NARRATIVE THEORY, POST-MODERNISM AND THE SELF

BY

SANTJIE GENOT

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Summary

The current vast sociocultural shift from Modernism to Post-Modernism forms the backdrop to this study. Whenever paradigm shifts occur, the metaphors which depict human experience and identity also change. The mechanistic metaphors of Modernism are giving way to metaphors derived from art and literature, in particular narrative theory. Self, as one of the most pivotal notions in philosophy, literature, and psychology, should not be excluded from this process of reconceptualisation. As the point of intersection between the personal and the cultural, the notion of Self now needs to be reformulated to become more coherent with Post-Modernist ideas. Within this framework the Modernist notion of a Self which is unified, substantial, and stable across all contexts, is deconstructed in this study to reveal the linguistic and ideological codes and conventions which are used in its construction. It is proposed that the Self can be viewed as embedded in relationship with others and as inscribed by the prevailing cultural ideologies regarding personhood. As such the Self can be regarded as held together reflexively by narrative codes and conventions. These ideas are demonstrated in an analysis of two written self-narratives and applied to the conventions and practices in psychotherapy.
KEYWORDS

LANGUAGE; MEANING; IDENTITY; NARRATIVE THEORY; MODERNISM; POST-MODERNISM; STRUCTURALISM; POST-STRUCTURALISM; AUTOBIOGRAPHY; LITERARY THEORY; LINGUISTICS.
CHAPTER 1

LANGUAGE AND MEANING: FROM MODERNISM TO STRUCTURALISM

Introduction

This study is an exercise in making explicit the implicit discourses and practices which create, organise, and perpetuate concepts of identity and interpersonal meaning in sociocultural contexts. The assumption on which the study, and in particular, the notions of Self are based, do not correspond with the traditional Cartesian notion of Self as a fixed set of enduring characteristics. Instead, the assumptions follow the Post-Structuralist idea of identity as a set of intersubjective 'negotiations' which is ever in flux, and which has to be continually renegotiated in the intersubjective domain. Thus, on a philosophical level this study is an examination of the fundamental reconceptualisation of the concept of the individual, and, as such, it will trace the evolution of these ideas from Modernism to Post-Structuralism (both are movements in literary theory and philosophy which will be elucidated later on) in this and in the next chapter.

Western countries are currently undergoing a fundamental and radical reappraisal of the understanding of the nature of truth and knowledge. The belief in objective knowledge is gradually receding, propelled by the vast cultural movement, Post-Modernism. Inevitably all the systems of knowledge which reflected that belief (the natural and social sciences) are facing the uneasy challenges of undergoing radical alteration. A number of fundamental assumptions in psychology (i.e. the appropriateness of a scientific model for psychology; defining people in terms of theoretical frameworks which alienate them from their own experiences) need to be questioned and
reconceptualised if it is to take account of the Post-Modernist movement.

While Post-Modernist influences are becoming apparent in academic spheres, it is also evident in art, architecture, music, film and literature. Its influence is characterised by a rejection of the notion of identifiable essences, an acknowledgement of the social construction of reality, a disregard for authority and for rational coherence, and the emergence of ironic self-reflection. Science is increasingly seen as influenced by social, political and ideological trends, rather than as reflecting objective truths. Therefore attention is increasingly shifted from a single objective representation of the world, to various subjective representations of the world. Moreover, these representations are not produced by individuals in isolation, but are influenced by collective narratives which are reflected in literary and cultural traditions. It follows from this that if scientific knowledge is seen to be shaped by literary conventions, then so too are conceptualisations about the Self (Gergen, 1991).

If psychology is to enter the arena of Post-Modernist discourse, then a reformulation of our understanding of the Self is required. The Self has been one of the foundational concepts in psychology and has until now reflected the basic assumptions of the Modernist paradigm, namely, Self is seen as a consistent and coherent set of characteristics (which emerge from the person's 'soul' or 'personality'), which are contained within the physical boundaries of the person, and which embody the enduring essence or substance of the person. In this study I intend to demonstrate how a reformulation of this central concept can be achieved which reflects Post-Modernist ideas. The first part of this reformulation will entail an examination of the creation of meaning through language and narrative structures. Following from this I will develop the idea that 'Self' can be
deconstructed to reveal the modes of its own creation. In the light of Post-Modernist ideas the Self should rather be viewed as a complex series of ongoing negotiations between the individual and the interpersonal meanings in which he or she is embedded. These meanings include the traditional narrative conventions through which identity is presented as well as the prevailing cultural and ideological assumptions about how to be a Self. With this study I hope to address the present dislocation which exists between Modernist and Post-Modernist views of Self in psychology and to thereby bring about greater congruence between them.

In Chapters 1 and 2 the broad shift from Structuralism to Post-Structuralism will be delineated. In Chapter 3 of this study I will focus on narrative primarily as a cognitive schema with certain organising operations which contribute to the emergence of an experience of meaning in relationships. In Chapter 4 the relationship between narrative schemas and the negotiation of identity will be examined. The focus will move to self-narratives or autobiographies as an example of how people create coherence in the way they view their own lives and of how they convey this to others. In Chapters 5 and 6 all the above will be operationalised when the autobiographical texts of two clients from my own psychotherapy practice will be analysed and deconstructed. And, finally, in Chapter 7, the discussion will move to the level of cultural meanings, ideology and politics, where the concepts such as meaning, Self, and self-narrative, will be contextualised from the aforementioned perspectives.

However, in order to contextualise meaning, narrative, and identity logically and historically, I will first have to examine the relationship between language and meaning. After a general discussion of the centrality of language in organising human experience, I will consider the development in ideas of
meaning, language, and identity from the period of Modernism through to Structuralism.

Conceptualisations of language and meaning

The emergence of language, the beginning of awareness

Human existence manifests itself in different realms of reality, such as the material, the organic, and the mental realms. Because human existence is embedded to various degrees in these realms, it incorporates the three basic structures of reality within itself: Matter, life, and consciousness (Polkinghorne, 1988). These three realms are structured in accordance with the principles of autonomous living systems (Durkin, 1981) and interact with one another in a complex and nonlinear manner. According to the emergent theory of evolution (Polkinghorne, 1988), the development of new structures and properties in living systems is an ongoing process. Although the process of emergent evolution is cumulative, it reaches certain threshold points of structural complexity where the features exhibited by the new organisation represent a dramatic departure from earlier ones. The two most dramatic threshold points or points of bifurcation in the history of human existence appeared at the transition from matter to life, and the transition from life to consciousness (Polkinghorne, 1988). The latter transition was characterised by the emergence of language skills which gave rise to reflective consciousness. This has provided us with the uniquely human capacity of experiencing meaning. The acquisition of language has given rise to collectively shared meanings which culminate in their most refined form in cultural expressions. People are linked in interlocking meanings with others by means of this symbolic level of linguistic experience which recursively reflects and informs their thoughts and actions.
Thus meaning is an intra-individual as well as a communal phenomenon. Communities maintain a system of language and pass this system of symbolic signifiers and their related referents on to successive generations. Communities also maintain collections of typical narrative meanings in their myths, fairy tales, histories and stories. A sense of belonging within a community entails, inter alia, a knowledge of its range of accumulated and evolving meanings.

Language: A bulwark against meaninglessness

Language provides us with a comfortable daily refuge of familiarity in the perpetual onslaught of the newness of experience. Language has a "rage for order", as Miller (1972, p. 39) states. We use language and narrative productions of reality as a defense against the complexity of the phenomena of the world. If we had no choice but to cope with the totally fragmented, incoherent, and confusing disarray of human experience and life afresh each day, we would all be permanently disoriented. Thus, we create order and meaning through language out of the chaos of our experience (Miller, 1972). By virtue of its selective and reductionistic nature, language reduces the "overabundance of life" as we encounter it daily, to manageable proportions (Miller, 1972). Language and symbols, by their very nature, are abstractive and reductive, combining things and events in classes and groups; they represent essential features, and therefore gloss over subtle or detailed aspects; they transform complex phenomena into simple ones by selecting main features, principle aspects, and dominant traits.

We appear to be locked into sets of assumptions and fictions about reality, the hopeless subjectivity of which we seldom acknowledge. Our aspirations to attain a perfect correspondence between our experience, and an objective reality, have been futile. Our earliest 'scientific' explanations about the
puzzling and often frightening phenomena of our world were made in the form of narratives, or more precisely, myths: The ancient Bushmen thought that the stars in the sky were the camp fires of other tribes. Many other ancient myths exist which originated in order to explain the unfathomable yet regular phenomena in nature: The sunrise and sunset, the thunder, the tides, the changing seasons, the vagaries of fortune, the patterns of nature. The interpretive and explanatory significance of myths are clearly evident — they provide a way of understanding the otherwise chaotic and, hence, threatening. Creating explanatory stories about chaotic events somehow tamed them. Once they fitted into a structure of meaning, they became manageable. The early myths promoted the meta-narrative that "the world and the mind [were] theatres of meaningful activity" (Nash, 1989, p. 88).

Language is not the simple, rational system of communication that many would have us believe. According to Miller (1972, p. 84), words do not remain simple bearers of messages, but rather explode into many fragments of meaning within each individual — and no one can foretell where the fragments may fly, what bruises they will leave, what flesh they will tear. There is, then, in any concept of meaning in language, both a public and a private dimension. Regardless of how dominant the public or common meaning — language stripped to its bare essentials with 'vibrations' held somehow to a minimum — the private meaning is always there to contend with, both on the part of the writer and the reader.

This unstable relationship between words as signifiers and their meaning, that which they signify, will become the focus of the discussion on Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.
We cannot but live in language; it does not only embody experience nor is it merely a vehicle for expressing experience, it actually exists as part of experience — it completely interpenetrates with experience.

From Modernism to Structuralism

The Modernist movement emerged during the period of the Enlightenment, a philosophical movement which was characterised by a break with the traditional social values of the 18th century and reflected an emphasis on reason, individualism, and progress. The Modernists regarded reality as a closed material system which was organised according to rules that could be expressed in terms of formal logic and mathematics (Polkinghorne, 1988). The influence of these ideas were profound in all spheres of human functioning and pervaded thinking in all human activities, from politics, to economics, to science. These conceptualisations formed part of psychological thought right from its inception: Many of Freud's foundational ideas reflect the influence of Modernism, for example, that the rational could conquer the irrational, and that compulsion could be overcome by freedom of choice.

It was during this period that formal science emerged as the so-called elixir of all the ills of humankind. The development of formal science was based on the notion that reality, including humans, consisted of objects whose actions and reactions were governed by stable laws. The dualism of body and mind was introduced, separating the observer from that which was observed. Formal science accepted this separation. These beliefs were a profound departure from the previously held, traditional notion that the nature of human existence was primarily spiritual and was governed by a relationship to God rather than by the laws of nature (Polkinghorne, 1988).
The Modernist movement was upheld by a belief in the *grands recits*, 'grand' or 'master' narratives (Sarup, 1988), for example:

- the conquest of, and mastery over, nature
- the liberation of the individual from fate and circumstance
- the striving for progress
- striving for the ideal
- striving for the truth
- the attainment of unifying general principles
- the accumulation of wealth.

Science was regarded as the mechanism through which many of the above grand narratives were to be realised.

The Modernists conceptualised humans as independent, free, and individualistic. Each person had an identity which was separate from that of the social group and each person had a unique vision of the world. Free choice and total mastery over personal circumstances were possible. This authentic individual had a stable sense of his or her identity and of where she or he fitted into the historical scheme of things (Norris, 1982; Polkinghorne, 1988).

The Modernist view of meaning was that it consisted of ideas that were representations of an external reality. *Language* was not considered to have an epistemological role; it was relegated to a secondary role in the realm of meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988). The view was that ideas and thoughts existed in the mind and that the function of language was to organise these ideas and thoughts, and to transmit them to others when necessary. The nature of language was not linked to the nature of knowledge in any way, according to the Modernists. This dislocation of language from its epistemological role was manifested both in empiricism and phenomenology. The difference between the two
positions is characterised by the role that consciousness played in the production of ideas. According to empiricism, ideas were passively received from the environment; for phenomenology, the 'transcendent ego' was actively involved in the creation of ideas. Language was a secondary aspect of meaning, and not involved in the emergence of meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988).

The failure to acknowledge the role which language plays in creating meaning is related to the Modernist view of the role that language played in understanding and inquiry. Locke (Polkinghorne, 1988) most clearly expresses the Modernist notion that language is a 'conduit' between us and the things we observe and study. Figurative speech was not considered as helpful in cognitive understanding; its embellishments detracted from knowing things as they are, and was to be avoided.

The empiricist movement in science best embodies the spirit and methodology of the Modernist conceptualisation of reality, language, and meaning.

The empirical model

In the traditional empirical model, language is conceptualised as an adjunct to the sensory organs. It is regarded as something which is added to the cognitive or scientific process after the perceptual stage. It is viewed as a means to store that which was perceived in memory or to communicate it to others. In this model language is reduced to an instrument for accurate description and it should be applied in such a manner that it does not add superfluous elements to the user's intended meaning. Ideally, according to the proponents of this model (which include Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, and the many empirical scientists in the early 20th century), each word is a direct and precise referent of the actual image or idea in one's mind (Polkinghorne, 1988).
This model of language is based on the following assumptions:

* General (higher order) ideas are assembled from first-order perceptual ideas

* General ideas can be reduced to their component parts, which correspond directly to reality itself

* The world does not possess intrinsic meaning — merely energy patterns. There are no real essences or categories.

* Language can be stripped of its subjectivity in order to permit direct access to pure reality. Thus, language can be used as a transparent medium which facilitates direct knowledge about reality.

In the 1920s and 1930s the logical positivists attempted to produce such a transparent language, an ideal language for formal science. They aspired to produce an accurate representation of reality by limiting language to observational statements of phenomena as they appeared directly to awareness. It was hoped that they could eliminate any contamination by metaphysical assumptions from scientific observation (Polkinghorne, 1988). When this proved impossible in practice, they conceded that the names of objects could be included in observational reports!

