob is modified. She becomes more empathic and understanding of Rob, and she comes to see that Ken needs to transform his relationship to the world of dreams. Symbolically, with time Nina comes to embody Nell's perspective on both Ken and Rob, rather than Ken's perspective on the world. It is this passage that reflects Nina's coming-of-age. We could say that she goes from loving Nell in the naïve way that Ken does, to loving Ken in the empathic-compassionate way that Nell does – a Kopernican turning.

Transmuting internalisation

In Kohut's theory of transformation, the archaic self-object needs are modified through a transference, in which they undergo what Kohut terms "transmuting internalisation." This is a taming process whereby the needs gradually lose their raw intensity and find symbolic outlet. And so the individual slowly becomes able to internalise and perform vital functions of self-regulation. This is a two-stage process: first there must be a strong relationship so that the transference can unfold. Next, through manageable and minor failures of the object to conform to the expectations, a process of "optimal frustration" ensues.[37] I think it is fruitful to employ the concept of transmuting internalisation to account for what happens to Ken through his moratorium. He comes to realise that his mother too has her own dreams, different from his. And he comes to see his father as someone amenable to softening. And by going over this ground over and over again, Nina can both revisit a permanent ideal universe and discover new bits that she then internalises. Even while we read it together in the interview, the book is 'the living word' as she makes fresh discoveries. In her katabasis the book is something to hold onto, a safe haven to return to; and importantly, by seeing new things in it she also receives confirmation that she is making progress. She needs to internalise "the Nell gaze" in relation to her own life. She must see both the "Ken pole" of herself, the pole of ambition, and the "Rob pole" of Ideals, in a new light. In literature on perfectionism it is common to distinguish between a normal and adaptive kind, "defined as a striving for reasonable and realistic standards that leads to a sense of self-satisfaction and enhanced self-esteem" on the one hand; and a neurotic or maladaptive perfectionism on the other, "a tendency to strive for excessively high standards and is motivated by fears of failure and concern about disappointing others."[38] We may say that the maladaptive one is like a Rob one cannot negotiate with, the adaptive kind is like Rob after he realises that Ken is both brilliant and responsible. As Ken changes, "getting into other worlds" goes from being a defensive manoeuvre to being a source of creativity. Nina admits that it has taken time for her to be able to see Rob empathically, as well as to fathom the importance of the "Nell gaze." But the fact that she is able to do that is testament to the transmuting internalisation she has undergone. This has been a great struggle: to free herself from the internalisation of "their God" and to grasp the full extent of the source of strength inherent in *My Friend Flicka.*

In a fascinating passage, Nina says:

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[37] Heinz Kohut, *The Restoration of the Self* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1977).

[38] Gordon L. Flett, and Paul L. Hewitt, *Perfectionism: Theory, Research and Treatment* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002), 11.

> Nell almost sees too many things. She is such a special person. And perhaps that is the very strength of the book: When you come back to read bits of it, over and over, this universe is always there, even if your own family and all else is far away and all your points of contact dissolve… In all turbulent periods for me this has been like a place to come home to when I have been run down.

What I find peculiar here is the word "and," ostensibly there to logically connect two thoughts, and yet the associative jump is apparent; it switches from talking about her affection for Nell, to musing on the self-sustaining importance of this fictional universe. Is this merely a flight of thought? What does the "and" mean here? That she is such a special person, and that the book becomes special in a like manner? My understanding is that Nina, through a deepened appreciation of Nell, becomes aware of the extent of the Nell gaze and how vital it is. And although she always has come home to this book, now she has also come home to herself, able to be her own Nell. To conceptualise this process of a deepening engagement with the work through repeated re-readings, by which a transmuting internalisation takes place, I propose the term *palilexia.* One of the rhetorical figures of repetition is *palilogia*, which signifies a figural repetition in order to increase general fullness or to communicate passion.[39] And in one of Heraclit's fragments, we come across the word "palintropos": "They do not understand how, though at variance with itself, it agrees with itself. It is a *backward-turning [i.e., palintropos]* attunement like that of the bow and lyre." This palintropic attunement is how I understand Nina's mode of engagement with the work. So *palilexia* means a repeated reading of deepening attunement.

My initial understanding of the above passage, in which she says that "this universe is always there, even if your own family is far away" and "a place to come home to when I have been run down," is that this is an expression of *nostalgia*. As she says elsewhere, "as a child, it was something to hold on to. It has been something to turn to in all kinds of situations. Or, in those situations when I needed someone." Is it nostalgia?

RESOLUTION

Nostos and *Algos*

In a psychoanalytic context, nostalgia was viewed as a maladaptive, regressive condition conceptualised as an acute yearning for the pre-oedipal mother, or as an incomplete form of

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[39] See Brigham Young University's rhetorical lexicon:
http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Figures/Groupings/of%20Repetition.htm.

mourning for a lost object. In recent years, the beneficent aspects of nostalgia have come to the fore in psychology. Theorists have increasingly begun to view nostalgia "as an adaptive response to stress or change."[40] Cavanaugh considered nostalgia to represent "a cognitive attempt to recapture a time when life was good, safe, secure, and contented," and "one of the ways that one develops and maintains identity."[41] Hepper et al., using a prototype approach, examined the lay conception of nostalgia. They found that "lay people view nostalgia as a self-relevant and social blended emotional and cognitive state, featuring a mixture of happiness and loss."[42] That nostalgia is self-relevant indicates that it may serve several adaptive functions. Two main empirical approaches to studying its adaptive functions have emerged: those who focus on its *security-providing function* - nostalgia's potential to act as a psychological protection from threatening self-relevant cognitions; and those who explore the *growth-providing function*. Sedikides et al. have undertaken several studies to find out whether nostalgia can counteract loneliness. They found that nostalgia had a restorative function. Although individuals may find it difficult to cope with loneliness directly through strengthening social support, nostalgia may work as an alternative coping strategy. They conclude that nostalgia "restores social connectedness by increasing subjective perceptions of social support."[43] This was particularly so for resilient individuals. In another study they found that nostalgia provides security through four key aspects: "It generates positive affect, elevates self-esteem, fosters social connectedness, and alleviates existential threat."[44] Baldwin and Landau have investigated the possibility that nostalgia may promote psychological growth understood as cultivation of potentialities, seeking out optimal challenges and integrating new experiences into the self-concept. They tested the effects of "experimentally induced nostalgia" on growth-oriented self-perceptions and behavioural intentions. They found that nostalgia indirectly increased growth by increasing positive emotion through drawing on positive self-regard.[45]

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[40] Krystine Batcho, "Nostalgia: The bittersweet history of a psychological concept," *History of Psychology* (2013): 6.

[41] Cited in Batcho, 6.

[42] Erika G. Hepper, Timothy D. Ritchie, Constantine Sedikides, and Tim Wildschut, "Odyssey's end: Lay conceptions of nostalgia reflect its original Homeric meaning," Emotion 12 (2012): 102-19.

[43] Xinyue Zhou, Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, and Ding-Guo Gao, "Counteracting Loneliness: On the Restorative Function of Nostalgia," *Psychological Science* 19, no. 10 (2008): 1028.

[44] Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, Jamie Arndt, and Clay Routledge "Nostalgia: Past, Present and Future," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 17, no. 5 (2008): 307.

[45] Matthew Baldwin, and Mark J. Landau. "Exploring Nostalgia's Influence on Psychological Growth," *Self and Identity* 13, no. 2 (2014): 162-77.

What is not discussed in this research, however, is what happens when one lacks this positive self-regard and the resilience that allows one to contact the resource bank of positive memories. Nostalgia is viewed exclusively as looking back on one's own past. Might a fictional universe assume this role by proxy? Svetlana Boym defines nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy."[46] If it is a longing for something that never existed, may one then create it? Moreover, this research neglects a feature of nostalgia that has been prominent throughout the history of the concept: that it may sometimes serve a regressive function. Nina says that

> I think I did happen to read it a bit too much, at times. It gave me solace, but then I would cling onto it rather than summon the courage to act. I would stop myself from taking action almost before I knew what my intention was. But then I had an inner voice that told me: 'Now you are stopping up on purpose'. It's about knowing the dividing line between needing to recuperate and just wanting to escape… Then the act of reading is just about wanting to stay where you are. Other times I discover new things in it.

We see here that this universe to which she can always return sometimes has a regressive function, at other times a progressive function. With time she has learned to listen to the inner voice that wants her not to move forward in life. Can these two tendencies really be subsumed under the same concept? The concept of nostalgia has journeyed from designating a painful pathological condition to indicating the inner resources one draws upon in order to sustain the psychological distress involved in psychological growth processes.

Krystine Batcho has traced the historical trajectory of the concept of nostalgia from its origins as a medical disease to a psychological concept, and from a malevolent, regressive experience to a benevolent emotion that can strengthen the self. From its origins derived from *The Odyssey*, the concept has itself undergone an odyssey without yet finding a secure home. She shows the changes from viewing homesickness as a normal and admirable feeling to inscribing it in medical pathology for ideological reasons. When subsequently this disease is subsumed under a larger category the term is freed up for reconceptualisation within the field of psychology. It is still a disease, but no longer related to yearning for home. Instead it comes to mark a pathological regressive state. However, another reversal takes place. The term now goes from signifying an abnormal condition to becoming normalised, coming to mark a sentimental longing for an irretrievable past. The concept undergoes yet a further transformation: as its valence changes from bitter, via bittersweet, towards sweet, it changes its

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[46] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

meaning from a malevolent or neutral state to a benevolent process serving adaptive means.[47] Batcho emphasises that "confusion of different constructs designated by the same term has continued to obstruct progress in empirical research on nostalgia."[48] She therefore proposes that "*homesickness* and *longing for one's past* represent different, albeit related, constructs."[49] This confusion was inherent from its conception, however, as *nostalgia* collapses two different states into one: the safe return and the pain of being in exile. Theories of nostalgia always point us back to the concept's origin in *The Odyssey*. *Algos* denotes a painful condition (the Algea were the personifications of pain, sorrow and grief). In the beginning of Book V of *the Odyssey*, the long-suffering Odysseus is said to suffer this pain, *algea paschon.* He is a prisoner in the house of Calypso, without "the power to regain the land of his fathers." He is in exile, cut off from his homeland, without the means of returning home. He is unable to achieve *nostos*. The *algos* is due to the very impossibility of *nostos*. Only when he receives help does he have a choice: whether to stay on Ogygia and have immortality, or return home. Anna Bonifazi has inquired into the double meaning of *nostos*: it signifies both the safe return after a dangerous journey, and the telling of the tale about it. It is a poetic genre, of which Bonifazi lists the following motifs as central: the sailors initially plan to reach a particular place; the journey is diverted by a storm; there is a shipwreck and many of the crew perish; the survivor arrives in an unknown land and collects certain goods there; he stays in this place for some time; he receives help in reaching home. She argues that *nostos* is a foundational concept in the Odyssey. Bonifazi, summarising the various meanings and associations of the term *nostos* – safe journey, coming back (home), saving oneself – says that "return" is common to these meanings. But what she identifies as the core meaning of *nostos* is "surviving lethal dangers."[50] Therefore, she argues, *nostos* is connected to the idea of salvation. She maintains that "translating *nostos* and its cognates as 'return home' is not sufficient, and in several instances it does not even make sense"; it is "because of the frequent Homeric associations with a backward movement and with the idea of home" that it has come to mean 'homecoming'.[51] *Nostos* is the quest to reach one's

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[47] Batcho, "Nostalgia: The bittersweet history of a psychological concept," 1-12.

[48] Ibid., 7.

[49] Ibid., 9.

[50] Anna Bonifazi, "Inquiring into Nostos and its Cognates." *The American Journal of Philology* 130, no. 4 (2009): 492.

[51] Ibid., 497.

destination after a perilous journey in which one suffers many *algea* in one's heart. I suggest that we therefore derive the following terms to differentiate states and conditions.

The pain of being in exile and the accompanying homesickness may more accurately be termed *metoikalgia*[52]. The yearning to return home may be termed *hiemenos*. The refusal to head this call, opting instead for "immortalisation" by hiding to oneself one's true self, *kalypsis*. And the arrival at one's destination, by having helpful resources, to tell the tale, *nostos*. These four terms respectively sum up the four concepts historically embedded within nostalgia. Also, they sum up the various stages on Nina's quest for identity. Foreclosure is at bottom a *kalyptic* state; diffusion is *metoikalgic;* moratorium is *oikad hiemenos;* and achievement is *nostos*, arriving at one's destination after suffering many perils. In my interpretation, the resolution of Nina's crisis is a *nostos*.

MySpace: Homecoming

Her homecoming is metaphorically symbolized by her account on MySpace:

> I managed to conquer an inner space for myself. It was fragile at first. And then I registered my account on MySpace, where I could use a pseudonym. I didn't want to use my own name, because I associated it strongly with the girl who had helped her dad with his manuscripts. On MySpace I could just be myself, be a musician. It was fantastic. … My music had meant something to a Latin-American living in Australia. That was huge. Gradually I gained the courage to share this with other people. I was terrified that this would be crushed, when I came forward with it.

In this passage she formulates the true nature of courage: to come forward *despite* the terror of being crushed. This is what it takes to achieve identity and to find one's way home from inner exile.

Nina is reluctant to say that the book has saved her life, because "I am too much of a coward ever to have taken my life." She thus understands "saved" to mean 'resqued from death'. Still, the book has "made unbearable times bearable." In my view that is a form of salvation – of reaching nostos, arriving safely after experiencing many perils and algea. And in fact Nina proceeds to acknowledge that "to save a life – it is not just on the physical level." She says that since she killed her soul, she has "been working to restore, to reinstall those original parts. Her "great struggle" was that "I haven't had the courage to live." She couldn't dare to reveal herself.

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[52]From Μετοικεσία: a removal from one abode to another, especially a forced removal. *Hiemenos:* the word used in The Odyssey for Odysseus' yearning to return home.

Without the book she would have been "more lonely as a child," "less able to listen to myself, to have self-belief, and to have hope that I could find myself at last." Thus, we may conclude that the book has changed her – she has found self-belief and the hope that she could achieve her quest for *nostos*. Her challenge was two-fold: first, to "reconquer that inner space," and then to reveal to others what was in there: creating a "My Space" and come forward, courageously. Nina's narrative may thus be said to be an *odyssey*. The plot has a circular shape; it is structured according to three stages: having the Book, sacrificing it, and regaining it.

Summary

To achieve an ego-identity is to be able to express who one is: to bring one's self-concept into alignment with viable social roles in the relevant domains. This is a two-fold challenge: To acknowledge to oneself one's occupational dreams, intimacy needs, sexuality, ethnicity or worldviews – and then to openly declare this to the world. If I cannot come out with it, or even admit it to myself, then I am in crisis: I live in an inner exile. Such exile is *algos*, psychically painful. To face the challenge is to heed the yearning to arrive safely "home", *nostos.* The conversion experience, although partly motivated by a need for moratorium, in effect become a foreclosure of identity exploration that may be termed "*kalyptic*": succumbing to the temptation of "immortality" rather than heeding the *nostos hiemenos.* After the gradual apostasy, there is a long spell of ruminative diffusion, the pain of which may be referred to as *metoikalgia.* In order to achieve identity, Nina must go through a process of transformation. This requires a lengthy period of moratorium, a break from "the outer world." During this moratorium she must undergo a gradual *katabasis*: a descent into, and exploration of, threatening feelings against which she has previously defended. The reading of *My Friend Flicka* represents such a katabasis for her: for each return to the Source, a little bit of herself is won back. She goes from identifying with Ken the dreamer to achieving a deeper understanding of Nell's mediating role: she bit by bit builds a "bridge" between Ken and Rob by modifying the perspectives of both. Through a process of "transmuting internalisation," Nina comes to understand and experience "the Nell gaze," thereby providing a vital self-mirroring for herself and building a bridge between two dimensions of the self. For this process of deepening re-reading I propose the term *palilexia.* Through the *nekyia* of turning away from the world and encounter feelings that have gone underground, Nina gains the resources to embark on her *nostos:* having reclaimed her inner space, she can now share it with the world.

Interpretation of Jane's Story: *The Big Bang and the View from Above*

Introduction

Jane's reading experience clearly begins before she opens the book, and goes on for many years after she closes it. It has "shaped her life" and is both the centre and the circumference of her redemptive life-story. Jane's story fits neatly into McAdams' study of generative adults: those who begin life by being a special child, experience adversity before turning things around and gradually find a way to give of themselves to a larger community. Jane had a difficult childhood, and found meaning and solace in reading literature. Although Jane nowhere voices an opinion of herself as having been a special child, it is far from common that children seek out Beckett in the local library. After having outgrown two "frameworks," first that of her family and local community, and then that of her peers and the zeitgeist, there is a deep, yet unrecognized, readiness for change. Afterwards she will come to realise that this was a time of crisis. At the right time, in a moment of *kairos,* Jane encounters *Shikasta*. She loves and trusts Lessing, yet she is shocked by the truth the book reveals. I will interpret this "Big Bang" as a special kind of sublime experience: an *ekplektic* form of *ekstasis.* In her deeply affective and contemplative reading of *Shikasta*, Jane seems to enact a *metabolic* mode of engagement, marked by slow digestion and an immediate turn, *metaballein,* from one framework to another. This brings about a *metanoia*, a change of mind and heart. There is a retrospective realisation that she was in crisis, "hungry" for spiritual nourishment; at the same time, the reading of *shikasta* may be understood to precipitate a crisis, as Jane struggles to accommodate its truth. The *metanoia* also implies a change of direction; it encompasses her *anabasis*, the manifestation of her purpose through the growth of Shared Reading. Jane's experience is, I will argue, a form of non-religious conversion into "conjunctive faith," which can be conceptualised as *epistrophe.* She spends many years accommodating the Big Bang, writing novels and doing a Ph.D. in order to articulate her Visionary Realism, before she finally discovers her vocation: Shared Reading – all of which turn upon her reading experience of *Shikasta.* In my understanding it has therefore "shaped her life" *epistrophically*.

CRISIS

Kairos **and** *Metanoia*

Jane, at the time of encountering *Shikasta,* did not consciously experience herself as being in crisis. It is only afterwards that she is enabled to see that she was *hungry* for change. The summary of her background is preceded by a reflexive differentiation between the experiencing I and the narrating I: "And I don't think I knew it at the time, but I think I worked it out since then." It is a careful consideration of what she was able to know then and what she knows now: "I think" acknowledges the fact that she cannot now remember the past as it actually was then. Yet, further on she nuances this by saying: "I don't think I had any of that in proper consciousness, but I do now think I knew it." She here appears to distinguish between two levels of knowing: conscious knowledge and tacit knowing. So there is both a horizontal gap, between then and now, and a vertical division between levels of knowing/awareness. What did she unknowingly know? That some lives tragically fail, "they fail to achieve their potential." She seems to imply that she possessed a negative form of knowledge: she knew the "frameworks" that would lead to failure. And she was now "hungry" to find a way to achieve the potential she must have suspected was there. Her mother had been awarded a scholarship, yet had chosen the road to suicide. The second framework she had entertained, the Marxist-feminist one, she "didn't really believe in." She reaches the conclusion that "the book and where I was in my life came together at exactly the right sort of point." This notion of the propitious moment, *kairos*, is an assertion that she shares with many of the other intimants. The ground had been prepared, partly by previous books by Lessing: "there were things about understanding what a life might be, that were already happening, that were changing anyway." She had followed Lessing up to this point, sharing her framework and her discovery of the possibilities of sci-fi. Jane was a declared atheist, however. Retrospectively, she can identify this as a kairotic moment. Her life was at a critical point. She also indicates an element of fortune, implying gratitude: "Luckily, I got this." In looking back on her experience, Jane can now see that the encounter happened at the right time, in a propitious moment: "So the book and where I was in my life came together at exactly the right sort of point to interact with each other and make a major change."

In the fourth book of the *Laws* (709b ff.), in his discussion of the factors that govern human life, Plato declares: Chance [*Tyche*] and Occasion [*Kairos*] cooperate with God in the control of human affairs." Whereas chance has to do with luck and a coming together of events

that could have happened at any time, *kairos* points to a particularly propitious moment. Together, they form an ontological element where the moment, although not of human devising, calls for human response. John E. Smith notes three distinct but related aspects of Kairos:

> first, the idea of 'the right time' […]. Second, Kairos means a time of tension and conflict, a time of crisis implying that the course of events poses a problem that calls for a decision at that time, which is to say that no generalized solution or response […] will suffice. Third, Kairos means that the problem or crisis has brought with it a time of opportunity for accomplishing some purpose which could not be carried out at some other time.[1]

According to Philip Sipiora, kairos first appeared in the *Iliad*, where it is connected to vulnerability; "it denotes a *vital* or *lethal* place in the body, one that is particularly susceptible to injury and therefore necessitates special protection."[2] Sipiora refers to Doro Levi's study of the etymology of the word, who in his 1923 treatment of kairos in classical literature, traces the etymology of the word to 'death', 'ruin', 'breast', 'the seat of spiritual life', 'to care for', 'to destroy'. Passages from Euripides reveal the transition in meaning from the Homerian vulnerability to 'opportunity' and 'the right time'. There are, relates Sipiora, two different sources for the word: In archery, it refers to an opening, a tunnel-like aperture through which the arrow must pass; in the art of weaving, it is the 'critical time' when the weaver must draw the yarn through a gap that momentarily opens up in the cloth being woven. Thus it is at the same time a momentary opening, creating an opportunity for the weaver or the archer, and a vulnerable spot that needs to be protected; in both instances a sensitivity to the aperture is required for an apt response. It marks a particular moment in time where several conditions become confluent, and whether it presents an opportunity or a special vulnerability, it is vital that one does not fail to respond.[3]

According to Carolyn R. Miller, there are two different conceptions of Kairos within rhetoric. "In one view […] it becomes a principle of adaptation and accommodation to

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[1] John E. Smith, "Time and Qualitative Time," In *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory and Praxis,* ed. Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 52. Crisis and Kairos are here related, although they are not derived from the same verb. Krinô means to "separate", whereas keirô, the verb leading to Kairos, means to "cut", "cleave" or "part". See: Aris Fioretos, *Det Kritiska Ögonblicket: Hölderlin, Benjamin, Celan* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1991), 7.

[2] Philip Sipiora, "Introduction: The Ancient Concept of Kairos," in *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory and Praxis*, ed. Philip Sipiora and James S. Baumlin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 2.

[3] We can thus see how kairos came to have a central importance in rhetoric, in Plato and Aristoteles as well as Isocrates, where it relates both to seizing the rhetorical situation, and to decorum, using the apt means in relation to the audience.

convention, expectation, predictability. […] In the other view, *Kairos* is understood to represent not the expected but the opposite: the uniquely timely, the spontaneous, the radically particular. […] The timely action will be understood as adaptive, as appropriate, *only in retrospect*."[4] It is this latter view that is apposite in relation to Jane's situation: the determination of the moment as propitious can only be understood in retrospect. Jane and the book came together at the right moment: the *kairos* of this was beyond the awareness of the experiencing I, just as the crisis of meaning was. Kelly R. Myers discusses the close partnership of *Kairos* and *Metanoia* as essential in "understanding the affective and transformative dimension of *Kairos*."[5] She argues that it is often neglected that "the god of opportunity does not work alone. […] *Metanoia* resides in the wake of Opportunity, sowing regret and inspiring repentance in the missed moment."[6]

One meaning of *metanoia* is 'afterthought' (from meta, 'after' or 'beyond, and nous, 'mind'). The afterthought "brings new knowledge and therefore creates a 'change of mind' that can affect the feelings, will, or thought. Thus *metanoia* implies a reflective act in which a person returns to a past event in order to see it anew."[7] Such a retroactive meaning-making, where an event only gains meaning in light of a later occurrence, seems to have a certain resemblance to an experience recounted by Wordsworth in the Prelude:

> While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
> A heart that had not been disconsolate:
> Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
> At least not felt […].

In a perspicacious commentary on these lines, Philip Davis remarks: "The heart had *not* been disconsolate: it is not simply a problem followed by a solution. Deeper and more gently, it is a subtly double experience: he did not know he previously lacked what now he was glad to be given."[8] Jane, through a *metanoia*, realises both that she was in a crisis, needing spiritual nourishment, and that encountering *Shikasta* was a *kairos*. I will argue that this *kairos-metanoia* complementarity is reflected in Jane's use of the two metaphors of framework and hunger.

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[4] C. L. Miller, "Foreword," in Sipiora and Baudlin, eds., *Rhetoric and Kairos,* xii-xiii.

[5] Kelly A. Myers, "*Metanoia* and the Transformation of Opportunity," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (2011): 1.

[6] Ibid., 2.

[7] Ibid., 3.

[8] Philip Davis, *Reading and the Reader* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013), 75.

Framework

I interpreted Jane's encounter with *Shikasta* as "a third kind of worldview," which she accepts after a brief moment of mulling it over. This more Kantian term is not the one she used, however. She referred several times to "framework," apparently implying an entire life-philosophy with an outlook, a set of values and moral implications - something that she "ordered my life through." Later on, in recounting the process of working on the Ph.D., she says it "became the combing out of lots of strands of it into, I suppose, an order or a *framework* by which I could *be.*" All in all, she leaves behind two different frameworks before finally working out one that allows her to *be*.

The mother, although talented and with a love of reading, had chosen a flawed framework. She passed on the love of reading, however. And now Jane had outlived the two frameworks that the culture around her espoused, leaving her "a very hungry person." This is the essence of her crisis, which may therefore be called a spiritual crisis. We note that her state or condition at the time is described both in cognitive and bodily/instinctual terms, as she employs the metaphors of "framework," a mental order(-ing) and "hunger."

She appears to equate framework with a way of being and relating to the world, and that there is progression through stages, as if one passes from one framework to the next by climbing up a step on a ladder, each step affording a momentary resting place and an increasingly larger vision and outlook. Within psychology several such theories of frameworks and stages have been propounded, all of them building on the work of Piaget, offering dynamic models of levels of growth where cognitive/moral/psychosocial development progresses through an invariant sequence of qualitatively distinct, hierarchically arranged stages.[9] James W. Fowler has developed a dynamic model of seven distinct stages of faith, attempting to "clarify the dynamics of faith as the ways we go about making and maintaining meaning in life."[10] He sees faith as

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[9] Jane E. Loevinger, *Ego development: Conceptions and theories* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976) defines an ego stage as a "frame of reference," a filter that the individual uses to interpret life experiences and which implies a niveau of character development, cognitive complexity, an interpersonal style and a set of conscious preoccupations. She conceptualized nine stages of personality development. The first three are termed "pre-conventional," the middle three "conventional" and the last three "post-conventional." The majority of adults operate at the conventional level, between the stages of self-aware and conscientious. When persons move beyond the conventional, to the stages of the individualistic and autonomous, they become more inner-directed and willing to live with emotional and cognitive complexities that may not be resolvable, becoming very psychologically minded. They become concerned with high ideals of justice and compassion.

[10] James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981), xii. Fowler is inspired by Tillich and Niebuhr.

transgressing the boundaries of religion and belief, as a deeper and more personal way of responding to transcendent value. "Faith is not always religious in its content or context. Faith is a person's way of seeing him- or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose."[11] Growth and development in faith, adds Fowler, "also result from life crises, challenges and the kind of disruptions that theologians call revelation."[12]

Like Piaget's cognitive model and Kohlberg's moral model, it seeks to describe changes in human thought and adaptation in general and formal ways, but attempts to incorporate the structuring of *affective and imaginative modes of knowing* left out of their accounts.[13] Furthermore, it discusses the dialectic between structure and content in development from one stage to another. Fowler argues for faith as a form of imagination:

> faith is our way of discerning and committing ourselves to centers of value and power that exert ordering force in our lives. Faith, as imagination, grasps the ultimate conditions of our existence…. Faith, then, is an active mode of knowing, of composing a felt sense or image of the condition of our lives taken as a whole. It unifies our lives' force fields.[14]

I find it reasonable to compare Jane's notion of framework to Fowler's concept of faith stage. The framework of "enjoy yourself while you can" is - not so much on account of its content, but because it is the prevailing sociocultural and parental norm with which she grows up - analogous to Fowler's Synthetic-Conventional Faith, where one's identity is a reflection of the group and family norms, and tacitly held. The "feminist framework" is, moreover, comparable to the next stage, Individuative-Reflective Faith. "Self (identity) and outlook (world view) are differentiated from those of others and become acknowledged factors in the reactions,

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[11] Ibid., 4. Fowler maintains that "If faith is reduced to belief in creedal statements and doctrinal formulations, then sensitive and responsible persons are likely to judge that they must live 'without faith.' But if faith is understood as trust in another and as loyalty to a transcendent center of value and power, then the issue of faith – and the possibility of religious faith – becomes lively and open again" (14).

[12] Ibid., 100.

[13] For Piaget and Kohlberg, structural development occurs when, in the interaction of person and environment, the subject must construct new modes of knowing and acting in order to meet new challenges of the environment. Development results from efforts to restore balance between subject and environment when some factor of maturation or of environmental change has disturbed a previous equilibrium. These models are normative: The assumption is that the more advanced stages are better ways of relating to the world than the less developed ones. As Fowler remarks: "In the domain of faith the assertion that more developed stages are in significant ways more adequate than less developed ones has to be made with even greater cautions and qualifications than in the cognitive or moral reasoning spheres. Yet we cannot (and will not) avoid making and trying to corroborate that claim" (101).

[14] Ibid., 25. Fowler criticizes Piaget for his restrictive understanding of the role of the imagination in knowing, seeing it as a function of childhood play and a precursor of formal operational thought.

interpretations and judgments one makes on the actions of the self and others."[15] This stage is marked by a capacity for critical reflection on identity, and is based on a logic of clear distinctions and abstract concepts, translating symbols into conceptual meanings. The next stage in the model, Conjunctive Faith, is according to Fowler quite rare and unusual before mid-life.

> Alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions, this stage strives to unify opposites in mind and experience. It generates and maintains vulnerability to the strange truths of those who are other. Ready for closeness to that which is different and threatening to self and outlook (including new depths of experience in spirituality and religious revelation), this stage's commitment to justice is freed from the confines of tribe, class, religious community or nation… The new strength of this stage comes in the rise of the ironic imagination – a capacity to see and be in one's most powerful meanings, while simultaneously recognizing that they are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality.[16]

This stage accepts that truth is multidimensional and organically interdependent, and cannot be encompassed in any abstract theory. It is does not take the form of propositions or a set of beliefs, but will often take paradoxical forms of expression and may be akin to a Keatsian negative capability, or the attitude Gordon Allport referred to as "whole-hearted but half-sure." The term "conjunctive faith" also has hermeneutical ramifications. To differentiate Conjunctive Faith from the previous two stages, Fowler draws on Ricoeur's distinction between "first naïveté" (a pre-critical relationship of unbroken participation in symbolically mediated reality) and "second naïveté" (a post-critical desire to resubmit to the initiative of the symbolic). Interestingly, Fowler indicates that this stage has its own way of relating to text and scripture: without giving up or negating one's critical thinking skills, one learns "to relinquish initiative to the text."[17] Instead of analyzing and extracting meaning, one lets oneself be read by the text. Without attributing any objective status to these stages, one may regard them as a useful way of illustrating the felt development and progress Jane had been through as a qualitative leap in framework. We may say that Jane's crisis consisted of being in transition between the framework of Individuative-Reflective Faith and Conjunctive Faith. She moves to a higher stage, but takes many years to integrate this experience. Her spiritual crisis of transition is experienced as a hunger for meaning.

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[15] Ibid., 182.

[16] Ibid., 198.

[17] Ibid., 186.

TRANSACTION WITH THE LITERARY WORK

The hunger for reading

Jane is seeking something; it is an instinctual seeking, to fulfil a deep need rather than a passing whim. The nourishment she hungered for, are we justified in calling it 'spiritual', in the same way that Tolstoy defines true art as spiritual nourishment? To eat does not mean to "swallow whole": it involves a process of preparation, taking a mouthful, masticating, tasting, savouring, and digesting before the body can make use of the food as energy. The use of this metaphor to describe the need for reading finds its counterpart in the medieval reading practice of *Lectio Divina*, a personal mode of engagement with scripture, which was revived by Thomas Keating within the tradition of Contemplative Christianity. Gervase Holdaway explicitly links *Lectio Divina* to spiritual hunger and eating food, likening it to "feasting on the Word": first, the taking of a bite (*lectio*); then chewing on it (*meditatio*); savoring its essence (*oratio*) and, finally, digesting it and making it a part of the body (*contemplatio*).[18]The four stages of the divine reading are thus described metaphorically in terms of the process of eating. I will now look at how Jane relates the way she read *Shikasta.*

Feeling as the deepest form of knowing: Mmm, wow, huh!

We have of course no transparent access to what Jane was experiencing as she read *Shikasta*. We must rely on the words and expressions chosen by the narrating I as indicators of important qualities of her reading process. In my view, onomatopoetical expressions such as "Mmm, that's true"; "Wow, this is making me think something I've never thought before"; "Wow, mmm, this is true"; "wow, I recognised it was just true"; "It was more like going: huh!" must be interpreted as tokens of a bodily-affective form of responding to the work.

The recurring juxtaposition of *wows*, *huhs* and *mmms* is interesting: A pre-verbal, guttural expression of visceral reactions and of excited discovery on the one hand; on the other hand are the *mmms* - expressions of contemplation, of mulling it over, tasting, and holding it up for comparison with previous experiences. The "mmm" has both a pensive and a savoury quality, and as such mirrors the two metaphors of mental framework and eating. It signifies an

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[18] Gervase Holdaway, *The Oblate Life* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008), 109.

emotional truth, a recognition of something that rings true, rather than a deliberative being convinced of propositional truths. Although she is sat on the bus whilst reading these first few pages, she is not reading hurriedly. She stops to consider the truth-value of each segment that she bites off and chews. *Mmmm* is a signifier of slow reading, of reflection, of a back-and-forth between text and lived experience. It is a form of expressive enactment. And the *wow*, coupled with the *huh,* mark an immediacy of felt reaction. So the *mmm*, with its "…" and the *wow/huh* with its "!", are both components of, and precursors of, perceived truth. She takes a bite, then chews on it (*wow!),* savouring its essence (*mmm*), but then spends ever so long digesting the nature and implications of this truth for her life.

Together, the reflective *mmm* and the immediate reflex of *wow-huh* make up the phenomenology of the deep impression the words are making; a doubleness of immersed reflexivity that bears witness to a great receptivity to the text. So much has happened by the time she steps off the bus, by the time she has even read the first page of the story itself, having barely begun to digest the prefatory remarks. Later on in the narrative, she refers to George Eliot's aim of making us "understand that feeling is the deepest form of knowing. That's what literature does for us. It makes us feel, so we can know." How can this deep impression of immersed reflexivity become a knowing, and what would be the linguistic markers of such a knowing? I believe this is connected to her repeated use of "as if" to describe what it did to her.

The great "as if" and metaphorical thinking

Jane's first major evaluation of the experience was this: "I felt as if I was being asked to consider, at the deepest of levels, the very basis of everything I thought I was." This means that a great demand is placed upon her; she must start again: "It was as if a great deal of, I suppose, moral thinking would have to come about, or even moral *practice* maybe. That literally I'd have to learn how to do it, if everything mattered, and if how I conducted myself mattered. It's like starting again, and everything you did you'd have to think, have I done it right?" In addition to the "as if", this evaluation makes use of simile: "it's like starting again."

The reading experience not only precipitates this great moral demand, it also gives her something: "So this book, *Shikasta*, gave me a kind of prism to read a lot of other things and eventually that became my Ph.D." Furthermore, she says: "So I feel as if what the book did for me was open an area of life and thinking of human experience that was closed, and then I went in and found it was full of this amazing stuff in there." The book gave her a prism, and it opened

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up an area of life, like a key to a hidden room. Thus it is both something to view other things through, and an area to be explored. It colours her perception of the world, but also opens up and expands that world, and it shapes her life.

These, the *starting again*, the *opening up* and the *prism*, are the three central metaphors she uses. These metaphors are themselves embedded in figural thought structures of "as if " and "like". The poet John Ashbery in some of his poems speaks of the "great as though" and the "great as if" – as if it is a spacious territory allowing thinking, or is itself a big thought operation. This adverbial subordinating conjunction pertaining to manner recurs on seven occasions in the course of this narrative:

> "I felt as if I was being asked…"
>
> "And as if I would have to learn how to *be...*"
>
> "And as if it might hurt me or I might hurt it."
>
> "It was as if a great deal of, I suppose, moral thinking would have to come about or even moral *practice* maybe."
>
> "I don't know, but I feel as if I was still indoors all that time, that may not be true…"
>
> "So I feel as if what the book did for me was open an area of life and thinking of human experience that was closed…"
>
> "And I think it is almost as if we've just stumbled into a way of having that".

Interestingly, the first use of "as if" comes directly after she has read out the passage where Lessing uses this expression. And Jane repeats this very line, saying she recognised it as "true," implying that it is the form of thinking, as well as the content, that she recognises. The *as if* signifies a movement of the narrating I into empathising with the experiencing I, feeling her way into her former self. Unlike the word "seemed" it does not signify that something was illusory or premature and a position which the narrating I has left behind. It is not an automatic, clichéd conjunction that follows upon it. Rather, it has a double perspective, opening up a space, a form of and for exploration of felt sense. It involves both disjunctive reasoning and imaginative bridging. The person must listen to herself first, look for the right expression and weigh it against others. The implication of *as if* is that there could be other possible ways to represent it, but this one *feels* right. It is tentative and explorative, yet very visceral - an embodied, emotional form of thinking.

In his *Philosophy of As If* Vaihinger argued that we cannot find out whether religious or metaphysical doctrines are true in an objective sense; instead one ought to ask whether it is

useful to act "as if" they were true. His fictionalism, although it bears a certain surface resemblance to William James' argument in *Will to Believe*, is however more like a form of "if-then" thinking, turning "as if" into a figure of speech. What is more relevant in this context, is to establish how *as if* operates as an opener onto a field of explorative thinking and feeling. The *as if* may be understood on two levels. It signals the opening of a process of thinking, where the subject attempts to articulate pre-verbal feelings and sensations, searching for the right expression. On another level, it has its own feeling. With James we may say that we must inquire into the 'feeling of as if'. In *Practical Criticism* I. A. Richards maintains that the distinction between Intellectual and Emotional Belief is essential: "as the scientific view of the world develops, we shall probably be forced into making a division between fact and fiction that, unless we can meet it with a twofold theory of belief [....], would be fatal not only to poetry but to all our finer, more spiritual responses."[19] He proceeds to argue that "the desirability or undesirability of an emotional belief has nothing to do with its intellectual status, provided it is kept from interfering with the intellectual system. And poetry is an extraordinarily successful device for preventing these interferences from arising."[20] If we take poetry here to mean imaginative literature in general, we may say that *as if* is the kind of thinking literature makes use of to create the feeling way of knowing that Jane finds in George Eliot. The *as if* is at one and the same time the interference prevention and the opening up of the imaginative-emotive space – the door to a "visionary realism", perhaps.

To sum up, the narrating I is making use of *onomatopoetica* and subordinating conjunctions of manner to convey aspects of the reading process of the experiencing I. Whereas the onomatopoetica function to take us immediately into this experience, the "as if" has a double status of highlighting the distance of experiencing and narrating I. Both figurations are expressions of a feeling way of knowing. The "framework" that she arrives at cannot be determined in terms of a propositional content or a creed. Perhaps it can only be pointed to, and revealed in the use of "as if." The "hunger" that finds spiritual nourishment does so through a double temporality of an immediate *wow-huh!* and a slow process of *mmm*-digestion. Not only does the book give her a new way of looking (the prism) and a bigger world to look at, but her evaluations do themselves rely on a metaphorical way of thinking.

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[19] I. A. Richards, *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954), 279.

[20] Ibid., 277.

The shocking recognition of frightening truth

We are given a rudimentary account of what her situation was before starting to read the book, consisting of two pieces of information: She describes herself as "absolutely… an atheist," and someone who "loved" Lessing's work. And she gives us two adjectives to describe her reaction: "I was really shocked by it, and also deeply affected." I take this expression not as a use of *hendyadis* for emphasis, but as a case of subordination. She seems neither to have expected the contents and tone of the passage, nor how it would affect her. By saying "shocked … and affected" the implication is that there would be two responses to the shock: recoil and turn away from it to protect herself, or to take it on board and let it affect her.[21] Jane chose the latter, allowing herself to be deeply moved by the experience. We note a parallelism between this description, which came prior to reciting the passage, and the one that follows afterwards: "And at the same time, while that was quite frightening, I also absolutely recognised something in it as true." She was both shocked *and* affected, it was "frightening" *and* "true." It is not simply a shock of mild surprise, and this is not simply a cognitive truth where a proposition is accepted as corresponding to facts. It is worth pointing out that the part that must have preceded the reading of this passage, the dedication, is only narrated subsequently. Here she indicates that she seemed prepared for receiving it: "I've always been interested in space." The contents of this first paragraph would thus probably have come across as more familiar, and more readily enjoyable and unproblematic to process. It is striking that all this has taken place before she has even started on the main body of the text.

Her initial reaction must have been one of surprise: her atheist stance, and her conception of Lessing was challenged. The work places an unexpected demand upon her: it is *as if* the work insists that she must reconsider her life and her sense of self. In the same way she conjoins shocked and affected, she now pairs fright and recognition of truth. In other words, it is an experience that implicates her on both a cognitive and an affective level. "I couldn't really think about it, I just *felt* it"; "I was very, very moved by it." To be moved means then not just simply to have an emotional reaction, as in laughing or crying or being angry or surprised. There is also a shock, the recognition registers deeply in the body/psyche. The position is shifted. And then, in recounting the event of the dream (referred to alternately as "the weird dream", "the terrible dream"), she evaluates it as "exhilarating and terrifying." We have shock,

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[21] This choice is at the very centre of the model of transformative aesthetic experience developed by Pelowski and Akiba, discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. Disruption leads to either giving up or to a process of accommodation.

frightening, terrifying paired with affected, recognition of truth, exhilaration. A polarity of repulsion and attraction, a double movement. "My mind had shifted, and then I was really *scared*." Doubtlessly, the dream is inextricably tied to the affective experience. Because the effect seems to be sudden, shocking, frightening and also exhilarating, it seems obvious to describe this as an example of a sublime experience.

Jane's dream bears remarkable similarities to the Stoic exercise Pierre Hadot named "The view from above." The stoics employed a number of perspective-shifting exercises in a philosophical contemplation of the bigger picture. According to Hadot, contemplating *phusis* in order to expand consciousness and achieve greatness of soul, *megalopsychia*, was "the very essence of philosophy."[22] The view from above involves picturing life on earth as if seen from high overhead. In a surviving fragment of Cicero's *De Republica* is related the dream of Scipio Aemilianus (185-129 BC), a cultured Roman and a stoic. Suring the third Punic War he experiences a strange and mystical dream:

> He ascends to meet Africanus the Elder in the outer heavens and together they look down upon the whole cosmos. Aemilianus exclaims that Earth seems tiny, adding 'I began to think less of this empire of ours, which only amounts to a pinpoint on its surface.' Yet he is filled with awe at the overwhelming beauty and harmony of the universe. Africanus the Elder shows him that the Earth and mortal life are miniscule parts of the whole cosmos and that 'the lips of mankind can grant you no fame or glory worth seeking'.[23]

Jane's dream gives her such a view from above; that which was big becomes small, and that which was not prominent now stands out. Her dream is both frightening and exhilarating. Although she does not use that word, it seems to fill her with awe.

What seems central to Jane's story is that the reading experience itself, and the ensuing dream, together precipitate a "Big Bang." This is a metaphor she uses several times. Curiously, given the fact that Lessing places the book within an Old Testament tradition, the central metaphor for the sudden rupture that gradually formed itself into an order, is taken from the scientific theory that shattered the religious cosmogony. The explosion marks an abrupt, unexpected event, a *metaballein*: there was nothing that lead up to it, and everything changed in its wake. Yet, after the Big Bang, an order was created. The order in Jane's life is not that of

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[22] Hadot discusses the spiritual exercise of the View from Above in: Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?,* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2002). See also: Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault,* trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

[23] Cited in Donald Robertson, *Stoicism and the Art of Happiness* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2013), 216.

a religion: an ordered set of beliefs. Her life seems to be ordered around working out the existential implications of the realization that everything, every choice, matters. She says "that 15 – 17 year period was assimilating… the Big Bang." Considering that Jane's mode of engagement is marked both by a shocked recognition and a gradual digestion of its truth, I propose that we may employ the term *metabolic* to account for it. It encompasses both the *metabolism* of digesting the experience and the *metaballein* of sudden change.

Ekpleksis and awe

According to Keltner and Haidt there has been very little scientific research on the positive feeling of awe. In their review of what philosophers, sociologists and theologians have written on the subject, they found that awe nearly always was related to fear and submission in an encounter with something that is larger than the self. Keltner and Haidt therefore concludes that the emotion of awe has two major appraisals; it occurs as the result of these two conditions: *vastness* and *accommodation.* The person will perceive something that is "vast," i.e. either big or powerful; and the vast cannot be assimilated into the existing mental framework, but must be accommodated. In contrast to cognitive processes of assimilation, where new experiences are incorporated into already established mental structures, accommodation is characterised by a need to expand awareness by forming new mental schemas.

> Something enormous can't be processed, and when people are stumped, stopped in their cognitive tracks while in the presence of something vast, they feel small, powerless, passive and receptive. They often (but not always) feel fear, admiration, elevation or a sense of beauty as well. By stopping people and making them receptive, awe creates an opening for change, and this is why awe plays a role in most stories of religious conversion.[24]

Awe makes us open to change. Keltner and Haidt distinguish between the emotions of admiration and elevation on the one hand, and awe on the other. This is because the experience of the former only necessitates accommodation. In the case of admiration and elevation there is no vast entity or force, but rather great skill or moral greatness. Elevation depends on a successful accommodation. Shiota, Keltner and Mossman have found empirical support for this theory. They discovered that awe leads to "a sense of smallness of the self and the presence of something greater than the self […] increasing one's sense of self as part of a greater whole –

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[24] Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 203. The distinction between assimilation and accommodation is derived from Piaget.

a self-concept that de-emphasises the individual self."[25] It is quite clear that Jane's experience invokes a need for accommodation. Her metaphor of the "Big Bang" seems to illustrate both vastness and accommodation. She takes a number of years to integrate the event into her life-story. Keltner and Haidt's theory of vastness is very similar to Kant's emphasis on the mathematical and dynamical sublime. However, it is fully possible to experience awe in an encounter with nature, and still assimilate it to an already existing framework such as a religious one; the wonders of nature becoming confirmation of God's existence. I contend that it is not just vastness that characterizes Jane's experience. It is the kinetic experience of turning, *metaballein,* from one perspective to a greater one, where the small becomes great and the big pales into insignificance. Moreover, it is the shock, as Jane had not expected such a perspectival turn in her encounter with *Shikasta.* Jane says that she had developed a relationship of *trust* in Lessing and her books, and that she loved her. Jane would have expected to encounter, in taking up *Shikasta*, something that fitted in with her current "framework." However, this expectation is not fulfilled, as *Shikasta* brings in a religious vision. This disruption of her expectation and the ensuing *metaballein* is an *ecstatic* experience, in the Longinian sense. Her experience is "sublime" – or to be more precise: *ekplektic.*[26] In his philosophy of the *affects,* Spinoza says that wonder "aroused by an object we fear" is "called consternation." According to Spinoza this consternation happens because wonder at something that does not give us pleasure or conforms to our expectations keeps a person "so suspended in considering it that he cannot think of other things by which he could avoid this evil." This consternation is contrasted with veneration and devotion. Says Spinoza: "love joined to wonder, or veneration, we call devotion."[27] Now, this *metaballein* from devotion to consternation is precisely what I understand Longinus to mean by his term *ekpleksis*. If we take *plexis* to mean mental schema (cf. the terms 'com-plex' and 'per-plex'), then *ek-pleksis* means the frightening disruption of one mental framework or schema and the ensuing felt need for accommodation. In order to experience wonder, Jane must accept the *ekplektic* shock. Because of Jane's veneration for Lessing, she was prepared to follow her into the Universe of *Shikasta*, even though it challenged her entire framework, and

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[25] Michelle N. Shiota, Dacher Keltner, and Amanda Mossman, "The nature of awe: Elicitors, appraisals, and effects on self-concept," *Cognition and Emotion* 21, no. 5 (2007): 960.

[26] See Literature Review for necessary clarification of central terms in Longinus' *On the Sublime.*

[27] Benedict de Spinoza, "Of the origin and nature of the affects," in *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 97.

demanded that she leave it behind. Thus the awe-experience, the deeply affective recognition of the truth of the vast vision, is predicated upon a prior *ekpleksis*.

RESOLUTION

Spiritual transformation: *Epistrophe*

Jane has to ask herself the big and complex question: "Was it a religious experience? I think anybody would say it was, though if you don't *believe* in religion, oh God, it's a hard thing to understand." Let's look at some of the other comments she makes in discussing the religiousness of the experience. On being scared because suddenly everything mattered, she says: "That's why I say it was a bit like a religious conversion, because it was, it did feel vulnerable. And when they say in religious settings, 'born again' and things like that, the main feeling I remember of that is of immense vulnerability. Of being someone with very soft skin, or no… And as if I would have to learn how to *be…*" Whether the experience is to be appraised as religious remains an open question. She cannot think of a better word to describe the experience, yet she will not accept any belief-structure. "I really waiver between whether I believe in God or don't believe in God…. I don't believe in Someone… I think there are underlying patterns of goodness and wholeness, and connectivity." The next comment may be taken as support for Fowler's distinction between faith and belief: "I definitely believe something, I just don't know what it is"; "I don't think it's still a Christian, it's a believer." This leads her to formulate the following question, "What happens to religious experience if culturally you don't believe in God?" Jane specifically says that she thinks a central aspect of George Eliot's project was to work out the implications of this problem. This paradoxical notion of 'to believe' as an intransitive verb, is in my view an expression of Fowler's Conjunctive Faith.

Jane then goes on to read about the Rule of Necessity, of the need to bow to a larger Will. There is a connection here to what she says about teaching Herbert: "trying to take people to understand what *Lord* means in that poem, if you don't believe in God; well, it means *necessity* or the *truth* or *reality*." God is equated with the supreme value. Is this a non-religious conversion or a non-conversional religious experience? According to A. D. Nock's classic study of conversion, religious conversions bring about "a reorientation of the soul of an individual,

his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right."[28] It is true to say that Jane relates a reorientation of the soul and a deliberate turning from the initial framework of indifference and the second framework of atheism. However, there is no condemning of her previous life and no conviction that she has any right beliefs. In his study of narratives of conversion, Gerald Peters finds that the notion of the reorientation of the soul "comes directly from the Greek *epistrophê*, the word coined by Plato as the goal of a philosophical education and the term adopted by early Christians for conversion."[29] Perhaps we could use the term *epistrophe* to designate this conversion into a non-believing reorientation to truth. I think it is fair to say that she experiences the event as a form of spiritual transformation - "the book made me realise that there is a spiritual dimension to life" - from being an atheist to a non-Christian believer. It is a position that is difficult to articulate, possibly because it is no position. It is "as if" it was a religious conversion: She can enter into that way of thinking, explore it and compare it. It is as if it is the Container without the content of a religious experience. Jane's experience of a self-surrender to the Rule of Necessity, without knowing what this is or what it leads to, comes close what William James saw as the essence of the religious experience: surrender to something greater than oneself, despite the fear of not knowing what this is or what it will entail. Elsewhere James states that "however particular questions connected with our individual destinies may be answered, it is only by acknowledging them as genuine questions, *and living in the sphere of thought which they open up*, that we become profound. But to live thus is to be religious (...)."[30] There are questions which we must not answer, but rather live in the sphere they open up. We live in the light cast by the questions. So here the religious is different from a professed faith-content of a conversion. We remain in the open, in a kind of negative capability. If we then understand her non-religious conversion as a spiritual transformation through metanoia, I think that we must include the discovery of Purpose in that process of metanoia.

The shape of a life: Purpose

> That which the unreligious man holds in his head merely, the religious man places out of and above himself as an object, and hence recognizes in himself the relation of a formal subordination. The religious

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[28] A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 7.

[29] Gerald Peters, *The Mutilating God: Authorship and Authority in the Narrative of Conversion* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).

[30] James, *Varities of Religious Experience,* 379.

man has an aim. Only activity with a purpose, which is the union of theoretic and practical activity, gives man a moral basis and support, i.e. character. Every man, therefore, must place before himself a God, i.e. an aim, a purpose. He who has an aim has a law over him; he does not merely guide himself; he is guided. He who has no aim, has no home, no sanctuary; aimlessness is the greatest unhappiness. An aim sets limits; but limits are the mentors of virtue. He who has an aim has a religion.

Thus says Feuerbach, in George Eliot's translation. The essence of religion is not a belief system, but the manifestation of a Purpose. Before we discuss the meaning of the Purpose, let us look at how it forms part of the shape of her story. Perhaps the most important and central evaluation Jane makes of her reading experience is the following:

> The book… *made* or *shaped* my life… The book made me realise that there is a spiritual dimension to life, and it made me see that you have life for a *purpose*, and you've got to find out what that purpose is, and then you've got to *do* it. So I think it has given me a very, very strong sense of purpose, and that purpose has *made* my life.

She says that it has been a transformation: from atheism into realising that there is a spiritual dimension to life, and that this spirituality takes the form of a purpose. I find the idea that life has a shape very interesting. What is the shape of Jane's life, as told in her story? Her narrative of life after *Shikasta* can be read as constituting two stories: the 17 years of assimilating the Big Bang; and "passing on the Big Bang" in the discovery of her purpose, Shared Reading. We could extend the cosmic metaphor in terms of the imagery of darkness and light, sleeping and waking: at first there is living in darkness, then the Big Bang happens: an explosion of light and energy that it takes a patient and faithful effort to integrate into an order (*religio*), then working to manifest the vision. Thus the shape is of a double journey, a double movement of *katabasis* and *anabasis*. The first movement is an inward turning in order to accommodate the revealed truth, marking a progressive going into the depths of her experience: "What I now think is that that whole period, that 15-17 year period, was assimilating… the Big Bang. And that was something to do with, I don't know what, whether that's… Well, anyway, it's your *inner* self, that's what was being made in that time." It is quite clear that Piaget's cognitive concept of accommodation can only partly account for this process. The inner self was being made. There is a turning inward, by means of the "prism" given to her by Shikasta, where both the Ph.D. and the writing of the novels form part of a laborious search for an essence, an answer to the implicit question of what does it imply that everything matters? The answer comes in the shape of the gradual unfolding of the Purpose, the Shared Reading, which points back to *Shikasta* as well as to her significant childhood memory. Thus, Shared Reading can be understood on two levels: Jane shares her reading experience by creating shared reading. The way for her to share with us

what she experienced in reading, is not to write about it, but to create the conditions for others to have a similar encounter. Is Shared Reading, then, not itself a form of "visionary realism": The social realism of countering lack of access to cultural heritage, the low levels of literacy, the receding importance of the classics, and the need to provide low cost mental health interventions?

Against the conventional view of *metanoia* as the lament for a missed opportunity, Myers recasts "metanoia as an active emotional state […] the affective dimension of *Kairos*. […] The experience of *metanoia* involves a transformation that can range from a minor change to a dramatic spiritual conversion."[31] Thus, *metanoia* may be more accurately translated as 'change of heart' than 'change of mind'. The New Testament *metanoia* calls for a (re-)turning of the soul to God. The meaning of an act of repentance that leads to spiritual conversion, so central to the concept in New Testament translation, may thus be said to be an afterthought to this afterthought: "Such reflection often brings an emotional response, such as the regret of a failed attempt or the guilt associated with a poor decision, but regret and guilt are only part of the overall experience of *metanoia.*"[32] Alan J. Torrance, drawing on Kierkegaard, differentiates *metanoia* from *anamnesis*: "Whereas anamnesis denotes the confirmation and ratification of the epistemic criteria immanently within us, metanoia denotes, by contrast, a profound transformation of the epistemic orientation of the whole person."[33] Edward J. Finlay uses the term metanoia to describe the "'turn' toward understanding characteristic of Plato's liberated cave dweller."[34] In this he accords with Pierre Hadot, who sees this turning of the whole body or soul as a reference to *metanoia*. The allegory of the cave gives us an interesting parallel to Jane's experience: going from a restricted and confined framework into the light of truth.

Andrea Wilson Nightingale argues that Plato sets his Allegory of the Cave against the background of a traditional *katabasis*, as the setting of the cave is explicitly underground.[35] In my view, however, its structure is clearly that of an *anabasis*: the trajectory is an ascent from

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[31] Myers, *Metanoia,* 2.

[32] Ibid., 8.

[33] Alan J. Torrance, "Auditus Fidei: Where and How Does God Speak? Faith, Reason and the Question of Criteria," in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith,* ed. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter (New York: T &T Clark, 2005), 38.

[34] Edward F. Findlay, *Caring for the Soul in the Postmodern Age: Politics and Phenomenology in the Thought of Jan Patocka* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 146.

[35] Andrea Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 102.

the cave into the light of day. As such, it may act as a central topos of both the Big Bang of the reading experience and its 17 year long expansion of the inner universe. Jane's dream is an anabasis, and we may say that the evolvement of Shared Reading represents an anabasis: it is built from the ground up, gradually expanding and gradually evolving into an organisation with a vision and supported by evidence-based research. The classical scholar Louden mentions Scipio's dream as an instance of anabasis, comparing it to Plato's allegory: "Like Plato's Allegory he demonstrates that what Scipio the Younger thinks of as life is really death, his soul imprisoned in his body, whereas death, when his soul will have infinite freedom, is really life."[36] Of course, the shape of the double movement of descent and ascent not only reflects Augustine's famous injunction "Descend that you may ascend," but also constitutes the very shape of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which Jane mentions as one of the books the prism of *Shikasta* refracted.

Myers argues that "metanoia requires that a person look back on past decisions in order to move in a new direction."[37] Thus, just as *Kairos* has the three aspects of propitious moment, crisis and opportunity for change, so *Metanoia* has the three aspects of retroactive meaning-making, a change of heart, and moving in a new direction to realise one's purpose. In light of this, the anabasis of the story of Shared Reading forms an integral part of the narrative of her reading experience. In the quote above about how her life has been shaped, she makes recourse to the word "purpose" four times:

> and it made me see that you have life for a *purpose*, and you've got to find out what that purpose is, and then you've got to *do* it. So I think it has given me a very, very strong sense of purpose, and that purpose has *made* my life.

There is a progression involved: first discovering the idea of purpose, then finding out what it is, then carrying it out. Doing so will make your life. For a deeper understanding of what this notion of purpose may mean, it may be useful to turn to Gabriel Marcel's philosophy of Vocation. In his rejection of all forms of –isms, Marcel endeavoured to understand what a person is meant to do with her life, which lead him to explore the concept of vocation.[38] For

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[36] Ibid., 218.

[37] Ibid., 11.

[38] In *Creative Fidelity*, Marcel, like Fowler and Richards, works to distinguish between two notions of belief. What Fowler would call "belief" and Richards "intellectual belief," Marcel terms "conviction": 'I believe that…': whereas for Marcel, "belief" means 'I believe *in*'. This belief is intersubjective. As such, it is close to

Marcel, says Terence Sweeney, "vocation opens us up to the reality that the human person is *homo viator*, a pilgrim and wayfarer." [39] To be such a *homo viator* "is to be in relation to the transcendent while living in the immanent world, a stance that emerges from a sense of having been called."[40] Each use of "purpose" in Jane's quoted words marks a different part of this journey.

Marcel opens his *Homo Viator* by stating that a person must be "acutely conscious that his condition is that of a traveler."[41] The initial step on the journey is one of "not-at-homeness." This is a state of captivity where one is restrained from "rising to a certain fullness of life."[42] This state is marked by an ontological exigency: the beginning of openness to the other and to vocation. In discovering that the self is restrained, one becomes able to respond to the call for fullness. This call may be ignored or misinterpreted (leading to a fall into ideology), or the self may open itself up to its vocation. For Marcel, vocation is more than and other than its common usages of religion or career. It has three interrelated aspects: the interior call, the callings of others, and the summons of the transcendent. It forms the centre of personhood and is unique to the individual. Yet it is intersubjective: it is a response to something that comes to us from outside and from above. Vocation "comes both from me and what comes from outside, a connection which is nourishing or constructive and cannot be relinquished."[43] It means to make oneself available to the other. Vocation is intersubjective: if it is reduced to an inner call, the self cannot reach fulfilment; it also involves a relationship with the transcendent. I think this sense of vocation touches on vital aspects of Jane's "strong sense of purpose." It is a call from within and from without: her childhood and her reading of *Shikasta* meets her deep wish that the underprivileged have access to the best that literature can offer, and it requires a deep faith to stake so much on such an enterprise. The double movement of the story, the *metanoia* of accommodating and integrating the Big Bang, and the discovery and manifestation of Purpose, both *turn upon* the experience of reading *Shikasta*. I therefore understand the term *epistrophe*

Fowler's "faith" and Richards' "emotional belief." See: Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity,* trans. Robert Rosthal (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

[39] Terence Sweeney, "Against Ideology: Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Vocation," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 16, no. 4 (2013): 179.

[40] Ibid., 179.

[41] Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: An Introduction to a Metaphysics of Hope* (South Bend, IN: St Augustine Press, 2010), 1.

[42] Ibid., 24.

[43] Ibid., 17.

to encompass both the non-religious conversion and the shape of the plot of Jane's life-narrative.

Summary

In my interpretation there are three aspects to Jane's *metanoia*. Retrospectively, she realises that she was "hungry" for spiritual nourishment as she had grown out of her "framework." The encounter with *Shikasta* happened at the right time. It necessitates a process of accommodation and a change of mind and heart. Her shocking recognition and the process of integrating the Big Bang may intuitively be interpreted as a sublime experience. In my view, it is a special kind of sublime experience marked by *ekplektic awe.* There is a need to reevaluate both her understanding of Lessing and her "framework" for perceiving life. This experience leads to a form of non-religious conversion that we may call *epistrophe.* When the experience is finally accommodated, Jane discovers her purpose and begins the anabatic process of its realisation. She says that reading *Shikasta* has *shaped* her life. Given that it has lead to a conversion experience and the search for, and unfolding of, a purpose, I understand Jane to have undergone a *metanoia*: a change of mind-set that leads to a re-evaluation of everything that has gone before, and a long process of accommodation of the new, before setting off in a new direction to realise one's purpose. The reading experience has precipitated a crisis, as Jane realised that "everything matters" and that this required commitment to a new way of living. The narrating I can retrospectively identify a moment of *kairos*, when *Shikasta* and her life came together: *Shikasta* enacts a transport from one worldview to another, a *metaballein* from darkness to light; Jane has outlived her framework and has a readiness for change. Hadot remarks of the Stoic view of life and the Law of Necessity:

> This is a complete reversal of the usual way of looking at things. We move from a 'human' vision of reality, in which our value judgments depend on social conventions and on our passions, to a 'natural' or 'physical vision of things, which resituates each event within the perspective of nature and universal Reason.[44]

The enactment of such a reversal constitutes in my view the essence of the *hypsos* of Lessing's novel. In Jane's mode of engagement with it, I interpret the *wows* and *huhs* as marking an immediate *metaballein*, where Jane's worldview is turned upside-down – evidenced by her big dream, the "view from above." On the other hand, the *mmms* I understand as a slow

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[44] Hadot, "Stoics," *What is Ancient Philosophy?,* 133.

contemplative mulling over of its implications, a digestion of the truth revealed in and through *Shikasta*. As such, Jane is practicing a form of *lectio divina,* a metabolic mode of engagement. Jane's disruptive experience, as she is taken out of her "framework," is a form of *ekplektic ekstasis.* As Jane surrenders to this experience, and is deeply affected by it, she experiences awe. The process of accommodating this vast vision takes many years. Her paradoxical form of conversion into what Fowler conceives of as "conjunctive faith" may be termed *epistrophe.* This term also signifies the shape of her life-story: it turns upon the *Shikasta* experience. Perhaps we can sum up Jane's reading experience by referring to a remark made by Nock in relation to Augustine's conversion: "it is like a chemical process in which the addition of a catalytic agent produces a reaction for which all the elements were already present."[45]

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[45] Nock, *Conversion*, 266.

Interpretation of Sue's Story: *Re-membering the Body's Song*

Introduction

Of the six reading experiences presented this is the only one to originally have unfolded in a group setting. Moreover, the first time I learned of Sue's experience was in a similar group. Sue read an extract from the poem before telling us that the encounter with Arnold's poem had been a breakthrough moment for her. I think everyone there could directly sense the experiential truth of what she said; she was indeed "full of feeling." Therefore Sue's tone sounded more elegiac than apologetic when she initiated our dialogue by lamenting that "it's a shame that the tape wasn't on then, really"; although she could not recall *what* she had said then, only *how* she had felt. In fact, she did not tell us much about her experience - only that it had been a major breakthrough for her and that she had been coming out of a depression. Her experience of *The Buried Life* being about a moment of shared feeling, I understood Sue to be concerned lest she no longer may speak from *within* the experience, but be restricted to talking *about* it. Not only did she feel that her experience was difficult to convey in words, but that she had already shared its truth with me beforehand. Furthermore, I took her to imply that successfully relating her experience to me would depend on a moment of meeting occurring between *us*, in our dialogue. So I invited her to read the poem for me again, in its entirety. I do believe that her fullness of feeling was revived in our meeting.

In his phenomenological investigation of subjective experience that leads to change, Daniel Stern suggests that conscious present moments be divided into three different kinds. The first kind is the regular, ordinary present moment. Secondly, there is the *now moment*. This is a present moment that "suddenly pops up and is highly charged with immediately impending consequences."[1] Thirdly, there is a *moment of meeting:* "This is a present moment in which the two parties achieve an intersubjective meeting" and each becomes aware of the other's experiencing. They share a sufficiently similar mental landscape so that a sense of 'specific fittedness' is achieved."[2] These moments of meeting usually follow immediately upon now

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[1] Daniel N. Stern, *The Present Moment in Psychotherapy and Everyday Life* (New York: WW Norton, 2004), 151. I assume that this understanding of the present moment closely resembles the common conception of the epiphanic. Stern himself refers to it, somewhat misleadingly, as kairos.

[2] Ibid., 151. Stern's basic assumption is that "change is based on lived experience. In and of itself, verbally understanding, explaining or narrating something is not sufficient to bring about change. There must also be an actual experience, a subjectively lived happening." (xiii). I concur with his view.

moments, and, argues Stern, constitute "the key moments of change in psychotherapy."[3] Stern gives two pertinent examples of potential moments of meeting that resemble those in *The Buried Life*: "looking at someone in the eyes who is looking at you, and taking a deep breath while talking to someone."[4] Significantly, Stern emphasises that the present moment is "hard to grasp because we so often quickly jump out of the present ongoing experience to take the objective, third-person viewpoint. We try to seize what we have just experienced by putting it into words or images in the moment after. These attempts at introspection appear to objectify the experience."[5]

My interpretation revolves around several such moments of meeting: Sue and *The Buried Life;* Sue and I in dialogue; my own reading of the poem; and my understanding of her story. I will first attempt to understand the essence of her crisis, before interpreting her reading experience. I will look into her description of how she was affected, and the lines in the poem she said was most important to her. In my view, her affective realisation is a form of *eparetic ekstasis:* she is *lifted up* in the encounter with the poem. This leads to an *anamnesis*: re-membering a forgotten part of the lived body. I will argue that Sue's mode of engagement with the poem can be termed a *synesis*, an interaffective attunement that opens up contact with a deep source of vitality. Because this experience transforms Sue's entire understanding of what poetry is and how it has changed the course of her life, I think her story can be called an Epiphany.