In literature logical positivism manifested itself in the following assumptions:

* A literary text should be regarded as the expression of the psychology of the author, which in its turn, is the expression of the historical period and the cultural
context in which the author lived and of the race to which he or she belonged.

* All human endeavours and productions can be explained by reference to these three causes.

* If literary scholars undertook the causal explanation of texts in relation to these factors, the practice of literary criticism will become a form of scientific history which will gain equivalence with the methods and status of the natural sciences (Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

By the 1950s and 1960s the empirical model had come under persistent attack. The philosophers of science who opposed the model put forward the argument that because words are learned in empirical situations where the observer is taught to describe certain distinctions in prescribed terms, it introduces bias and undeniable subjectivity into the reports of their observations. Their point was that the theoretical, cultural, and value schemas in which the observers were embedded as scientists and which were pointedly transmitted through training, contaminated the distinctions which they drew in language (Polkinghorne, 1988).

During the last two centuries Modernist culture has gradually permeated the values of everyday life, culminating in "unlimited self-realization, the demand for authentic self-expression and the subjectivism of a hyperstimulated sensitivity have come to be dominant" (Sarup, 1988, p.130). But it has come under severe attack from different quarters during the last 50 years or so. The critics regard the widespread hedonism, the lack of social identification, the narcissism in Western societies as the result of cultural Modernism.
The Modernist project has been denounced by the French 'new philosophers' and their American and English counterparts. It has also been rejected by the Post-Structuralists who declare that progress is a myth. Foucault (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986), a Post-Structuralist philosopher, takes an extremely sceptical position against the Modernist preoccupation with progress. He equates all forms of knowledge with a form of power over others, and therefore regards all forms of modern progress (for example, in psychiatry, sexual attitudes, and penal reform) as an indication of increasing social control. On the other hand, Derrida (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986), another post-modernist philosopher, maintains that we cannot evade the Modernist tradition — the only route, according to him, is to work within that tradition, but against some of its ruling ideas. These ideas will be elaborated on in Chapter 2.

But let us first turn to the Structuralist movement which followed on the Modernist manifestations of the Enlightenment project.

After the Second World War society began to change fundamentally. The descriptive terms for the newly emerging trends vary, that is, 'consumer society', 'post-industrial society', 'post-Marxist society', etcetera but they all refer to fundamental changes in the conceptualisation of reality, language, meaning, and personal identity.

Of the many different movements and trends which emerged during the Post-World War II period, I have selected to focus on Structuralism, since it best embodies the widespread preoccupation in the Western World with holism. It was in Structuralism that the emergent awareness of the inadequacy of the Cartesian/Aristotelian epistemology (and the empiricism through which it had been manifested in the physical and human sciences) was most coherently embodied. Structuralism therefore
rejected atomism, reductionism, and the representational relationship between language and reality. Its preoccupation was with finding metaphors and meta-patterns which transcended the boundaries and content of single fields of study.

**Structuralism**

Structuralism can be described as a movement which attempted to study the general structures of human activity. The movement found expression for its tenets in the metaphors presented in linguistics.

Structuralism cannot be regarded as a school or doctrine — it is a revolutionary way of thinking in that its principles show a fundamental departure from those of preceding models in linguistics. Structuralism originated in France during the 1960s primarily in the work of scholars such as Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, and Genette, and outside France in the work of Propp and Todorov, two narratologists whose work I will discuss in the third chapter.

There are four basic operations which characterise Structuralist thinking, namely:

* Attention is shifted from the study of the content of linguistic phenomena to the study of the processes through which they are manifested.

* Entities are treated as relational (rather than as isolated) manifestations.

* The concept of whole systems is introduced to replace atomistic and reductionistic conceptualisations.

* The aim is to discover general laws (Sarup, 1988).
As Piaget (Visser, in Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982) claimed, there is a general emphasis on structure in the 20th century. It is apparent in many different disciplines, including mathematics, biology, and psychology. Structuralism, as embodied in these fields of study, manifests in an interest in whole entities, rather than parts or individual elements; in relational conceptualisations, rather than cause and effect explanations; and it is based on an analogy of functions rather than on an analogy of substances and forces (Davis & Schleifer, 1989). It is these fundamental epistemological differences from Modernist assumptions which situate Structuralism within similar reconceptualisations of the 'objects' of study in contemporary sciences (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

Structuralism, unlike previous theories of literature or criticism, is not exclusively linked to literature. While its early conceptual roots are to be found in the work of De Saussure, a Swiss professor of linguistics who lived at the beginning of the century, the movement first found its expression in French circles in the 1960s in the work of the anthropologist, Lèvi-Strauss. He founded what he called 'Structural Anthropology'. He broke away from the positivistic recording of observable data and based his analysis of kinship relations entirely on the assumption that they were systems which were structured like a grammar (language), that is, that their individual elements have meaning only in terms of their relation to the overall meaning system.

The work of De Saussure forms the foundation of the Structuralist movement. The implications of his theory were so powerful that modern linguistics has produced new theories of the nature and organisation of literature as a whole, and even of social and cultural life as well. De Saussure's concept of the linguistic sign has been applied far beyond linguistics, to the widest possible range of human behaviour and interactions,
all of which was regarded as governed by systems of meaning which are either linguistic or analogous to those of language (Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

The French Structuralist response to De Saussure's theory, five decades later, led to the realisation of De Saussure's vision — the formation of a general science of signs — semiology. Although he regarded language as the most complex and most characteristic of all systems of expression, it was, according to him, nevertheless still analogous in form and structure to any form of social behaviour. The extension of Structural linguistics into the domain of the social sciences brought about a change of perspective in most of these fields of study: it was no longer a question of gathering empirically verifiable data, of looking at a world of objects through positivistic lenses — it meant seeing forms of expression as signs whose meanings depend on conventions, relations, and systems, rather than on any inherent features (Jefferson, in Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

In Structuralist thought there is a preference to express ideas in holistic, synchronous, and evolving terms. Thus, social and cultural phenomena are regarded as stable networks of codes which exist at a single moment in time. The Structuralist theorists have as little interest in the historical causes behind meaning as in events or personal motivations that meaning may refer to. Instead of focussing on the content of meanings derived from experience, they are interested in the processes by which meaning is socially constructed. According to Culler (1977, pp. 76-77) Structuralism does not try to explain why an individual uttered a particular sequence at a given moment, but it shows why the sequence has the form and meaning it does by relating it to the system of the language.... One attempts to show why a particular action has
significance by relating it to the underlying system of underlying functions, norms, and categories which make it possible.

The Structuralist movement has a revolutionary character, though not primarily politically revolutionary, despite the fact that the movement reached its peak in the 1967-1968 period, thus coinciding with the student revolt in France. According to Jefferson (Jefferson & Robey, 1984) its revolutionary nature can be found in the discontinuity between its tenets and that of previous movements in literary theory. It can only be incorporated as an alternative orientation and not as an additional device or framework to supplement the previous orientations. Its most revolutionary feature is the significance it attributes to the role of language, and not merely language as such, but language as a metaphor for the analysis of a variety of human cultural artefacts. This is the highest aim of Structuralism, to "attempt to isolate and define the conditions of meaning in culture, to articulate the relationship between the tangible entities of nature and the intelligible meanings of culture" (Davis & Schleifer, 1989, p. 144).

De Saussure's theory of linguistics

De Saussure's basic premise is that languages are systems. According to his analysis of language, the relationship between words does not reflect the external relationship between the things which the words signify; words can only indicate the organisation internal to a language system.

Furthermore, language consists of signs which are arbitrary and differential. The specific way in which a language organises its realm of ideas is arbitrary, with the meaning of an idea being determined by the other ideas in the language, rather than by external referents. Due to the fact that various language
systems divide the spectrum of conceptual possibilities in different ways, it follows that the expressions of a language are not based on an external, objective realm (Polkinghorne, 1988).

A linguistic sign is composed of two elements, a sound image (or its written counterpart) and a concept. The term signifier is used for the sound (or written) image, and signified for the concept. For example, the spoken sound or the written word, house is the signifier, and the concept of a house, which the sound or written image evokes in my mind, is the signified.

The arbitrariness of the sign, which De Saussure postulates, manifests in two ways:

* except in a few cases (where the spoken image consists of sounds that resemble those that are associated with the object or action, as in onomatopoeia, for example, sizzle, and cuckoo) the association of a signifier with a signified is entirely the product of linguistic convention, not of any direct or iconic link;

* there is also no natural relationship between the sign and reality (Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

It is the second postulate which is the most radical and fertile feature of De Saussure's theory. It is based on the notion of an essential disjuncture between reality and language. Words do not merely reflect or express our experience, they shape it; they give form to what would otherwise merely be a chaotic and undifferentiated jumble of ideas. Thus De Saussure postulated that reality does not determine the meaning of words, words determine the meaning of reality. For example, the signified house is not the reflection or product of the assorted architectural structures and building materials with which it is
conventionally associated in English. Rather, it is the presence of the sign which enables us to distinguish a class of objects, houses, from classes of objects such as hotels and offices, etcetera — the signifier participates in creating the signified. In this way the signifier and signified are inseparable, or, to use De Saussure's simile, they are like two sides of a single sheet of paper. Not only can we not recognise sounds as linguistic units unless they are attached to concepts, but we also cannot think about concepts independently of the verbal forms to which they are attached.

Yet if the relationship between the sign and reality is entirely arbitrary, how can we understand the sign's ability to signify, the capacity of language to generate meaning from our chaotic experiences? De Saussure's response to this question is that a sign attains its meaning by means of its difference from other signs — each signifier obtains its semantic value only by virtue of its differential position within the structure of the language system. We do not identify words by means of their intrinsic qualities, but by means of their difference from one another, and it is therefore their differences which give meaning by dividing up the continuum of experience. Thus, language is not a collection of separate facts, but a closed system, in the sense that the function and meaning of each element depends entirely on its position within the whole (Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

It is clear that De Saussure's notion that there is a precarious balance between signifier and signified constituted a radical departure from the notion of the empiricists that the signifier reflects and portrays the signified in a direct manner. Thus, meaning was reconceptualised as a relational interplay which was arbitrary and changeable. Meaning was socially and culturally determined and was, therefore, context-specific, not universal. Since there was no longer a stable and ultimate external
referent, no closure could be achieved. Meaning was constructed in a process of continual reinterpretation (Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

The result of these Structuralist conceptualisations was that it became widely accepted that we cannot bridge the gap between the categories of any language and those of reality. "We are, then, caught in the prison-house of language with no way to break through to know extra-linguistic reality in itself" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 26). Thus, experience should be seen as an artefact of language, rather than of reality. The philosopher, Richard Rorty, maintains that because language is "opaque" and prevents our experience from being a "mirror of nature", scholars in philosophy should redirect their efforts from searching for ultimate truths, toward participation in conversations (Rorty, 1979, p. 375). He writes, "To see keeping a conversation going as a sufficient aim of philosophy, to see wisdom as consisting in the ability to sustain a conversation, is to see human beings as generators of new descriptions rather than beings one hopes to be able to describe accurately" (Rorty, 1979, p. 387).

Conceptualisations of the Self

The Structuralist theoretists formulated a critique of the view of the human individual. Lévi–Strauss, for example, called the figure of the Self which was created by Modernist thinking "the spoilt brat of philosophy" (Sarup, 1988, p. 3). He believed that the 'individual' or 'subject' (the term which is widely used for the Self in Structuralist and Post–Structuralist works) was constituted by the human sciences as the centre of being. The individual was seen as not only autonomous but coherent and self-aware, as "a narrator who imagines that he speaks without simultaneously being spoken" (Sarup, 1988, p. 1). It was one of
the central aims of the Structuralist movement to dissolve these conceptualisations of Self.

The Structuralists regarded the Self as a function of the codes that ground it. They believe it can be thought of as a social convention. Such a conceptualisation reflects that the Self is not regarded as the centre of consciousness, because an individual is not usually conscious of the conventions that shape meaning. Such a Self can also not be regarded as the originator of meaning — the functions of the Self are substituted by a number of interpersonal systems that operate through the Self. But then, according to the Structuralists, meaning does not need to have an 'author', since it consists entirely of an intersubjective system which has no beginning and no end (Ray, 1985). As De Saussure stated "... language is not complete within any single brain, it exists perfectly only in the collective mass" (Ray, 1985, p. 112).

This kind of reasoning not only precludes the notion that meaning is attributed by an individual, it invalidates the traditional search for the 'author's meaning' in literary texts. Instead, the Structuralists propose a description of the structures of rules and conventions which underlie various texts. Because these codes cannot be restricted to single works or contexts, the Structuralists strive to create a set of general descriptions. But they have to limit their analysis to the particular set of codes which are operative at a given moment in time, since they are continually evolving.

Conclusion

The Structuralist notions are revised and taken a step further in the Post-Structuralist movement and will be elaborated on in the next chapter. Suffice it to say that in Post-Structuralism the relationship between the signifier and the signified is
stretched even further until none at all exists. In contrast, Structuralists still regarded it as possible to construct a heuristic or systemic set of 'truths' from the individual material in texts; it was still possible to ascertain the codes by which meaning was socially or culturally constructed, however shaky the relationship between the sign and meaning. De Saussure still believed that a relatively stable and useful unity could be achieved between sign and meaning, even if it was altered from time to time. After all, the belief in the existence of something called 'structure' presupposes a centre, fixed principles, a hierarchy of meanings and a stable foundation (Eagleton, 1986). The Post-Structuralist writers, on the other hand, shifted the emphasis entirely away from the signified to the signifier, so that there is a perpetual detour on the way to a 'truth' which has lost any stability or significance — 'truth' is perpetually delayed.
CHAPTER 2

POST-STRUCTURALISM: THREE PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

The birth of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism can be traced back to Modernism. Structuralism emerged when language became a central preoccupation. This, in turn, occurred because in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries language in Western Europe was seen to be in a deep crisis. It had become impossible to write in a world where language had become degraded to a mere vehicle for science, commerce, advertising, and bureaucracy. Was there still an audience for written works when the reading public was inundated with superficial mass produced culture? Could a literary work be an artefact and a commodity at the same time? Did the traditional notion of the representational character of language still hold? Was meaningful communication with an audience still at all possible in the ideological turmoil of the twentieth century?