CRISIS

What Sue tells us about her depression

What does Sue tell us about the circumstances and experience of her crisis? Firstly, here is how she configures its trajectory:

> "I had come here because I'd gotten into quite a severe depression. I almost needed to shock myself out of it, so I gave up my job and just, you know, came over."
>
> "I'll either finish my life now, or I will give this a go… because nothing can be worse than it is now."
> "But actually, the amount of energy it takes and effort it takes to create a life, it was like the shock I

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[3] Ibid., xi.

[4] Ibid., xv.

[5] Ibid., 33.

needed. It was a very helpful thing, to have to struggle so hard in a strange place… I would have sunk otherwise."

"I think my life was already on a sort of upward trajectory by the time I read it."

"I was still really in this depression, actually, and it took probably about a year of being here before it really lifted properly. Something about this poem connected in with that in some way. I'm not quite sure how, but it just felt so enlivening…" She goes on to state that "it was like [the poem] broke through all of that."

She points towards two distinct turns in her upward trajectory: the relocation process and the encounter with Arnold's poem. Moreover, she gives this account of the experience of being depressed:

"with a depression it's like everything is <u>dampened</u>, and there is this <u>weight</u> on you, and it's hard to have anything that really excites you, so I felt this excited me."

"A lot of the time I did feel like I was <u>wading through treacle</u>, it was so <u>hard to have forward motion</u>."

This is a very rudimentary description of depression, although familiar from other phenomenological descriptions (in which terms such as "numbness" are prevalent).[6] It does tell us, however, that there is a strong somatic component, a visceral-kinetic dimension to the experience. Her description of the depression is concentrated around metaphors of heaviness, dullness and thick liquid. "Dampening" means that something is dull and has lost its force. It also signifies something moistening – Sue additionally uses the metaphor of "wading through treacle" – a dark and thick liquid which is hard to stir. The weight on her also signifies inertia. I get the sense that she is buried under something dense and heavy, and cannot move or breathe. It is pertinent that when relating the anecdote about the woman in prison, Sue says she was "blocking" at first, contrasting this with her own experience where she "didn't feel any inclination to block it." 'Block' means an obstacle, made of solid material. Etymologically it is connected to the trunk of a tree. So in depression one is under the weight of a block, and one blocks out experiencing. Similarly, the verb 'to bury' may mean both 'interring' and 'protecting'. The poem breaks through this block, creating excitement and bringing new life; "A lost pulse of feeling stirs again."

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[6] Interestingly, Veronica in describing her depression also speaks of a weight on her chest.

Despair and despondency

Sue does not expound on the reasons for her severe depression, nor elaborate its aspects. But she does say that the poem addresses "problems," "concerns," that she has had for most of her life. From what she does indicate, it can be surmised that these concerns are of how to communicate with loved ones, how to be authentic and how to access a deeper part of herself – and therefore that her depression is connected to perceived difficulties with these concerns. This inner conflict is symbolised as being set apart from her closest friends by not sharing their love of poetry. However, the depression may well be rooted in factors not to do with external circumstances, and not to be understood only in psychological terms.

Depression is now one of the principal causes of functional impairment worldwide and considered a major threat to public health.[7] However, there exists no precise definition or unitary conceptualisation of the condition, nor agreement on remission criteria. According to Nesse, there are different theories as to its function: "Is depression an adaptation, an adaptation gone awry, or a pathological state unrelated to any function?"[8] But this question springs from a view of depression as primarily characterised by low mood and pessimism. If depression is defined as "a significant lowering of mood, with or without feelings of guilt, hopelessness and helplessness, or a drop in self-esteem," then it may be overdiagnosed; for depression goes beyond misery and distress, argues Gordon Parker.[9] In their investigation of the taxonicity of depression, Beach and Amir found that any test should also "tap multiple vegetative signs," because of the prominence of somatic symptoms in diagnoses of depression (disturbance of sleep, appetite, sexuality, weight and other basic homeostatic processes). They argue that focus on somaticity "dovetails with recent evolutionary theorizing about depression."[10] Transcultural studies such as a major WHO comparison study show that the core syndrome of depression is not primarily emotional/psychological, but rather "loss of vitality, appetite and drive, fatigue, sleep disturbances, and various somatic complaints such as feelings of pain, burning, tension,

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[7] Harvey A. Whiteford, Louisa Degenhardt, Jürgen Rehm, Amanda J. Baxter, Alice J. Ferrari, Holly E. Erskine, Fiona J. Charlson, Rosana E. Norman, Abraham D. Flaxman, Nicole Johns, Roy Burstein, Cristopher J. L. Murray, and Theo Vos, "Global burden of disease attributable to mental and substance use disorders: Findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010," *The Lancet* 382, no. 9904 (2013): 1575-86.

[8] Randolph M. Nesse, "Is Depression an Adaptation?," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 57, no. 1 (2000): 14.

[9] Gordon Parker, "Is Depression overdiagnosed?" *BMJ* 335, no. 7615 (2005): 328.

[10] Stephen R.H. Beach, and Nadir Amir, "Is Depression Taxonic, Dimensional or Both?," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 112, no. 2 (2003): 228.

numbness, or heaviness are overall much more frequent than depressive mood."[11] Thus, we see that depression comprises two aspects of lived experience: emotions and cognitions on the one hand, vegetative-somatic factors on the other. Sometimes one or other is prevalent, at other times both, as in a severe depression. These dimensional differences can already be found reflected in the affective terms of our language. Perhaps one could say that a minor depression is characterised by *despair*, the loss of hope (low mood etc.); a major depression by *despondency*, the loss of heart – understood as both vitality and meaning.

In their article "Embodied affectivity: on moving and being moved," Thomas Fuchs and Sabine C. Koch elaborates a model of *interaffectivity*, which is "regarded as an intertwinement of two cycles of embodied affectivity, thus continuously modifying each partner's affective affordances and bodily resonance."[12] They emphasise that

> a lack or loss of bodily affectability is characteristic of severe *depression*. The constriction, rigidity and missing tension-flow modulation of the lived body in depression leads to a general emotional numbness and finally to affective depersonalization. […] The deeper the depression, the more the affective qualities and atmospheres of the environment fade. The patients are no longer capable of being moved and affected by things, situations or other persons. They complain of a painful indifference, a 'feeling of not feeling' and of not being able to sympathise with their relatives anymore.[13]

Thus, the depressed person comes to feel disconnected from the world, and lose their participation in the interaffective space that we normally share with others.[14]

Remission

Martin Baker argues that there is considerable variability in the specific characteristics that are accepted as indicators of remission. According to Whiteford et al., remission can be defined as "rescinded diagnoses or below threshold scores on standardised symptom messages,"[15]

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[11] See Thomas Fuchs, "Depression, Intercorporeality, and Interaffectivity," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 20, no. 7-8 (2013): 220.

[12] Thomas Fuchs, and Sabine C. Cock, "Embodied Affectivity: on moving and being Moved," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, no. 508 (2014): 1.

[13] Ibid., 7.

[14] Fuchs, "Depression, Intercorporeality, and Interaffectivity," 219-38.

[15] Harvey A. Whiteford, M.G. Harris, G. McKeon, A. Baxter, C. Pennell, J.J. Barendregt, and J. Want, "Estimating remission from untreated major depression: a systematic review and meta-analysis," *Psychological Medicine*, 43 (2013): 1569.

concluding that there is a high rate of spontaneous recovery as "just over half of those with a major depressive episode will remit within a year without intervention."[16] Zimmerman et al. maintain the importance of taking the depressed person's perspective on what constitutes remission. Hence they found that a return to normal functioning and relief from symptoms was not deemed sufficient by the patients themselves, as they pointed to positive markers of new growth: "patients indicated that the presence of positive features of mental health such as optimism, vigour and self-confidence was a better indicator of remission than the absence of the symptoms of depression."[17]

Deciding to move, mustering energy and resources to find a new home and occupation, does this not constitute recovery from depression? Had remission not been achieved before the reading experience? What we may conjecture is that any functional impairment had been overcome prior to the reading experience. But affective impairment remains as a felt lack of vitality. In their research on embodiment experiences in depression, Danielsson and Rosberg found that at the core of participants' struggle was an "ambivalent striving against fading": on the one hand resisting urges to withdraw from life, on the other yielding to the need for a pause. The body-feeling was marked by numbness and a sense of confinement, estrangement and heaviness.[18] The ambivalent striving is echoed in Sue's story. She managed to avoid such withdrawal; by uprooting she in a sense overrode the other need of delving into the feelings. In a study exploring lived experiences of basic body awareness therapy, Danielsson and Rosberg found that treatment resulted in an "opening towards life" that was characterised by "vitality springing forth, […] recognising patterns in one's body, and grasping the vagueness."[19] Thus it seems that uprooting signalled the conquering of the fading pull, whereas the enlivening and energising reading brought about an opening where vitality could spring forth.

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[16] Ibid., 1582.

[17] Mark Zimmerman, Joseph B. McGlinchey, Michael A. Posternak, Michael Friedman, Naureen Attiullah, and Daniela Boerescu, "How should remission from depression be defined? The depressed patient's perspective," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 163, no .1 (2006): 150.

[18] Louise Danielsson, and Susanne Rosberg, "Depression embodied: An ambiguous striving against fading," *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences* 29, no. 3 (2015): 501-09.

[19] Louise Danielsson, and Susanne Rosberg, "Opening toward Life: Experiences of basic body awareness therapy in persons with major depression," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being* 10, no. 1 (2015): 1-13.

In her deeper wisdom Sue devises a radical cure for her depression: uprooting and relocating, thus having to deal with the bare necessities of subsistence. She leaves her whole life behind because it must somehow have become meaningless to her. And by struggling to establish herself in London, she is forced to deal with basic practicalities in order to get by, thus removing herself from the objects of rumination and preventing herself from opportunities for ruminating, allowing her to return to normal functioning. But if recovering from depression is regarded dialectically, then this is a necessary but not sufficient step for her. For it is not just a question of *getting out of* a depression, but also of *getting into* the experience of vitality and the creation of meaning. Hence, when Sue in her appraisal regards these two steps, uprooting and relocating, as life-saving, she implies that they rescued her because they prevented her from sinking. They kept her afloat. But if there is a part of saving that is about *more* than being rescued, to do with experiencing the lived body "singing with" meaning, then perhaps one could say that the poem saved her still. By taking care of what was necessary, she opens herself up to grace and possibility. Her *problem* is already solved by the time she encounters the poem. She will not sink, she is standing on *terra firma*, saved from the *naufrago*. I think it is rather clear from Sue's response that her understanding of being saved is that it means being *rescued,* averting the existential danger. But salvation has an additional meaning of getting into contact with a source of vitality, nourishment and meaning, which, when one shares it with other people, only increases. A depression can be turned into a solvable problem: apply psychopharmaka to repair a neurochemical balance, counter ruminative cognition, take pro-active measures to remedy the situation. But a crisis is more than, other than, a problem to be solved. It calls not only for activity, but for passivity. "I don't know, something about this poem connected in with that in some way. I'm not quite sure how. But it just felt so enlivening. […] I felt this excited me. It was like this broke through all of that." She says that the reading of the poem not only coincided with the end of her depression, but that it is connected to it because it enlivened her. I understand her "I don't know" to mean that she cannot objectively know that the poem caused the end of the depression; perhaps it would have lifted in time anyway, without it. However, what she does know is that after having read it, she has been uplifted and lifted up. We may regard her way out of depression as consisting of three phases: First, she *lifts herself* out of her depression by uprooting, and secondly, she has to struggle to find the job. Then, in the third and final phase her depression *is lifted* as the poem breaks through the dampening, the weight of the depression, and *lifts her up*. Will and grace both play their part.

TRANSACTION WITH THE LITERARY WORK

Impact

After providing a brief orientation section, describing where and when she first read the poem, Sue says that from the moment the first part of the poem was read out loud, she had "a strong, strong feeling for it." She says she was immediately "captivated." Now, she probably only uses this word in the sense that the poem completely took hold of her attention, but the use of the word "captivated" is noteworthy, in lieu of the importance of the anecdote of the Woman in Prison – through which much of Sue's reading experience is refracted. To be captivated also means to be held prisoner. The woman in prison refuses to be captivated by poetry, until finally The Bluebird manages to hatch an opening in her block. By allowing herself to be captivated, she is released.

As Sue emphasises several times, the "impact" has two principal components: She "felt that I completely understood the experience that he was writing of," and she experienced a transvaluation of poetry itself: "suddenly I was awake to this possibility of what poetry might do." Sue says: "I did feel a bit shocked." But does she mean shocked over her own reaction to the poem or over her discovery of poetry's value? It is fair to say that it was both, her response is a composite of the two. I will discuss each of these aspects in turn, beginning with the experience that Arnold writes about, before moving on to her discovery of the value of poetry.

Sue uses the word 'impact' several times. This may simply reflect the fact that she has been, and is, working in a context where the discourse of medicine and its emphasis on evidence-based treatments is prevalent. Here, 'impact' merely signifies the measurable effect that an intervention has on a given problematic state of affairs. The notion of impact comes from physics, where it designates the pressure exercised by one body upon another at the moment of collision. The forceful impression the poem makes is felt bodily; it is an affection. Eric Méchoulan, in an article critiquing the current discourse in which "impact" is used to mean measurable effect, points out that it was Coleridge who first introduced this as a figurative term meaning 'forceful impression'. In his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge maintains that "in any given perception there is a something which has been communicated to it [the mind] by an impact, or an impression *ab extra*." According to Méchoulan, Coleridge intends to "stress the

unintelligibility of that 'something' that has been communicated to the mind by the senses."[20] Thus, it is an affective figure, denoting the felt force of an influence that cannot be rationally comprehended, yet has significance, in its insistence on being suffered or experienced. Thus, something can have a significant effect without having much impact. For instance, I can take a medicine that is very effective, and within days I am much better and back to normal, without really reflecting on what happened to me. In this sense it did not have much impact, it did not leave a forceful impression and it is not incumbent on me to make meaning of the experience.

In her elaboration on the nature of this impact, Sue employs images grounded in physics and music. She introduces the anecdote of the Woman in Prison to illustrate a truth she has discovered: there is a poem for everyone – an encounter in which "everything sort of fits." When you encounter such a poem "you can't hold yourself back" - it becomes impossible to "block" the experience. The Woman in Prison serves a two-fold function: it is a way of illustrating her own experience, and it also symbolises the essence of her purpose: to share this life-enhancing experience with other people. It is crucial to note that when describing the breaking through to the buried part of herself, Sue does so in reference to sharing the experience with others, and she uses the metaphors of resonance, attunement and striking a chord. In his phenomenological understanding of depression as a disturbance of intercorporeality and interaffectivity, Fuchs analyses "depression as a 'detunement' of the resonant body that mediates our participation in a shared affective space. Instead of expressing the self, the body is turned into a barrier to all impulses directed to the environment"[21] (my emphasis). The matching metaphors of Sue's description and Fuch's intercorporeality-theory also find their resonance in the themes, movements and images of the poem itself.

Let us look more closely at her metaphoric field of resonance - attunement – accordance. Attunement is an important theme in her story: elsewhere she speaks of poems being "tuned in", "they're the right tune for you"; she speaks of "tuning into" another person; of being "tuned into" poetry; of having "tuned into" a deeper way of knowing. A frequently recurring verb is 'to resonate'. This is originally an acoustic term, meaning 'prolongation of sound by reverberation'. The literal sense of 'sound again' later took on the figurative sense of pertaining to feelings and emotions. The verb has entered common parlance and does not therefore seem to be a reflective choice, but when repeated so many times and occurring in conjunction with

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[20] Éric Méchoulan, "Impacting the University: An archeology of the Future," trans. Roxanne Lapidus, *SubStance* 42, no. 1 (issue 130) (2013): 8.

[21] Fuchs, "Depression, Intercorporeality, and Interaffectivity," 219.

several musical metaphors, itself begins to *resonate*. A resonator is an 'instrument or chamber formed to respond to a single tone'. In the field of affective neuroscience, the physics-derived concept of resonance has become a root metaphor: "Physicists speak of resonance as a sympathetic vibration between two elements that allows these elements to suddenly synchronise signals and act in a new harmony"; resonance accordingly becomes a root metaphor for intersubjectivity: "There is a correspondence, a flow that is beyond empathy and [is] the source of a deep intimacy" in which two persons are attuned to one another mentally and emotionally.[22]

When striving to articulate the kind of change that being moved by a poem creates, Sue says that "it helps you access some part of yourself that […] has been a bit buried." Then, elaborating on what it is that has been buried, she finds that she is "struggling to find the right kind of metaphor." Implicitly, only metaphoric language can approach and illuminate this feeling, precisely because it has been buried outside verbal consciousness. She is searching for the right words that *resonate* with her felt sense:

> Sue: You know, a bit that's unknown, or kind of… *un-resonated*. That hasn't been… the strings haven't been played, or something – like a sort of instrument that's not been used fully, so… Well, I don't know if that's the right metaphor – I am struggling to find the right metaphor, really. (Pause).
>
> Thor: You said "unresonated"?
>
> Sue: Mmm, some sort of deeply – or, because what it feels like is that, when that happens, you – even if you don't tell anyone else, it's like you can't *not* experience it if you get a piece of writing that does that to you - you're just going to … you're whole being is going to … *sing* with it.

The first one she hits on is "unresonated": "a bit that's unknown, or kind of … un-resonated." The pauses are places where real thinking is going on, as if she is trying to *excavate* something buried deep. Then she digs further: "That hasn't been… the strings haven't been played, or something – like a sort of instrument that's not been used fully." It is a string instrument, perhaps like a lyre. But she does not feel quite satisfied that this hits the mark. She goes back to 'resonating' again, eventually locating a more fitting metaphor: "You're just going to, your whole being is going to… *sing* with it." The emphasis placed on sing indicates two things: she has found the right word and she is now experiencing that feeling as she says it. She does not merely say "sing", she says "sing with"; does she mean sing along? She does not say that the body is going to sing along to the music of the poem. I think "sing with" must be taken to mean that the body sings with the knowledge that something has opened up, and that it sings from

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[22] Susan Johnson, "Extravagant Emotion," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice*, ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel and Marion F. Solomon (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 273.

and about this knowledge. She stays within the same metaphoric field, moving from resonance to accessing a string instrument to singing, not just with the voice but with the entire body. The way the poem creates resonance is that your whole body sings with it, and when this happens you uncover a hidden or forgotten instrument inside, whose strings you can now begin to play. Thus resonance is a sounding back and forth: she as reader must be attuned, tuned into, the poem. The lyric makes the body sing in response, and this singing puts her in contact with a buried part that is itself like an unplayed lyre.

In our shared reading of this poem, much of the reflection revolved around the two lines that Sue deemed to be of greatest importance to her, and which may be said to represent two crystallising moments in her reading experience:

1   But hardly have we, for one little hour,

     Been on our own line, have we been ourselves –

2   A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast

To be on one's own line and the bolt shot back

Initially, it seems rather puzzling that Sue regards "being on one's own line" as having "even more impact" than "the bolt shot back." Why would she do so, when the sum of her statements point to the latter constituting the essence of her experience? As far as I understand her, the breakthrough moment happens at "the bolt shot back." "But hardly have we … Been on our own line" is connected to "Hardly had skill to utter one of all the nameless feelings"; they go to the core of our predicament: we cannot speak our hidden self and we cannot be our own true self. Why would the 'crisis formulation' - our inability to be our genuine, authentic self and to communicate the truth - be seen as more important than the moment of its resolution, when the hidden is opened up or let out?

Of the first line, Sue remarks: "I mean he is quite hard on; I'm not entirely sure that's true for me, but there's something about the being authentic, you know, being who you really are. And I think that has been quite a big thing for me in my life […]" She does not completely subscribe to his expression, finding perhaps that he exaggerates. Yet at the same time it is precisely this utterance that allows the full force of recognition of the supreme importance she has always attached to being authentic. In the poem's reiteration of this theme, Sue finds

reflected her inner drama of struggling for authenticity and intimacy. This line validates both the reality of her depression and the deeper reason for it: being true to herself and at the same time true to the other is difficult for her. Sue reiterates her reservation: "Unless I'm not understanding what he's meaning entirely, it's not like I entirely agree with it." And still it was for her the most important *line* in the poem, the one "that stuck out the most to me." To stick out: easily noticed, but also going over the edge of something. If you are on your own line, you are bound to stick out. And you may get stuck there, unable to connect to other lines. The past form of 'to stick' is stuck. To be depressed is to be stuck: buried under a heavy load, or stuck in an immobile treacle. It is a peculiarity that Arnold uses the rhetorical "we" here. This "we" threatens to disintegrate, so that the reader may think: he is exaggerating, I am not part of that We. In order for the poem to succeed, the reader must participate in this we. It can be difficult to admit that we have not been ourselves. But Arnold manages to weave a we *into* the very fabric of these lines. When we look at the resonant prosody that runs through these lines: "But hardly have we, for one little hour, / Been on our own line, have we been ourselves –", we find that there are several internal phonetic repetitions: ha-ha-ha, ly-we, been-line, one-on-own, hour-our as well as the repetition of clauses: "have we been on our own line" and "have we been ourselves". Thus the lines come to have suggestive force for the reader, who is as yet reluctant to *embody* Arnold's great claim. My interpretation is that this thought, which resonates so deeply with Sue - "hardly have we been on our own line" - keeps reverberating through the rest of the reading, until, when the bolt is shot back, it unlocks her heart and she comes to know both the hills where her life rose, the connection with the source of vitality, and the sea where it goes, the sharing of the source of vitality with others.

What does Sue says about "the bolt shot back"? The first time she quotes it is in reference to the truth she discovered in relation to the woman in prison. It has become a metaphor for the discovery of the person's greatest need, of how to get past someone's defenses and unlock their heart. This is how Sue proceeds to meditate upon the line:

> Yes. A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast. *Bolt. Shot. Back.* I've never fully understood what a bolt shot back means, but it sounds so… *right*. I think it's like… I imagine it to be a shock, a shocking awakening. Like an aha-moment, a sitting up moment. Or a… it was like a bolt was shot back somewhere in *my* breast.

She "tastes" each word; three monosyllabic words that all may either be verbs or nouns. The [o] sound is carried over into the next word, and subsequently the [b] is repeated: b – o – o – b, creating almost a chiasmus, and a resonating, reverberating sound awaiting the end of the line's

'breast'. As if a lightning bolt is followed by shots of thunder. The bolted vault that was shut is now violently, suddenly, forced ajar. Sue is looking for the right figurative meaning, first alighting on shock, then elaborating on this by turning shock into adjective. Next she states that it is like an aha-moment, and sets off to nuance this before halting, pausing and eventually saying that it is what it is, and she experienced it in her own breast. She repeats by emphasising each word, as if they were three successive hammer blows, or a reverberating echo. When she says she doesn't fully understand it, she must mean that its figurative meaning is equivocal. She uses the present tense: it *is* almost like a shock – it is unclear here whether she is describing the figurative meaning of the phrase, or her own experience. But finally, she moves from working out what it may mean to saying that she experienced it literally, on her body, as impact. There are three stages to this movement: it is sounded; it is imagined; it is internalised. The bolt shooting back is the affective component, in the light of which she realises what "hardly have we been on our own line" means for her. She has struggled all her life to be on her own line, to be authentic, to be herself, to be in contact with an inner source of meaning, and at the same time create authentic intimate relationships. The speaker spends the greater part of the time expounding on the cause, nature and consequences of our predicament, and only briefly touches on the event of becoming "aware of one's life's flow." For the realisation to *strike*, so that the bolt really *shoots* back and impacts deeply upon us, the ground must have been thoroughly prepared. We must come to deeply inhabit the diagnosis of our situation, we must feel the full force of the "hardly," in order to feel fully the sudden transition from the "buts" to the "bolt," so that it does not only remain a claim, a proposition, but becomes a fully embodied truth. And the truth works backwards, the bolt is shot *back*: the result of the lost pulse of feeling stirring again. Sue is made aware of her life's flow; she no longer needs to struggle, she *is* on her own line because this is the very same line that connects us deeply, the resonating chord, when we mutually attune to one another. For such a bolt to have *impact*, the reader must have been brought to a deep state of tranquil alertness. It is as if reading this long poem in a group has brought Sue into such a deep, contemplative rest where her "eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain." This is a physiological process, where the heart rhythm slows down, and the mind quietens, and the eyes moisten.

Incidentally, the word 'hardly', used twice in the poem and contained within what constitutes for Sue the most important line - although paradoxically she also regards it as hyperbolic - etymologically has passed through a three-step downwards trajectory that seems to imitate that of depression itself. Initially, it meant 'in a hard manner, with great exertion and

effort', then via the intermediate meaning of 'not easily, with trouble' has come to mean 'barely, just'. [23]   It is worth bearing in mind that the word 'depression' literally means a pressing down on. As if the flow between *impressivity* (ability to open up towards the world, vitality) and *expressivity* (capacity to communicate to others what one is feeling) is restricted, thus signifying both de-impressivity and de-expressivity. And perhaps the poem describes both problems: the inability to express one's true feelings, and the incapacity to establish a channel where the stream of vitality can in-flux the psyche. For there are two principal threads or streams of metaphors coursing through the poem. We have one thread consisting of *constrictions*: *locked* (unlock the heart), *chained* (lips unchained), *bolted* (bolt shot back); another one that represents *movement*: *stream, eddying, flow, current, coursing, rolling, gliding,* as in the "unregarded river of our life pursue with indiscernible flow its way." Fate has buried this stream in order to protect us from ourselves, so that we are forced to obey our "being's law." In the "din of strife" it seems that we inevitably have to lock our hearts. We are cut off from a source, a stream, of vitality. That this life is *buried*, may signify two different things: That a part of us is dead and interred, or that it is being sheltered and protected, and thus recoverable.

How may we "become aware of our life's flow"? How can we inquire in to the mystery of our heart? This is not possible through introspection, or by digging through layers of psychic material in self-analysis: "And many a man in his own breast then delves, But deep enough, alas, none ever mines." No action can bring us into contact with the buried life, nor can discursive communication do so: "And long we try in vain to speak and act Our hidden self." How, then? It seems to be that only after we have given up on this inward striving may we allow something to happen. Only when we realise that it is not through activity, but through passivity, that the "lost pulse of feeling" may "stir again." In the attentive togetherness, through the attunement attained of holding hands and looking deeply into each other's eyes, through the resonance created when we let ourselves be caressed by the tone of the other's voice, will the heart unlock. Only in this "unwonted calm" can we sense the flow. Why is this deep resting such a "flying and elusive shadow"?

Daniel Stern, in his research in developmental psychology on affect attunement, says that the affect that emerges in the course of joyous play between mother and infant may not be

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[23] See https://www.etymonline.com/: c. 1200, "in a hard manner, with great exertion or effort," from Old English *heardlice* "sternly, severely, harshly; bravely; excessively" (see *hard* (adj.) + *-ly* (2)). Hence "assuredly, certainly" (early 14c.). Main modern sense of "barely, just" (1540s) reverses this, via the intermediate meaning "not easily, with trouble" (early 15c.). Formerly with superficial negative (*not hardly*). Similar formation iOld Saxon *hardliko*, German *härtlich*, Old Danish *haardelig*.

divided and collocated in one or the other.[24] Rather, it springs up from the 'in-between', or from the encompassing process in which the two are immersed – giving rise to what Stern terms 'vitality affects' or 'vitality contours'. These shared states are experienced through interbodily affection.[25] We gather that contemplation is not introspection, but rather a form of 'trans-spection': by looking through the other's eyes, resting in the presence of the other, may we read our own soul. The soul is not 'in there', but 'between' and 'around' us. Fuchs, in his discussion of intercorporeality, maintains that in other cultures there is less of a tendency to regard affective experiences as intra-psychic, "but rather as bodily, expressive, interpersonal, or even atmospheric processes."[26] He argues that mutual bodily resonance "mediated by posture, facial, gestural, and vocal expression, engenders our attunement to others."[27]

How are we to understand the poem's ending: "And then he thinks he knows /The hills where his life rose, And the sea where it goes"? Does Arnold mean that this knowledge is an illusion - man only thinks that he knows, whereas in actual fact he does not? That would undercut the entire thrust of the poem's movement, however. It is not a knowledge that can be grasped, held on to, turned into propositions. It borders on the ineffable. What does "think" mean here? We cannot truly know "Whence our lives come and where they go." But the thinking one does in this state, in this intersubjective matrix, is different from the discursive, rational thinking and introspection one normally engages in; this is of course the central tenet of the whole poem. The poem lays claim to a deeper and different form of thinking, taking place in the imaginative space opened up by the emphasis on "and *then*." A thinking that happens beyond the verbal, in a moment of meeting: in this paradoxical still and resting flow imagination is opened up. He cannot know, and neither does he assume that he knows – and yet, it is *as if* he knows. In contemplation we may feel that although we are far from the Stream, it is near to us. It is quite clear that the experience of temporality changes in this attunement. In this restive silence, time slows down, becomes an elongated moment with (vitality) contours and shapes: hills, river.

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[24] Daniel N. Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Human Infant: A View from Psychoanalysis and Developmental Psychology* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 132.

[25] Daniel N. Stern, *Forms of Vitality: Exploring Dynamic Experience in Psychology and the Arts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[26] Fuchs, "Depression, Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity," 221.

[27] Ibid., 222.

In their research into how the attention to bodily sensations and the cultivation of interoceptive, proprioceptive and kinaesthetic awareness can be understood, Schmalzl et al. remark that "dyadic contemplation is at the core of many Eastern movement-based systems." In such dyadic contemplation, "they enter a state of enhanced connectivity."[28] This state corresponds to what Siegel refers to as "resonance,"[29] and what Nummenmaa et al. term "synchronisation of brain activity,"[30] characterised by a sharing of affective and somatosensory experience that happens mainly automatically. They find that this state involves a simultaneous activation of affective and sensory brain structures in both individuals. Social neuroscience research on empathy corroborates these findings.[31] Thus, in the contemplative dyad, through a process of attunement and mutual resonance the block or barrier, in relation to the environment and in relation to the deeper vitality affects of the body, is experienced as dissolved or broken through.

The knowledge of life's buried flow is ineffable, arising *between* two people in a moment of meeting. Neither you nor I have the skill to put into words these nameless feelings. These are neither *my* personal feelings, nor yours. To think so only leads to a divide between us, and a feeling of being inauthentic. It is only when you and I together, in dyadic contemplation, stay close to the source of these nameless feelings, that we, through mutual attunement, enter into contact with the stream. Now we have intimate communication, but beyond the discursive, rational. This seems to be the central tenet of the poem, and the core of Sue's realisation. Is there a conceptual term that encompasses the interpersonal understanding and the musicality of this dyadic attunement that brings us into contact with deeper truth and vitality?

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[28] Laura Schmalzl, Mardi A. Crane-Godreau, and Peter Payne, "Movement-based embodied contemplative practices: definitions and paradigms," *Frontier in Human Neuroscience* 8, no. 205 (2014): 4.

[29] Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007).

[30] Lauri Nummenmaa, Enrico Glerean, Mikko Viinikainen, Iiro P. Jaaskelainen, Riitta Hari, and Mikko Sams, "Emotions promote social interaction by synchronising brain activity across individuals," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA* 109, no. 24 (2012): 9599-604.

[31] Tania Singer, and Claus Lamm, "The Social Neuroscience of Empathy." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1156 (2009): 81-96.

Synesis: knowing together

In the *Odyssey,* 10.515, the word *synesis* can be found, denoting 'a union of two rivers'. In Plato's *Cratyllus* it means 'come together'. The received etymology is rendered as 'perceive', 'apprehend'. In Plato it means sagacity in respect to something, an inherent form of knowing. This is corroborated in the Septaguint, where synesis is listed as one of the seven gifts of the holy spirit. The confluence of these two meanings, *flowing together* and *intuitive understanding,* point us in the direction of an implicit form of knowing that can only be achieved when two subjectivities come together. In her analysis of instances of this word in a text by Aristoxenus, Flora Levin finds that this kind of understanding "is more significant than the English words 'understanding' and 'comprehension' suggest." She argues that Aristoxenus takes synesis to mean 'musical intuition': "This implies more than mere recognition or superficial understanding of melodic lines; it suggests, rather, a total musical competence."[32] Aristoxenus says that the activity of synesis "is something hidden deep down in the soul, and is not palpable or apparent to the ordinary man."[33] Thus, the concept of synesis brings together four principle aspects of the communication between the poem and Sue: a stream hidden deep down in the soul, a non-verbal, bodily attunement, the confluence of two rivers, knowing myself in and through the other. It is reflected in the intersubjective theories of Stern's developmental psychology, affective neuroscience and Fuch's phenomenological intercorporeality: a contemplative dyad where knowledge is not achieved by introspection, but happens between the two, when hearts and minds are brought to alert rest, requiring attunement and creating a resonance that reveals deeply hidden qualities of the soul. That this perception be likened to musical intuition makes sense. Synesis brings these notes into accordance, creating a chord that resonates. This deepening movement is reflected in the conceptual model of the three-stage process that unfolds in shared reading. First, there is a 'getting in', as the readers engage in the pendulum of immersion and reflection on what is read; second, a 'staying in' as this experience deepens, themes are reiterated and increasingly begin to resonate with the affective schemas of each participant; third, a possible 'breaking through', an experience of a shift, the acknowledging that something is different – one has been moved and what was stuck or inert has begun to move again.

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[32] Flora R. Levin, "Synesis in Aristoxenian Theory." *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 103 (1972): 212.

[33] Ibid., 213.

RESOLUTION

Anamnesis

Sue says that "if you have had that experience of being moved by something then I suppose you, well *I,* would like other people to have that experience, for sure." What, in a moment of sharing, has moved you, you would like to share with others, so that they can be moved too. I find it interesting that she catches herself mid-utterance, shifting from the general second-person to first-person. She takes care, of course, not to impose her personal experience and value on others; this is *her* individual destiny, to facilitate that experience for others. Yet, the initial generalisation still echoes: If you have been moved like I have been moved, you cannot but want others to participate in this, "you cannot help yourself." That which has helped her to say I, to be on her own line, demands to be brought forth to others. It is a universal experience. And it is where I becomes you becomes I, not just rhetorically, but truly: the I-Thou. To be on one's own line is to be on a transpersonal line, to share and dare; "a bold swinging – demanding the most intensive stirring of one's being – into the life of the other."[34]

What the poem does for Sue, I think can best be described as an *anamnesis.* Sue says that the meeting is "powerful because someone was speaking about this thing that I <u>always</u> felt" – it is "something I'm already being aware of." Towards the very end, she concludes that she loves the poem. It "opened something up in me. Something that I will always carry with me." What the meeting with Arnold has achieved is "reminding me of something important, getting back to sort of excavating something 'from the soul's subterranean depth." She concludes that the poem *has* changed her. "And what I mean by change is, it does make you into a different person, it helps you access some part of yourself that you… that has been buried."

From disdain to wonder

Sue says that her initial reaction was so strong for two reasons: she recognised her own experience in the poem's first stanza. And she found it "mind-blowing" that Matthew Arnold could communicate with her like that. Poetry had never come alive for her before. This is a common enough experience of poetry – high-flung phrases that are hard to understand; poetry

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[34] Martin Buber, *The Knowledge of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 81.

is remote and 'says nothing to me about my life'. Thus, the first time she "gets it," it is from an unlikely source - a 'Victorian' poem. She experiences a direct communication between herself and Arnold, across the historical and cultural divide. An old poem need not be "dug up" by means of contextualisation, theoretical perspectives, and historical documents; it is made new by carefully paying attention. What she assumed was *past*, has suddenly become *contemporaneous*; the speaker is here, now – demanding that she be present too. ("The fact that the poem has travelled such a great distance in time adds to its power. It makes it timeless, you know, these ideas are timeless […] I feel like I know this guy, that's the feeling.") Ironically, the communication between author and reader is about the inability to communicate even to one's nearest and dearest – what they share is this longing to share: "can we not even, if we love each other enough, can we not break through this, whatever this thing is that wouldn't, can't, communicate with each other." I find this absolutely *wonderful*: two concurrent events take place in her. Sue realises that someone is speaking to her about his deepest concerns, and these are also *her* deepest concerns – it is an experience they can share. And in the act of discovering this, she also realises that *this* is what a poem can do: as the poem comes alive in the present moment, she and Arnold come alive too, "enlivened," and, so to speak, unburied.

In his treatment *Of the Affects*, Spinoza contrasts *wonder* and *disdain*. Of wonder Spinoza says that it is the imagination of something we have not encountered before. Normally, when we are faced with an object that we have seen before and which is familiar, "we shall immediately recollect the others." We presume it to have "nothing but what is common to many things" and "we consider nothing in it but what we have seen before with others"; however, things are very different when we imagine that there is something singular in the object that we have never encountered before. Thus, says Spinoza, this affection of the mind, "*this imagination of a singular thing, insofar as it is alone in the mind*, is called *wonder*."[35] And this is precisely Sue's affection upon encountering a poem that communicates intimately with her. This has never happened before. It is a singularity. She never expected anything from poetry, and here she is, discovering that a poem by a male Victorian can speak to and for her, across the centuries and continents, over and beyond gender issues, as she felt she "completely understood this experience he is writing of." "It felt so current, even though I know he was writing in eighteenhundred-something." The poem is "timeless", and "true and authentic" because it

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[35] Benedict de Spinoza, "Of the origin and nature of the affects," in *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 97.

comes from the "heart, the innermost place of a person." This is wonder-full; "It was the most magical, amazing stuff."

To wonder is opposed *disdain*, Spinoza then says. He attributes the general cause of disdain to this: "because we see that someone wonders at something," or "something appears at first glance like things we admire, love," we are determined to wonder at the same thing. However, if "from the thing's presence" or from "considering it more accurately" we are forced to deny that it can be the cause of wonder, "then the mind remains determined by the thing's presence to think more of the things which are not in the object than of those which are."[36] In other words, we can only see what is missing. Therefore, whereas wonder is imagination of a thing which touches us deeply in its newness, "disdain is an imagination of a thing which touches the mind so little."[37] Such disdain is at the heart of Sue's anecdote about her group of poetry lovers. This group of friends is dearly important to her. She says she feels closer to them than to her own family and that "it's the most home I feel." And yet she was distanced from them in one respect: they would read poetry whilst Sue was "bored, ignoring it, I was always resistant to it." Still, "if my friends valued something, then that would make me curious." So she would try, but "couldn't overcome the hurdle"; "poetry just felt like a waste of time."

Epiphany

In my understanding, Sue, through reading Arnold's poem, has experienced a sudden about-turn, an *enantiodromia,* in which disdain is transformed into wonder. That which had been found to be wanting, to be of little value, all of a sudden embodies the greatest value, and becomes the key to reaching out to people and touching their hearts. In alchemical terms, this is tantamount to finding the gold in the dung-heap – to a king being born in a manger. This is an instance of a positive surprise. "Suddenly I was awake to this possibility of what poetry might do. … It did feel that big, actually." She can no longer imagine her life without poetry. We have an instance of *ekstasis* without the *ekplexis*, where thauma springs out of its opposite, disdain. Whereas Jane experienced a negative surprise in that *Shikasta* did not conform to her expectations of Lessing's work, Sue has a positive surprise. She did not expect anything good, yet experiences an awakening. This *ekstasis* is one of *eparetai*, of being *lifted up* into *wonder*.

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[36] Ibid., 97.

[37] Ibid., 105.

Is this turnaround what an epiphany is? For an objective epiphany to take place, argues Tigges, "there must be a larger context to set off the triviality of the epiphanic image."[38] He is here following Beja's Joycean conception, where epiphany occurs as the result of an encounter with a trivial or insignificant thing or event. But Bidney, in his definition of epiphany as "a moment that is felt to be expansive, mysterious and intense" explicitly rejects the criteria of triviality.[39] Nichols defines it as "momentary manifestations of significance in ordinary experience."[40] Much of the disagreement revolves around the difference between the trivial and insignificant on the one hand, and the ordinary on the other. What this disagreement occludes, however, is that what was previously regarded as insignificant suddenly becomes of the greatest significance: the object itself shines forth. Upon hearing a shout in the street, Daedalus discovers that "*that* is God." The previously trivial has been found to be of supreme value. This is the essence of the epiphany. This, and one other thing: the epiphany is the narrative not just of coming upon the king in the manger, *but also of setting out to find him*, guided by the iridescence of a star. Retrospectively, Sue feels as if there is a God: in starting a new life and finding the magic of sharing poetry she "was following some kind of deep thread of knowing."[41] This is part of Sue retroactively ascribing meaning to her life's journey:

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[38] Wim Tigges, "The Significance of Trivial Things: Towards a Typology of Literary Epiphanies," in *Moments of Moment: Aspects of the Literary Experience*, ed. Wim Tigges (Atalanta, GA: Rodopi BV, 1999), 21.

[39] Martin Bidney, *Patterns of epiphany: From Wordsworth to Tolstoy, Pater and Barrett Browning* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. 1997).

[40] Ashton Nichols, *The Poetics of Epiphany* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987).

[41] Why does she employ this metaphor, rather than stay close to the imagery of *The Buried Life?* I make the following conjecture: After years of doing Shared Reading, Sue is likely to be familiar with the common stock of poetry used by the Reader. One fine poem that has proved popular in reading groups, is *The Way It Is* by William Stafford:

> There's a thread you follow. It goes among
> Things that change. But it doesn't change.
> People wonder about what you are pursuing.
> You have to explain about the thread.
> But it is hard for others to see.
> While you hold it you can't get lost.
> Tragedies happen; people get hurt
> Or die; and you suffer and get old.
> Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
> You don't ever let go of the thread.

> (William Stafford, *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 1998).

I imagine Sue coming across this poem at some juncture, perhaps years later, and finding that it perfectly captures her journey: she can see now that she has followed the thread, and because she held it she couldn't get lost. The poem's central metaphor has become internalised as this poem becomes a site in which to reflect on her life. Thus, the "deep thread of knowing" is not just a metaphor for an integrated life story, but, being deployed

> … so it's more looking and at the time I wouldn't have said there is a God. Looking back I think how incredibly fortunate I've been. It feels like a whole lot of things were leading to this, a combination of things in my life made it all make a lot of sense.

So this, then, is epiphany: upon turning disdain into wonder, as loss of soul turns into anamnesis of the buried life through an intercorporeal moment of meeting, she discovers that all along she has followed a thread. "The Thou meets me through grace – it is not found by seeking," says Buber.[42] But when grace has been experienced, you also know that it sought you; it brought you to a place you had always known.

Summary

Sue calls her crisis a severe depression, characterised by somatic experiences of heaviness and inertia. Although she had managed to lift herself out of her pessimism before her encounter with *The Buried Life*, she still felt the lack of vitality. The poem had a forceful impact upon her on two levels: she could completely relate to the experience Arnold conveys, and therefore she must reconsider her relationship to poetry. The poem is about such a moment of impact: "The bolt shot back" in our breast, as two people experience a moment of meeting, lets "a lost pulse of feeling stir again." Her mode of engagement is one of *synesia*, a mutual attunement in dyadic contemplation that lets a deeper understanding shine forth. Given that her relationship with poetry is transformed from disdain to wonder, this may be termed an *ekstatic* reading experience. This ekstasis is of an *eparetic* kind: it lifts her up into wonder. This brings about for her an *anamnesis:* she now re-members a part of herself, her lived body, opening to a source of deep vitality. Her life course, retroactively seen as leading up to this encounter, and prospectively gaining meaning through sharing this moment of meeting with other people, can thus be said to represent the essence of Epiphany.

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by her after being saved, it performatively connects for her the three life-changing events into a coherent story. It is the experience of *The Buried Life* that has opened her up to this knowledge.

[42] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 8.

Part Four: Towards a Theory of Pathematics

Chapter 8. Transformative Affective Patterns and Reading by Heart

Summary of idiographic interpretations
Crises and changes in relation to affective categories and genres
Transformative affective patterns
Reading by heart: Lexithymia
Psychagogia

Chapter 9. Conclusion

Overview of dissertation and justification of approach
Significance of study

Chapter 8. Transformative Affective Patterns and Reading by Heart

Summary of idiographic interpretations

From the idiographic interpretations a panoply of concepts pertaining to crises, transactions with the literary works (experiences of realisations; and modes of engagement), resolutions and life-shapes have been developed. Additionally, two primary affective categories have been identified, alongside a number of basic genres. These concepts may be presented in the following table.

Table 1. Summary of idiographic interpretations.

Person	crisis	affective category	genre	realisation experienced	mode of engagement	resolution	life shape
Esther	conflict	katharsis	comic	ekaphany	readerese	anagnorisis	metamorphosis
Camilla	loss	katharsis	tragic	feeling felt	agkalilexia	therapon	katamorphosis
Veronica	attachment	( )	ironic	Felt sense	enkinaesthetic	thumos	anamorphosis
Nina	identity	( )	romantic	katabasis	palilexia	nostos	odyssey
Jane	Faith	ekstasis	( )	ekpleksis	metabolic	metanoia	epistrophe
Sue	Depression	ekstasis	lyric	wonder	synesis	anamnesis	epiphany

Life-shapes: the plots of the narratives

The six narratives interpreted can be understood to fall into two categories: using Habermas et al.'s dichotomy,[1] we may determine four of them to constitute life-narratives and two of them to be instances of critical event narratives. Esther's life-story may be said to be organised around the narrative master-trope of *metamorphosis,* in her quest to share the truth of *Episode.* Nina's life story is plotted as an *odyssey*, a circular journey of finding, losing and regaining her source of strength, thus finally managing to arrive "home" safely. Jane's life story I have interpreted to be shaped in the form of an *epistrophe*: both her *metanoia* and her discovery of purpose turn upon the conversional experience of reading *Shikasta*. In Sue's story, I understand *epiphany* as a narrative category: it traces the plot of her story as the following of a "deep thread of knowing" to find new life in what is for her an unlikely place: lyric poetry. The two remaining narratives may perhaps not be entire life-narratives as such, given that Camilla and Veronica are both still young and in the first half of life. Their stories may therefore be regarded as critical event narratives that are both instances of serendipity, metaphorically shaped as *katamorphosis* and *anamorphosis* respectively. All the narratives thus have a plot-shape which is marked not just by a change from crisis to resolution, but places this passage within a larger narrative category. It is important to note that the readers' mode of ascription is complex. They do not portray the text as a 'cause' that has produced an 'effect'. Hence these narrative master-tropes signify complex ascriptive relations between a katalytic experience and its unfolding consequences.

Kinds of qualitative change: allioses

My idiographic interpretations have revealed six different kinds of crises and six kinds of resolutions that are intrinsically connected. The qualitative change from crisis to resolution is called *alloiosis*. I have found six different kinds of allioses. These can summarily be rendered thus:

> *Anagnorisis*: Reconciliation through the recognition of the true being of the other, and the bond that unites.

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[1] See Literature Review.

Therapon: Recovering from loss and being enabled to feel whole again.

Thumos: escaping from old strictures and regain ability to listen to one's heart/felt sense

Nostos; achieving self-identity, the confluence of inner self and outer role.

Metanoia: Going from one framework to a higher one; conversion to conjunctive faith.

Anamnesis: Recovering from a loss of vitality to remember a dead or lost part of self.

In comparing different crisis theories in the Literature Review, I found that when these are synthesised we may operate with three broad kinds of crises: Developmental, situational, and existential (inner conflicts related to things such as life purpose, direction and spirituality). The crises described in the six narratives correspond to this model. Esther' and Camilla's stories represent two kinds of situational/relational crises: Conflict and loss, respectively. Furthermore, there are two developmental/psychodynamic crises: Nina's represents an identity crisis, Veronica's a crisis of separation, related to the attachment system. And finally there are two kinds of spiritual crisis: Jane's crisis of meaning/worldview, and Sue's crisis of depression or loss of soul/vitality.

Hence we have the following structure of crises:

Interpersonal/situational: conflict and loss/bereavement

Developmental/psychodynamic: identity diffusion and attachment-related wounds

Spiritual/existential: faith/life-philosophy and depression/loss of vitality

In each crisis there is a complex configuration of various emotions and cognitions to be worked out and lived through. Given that the crises can be divided into three 'families' of pairs, I accordingly surmise that the kinds of changes also can be grouped into three corresponding "families" (*anagnorisis* and *therapon*; *thumos* and *nostos*; *epistrophe* and *anamnesis*), based on the pairs of genres and affective categories to which they are transactionally related.

Crises and changes in relation to affective categories and genres

I will now attempt to relate crises and changes systematically to the affective categories and genres that were part of the transactions. I propose that each crisis corresponds not only to a particular kind of change, but also to a particular kind of genre and a particular kind of affective category, and that each of these are fundamental *transformative affective patterns*. I will describe each of the transformative affective patterns. Together, they form a theory of *pathematics*. Before I can do so, however, there are two problems left to address, and which become apparent when we look at the comparison of findings in table 1:

(i)   In relation to four of the interpretations, there is explicit discussion of classic foundational affective categories. Camilla's and Esther's stories are said to be kathartic experiences, tragic and comic respectively; Jane's and Sue's are understood to be ecstatic experiences, ekplektic and epairetic respectively. What then about Veronica's and Nina's experiences? No corresponding term was discussed in the interpretations of these narratives, although the affective response was thematised. This is because as yet no such term exists. I interpreted their transactions with the works as belonging to the *mythoi* of the romantic and the ironic respectively. Is there an affective term that can encompass both these 'epic' genres?

(ii)   Five of the works read were specifically related to the basic genres of the tragic (Camilla), the comic (Esther), the lyric (Sue), the ironic (Veronica) and romance (Nina). What about Jane's engagement with *Shikasta*? I did not designate a genre term here, because there does not exist a term for the kind of genre to which *Shikasta* belongs. How can we designate this genre? Given that I understood both Jane's and Sue's experience to be ecstatic, and the ecstatic experience is related to transactions with *hypsotic* texts, of which the *lyric* represents one direction, the genre term must therefore be a complement to the *lyric*.

What is missing is an affective category alongside *katharsis* and *ekstasis*, and a genre to complement the lyric. By relating my findings to existing theories of genres, specifically Genette's and Frye's, and to a classical transformative-affective concept not primarily

associated with aesthetics but theology, I will supply the missing terms and thereby complete the conceptual model offered on the basis of the idiographic interpretations.

Genre: mode, thematic concern, form and affective engagement

One of the problems pertaining to the category of genre is that there is no stable intersections between mode of enunciation and thematic concern. In his study of the history of literary genres, Gerard Genette has demonstrated how the classic division into "the three major genres," the tripartition of drama, epos and lyric that many scholars (such as Bakhtin, Todorov, Frye, Scholes and Warren) have attributed to Aristotle and Plato, in fact is a modern invention that crystallises in the Romantic Period. According to Genette, Plato distinguishes between mode of representation/enunciation/form/lexis, and thematic concern/content/logos. Plato's division into genres is based upon the differentiation of different modes of representation: mimesis, diegesis or mixed. Thus tragedy and comedy are the mimetic forms, epic the mixed, and the pure diegesis is for Plato the *dithyramb* or *historia.* The lyric is left out of his classification. Whereas Plato of course devalues the mimetic (and the mixed), Aristotle comes to regard this as the highest form. Aristotle's classification is based on the intersections of the mode of enunciation and thematic concerns. He distinguishes between what is represented (object) and how it is represented (mode). There are two kinds of object: superior and inferior; and two kinds of mode: mimetic and diegetic (this collapses Plato's distinction between mixed and pure diegesis). Thus Aristotle has four genres: tragedy (superior-dramatic), comedy (inferior-dramatic), epos (superior-narrative) and parody (inferior-narrative). However, the latter term remains an empty category in his *Poetics,* as nothing is specified regarding it. Aristotle leaves out all forms of didactic poetry and historic texts. Therefore Aristotle leaves out one term; his system in fact only consists of two major genres, drama and epos. On account of the empty position in his schema, and the historical fact of the many forms of the lyric, argues Genette, there is a temptation to "fill in the empty slot" with the third major category of the lyric.[2] Genette argues that the empty slot in the system helps one discover a genre. However, there is also an empirical-historical dimension: there are texts with features in common that have no place within the system. According to Genette, the lyric in the tripartition is a negative term, encompassing that which is not dramatic or epic. The later efforts of systematisation, at the end

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[2] Gerard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 23.

of antiquity and in the Middle Ages, make great attempts to integrate lyric poetry into the system of Plato or Aristotle without modifying their categories, according to Genette. So the lyric is made to be a kind of imitation of the feelings. Cascales, in his *Tablas poeticas* (1617), argues that the lyric has for its 'plot' not an action, but a thought – although this in fact contradicts the definitions of the *Poetics*. This notion that *dianoia* in the lyric corresponds to the *mythoi* of epos and drama, is central to Frye's classification of "pregeneric" forms of narrative. Frye argues that there are four "narrative categories of literature broader than, or logically prior to, the ordinary literary genres" – the romantic, the ironic or satiric, the tragic and the comic.[3] These four are "pregeneric elements of literature" which Frye calls "mythoi or generic plots."[4] In contrast, "in essays and in lyrics the primary interest is in *dianoia,* the idea or poetic thought that the reader gets from the writer." He translates *dianoia* as 'theme', and contrasts plot-oriented and thematically oriented texts.[5]

All major theoretical attempts, from the romantic period onwards, to create a tripartite system fail to convincingly combine form and content in their definitions. Therefore, the three major genres are in actuality three major *modes* of enunciation, according to Genette. Moreover, says Genette, Aristotle admits "that the tragic subject can be dissociated from the dramatic mode and entrusted simply to narration, without thereby becoming an epic subject."[6] The inclusive relationship "did not prevent the generic and modal criteria from being absolutely dissimilar, as well as radically different in status: each genre was defined essentially by a specification of content that was in no way prescribed by the definition of its mode."[7] Therefore the genres can be said to be made up of the major thematic concerns: tragic, comic, epic. Genette proposes that the combinations of form and content, mode and genre, be called *archigenres,* and that these are historical rather than natural phenomena.

Genette concludes his historical discussion thus:

> The whole history of the theory of genres is imprinted with these fascinating patterns that inform and deform the often irregular reality of the literary field – patterns whose designers claim to have discovered a natural 'system' precisely where they are constructing a factitious symmetry with the help of a copious supply of false windows. These strained configurations are not always useless – quite the contrary. Like

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[3] Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 162.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 52.

[6] Genette, *Architext*, 18.

[7] Ibid., 61-62.

all provisional classifications, provided they are taken as such, they often serve an unquestionable heuristic function. In any given case, the false window may open onto a true light and reveal the importance of an unappreciated term; the slot left empty or laboriously filled may, much later, find a legitimate occupant.[8]

I believe there is an unappreciated term in relation to the genres, an empty slot alongside the lyric. And that there is a legitimate occupant of this slot. This becomes apparent when we include the affective categories in the discussion of definitions of major genres. Genette concludes that "the major imaginable parametres of the generic system come down to three kinds of 'constants' (thematic, modal, and formal)."[9] However, there is another parametre. As Genette himself points out, in Aristotle's definition of tragedy he finds it insufficient to use the parametres of theme, mode and form. Accordingly, he also includes the affective category of catharsis. Interestingly, Genette asserts:

> I by no means intend to deny to literary genres any sort of 'natural' and transhistorical foundation. On the contrary, to me another obvious (albeit vague) fact is the presence of an existential attitude, of an 'anthropological structure' […], of a 'mental disposition' […], of an 'imaginative design' or of a 'feeling' that is properly epical, lyrical, dramatic – but also tragic, comic, elegiac, fantastic, romantic etc. – whose nature, origin, continued existence […] are still to be studied.[10]

This still-to-be-studied existential attitude/feeling/disposition is the relevance of the affective categories to the genres. Thus Genette has created two 'openings': There is an unappreciated term among the genres, for which there may be a legitimate occupant. Secondly, the existential attitude or feeling is already counted among the parametres by Aristotle, the affective category of *catharsis*. What I wish to point out in the following is that:

(i)   The 'legitimate occupant' was discovered in the interpretation of Jane's encounter with *Shikasta.* Thus, I will discuss which term may adequately designate the genre to which *Shikasta* belongs.

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[8] Ibid., 45.

[9] Ibid., 78. These constants, remarks Genette, delineate "the landscape in which the evolution of the field of literature is set, and to a great extent determine something like the reservoir of generic potentialities from which that evolution makes its selection." (78).

[10] Ibid., 67-68.

(ii)   The existential attitude or imaginative design in the form of affective categories other than *catharsis* and *ekstasis* was uncovered in my interpretations of the stories of Veronica and Nina, and needs to be named.

Metable

According to Frye there are four fundamental narrative *mythoi*: tragic, comic, romantic and ironic. Thus, Frye's four "pre-genres" correspond to the transaction patterns found in the stories of Esther (comic), Camilla (tragic), Nina (romantic) and Veronica (ironic). Frye also specifies the lyric as a fundamental pre-genre, based however not on plot but on *dianoia* (thought). He does not specify any further pre-genres, but clearly does not reserve *dianoia*, a term originally found in Plato's dialogues, for the lyric. Where does that leave Jane's transaction with *Shikasta*? It is clearly a narrative and not a lyric work, belonging to the marvelous more than the realistic. It is characterised by the use of several narrative 'layers': texts within texts. We may call it "science fiction" or "space fiction," but this does not refer to its thematic concern or structure as much as its *motif* and fictional universe. Lessing and Jane both place it within an Old Testament tradition, a wisdom tradition. Is there a fundamental pre-genre to which works of wisdom as different as Plato's dialogues and the texts that make up the bible belong? I believe there is such a pre-genre or archi-genre that combines the thematic concern of conversion and the structural pattern of *metaballein*. It is similar in theme, but not in structure, to the parable. A parable is commonly understood to be a succinct story, in verse or prose, with a didactic purpose, aiming to illustrate a spiritual principle or give an instructive lesson by means of some form of analogy. Unlike the fable, which typically employs animals or plants or inanimate objects or forces of nature as characters, the parable has human characters. The word *parable* comes from *para* ('beside', 'outside') + *ballein* ('to throw'). Literally speaking, a 'juxtaposition'. Thus, it may mean a comparison of one thing to another. Alternatively, it could also mean that two incompatible views or truths are thrown beside each other.

Paul Ricoeur has defined "the literary genre of parable" as a "conjunction between a narrative form, a metaphorical process, and an appropriate 'qualifier' which insures its convergence with other forms of discourse which all point toward the meaning 'Kingdom of God.'"[11] John Dominic Crossan adds two other elements to this definition: paradox and

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[11] Quoted in: John Dominic Crossan, *Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 1.

brevity.[12] Crossan uses the metaphor of the window to describe parables. However, he emphasises that there is also a kind of parable that is more like a mirror: "their reflective opacity reveals instead the faces of those who look upon them." This kind of parable, which he terms *metaparable*, "show us not just ourselves but ourselves looking, not just what we perceive but how we perceive."[13] Such a metaparable, which throws us back upon ourselves in a *metaballein*, is in my view analogous to the zen-genre of *koans*. Hori argues that the *koan* is not an unanswerable riddle or meaningless puzzle, but a paradoxical form that "explores the theme of non-duality" and the "identity of opposites."[14] It throws us out of dualistic thinking, to bring about a higher unity. In my view, stories in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament come closer to metaparable than parable: they 'transtruct' rather than 'instruct' the reader.

Many of Plato's dialogues are pervaded by a performative deep structure. The interlocutor, and by extension the reader, is made to accept a premise or a situation, only to be brought, through a subsequent process of *elenchus*, to an *aporia*. We are suddenly thrown back upon ourselves, confronted with the shortcomings of our philosophy or outlook. We experience that what we thought we knew was in fact not true. One must leave one's framework behind and adopt a more expansive or 'higher' one, precisely as Jane found herself having to do. Curiously, we find a similar pattern at work in the biblical texts. For instance, in the *Akedah*, the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, God shockingly brings sacrifice to an end. And in the New Testament, in one of Jesu parables, one of the hated Samaritans is shockingly revealed to be a good man, not evil – thus the listener must accommodate the knowledge that One of Them can be better than Us. Kenneth Burke calls proverbs and maxims "equipment for living."[15] When we compare them, they may be mutually contradictory, but there is one to fit every occasion. They are thus meant to offer a perspective on our situation, either confirmatory or advisory. Parables on the other hand, clearly work differently. There is an instructive element, but they are mysteriously hard to understand at the same time. When we look more closely at the parables of Jesus, they turn out to be more like *koans* than illustrations of abstract truths by

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[12] Ibid., 2.

[13] Ibid., 26.

[14] Victor Sogen Hori, "Koan and Kensho in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum," in *The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, ed. Steve Heine and Dale S. Wright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 289-290.

[15] Kenneth Burke, "Literature as Equipment for Living," in *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1973).

analogy. The listener is thrown back on her presuppositions, and invited to accommodate a new perspective. In the interpretation of Jane's story, I mentioned that her experience was like a *metaballein*: a turnaround in perspective. Suddenly our world is seen from a larger perspective, and what seemed insignificant becomes very important. This experience of a shocking truth comes about through transaction with a work in which one is performatively taken out of a smaller frame and into a bigger one, analogous to the Allegory of the Cave in Plato. I therefore propose that the deep structure of this pre-genre, and which puts *Shikasta* in the same category as the biblical texts and Plato's dialogues, is properly speaking a *metable*. *Shikasta* throws together two different realities, but in doing so shifts our perspective on ourselves from a local to a global one, effecting a 'copernican turn'. Thus it is more fitting to term it *metabolic* than *parabolic*. The form of the *metable* is always that of exchanging a narrow framework for a larger vision. This is reflected also in the narrative form of *Shikasta*: there are various layers and frames that shift our perspectives. What is essential to an understanding of the structure of *metable* is that it is always a response to a question asked, or a proposition put forth, from a partial/local perspective. The response does not answer the question on its own terms, but changes the questioning, and therefore also potentially the questioner. This holds true for *koans* as well as Jesus' parables and Plato's dialogues. In my view, it also holds true for many stories from the Old Testament, as they chronicle a gradual evolution and expansion of people's view of God. At every *turn*, the version of God is changed.

Whereas the lyric experience of Sue was uplifting in that it was an *awakening* experience, Jane's experience is not so much an awakening as passing from blindness/darkness to vision/insight/light. In wisdom literature, the metaphors of *awakening* from sleep and going from blindness/darkness into vision/light are central. As different as the genres of the lyric and the metable are, in accordance with the findings from the interpretations of Jane's and Sue's reading experiences, I infer that they both belong to a super-genre: *hypsous*, the lofty thought. I propose that *hypsous* is the third classical genre, alongside drama and epos; it is based on *dianoia* rather than *mythos.* It encompasses two complementary pre-genres: the lyric and the metable. When encountering the lofty style, or engaging in a higher perspective through narrative structural devices, we are either lifted up and vitalised, or we must bow down in acceptance of our smallness in relation to the great. These are two different forms of *ekstasis,* which I, based an interpretation of differing affective terms in Longinus, have termed *ekplektic* and *eparetic* respectively.

What this means is that there are three basic literary protogenres: the dramatic, consisting of the tragic and the comic; the epic, consisting of the romantic and the ironic/realistic; and the hypsotic, consisting of the lyric and the metabolic. To each of these genres belongs an affective process of engagement. According to Northrop Frye, there is a catharsis of the comic; to the fear and pity raised by tragedy correspond "sympathy and ridicule."[16] Regarding the two foundational terms of literary theory, Frye says: "Just as catharsis is the central conception of the Aristotelian approach to literature," so ekstasis is central to the "Longinian approach." Frye underlines that ekstasis "is more useful for lyrics, just at the Aristotelian one is more useful for plays."[17] Thus both dramatic forms can lead to catharsis, just as both hypsotic forms can lead to ekstasis. What about the epic forms, what is the common affective category that corresponds to them?

Three major literary affective categories

The affective categories are ways of *krinein,* of living through and sorting out different emotions through a process in which resolution is arrived at. In crises of conflict and loss, the various emotions must be lived through in such a manner that some of them are purged in order to purify the central emotion and arrive at a clarification of the meaning of the experience. In crises of spirituality, there must be an *ekstasis* where the person who is stuck in a certain way of being comes *unstuck*, is moved out of stasis, either through being shocked out of their framework or by being lifted up from their devitalised state. What then about the two developmental crises that pertain to the identity and the attachment system respectively? We have seen that for Nina to embrace her nostos, to amass the courage to venture forth, she must leave something behind: her dream of perfection. This longing for the perfect is related to the affect of shame, or the fear of being judged. She must let go of this deep-seated shame or fear in order to arrive at her *myspace*. Likewise, for Veronica to face her true feelings and embrace her *thumos*, she must not only separate from a malfunctioning relationship, but she must let go of the need for an external locus of security. What they have in common is that they must relinquish something, in order to turn away from that which is no longer any good, or to

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[16] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 43.

[17] Ibid., 67.

approach that which is good. I propose that the affective notion that most closely resembles this movement is *kenosis.*

Kenosis is commonly regarded as a theological term, originating in Philippians 2:5-8, where St. Paul speaks of Christ's "self-emptying":

> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.[18]

What justification is there for transposing this religious concept of "self-emptying" into literary studies as an affective category for the way the reader relates to characters? Many terms that have had their origin in biblical and theological studies have been imported into literary theory, such as for instance *hermeneutics* and *epiphany.* The psychologisation of *kenosis* furthermore happens also within theology. In his discussion of kenotic Christology, Graham James shifts the attention from the experiences of Christ to our self-experiences. He regards the power of kenotic imagery to reside in its ability "to express an experience common to the human condition."[19] James maintains that the spirit of self-emptying is one of self-forgetting, and that it is a common experience: "Most of us have some idea of what self-emptying might mean." He underlines the affective nature of kenosis: "We sense that in emptying ourselves of pride, in giving ourselves at a deep level to others, that life becomes strangely real and fulfilling. We sense that in the self-emptying that human love demands that paradoxically we become more truly human."[20]

It is important to note that lthough *kenosis* is often understood to be a theological term, it is also a literary, philosophical and medicinal term. According to the Liddell-Scott Greek-English lexicon, *kenosis* is used in Plato's *Republic* to mean an emptying and a depletion, as well as in the letters of Epicurus. It is furthermore found in Pindar, where he speaks of the emptiness of life (*kenosis bion).* Medically, it is used by both Hippocrates and Galenus to

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[18] See https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A5-11&version=ESV.

[19] Graham James, "The Enduring Appeal of a Kenotic Christology," *Theology* 86 (1983): 12.

[20] Ibid., 13.

signify depletion (blood-letting) and low diet (the opposite of *plerosis*).[21] What we have is then an affective term that signifies a transformation, and which precedes any division into theological, philosophical and medicinal discourses.

In a collection of essays entitled *Bakhtin and Religion*, scholars have discussed *kenosis* as the word made flesh, and compared it to Shklovskij's concept of defamiliarisation. Several literary scholars have made use of the concept, for instance Harold Bloom. In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom relates it to the writing of poetry, where he talks of *kenosis* as a "movement towards discontinuity with the precursor."[22] It is a suggestive concept that can be used in several ways. However, the direct precursor for designating kenosis as a principal literary affective category is Keith Russell's theory of literary affective categories. His basic system postulates: "As katharsis is to the dramatic, so kenosis is to the lyric, and so kairosis is to the epic."[23] The genres are seen as interpretive genres, modes of relation that are "constitutive of the understanding of a text."[24] Russel argues that the concept of kenosis, "self-emptying" ("a fundamental ability of the self to be transformed"[25]), "amounts to a pattern of transformation. The initial, or given identity, is firstly emptied (seen as of no account), and then replaced with a new identity that implies a relationship with the initial identity."[26] However, I propose that such a concept relates to the genres of romance and irony, rather than the lyric. In the stories of Veronica and Nina, there are concrete experiences of self-emptying. By the end of her reading of *Lady Chatterley's* Lover, Veronica feels differently. She can now clearly sense the truth of her situation: something has been given up. And Nina, after repeated re-readings, lets go of her identification with Ken's perspective, and is able also to entertain the 'Nell gaze'. They must let go of their old identification or attachment in order to embrace the change the character undergoes. Thus kenosis signifies a mode of engagement with the character that goes beyond

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[21] Cf. The online version: Henry George Liddle and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dke%2Fnwsis&highlight=empty.