It was concerns such as these which were related to the historical context of modern writing, which forced language into the foreground. It was in this context that the content of the literature as well as the reader, or audience, were renounced—and language itself became the cherished object.

If objects and events in the real world are experienced as lifeless and alienated, if history seems to have lost direction and lapsed into chaos, it is always possible to put all of this 'in brackets', 'suspend the referent' and take words as your object instead. Writing turns in on itself in a profound act of narcissism, but always troubled and overshadowed by
the guilt of its own uselessness (Eagleton, 1986, p. 140).

Structuralism and semiotics are still a reflection of the traditions of Western thought and science. For example, they continue the typically Western tradition of finding ways of 'understanding' phenomena by producing models of explanation that offer coherent images of the order of things, images of what Foucault calls, a 'principle of unity' (Davis & Schleifer, 1989). The Structuralist writers endeavoured to account for the existence of phenomena and their conditions of existence.

However, deconstruction (the central technique of critique used in Post-structuralism) aims at describing the limits of understanding. Deconstructive critique analyses and tests the assumptions which support intellectual knowledge in order to expose and question the 'self-evident truths' they are based on. Rather than finding a way of 'understanding' — that is, of incorporating new phenomena into coherent existing or modified models of knowledge — deconstructive critique seeks to uncover the unexamined epistemology that produces those models.

Post-structuralism emerged from the mixture of euphoria and disillusionment which followed the 1968 student revolution in France. The movement swiftly swept across Europe, attacking the authoritarianism of the educational institutions and the state. In France the force of the revolution actually briefly threatened to overthrow the state. But an inability to produce a unified leadership structure led to its demise. In the aftermath of these events, Post-structuralism took shape, almost as if, unable to dismantle the institutional structures, the proponents of the revolution turned their energies toward the subversion of the structures of language (Eagleton, 1986). They turned against any form of coherent belief-system, specifically all forms of
political theory and ideology which attempted to influence and control the structures of society as a whole (Eagleton, 1986).

It is widely recognised that the complex and intriguing nature of the Post-Structuralist movement is best demonstrated in the work of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan (Eagleton, 1986; Jefferson & Robey, 1984; Sarup, 1988). What follows, therefore, is a discussion of their contributions to the movement. These three prominent figures should not be regarded as a group. They themselves would have rejected the notion that their work belonged to any clearly demarcated intellectual domain. However, in most texts on Post-Structuralism, their ideas are presented side-by-side. I have chosen to continue this convention, since, although their points of departure differ (i.e. philosophy, cultural history, and psychoanalysis respectively), their ideas dovetail in such a way as to provide a representative (if there is such a thing in the context of Post-Structuralism!) and tantalising, if ever-elusive, impression of Post-Structuralist thinking.

Jacques Derrida

Derrida has made a substantial contribution to the study of language, literature, and philosophy. He was born in Algiers and educated in France. He held a position at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris where he taught the history of philosophy. He is widely regarded as one of the two or three most influential contemporary philosophers. Although he was not trained as a literary critic, his philosophical works and, in particular, his conception of "deconstruction" has had a great impact on literary theory and literary studies since the 1960s which continues still. In more recent years his influence has spread to other fields of study, most significantly, theology, sociology, and the newly emerging interdisciplinary domain of "discourse theory". He is a prolific writer and has produced
works on different areas of study, such as art, literature, psychology, politics, theology, theatre, and of course, philosophy (Davis & Schleifer, 1989). Some of his books include: *Speech and Phenomena* (1973); *Writing and Difference* (1978); *Of Grammatology* (1976); and *The Postcard* (1980).

Very broadly speaking, his most consistent contribution has been to question assumptions and to make the familiar unfamiliar. It is difficult to summarise his works in terms of his central ideas, since he took up a position against general and unified theories. His central endeavour was to avoid substituting one closed system (of explanations of language, literature, and philosophy) for another. Another obstacle in the way of providing a summary of his works is the inseparability of his ideas from their contexts. His ideas are expressed in the context of his discussions of particular literary texts and become distorted when they are separated from their originating discussions (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

In order to locate Derrida in a specific philosophical space, it is useful to relate his creation of the technique of deconstruction to a broader effort supported by Barthes, Lacan, and Foucault. They do not collectively represent an organised reform movement, which has formulated a set of principles with detailed specifications for the revision of existing structures into a new, coherent whole. Quite the contrary: They question and undermine these existing structures in ways that have very little in common, except perhaps, precisely in that they undermine existing structures (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

Traditional theories of meaning imply a simple vertical relationship between the signifier and the signified. The signifier is believed to symbolically reflect meaning other than itself. Derrida endeavours to replace this model of the vertical relationship between the word and its meaning by reducing the
generation of meaning to a process which occurs within a horizontal system of relationships. Stated simply, signifiers no longer refer to phenomena outside themselves, they refer only to other signifiers. Thus, meaning is never separable from the signifier which invokes it (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

De Saussure maintains meaning in language is merely a question of difference. 'House' is 'house' because it is not 'mouse' or 'louse'. Meaning is always the result of a division of signs. The signifier, 'house' evokes the concept or signified of a house, because it divides itself from the signifier 'mouse'. The signified is the product of the difference between two signifiers. But the process does not end here: The signified is also the product of the difference between a large number of other signifiers: 'louse', 'grouse', 'ground', 'mound', etcetera. This contradicts De Saussure's notion of the sign as a neat symmetrical unity between one signifier and one signified.

In other words, the signified, 'house' is really the product of a rather complex interaction of signifiers, which has no endpoint (Derrida, 1976). Thus, meaning is the result of a potentially endless play of signifiers, rather than a concept which is neatly teamed up with a particular signifier. The signifier does not reveal a signified directly, as a mirror-image of reality; there is no harmonious one-to-one correlation between the level of the signifiers and the level of the signifieds in language (Derrida, 1976).

There is no fixed distinction between signifiers and signifieds either. In order to ascertain the meaning of a signifier, you can look it up in the dictionary, but all you will find will be yet more signifiers, whose meaning (signifieds) you can look up, etcetera. This process is not only, in theory, infinite, but also circular: Signifiers keep changing into signifieds, and vice versa; you will never come to rest at a signified which is not itself also a signifier. Thus if Structuralism divided the
sign from the referent, Post-Structuralist thinking goes a step further: It separates the signifier from the signified (Derrida, 1976).

The above can be reformulated as follows: Meaning is not immediately present in a sign. Because the meaning of a sign is a matter of what the sign is not, its meaning is always, in some sense, absent from it too. Meaning is scattered or dispersed along the whole chain of signifiers: It is never fully present in one sign alone. It is a kind of constant flickering of presence and absence simultaneously. Reading a text is more like following this process of constant flickering than it is like "counting the beads on a necklace" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 128).

There is yet another sense in which we can never quite capture the meaning of a text, which results from the temporal nature of language. When I read a sentence, its meaning is always somehow suspended, deferred or still to come: One signifier refers me to another, and that, to another; earlier meanings give way to, and are modified by, later ones. We do not understand the meaning of a sentence by merely mechanically stringing one word after another. If words are to create some relatively coherent meaning at all, each one has to hold the traces of the words which have gone before them, while simultaneously holding itself open to the meaning of those which are to follow (Derrida, 1976). According to Eagleton (1986, p. 128) "each sign in the chain of meaning is somehow scored over or traced through with all the others, to form a complex tissue which is never exhaustible; and to this extent no sign is ever 'pure' or 'fully meaningful'". At the same time as the above is occurring, I am aware, however imperceptibly, of all the different meanings which it has excluded, or 'fended off', in order to be itself. All the excluded signs inhere within the sign, since they are, in fact, part of the constitutive process (Eagleton, 1986).
This notion seriously undermines the domains of Western metaphysics and semantics, which is based on the fallacy that meaning can exist beyond its signifier (Ryan, in Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982). Derrida rejects the tendency in Western metaphysics to regard 'being' as absolute, and to assume that all phenomena have a centre and an origin. Each in their own way, Freud, Nietzsche, and Heidegger have all challenged this notion. Derrida's efforts can be seen as being parallel to this broader challenge (Ryan, in Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982). He attempts to illustrate that by undermining the notion of a representational relationship between language and reality, one necessarily undermines the foundations of Western discourse. Language can no longer be regarded as a subservient, secondary schema for the useful arrangement of reality. Instead, texts and discourses should be seen as self-contained and self-reflective entities, which invoke only themselves (Derrida, 1976).

Another reason why meaning is never identical with itself is because signs are, by definition, reproducible or repeatable. A mark which occurred only once can, by its nature, not be considered to be a sign. The fact that a sign can be reproduced therefore forms part of its identity; but, at the same time, it also divides its identity, because it can always be reproduced in another context where it has a different meaning. According to Eagleton, 1986, p. 129) "the signified will be altered by the various chains of signifiers in which it is entangled". It is impossible to ascertain what a sign's original meaning was, because it changes slightly in each different context it is encountered. Although it does maintain a measure of consistency across those contexts in order to be recognised as a sign at all, it is never completely identical with itself in all contexts. It is modified by the specific chains of signifiers in which it is entangled (Derrida, 1976).
The above argument holds far-reaching implications for traditional theories of meaning. Within the framework of these theories, language was believed to function as an uncomplicated and transparent reflection of personal experiences and phenomena in the real world. In my discussion on Structuralism some of the problems with regard to this view of 'representation' emerged, but now even more serious difficulties arise. One of the consequences of the theory which I have outlined above is that all the transcendental meanings which we have traditionally held to be fixed and true are shown to be fictions — necessary fictions, perhaps, but fictions nonetheless. There simply are no meanings or concepts which are not contaminated by an open-ended play of signification, shot through with the fragments of other ideas. Certain of these ideas or meanings are selected from this play of signifiers, and elevated by social ideologies to a privileged position, or made so central that other meanings are forced to 'orbit' around them. In our own society examples of these are ideas such as Freedom, Democracy, Authority, Order, etcetera (Eagleton, 1986).

These central ideas are sometimes regarded as the origin of all other meanings — the source from which other ideas emerge. However, in the light of the above argument, this does not make sense any longer, since for this meaning ever to have been possible, other signs must already have existed. It has now become impossible to think of an origin without wanting to reach back beyond it. At other times these centrally dominating meanings may be regarded as the goal towards which all other meanings are, or should be striving. Teleology, or conceptualising life, language or history in terms of its orientation to a telos, or end goal, is a way of rank ordering meanings in a hierarchy of significance. But such a theory of history or language as a simple linear evolution does not take cognisance of the weblke complexity of signs, the back and forth, the present and absent, the forward and sideways movement


of language in its actual processes. It is this web-like complexity which Post-Structuralists invoke when they use the term 'text' (Eagleton, 1986).

Derrida (1976) calls all the thought-systems which are apparently based on unassailable principles, 'metaphysical'. He maintains that we cannot escape the urge to construct such metaphysical thought-systems -- it appears to be too deeply rooted in our human needs. They can therefore not simply be ignored or done away with. Derrida even regards his own work as contaminated by these metaphysical thought-systems, despite his attempts to escape from them. But they can be 'deconstructed':

- They can be shown to belong to a particular system of meaning, rather than some original uncontaminated 'truth' (Derrida, 1976).

Deconstruction uncovers the dualistic thinking which underlies much of what is typical of ideological thinking. Ideologies, by their very nature, draw sharp distinctions between what is acceptable and what is not, between 'us' and 'them', truth and falsity, sense and nonsense, reason and madness, central and marginal, surface and depth. Although we are not able to transcend beyond this realm of binary opposition into some ultra-metaphysical realm, we can unravel these oppositions somewhat and demonstrate how one part of an apparent opposition secretly inheres in the other (Eagleton, 1986).

Structuralism stopped at the point where a text could be analysed to reveal its dualistic thinking and to illustrate the dynamics and the logic of the dualistic interaction. Deconstruction, on the other hand, illustrates how such oppositions are held in place by contrived and artificial means and inverts or collapses them. Derrida typically reads a text in such a way that he seizes upon an apparently peripheral detail and tenaciously works it through in such a way that it threatens
to dismantle the dualisms which form the foundations of the work. The technique of deconstructive criticism entails the illustration of how texts "come to embarrass their own ruling system of logic" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 133), by uncovering the impasses or *aporia* of meaning in the text, that is, the parts where the text contradicts itself. This is not only a characteristic of certain kinds of texts, it is a universal supposition about the nature of all writing. It follows from the previous discussion about meaning, that there is something about writing itself which evades logic and systems of meaning. There is a continual 'dissemination', a term which Derrida uses to refer to the flickering presence/absence of meaning, the defusion and detouring of signification.

Writing, like language, exists in terms of *difference*, a dense term coined by Derrida which is, in fact, a non-concept, a non-thought (Derrida, 1978). It refers to the fact that a text may show us something about the nature of meaning which it is unable to articulate as a proposition. According to Derrida, all language exhibits this "surplus" over exact meaning, "is always threatening to outrun and escape the sense which tries to contain it" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 134). This occurs most obviously in 'literary' texts, but it is true of all other writing. Thus, writing is no longer seen as that which establishes some kind of structure or meaning, a fixed principle, a stable centre, a solid foundation. The idea of writing as endless deferring and differing, undermines the foregoing notions (Derrida, 1978).