[22] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 14.

[23] Keith Russell, *Kenosis, Katharsis, Kairosis: A Theory of Literary Affects* (Phd Dissertation, University of Newcastle, UK, 1990), 46.

[24] Ibid., x.

[25] Ibid., 26.

[26] Ibid., 44.

Jauss' pendular movement. To let go of one's clasp of a self that is actually a response to an old situation is thus akin to a form of self-emptying. Without this emptying, the new cannot be taken in and contained. To escape from that which is not good, one must have the courage to let go, to leave the familiar. And to move forth on a journey towards one's true destination, one must let go of the kalyptic dream of immortality. That this is an emptying of one's self is experientially true. When one lets go, one surrenders to the unknown. There is no guarantee that you will be filled up (*plerosis)* with something better afterwards. Central to the affective dimension of *kenosis* is therefore *courage*: that the heart can contain the fear. Fear is not *cast out*, but *contained*. Rather than emotions being purged, in *kenosis* it is the fear of experiencing emotions that is contained and accepted, so that one can move on. In the theory of emotion-focused therapy, a dynamic reorganising process of the self can happen if one first accepts the presence of a maladaptive emotional schema, and then co-activates an adaptive emotion to undo the old response. Says Greenberg: "The process of changing emotion with emotion goes beyond ideas of catharsis, completion, exposure, extinction or habituation, in that the maladaptive feeling is not purged, nor does it simply attenuate by the person feeling it; rather, another feeling is used to transform it."[27] This is not quite kenosis, but it points in the direction of it. Interestingly, in this sentence Greenberg actually *changes* from using "emotion" to using "feeling", as if they were the same thing. It is possible to have an emotion without actually feeling it. There is something that prevents us from feeling it. When we clearly feel the emotion, we are in contact with *thumos*. What must be emptied out is that self-relation that prevents us from feeling. Spinoza says that "hope is an inconstant joy, born of the idea of a future or past thing whose outcome we to some extent doubt."[28] Confidence, by contrast, "is a joy born of the idea of a future or past thing, concerning which the cause of doubting has been removed (my emphasis)."[29] Therefore, concludes Spinoza, is confidence born of hope; the cause of doubt is removed. To be in inner exile is to live in doubt, *nostos* is achieved when confidence is born. What is emptied out is the doubting. Likewise, fear is an inconstant sadness born of doubt. Moving away from this insecurity is to remove the doubt, but then one must face the sadness. The doubt is about worrying about the future outcome, rather than staying in the here and now. As such, doubt prevents us from listening to our feelings. What is emptied out in ironic kenosis

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[27] Leslie S. Greenberg, *Emotion-Focused Therapy* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2011), 78.

[28] Spinoza, *Ethics,* 106.

[29] Ibid., 106.

is not fear, but doubt - insecurity born of fixation on future outcome. This doubt prevents us from listening to our heart. The emptying out of doubt allows us to face and contain – to *feel* - our fear, shame and anger, so that courage can be born, the courage to move away from the bad or towards the good. *Kenosis* is a slow process, closely related to the notion of *hora*: it is completed in the fullness of time.

I now have in place a systematic model relating crises to affective modes, to genres (as modes of relation constitutive of understanding of the work) and to kinds of changes, *alloioses*. Whereas the combination of mode and thematic concern is termed *archigenre* by Genette, I propose that the combination of affective category and thematic concern/structural pattern be called protogenres. Furthermore, each of the intrinsic relations between crisis, protogenre, affective category and alloiosis constitutes a *transformative affective pattern (TAP)*. Thus there are six such patterns, belonging to each of the six protogenres: tragic, comic, romantic, ironic, lyric and the *metable*. These are connected to the affective categories of katharsis, kenosis and ekstasis.

Being moved: kinesis

In the introduction I said that in Aristotle's view of change, there are two kinds of change, *metabole and kinesis*. The former is connected to the genre of metable. And the *phthora*, ceasing to be, to the ironic. The kinesthetic refers not only to physical movement in space (locomotion), but also to qualitative visceral internal movement, *being moved*. Fuchs and Kochs have developed a theory of embodied affectivity. They regard emotions as the outcome of circular interactions between affective qualities in the environment and the subject's bodily resonance, which takes on kinesthetic qualities. They argue that there are four basic emotional movements: moving towards the other, moving the other towards oneself, moving the other away from oneself, and moving oneself away from the other. These movements are connected to a bodily felt sense. Thus they maintain that emotions can be "experienced as the directionality of one's potential movement, although this movement need not necessarily be realised in physical space; they are phenomena of lived space."[30] These are active *moves*, but what about *being moved*? In my view, there are two different kinds of affections: emotions and being moved. Emotion of

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[30] Thomas Fuchs, and Sabine C. Cock, "Embodied Affectivity: on Moving and Being Moved," *Frontiers in Psychology* 5, no. 508 (2014): 4.

course comes from ex + movere, to 'move out'. Emotions have an action component. Emotion "ends" in movement. But being moved is also a process, an en + movere, to 'be moved in'. An internal movement that has no action tendency, but rather a contemplation tendency. Interestingly, this finds its counterpart in rhetoric. In a discussion of Heidegger's understanding of Aristotle and rhetoric, Daniel Gross argues that pathos, one of the three *pisteis* (forms of appeal) in rhetoric, involves an account of how people are being moved. Gross emphasises that "Pathe are not merely psychological emotions […]. Rather, the pathe indicate possible ways of being-moved that tie humans in a unique way to their embodiment."[31] Is there no word for this being in-moved? I believe there is, and it is a word that originated within aesthetics. The word *empathy* literally designates precisely this em + movement. Empathy is thus the process of being moved. In my view, emotion and empathy are therefore complementary affective terms that belong to different realms (participant vs. witness) and have different ends (action vs. contemplation). So if the movements have directionality, what kinds of directions of movement do we find in the being-moved experiences of undergoing the transformative affective patterns?

In tragic katharsis there is a being moved *inwards*. One must not merely retreat from the social, but one must 'incorporate' the good aspects of the lost object. In comic katharsis there a being moved *outwards*. I embrace the bond that ties me to the other. In ironic kenosis there is a being moved away or *backwards*, a retreat, as I escape from that which harms me in order to listen to my feelings. In romantic kenosis there is a being moved forth from inner exile or *towards* a goal. In metabolic ekstasis there is a being moved *downwards*, I am made to bow down before the Vast, and look at myself from this higher perspective. In eparetic ekstasis I am being moved upwards, lifted up from the inertia of my devitalised condition into wonder. Thus these *kineses* within 'lived space', these *empatheia*, can be metaphorically envisaged as movements within a three dimensional lived space, apropos of Spinoza, who considers the affects geometrically, "just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies."[32] In such a three-dimensional system, the *epic* would constitute the x-axis, delineating the forwards and backwards movements. The *hypsotic* would be depicted along the y-axis as movements upwards and downwards. And the z-axis would represent the *dramatic:* movements inwards and outwards.

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[31] Daniel M. Gross, "Introduction: Being-Moved. The Pathos of Heidegger's Rhetorical Ontology," in *Heidegger and Rhetoric*, ed. Daniel M. Gross and Ansgar Kemmann (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005), 26.

[32] De Spinoza, "Of the Affects," 69.

Fig. 1 The Lived Space of being moved

hypsotic

upwards

dramatic

outwards

backwards

forwards

epic

inwards

downwards
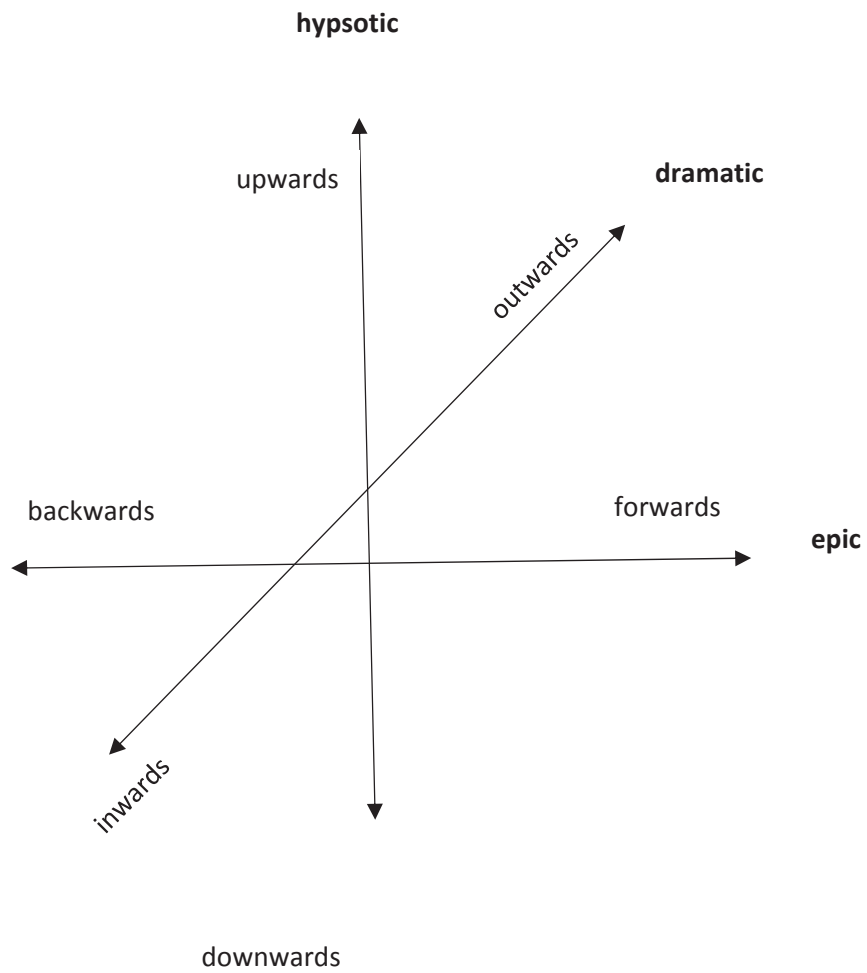
To sum up, the following complete taxonomy of transformative affective patterns can be determined:

Table 2. Six transformative affective patterns

Transformative affective patterns		Being moved/kinesis	Alloiosis	
Protogenre:	**Affective category:**	**Direction:**	**Crisis:**	**Change:**
Dramatic	Katharsis			
Tragic		inwards	Loss	Therapon
Comic		outwards	Conflict	Anagnorisis
Epic	Kenosis			
Romantic		forwards	Identity	Nostos
Ironic		backwards	Separation	Thumos
Hypsotic	Ekstasis			
Lyric		upwards	Vitality	Anamnesis
Metable		downwards	Faith	Epistrophe

The resolution of each of the crises is brought about through undergoing the experience of the corresponding transformative affective pattern. This will only happen through *katalysis*, i.e. through an encounter with a conducive facilitative agent that *moves* the person deeply. The theory of these processes, involving the katharsis, kenosis or ekstasis of the *pathemata* in relation to life-crises, I shall henceforth call *pathematics.*

Six transformative affective patterns

The neuropsychologist Panksepp regards emotions as evolutionary adaptive programmes. By researching the phylogenetic development of the brain, he has developed a model for how we can understand fundamental primary affective systems. These systems have a definite neurological substrate on which complex emotional processes are based. Panksepp has identified seven different affective systems, all related to how we act to solve problems in relation to our environment, and connected through complex forms of co-activation. The seeking system drives us to explore and master our surroundings. The fear system has developed to help the organism predict and handle dangers. The pleasure system is primarily tied to sexuality. The care system has evolved in order for humans and animals to look after their offspring, and is the foundation of our social orientation. The grief system functions to restore contact with caregivers in situations of separation. It produces pain upon separation, well-being when there is contact. The play system has evolved to have two main functions: preparing the child for adult life, and to co-operate with other systems in creating social bonds. The rage system primarily serves to make other beings act in accordance with one's needs and desires. Whereas anger, according to Panksepp, is a secondary state, rage protects what is fundamentally important for the organism.[33] This view of emotions as adaptive programmes that help us to act, is influential and not something to be challenged here. It ties emotions to action tendencies, and to concrete challenges in the environment. Panksepp's systems are located in the brain. In the darwinistic approaches to literature, these evolutionary adaptive programmes are related to the function of literature as adaptivity. However, this approach tends to privilege realistic fiction, which comes closest to representing the problems and situations these programmes are designed to solve. Like Ekman's theory of basic emotions, there is a finite number to the systems. They both converge on the number seven. Both theories posit that the basic emotions are universal. As Panksepp says, "These emotions appear to be universal and to be associated with specific neuroendocrine patterns and brain sites […]."[34] And Daniel Siegel, with reference to Ekman's theory, says that each of the seven "categorical emotions" reveals "the way in which we create common pathways of neural firing that link together states

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[33] Jaak Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[34] Ibid., 260.

of activation into a functional whole we call an emotional state of mind."[35] Ekman's theory pertains to the communicate aspect of emotions: what we convey to other people. We thus have two systems which have radically different *loci*, the human brain and the human (inter-)face. But they both regard emotions as discrete entities. The view of evolutionary theorists that emotions are universal, hardwired psycho-affective programmes that solve ancient and recurrent threats to our survival[36] is criticised by social constructionists, who view emotions as socially learned responses constructed in culturally embedded discourses governed by social concerns.[37] In their view, cultures over time create new kinds of responses to new kinds of situations. Although these contrasting biological and social approaches conceive of the source of emotions in markedly different ways, both ascribe important relational functions to emotion. And both assume that emotions help us solve many of the basic problems of social life. A view of emotions as discrete and as constructive responses to specific causes, is too simple, however. Greenberg argues that we rarely encounter emotions in pure form, "but rather observe combinations or sequences such as fear of anger or a blend of sadness and shame. The nature of the combinations of emotions is complex, as all emotions have, to varying degrees, components of other emotions within them."[38] I believe that starting out from the emotions, or the neuropsychological programmes, occludes the lived experiences of the complex situations in which people find themselves embedded. Human beings do not always solve problems or adapt to situations by acting. We also suffer. A different approach to understanding emotion is provided by Cochran and Caspell, an approach which they call "dramaturgical":

> It seems clear that what endures over time is not arousal…. What seems capable of enduring are meanings. For example, beliefs and judgments endure, but not any kind of belief or judgment will do, for emotions are nothing if not dramatic. If it is meaning that endures, it must be a particular kind of meaning, what is meaningful rather than, for instance, just referential. .. The underlying thesis of this book is that meanings are organized into a dramatic structure, a story. To experience a certain emotion is to be involved in a particular type of life drama.[39]

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[35] Daniel J. Siegel, "Emotion as Integration: A Possible Answer to the Question, What is Emotion?," in *The Healing Power of Emotion: Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice,* ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel and Marion Solomon (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 161.

[36] John Tooby, and Leda Cosmides, "The past explains the present: Emotional adaptations and the structure of ancestral environments," *Ethology and Sociobiology* 11, no. 4-5 (1990): 375-424.

[37] See for instance Catherine Lutz, and Geoffrey M. White, "The Anthropology of Emotions," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15 (1986): 405-36.

[38] Leslie S. Greenberg and René H. Rhodes, "Emotion in the change process," in *How People Change: Inside and Outside Therapy,* ed. Rebecca C. Curtis and George Stricker (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1991), 50.

[39] Larry Cochran, and Emily Claspell, *The Meaning of Grief: A dramaturgical Approach to Understanding Emotion* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 14.

They are interested in states and processes that are played out over long time periods. They argue that emotions are dramatic, and that therefore they are processual and involve meanings which are structured like dramas. They are interested not just in emotions as transient states in response to concrete incidents. There are experiences which we undergo or suffer, and which involve meaning-making and a complex pattern of interaction of emotions, or that leave us stuck. To understand our affective responses to works of literature is therefore not so much about concrete emotions being aroused, as about seeing the reader as already immersed in a complex of feelings and affects that may sometimes constitute a crisis, other times more simply a 'mood'. A theory of pathematics will therefore, like Panksepp's and Ekman's theories, attempt to determine fundamental affective responses, but unlike theirs start out from the crises in which people are embedded and the dramatically patterned affective processes which they undergo in resolving these crises. Living through such crises depend less on activity than passivity. It is through being moved that one finds the capacity to suffer the crisis. A crisis is a forking path: it may lead to resolution and the creation of meaning, or it may lead to self-fragmentation, regression, denial, or loss of meaning. A crisis is not a *problem,* a throwing-before, that I can solve strategically. To get through a crisis, I depend on an encounter with grace or mercy. A catalyst is needed.

I will in the following describe each of the six transformative affective patterns through which a person is moved from crisis to resolution.

Descriptions of the transformative affective patterns

Tragic katharsis

Tragic katharsis is the resolution of a process of coming to terms with loss or bereavement. The tragic implies a loss of great magnitude. The person must negotiate a passage through various stages of complex emotions; from denial, anger, self-recrimination to grieving and incorporation of the memory of the loved one. This is at once a process of purification, purgation and clarification. What must be purged are emotions such as denial, fear, anger and guilt, in order to purify sorrow. Sorrow is a melting feeling that is other-directed, it involves the deepest appreciation of the other. When sorrow is purified then the person can clarify what the meaning of the experience was and what the other person meant to one. Katharsis is therefore

much more complex than emotions being raised from a state of a-pathy and subsequently returning to homeostasis. Katharsis is the successful negotiation of a crisis that threatens to collapse the self-structure. The natural initial reaction to being confronted with the loss of a loved one is denial: 'no, this can't have happened'. This denial keeps emotions at bay, and may lead to numbing. Whether grieving be conceptualised as consisting of four or five stages, as linear or fuzzy, the point is that there is a complex configuration of entwined emotional states to live through and sort out. There is no guarantee that the person will succeed in resolving the crisis. Katharis is thus far more complex than a mere "emotional discharge." It is the living through of a deep crisis of loss to its eventual resolution in the melting feeling of sorrow, enabling a clarification of the meaning of the relationship.

The existential psychotherapist Emmy van Deurzen relates a case example of a woman who has been severely depressed for a year after the death of her husband and son in a car accident. Initially, Rita "does not want to be made to let go of Steven and Ralph, who mean everything to her. Grieving is synonymous with giving them up and she does not want to do that."[40] Rita cannot imagine how to find a way to ever enjoy life again. Until now, Rita has tried to keep her pain at bay. She "talks a lot about the unfairness of life and wonders why this has hit her rather than anyone else."[41] After a while, it transpires that Rita suffers terrible guilt over the accident. She had had a row with her husband, and was angry with him for failing her. Rita feels that the accident is her fault. Her "fear still tells her she is guilty", and when asked: "'Your sense of guilt is what makes the grief so unbearable, isn't it?'", she nods "and the tears begin to flow […]. Her sorrow is finally exploding instead of imploding inside of her."[42] After this, her grief for her son comes to the fore, which is "much softer and open": "She talks of him with tenderness and with a kind of bittersweet joy."[43] Slowly, Rita has a growing understanding "of the inner strength that her battles with misfortune have brought her. She accepts that she has to make her tragedy into a meaningful event." And when she makes peace with the past, two years after the crash, she can face it "without feeling afraid and guilty."[44] Finally, Rita "believes that

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[40] Emmy Van Deurzen, "Existential Therapy," in *Handbook of Individual Therapy*, ed. Windy Dryden (London: Sage, 2002), 199.

[41] Ibid., 201.

[42] Ibid., 203.

[43] Ibid., 204.

[44] Ibid., 205.

she has been blessed to overcome something that she thought was impossible to overcome."[45] Here we see the process of catharsis unfold. Rita does not want to grieve and keeps her pain at bay. Her first feeling is fear: she does not want to go into this. Then there is blaming, why me? These are universal reactions. So are the feelings of guilt and self-recrimination. Anger and resentment with her husband and in-laws are also involved. These feelings are then cast out, *purged*. Towards the end of the process, there are softening feelings of tenderness. Her sorrow is being *purified*. And then, there are attempts to make meaning of the tragedy, and finally she is able to feel blessed: the meaning of the catastrophe has been *clarified* for her. Rita defended against the pain for a year, and then took another year to be able to embrace life again. We see here that a process that begun with *fear being raised* culminated in feelings of *self-compassion* and tenderness. This is the unfolding of tragic catharsis, and it was predicated upon the intervention of a facilitator of change, a catalyst. Although in objective terms such a personal loss may not seem properly 'tragic', when viewed from the perspective of the subject, who guiltily casts herself as responsible for the catastrophe, we can see the relevance of such a central tragic concept as *hamartia.*

Comic katharsis

Comic katharsis is the resolution of a process of coming to terms with interpersonal conflict or discord. The person must negotiate a passage through various stages of complex feelings and emotional states. There may be confusion, hostility, hatred, projections, denigrations and contempt. These feelings must be purged in order to purify joy. When joy is purified, the meaning can be clarified. Joy is ultimately the joy of union, and is more complex than the emotion of happiness. This pure joy can be distinguished from triumph, jubilation and happiness in relation to achieving a goal. When a team celebrates a triumph, then the *joy* lies in celebrating the happiness together. Joy comes as the resolution of the greatest opposition, and results from two halves being connected, when there is recognition of the bond of love. Joy is the end point of a dialectical process. Whether the resolution is the end of a relationship or renewed commitment, there is katharsis when both parties recognise the deep significance of the bond, and that this bond will always be there, in a clarification of its meaning. In the classic romantic comedy the two parties represent different tribes or classes or identities, and their

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45 Ibid., 206.

prospective union is met by opposition. In conflict the parties feel the need to disguise their true identities and feelings, and to project unwanted feelings onto the other. Disguise and projection will always lead to confusion and ridicule. The laughter of comedy is different from the final state of joy. The laughter is closely connected to confusion, derision, and the state of inauthenticity. Joy is a melting feeling, made visible as a glowing smile. The comic is about seeing through the mask to the underlying true being of the person. Joy is the smiling of moist eyes with no need of protection. Thus one moves from ridicule of the other to sympathy. This process may also begin with denial, as is the case in *Episode:* no, there is no quarrel. I am in the right, the other person in the wrong. The process of resolution commences with admitting that there is discord.

One must admit to having negative feelings, but one must also own one's vulnerability and fear of rejection. This involves a movement from defense-attack to acknowledging emotional undercurrents, and finally being able to communicate about and share long-denied core emotions, and feeling received when doing so. What is cast of is the mask, what is purified is the joy of connecting, and what is clarified is the meaning and value of the bond. Thus comic katharsis is the movement from discord to concord via ridicule (negative evaluation), sympathy (acknowledgment of own and other's vulnerability) and authentic sharing of emotional needs. According to Susan Johnson, who practices Emotion-Focused Therapy with couples, "the change process moves through three stages: (1) negative cycle de-escalation, (2) restructuring of attachment interactions, and (3) consolidation."[46] I believe the same process also characterises conflict resolutions outside that of romantic relationships. In any conflict, it can be very difficult to break the negative cycle of defense-attack, unless there is a facilitative agent that katalyses the change into restructured interactions and possible reconciliation. Johnson gives a case example in which the partners Ed and Gail arrive at reconciliation. The following communication from Gail to her partner is I believe a manifestation of concord resulting from a comic katharsis, as Ed comes to hold her in a joyous embrace. Johnson quotes Gail thus:

> 'I don't feel angry right now. I feel more of those scary feelings we have talked about. Part of me wants to keep you away and test you to see if you really care, just like I used to do in the past. Then all you see is this controlling, angry person. And I might even look kind of cool right now. But inside I have that sense of feeling small and not wanting you to see how helpless I feel. But I do feel this helplessness. This is so hard. I do believe that you want to be there for me. And I understand now how we have hurt each other in this pattern we got caught in. But it is a risk for me to talk like this, to feel this. I am so afraid that

[46] Susan Johnson, "Extravagant Emotion. Understanding and Transforming Love Relationships in Emotionally Focused Therapy," in *The Healing Power of Emotion. Affective Neuroscience, Development and Clinical Practice,* ed. Diana Fosha, Daniel J. Siegel, and Marion F. Solomon (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 267.

if I ask you, if I let you see how much I need you, you will not respond. Then I will feel more alone, so alone. That aloneness is so cold, cold like death. I want to ask you. I need to know that you will turn to me, hold me. (*In a soft voice, leaning towards him*) Can you hold me?'[47]

The partner attunes to her and responds in a receptive, open way. We see here that they have been caught in a pattern of hurting each other. Gail must purge the emotions of anger and admit her feelings of helplessness, containing the fear of rejection this involves. And then she must have the courage to create sympathy, the sharing of feeling, in openly communicating a need for intimacy. When the need is met the bond is re-established and clarified: they acknowledge the cord.

Romantic kenosis

Romantic kenosis is the resolution of a process of living through an identity crisis. The person must empty herself of doubt. This doubt is related to the anxiety of how one will be received when one comes out with who one really is. There may be a fear of being hurt or judged; a longing to return to a state of bliss and being at one with everything; or the shame-filled sense of self on account of prior self-invalidations – all such feelings must be contained. Essentially, this may be described as a crisis of inner exile: a condition in which one dare not express who one really is. Individuation always comes at a price. Anyone who does not belong to the compact majority must have courage to live out their true identity. Lesbian science fiction author Nicola Griffith has found that her books have helped readers to accept their own identity and situation:

> A woman in Australia, married with two children, read *Ammonite* and wrote me a letter to tell me that my novel had shown her what the empty space inside her meant: she was a lesbian. Two years later, I got an email from the same woman, saying she had read *Slow River* and as a result had found the courage to do something about it; she now had a girlfriend. At a bookstore reading in the South, a man told me *Slow River* had made his job bearable during a truly awful period in his life. A woman in the Midwest approached me at a convention: No, she didn't want to chat, but she thought I ought to know that *Ammonite* had literally saved her life: she had been planning to kill herself but instead, for six months, read the book cover to cover, over and over, endlessly, immersing herself in a world of women until she knew it was okay to be a woman, to stay alive and become herself.[48]

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[47] Ibid., 277.

[48] http://www.lambdaliterary.org/memo/03/31/books-change-lives-sometimes-books-save-lives-queer-books-save-queer-lives/

Thus we can see in these works that the desire for self-revelations and confessions are experienced as liberating and as an extended invitation to share intimate experiences. All the examples cited by Griffith are to do with the courage to embrace one's identity, to achieve *nostos*. A clear case of the identity crisis may be the challenge of coming out for gay and lesbian people. Coming out is not a linear process, but a gradual and recurring one. The person must come out at least twice; coming out to themselves, and coming out to others. Both of which may be experienced as hard steps. Kaufmann and Johnson conducted a study in which they reviewed models of the coming out process and interviewed gays and lesbians. They found that all models shared the same four main stages. The first they called "sensitization"; the pre-coming out stage in which there is identity confusion. There is awareness of being different and of having homosexual feelings. The second stage is about developing self-image and "managing guilt/doubt/anxiety."[49] The third stage is identity disclosure, before the final stage of identity pride. Kaufmann and Johnson criticise such models for being linear and for understating the importance of social context as well as cultural variation. Moreover, these models inadequately address the problem of stigma. Managing stigma is a process that may never be resolved, in relation to the non-stigmatised. This of course is a major point about identity crises for all minorities and for everybody who is 'different'. Kaufmann and Johnson found that many respondents reported that self-disclosure was selective, depending on context. And that romantic relationships formed an important part of achieving identity pride. One of the interviewees, Adam, talks about how he finally came to terms with being gay:

> When I was 33, I finally began to be able to get beyond social convention to get an idea that *I could actually actively construct who I am.* To hell with everybody else… I fell in love with a guy who was absolutely gorgeous. It created such a sense of dissonance for me that that was really what pushed me over the edge and into treatment. Finally it was like if I'm queer I'm queer.[50]

Recognising his feelings, he enters a crisis as he experiences dissonance. This dissonance, the discrepancy between who he 'ought' to be and who he is, creates the difficulty of "managing guilt/doubt/anxiety." I understand the process of regulating this doubt as one of gradually "emptying out" the dissonance.

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[49] Joanne M. Kaufmann, and Cathryn Johnson, "Stigmatized Individuals and the Process of Identity," *The Sociological Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (2004): 809.

[50] Ibid., 820.

Ironic kenosis

Ironic kenosis is a process of moving along a *via negativa*. I must separate from, and let go of, my attachment to something that I know is no longer what I deeply need. There is a double process involved: I must admit to myself that this situation is harming me, then I must leave this situation. To do so takes courage, as one cannot know what will come after one has turned away from and emptied oneself of the familiar. There is a surrender to the unknown. This is a movement away from that which I know to be bad for me, without knowledge of what lies beyond. If we look at my interpretation of the transaction between Veronica and Lawrence's novel, we may say that it belongs to the ironic. Superficially, the novel may be said to be romantic: the heroine leaves the sphere of the real and enters the dream-world of the forest in unison with her lover. However, the novel is not idyllic in idealising a simplified life in the country. Rather, the theme of escape from society is ultimately cast in an ironic mode. The world outside the woods, the society in which Connie lives, is represented as a false world which pollutes the spirit and destroys her soul. The woods is not represented as a 'nether', lower world, but as a transitional space from which one can look back on the fallen world and heal one's bruise. This is not a realm in which one can remain permanently. There may not be a better world elsewhere. All one can do is take the risk and separate from the false world. It is a *via negativa.* One must distance oneself from the false and inferior, without having any guarantee that one will end up in a better place. This separation from the mal-nourishing is therefore an ironic act. The essence of ironic kenosis is that the away-movement is an emptying out of the compulsive need, and at the same time containing the emptiness. When one moves away, one must at the same time face difficult feelings that had been fended off. Herein lies one of the limitations of the trans-theoretical model. In focusing on facing the problem and solving it, it underplays the difficult process of emotional regulation. It is not just about moving away from and staying away from what is harmful, but it is also about learning self-regulation. This requires *kenosis*: the emptying out of the old self-schema. Leaving behind a harmful situation or habit means giving up on the conviction that I must have relief from these difficult and unmanageable feelings. Giving up on this conviction leads to fear. The psychologist Peter Palanca says that difficult emotions can hinder the process of recovery: "As the recovery process deepens, we often face the hurdle of getting back in touch with our emotions, and learning to handle them appropriately rather than simply reacting or 'numbing out'."[51] When

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[51] Peter Palanka, https://www.psychotherapy.net/video/addictions-emotions

faced with the challenge of recognizing and taking responsibility for their emotions, people in recovery must typically deal with anger, shame, and guilt.

The Gestalt psychotherapist Judith Hemming presents a case history of a woman named Frankie, who suffered from alcoholism and was a victim of childhood neglect and abuse. After a year and half in treatment, in which Frankie has talked about her alcohol problems and the trauma of her mother's death, there came a session in which she "was wanting to go beyond storytelling":

> She spoke despairingly of her heart as being locked inside many boxes, wondering if she would ever come to meet it. So I invited her to travel through to her heart in fantasy, encouraging her to unlock door after door and find out. She did this as an internal exercise, her eyes closed, with me just making quiet suggestions as she sat opposite me. The impact of this exercise was enormous. For the first time in her adult life she felt wide open, very soft, and, at least in my presence, extraordinarily safe. However, when she left the room, she was terrified, believing that her heart's vulnerability could not cope with the buffeting of everyday life.[52]

Frankie subsequently had to learn "to close the doors again in her imagination so that she could choose the level of vulnerability that felt safe."[53] Gradually this enabled her to "feel her bewildered terror, grief, fury and despair, her shame and hatred, and gradually, her compassion."[54] In my view, this "unlocking of doors" to the heart, so that feared feelings can be felt and regulated, is an example of ironic kenosis.

Lyric ekstasis

Lyric ekstasis is an awakening to the present moment of experience, in an I-Thou meeting, that lifts the person up and out of stasis, depression or devitalisation. This ekstasis brings the person out of a crisis of "stuckness." One may well call the loss of vitality a loss of soul or an anaesthetisation. The life-world has become overly familiar to us, or we experience a loss of immediacy or meaning that calls upon a need for re-establishment of contact. Of course, the famous term in literary theory for this restoration of the world's freshness is Shklovskij's *ostrannenie*, 'defamiliarisation' or 'making-strange'. We may say that the aim of *ostrannenie*

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[52] Malcolm Parlett, and Judith Hemming, "Gestalt Therapy," in *Handbook of Individual Therapy*, ed. Windy Dryden (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 235.

[53] Ibid., 235.

[54] Ibid., 236.

is "mindfulness." What is meant by mindfulness? According to the Buddhist psychologist Khong,

> Different explanations have been given to unpack the meaning of mindfulness, and what is involved in being mindful. Gunaratana (1991) explains that mindfulness involves the 'ability to see things as they really are… to give bare attention and just looking at whatever comes up in the mind, or in each situation as it occurs'. According to Nyanaponika (1992) mindfulness entails cultivating constant awareness to what is 'actually happening to us and in us' moment by moment.[55]

Khong emphasises that mindfulness is a way of being, and not a technique. However, the term has become multi-referential. According to Germer, the term can be used to "describe a theoretical construct (mindfulness), the practice of cultivating mindfulness (such as meditation) or a psychological process (being mindful)."[56] It is the latter Khong has in mind here. "Mindfulness" has been criticized for being a vague, catch-all term.[57] Being mindful, however, as a way of being, comes very close to the essence of the lyrical. Perhaps a better term, considering that this being aliveness depends not just on awareness but also on imagination, would be 'soulfulness'.

Khong sites the case of a young mother, Therese, who is undergoing chemotherapy having been diagnosed with cancer. Therese was suffering from anxiety, panic, anger and distress, and she was "finding it hard to let go of the constant chatter going through my head."[58] Khong encouraged Therese to engage in observing change in nature: "Because it was winter, I suggested that she watch the leaves falling from a deciduous tree, and try and identify two similar clouds. Her encounter with impermanence in nature was deeply moving and profound, and resulted in a radical change of attitude."[59] Of this experience, Therese recounted:

> It was such a powerful experience. I noticed that the clouds were continually evolving. You asked me to look for two clouds that remained the same at any moment. I could not find any. I also noticed the tree shedding its leaves spontaneously. I realise now that change is natural and inevitable. It happens to everything and everyone. As I sat and watched these changes in nature, I realized that I was slowly losing

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[55] Belinda Siew Luan Khong, "Expanding the Understanding of Mindfulness: Seeing the Tree and the Forest," *The Humanistic Psychologist* 37, no. 2 (2009): 122.

[56] Christopher K. Germer, "Mindfulness: What is it? What does it Matter?," in *Mindfulness and Psychotherapy,* ed. Christopher C. Germer, Ronald D. Siegel, and Paul R. Fulton (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2005), 6.

[57] See for instance Adrian Wells, *Metacognitive Therapy for Anxiety and Depression* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 2009).

[58] Khong, "Expanding the Understanding of Mindfulness," 124.

[59] Ibid., 125.

the fear of the changes taking place within me, especially my fear of dying. I was surprised to find that there were no thoughts except the resolve to be around next year when the tree regains its leaves, and me, my falling hair.[60]

Khong refers to Therese's experience as an epiphany. I think the sudden realization is an example of a lyric ekstasis, in which Therese wakes up from the deepest despair to an experience of renewed vitality, resolving to live fully whatever time she had left.

Ekstasis of metable

Metablic ekstasis is an eye-opening experience of being shocked out of one's current framework and seeing things from a higher/more expansive vantage point. It is the experience of a profound change in worldview in one or more of six dimensions: political, intellectual, moral, personal, religious or cultural. I regard all of these dimensions to make up the spiritual domain, which is not limited to the religious. Mezirov has developed a theory of "perspective transformation," which he defines thus:

> The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings.[61]

The theory is concerned with how learners construe, validate and reformulate the meaning of their experience, according to Cranton.[62] Mezirov identified psychic, epistemic and sociocultural sets of assumptions that constitute an individual's meaning perspectives and make up the filter or framework through which experiences is processed and interpreted. Transformative learning, unlike learning which adds knowledge without a change of the existing frame of reference, happens when the person revises the set of assumptions through critical reflection. The person does not merely exchange one set of assumptions for another, but must transcend the previous level. Such perspective transformations may thus be either

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[60] Ibid., 125.

[61] Jack Mezirov, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 14.

[62] Patricia Cranton, *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning* (San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994.

conversive or deconversive. In my view, it is therefore a theory of spiritual perspective transformation. It is a conversion to the "view from above," in which one's previous framework appears small and limited. What sets this transformative affective pattern apart from the other five, is that this ecstatic encounter with a catalyst does not mark the resolution of a crisis, but rather *precipitates* a crisis. Therefore, *metanoia* constitutes and accompanies the crisis. When viewing one's life from above, it leads to three aspects of revaluation. What went before *may* be seen as a crisis, in so far as something essential can now be seen to have been missing from one's life. Secondly, one's current life-style must be revaluated with a view to acting otherwise. Thirdly, one may gradually discover a deeper purpose in life. Only at this point of commitment is the crisis resolved.

In a longitudinal case study, Richard Kiely investigated the long-term consequences for students participating in an international service-learning programme in Nicaragua, a programme that was explicitly oriented towards social justice. He found two major aspects that point to the essence of the ekstasis of the metable and the ensuing metanoia. Each student experienced a profound change in worldview pertaining to one or more of the following dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual and cultural. However, this sudden and dramatic change also lead to difficult experiences that may be seen to constitute a crisis: students who immediately experienced a willingness to substantially change their lifestyle and values, subsequently experienced prolonged conflict and struggle in their efforts to translate the changed worldview into meaningful action. Kiely quotes the following excerpt from the account given by Karen, reflecting on her experience of service-learning in Nicaragua in 1994:

> 'The Nicaragua trip challenged my entire value and belief system. I now have feelings of guilt over having so much, of being privileged enough to be born in a stable prosperous country and into an educated White middle class family. Every day I am unable to ignore a world of Maquiladoras, global commodity chains, and suffering due to the curse of bad luck, and social and political events that have taken place in Nicaragua and the rest of the developing world. Is this poverty the way it has to be? Do I just accept it and buy cheap goods at Wal-Mart or do I boycott and do something about the treatment of people in the third world factories that are being used and abused. My Nicaragua experience has gotten me involved in all of this whether I like it or not. The Nicaragua trip planted the seed…'[63]

Karen's life has been enriched, but also made more complex and difficult on account of her transformative learning experience. Her *metanoia* apparently has not yet reached resolution, as

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[63] Richard Kiely, "A Chameleon with a Complex: Searching for Transformative Learning in International Service-Learning," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 10 (Spring 2004): 5.

she is struggling to come to terms with the implications of her transformation. In my understanding, resolution will always be a leap into Conjunctive Faith, an *epistrophe*.

A fundamental postulate

To suffer is not the same as being in pain or being afflicted; to suffer is to live through the affliction and to create meaning (*poeisis)* out of it. Accordingly, a fundamental postulate of a theory of pathematics is this:

> *The deep structures of literature, the six protogenres, are humanity's responses to the universal life-crises.*

For instance, in relation to the crisis of identity or exile: When the Israelites were conquered by the Babylonians and taken away from their homeland, and they were struggling to maintain their sense of identity and tribal belonging, they begun to compile the Hebrew scriptures. Creation stories were most important to identity, because they rooted people in a particular world setting. The Babylonians had a story of creation in which the god Marduk defeated the goddess Tiamat and then tore her body apart before using it to make the world. Genesis 1 may be understood as a counter-story to theirs, in which violence is supplanted by creation out of love. The Greek tragedies may have served the function of instituting the democracy, but ultimately they were responses to suffering, representing the hero who has everything, only to lose it because of forces beyond his control. Satire and irony are deep responses to the need to protect oneself and distance oneself from the corrupt and polluted community. Comedy is the ultimate response to confusion and attrition. And the metable is the response to a need for expanded consciousness, for transcendence. The lyric is a response to the inevitability of habituation, of the fading freshness of the world. For instance, in the following fragment from Sappho, a world opens up: "Just now Dawn in her golden sandals."[64] Not only do we imagine the day gradually approaching, personified as walking step by step in her sandals, but at the same time we *see and feel* the golden sunlight coming in through the window, alighting on the sandals and making them shine forth in their sandalness. Therefore it literally *dawns* on the speaker that a new day has come.

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[64] Sappho, *The Poetry of Sappho,* trans. Jim Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 31.

A further three protogenres: formative affective patterns

I have proposed that there are six fundamental transformative affective patterns corresponding to resolutions of six life-crises and six protogenres. Does this mean that imaginative literature can be reduced to these six protogenres, or are there other protogenres that do not constitute transformative affective patterns? After all, it seems intuitively obvious that there must be other protogenres. In the remaining life-changing reading experiences I investigated, I found three other patterns that I consider to be formative affective patterns. I will in the following relate these three patterns to the 3 *eide,* genres, of classic rhetoric: the deliberative/political, the forensic/judicial and the epideictic/ceremonial.

The forensic genre deals with what really happened. It is primarily *informative.* This corresponds to the documentary, historical and realist genre of literature: the attempt to represent as accurately and fully as possible what it was really like to be in a particular situation. Marge found that the reading of Mrs Oliphant's novel *Days of My Life: An Autobiography* helped her deal with her difficult life-situation of undergoing adult education whilst at the same time being a lone parent. As such it was not a transformative reading experience so much as one that helped her accept her situation, and give her the sense of strength to deal with it.[65]

The deliberative genre deals with what must be done about a problem. It is primarily *persuasive*. This corresponds to the exhortative genres of literature: the attempt to provide guidance to people who find themselves with a moral problem. Agnes was struggling to care for her disabled in-laws, and had always dreamed of living abroad. Through reading Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story *Mr Peebles' Heart*, in which a husband is depressed because he thinks he must stay at home and look after his wife, and is thereafter persuaded by his sister-in-law, a doctor, to travel abroad for a year, Agnes found the resolve to move to Paris to realise her dream. In my view it was not properly speaking a transformative reading experience, but one that allowed her to strengthen her self and express her own needs.

The ceremonial genre deals with the present and the need to praise or censure somebody or something. It is primarily *entertaining*. It allows us to be diverted, and corresponds to genres of literature the purpose of which is divertissement, or what Kocelni termed *chills 'n' thrills*. Its psychological function is fascination, and the mode of engagement may be akin to Freud's notion of sublimation. In Marco's story, reading the crime noirs of James Ellroy enabled him to live out his fascination with crime and evil, and at the same time refraining from committing

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[65] See the Method Chapter for a discussion of narratives not selected for interpretation.

any criminal offences. Marco's is perhaps not a transformative reading experience, but one that shored up his defences and saw him through a difficult period in his life.

These three protogenres are not transformative, but *formative*: they function to strengthen the ego, to enable the self to accept the problematic situation in which the reader finds herself. Thus these genres are not responses to *crises*, but to *predicaments*. As such, these protogenres come much closer to responding to the life-challenges that Panksepp's adaptive programmes are designed to solve.

Accordingly, I postulate that there are nine fundamental protogenres of imaginative literature, each corresponding to an affective pattern:

<u>The transformative patterns</u>

The tragic

The comic

The romantic

The ironic-satiric

The lyric

The metabolic

<u>The formative patterns</u>

The informative: representational (documentary, historic)

The instructive: hortatory (guidance, advice)

The divertive: entertainment (fascination, e.g. works of the uncanny, crime, horror, thrillers).

Most attempts to account for the functions and uses of literature do so in terms of the three formative patterns. There are three principal forms of *apologia,* which correspond to each of the formative patterns respectively. Firstly, there is the representational argument: Literature

can give us information about life in other times and places, or literature increases information literacy and critical thinking skills. Secondly, there is the ethical argument: Literature has moral importance: we find models that can guide our conduct in a positive direction, or warn us off a negative direction; literature makes us more pro-social and compassionate. Thirdly, there is the art for art's sake argument: literature is understood as various degrees of sophistication of entertainment: from escapism to focusing on formal aspects of works. Such apologias are grounded in a realist ontology, which lead to either seeing literature as referential, representing the world "out there," or non-referential, as "fiction." What appears in the light of pathematics is that there are six patterns that reflect an idealist ontology, in which literature neither represents the world "out there" or "in here," but instead creates meaning out of our suffering.

I put forth the following proposition regarding pathematics:

There are nine fundamental literary deep structures, protogenres that constitute affective patterns, of which there are six transformative affective patterns and three formative ones. Pathematics could thus be a comprehensive, i.e. universal and exhaustive, catalogue of life-crises and predicaments, and allloioses (ways of being moved and changed) in relation to protogenres and affective patterns.

This proposition, needless to say, is tentative and subject to further study. It would require extensive research to verify it empirically. However, even if it were found not to be falsifiable, it may still retain pragmatic value: If one entertains this postulate, what does it enable one to see regarding relations between crises, genres and affective patterns? Subject to further elaboration, the theory could potentially function as a bridge between structuralist poetics and reader-response theory.

In his *Structuralist Poetics,* Jonathan Culler sought to ground literary studies in linguistics and the science of the *sign* and structure. In the preface to the new edition of his work, Culler states the purpose as one of undertaking

> to interpret and draw lessons from the variety of structuralist writings and to lay the foundations for a systematic study of literature. The goal was a poetics, an understanding of the devices, conventions and strategies of literature, of the means by which literary works create their effects. In opposition to *poetics*

I set *hermeneutics,* the practice of interpretation, whose goal is to discover or determine the meaning of a text.[66]

Culler maintains that literary studies should be committed to establishing such a poetics, and laments the subsequent post-structuralist turn which refused the possibility of a systematic study of relations among works of literature. I believe Culler's wish for a poetics that can systematically study how literary works affect us is legitimate. However, rather than grounding such a literary theory in linguistics, a poetics should return to Aristotle and Longinus, and ground it *in the affective responses of readers*. Against Culler, who discredits reader-response studies, pathematics relies on studying individual responses to particular works in the context of their life-crises.

Reading by Heart: *Lexithymia*

Having defined pathematics and described the transformative and formative affective patterns, there is still one essential dimension to be discussed: in interpreting the transactions between reader and work, I identified two categories: the manner in which a realisation was affectively experienced (the experience of being moved); and the mode of engagement with the work. In table 1 there are two columns of concepts that designate how each reader related these aspects of the transaction.

The experience of realisation

The verb 'to realise' runs with striking frequency through the six narratives. And each reader explicitly or implicitly testifies to being deeply moved by the encounter with the literary work. The realisations experienced are instances of being moved. Being moved has cognitive components of insight. Realisation *comes to* the reader in a particular phenomenal way. They may be divided into the two temporal categories of *sudden* or *gradual* realisation. However, the

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[66] Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2002), vii.

realisations each have different affective and phenomenal qualities that the following concepts are meant to encompass:

Ekaphany

Esther's encounter with the poem is experienced as a sudden, unexpected revelation through attending to a detail that is sensual and kinetic. It leads to a *realisation* of profound affective importance. Therefore it feels important to *learn the poem by heart.* Accordingly, I suggest that to *realise* something is to learn with and in and through the heart.

Feeling felt

Camilla experiences a gradual and progressive realisation through following the movement of the shape of the sentences. This progression can metaphorically be described as fugue-like. The realisation is one of feeling courage. It is literally a form of *encouragement:* enheartening.

Crystallised felt sense

Veronica experiences a gradual emerging of a felt sense that becomes *crystallised.* It involves meta-cognition and affect. She can do for herself what she does for Connie: empathise. And she can empathise with herself through taking the perspective of the mother coming back to life. This crystallisation is of a refracted form of two-way empathy.

Katabasis of transmuting internalisation

Nina experiences a gradual form of realisation that may be regarded as a transmuting internalisation. With each reading new aspects of feeling emerge, until the 'Nell gaze' comes into full view and can be grasped.

Ekpleksis

Jane is "shocked and affected". There is an element of consternation as the view from above is taken up.

Wonder

Sue experiences resonance as the song of the lyric and the song of the body are mutually attuned, and surprise that this is possible. This double realisation is one of wonder.

These experiences are not discrete categories, and nor are they restricted to a particular transformative affective pattern. Instead, they are differing qualitative aspects of the phenomenon of *realising* something. They are realisations of profound affective importance. I suggest that to *realise* something of deep personal relevance, through being moved, is to learn with and in and through the heart.[67] This is in accord with the neuropsychological finding of Vessel et al. discussed in the literature review: during the strongest affective responses, self-referential mentation is activated in a different way, encompassing affective response and personal relevance. A fundamentally different brain activity accompanies only the most moving aesthetic experiences, in which there is integration of attention to artwork and internal states.

Mode of engagement

It is through the mode of engagement that the transformative affective patterns are brought to life and realised. These can be summarised as follows:

Readerese

Esther describes a mode of engagement where she is talking to and with the characters. Veronica describes a similar way of engagement urging Connie ahead. This engagement involves not only voicing but an interoceptive activity.

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[67] This accords with the neuroaesthetic studies of Vessel et al., discussed in the literature review, in which they found that During the strongest affective responses, self-referential mentation is activated in a different way, encompassing affective response and personal relevance. A fundamentally different brain activity accompanies only the most moving aesthetic experiences, in which there is integration of attention to artwork and internal states. The most moving artworks "produce a clearly differentiable pattern of signal, going beyond mere liking, to something more intense and personally profound." Edward A. Vessel, G. Gabrielle Starr, and Nava Rubin, "The brain on art: intense aesthetic experience activates the default mode network," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 6 (2012): 9.

Enkinaesthesia

An essential element of Veronica's mode of engagement with the novel is the visceral, and a bodily form of knowing, in which she is gradually brought to a felt sense of awareness, of being able to listen to the heart. I have called this mode *enkinaesthetic.*

Agkalilexia

I proposed to call Camilla's mode of engagement *agkalilexia:* meditatively reading significant passages as "holding-grounds" or nests that enable a process of affective mentalisation – a heart in which she can feel her own heart and feel embraced.

Palilexia

I called Nina's transaction with the work *palilexia:* a *deepening attunement* to the work through repeated readings.

Metabolic reading

Janes' mode of engagement I described in terms of *lectio divina,* using the metaphors of hunger, eating and digestion. Jane talks about a *hunger* for reading, and for digesting the truth revealed through *Shikasta.*

Synesis

Sue's mode of engagement may be understood as a form of *synesis*, an interaffective attunement that lets a deeper understanding shine forth in dyadic contemplation.

What is important to note is that these *kinds* of experience are not discrete categories that belong exclusively to the particular crisis or genre that characterises their reading experiences. For instance, there is nothing about *enkinaesthesia* that makes it pertain only to ironic kenosis, nor is *synesis* tied only to the lyric. What we see here are different aspects that all point towards a larger mode of engagement, and that partly overlap each other. How can we

circle in this transaction? We are not looking for the common denominator of these six modes. Rather, they are all partial designations of a more comprehensive pattern. At the same time, we may see them as related to the mode of engagement that Kuiken et al. have identified as "expressive enactment." Kuiken et al. define self-modifying feelings as a distinct level of feeling in relation to the literary text. It is marked by a particular approach to the text characterised by a combination of an absorptive trait and a situation of crisis. They specify three features that set expressive enactment apart from other modes: explicit description of feeling, blurred boundaries and reiterative modification of emergent affective theme. In my understanding, the six aspects summarised in table 1 may all be said to reflect expressive enactment. I understand the way the intimant points to, and talks about, significant passages as a form of expressive enactment. There is in all cases description of feeling and reiteration of an affective theme, and there is a blurring of boundary. When talking about a character, the reader is also talking about herself, and vice versa. For instance, as Nina says: "I read myself into it." A possible distinction from expressive enactment is that Kuiken et al. point to the hybridity of this mode: such reading focuses both on formal features and the affective content of the text. To what extent do my six readers attend to formal features? Several of them specifically remarks on the style of the writer, but there is no explicit discussion of formal features as such. Camilla intimates a distinction between aesthetic judgment and *being moved:* "This is a beautiful passage, and I can appreciate its qualities, but it does not concern me. […] This is interesting. Well done. Well crafted." But I have not been moved by it." This distinction echoes Leder and Nadal's finding: "It is possible to be emotionally moved by artworks we understand poorly, and it is possible to feel indifferent towards artworks we understand well and judge highly."[68]

We cannot conclude that these readers do not read hybridically. Their modes of engagement share the properties of expressive enactment. However, the reading experiences of these readers do not necessarily follow a hermeneutical arc. It is not required that the reader be aware of, and clarify or explicate, all the ambiguities and polysemic aspects of a text in order to create meaning. Reading by heart follows a different arc: that of being moved, through subjecting oneself, by *something* in the work, and, as Philip Davis writes of the experience of reading, "taking books personally to such a depth inside, that you no longer have a merely secure idea of self and relevance to self, but a deeper exploratory sense of a reality somehow

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[68] Helmut Leder, and Marcos Nadal, "Ten years of a model of aesthetic appreciation and aesthetic judgments: The aesthetic episode – Developments and challenges in empirical aesthetics," *British Journal of Psychology* 105 (2014): 447. The model was discussed in the Literature Review.

finding unexpected relations and echoes in you."[69] From such deep impressions new configurations of self may be created, as the crisis can be resolved and given meaning within an enlarged self-understanding. This arc of reading is highly significant. There is a perennial tendency in hermeneutics to conflate *reading* and *interpretation*. The former is a personal, or interpersonal if one reads in a group, response to the work. The latter is to act as an intermediary between a text and an audience.

What is most evident about the six modes of engagement identified in the life-changing reading experiences, is that they all converge on what we may call the *bodily* aspect of reading. *Readerese, agkalilexia, enkinaesthesia, palilexia, metabolic reading* and *synesis,* in pointing to physical, kinaesthetic, affective, physiological , interoceptive and metabolic aspects of reading, all relate to embodied cognition and embodied affectivity in the transaction with the literary work. Together, these aspects allow us to see a larger configuration.

The enkinaesthetic aspect is apparent in all six narratives

Esther says: "As you read you shout out inside yourself: 'No, no, no!'; 'Stop being so bloody self-destructive!' […] You care about the characters, and you address them and talk to them." There is a clear interoceptive quality to this 'readerese' description.

Camilla "underlines" significant passages as she reads. This is a form of cognitive embodiment.

Veronica likes to "cradle and hold" the book when she engages with the work: "And if there's a particularly good passage I'll almost like stroke the page, haha, and obviously connect with it. […] And for me when I'm reading, just the act of, I guess, sitting a certain way, or physically picking it up, the way that I physically hold myself, the physical process of turning the pages, makes me physically feel that I'm in it. The way that I can touch the page if something good happens, the way that I can sort of close it and turn it away from me."

Nina uses the metaphor of dancing to express this internally felt movement: "It is like dancing, in a way, a particular way of moving. You are permitted to draw threads to yourself, but at the same time you are allowed to let yourself go, to dissolve into it, to dance with what comes."

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[69] Philip Davis, *The Experience of Reading* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), xvi, as quoted in the introduction to this dissertation.

Sue also employs musical metaphors: "your whole being is going to, <u>sing</u> with it." Also, her reading was not only affective but had a physiological component: "Yeah, I think I probably did have a weep actually."

Jane stresses that knowledge has an affective component: "I think that we are here *to know*. I don't mean intellectually, a lot of our knowing is in our gut, in our heart. You've already got your feelings, sometimes you just haven't got any language for them."

Moreover, the metaphoric field of eating is also an aspect of *enkinaesthesia* or the *visceral*. In three of the narratives, the metaphor of eating is used. Jane talks of her reading motivation in terms of hunger. Veronica talks of digesting the experience: "So, yeah, afterwards, when I was digesting it". Esther expands on this to include the entire process of eating as a metaphor of the reading experience: "It really is a form of dialogue, where you taste it, chew on it, digest it." Camilla does not explicitly use the metaphor of digestion, but points out that the experience is not finished when the book is closed: "you cannot 'take the temperature' on what the book has done to you right afterwards, you need time to be able to gauge that. It continues to live inside you," which I think is a clear parallel to the digestive part of the process of eating. This lends confirmation to the finding reported by Usherwood and Toyne, referred to in the literature review, that the reading experience was described in terms of nourishment: "When talking about the nourishment on offer through imaginative literature, several participants developed the eating metaphor."[70]

Reading as contemplation: a sacred space, a unique relationship

Camilla talks of reading as providing a sacred space: "My secret sacred space? Yes, for me many books are holy. Nothing else is, that's for sure. A kind of reverence for them […] I need to protect that space, and it did feel uncomfortable thinking that I was going to talk about them. I maybe have a need for this holiness, too. A great reading experience is sacred, the space in which you become absorbed in the book. I feel a peaceful stillness inside."

Nina talks of needing external space in order to access the inner space: "I seldom read on trains, for instance, or in public places. It is too existential a thing for that, because something happens when I read. It's a way of working through my own inner stuff. I want to be by myself.

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[70] Bob Usherwood, and Jackie Toyne, "The Value and impact of reading imaginative literature," *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 34, no. 1 (2002): 39.

I need to be able to let myself go, to weep or whatever. I'll read for a while, and then something will happen inside me. And if I am surrounded by people, then that movement will not have enough space. So I have a very intimate relationship to books."

Sue says she wanted to protect her experience: "No, well, it just felt so personal, I actually didn't want anyone to see or notice. I did feel a bit shocked, and I think I didn't really want to talk about it, because there was nobody there that I knew very well. It just felt very, I felt like it was, oh, that it was touching a really tender place. I felt quite protective with myself at the time.

They are all talking about a place or space inside. This "place" is described as *holy and tender*, respectively. The discourse of the numinous meets the visceral-affective in this intimate space. It must be *protected* from intrusion by others or by one's own thoughts. Reading is an intimate experience that puts you in contact with the sacred and tender place inside. This intimate relationship with the book is different both from social relationships and therapeutic relations:

Camilla says that the book provides a unique relationship that social relations cannot offer:

> And there are very few other situations where you don't need to give something back if you want to receive solace. So if I came to you and said: "Oh I feel absolutely terrible!" I would have had to explain what had happened, or why I felt that way. And then we, then I would have wallowed and got lost in the maze of my own thoughts. I do of course think that sometimes it can be healthy to talk about matters, but there are times when that is just experienced as adding to the confusion. And also, the sense that once something has been said, once it is out there, it cannot be retracted. It has a finality, you have stated what things are like. Whereas here, in the meeting with the text, you are set free: your experience is not distorted, your experience remains intact – and at the same time your reading <u>is</u> your experience of it.

This is seconded by Nina, who finds that in reading "it is up to us to regulate the distance. We can come and go, and that's vital. […] it has its own unique value. If I only had people to relate to, I would end up very confused and depleted, and if I only had books I would of course get lonely."

Veronica distinguishes reading from the therapeutic relation:

> when you're in therapy, you're either being asked questions, which you then have to consider and think about and process, and you're maybe trying to juggle, is this the right answer? Is this really what I think? Are they going to judge me, or what? […]You are aware, even if they say that you're not, you are aware that you're very vulnerable and kind of giving things up that you're maybe not sure if that's even what you really think. Whereas with reading *The Winter's Tale*, it's almost like the kind of realisations that you make about yourself or your feelings, they rise up unannounced.

This understanding of the relationship with the work as being unique is related to the sacred space. In social and therapeutic relationships there is the risk of being judged, of having to explain ourselves and the obligation to take turns. In reading there is an experiential process that is not interrupted by such concerns – the inner sanctuary is protected and enlarged. The relationship with the work is therefore felt to be a form of contemplation. The temple must be protected, and it allows an experience that is separate from that of social interactions.

What I have found is that the modes of engagement converge on the bodily-affective experiences of internal movement and space on the one hand; and on the tender, vulnerable and sacred space of contemplation on the other. In my interpretation of Jane, in discussing the hunger for spiritual nourishment, I referred to the reading practice of *Lectio Divina*. This mode of engagement with sacred texts combine precisely the *enkinaesthesia* of eating and digestion, with contemplation in and of the *holy* relationship to the source and the living word. As Ferguson remarks of medieval writers on reading, they

> conceive the activity of reading in alimentary metaphors; the reader 'tastes' the words of Scripture on the 'palate' of the heart, or indeed literally in the mouth as he or she pronounces them; one has then to 'chew' the text thoroughly and 'digest' it, that is so to say, proceed towards interpretation and personal appropriation.[71]

It must be noted that another vital metaphor here is the *heart. Lectio Divina* was originally a ruminative form of medieval reading practice linking study and textual interpretation, where the reader, in an encounter with "the living word" would listen to the sacred text "as though it were spoken to one directly and personally," according to Duncan Robertson. This was a subjective form in reading, in contrast to the objective aim of biblical exegesis.[72] Robertson argues that *Lectio Divina* was a standard of medieval literary culture, and that it should be rediscovered by modern readers to restore "a fullness of active, affective, intellectual and creative literary participation."[73] He links it to reader-response theory, arguing that it can bring even the most hermetic text to life for the reader. Robertson claims that theories of reader-response have completely bypassed medieval practices. He says that for instance Tomkins, in

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[71] Duncan Robertson, *The Medieval Experience of Reading. Cistercian Studies Series*, vol. 238 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 31.

[72] Ibid., xiii.

[73] Ibid., 233.

her essay 'The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response', "skips blithely from Plato to the Renaissance without pause for the Middle Ages and without considering religious approaches. In the context of a discussion of reading, these omissions constitute a serious oversight."[74]

In *Lectio Divina*, the reader is "called upon to 'listen to' the sacred text" in order to develop "a true mutuality of response between the reader and the text."[75] This listening is closely akin to the *synesis* described in the interpretation of Sue's attunement to the poem. It has the nature of a "progressively deepening dialogue," just like the *palilexia* of Nina's engagement. To meditate on a text is to interiorise it and learn it by heart, like Esther did with *Episode.* Says Robertson: "*meditatio* chiefly means repetition, memorization and recitation. The term refers to the process of learning texts by heart."[76] This process "requires the participation of the whole body and the whole mind."[77] In communication with the Author, the text becomes the "living word," and the reader feels "as if they were his own utterances; and will certainly take them as aimed at himself." One reads the words "as though they were directed on one personally (ad suam personam aestimet eos fuisse directos); they become the expressions of one's own experience. … one becomes not only a reader but their true and final author."[78] One is reminded here of the words of Longinus quoted in a previous chapter: "as though we had ourselves originated the ideas which we read."

This reading practice, neglected by reader-response approaches, closely mirrors that of our six readers. It cannot properly be called a *lectio divina,* in as much as they are not reading Scripture. But they are reading with their hearts, and in realising the meaning of the text, learning by heart. I therefore propose that *at the heart* of their reading experience, the *essence* of their mode of engagement, is a *reading by heart.* The synesis is a mode of understanding that is far deeper than the intellectual, and requires attunement and mutual resonance. Sue's is a heart-to-heart relation with Arnold's poem. Jane speaks of the feeling way of knowing: this is a knowing in one's heart. Nina and Esther have re-membered their texts and learned them by

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[74] Ibid., 31.

[75] Ibid., xiii.

[76] Ibid., xiv.

[77] Ibid., 7.

[78] Ibid., 85.

heart. Veronica is enabled to listen to her heart. And Camilla is enheartened through her meditation on the novels. Furthermore, each crisis may be understood to be a crisis of the heart:

The crisis of loss is the crisis of a broken heart. The resolution of conflict is to move from dis*cord* to con*cord.* The healing of the bruise happens through *thumos*, another word for heart. The resolution of a crisis of identity comes with finding the *courage*. The resolution of a faith crisis may be said to lead to a *credo*, another word related to heart. And when the lost pulse of feeling stirs again, this is connected to the *cardio*, the beating of the heart.

To read by heart means then both to be in a crisis, and to engage one's whole heart and mind in the reading. I propose to name this mode of engagement *lexithymia.* In psychopathology, "alexithymia" is the name of a disorder. It describes problems in affect regulations, such as difficulties with recognizing, processing and regulating emotions. The literal meaning of alexithymia is 'no words for feelings'. Alexithymic persons are thought to have a paucity of internal psychic structures for the awareness of and elaboration of affect. The alexithymia construct has been examined with regard to various aspect of emotional processing.[79] According to Nemiah et al., it is comprised of four components: (i) a difficulty in identifying feeling and distinguishing between feelings and the bodily sensations of emotional arousal, (ii)) difficulty describing feeling to others, (iii) externally oriented cognitive style and (iv) constricted imaginal processes.[80] Others have introduced a fifth component: an incapacity or reduced ability to experience emotional feelings. Lexithymia is in these theories the normal manifestation of affect regulation, in other words simply the absence of alexithymia.[81] I propose instead that *lexithymia* be given a positive definition. It marks the capacity to identify and describe feelings, experience them and suffer them; increased imaginative capacity and a metacognitive style. Moreover, lexithymia is the capacity to engage the heart in contemplation.

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[79] Graeme J. Taylor, R. Michael Bagby, and James D. A. Parker, *Disorders of Affect Regulations: Alexithymia in Medical and Psychiatric Illness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[80] J. C. Nemiah, H. Freyberger, and P. E. Sifneos, "Alexithymia: A view of the psychosomatic process," in *Modern trends in psychosomatic medicine*, vol. 3, ed. O. W. Hill (London: Butterworths, 1976), 430-439.

[81] Peter Paul Moormann, Bob Bermond, Harrie C. M. Vorst, and Lea Rood, "New Avenues in Alexithymia Research: The Creation of Alexithymia Types," in *Emotion Regulation, Conceptual and Clinical Issues*, ed. Johan Denollet, Ivan Nyklicek and Ad Vingerhoerts (New York: Springer, 2008), 27-42.

In my view, the practical application of the description of this mode of engagement may be understood in terms of the rhetorical practice of *psychagogy*

Psychagogy

> The soul is cured by means of certain charms,
> And these charms consist of beautiful words.
> -- Platon, *Charmides* 157a

In her book on the ancient Greek schools of philosophy, *Therapy of Desire,* Martha Nussbaum writes: "There is in this period a broad and deep agreement that the central motivation for philosophizing is the urgency of human suffering, and that the goal of philosophy is human flourishing, or *eudaimonia.*"[82]　Thus, ancient philosophy regarded *logos,* the living word, as therapeutic. "During the Hellenistic period, philosophers, in this way, universally insisted that authentic philosophical inquiry necessarily altered one's way of life," writes Kolbet in his study *Augustine and the Cure of Souls.*[83] Kolbet remarks of these therapeutic schools that the "classical traditions of philosophical therapy have been referred to as 'psychagogy' in recent scholarship."[84] And Clarence E. Glad claims that psychagogy was an established social praxis: "Ample evidence exists of the social practice of seeking a mature guide."[85] This would occur "mainly during the period of adolescence but sometimes lasting into adulthood. It reveals the tendency of the age to look for someone to direct one in a spiritual quest for a lifestyle or in the 'art of living'."[86]　Glad says that psychagogy referred to a mutual involvement between a leader and a follower, where both parties were engaged in a dialogic relation with a common goal: to heal the soul by means of right words.[87]

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[82] Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15.

[83] Paul R. Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls: Revising a Classical Ideal* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 45.

[84] Ibid, 7.

[85] Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), 53.

[86] Ibid, 53.