Michel Foucault

Together with Derrida, Foucault has become one of the most influential philosophers of contemporary thought, both in Europe and America. Foucault was, however, less concerned with language per se (i.e. at the level of signification) than with the relationship between language and social institutions — a
relationship which he refers to as 'discourse'. In his work he endeavours to examine language at its interface with social institutions in order to identify the institutional rules that shape the emergence of particular meanings, and hence, shape certain forms of knowledge (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

In the 1960s Foucault's work centred on language and the constitution of the Self in discourse. He regarded the individual subject as an empty entity, a mere intersection of different discourses. He rejects Humanism which proclaims that individuals are autonomous and responsible. Foucault believes that the individual has become an object of knowledge in the interface between the Self and the social sciences. Foucault sees the confession as a central dynamic in the expanding technologies of the human sciences in their quest to gain increasing control over people's bodies (in the medical sciences) and their perceptions of themselves (through an emphasis on normative thinking in psychiatry). The confession, telling an expert in a particular field of knowledge, everything about oneself (a doctor or a psychiatrist), has become a central part of the strategy of power (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986).

In his early works he identified the conditions that facilitated the emergence and development of modern domains of knowledge as well as their institutions, namely, conceptualisations about madness and the emergence of asylums in Madness and Civilisation (1967); scientific medicine and the establishment of clinics in Birth of a Clinic (1973); and the development of the human sciences in 18th century Europe in The Order of Things (1970). After the failure of the 1968 student uprisings in Paris, Foucault turned his attention to an analysis of the exercise of power through social practices, including the use of language or discursive practices. He proposed that each society generates certain procedures according to which the production of discourse is selected, controlled, organised and distributed.
In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault combined his ideas on the development of social institutions (prisons, in this case), and the exercise of power through discipline, in particular, discipline of the body. This theme is developed further in Foucault's last work, *The History of Sexuality* (1979). Foucault, therefore, differs from Derrida and other Post-Structuralist writers in that he does not comment on individual literary works, but rather views literature as a socially constructed discursive practice (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

**Foucault's genealogy of history**

Foucault rejects any form of universal theorising. He attempts to avoid totalising forms of analysis and is critical of systematisation. However, there is an underlying coherence in his works which results from the fact that he follows the same vision of history as Nietzsche, called *genealogy*. Foucault, like Nietzsche, rejects the notion of a line of continuity and causality running through from the past to the present. They both separate the past from the present by estranging the reader from the past, by making it foreign, and therefore undermining the legitimacy and superiority of the present (Sarup, 1988).

The differences between this approach and traditional historical analysis are profound: Whereas traditional historical accounts insert events into grand explanatory schemes and linear-causal processes, attempt to view events from a central point of origin, and celebrate great achievements, moments and persons, genealogical analysis seeks to establish the singularity of events, eschews the spectacular in favour of the discredited, the neglected, and the phenomena which have been denied a history (Leitch, 1983; Sarup, 1988).

According to Foucault, many forms of knowledge were denied and suppressed, disqualified as inadequate and naïve, and located
low down on the hierarchy established by scientific criteria. Foucault's genealogies focus on "local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchize and order them in the name of some true knowledge" (Sarup, 1988, p. 64). Thus, in Foucault's view of history there are no constants, essences or static forms of uninterrupted continuities structuring the past.

**Power and knowledge**

The main thrust of all Foucault's works is the analysis of the process of modernisation. In many of his books he analyses a general historical argument in terms of the development of a particular kind of institution. In his book, *The Birth of a Clinic* (1973), his focus is still on the medical profession's control over social perceptions of health, but in his subsequent works, *The Order of Things* (1970), and *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), he analyses the structure of scientific discourses. Discourse is best defined here as practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak (Leitch, 1983). Foucault's concern is with the conventions and rules which determine which statements are desireable/undesireable in a particular scientific context and how this process determines the content of the 'knowledge' produced. He is particularly interested in the effects of power as it is manifested in knowledge and refers to an 'apparatus' in this regard, a term which represents a structure of heterogeneous elements such as discourses, laws, institutions, in other words, the *said* as well as the *unsaid*. The 'apparatus' contains "strategies of relations of forces supporting, and supported by, types of knowledge" (Sarup, 1988, p. 71).

Foucault, following Nietzsche, turns the common-sense view of the relationship between knowledge and power on its head.
Whereas knowledge is usually regarded as providing us with the power to accomplish tasks and to understand phenomena, Foucault argues that knowledge presents us with the power to define others, which gives us a hold over them. So, in his view, knowledge ceases to be a liberation and develops into a mode of surveillance, regulation, and discipline (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986).

In Foucault's masterpiece, *Discipline and Punish* (1977), he analyses the transformation in the manner in which punishment was meted out for crimes in the 18th century, in other words, a change in how power was exercised. In feudal times, under monarchical power, when crimes were perceived as a threat to the king's sovereignty, punishment took the form of cruel executions and humiliations in order to restore the position of the king and as a warning to others. Public executions were a visible display of his power to his vassals, his total control over their every manifestation. Foucault (1977) suggests that under a monarchical system, society was structured in such a way that individualisation was greatest at the top of the hierarchy, represented by the king. Power was visibly manifested in the person of the king, who had unlimited power over an unindividualised mass of subjects.

Then, within a period of 80 years the system changed to one of disciplinary power, a system of surveillance which is supposed to lead to the interiorisation of the process in each individual, leading to the point where each individual is his/her own overseer. The new theorists claimed that the new system was superior to the old since it is exercised continuously at minimal cost (Foucault, 1977).

This process of transformation in Western societies is best portrayed in Foucault's description of the Panopticon, an architectural structure proposed at the end of the 18th century.
by Jeremy Bentham (Foucault, 1977). In the Panopticon prison the prisoners could not be sure whether they were being observed from a central watch-tower from which all the cells were visible. The product of this system is hypothesised to be that the prisoners would gradually start to supervise their own behaviour. Thus overt violence is replaced by moralisation. This new form of power, which can be referred to as panopticism, was first displayed in schools, barracks and hospitals. Dossiers, systems of evaluation and classifying were developed, and groups of patients and pupils were continuously supervised. At a certain point these measures were generalised to other contexts.

The traditional view of power is a negative one — it is that which limits, obstructs, refuses, prohibits, and censors. It presupposes an autocrat whose function is to forbid, to have the power to prohibit. In such a framework, any challenge to the power can only be seen as a transgression. Foucault had this view of power in his earlier works, but later, in 1971-72, he replaced a judicial and negative conception of power with one which was technical and strategic. In its modern manifestation, power produces new capacities rather than limiting anything (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1986).

Foucault states further that power is not a possession or a capacity, nor does it reside in hierarchies — it has the nature of a network, with threads extending everywhere. He suggests that an analysis of power should not focus on the level of conscious intention of those who apply it but on the point at which it is applied. Thus, instead of viewing power as a constraint or prohibition, it "produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth" (Sarup, 1988, p. 82). For Foucault power is necessary for the production of knowledge and is a natural characteristic of all social relationships.
In summary, one of the central tenets in Foucault's work is the notion that social power is omnipotent with respect to the psychological formation and functioning of the individual. It is this idea which has a direct bearing on this study and will be integrated in the material which follows in later chapters.

Jacques Lacan

The work of Lacan (1901-81), a French psychoanalyst, has had a profound influence, not only on the practice of psychoanalysis, but on literary theory and Post-Structural thinking in general. Interest in Lacanian psychoanalysis reached new heights during the May 1968 uprising in Paris, because it was thought to reconcile existentialism and Marxism. Many of the students and workers felt that politics could only be liberated through a liberation of interpersonal relationships and it was supposed that Lacan's thinking could provide the foundation for this (Sarup, 1988).

Existentialism was central to the student movement because it provided a framework for thinking about issues of choice and personal responsibility. However, as a theory of the Self, existentialism was still firmly embedded in the Cartesian epistemology. Existential psychology tended to depict the individual as a rational, conscious agent who could consciously control and explain his or her behaviour. Thus it remained within the bounds of a philosophy of individual autonomy and rational choice (Sarup, 1988).

Lacan's theory, on the other hand, offered a way of conceptualising the social and linguistic construction of the Self. According to Lacan, Self and society cannot be viewed separately: Humans become socialised with the acquisition of language -- and it is through language that we are constituted as subjects (Sarup, 1988; Wright, 1985).
The content of Lacan's texts is not simple to access conceptually; his writing is a manifestation of his views on language. He attempts to avoid the over-simplification of other psychoanalytic writing and combines the theoretical and the poetic in a highly associative style. He does not regard his writings as a medium for convincing or persuading readers; he does not wish to 'ideologise' ideas or to present a stable body of knowledge. He also wants to subvert the normalisation that everyday language produces (Sarup, 1988). These features of his style of presentation are typical of Post-Structuralists generally: They pay scrupulous attention to both content and process, displaying an extraordinary awareness of the implications of modes of communication.

According to some authors (MacCannell 1986; Sarup, 1988; Wright, 1985) one of Lacan's main achievements is the integration of Structuralism and Phenomenology. In his early work the growth of French Phenomenology and the influence of Hegel and Heidegger could be seen. Later, Structuralism allowed him to consider systems of interpretation. According to Sarup (1988), Lacan's work retains features of both Structuralism and Phenomenology throughout. This can be seen in his emphasis on language determinism (a Structuralist assumption) without relinquishing the concept of the 'subject' (Phenomenologism stresses the 'free self').

Lacan rejects any form of physiological reductionism — his work is implacably anti-biological. Organic accounts of madness are rejected in favour of linguistic explanations. It is a discourse, an attempt at communication, that has to be interpreted. The emphasis is on understanding the discourse, rather than on finding causal explanations. He maintains (Sarup, 1988) that we cannot separate the person's 'mind' from her or his whole being; we cannot regard a person's 'psychology' as separate from his or her personal history.
When Lacan relinquished psychiatry for psychoanalysis, he initiated his work on Freud by criticising the biological assumptions reflected in Freud's work. Lacan's view is that the biological dimension of existence is always interpreted by the subject, it is "refracted through language" (Sarup, 1988, p. 8) - the body can only be conceptualised in language. The imposition of cultural meaning on the human anatomy is unavoidable.

Lacan is critical of Behaviourism and American Ego Psychology, the latter because of its emphasis of the individual's adaptation to society. He believes that theorists such as Fromm and Horney have devitalised Freud's theory; they have sweetened Freud's ideas on the unconscious and infant sexuality. Lacan also disagrees with their belief that 'self-improvement' is possible without reference to the role of social factors (Sarup, 1988).

Lacan's work is often described as a 'return to Freud', but his theory of language makes this impossible -- much of what Freud meant literally, Lacan reframes in terms of linguistic and metaphoric implications. Moreover, he retains the main concepts but realigns them to create a new system of thought, a rigorous reconceptualisation of Freud.

Lacan's psychoanalytic theory

Lacan maintains that our knowledge of reality, ourselves, and others is entirely determined by language. His psychoanalytic theory illustrates the process by which the infant becomes aware of herself or himself as a separate entity through the acquisition of language. He believes that subjectivity is created through the I-Thou dialectic which defines the subjects by their mutual opposition. Language is also the vehicle through which the social reality, such as culture, prohibitions, and
laws, manifests. The infant is shaped by these various dimensions of language without being aware of it (Lacan, 1977).

The gradual development in the acquisition of language is typified in the tale of the child's game described by Freud (Lacan, 1986): The child is playing with a cotton reel with a piece of string tied to it. She holds the string and throws the reel over the edge of the cot, uttering a sound which sounded to Freud like "fort", that is, "gone" or "away". Then she pulls the string back so that the reel reappears, and greets it with a cheerful "da", meaning "there". This game is seen as the young child's strategy to master the painful experience of her mother's absence, an attempt to cope with her disappearance and reappearance. It illustrates the beginning of language in its independence from reality and provides insight into how language distances us from the lived experience of the Real (Lacan, 1986). This distancing process occurs in two stages: The movement from the mother to an object (the reel) and eventually to language.

It is in, what Lacan calls the mirror stage, that the first articulation of the idea of a Self occurs. Lacan returns to this key metaphor for narcissism which Freud uses in a discussion on the ego (Lacan, 1986), since he believed that there is a mythical, and sometimes literal, moment of an awakening to the Self when a child makes an imaginary identification with his or her image in the mirror. The process of self-recognition in the mirror occurs in three successive stages: In the first stage the child assumes that her or his own reflection is part of the adult's image. In the second stage the child understands that the image is not real. In the final stage she or he is able to distinguish his or her own image from the adult's (Lacan, 1986).

Lacan therefore extends the implications of this metaphor used by Freud. Whereas the child, before this stage, used to
experience itself as a shapeless mass, it now acquires a sense of completeness. In fact, this stage has wholeness and completion as its central idea. The pleasurable experience of a mirror-image is a metaphorical parallel of a perfect union between the inner and outer, a perfect control which brings about immediate satisfaction of desire. Lacan calls this pre-linguistic, pre-oedipal stage the realm of the 'Imaginary'. So, the mirror-image is a "homologue for the Mother/Child symbolic relation" (Wright, 1985, p. 108). According to Lacan (1977, 1986) this stage is very significant since it is the precursor for the enduring dialectic between subjectivity and alienation.

During this stage the child imagines something which Lacan calls the 'Desire of the Mother' — Lacan utilises the double genitive 'of' on purpose, referring to both the mother's desire and the child's desire for the mother. The child imagines it is the desire of the mother in that it is all that the mother desires. In psychoanalytical terms, the child therefore becomes the 'phallus' for the mother, all that would complete her desire. At the same time the 'Desire of the Mother' is the child's own desire for the mother, as that part of her or his experience which has provided adequately and promptly in all her or his needs. So it too is drawn into this phantasy of completion. At this stage the unconscious has not yet been formed since the child has neither experienced nor acknowledged repression at this stage.

The child's ego is illusionary at this stage; the child's sense of ego is not something which has to be negotiated with the outside world; there is no gap between the concept and its application — it has never been 'tested' in 'use' (Lacan, 1986). The gap only appears during the Oedipal stage when the child is initiated into the order of language, or what Lacan calls the 'Symbolic Order'. Embedded in language are the social imperatives embodied by the Father's rules, laws and
definitions, including those of 'mother' and 'child'. Thus, it is only when the child has to learn to delay gratification and to conform to society's norms, that the split between the conscious and unconscious occurs and repression occurs, which is described by Wright as "the tax exacted by the use of language" (1985, p. 109).

Lacan, like Lèvi-Strauss, regards the Oedipal stage as the most crucial in the child's process of humanisation, since it represents a transition from the "natural register of life to a cultural register of group exchange, and therefore of laws, language and organization" (Sarup, 1988, p. 10). Lacan (1986) maintains that during the first Oedipal phase the infant not only desires the care and the contact with its mother, it also wishes unconsciously to be the complement of that which she lacks: The phallus. This desire could not occur on a conscious level since the child is not yet a subject at this stage of development. Then, during the second phase, the father intervenes and deprives the child of its desired object. Thus the child encounters the power and authority, the 'law' of the father. During the third phase the child identifies with the father. The father therefore reinstates the phallus as the object of the mother's desire instead of the child-complement to what is lacking in her. This process can therefore be described as a symbolic castration of the child by the father by separating it from its mother (Lacan, 1986).

Commenting on the supreme significance which the Oedipus complex has for Lacan, Sarup (1988, p. 11) states it is the moment in which the child humanizes itself by becoming aware of the self, the world and others. The resolution of the Oedipus complex liberates the subject by giving him, with his Name, a place in the family constellation, an original signifier of self
and subjectivity. It promotes him in his realization of self through participation in the world of culture, language and civilization.

Lacan's conception of language

In order to understand Lacan's theory it is best placed in the context of De Saussure's concepts of signifier and signified. As illustrated in a previous section, De Saussure describes two continua, one of sounds and one of thoughts, both of which are chaotic. Through the language process, a section of the level of sounds and a section of the level of thoughts are coupled together: The signifier (the sound element) is matched with the signified (the concept, or thought). In this way, according to De Saussure, the chaotic continuum of sounds and concepts are divided up and matched permanently as two sides of a piece of paper (Jefferson & Robey, 1984).

However there is a significant omission in De Saussure's theory: He fails to describe how we get from the chaos to the distinction, how meaning is made. He does not explain how a disorganised realm becomes sorted out into discrete units. In Lacan's theory the match between the signifier and the signified is not fixed, or logically secure in their sorting of the chaotic continuum of sounds and concepts (Lacan, 1977). Lacan refers to the common occurrence of a single signifier which can refer to two or more signifieds. Lacan therefore maintains that the signifier slides over the field from which the signified is selected. A signifier always signifies another signifier — no word is free from what it evokes on a metaphoric level. Lacan refers to glissement (slippage, slide) along the signifying chain, from signifier to signifier. Equally important, since any signifier's meaning can be altered retrospectively, after the fact (the words in a sentence only attain their meaning once the
sentence is completed), no signification is ever closed, ever saturated (Lacan, 1977). Moreover, each word is only definable in terms of other words. These observations all point to the conclusion that there is no natural bond between signifier and signified. This possibility of signifying something other than what is being said, determines language's autonomy from meaning.

Lacan (1977) maintains that the unconscious not only comes into being through the acquisition of language, it is structured like a language. Lacan draws a parallel between conscious and unconscious discourse in that they both 'say' something different to what they appear to 'say'. For Lacan metaphor and metonymy (the substitution of the name of an attribute for that of the thing which is meant, e.g. crown for king) are the linguistic equivalents of what Freud called condensation and displacement (Wright, 1985). Unconscious desire can mistake one phenomenon for another similar to it and it can substitute one signifier for another (metaphor). It can also shift from one thing to another found with it (metonymy). In repression one signifier comes to substitute for another. The original signifier and what it signifies is banished to the unconscious. Through the devices of displacement and condensation, or metaphor and metonymy, the unconscious manages to avoid censorship. But by the same means the unconscious invades every one of our utterances (Wright, 1985). Thus, each subject builds up many chains of signification, "always substituting new terms for old and always increasing the distance between the signifier that is accessible and visible and all those that are unconscious" (Sarup, 1988, p. 13).

**Language and Self**

The most significant aspect of Lacan's reconceptualisation of Freud's theory is that the 'ego' is no longer a central concept.
In the place of the 'ego' there is the 'subject', a semiotic construct used to refer to a way of understanding and organising the discourses that relate individuals to culture. The notion of a consistent personal identity is rejected. Lacan links positions in language as corresponding to family roles (Father, Mother, Child), which are then constructed like a kind of grammar, that is, 'persons' are seen as markers for structural positions (Davis & Schleifer, 1989). The ego is but one 'position' which is designated as the 'speaking subject' or the 'I' in discourse. Lacan (1986) maintains that the 'I' has no controlling influence on the discourses in which it is embedded. He believes that the sense of Self that people experience is a function of the linguistic operation which he calls the 'discourse of the Other'. The 'subject' is regarded as an inscription in the discourse of the unconscious with itself, in other words, it is a message that the unconscious sends itself (Davis & Schleifer, 1989).

In his critique of ego psychology, Lacan states (Davis & Schleifer, 1989) that the assumed direct relationship between the so-called ego and reality is a narcissistic illusion. It can be seen as corresponding to the phase in discourse called 'Imaginary', since it excludes the mediation of language from the model. Thus, Lacan's critique on Freud resembles deconstructive criticism very closely: Both attempt to dismantle the traditional ego- and logocentric assumptions. Both Lacan and deconstructive criticism reject the Cartesian notion of the 'individual' as an independent, objective, nonparticipant observer of a world that stays forever separate from him or her.

Lacan also considers what he calls the 'dialectic of recognition', which refers to the notion that we obtain a sense of who we are through our reflection from others. In this regard it is useful to consider Winnicot's (1974) discussion of the mirror role. He argues that other people provide an individual
with a consistent sense of Self, with the mother's face being the first mirror. However, as stated before, Lacan (1977) maintains that it is impossible to achieve a stable image. Although we attempt to interpret our reflection from others, there is always the possibility of misinterpretation — there is always the unavoidable gap of misrecognition. Lacan's views coincide with those of Sartre, who maintains that consciousness cannot grasp itself since reflection always turns the subject into an object (Sartre, 1957).

Lacan stresses that we exist only in our retrospective linguistic representations of ourselves, but that these representations are always inadequate (Lacan, 1986). Moreover, our representations of ourselves are always subject to interpretation by others. Thus, there is an inherent tension because one's identity depends, in part, on the recognition by others. In Hegel's discussion of this theme, he uses the metaphor of the Master and the Slave (Sarup, 1988). The Master demands recognition of himself from the Slave but this process is self-defeating since the Master's dependence on the Slave's acknowledgement of him keeps him continuously vulnerable. Extrapolating from this, we attempt to transform others into a mirror.

Neither is mutual recognition ever entirely possible. Intersubjectivity never achieves a completeness because we can never enter another person's consciousness completely. This is partly due to the ambiguity of signifiers — there is always a gap between what is said and what is meant. Therefore our need to achieve a state of wholeness and unity is forever frustrated.

Conclusion

One of the common threads which runs through the above discussion of Post-Structuralist thinkers is their fundamental
axiom that human experience cannot occur outside of linguistic and ideological structures. Their views are unique expressions of a larger philosophical trend toward a transformation in conceptualisations of the individual. It is this trend which will form the central theme of this study. I will therefore return to the ideas of the Post-Structuralist theorists in later chapters.

In the next chapter I will present an outline of the progression of thought in the realm of narrative theory. This excursion will once again trace the development from Structuralist to Post-Structuralist thinking. The relationship between narrative and the construction and maintenance of an identity will be articulated more clearly, but will only emerge fully in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 3

NARRATIVE THEORY: A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLECTIVE MEANINGS

Introduction

We have established in the previous chapter that human experience is ordered and given meaning through language. In this chapter I intend to illustrate that a large part of human experience is given a form which resembles aspects of narrative schemas. What follows is a discussion of the nature of these narrative schemas and the evolution of conceptualisations in the field of narrative theory. In the next chapter autobiography will be examined as a special form of this process of narrativising experience. It is assumed that an understanding of the narrative schemas which shape the production and maintenance of a person's story of himself or herself is a necessary prerequisite for understanding the therapeutic discourse: how the client and the therapist manage and negotiate the perpetuation of the narrative schemas which support their need for meaning and their ideas of their own Self and of the Other.

Narrative: A pervasive and interdisciplinary metaphor

According to Barthes (Mitchell, 1981) narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted. Narrative in its almost infinite possibility of forms is present at all times, in all places, in all societies. The history of narrative begins with the history of humans. Emerging between our experience of the world and our efforts to describe that experience in language, narrative "ceaselessly substitutes meaning for the straightforward copy of the events recounted" (Barthes, in Mitchell, 1981, p. 2).
There is wide agreement amongst scholars from a variety of disciplines and amongst investigators with different theoretical perspectives that narrative is one of the primary forms by which human experience is imbued with meaning (Bruner, 1986, 1987; Carr, 1986; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Miller, 1972; Mischler, 1986; Mitchell, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988; Reason, 1990; Ricoeur, 1984; Sarbin, 1986; Schafer, 1976; Van den Broek & Thurlow, 1991). The impulse to narrate is so natural, and the narrative form so inevitable, that it probably reflects a very central aspect of culture (White, in Mitchell, 1981). According to Barthes (Mitchell, 1981, p. 1) narrative "... is simply there like life itself ... international, transhistorical, transcultural".

Some psychologists regard the story schema as a "natural psychological unit" (Rayfield, 1972, p. 1085) which is as much an intrinsic part of the human mind as our inherent capacity to learn and to use language and grammar. Gee (1985) notes that the ability to understand and to tell stories develops early and rapidly in children, without explicit instruction or training. Cohler (1982, p. 207), a psychoanalyst, refers to personal narratives as the "most internally consistent interpretation of presently understood past, experienced present, and anticipated future". He suggests that a narrative approach should be used in the study of personality because it would entail the same format as that which is actually used by people when they make successive reconstructions of their own history during the course of life. McAdams (1985) proposes that the story metaphor should be used to study identity development since identity stability would be reflected in long-term coherence and consistency in a person's life story.

Jameson (1981, p. 13), a literary critic, refers to the "all-informing process of narrative" which he regards as "the central function or instance of the human mind". MacIntyre (1981, p.
a moral philosopher, maintains: "It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives we live out that the form of narratives is appropriate for understanding the actions of others". What is considered better or worse for a person depends on the nature of the narrative which gives the person's life its coherence.

I can add many other similar statements to this discussion, but these should suffice as a sample of the wide recognition that prevails of the special significance which narrative has as a code through which people express their understanding of events and experiences.

In this study, narrative is conceptualised as a phenomenon which transcends its usual enclaves of poetry, drama, and fiction. Narrative and discourse have become the preoccupation of the present era; the study of the forms of our utterances, their functions and effects is no longer the cherished possession of specialists in literature studies and linguistics. The realisation that our perception and cognitions are inextricably linked to, and indeed do not exist separately from, the systems of signs through which we articulate them to ourselves is an indication of an increased awareness of the self-reflexive nature of our relationship with the world.

New movements have sprung up in ethnomethodology, psycholinguistics, social constructivism, critical legal studies, certain groups in the physical sciences, the social sciences — all seeking to apply techniques such as discourse analysis to examine their own patterns of perception, conceptualisation, and communication. Thus, it is widely accepted that the narrative mode of discourse is omnipresent in human affairs: Narrative is a central feature of our cognitive activities (Ricoeur, 1984), of historical thinking (White,
1973), of psychological analysis and practice (Bernstein, 1990; Lacan, 1986; Schafer, 1976), of political critique and praxis (Lyotard, 1984); narrative is the central function or instance of the human mind (Nash, 1990).

The literary study of narrative has a long history but it has undergone significant developments in recent years. It is no longer the province of literary specialists or folklorists borrowing their frame of reference from psychology and linguistics, but has now become a source of insight and renewal in virtually all the branches of the human and natural sciences. The work of Booth (1961) and Burke (1962), Scholes and Kellogg (1966), and Kermode (1968), are regarded as classics in Anglo-American criticism. The work of the Canadian Frye (1967), focussed on narrative structure, which links him to the emergence of the French Structuralist literary movement in the last twenty years. Building on the work of the East European linguistic theorists (such as Propp and Jakobson), the French Structuralists (in particular, Barthes, Greimas, and Bremond) have produced significant works on narrative structure (Carr, 1986). The contributions of some of these authors will be discussed later.

Narrative forms a link between perception, the construction of meaning, and communication. The narrative schemas which we use influence the initial processing of information; they determine what is perceived, how the information is organised and stored and how it is recalled and conveyed to others. Therefore the interpenetration between our perceptual apparatus and language is such that our understanding and expression of our experiences are never in a one-to-one correspondence with an external reality. The characteristics inherent to language and narratives determine how we select, organise, and attribute meaning to our experiences. Crites (1975, p. 32) has expressed it as follows: "Even if we grant that we may experience something in the utter
absence of language, still, if an experienced present is not simply a disassociated 'now', but contains at least a vestige of memory and a leaning into anticipation, then an incipient narrative form will be implicit in it, of which narrative language is the irreducible expression". This idea of narrative concurs with the view of Barthes (1974) who maintains that at the individual level, people's narratives of their own lives enable them to orientate themselves in terms of their past and their future. At the cultural level, Barthes believes, narratives provide cohesion through shared beliefs, transmit values, and determine a community's identity. In the literary context, the listener or the reader's desire to order and to know are the sources of what Barthes (Mitchell, 1981) has called the proairetic and hermeneutic codes in narrative. These codes, like all codes for that matter, are cultural, namely, they are the common 'property' of all the members of a cultural group. Or to invert the metaphor, all members of a cultural group are possessed by these codes.