[87] One is reminded here of Proust's assertion in *Days of Reading:* "The mediocre usually imagine that to let ourselves be guided by the books we admire robs our faculty of judgment of parts of its independence. 'What can it matter to you what Ruskin feels: feel for yourself.' Such a view rests on a psychological error which will

The term 'psychagogia' originally hailed from practices of magic and necromancy, and denoted a journey into the underworld, or the reawakening of the souls of the dead. With the passing of time, however, it came to be used

> in rhetoric and poetics to refer to the influencing of the souls of the living: 'bringing into ecstacy (the mind of) the audience by the magic of speech, carrying it away to the fictitious world that one (as a poet) has created, or to the emotional state that will make it take the decision one (as an orator) hopes for.' This seductive enchantment often carried with it negative connotations of manipulation, flattery, or beguilement as well.[88]

Thus the term did not belong to a discourse of rationality or logic: "Only one who believed that the human condition was such that appeals to reason alone were therapeutically ineffective would resort to such measures."[89] However, the meaning of psychagogia was transformed in Plato's dialogues. The term *psychagogia* appears twice in the *Phaedrus.* The first time Socrates uses it, it seems to mean 'beguilement' and is a pejorative term. By the second time he uses it, it has become a positive term signifying guiding someone to the truth, and is therefore now the true assignation of rhetoric. Elizabeth Asmis, in her analysis of psychagogia in Plato's Phaedrus, remarks of this transformation: "as the argument of the *Phaedrus* proceeds, a new meaning unfolds. Socrates gradually develops the view that genuine rhetoric is an art by which a speaker guides another to the truth by adjusting his words to the other's soul."[90] This art of matching *logos* to *psyche* in order to lead the hearer to self-knowledge, is *psychagogia.* And the very function of *logos* is now defined as psychagogia. The genuine psychagogue must therefore, according to Asmis, "know the various types of soul, as well as recognize particular souls, in order to be able to know what type of speech is suitable for a particular person."[91] Plato has appropriated the term from mythic literature and made it into the very aim of philosophy. Of course, for Plato, self-knowledge implies knowledge of one's former divine condition.

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be discounted by all those who have accepted a spiritual discipline and feel thereby that their power of understanding and of feeling is infinitely enhanced, and their critical sense never paralysed… There is no better way of coming to be aware of what one feels oneself than by trying to recreate in oneself what a master has felt. In this profound effort it is our own thought itself that we bring out into the light, together with his." Marcel Proust, *Days of Reading,* trans. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 2008).

[88] Kolbet, *Augustine and the Cure of Souls*, 8.

[89] Ibid., 8.

[90] Elizabeth Asmis, "Psychagogia in Plato's *Phaedrus,*" *Illinois Classical Studies* 11, no. 1/2 (1986): 156.

[91] Ibid., 169.

However, the term transcends the particular conceptions of Plato. *Psychagogia* does not only belong to the philosophical dialogue or the transformative affective pattern of the metablem. The matching of *logos* to *psyche* may be understood as the right encounter between protogenre and the life-crisis of the reader, when the reader's mode of engagement is one of reading by heart. This is the principle of *psychagogia*, of leading the soul by matching the *logos* and the *psyche* of the reader. Such facilitation of reading by heart may lead to being deeply moved, and to a realisation. This experience creates a 'window of opportunity' for life-change.

Thus, *psychagogy* is proposed as a collective term for all practices related to facilitating katalytic encounters between a reader, where she is in her life at a given moment, and a work of imaginative literature. Such encounters *may* bring about the unfolding of transformative affective patterns if the *kairos* is propitious, that is if the crisis of the reader corresponds to a conducive protogenre. However, primacy must be given to the autotelic aesthetic-affective experience of reading by heart and the experience of being moved. Hence, psychagogy is the application of art for heart's sake. The proposition is that deep engagement, reading by heart, allows the reader to be deeply moved. This is a necessary but not sufficient condition for experiencing life-change. Conversely, to change someone is not the aim of psychagogy. Thus, psychagogy is to be distinguished from bibliotherapeutic practices of a prescriptive or instrumental orientation on the one hand, and pedagogical practices which aim to transmit pre-defined knowledge about literary texts on the other. Elizabeth Brewster's investigation of bibliotherapy concludes that "the role of recommending specific titles is called into question" by the finding that the transaction depends on the personal situation of the reader.[92] For instance, the practice of Shared Reading may hence be regarded as a form of psychagogy rather than bibliotherapy. Reader Advisory may also come under the heading of psychagogy, in so far as it is the art of matching *logos* to the reader's life context.

The following proposition regarding psychagogy and reading by heart is put forward:

When a person experiencing a particular life-crisis encounters a literary work of the corresponding transformative affective pattern, and the mode of engagement with the work is one of reading by heart, the reader will be deeply moved by the encounter. This creates the possibility for change in relation to self.

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[92] Elizabeth Brewster, *An Investigation of Experiences of Reading for Mental Health and Well-being and their Relation to Models of Bibliotherapy* (Phd Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2011), 204.

An important caveat here is that although the reader will be deeply moved and experience a deeply affective realisation, it may not lead to a life-change. In the literature review I mentioned the surprise Maslow noted when peak experiences did not necessarily lead to transformation. We may say that being deeply moved is a necessary but not sufficient condition for life-change. The life-change depends upon a retrospective act of ascription that implies choice. This caveat has important practical implications. In intermediation practices of reading literature, we may facilitate the experience of being moved through reading by heart, but we cannot plan for change to happen.

The taxonomies and descriptions of crises and alloioses, as well as of the qualitative aspects of affective realisations and modes of engagement, constitute the findings of this study. Moreover, the propositions regarding transformative affective patterns and psychagogy are offered as a contribution towards a theory of pathematics.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

Overview of the Dissertation and Justification of Approach

The aim of this study has been to *listen carefully* to those who have experienced, profoundly, a transformative engagement with a work of imaginative literature. Accordingly, the principal thrust and main part of this dissertation is devoted to the full *presentation* of the individual narratives of life-changing reading experiences, and to *interpreting* these ideographically to preserve the unique nature of the encounter and to understand and appropriate their meaning.

The transformative reading experiences of the participants in this study have themselves undergone many turns: the reading experience is transformed in memory, the remembrance in the interview, the dialogue in the recording, the record in the transcription, the transcript in the textual editing, the text in being interpreted, and, finally, the interpretation in the act of appropriation into a theory. Each of the transformations can be regarded as part of a distillation process: at journey's end is the essence of the life-changing fiction-reading experience. Hence, the knowledge arrived at is not a reconstruction of what *really* happened, but the carrying forth of *ideal* meaning. This is a basic ontological-epistemological premise of this inquiry. I have called my hermeneutically oriented narrative method Intimate Reading. Its logic of inquiry is neither a deductive top-down process of applying one theoretical framework or critical vocabulary to the material, nor is it an inductive bottom-up process of extracting common themes and statements. Instead, it involves a hermeneutic circle, the virtuous entry into which must begin with a review of both prior research into, and central historical concepts of, transformation, so as to establish fore-knowledge.

The purpose of Part One was therefore three-fold: to build on existing knowledge; to identify knowledge gaps; and to elucidate and clarify the conceptual horizon against which such research is processed. As this study is a transdisciplinary inquiry in which reception studies, aesthetics and narrative psychology meet, it is fruitful to review not just the research on reading, but also transformative aesthetic experiences and studies of life-stories. What I learned from this review is that all kinds of fiction may be transformative depending on the reader's life situation, and that research of transformative reading experiences should include what happened before, during and after the transaction. Crucial to transformative aesthetic experiences in general is the complex phenomenon of *being moved*, which is irreducible to an emotional

category, and intimately connected to transformation. Research on life-stories shows that *redemption* is a central trope, and such narratives involve a number of discourses. Moreover, there are two main categories of change: discontinuous transformation and incremental change. The review revealed that there were three classical concepts in particular that emerged as central in discussions of TAE: *katharsis, the sublime* and *epiphany.* Because they are as fuzzy as they are pervasive, they were in need of clarification.

The main knowledge gaps identified were: How is being moved and changed related; how may transformative encounters lead to lasting change and shape life-stories; what can we know about the particular transactions between individual works and readers; and what kinds of life-crises and changes are involved in such experiences? On this basis the research questions were formulated and the necessity of a hermeneutic orientation confirmed.

The purpose of Part Two was to explicate the assumptions and procedures involved in developing epistemologically justified answers. Because narrative approaches to qualitative inquiry rest on questionable ontological assumptions, and the discussion of hermeneutics is largely absent in their epistemological foundations, a lengthy explication of methodological considerations is undertaken. Having defined the essence of scientific method as the interaction between the empirical and the inferential, methodology may be understood to involve the elaboration of the various viable conceptions of the empirical and the logical. I introduced the term *subservation* to account for an approach to the empirical that relies on subjecting oneself to the other's experience. Based on a discussion of Pierce's abduction, I argued that the abductive is a moment of surprise discovery within two different logics of inquiry: retroduction; and what I have called *anteroduction,* a new term for the logic of inquiry implicit in the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur. It involves an initial explication of the parts of the text and relating this to one's pre-understanding, then modifying the conceptual horizon and carrying forth the newly derived or restored concept in order to see the experience in a fuller light and understand its essence.

Chapter 5, Intimate Reading, explicates in depth the procedures involved in subservation and anteroductive hermeneutic interpretations. I argue for the importance of including the full narratives and for editing transcripts, as well as critically selecting narratives from the set of collected data, as ways of ensuring reliability and validity. Thus there are six critical procedures that are crucial to Intimate Reading: (i) *subservation*, the mode of attending to the intimants' communication of their experience; (ii) *text production* from a manuscript matrix of transcripts and memos; (iii) *critical selection of the narratives* corresponding most closely to the construct

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of LCFRE; (iv) *presentation of the full narrative* of texts to be interpreted; (v) *idiographic* interpretations based on the preliminary narrative analysis of the structural framework of crisis, mode of engagement and resolution; and finally, (vi) *the abductive moment* of seeing the particulars as part of a larger systematic configuration of relations.

Part Three constitutes the main part of the dissertation: the presentation and interpretation of the LCFRE narratives. Why present the narratives in full rather than simply summarise and present extracts; and why not analyse the readers' accounts by staying close to their own language instead of additionally bringing into play several psychological research and theories, classical terms and literary tropes? There is a perennial tendency in qualitative inquiries to present themes and categories, and then 'illustrate' them with quotes from participants. However, interview statements belong to a context and they are not transparent. They cannot merely be *analysed,* but must be *interpreted*: there is an encounter between two subjective horizons. The most reliable form of qualitative data production therefore gives the critical reviewer access to the whole text to be interpreted. Chapter 6 accordingly presents six entire narratives. These are 'framed' by intros and outros to signify that the narratives do not give direct access to the participants' subjective experience, but that this experience is inscribed in an intersubjective dialogue.

My interpretations in chapter 7 are organised in accordance with the tripartite narrative structure of beginning-middle-end identified through the literature review and the preliminary comparative analysis of transcripts: *life-crisis, transaction with the literary work,* and *resolution* or subjective change. Each interpretation thus follows a similar trajectory. First, I explicate and amplify the nature of the crisis, objectifying it in terms of psychological research but also intermediating between participants' expressions on the one hand and literary and affective terms on the other. For instance, Nina's crisis is objectified as an identity crisis, and metaphorically viewed as an inner exile. Next, the transaction is studied in terms of two main categories: *affective realisation*, the qualities of being moved, and *mode of engagement*. All participants speak of realising something important, and that this realisation was deeply felt. Furthermore, they describe and indicate the way they have engaged with the structural, thematic and stylistic components of the work. To bring out the emerging properties of these intimations, I have 'carried forward' classical terms that have either become lay-terms and thus lost or altered their precise meaning, or are restored from obscurity. There is no one discourse, theory or conceptual field that 'covers' these readers' experiences. If a fusion of horizon is to occur, my pre-understanding must be modified and expanded, and the intimant's expression must be

clarified, amplified and enriched. Essentially, such *intimate reading* is a dialogic process where different understandings, vocabularies and traditions interpenetrate, and serve to intermediate between the horizon of the researcher and the participants' voices. The interpretations are 'dialogic' also in the sense that not only do the classical and psychological terms throw light on the readers' experiential accounts, but importantly, the readers' accounts also enable a deeper, concrete and specific understanding of the classical tradition's affective language. This hermeneutic approach may thus lead to a renewed engagement with the classical literary tradition's language of affection.

Part Four summarises the findings from the idiographic interpretations. Furthermore, as the final stage of the hermeneutic arc, these findings are then appropriated. The hermeneutic inquiry thus goes beyond the goal of describing varieties, commonalities and typical qualities and finding concepts in order to develop a 'middle-range' theory that can provide new insight into possible connections and relations between genres, universal crises and experiences of being moved and changed.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to knowledge

The works that have changed the readers I interviewed are highly diverse; this confirms previous research. What these readers have in common is that they have been deeply moved by the literary works, and being deeply moved is a catalyst for reflexively altering aspects of their self-understanding.

What my inquiry contributes is new knowledge about the kinds of life-crises that may be resolved through transformative encounters with fiction, and the kinds of qualitative change, *alloioses,* that may result. I have identified the following six life-crises: loss, conflict, identity crisis, attachment crisis, spiritual crisis and crisis of vitality. I have accordingly determined six alloioses that correspond to each crisis: *anagnorisis, therapon, thumos, nostos, metanoia* and *anamnesis.* These categories may serve to nuance descriptions of change and expand the current models of change to incorporate the life-crises.

I have explored the possibilities of finding 'shapes' to the life-stories by looking at the master-tropes that organise the stories. There were four examples of different life-narrative shapes: *metamorphosis, odyssey, epistrophe* and *epiphany.* Furthermore, there were two instances of critical event narrative shapes: anamorphosis and katamorphosis. This tentative finding may be used in further exploration of the organisations of plots in people's life-stories.

As regards the transaction between reader and work, I have identified six qualitative aspects of affective realisations or experiences of being moved: *ekaphany, feeling felt, crystallised felt sense, katabatic transmuting internalisation, ekpleksis* and *wonder.* The six aspects that characterise the enkinaesthetic-contemplative mode of engagement were found to be: *Readerese, agkalilexia, enkinaesthesia, palilexia, metabolic reading* and *synesis,* which all relate to embodied cognition and embodied affectivity in the transaction with the literary work, and furthermore are elaborated in terms of metaphors related to the heart. Accordingly, I have named this transaction *reading by heart,* or *lexithymia.* This description of *reading by heart,* which in part builds on Kuiken et al.'s elaboration of expressive enactment, adds to our knowledge of affective reading experiences, and can expand the critical vocabulary of affection.

Limitations of study and implications for future research

From this explorative understanding of varieties, commonalities and typical characteristic of life-changing reading experiences, and the terminology developed, I have sought to develop a 'middle-range' theory. The postulates of protogenres, transformative affective patterns and *psychagogy* is offered as a contribution towards a theory of *pathematics.* They should only be regarded as 'investigatory DNA', the combinations of which still need further investigation. Through an abductive movement between categories and idiographic experiences, I identified transformative affective patterns and protogenres. The protogenres, which I postulate are humanity's responses to universal life-crises, may form the basis of an affectively grounded poetics that bridges structuralist poetics and reader response theories, if supported by further study. I have put forth the proposition that the *six transformative affective patterns* (the relations between each crisis, affective category, protogenre and alloisosis) may be a comprehensive, universal and exhaustive catalogue of life-crises, protogenres and ways of being moved and changed. Further instances of each crisis and transformative affective pattern must be studied to provide better descriptions of their essences and varieties. What must be verified through further research, is whether every fundamental life crisis can be reduced to those I have

specified; and whether resolutions of these crises lead to the *alloioses* I have elaborated. This could be determined by extensively interviewing people who have experienced crises.

The theory of transformative affective patterns may have relevance for practices such as shared reading, providing a guiding framework for compositions of groups in various settings. Moreover, it may also provide a model for how "breakthrough moments" may eventuate lasting change in participants' lives. *Psychagogy* is proposed as a collective term for all practices related to facilitating catalytic encounters between a reader and a work of imaginative literature. I have proposed that *reading by heart allows the reader to be deeply moved, and that this is a necessary but not sufficient condition for experiencing life-change.* Thus, it may be tentatively concluded that the transformative reading experience is one of *being moved*; and the subjective experience of change is a reflective process of integrating the experience into the life-story. This process depends on further undetermined factors. This conclusion could be substantiated by testing the following proposition: *When a person experiencing a particular life-crisis encounters a literary work of the corresponding transformative affective pattern, and the mode of engagement with the work is one of reading by heart, the reader will be deeply moved by the encounter. This creates the possibility for change in relation to self.* Turning such a postulate into an hypothesis would necessitate some means of operationalising the mode of engagement. For comparison it should be investigated how experiences of being moved by catalysts other than art experiences can facilitate psychological change. After all, the scientific study of being moved is only in its infancy.

Coda

This dissertation springs out of a quest for the restoration of art for heart' sake, a return of literature to its home in the feeling life of human beings. This is its *nostos*: imaginative literature is the language of the heart. To engage with this language is to be moved. Being moved opens us up to the possibility for transformation and the creation of new meaning.

- To sum up, then, literature has saved your life?
- Yes, it has, in a way. I would say so. In a way. Because I think that if I hadn't read so much, my foundation would have been smaller and less solid. I would have had a poorer understanding of life. I am forever in debt to libraries, for giving me access to all these books.

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Appendices

Approval from Norwegian Centre for Research Data, NSD

Consent form and information sheet

Specimen of de-selected narrative

Thor Magnus Tangerås
Institutt for arkiv, bibliotek- og informasjonsfag Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus
Pilestredet 48
0167 OSLO

AFFIRMATION

39732   *Hvordan kan litteraturen redde leserens liv? En kvalitativ undersøkelse av leseres beretninger om eksistensielt transformative møter med litterære verk*

The Data Protection Official for Research at the Norwegian centre for research data (NSD) finds that the processing of personal data in relation to the project *Hvordan kan litteraturen redde leserens liv? En kvalitativ undersøkelse av leseres beretninger om eksistensielt transformative møter med litterære verk* is in accordance with the Norwegian Personal Data Act, ref. our letter to Thor Magnus Tangerås on 14.10.2014.

Best regards,

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Hildur Thorarensen

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Thor Magnus Tangerås
Institutt for arkiv, bibliotek- og informasjonsfag Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus
Pilestredet 48
0167 OSLO

Vår dato: 09.10.2014   Vår ref: 39732 / 3 / IB   Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 09.09.2014. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

39732	*Hvordan kan litteraturen redde leserens liv? En kvalitativ undersøkelse av leseres beretninger om eksistensielt transformative møter med litterære verk*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Thor Magnus Tangerås*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 10.08.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Katrine Utaaker Segadal

Inga Brautaset

Kontaktperson: Inga Brautaset tlf: 55 58 26 35
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Data innhentes ved kvalitative intervju, der informanten skal snakke om hvordan møte med litteratur har blitt et vendepunkt i livet.

Det tas høyde for at det kan bli registrert personidentifiserende opplysninger, og at noen opplysninger kan være å regne som sensitive (f.eks. om livskrise). Det vil imidlertid være mulig for informantene å delta med anonyme opplysninger, hvis de ønsker det, siden intervjuer ikke stiller eksplisitte spørsmål om navn eller identifiserende bakgrunnsopplysninger.

Utvalget rekrutteres via høyskole, bibliotek, sosiale medier og nettverk. De informeres skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet.

I følge meldeskjema skal det ikke registreres identifiserbare opplysninger om tredjeperson. Dette kan intervjuer med fordel ta opp med informanten innledningsvis i intervju.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker behandler eventuelle personopplysninger i tråd med Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet.

Vi minner om at forsker har taushetsplikt for alt informantene forteller, det gjelder også etter at forskningsprosjektet er avsluttet.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 10.08.2017. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:
- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn og evt. koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette lydopptak.

Endringsskjema

for endringer i forsknings- og studentprosjekt som medfører meldeplikt eller
konsesjonsplikt

(jf. personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter)

Endringsskjema sendes per e-post til: **personvernombudet@nsd.uib.no**

1. PROSJEKT

Navn på daglig ansvarlig: Thor Magnus Tangerås	Prosjektnummer: 39732
Evt. navn på student:	

2. BESKRIV ENDRING(ENE)

Endring av daglig ansvarlig/veileder:	*Ved bytte av daglig ansvarlig må bekreftelse fra tidligere og ny daglig ansvarlig vedlegges. Dersom vedkommende har sluttet ved institusjonen, må bekreftelse fra representant på minimum instituttnivå vedlegges.*
Endring av dato for anonymisering av datamaterialet:	*Ved forlengelse på mer enn ett år utover det deltakerne er informert om, skal det fortrinnsvis gis ny informasjon til deltakerne.*
Gis det ny informasjon til utvalget? Ja: _x___ Nei: ____ Hvis nei, begrunn:	
Endring av metode(r):	*Angi hvilke nye metoder som skal benyttes, f.eks. intervju, spørreskjema, observasjon, registerdata, osv.*
Endring av utvalg:	*Dersom det er snakk om små endringer i antall deltakere er endringsmelding som regel ikke nødvendig. Ta kontakt på telefon før du sender inn skjema dersom du er i tvil.*
Annet Grunnet store mengder innsamlet datamateriale (20 intervjuer totalt, varighet mellom 90 og 180 minutter hver) søkes om tillatelse til å benytte hjelp til transkribering av noen av intervjuene. Databehandler vil være en person som har erfaring med transkribering av forskningsintervjuer og som garanterer konfidensialitet. Vedkommende har selv erfaring med å foreta forskningsintervjuer. Det er snakk om transkribering av fire intervjuer som allerede er foretatt. Intervjuobjektet nevnes ikke med navn eller adresse i intervjuet. Navn på personen vil heller ikke bli gitt til databehandler. Lydfilene er kun merket med nummer. De intervjuede vil bli forespurt om tillatelse til dette før jeg eventuelt går i gang. De vil bli kontaktet via epost. Datamaterialet vil bli ført fra min pc over på minnepinne og personlig overbragt transkriptør. Vedkommende laster så innholdet over på sin private pc som er passordbeskyttet. Deretter slettes innhold på minnepinne. Når transkribsjon foreligger, slettes data fra dennes pc, og overbringes meg på passordbeskyttet minnepinne. Databehandler vil signere skjema med taushetserklæring og konfidensialitet.	

3. TILLEGGSOPPLYSNINGER

Har du spørsmål i forbindelse med utfylling av skjemaet, ta gjerne kontakt med Personvernombudet hos NSD, telefon 55 58 81 80

Request for Participation in Research Project

«How can literature change the reader's life? A Qualitative Inquiry into readers's accounts of transformative encounters with works of fiction.»

Have you had a reading experience with a novel, short story or poem that you felt has saved or changed your life?

Background and purpose

This Phd project attempts to investigate a certain type of interaction between text and reader which may be described as existential in its motivation and transformational in its effects. For some readers a particular encounter with a work of fiction may have such a life-altering impact that they experience this as having "saved" or "changed" their lives. By doing qualitative interviews with such readers the project aims to study phenomenologically and narratively how subjective conditions and literary aspects interact to create an existential meeting. A phenomenological inquiry of this kind may give us knowledge about existential and therapeutic uses of literature: where and how literature is sought, how it is read, og how it is used to re-appraise one's life and create psychosocial changes. The following questions will be addressed: What type of crises preceded the reading experience? What were the effects of the reading, and how were these integrated into the life-narrative? Did the reader seek this experience, or did it seems to happen unexpectedly?

The dissertation forms part of a Phd Programme at the Department of Library and Information Science at the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Oslo Norway. The results of the study will be published in a monography. The aim is to contribute valuable knowledge to the field fo reception studies and to the Psychology of Literature.

What will it imply for you to participate?

Participation in this research project will mean that you consent to being interviewed in depth on either one or two occasions, each interview lasting between 1 and 2 hours. The method employed will be a semi-structured interview, which means I have a short set of questions I ask all interviewees, but also allows you the freedom to tell your story in the way you have experienced it. And together we will read and talk about significant parts of the work of fiction that changed you. No other information about you will be gathered, save that which you provide during the interview. All information you give will be anonynimised and treated confidentially. This means that whoever reads the dissertation will have no means of tracking the information back to its source.

How happens to the information gathered in the interview?

All personal data will be treated confidentially. The interview will be audiorecorded. All data will be saved to a protected personal computer. No other person will have access to these files. The information will be analysed and used in the dissertation.

The project will be completed in August, 2017. All data will be deleted upon completion of project.

Voluntary participation

Taking part in this study is voluntary, and you may at any time withdraw your consent without having to state your reasons for doing so.

The project has been reported to, and clarified by, the Norwegian ethics committee for scientific research, Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

If you have any questions regarding the aims or procedures of this study, please contact:

Thor Magnus Tangeraas
Tel.: 075 4253 0212 (or 0047 40247739)
E-mail address: Thor-Magnus.Tangeras@hioa.no

Consent to participate in the study

I have received information about the study, and am willing to take part

----

(Signature of participant, and date of consent)

Example of de-selected narrative: *Marco's Fascination*

I met up with Marco in the park on a cloudy, but mild autumn afternoon. He parks his bike while I get coffees from the café. We sit down on a park bench in a secluded area surrounded by trees. Marco immediately strikes me as friendly, eager and energetic. He has responded to a flyer I put up a few weeks earlier: 'Has a Book Changed or Saved your Life'? He phoned me and told me that James Ellroy's Black Dahlia had changed his life. That's all I know about him. Prior to our interview I have read the book and taken notes about my impressions of it. I noted my strong prejudices against the genre, but that I enjoyed it once I got into it. I was baffled and intrigued as to how this Crime Noir of the LA underworld could have changed his life.

Thor: Please tell me about you experience with this novel.

Marco: The reflective aspect of it is, I think, part of the reason why I was so fascinated by your question. I'm forty now, I'll be forty-one in a few weeks, and that's a very reflective time. That is when you absolutely start to look back, and it's been a good year, but it's… it's been a year not without its challenges, and I'm in a fantastic place in my life, so it's a nice place to turn round and look back and reflect on things. And I guess what's interesting is - I'd be leaning more towards it being a book that *saved* my life in a sense - I was living with my mother at the time, I ended up moving in and there was just me and my mother for a period. And we have a very, very complex relationship, so with respect to that, it ties into a lot of, I guess, *self- reflective* work I've been doing, I think's the best way to describe it. So it's interesting to look back. I have a friend who's a fair bit younger than me, he's about fifteen, sixteen years' younger, and he watched this programme called This is England. I don't know if you've heard of it, but there was a variety of different series, there was one set in the seventies, one in the eighties and one in the nineties. And he asked me about the nineties, he said: What did you do? And I started telling him the stories, and this was part of that kind of story. And it was fascinating to me when you think of… as you were saying, you know, how you form an identity or how your life kind of changes and takes you on different ways, that there's actually a really interesting story there. You can always feel there's more to do or you could do better in life or you should be doing this, that or the other, but, I guess, to me, the reason why I'm particularly interested in literature makes quite a fascinating story. I don't think it would make a bad TV show, haha, you know, not that that's necessary, but I it's easier to look back, isn't it, and think: "well, my life was interesting", as opposed to "my life was perfect", because it's never going to perfect.

Thor: So you'd rather have an interesting life. And you're saying that you could actually look back on your life and see that this could be made into a story?

Marco: Yeah, and like you say, it was interesting that you mentioned identity, because James Ellroy for a time was just the pinnacle. Lots of the - how can I describe them? - bastard kids of modern literature; you know, Ellroy, and Chuck Palahniuk, and Irvine Welsh, I loved those guys. And for a spell they were, I think, writing some really, really great stuff. However, now, and even Ellroy's current work, I'm less interested in it, it pulls me in less. I think the main reason being that I'm not an angry young man anymore, and he was great then when you were angry, you wanted to look into the dark. I think a theme that runs throughout his work is looking into the kind of darkness inherent in all of us. However, you don't want to do that when things are all right in your life, if you know what I mean. I guess you want to sometimes qualify that things aren't that great, or you think that the world could be better, and sometimes a story like this can help you do that. But now I read a lot of nonfiction. I don't know why, but I've read tons of the great kind of true crime books. I guess it's a theme or maybe something that I've always been interested in, but I'm reading Helter Skelter about the Manson murders at the minute. And all the questions I've ever wanted to know about that fascinating kind of case - I understood what he did, and vaguely why he wanted to do it - but really, what was his methods, what was his actual reasons for doing it? Because it just seemed like an act of pure horrible insanity, but getting some background and stuff was also interesting. So, where do we start?

Thor: Yeah…

Marco: I guess in some ways we have.

"Lonely and isolated"

Thor: When, where were you when you first read it, or came across it, what was your life like? If you could just please tell me.

Marco: Well, as soon as I saw your flier I thought about this book straightaway. It was in my early twenties or maybe I was twenty one, twenty two.

Thor: Oh, so that would have been nearly eighteen years ago, then?

Marco: Yeah, absolutely, so a good while ago. I grew up in Warrington, which is a small town, not far away from Manchester. Not the worst place in the world to live, but certainly not the best, and there's not a lot to do. Back then, we did what most people did. I was a huge Star Wars and science fiction fan, and I remember, it must have been for a good nine months as a kid, I thought I was Rick Deckard from Blade Runner. The world was full of replicants and I was out to stop them, and that was my imaginative world as a kid. I formed a band and was always interested in music. We played a lot and then we moved around to various bedrooms, and then we got to a point where we felt that we'd done as much as we could, but we wanted to kind of take the next step. My mum had, for a variety of reasons, left Warrington and moved out to Sussex of all places. Sussex being a very, very strange choice, but her friend had moved there, so she moved out there too. So I thought maybe I'll move down there and then I can kind of, not just be with my mum, but be closer to London, and maybe then the rest of the guys can move down and we could all maybe, you know, get somewhere with the music. It seemed like a logical thing to do at the time.

Thor: Because you were quite ambitious with, with the music then?

Marco: Yeah, and I thought, I wanted to be a rock and roll star then, doesn't everyone I suppose at some point, but I thought that we might get somewhere. What I guess I didn't factor in was that there was this period where it was just me and my mum, and I knew nobody. I knew the way to the shop and I'd kind of find my way around, there was a big shopping centre nearby, but that was it, you know. I didn't have a job or any friends there, I just knew my mum and that was it, so there was a… I seem to remember it as only about three or so months and I'm pretty sure it was, but it was a very, very difficult three month period where there's nobody, there's nothing. I used to smoke a lot of weed at the time - I mean, I gave that up a good while ago, and I was glad I did - but at the time I couldn't even do that, I had kind of no recreational facilities. I was living with my mum in a one bedroom flat, sort of like she would sleep on the couch, and it just was a really, really difficult time.

Thor: How did your mother feel about your moving there, was it she that instigated it or wanted you to be there?

Marco: Yeah, she really wanted it. As I said, my relationship's with my mum's been… complex, and I'm happy to give you the context of that. My mum's a long term alcoholic, and she'd moved away, though, because my brothers were low-level drug dealers, not anything kind of major, and the house had been raided by the police. And for a long time, our family were slightly notorious, and also there were lots of people in that house, you'd have parties and we were kind of known for that, and it was the place where people would go to, to get high, you know. And then it got busted and then it all changed; that was the day that everything - it got serious finally, and then it just all changed. So mum said that she was fed up because she felt really put on, but I think there's a fair argument to say that she facilitated a lot, she enabled a lot of it to happen and therefore it's not surprising it got out of hand in the end. But then when that happened, she wanted to get out of it, and so she moved. She encouraged me to come, and it's only with hindsight really - I used to think I was a lot closer to her than I was, whereas I think actually I wasn't really that close to her - but she used me as a little bit of a kind of emotional comfort blanket. A lot of people who have addictions such as she had, have, not necessarily enablers, but people

that they enable to be carers, they kind of manipulate them into that position. I didn't see that so clearly at the time, I guess, but, so yeah, she encouraged me to go. And at the time I wanted to, and it seemed like a nice change, and looking back as I mentioned to you earlier, in the context of life, I'm very glad I did. It was a period where, when I look back now, I discovered *a hell of a lot* about myself, by being stranded in a way. Eventually the friends that I did find, and the way that I found them, I discovered a hell of a lot about myself. But you have to have that dark period first, don't you? Sometimes the big periods of discovery are the black ones, so I was in the thick of that really.

Finding Ellroy: blown away

And then I seem to remember… it was late one night at about two, maybe three in the morning, I am at home watching TV, and Channel four, as they do, randomly showed a documentary called White Jazz, and it was all about Ellroy. Now, I don't know if you know this, he was a really, really fascinating guy, for loads of reasons. He didn't really write until his thirties, so about early to mid-thirties he wrote Brown's Requiem, which is his first work that eventually got published. But before that he was a petty criminal, he was a thief, he was a golf caddy, and he used to get high on Benzedrine inhalers. He was just a mess, but he himself was trying to live by literature, it's very, very worth looking into. The fascinating thing about Ellroy, though, is that all of that was because, when he was a kid, his mum was killed. His mum was very brutally murdered, and he was only a twelve year old, and he wrote an amazing book about this, amazing book called My Dark Places. His relationship with his mother is again incredibly complex, and the way that he talks about and describes his mother, from being everything from the maternal figure who wasn't quite right, to his kind of sexual ideal, to so much, he's very, very honest about his relationship with her. So the documentary focused partly on that, and then talked a little bit about his writings, and it talked about the LA Quartet. Now this, this is the first book in the LA Quartet, I'm absolutely certain it is.

Thor: And you've read them all?

Marco: Oh yeah, I've read pretty much everything that he's done, there's only a couple of things that I haven't read. I then, I'm pretty sure it was the next day, I went to the library, signed up at the library and said, do you have this book?

Thor: So this documentary, you just accidentally saw it on telly, and it sort of blew you away?

Marco: One hundred percent, yeah.

Thor: And, I'm just guessing here, you had quite a strong identification with his story, then?

Marco: I didn't think about it at the time, because I wasn't as self aware then, but now, definitely, and I guess that's why I mentioned the story to you in that way. Because yes, absolutely, I was thinking about it as I was coming over today, I was thinking, yes, there's definitely a correlation there between the difficult relationship that he's had with his mother and his parents and so forth, and him being this guy who was lost for a while, so definitely, yeah.

Thor: That's very interesting how you can see something now that you couldn't see then.

Marco: Definitely. I went to the library and I signed up, because it just seemed to make sense at the time - no money, no job, what else would I do? And then I got my hands on the book. And the book and his work, it completely blew me away. What then is fascinating, in terms of the story of James Ellroy is the fact that that is an actual case. That's what James Ellroy does brilliantly.

Thor: So before we talk more about the book, can I just ask you how long had you been in Sussex then, when you saw the documentary and went to the library?

Marco: Yeah, long enough to be knowing that I wasn't in the best place, but not too long, so about a month or so.

Thor: You've said it already, but if you were to describe how you felt then at the time?

Marco: Isolated.

Thor: Isolated.