Post-Structuralist narratives can be seen as attempts to frustrate our automatic application of these codes to texts. According to Scholes (Mitchell, 1981) Post-Structuralist texts can be regarded as anti-narratives and are meta-fictional because they force us to distract ourselves from our habitual interpretive processes. By frustrating this kind of closure, they bring the codes themselves to the foreground of our attention, forcing us to regard them as codes rather than as aspects of human nature or reality. Thus, the function of anti-narratives is to problematise the entire process of narration.

These conceptual narrativising habits become the manner in which we structure not only the stories of our own past lives (autobiography), but how we conduct our lives in the present, and the same schema also directs our lives in the future. This
implies that, as Bruner (1987, p. 31) states, "a life as led is inseparable from a life as told".

Adopting a small/grand distinction for a criterion for narrative rather than a truth/falsity narrative criterion, Lyotard (1984) maintains that narratives become limiting and damaging when they are elevated to the lofty position of philosophies of history. Grand narratives have become associated with political parties and ideologies, while little narratives are associated with local needs and local ingenuity. Small-scale and local narratives ensure that the power of communities is not relegated to a remote source which is disconnected from the issues in the different communities. This view is also reflected in the work of Foucault (1967) who collected various texts to illustrate the historical changes in the manifestation of power through the ages. He also examined how society's conception of 'madness' fitted into the evolving contextually bound manifestations of institutional power. He, together with the other Post-Structural writers, is deeply sceptical about power as a single-base phenomenon, since the danger exists that this will lead to hierarchical and unequal distribution of power. These writers propose that the coexistence of multiple discourses is more likely to ensure that the dignity and priorities of all parts of a social system will be recognised.

The current changes in the political structures in South Africa appear to reflect exactly these Post-Structuralist tendencies. The single Big White discourse has been broken down to make way for the emergence of different discourses which exist side by side and which should have equal significance in the Multiverse of discourses.

Functions of narrative
The essayist-novelist, Didion's (1979, p. 11) aphoristic
statement about narrative, "We tell stories in order to live", suggests the essential and serious nature of this feature of human existence and is best illustrated by the stories born from Sheherezade's predicament in *A thousand and one nights*. The anthropologist, Turner (1980) ascribes an equally serious function to narratives: He maintains that they provide a means for articulating and resolving problems and crises and disruptions in social relationships. Turner (1980, p.167) regards narrative as the "supreme instrument for binding the values and goals ... which motivate human conduct into situational structures of meaning". He regards narrative as an essential part of cultural rituals and social dramas, the latter consisting of four phases, namely: 'Breach', 'crisis', 'redress', and either 'reintegration' or 'recognition of schism'. Turner therefore sees narrative as serving a binding function, especially in contexts where conflicts in values and interests occur. He states that "the narrative component in ritual and legal action attempts to rearticulate opposing values and goals in a meaningful structure, the plot of which makes cultural sense" (1980, p.152). This is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's view that mythical thought provides a model for transcending contradictions and oppositions (Mischler, 1986).

According to Bruner (1990) a crucial characteristic of narrative is that it facilitates the integration of the *exceptional* and the *ordinary* in a community. The viability and stability of a community depends on its ability to resolve conflicts, to explain anomalies and differences, and to renegotiate communal meanings. This is made possible by narrative's ability to forge a coherence between ordinary and exceptional occurrences. Therefore, a community not only needs to contain normative codes and conventions, it also needs a set of interpretive procedures to make departures from those norms meaningful, in terms of
established beliefs. It is narrative which fulfills this function.

Early (1982), another anthropologist, goes beyond the ritualistic and mythical functions of narrative, to consider its function in people's need to generate shared understandings of significant events in their daily lives. She analyses everyday conversations in order to determine the cultural patterning of values in therapeutic narratives which occur in the context of illness, its progression, treatment procedures, and other related events. She examines these conversations to determine which of these aspects of the experience of the illness become codified into an elaborated version of the experience and become entrenched in versions which are recounted in people's future life accounts. She suggests that such narratives are employed like rituals and ceremonies which combine common sense explanations of illness episodes with shared cultural knowledge about illness.

Cognitive psychologists have studied narrative as the integrating factor in a wide variety of cognitive and linguistic skills, for example: Text comprehension (Rumelhart, 1977); learning and recall (Johnson & Mandler, 1980; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; reading and literacy (Gee, 1985; Heath, 1983; Michaels, 1985; Michaels & Cazden, 1984).

In literacy studies significant work has been done on the effects of different sociocultural contexts on the level of people's articulateness. The particular concern has been the patterns of linguistic and cognitive socialisation engendered by different contexts, and how these patterns shape children's literacy styles and abilities, how they express meaning, and how they take meaning from oral and written stories (Heath, 1982, 1983). Children typically select, memorise, and retrieve the content of texts in patterned ways which are coherent with the
implicit 'codes' of their communities for meaning-making. The implications of these differences have been investigated by Michaels (1985). She studied the stories which children told in classrooms and developed a distinction between 'topic centered' (used most frequently by white middle-class children) and 'topic associating' styles. Because teachers found it difficult to follow and understand the apparently incoherent topic-associating stories of socio-economically deprived children, they were hampered in the extent to which they could 'collaborate' and participate in the discourse with these children. The teachers assumed that because they could not hear the structure and logic in the child's apparently unplanned and incoherent discourse, that it did not exist. However, researchers such as Michaels and Cazden (1984) and Gee (1985) have provided convincing evidence that apparently incoherent stories do indeed have structure and coherence.

A number of research studies by cognitive psychologists have focussed on the structures of stories (Johnson & Mandler, 1980; Mandler & Johnson, 1977; Wilensky, 1983). A central part of these studies has been the development of 'story grammars' and 'story schemata'. The concept, 'story grammar', is used to refer to the analogy between the formal structural features of stories (setting, situation, agent, intention or goal, instrument, plot), including the conventions for the interplay between them, and the syntactic structures and conventions of sentence grammars. 'Story schemata' is used to refer to the generalised representations which are acquired through one's personal experience in typical situations. For example, Rumelhart (1975) developed a 'grammar' which entailed semantic and syntactic interpretation rules for stories which operated on such story elements as 'Setting', 'Episode', 'Event', and 'Reaction'.
In his studies on comprehension Rumelhart (1977) described problem solving as one of the most basic motifs in brief stories: Something occurs to the protagonist that delineates a goal which he or she has to achieve, and the rest of the story is a description of the protagonist's problem-solving behaviour as he or she moves towards resolving the dilemma.

The functions of stories in everyday conversations have also been investigated. Sacks (1972) analysed the assumptions and inferences which listeners used to interpret a sequence of utterances. Sacks (1978) also examined how speakers arranged their utterances in order to announce that a 'story' is in progress, which, incidentally, reflected an implicit social convention that the 'storyteller' may hold the floor for longer than usual in the reciprocality of implicit conversational arrangements. Jefferson (1978a), following a similar perspective, illustrates how participants in conversations insert their stories into the flow of the conversation in a manner which appears to be intended to, first, avoid the disruption of what preceded the story and, second, to advance the progression of the conversation. This suggests that stories serve to maintain the overall coherence of social interaction. Moreover, people appear to participate in an unspoken convention that allegiance, affiliation, and intimacy are expressed in the agreement on the sequence, plot, motives and meaning of interpersonal events — they create the same story about those events.

The fort-da game which Freud describes as the child's symbolic mastery of her or his mother's absence, can be described as the first signs of narrative in the child's development (Eagleton, 1986). The process conveyed by fort-da is perhaps the shortest story we can imagine: An object is lost and subsequently recovered. It is possible to reduce many of the complex narratives in our culture to variations on this theme.
In many of the classics the pattern of the narrative is that an original arrangement is disrupted and later restored. From this perspective narrative can be regarded as a source of consolation: To experience the loss of an object evokes anxiety in us. According to psychoanalytic theory, our sensitivity to loss is symbolic of other deeper unconscious losses (birth, the faeces, the mother) and it is always highly pleasurable to find them restored to their original place. In Lacan's theory it is the original lost object, the mother's body, which becomes the central aspect which gives impetus to the narratives in our lives, driving us to pursue "substitutes for this lost paradise in the endless metonymic movement of desire" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 185). Something has to be absent or lost in any narrative for it to find its impetus: If everything was intact there would not be a story to tell. This loss is not only distressing, it is also exciting. Desire is initiated by that which it cannot obtain and this is a significant source of narrative satisfaction. If the possession of what is lost were impossible, the narrative would become distressing, so we must know that the object will be restored to us. Thus, our pleasure in narratives lies in the suspension of the gratification that we know awaits at the conclusion of the tale. We are able to tolerate the disappearance of the object because our discomfort and suspense is permeated by the 'secret knowledge' (Eagleton, 1986, p. 186) that it will be restored to us. Therefore fort obtains its meaning only in relation to da.

But the opposite is also true: The mother's presence cannot but remind us of her immanent departure. Once the dialectic of this fundamental narrative structure has been incorporated into the person's symbolic realm, we cannot possess any object without seeing it, even if only unconsciously, in the light of its possible absence. Realist works are characterised by a literary style which entails 'sliding' our anxiety about absence under the tenuously reassuring sign of presence. This fragile sense of
security has disappeared in more recent works, where the readers are constantly reminded that what they are perceiving may always have happened differently, or may not have happened at all. But more of that later on in this chapter.

The relation of narrative to other forms of cognition

The question of the prominence which narrative has in relation to other forms of experiencing and communicating about experience is an issue which pervades all literature on narrative. Authors are generally divided in their views on whether narrative should be regarded as the only way in which people transform 'knowing' into 'telling' or as merely one of many other modes of imbuing experience with meaning. Those authors who fall into the latter category distinguish between narrative conceptualisation and a form of knowing which is exemplified by some form of logical argumentation.

In psychology the view that narrative is the primary form of representation is best expressed by those authors who endeavour to reconceptualise theory and research in the fields of personality, developmental psychology, and psychoanalysis. For example, Sarbin (1986) proposes narrative as the 'root metaphor' for psychology, because humans "think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (p.8). Cohler (1982) investigated how people maintain a sense of coherence and consistency in their lives in the face of both expected and unexpected changes, discontinuities and crises. He regards the autobiographical narrative which is formulated at any point in the course of life as the most internally consistent interpretation of the past, the present, and the anticipated future at that time. He adds that communities share certain informal assumptions about what constitutes the features of an adequate narrative. He advocates narrative as a more appropriate method for studying human development than
traditional research methods since it is the natural medium in which people's ideas about their own and others' functioning are embedded.

On the other hand, there are several authors who acknowledge that narrative is one of many equally valid forms of knowing. Polkinghorne (1988) distinguishes between narratives and, what he calls 'arguments'. He maintains that, in an argument, the conclusion has to flow from the logic of the statements in the argument and can therefore be predicted. By contrast, the ending of a story cannot be predicted or deduced in the same way. Stories can contain surprises and coincidences. Instead of predictability, the story's ending needs to satisfy the listener/reader's sense of adequacy and appropriateness. The listener/reader has to be satisfied that the narrated events could lead to the particular ending. The two modes of reasoning require different kinds of intelligence. The argument requires an understanding of logical rules while the story requires a sense of coherence, that is, a sense of how plot events and the human responses to them are integrated. While listening or reading a story, we constantly have to evaluate the narrator's and our own norms for acceptable coherence as the story unfolds.

Bruner (1986) distinguishes between the logico-scientific (or, what he refers to as the 'paradigmatic' mode) and the narrative form of rationality. According to him, paradigmatic discourses typically attempt to justify or demonstrate a point by relating it to other statements by means of formal logic. In narrative discourses, on the other hand, the 'demonstration' occurs by means of the type of reasoning based on an understanding of the whole as integration of its parts.

According to Bruner (1986) the paradigmatic and narrative discourses can be regarded as codes that transmit different
kinds of messages. The selection of discourse type depends on the kind of message the speaker/author wishes to communicate: Either a message about intrinsic reference (paradigmatic) or a message about the speaker/author's experience of a unity.

Thus formal science can be regarded as an example of the paradigmatic type of discourse. A variety of conventions of formal logic are used to organise its statements into a higher order of meaning. Narrative discourse, on the other hand, organises statements according to how they contribute to a unified whole.

However the distinction between narrative and logico-scientific ways of thinking does not have as clear a dividing line as Bruner would suggest. Developments in the domains of philosophy of science as well as in the philosophy of language have led to a blurring of the boundaries between narrative and scientific forms of thinking, as will be shown below.

Narrative and scientific theory

As I have indicated in Chapter 1, for many years empiricism provided the rationale for scientific methodology. As a metatheory, empiricism entails the assumption that theories about the world can be formulated on the basis of systematic observations of a reality which exists independently from the observer. By rigorously following systematic empirical procedures, it was assumed, one could discover theoretical principles which were consistent and generalisable (Gergen & Gergen, in Sarbin, 1986).

However, the attainment of this compelling goal depended on the justification of certain premises. Instead of generating support for these premises, one of these premises in particular was subjected to a number of critical blows — the premise that
theoretical terms within a science can refer to the features of the real, objectively existing world with sufficient precision that the propositions that these terms described can be subjected to empirical assessment. However if direct correspondence between theoretical terms and reality cannot be established, then objectivity cannot be guaranteed.

This key assumption of empiricism has not withstood attacks from different quarters over the last few decades. One attack came from the area of the philosophy of language: As I illustrated in Chapter 2, the assumed simple linear relationship between words and their referents has been revealed as an illusion. Another widespread criticism was that objects of observation cannot be identified independently of the concepts of understanding with which one approaches them. Theory therefore always precedes observation. Thus theoretical language shapes and therefore partly determines what appears to be objectively observed phenomena. In addition, observation statements are as fallible as the theories they presuppose and therefore do not constitute a completely secure basis on which to build scientific 'truths'. Thus, according to Popper (Chalmers, 1978), the empirical basis of objective science has nothing absolute about it.

Although the arguments of philosophers of science, like Popper, Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Lakatos have considerably weakened the empiricist assumption that scientific theories can serve as objective maps or mirrors of the world, they created the opportunity for new criteria to emerge for forms of inquiry. Wittgenstein (1963) suggested that the scientific community should turn its attention to the effects of linguistics on theory formation. Hanson (1958) maintained that if what we accept as fact is primarily based on preconception, then scientists need to examine the process of preconception. In fact, most critiques of empiricism reflected a concern with the process of theory construction. If scientific theories are
primarily linguistic instruments, then their development and elaboration may largely be governed by the principles of linguistic practice. This suggests that the form and contents of scientific theories may be significantly determined by conventions of discourse. This view corresponds with that of Kuhn (Chalmers, 1978) who gives precedence to sociological processes of establishing consensus about what is to be considered 'good science'. He states (Chalmers, 1978 p. 107):

"scientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all. To understand it, we shall need to know the special characteristics of the groups that create and use it".

This position has, in recent years, acquired increased impetus in theories of literary criticism, most specifically in deconstructionist theory. According to this theory, it is argued that what the reader brings to a text in terms of expectations, skills, and affective dispositions are significant determinants of the meaning of the text. It is not simply the text which determines the reader's response, but the reader who deconstructs the intentions of the author in order to make sense of it. Moreover, when literary critics interpret and evaluate a literary work, their reviews will be governed, to a large extent, by the conventions of 'proper' interpretation. In fact, descriptive accounts of any kind are influenced and constrained by a guiding metaphor of some kind, whether deliberately, or unconsciously (Gergen & Gergen, in Sarbin, 1986). The theories which psychologists use to explain human behaviour has recently reflected the metaphor of artificial intelligence. If one regards human cognition as equivalent to computer functioning, the metaphor of the computer will dictate how mental functions are conceptualised. Within the parameters of such a root metaphor, terms such as 'information processing', 'storage', 'retrieval', and so forth, do not surprise.
The emphasis in scientific activity has therefore turned towards the examination of self-referential processes of knowledge creation, rather than the discovery of objective 'truths'.

Our subjective perspective determines what we regard as 'real'. We cannot verify in any objective manner the extent to which our perceptions correspond to an external point of reference. We are, furthermore, encapsulated in the 'prison-house' of language in terms of how we construct our conceptualisations of 'reality'. According to this theory any knowledge is 'enculturated knowledge', in other words, 'reality' is always the result of intricate processes of communal negotiation. In a social milieu behaviour between people attains its meaning when it becomes coordinated through a process of consensual agreement. These premises logically lead to an emphasis on the intrapersonal and the interpersonal processes which underlie the construction of meanings, thus reflecting a similar preoccupation with self-referentiality as can recently be found in the realms of science. It has therefore become an urgent prerequisite that participants in all scientific fields should become aware of the presuppositions which make up their own perspectives. This essential activity of 'unpacking' one's own presuppositions facilitates the exploration of the basis of one's commitments.

After this general overview of how narrative is conceptualised, it has become necessary to contextualise these views by retracing developments in narrative theory in the recent past, from Russian Formalism to Post-Structuralism.

Overview of historical developments in narrative theory

In this section I will attempt to provide a condensed overview
of the most important schools of thought in narrative theory in order to contextualise the study as a whole, but more specifically, to illustrate the historical background from which Post-Structuralism developed. It is important to bear in mind that the field of narrative theory is vast and I will therefore not attempt to even approach comprehensiveness in this section. The discussion will focus mainly on Russian Formalism and Structuralism, because the ideas expressed by Post-Structuralist thinkers can be regarded as a reaction against many of the ideas founded by thinkers in these two movements. It is therefore necessary to first take cognisance of these before Post-Structuralist trends are discussed in the last section.

**Russian Formalism**

Although this movement has only relatively recently become known in the English-speaking world, it is acclaimed as one of the most influential literary schools of this century (Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982). This movement lasted for only a short time, from about 1915 to approximately 1935, but it had a profound influence on critical-theoretical movements in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Germany, after the Second World War. In addition, it provided a large part of the foundation for French Structuralism in the 1960s and it continues to have an influence on contemporary semiotics. The movement showed a remarkable readiness to recognise contemporary shifts in literary and general intellectual fields, incorporating many of the ideas of De Saussure and Husserl, the German phenomenologist, for example. By comparison, the work of De Saussure only started having an impact on French literary studies in the early 1960s and his work only became available in English in 1959 (Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982).
The Russian Formalists' main contributions to the exploration of the structure of narrative were made by Tomashevsky, Shklovsky and Propp. Tomashevsky identified typologies of many of the major features of prose fiction: He distinguished between types of 'point of view' (omniscient, limited), static and dynamic characters (a distinction which is similar to E.M. Forster's typology of flat and round characters), and direct and indirect characterisation (what a narrator explicitly tells the reader about a character versus what the reader learns about the character from her or his actions, speech, etcetera) (Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982). He also highlighted the distinction between story time (or narrated time) and reading time (or narrating time).

One of the most significant contributions which the Russian Formalists made is the distinction between fabula (or story) and sjuzet (or plot). These two terms specified the difference between the non-aesthetic material in a narrative, the story matter or fabula, and the literary management and arrangement of that material (sjuzet). In other words, story is the cluster of presented events in their causal-sequential order; plot is the artistic arrangement of those events. This distinction has such significance, because it transformed the previously ambiguous term, plot, into a device which became a useful instrument in the analysis of narrative. The extent to which the Formalists emphasised plot construction is a reflection of their attention to how the narrative material is artistically arranged, rather than to what is presented or even the meaning of what is presented (Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982). In his Morphology of the folktale (Eagleton, 1986), Propp reduced all known folk tales to a mere seven 'spheres of action' (the hero, the helper, the villain, the person who was sought for, and so forth) and 31 fixed elements or 'functions'. He also proposed that these 'spheres of action' were merely combined in different ways in different folk tales.
In their earlier studies of narrative the method typically employed by the Formalists was to identify a compositional device, determine its functions, to compare its use in a variety of texts, and then to place it alongside the other compositional devices in a typology of artistic conventions. The Formalists' rather narrow preoccupation with stylistic devices soon become too sterile, since, once the most important devices had been identified and studied in the manner described above, all that remained was to look for other examples of the same devices. The work of De Saussure provided them with a way out of this impasse: They moved beyond the view of a literary work as simply an aggregate of features on the same conceptual level, to regarding it as an integrated and dynamically structured system. This enabled them to reformulate their position in far more productive and sophisticated terms as they gradually moved into Structuralism (Ryan & Van Zyl, 1982).

Structuralism

The Structuralist movement did not only transform the fields of semiotics and poetry, it also revolutionised the field of narratology. The most influential in this regard were the Canadian, Frye, the Lithuanian, Greimas, the Bulgarian, Todorov, and the French literary critics, Genette, and Barthes (Eagleton, 1986). The Structuralist analysis of narrative began with the foundational work of the Structuralist anthropologist, Claude Lèvi-Strauss, who regarded apparently diverse myths as consisting of a limited number of basic themes or universal structures. He regarded myths as a kind of language: They consisted of individual components called 'mythemes' which acquired meaning only when they were combined in specific ways, much like phonemes, the basic sound units of language. The set of rules or conventions which governed the combinations were regarded as a kind of grammar, a set of relations below the 'surface' of the narrative which represented the 'true' meaning
of the myth (Eagleton, 1986). Lévi-Strauss went even further and assumed that these relations were also intrinsic to the human mind itself, so that myths were merely one form or embodiment of universal mental operations, for example, the making of dualistic or binary oppositions. He viewed myths as conceptual devices to think with — their function is to organise and classify reality, rather than to convey a story. This also applies to totemic and kinship systems which are not so much social and religious institutions as networks or codes of communication (Eagleton, 1986). Moreover myths operate on a level which transcends the individual mind: Myths think themselves through people, rather than the other way around. They do not originate in a single person's consciousness and have no particular objective. This is an example of how Structuralism 'decentres' the individual subject, who is no longer regarded as the originator or receptor of meaning. This model was generalised beyond the tribal forms of mythology to other kinds of narrative.

The work of the Russian Formalist, Propp (Jefferson & Robey, 1984) was typical of this kind of endeavour. Greimas (Jefferson & Robey, 1984) managed to condense Propp's model even further by introducing the concept of an actant, which refers to a structural unit rather than a character. The six actants (Subject and Object, Sender and Receiver, Helper and Opponent) subsume Propp's different 'spheres of action' with even greater simplicity.

Todorov (Jefferson & Robey, 1984) applied this 'grammatical' form of analysis to Boccaccio's The Decameron: Characters are seen as nouns, their attributes as adjectives and their actions as verbs! This turns the stories in The Decameron into a kind of extended sentence, in which these elements are combined in different ways. This exercise illustrates the Structuralist assumption that every literary work appears to describe some or
other external reality, but covertly busies itself with its own processes of construction. Thus, Structuralism does not only reinterpret all literary works as following the structural form of language, it views these works as having language as its actual subject matter.

In Frye's work, *Anatomy of Criticism* (1967), he attempted to view all literary genres as a single system. According to him, there were certain universal laws (i.e. archetypes, myths, and genres) which governed all literature. All the diverse kinds of literature could, according to him, be categorised in only four 'narrative categories': The comic, romantic, tragic, and ironic, each of which respond roughly to the four mythoi of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Frye (1967) maintains that literature is an autonomous verbal structure, locked into its own closed self-referential circuit, which made reference to life and 'reality' only through a system of linguistic relationships (Frye, 1967).

This vast system of literature does not change in any substantial way. It merely rearranges its symbolic units in relation to each other, rather than in relation to an external 'reality'. Literature should not be seen, according to Frye, as the self-expression of individual authors; they are merely functions of this universal system — literature emerges from the collective awareness of the human race itself, which is how it comes to contain archetypes or symbols of universal significance (Frye, 1967).

In his *Narrative Discourse* (1972) Genette distinguished between récit (the actual order of events in a text), histoire (the sequence in which those events 'actually' occurred, according to the text), and narration (the act of narration itself). The first two terms are equivalent to the Russian Formalist distinction between 'plot' and 'story' respectively. For
example, in a detective story the body is usually discovered first and then the narrator takes the reader back to explain what the events were that led up to the murder. Thus, the 'story', or the actual chronology of the action is reversed in the 'plot'.

In the next section I will discuss Post-Structural notions regarding narrative, or more correctly 'anti-narrative', since, in many of their works they deliberately undermine the conventions of narrative structures. As described in the previous chapter, Structuralist ideas were not merely developed further in the Post-Structuralist era, there is a discontinuity between Structuralist and Post-Structuralist thinking which is due to a substantial epistemological shift.

3. Post-Structuralism: From 'narrative' to 'anti-narrative'

There has been no century before the present one which has produced such a consistent attack on our beliefs about what we can know and how we can know anything. As I pointed out in the previous section, the previously held certainties about our ability as observers to produce empirically verifiable observations have been seriously undermined. The scientists have also alerted us to the observer's unavoidably subjective participation in the creation of his or her observations. In the previous section it was pointed out that these changes have had a profound impact on, inter alia, conceptualisations of how meaning is created and maintained.

In literature the traditional notions about the stability of the reality created in fictional texts have not escaped the influence of this vast epistemological shift. Bell (Nash, 1990) speaks of the subtle 'contract' contained in any narrative: Narrative seeks to convince, and in order to do that it requires the reader's complicity, her/his commitment to its implicit
terms. The reader has to make a complex series of negotiations between the 'real' world of experience and the 'world' portrayed in the book. Thus the meaning of the text is no longer assumed to be contained in the text itself, nor in the reader, but in their interaction (Bell, in Nash, 1990). The relativity and elusiveness of the narrative contract between text and reader has recently become a central preoccupation of the European novel. The seduction of the reader into the logic and meaning of the text has been exposed and foregrounded in the Post-Structuralist novel. Thus the self-questioning aspect of Post-Structuralist writings reveal an examination of the interrelation of life and narrative. These acts reveal the extent to which we create and maintain our own conceptualisations of 'reality'.

The neat and tidy notion of identity as a consistent and continuous entity has been exposed to reveal our own creations, our own need for coherence and stability as they are embodied in the characters portrayed in fictional texts. It is on this issue that the ideas of many contemporary thinkers overlap with astounding clarity, thinkers as diverse as the psychoanalyst, Lacan, the cultural historian, Foucault, the critical philosopher (or anti-philosopher), Derrida, and the Marxist philosopher, Althusser (Nash, 1990). They all suggest that what we experience as our autonomous and enduring identities, may very well be the products of culture and language, which has seduced us into thinking as we do — like

some 'emperor's new clothes' in which our thinking has been falsely dressed and blandished by a socio-economic—and-sexual hegemony, by a labyrinthine network of forces, sea-changes, of which we may be only anonymously entangled threads, edgeless, unbounded currents (Nash, 1990, p. 202).
Thus, the call of the Post-Structuralist writers is that we should 'decenter' the 'subject', to discard the naïve belief in our autonomous, inborn, integrated individuality, like the new clothes of the emperor. We should, according to them, replace our notion of a 'private identity' with the idea of a collective identity, and we should take up an oppositional stance against those whom we think to be other than ourselves and inimical to, and defining of, our being (Nash, 1990). Nash (1990, p. 203) maintains that other writers argue that this stance is merely another outmoded conservative narrative of heroic struggle, "of oppression and its eventual utopian redress". In other words, this new conceptualisation of identity is also a delusion. The humanistic concept of the Self has now been replaced by theories that destroy many of our fundamental traditional distinctions, for example, rational/irrational, appearance/reality, interior/exterior, fact/fiction. The concept of a unified and stable Self has to give way before the realisation that we are almost entirely created by a superficial and playful 'pastiche' of so many fleeting collective ideas. Nash (1990, p. 203) quotes Mas'ud Zavarzadeh who maintains that

character ... today cannot fulfill its traditional narrative functions, which were to portray a fully individuated person ... rooted in a 'community of thought and feeling' shared by his fellow human beings.... The old organic world of man and the new world of technology ... obey different imperatives, different directives and different laws which have nothing in common.... Such developments create an open-ended and indeterminable system which defies all historical and totalizing frames of reference.