Marco: Lonely. I didn't realise I hadn't got that part of me then, where now I'm very confident that you could pretty much plonk me anywhere and I'd do all right, I'd find my way, it would take time, but I'd find my way and I'd be fine. But I guess a lot of that confidence also is driven by work, because when you work, you have workmates, there's a whole social scene that's associated with that, I'm pretty much fine with that. But yeah, lonely and isolated, but also - I'm trying to think of my reading habits, because I was mostly listening to music, I think, more than anything, in that period. You know, getting high, listening to music, reading some comic books. I read a fair few kind of comics, right from your typical mainstream Marvel stuff to some of the more obscure little Indie comics and so forth, but that was the bulk of my reading experience. I hadn't read dedicatedly, or really got into books for a little while, I seem to remember.

Thor: And I get the sense that at the time, you had no feeling that your mind needed saving.

Marco: No.

Thor: So that's in retrospect?

Marco: Yes.

"Trying to piece these things together": The reading experience

Thor: And then you read the book. Can you relate to me the reading experience?

Marco: Yeah, so at its best, and it happens so rarely now, because you get longer in the tooth and I get more and more demanding of books, but at its best, and it's the same with films as well, and what happened is I started turning the pages, and I was lost. And there was this world, and I remember as I was reading through Ellroy's works, during the period of time I was in Sussex, I was there about eighteen months, and some days you'd get into work and you'd have names bouncing round your head, like Rolo Tomasi was one, Rolo Tomasi, Rolo Tomasi, which if you've seen the film LA Confidential, you'll know that he was a big part of that film, then you'd have names and things bouncing round your head. But just lost, because there's so many, as you've seen, there's so many strands, there's so many things, there's so much that's going on and you're in this world, and you're trying to piece these things together. But yeah, the reading experience was probably me, in a corner of the flat, just lost, gone, you know, just absolutely within this world, fascinated, enraptured.

Thor: Brilliant, how long did you spend over it, how long did it take you to read this book?

Marco: That's a really good question. I've never been a quick reader, I used to want to speed read and all this kind of thing, but I don't now, so I probably, I reckon maybe a week or couple of weeks. It wasn't like I just read it overnight, but I'm pretty sure I spent most of my time reading it, in between God knows what else I did.

Thor: This might be a leading question, but, because you read it over a period of at least a week, that means you'd put it down, and then try and reflect in terms of your own life as well?

Marco: Oh no, I didn't have the capacity then, I really didn't. I just, you know, the folly of being relatively young and you don't realise it, do you, I guess, when you're in your twenties, but I just wanted to do stuff. I wanted my music to go somewhere, but in the back of my mind I guess if I'm being completely honest with myself, I kind of knew that it probably wouldn't, but I wanted to enjoy myself, wanted to have a good time. But no, I would not have any kind of, anywhere near had the capacity to self-reflect. So I wasn't thinking about the themes that I think of now, the shared themes with Ellroy, more than the death and so forth, not at all.

Thor: So, you described the situation you were in before you read it, what was it like afterwards? How would you say, because first of all, after you read it, you didn't then say to yourself, oh this book has saved me?

Marco: No, God no, no.

Thor: That's looking back at it?

Marco: Yeah, absolutely

Thor: So, how would you now say that this book changed you or saved you?

Marco: You can easily, when you're kind of lonely and you're isolated as I was, then the world is very closed, and the world is a very strange and alien place, and you forget that there are things that can ever elevate you. And that book in particular, and absolutely James Ellroy, elevated me. I felt… I felt he… he took me to a place where he stretched my intelligence, and whilst reading it, he stretched me, and he stretched my knowledge of the world, my feelings of the world, my thoughts about the world. And only in retrospect now, looking back, and thinking of why don't I read James Ellroy anymore, he helped me to understand the kind of darkness within the world, and maybe put some context to it and get some sense to it. But that's a job that I've done, I guess, in that it helped me to understand that. And I guess that, you know, we were, I wasn't so much, but my family were, petty criminals, so there was a kind of sexiness to that world of crime and criminals and criminality, but I never felt like that. I always wanted to be one of the good guys, you know, and belong to the world of the detective and so on.

What amazed me about all of Ellroy's characters, as you will have seen, is they're fundamentally flawed, and they're not redeemed. He's not interested in redemption, he doesn't want the characters at the end of it to be redeemed, in fact almost the opposite. It's almost like he says you're slightly rinsed by the difficult kind of circumstances in your life, and yet somehow changed. Because I seem to remember that they don't kind of walk off into the sunset, they limp away, slightly improved for the experience, but very damaged.

Thor: Yeah, a good observation that. So that would be your notion of truth, then, because if there was redemption at the end of it, then you wouldn't believe in that?

Marco: Completely right. The James Patterson character, he walks away at the end of the day, and he's all right, whereas Lloyd Hopkins at the end of the Lloyd Hopkins trilogy, he isn't, he's spent, he's absolutely done. However, he has won in that he's got the killer, he's done the thing that he needed to do, but in the end he is damaged. So yes, that's a great point, it feels like a grain of truth in it. Because to me, if you are working for somebody like say the LAPD during this particular time, or looking at this particular case, then you're going to be in some way changed, damaged. There's a great series of podcasts I listened to recently, called Detective, and it was a guy called Joe Kenda who's an actual retired detective. He was just reflecting on his big cases, on his partners and what made a great detective, and he said at the end of it that he'd found the process therapeutic, because I don't think he could really tell you enough of how he was kind of damaged. And the narrator mentions when she's talking about certain sections that he was affected by PTSD, as you would expect to be. Ellroy absolutely accepts that, and I think that the interesting thing about the LA Quartet is that the real main character is LA. Dudley Smith is in the last three, I think, and he becomes a kind of prominent character but it's not the story of Dudley Smith, it's not the story of the LAPD, it's not the story of anything, but it's the story of LA. Because, as you probably remember, Elizabeth Short was a wannabe actress, she was a wannabe starlet, and she did the whole kind of waitressing that people still do now, and that's the world that he then wanted to look at. And he's done it throughout his work. He's gone even bigger than that and looks at the whole of America and the death of JFK and so forth, but as he's growing in stature and become more powerful, he can look at these bigger things. But then, and he was from LA, you know, so LA was his big character, and he's of the LA underbelly, so I guess he wanted to qualify the world he was from.

Thor: Yeah, so that world really resonated with your own world at the time?

Marco: Absolutely. It was alien, and new, and fresh, and it was set in the past, and that's an interesting thing as well when I look at my love of Ellroy. I don't really lean towards or like things that are historic

or old. And I wonder if that's, when you've had a difficult childhood, then the past is a place you never want to visit again. So the historic aspect was less interesting, but the world itself was, you know, I've never visited LA, I've visited America, never visited LA, never been there and in that world. We all know the side of it where you see Jennifer Lawrence or whatever, incredibly successful, but for every one of her, there are a million Elizabeth Shorts, aren't there? Who are lost, and I like the fact that he focused on that bit.

So he takes these real life characters, he writes around the context, if you like. My favourite James Ellroy book, which is in the LA Quartet, is the first Lloyd Hopkins book, Blood on the Moon. Lloyd Hopkins is an almost comic book-like character, he is super intelligent, tall, very handsome blond guy, has sex with a huge variety of women, but loves his wife and loves his daughters, and almost teetering on cliché, but way beyond that, I think. It's brilliantly put together. But the Black Dahlia was an actual case. Elizabeth Short, known as the Black Dahlia in the Press at the time, was actually murdered. I guess what Ellroy had done, is he had always been fascinated by the case, because he vaguely suspected, they never caught his mother's killer, by the way, and in the My Dark Places book, it's him talking about his mother. But also there was a guy called Bill Stone I seem to think his name was, who was about to retire. He was an FBI agent who went on to cold cases, so him and Ellroy got together, researched his mother's death. They also looked at the Black Dahlia, which is still unsolved, as things stand, so he always wondered whether it was the same person. The most he knew is there was this swarthy guy, as he described him, but they never found his identity, so they never found out who his mother's killer was. If you think about it from his perspective as a writer, the Black Dahlia case was to him a subject of great fascination, but he puts himself into it by creating these characters that then have to fall upon it and try and solve it. This is Blanchard and Bleichert, and there's another guy as well, which I'm trying to remember. There's a triumvirate of characters, and I know Dudley Smith is maybe somewhere in the Black Dahlia, Captain Dudley Smith who's a huge character as well, because he's the absolute bastard, who politically maneuvres the whole of the LA PD at that particular time. And that's another source of great fascination for Ellroy, the LAPD, throughout a lot of the LA Quarter particularly. So there was something in there, I guess it's not kind of directly anger, but it's vivid and it's really complex and beautifully put together. I seem to remember there's a showdown at the end, but ultimately he takes you on this journey for three, four hundred pages right into the kind of underbelly of Los Angeles, and he doesn't solve the Black Dahlia case, I'm pretty sure at the end of it he still leaves it unsolved. No, he does solve it I think.

He struggles to remember the ending of the story, not having reread it since. I remind him of the twists and turns of the plot, and who finally turned out to be the killer.

Thor: So, it's many years since you read it, but is there one thing in particular that you remember about it, or one passage that stands out?

Marco: I remember Bucky Bleichert. He always stood out to me, a very kind of unassuming main character. This kind of buck tooth awkward guy, who seemed to stumble upon this thing of great horror, and then as, you know, came out of it, mangled, but at least in some way he proves himself, at least to himself, during the course of it. He's a subject of some mockery and so forth. Then there is Blanchard who is a boxer as well.

Thor: In every interview I ask the person to read a passage that was felt to be especially significant.

Marco: That's lovely.

(Reads Passage from near beginning of text:)

Blanchard and Bleichert: a hero and a snitch. Remembering Sam Murakami and Hideo Ashida manacled en route to Manzanar made it easy to simplify the two of us – at first. Then we went into action side by side, and my early notions about Lee – and myself – went blooey.

It was early June of '43. The week before, sailors had brawled with zoot suit wearing Mexicans at the Lick Pier in Venice. Rumor had it that one of the gobs lost an eye. Skirmishing broke

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out inland: navy personnel from the Chavez Ravine naval base versus pachucos in Alpine and Palo Verde. Word hit the papers that the zooters were packing Nazi Regalia along with their switchblades, and hundreds of in-uniform soldiers, sailors and marines descended on downtown LA, armed with two-by-fours and baseball bats. An equal number of pachucos were supposed to be forming by the Brew 102 Brewery in Boyle Heights, supplied with similar weaponry. Every Central Division Patrolman was called in to duty, then issued a World War I tin hat and an oversize billy club known as a nigger knocker.

At dusk, we were driven to the battleground in personnel carriers borrowed from the army, and given one order: restore order. Our service revolvers had been taken from us at the station; the brass did not want .38's falling into the hands of reet pleat, stuff cuff, drape shape, Argentine ducktail Mexican gangsters. When I jumped out of the carrier at Evergreen and Wabash holding only a three-pound stick with a friction-taped handle, I got ten times as frightened as I had ever been in the ring, and not because chaos was coming down from all sides.

I was terrified because the good guys were really the bad guys. (pp. 11-12.)

Marco: Haha, what a brilliant passage, haha.

Thor: Haha, you really enjoyed it now as well, yeah?

Marco: Yeah, there's loads of things that I got from it. And there's one central thing that I think I'd forgotten, with my dad and everything that happened. There is always a theme within all of Ellroy books, and this happened so many times, of the LAPD being a fascist-like force that then was almost very anti-blacks. And in this particular incident they're out to settle and subdue what could turn into a riot, and they settled and subdued it by just knocking heads. It's something that's always fascinated me, race relations. I'd forgotten about it, there's a thread throughout, and it's not necessarily a theme in here, cause a lot of it was about Elizabeth Short and the Black Dahlia, but throughout the LA Quartet and throughout his work, there is that race relations thing which, more and more as I look at it now, is an absolute theme in me. I guess when your father has been brutalised for just being, it makes you hyper-aware of racial relations and so forth. Something else that I got from that, which really struck me as I re-read it, it's terms like Pachucos and Argentine ducktail Mexican gangsters. Ellroy's difficult to read at first, and there's no glossary. He says Zoot suit, and the he calls them Zooters etc.

Thor: I found it quite hard at first to get into the style. But that didn't throw you off at the time?

Marco: No, it actually did the opposite. And Irving Welsh did a similar thing with Trainspotting. It's a world that you then walk into. A similar thing happens in one of the greatest books I've ever read, definitely one of the five greatest books I've ever read, called Homicide: a year on Baltimore's killing streets. The author embedded himself with the homicide squad. It reads almost like fiction, but it's complete fact, and the way that he's managed to get inside the psychological landscape of the main characters involved is astounding. He then puts it all together brilliantly. You're in this world and there's all the slang and all these things going on. And you think, this is confusing and strange and I don't get it. But over the course of time, you find out, and you get to know more and more. It's like you're invited into this world that you will never be able to participate in, with all of its language and traditions and ideas. And then you're just thrown in, and you have to get your head around finding out what it all means. And I love that. And I'd forgotten that.

Thor: So that brought it back to you, a sense of…

Marco: Definitely. He really pops I think, he really raps, he's really lyrical. And at his absolute best, he's very… it's fluid and poetic. And because he writes in the first person so often, he's able to talk to you in their rhythms and in their styles. Because Ellroy's nothing like that himself, he's a very staid, conservative and very intelligent man, and what I love most about Ellroy is that he's the complete opposite of me culturally. He listens to classical music, he probably doesn't own a television, he would never dream of looking at an Iphone or touching one. He often says that when he's writing, he lies down and he listens to classical music, or he lies down in silence and plots these things. Because he's often asked in interviews, do you have a flow chart or a way of mapping these things out, and he says no, it's

all up here. But he sits and thinks about it, and thinks and thinks and then gets his head around it, you know. And when you look at the intricacies of the plot, and this is by no means the most intricate, you ask, how do you do that? Because these pieces all somehow fit together, and I don't know how he achieves that.

Thor: As a reader, you're intrigued by the intricacies of plots, the intelligence that goes into it.

Marco: So much. It's like when you see a footballer do a beautifully weighted angular pass, and you go, where did that come from? I'm fascinated by that, because I can't do that. And it's the same now when I look at the great kind of writers and I love how they manage to do that. I would love to be able to write. But I guess as I've got older, one of the things I'm more and more aware of is that you're good at what you're good at, and if you're lucky, and I am certainly lucky, then you'll be able to work with things that you really love, and you are really good at. You get to live in a world of things that you're really interested in and fascinated by, and then some days it's like you don't really go to work at all. I spent all of yesterday sat in a room fixing computers with my mates, listening to music and chatting and having a laugh, and did lots of work that really needed to be done, but overall it feels almost like a hobby.

Thor: You've said you love the universe in the book, and the plot and the style in which he writes. And the character, you must have identified to a certain extent with, with Bleichert?

Marco: Yeah, absolutely. You know, you at some point kind of - and maybe thinking back, a life that was dull and isolated and lonely, this guy who is not that great at anything stumbles onto a world, albeit dark and terrifying, but he stumbles onto a world whereby his life instantly is made more interesting.

Thor: Yes, and he does make firm choices in the sense that he does fight for the good. There is so much corruption and evil within the force, but he is determined to go against that. Also what struck me is his sense of ambition, he wants to make progress and become a detective.

Marco: Oh yeah, definitely. And that's a really interesting point, he does become quite ambitious and wants to progress, but it's an organisation that he knows is wrong. He knows that he can be a better man, but he has to do some very difficult things. And that's again, a very consistent theme, I think, in Ellroy's work. To be good, and Lloyd Hopkins is a great exemplifier of that, to do good he has to do some very terrible things. His methods often involve him doing whatever he feels he needs to do in order to get the end result, whether or not that involves beating a suspect within an inch of his life till he'll tell you.

Thor: So the end justifies the means?

Marco: yeah, although I wonder now, thinking about that. You know, I couldn't do that. I wonder if that's something that interests me in that, if you're pursuing an end goal, I'll do what I need to do but I will do it in the right way, and maybe it's that sense of injustice from what happened to my dad. Because during world war two we had to do some horrible things, we had to kill lots of people, it was that kind of right for the greater good. But fundamentally in my heart, I would passively say, I wish to stop this kind of shooting at people. At the moment with Cameron making his case for bombing Syria, and the reason why he's very carefully making his case, and he's not able to just go in and do it, is because I don't think that we'll pass it. And the reason why we won't pass it, is we bombed Iraq, and when we bombed Iraq we pretty much made ISIS, and that's the logic in it. So it rarely works, just bombing people rarely works. And also you're not going to just get these terrorists, you're going to get a lot of innocent people. What would have happened if we didn't make all those terrible choices that we had to in world war two, what would the world be like? Hitler was terrible, he did some really awful and atrocious things, but again, does the end justify the means? It's almost impossible to say.

"Why am I all right?"

Thor: You said that your family are criminals, and yet, you wanted to be a good guy. Why is that?

Marco: That's a great question. I think that, haha, I was more intelligent than them. I don't mean to be arrogant, I think I might as well just be honest and aware of that. I was more intelligent than them. Also, when someone says that people are horrible, people aren't any good, I really don't believe that. I work in a customer facing role, and I always want to do that in some aspects of my career. I want to progress and I'm working really hard to progress, but I always want to be somewhere where there's people, because they're awesome, they're amazing, they're interesting. They're incredibly flawed and they will get things wrong and they will lie to you. I work for Apple as a certified technician. I'm talking to customers about their products all the time, and they'll lie to you sometimes, and those are the things that we'll talk about cause that's the stresses and strains of your day. But I often say to people, for every one of those, there have been five people that I've spoken to that are just lovely and we work things out. But we tend to focus on the dark and the negative. And to me, my brothers were never horrible people and they're still not horrible people, they're good people, but they took the difficulties of their childhood and said, well I'm going to kick out and, fuck it, I'm going to get high and get other people high, and party and forget about all of that. In some ways, I guess, I wanted to always find out more about people, as opposed to just bring them in for a purpose or just have your mates that you just skitted all the time. I always wanted to find out more about people. I think that the world is shifting and we see it all of the time, people get less and less polite, and so to me being one of the good guys is a series of little attitudinal things that one can do all of the time. Just understanding other people and not having this kind of every man for himself idea. In Star Wars it's black and white, you're a Jedi or you're a Sith, or you're a goodie or you're a baddie. And I wanted to always be the goodie as a kid. I collect Strom trooper T-shirts and stuff like that. My dad was a Holocaust survivor, he died when we I was ten, so he died when I was very young. So I know what a real Storm Trooper was. And it's funny that they're the foot soldiers of a great evil. But as I get older, then you realise that we live in that grey area really, and we live in that place where we're not entirely good, we're not entirely bad. I just hope that most of the time, and for most of what I do, I live in the world of the good guys. But I just wanted to also better my life, and that's been a long and very, very ongoing process to get to a point where I'm at a place where I deserve. Because I always felt that I didn't. If I'd have just been like them, then I would have done what they did, which is you end up in petty crime, going in and out of prison. To be fair, you know, one of my brothers, he's done really well for himself, and he's a truck driver which is by no means a noble profession or anything, but he's earning enough money to look after his wife and kids, he's settled down, he's doing all right, and to me that's a great success for him. So yeah, haha, I was just clever and, I guess, wanted a little bit more out of life than that.

Thor: I hear in what you're saying a fundamental choice that you want to be one of the good guys, which, when you told me about your background, is kind of astonishing, that you had that inner…

Marco: Yeah, and this year has been, as I mentioned to you, about lots of reflecting. My mum stopped drinking for a while, she was kind of OK, and we took her to see a show last year and it was a nice day and she really enjoyed herself. She was sober and she was in a wheelchair, and we pushed her around and it was a nice day. And then she relapsed terribly, and then it really hit me, it hit me harder than it ever had….

My dad died when I was ten, he was from Holland, and his family we don't really know a great deal about. But my girlfriend's done some great research, she's found a lot of our lineage, she's gone quite far back, because she just loves doing that. So I've found out more this year than I ever have about that family. However, my mum was adopted, and my nan as we knew her, who was not in any way genetically related but she was our nan, you know, she adopted lots of kids and my mum was one of them. And my mum was good enough to be the one person that did look after her, but then, what that leaves you with, and certainly what that's left me with, particularly this year while you're reflecting, is you have no, I have no solid sense of place. But my dad was a captain, and he was a Holocaust survivor, so that those two things, he was captain of a cargo ship, he had his own cargo ship and he was in the merchant Navy, he'd left the concentration camp a couple of years earlier, he went in the merchant Navy. We were a seafaring family, in Holland, so we've always, going back to my great grandfather, always been in ships, and there is something that's within me that if I'm on a boat, even a canal boat or a ferry, there's a real stillness, there's a real thing, I just get this kind of thing. So my retirement plans in thirty years' time or whatever, I'm going to get a canal boat, and I've already named it, and I know

what it looks like, and I'm just going to fucking sail away, you know, haha, that's going to be my thing, me, wife and dog, kids, that's it, we'll go there.

So, my mum had relapsed, and it made me think, having wanted to know a sense of place, I wanted to know how he had done it. Because the one thing I couldn't ever get was why am I all right? The one thing I'll certainly say in my life now, is I've done well to get where I am, and I feel very comfortable and confident with where I am. And I feel like a better person for the things that I've been through, absolutely.

I remember a very brilliant manager from Apple who was transferred to another store, he said three or four things that have really stuck with me. And one of the things he said is you choose your attitude, and he mentioned one of my colleagues, a guy called Shaun, and he said he's a great example of somebody who chooses his attitude. I love that, cause he comes in and sometimes he's not that happy, and I know some of the things that he's going through, but he chooses to have a good day. And I see that in him, and I see that in him all the time. What we do is very high pressured, it's very stressful. We're trying to deliver this world class customer service to people who are very demanding, because they've got these luxury products and it's very expensive. To be really good at it, what you have to do is you have to go out there and you have to choose that day, because if you believe it ain't going to be a great day, then people will make sure it's not a great day. But when you choose that attitude, and say it's going to be a good day, then you're all right, and I guess that I'm lucky in that I've had the ability to lift myself at times. This is part of that, and this reflective process. This book reminds me, and you mentioned identity, and this is fascinating to me, is that I'm lucky enough in that something like this happened. I saw that documentary, acted on it, got this book and lifted myself. So then by lifting myself, I helped to save my mind at a very difficult point. I think that the best literature, music, poetry, or even video games or films, they elevate you that little bit. They give you that kind of… I don't even know if it's an insight, I just think at their best they connect you to a certain part of yourself, or part of the world that you might not have previously been to.

Thor: You use the words lifting and elevate. Does that mean you need to be elevated to get in contact with a part of you that you didn't know existed, or is it a recognition of something?

Marco: I think it's both, and I think it's everything. When I feel myself being elevated or I feel those moments, and going back to thinking how I did when I read this book, then I am connecting with all kinds of things that I understand and I don't understand. So I understand that I like the visceral pull of dark crime and the fascinating things that happen around that, and the way that people fight it, and what that says about people, and the way that a police officer has to work and find clues. You look back and the book says lots about the world and the way that the world is. I don't think Ellroy intended an allegory, but with LA being the main character, Ellroy's almost saying that LA takes people like Elisabeth Short and their ambitions, and pulls them under. The underside of the American dream is, yes everyone can get somewhere but it also chews people up and it spits them out. Reflecting on things like that, you also reflect on your own identity and the choices you make. Well, what do you really want from life? And, I'm just putting this together now, and it's never as direct as that, but did I ask myself the question, somewhere in the recesses of my subconscious, do you really want to be a rock star? Who do you want to be? As for elevation, what I want from a book is a greater insight, I guess, into the world. It helps you to formulate your choices. And it's funny, now that I think about it, that I read about these brutal, horrible murders, but then I get up in the morning and I'm like, I'm going to make sure that I'm nice to people all day, haha. I don't know what that is, there's maybe something there, some kind of link, but whether that's worth exploring I don't know. I just think that more than anything it's important that you do make the right choices.

When we settle down to watch a film and you're happy and you're with your loved ones, it's funny how often we will choose explosions and violence and war and darkness. Do we want to look at it because we're afraid of it and we're trying to kind of say, well I'm not that? Do we want to look at it because it's within us and we want to continue to make that right choice? Do we look at it because we're told to? If tomorrow we had some kind of Stalin-esque government that said everything's going to be positive, and we're going to make sure that every single film that you go and see at the cinema, there's some kind of positive element to it, would that change us and would that make us more positive? Or is

the fact that we still kind of love each other and look after each other, qualified by the darkness that we look at? That is not a question I can answer, but it's a question I'm endlessly fascinated by.

Thor: I think I can see why, it resonates with everything you've said so far.

Marco: Has it? It's a theme and it's something I've always been fascinated by and interested in. I'm playing a game called Star Wars battlefront, were you're soldiers and you're running around in the Star Wars landscape, and so there are certain modes and really all you're hearing is explosions and screams and war. And there are little moments where I think, that's quite dark, these people are dying and things are blowing up, and people are really out there actually in this right now, actually doing it, whereas I'm playing at this. Why am I sitting on my couch playing it? Why am I doing that? Why am I choosing to do that, and enjoying myself? It's something I've always disqualified as an argument that it might make people more violent. I've killed millions of virtual people and never, if you gave me a loaded gun and my worst enemy, I still wouldn't even consider picking it up. It's not something I consider doing, but it's interesting that I want to do that, I just think that's a fascinating thing.

Thor: You spent in total eighteen months in Sussex, and this book helped you cope with that?

Marco: Yes, I really formed the personality and the person I am today then, so, if I'm joining the dots, there was that darkness, and then there was the book, and then I found a job. I've spent most of the last fifteen years of work in things I'm really interested in. Maybe of those fifteen years about five of them have been things I've just had to do to get by, but most of them has been things I was really interested in. I ran a community project and I ran a community radio station. I was part of the team that wrote the bid that got a full time community radio station for Knowsley. I spent five and a half years doing something I really loved and now, again, I'm in the situation where I'm doing something I love, so I consider myself incredibly lucky. I can go back and I can forgive that guy who just thought that the best thing to do, was to sit on my backside and get high. But part of me still thinks that just a few years earlier, what if I'd have just said that was it? That's all part the reflective process, isn't it? You could say, why didn't I do that earlier? I could have been somewhere else, I could have been a, a manager now, I could be on forty grand a year. But then, all you can say, which I choose to say, well that's what you knew then, that's what you knew then. And if you could have known that you would get here,.. You've got to forgive that guy who sat on the couch, not really doing much with his life because you didn't know then, but now you know.

Thor: The moment you saw the flier, "has a book changed or saved your life", had you actually consciously thought, yes, the Black Dahlia, that saved my life, or did that happen when you saw the question?

Marco: Yes, it was absolutely the question, the answer to the question was, oh God, yeah, I remember the Black Dahlia. So yeah, absolutely the question, I answered it right then.

Thor: It sort of connected two things in a way?

Marco: Completely. As I said, this is a very reflective point in my life. That's why I really saw the value in it, cause I thought, yeah I remember that having saved my life.

Thor: What do you put into that word, to be saved, what does it imply to you?

Marco: Well. (pause). There's a series of questions there, that I'm running through, thinking, what would have happened if I never found it? What it allowed me to do was find a way of experiencing things, of finding those themes that are fascinating to me and interesting to me. I could explore those themes without going anywhere, without knowing anybody, being able to get into this completely different world when my mind and soul were so dull. So there is this fascinating thing, so how did that save me? Well, I could easily have given up. But no, I couldn't have, that's a lie. I know now, I know too much about myself to think that I would have given up at that point. But it saved me in that it helped me to understand that there is always something that will pick you up, that will elevate you, that will get you through. You find that thing that raises you out of the situation that you're in, and then that gives you enough energy, enough presence, enough sense, to continue to get out, to get that job, to look outside of the situation that you're in. So it saved me in that it gave me that strength and it also, I think, led me

onto a series of great literature. There was Black Dahlia, and then there was a book called Harlot's Ghost, which I would never dream of reading now. Norman Mailer wrote about eleven hundred pages about CIA agents, brilliant book, but I wouldn't read it now, because it's so dense and difficult. I'm pretty sure I read Harlot's Ghost before I found the job and before the friends and all of that. It gave me the time and the space to be able to say, well, actually I can improve my mind here, I can actually stretch my mind. To me, although it is not the only and exclusive purpose of literature, that is one of the great purposes of literature, it stretches and allows you to test your intelligence in a way that very few other things do, because there's a different discourse, isn't there? I'm not saying that a great song or a great piece of visual art or a great film can't do it, but I think that they do it in very different way. And to me, a great book or a great piece of literature, that really is you and that piece of literature, your interpretation and your being stretched. So it helped me to realise the power of my own mind and the strength of my own intelligence when I was lost and lonely.

Thor: So at the time you doubted your own intelligence, that you had any strength of mind?

Marco: Yes. Intelligence is such a wide thing, isn't it. I enjoy the perspective I have on the world, but it doesn't necessarily make life easy. To be intelligent is to question and to question is therefore to be anxious and to be insecure at times. I don't question my own intelligence, I've always known that I was clever and I've always seen that, but I'd not done very well at school, and I truanted a lot. I left with very few qualifications and so forth, so I'm not degree educated and that always was a thing for me. It isn't so much now, with the qualifications I have now. I'm OK with it now, my biggest thing now is, I'm a certified Macintosh technician. If you'd have told me then, five years' ago, you'll be qualified to be one of the few people in the country that Apple allows to specifically take apart their machines and put them back together and know how to do that, I'd've said, no, that's outrageous. But to me that's a real badge of honour, that's almost like a symbol of my intelligence, but I never got that degree. I never got that piece of paper that says, here you go, you're clever. Though I know enough about life now to know people from both sides of the field, some of the cleverest people I know are some of the best educated, some of the cleverest people I know don't have that degree. So I guess not having the backing of my parents and so on - and there's part of me in my mind that thinks that if life had gone a different way, and my dad had still been alive and slightly more useful, maybe I would have gone to Oxbridge, and been a very, very different person. So if I thought then that that therefore meant I had reduced chances in life, and I would have thought then that I would have always ended up just in a factory or whatever, and that was all I maybe would have been able to do, because I didn't have the same qualifications, I know better now, you know.

It's been a central theme, I think, to what we've talked about: I look back at a kind of younger, more naive, more afraid version of myself that was almost looking to be changed, I suppose. There were lots of experiences that I had in Sussex that will always remain with me, really enriching. I realised then, that if you put me anywhere now, I'd survive, I'd be all right, but that's only because of what happened then. I realised I would know what to arm myself with, I now have the toolkit. Black Dahlia and Normal Mailer's Harlot's Ghost were things that I could hold onto, elevate myself. I could go into this imaginative space and then I would be able to go and face the world. So it was there that I realised that I could confidently do that with the right tools. I think that's central, because as I've said several times, I feel that I'm made richer by the things that I've experienced.

Thor: So it's an internalisation of some resources or life skills, yeah?

Marco: Yeah.

Thor: What I think is sort of beautiful to think about, is the fact that you've got to forty and you say it's a reflective period where you're looking back to see how you've become you, and so that flyer comes as an invitation at the right time.

Marco: Yeah, absolutely. It's not something that five years ago I would have considered doing. I wouldn't have considered it as a really valuable way to spend an afternoon. Whereas now, definitely, and apparently, according to an article I read, that forty to forty two is supposed to be the most difficult years. How old are you, if you don't mind me asking?

I disclose something about my own journey.

Marco: I don't consider myself an anxious person as in outwardly anxious, but definitely in here there's tons of it, and every now and again (clicks fingers) you get those moments. But I'm really good at forgiving myself. Even recently over the last couple of weeks, nothing major, but I've had days where I've felt quite down and even on those days, I can now tell myself that I am ok. I would definitely class myself as happy, but I would look back and think there was this difficult crisis, there was this period where it was just absolute black depression. But it's led here, and there's a story in this, and the story's the kind of story of my life or the story of my involvement, how I've made it here. I like my story now, I think it's a really, really fascinating thing and when I said to you earlier, that I think it would make a great TV show, it's because it's just a great story.

After the end

Thor: Thank you, Marco, for sharing this with me. Just to clarify, if there's anything, after we're finished talking, that you think, oh I should have mentioned that, please let me know.

Marco: Yeah, absolutely**.** I'm very happy to do that. I am certainly now much more confident and I'm happy to be candid, because I'm very much of the mentality that people are people, and if you turn round and you judge someone else cause they're wearing a reflective band around their waist, and you think they look like a bit of a knob, then more fool you if you then dismiss a person because of something trivial like that. I don't worry about peoples' opinion. The lads at work were all laughing because I contributed to a Five Live debate on the legalisation of cannabis. I had quite a difficult time and that's why I gave up in the end, and I said on live radio that for about eighteen months I thought I was Nero from the Matrix, and they just all thought that was hilarious. I don't care, because I know that I'm away from that, and I don't believe that anymore, and to me it's fascinating that there is that in me. That's in lots of people and we have this very kind of misaligned idea of psychosis. We believe the psychotic is violent, but no, it's not so. Psychosis can just be that you're divorced from reality, and I've been there. I only realise now, I never kind of sought any help or anything like that, because luckily enough, I made the right decision and I got out of it. God, I was very poorly, you know. About four, five years ago, I was in my best friend's flat considering that that was going to be the night that everyone was going to murder me. My whole life had led to that point, my whole life had led to it, everyone was going to murder me, I thought. And it's fascinating to me that that's still there, and also, if you look at the kind of literature and the things that I've spoken about, I have a very vivid imagination in its place now. There's a very vivid, rich imaginative landscape in there that's been explored. You'll probably have some degree of awareness yourself, that intelligence, when you're constantly feeding it, it can do strange things to you, and with you. Like I said to you, when I was a kid, I remember going round the shopping centre with a little Han Solo blaster gun, and there were replicants out there, and I was going to find them. But that's what you do as a kid, and as you get older, then you have to put that in its place, and that gets put into its box. So there's no point in judging, but when you have this kind of ability, this kind of imaginative landscape, this Ellroy-like element of it, it just enriches everything, and feeds everything. Is psychosis just this not having the ability to switch it on or switch it off? Going back to me being candid about it, I think people are more fascinating the more that you know about them, and I like people to see the kind of… the more that you know about some people, the less you judge them.