Thus in terms of literature, according to Robbe-Grillet (Nash, 1990, p. 203), this means that
all the technical elements of the narrative ... the unconditional adoption of chronological development, linear plots, a regular graph of the emotions, the way each episode tended towards an end, etc.... Everything aimed at imposing the image of a stable universe, coherent, continuous, univocal and wholly decipherable has to be relinquished. Narrative structure and characterisation belong to the past, according to him. So does psychology, the cornerstone of realist narrative, which he considers to be "an arbitrary, artificial system of attitudes for the focalization of events through the perspective of a named individualized human consciousness — an outmoded anthropomorphic culture's strategy for the projection of a happily bounded and integrated vision of existence" (Nash, 1990, p. 203-204). Barthes joins his voice to Robbe-Grillet's by stating that the idea of a character as representing a human person who has an identity which is linked to his or her actions, is not a scientific, but an ideological concept (Nash, 1990). Thus, the old Modernist concept of 'person' is no longer regarded as a useful model for its representation. This means that a narrative no longer contracts with the reader as to the traditional laws of continuity or identity outside itself — it abides only by the rules of language. This means that narrative is regarded as nothing more than a string of linguistic signs (Nash, 1990). Whereas narrative was traditionally defined by what came before it (a world outside it, an author outside it, and an author's interpretation of the world), it is now beginning to be defined in terms of what comes after it, in other words, in terms of the reader and his interpretation of the text (Nash, 1990). This argument contains two different notions of indeterminacy: The undecidability in the relationship between texts ('intertextual indeterminacy') and the undecidability in the relationship between a text and its reference to the 'reality' outside it ('extratextual indeterminacy').
Intertextual indeterminacy reflects the idea that all communications are texts whose meanings are mere intersections, nodes in the whole web of the language of signs which permeate human experience. "Books, traffic signals, advertisements and thence the objects advertised, facial expressions, bottlecaps, thrown stones, all belong to this 'archtext' that is the world of our understandings" (Nash, 1990, p. 205). And these signs interact in such a way that they constantly modify each other. In essence this means that what is said is never said since it can always be said differently. "As we write, as we read, what we do is not to find a 'finished' meaning but merely to unfold the seamless fabric of possible utterances which the text draws into the open" (Nash, 1990, p. 205). Thus, every text exists at the intersection of many other texts of which it is simultaneously the rereading, the accentuation, the condensation, and the displacement — in a sense, the value of a text is the extent to which it integrates and destroys other texts (Sollers, in Nash, 1990).

Therefore intertextual indeterminacy is a function of the perpetually evolving nature of the possible relationships between signs. And to complicate matters even further, the reader, too, can be regarded as a plurality of other texts, of an infinite number of codes (Barthes, in Nash, 1990).

Given the arbitrary relations between all signs and their referents, the proponents of extratextual indeterminacy (Barthes, Derrida, in Nash, 1990) argue that since we discern what words signify only through their difference from other words, (and since they always contain the traces of what they do not signify) words evoke not the presence of events, but their absence. In this way texts always defer fixed and conclusive meanings, they open up chasms between themselves and the events or actions they refer to. Seen in the light of this definition, narratives are sets of signs which create nothing but
themselves, and in creating themselves they undermine or destroy themselves.

So, due to the problem of the indeterminacy of the subject, the uncertainty of the 'who' and the 'what' of narratives, many recent fictional works have been based on the premise that the only worthwhile activity that authors can engage in is to produce texts which illustrate the play of contradictions and infinite signification. This takes on many different forms, a number of which will be mentioned below.

A narrative may play with our expectations of what constitutes the proper perspective of a story. In contrast to depictions in the traditional realist novels of complete descriptions (say, the depiction of a character in the context of all her relationships and her significance in a social context), descriptions in Post-Structuralist novels will deliberately focus only on the description of the 'part' with no indication of how it is situated in the 'whole'. Nash (1990) likens this kind of text to being handed a telescope which is far too powerful for the 'subject', so that only a senseless fragment of the whole is brought into view, or when turned around, it reduces the 'subject' to an insignificant speck. In other words, we either obtain a view of the 'subject' with no sense of its position in the larger context, or we are given a sense of the totality, but it appears so distant that it seems like an empty void.

Alternatively, our familiar sense of continuity may be tampered with. In novels by Pinet (Nash, 1990) and Calvino (1983; 1984), for example, the names of people and places are changed at the author's whims and any events which have occurred in the past are all described as having occurred 'ten years ago'. This kind of technique seriously undermines our understanding of chronology and causality.
Or the text may make certain statements and then revoke them in the same breath. For example, in an early novel by Robbe-Grillet (Nash, 1990, p. 151) we find "... the apartment door is wide open, despite the late hour, the apartment door is closed ...".

Or, in Beckett's *Molloy* (Nash, 1990, p. 207): "Then I went back into the house and wrote, It is midnight. The rain is beating on the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining". In other texts verbal orientations are dissolved, re-formed or oscillated until the reader is in a perpetual state of disorientation and uncertainty.

Or in the novels by Calvino (1983; 1984), Flann O'Brien, Robbe-Grillet, Becket (Nash, 1990), the narrative has a deceptively simple structure, except that a crucial event is omitted: the reader's realistic expectations are frustrated by replacing the central pivotal integrating moment in the story with a void. Or, in narratives by Borges, Calvino, Pinget (Nash, 1990), and many others, the reader may start to read the story, only to discover that there are four or five other parallel alternatives being presented in the same text. This creates apprehension and a reluctance on the part of the reader to involve him or herself in the text.

Or the narrative may be structured in a recursive or regressive fashion. In works by Butor, Mauriac, Calvino, and Pinget (Nash, 1990), there are an endless series of false starts in the telling of the story, or the author continues further reconstructions of past novels. The narrative may refer regressively to events from which the event originated, or it may refer recursively to other passages of narration from which the current discourse originates, and these layers may be structured in such a way that they blur into one another. Neither characters nor events are depicted as original or authentic — everything is imitation and the novel itself, an imitation of infinite regress.
In other novels by Barth, Borges, Pinget, O'Brien and Beckett (Nash, 1990) the narrative appears circular, the reader returns to where she/he had begun, without any sense of progression or change. Or, in the works of Nabokov, Simon, Vonnegut, Sukenick, Mauriac, Sollers, and Sanguineti (Nash, 1990), the inevitable linearity which literature is embedded in (the letters, words, and sentences have to be read in a linear order), the sense of something happening, and of causality, is denied by a number of strategies. Or the relation between narrative and the world it refers to is disrupted, for example in a story by Cortázar, Continuidad de los Parques (Nash, 1990), the reader is killed by one of the characters. Another example is that of Vonnegut who invented a novelist-character, Kilgore Trout, who writes a novel, Venus on the Half-Shell, which is actually available from bookstores, but is published by the writer, Philip José Farmer (Nash, 1990).

The techniques described above clearly lead to a substantial redefinition of our relationship with narrative itself: They force us to become acutely aware of our expectations of what is supposed to occur, of the conventions which hold narratives together. Moreover, these techniques reveal the illusory nature of these conventions (Nash, 1990).

But the Post-Structuralist movement goes even further: It also suggests radically new ways of thinking about how narrative is created, different principles regarding what occurs on the page. The author is no longer conceptualised as a finite entity 'behind' the work who can be relied on to provide the reader with a coherent world view. This tendency is supported by the ideas of Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida, who argue against the traditional realist conceptions of the individual as a discrete psychological entity, as discussed before. Thus narrative characters, or anything denoting personal 'being', are viewed as artificially and self-consciously created by the mere flow of
the signs on the page — and which can just as easily be
dissolved by those very signs. Thus authors such as Sollers,
Federman, Cortázar, Rühm, Roche, and Brooke-Rose (Nash, 1990)
construct narratives from grammatical and phonetic permutations.
Writing is no longer motivated by mimesis, or the re-
presentation of reality, but has become diegetic. Attention is
drawn to the processes through which the 'real' is produced
(again, the emphasis is on self-referentiality, as in recent
scientific enterprises). It is a celebration of the
possibilities of language, and a reminder that reality does not
exist outside of the parameters set by language (Nash, 1990).

If narrative, in its traditional definition as being about
someone, about something, and written by a distinguishable
author, is destroyed, it means that narration itself is given a
supreme position and, thus, reified. Thus there is a shift from
a preoccupation with what's told to a preoccupation with the
experience of the telling, of the discourse. Scholes (Mitchell,
1981) refers to Post-Structuralist works as 'anti-narratives'
due to their attempts to frustrate the automatic application of
narrative schemas to our reading experiences. He maintains that
they should be regarded as meta-fictional because they distract
us from our habitual interpretive processes. They frustrate this
way of providing closure and bring the narrative codes to the
foreground of our critical attention. The Post-Structuralist
texts require us to see them as codes rather than as qualities
which are intrinsic to human nature or to reality itself.

Writing therefore both creates itself out of itself, and it
destroyes itself in the same process (Nash, 1990). The process of
naming things, places, people, and events paradoxically brings
their absence to our attention and exposes us to everything the
text does not say. Writing no longer needs to conform to
cultural or ideological conventions, or the rules of logic, such
as those concerned with time, place, action, causality, identity
which used to be prerequisites for the depiction of 'reality'. It is only subject to the rules of language itself, and these are constantly altered, even by the act of utterance itself (Nash, 1990).

These developments should be seen as part of a wider revolutionary process which is taking place on a cultural level. From this perspective traditional narrative structures are viewed as part of a cluster of psychosocial interdependencies that inhibit both individual development and necessary social change. The Post-Structuralist thinkers therefore regard the deconstruction of narrative schemas as a prerequisite of social change, they view narrative as an opiate which has to be given up in return for the ensuing sociocultural advantages (Scholes, in Mitchell, 1981).

However, as Nash (1990) points out, it is a mistake to assume that the human search for narrative structure can be dissolved by means of the Post-Structuralists' endeavours and literary innovations. No matter how hard the new forms of narrative attempt to not tell us about anything, they actually emphasise the fact that they are repressing or avoiding another narrative, an alternative construction of signs. These new texts which attempt to deny or conceal the rules which govern their own construction cannot help but make explicit the business of concealment.

It may be argued that these rules are determined differently by each reader and can therefore not be bound to any permanence. But then it should be recognised that this argument relies on the rule that readings are determined by their contexts. Such is the paradoxical nature of this kind of argument: One cannot illustrate that a text is not bound by anything but its own emergence (that it is indeterminate), without illustrating at the same time that it is determinate, that is, it is bound to
its context. The same argument has to be extended to the 'author', especially since every writer is his/her own reader. Therefore even if the form of the narration tries to deny it, every story is someone's model of how to view the world, even if it includes what one should not incorporate, what is insignificant, etcetera (Nash, 1990).

Another point in the argument against the claims of the Post-Structuralists, is that if the principle of self-referentiality is accepted, then writing has never informed us of any new or fixed truth which has its point of reference outside the text. Texts, even realist texts, can do nothing more than in-form our thinking about things — it merely re-forms our existing sense of truth. In this sense there is really not a very substantial difference between referential and Post-Structuralist writing.

In addition, time itself has undermined the movement. What appeared as revolutionary in the 1960s has become an established tradition — despite the movement's rejection of predictability, continuity, and conventions. Metaphorically speaking, the movement has become 'middle-aged':

Like many things middle-aged, it's not quite so nimble as it once appeared, it's developing the suggestion of a metaphysical paunch, and it shows signs of a mid-life crisis; it does break out in unexpected hot flushes, hoarse hysteria, myopia, and the general display of nervous defense mechanisms and tics of an idea, no longer quite sure of its own sex-appeal (Nash, 1990, pp. 213-214).

Eagleton (1986) criticises the Post-Structuralist movement for adopting an invulnerable position: The adherence to the assumptions that we are prisoners of our own discourse and that
we cannot make any claims about the truth, because such claims would be relative to the structure of language, enable the Post-Structuralists to dismantle everybody else's beliefs without having to adopt any themselves. It liberates one from taking up a position on important issues, and even if you state a point of view, you cannot be held responsible for it, since your statement would be regarded as no more than the fleeting progression of the chain of signifiers and not as sincere or serious.

Another aspect which Eagleton (1986) highlights is Post-Structuralism's mischievously radical stance with regard to all other points of view. It is able to dismantle and undermine many foundational ideas in our culture as a mere insubstantial play of signifiers. However, since it does not commit itself to anything nor affirm anything, it is in fact totally harmless — in fact, according to Eagleton (1986), it is actually utterly conservative of established ideas.

Of course, this is not to say that the movement has not been remarkably generative, opening up the possibility for imaginative works like no other movement since Romanticism. The ideas which are generated by this movement have not yet been exhausted, and we cannot discount or ignore it. But it needs to be contextualised, before it, too, becomes merely another tyrannical, elitist, or fashionable ideology. We should be fully aware, and even critical, of how we apply narrative structures but it is difficult to conceive of human cognitive and interactional functioning without them. I wish to propose that, based on the arguments elucidated above, narrative processes are too deeply rooted in the codes of human communication and functioning to be discarded at the whim of a new theoretical movement. It is one of the propositions of this study to explore how we create and maintain a stable and consistent sense of a Self, how we cling to our mechanisms for self-referentially
constructing ourselves, in conjunction with the sociocultural influences in which we are embedded.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented a comprehensive literature review on developments in conceptualisations of narrative. Special attention was given to its pervasiveness and its interdisciplinary status, but also to its fundamental relation to acts of meaning construction. Its relation to self-referentiality was also emphasised. The discussion culminated in a review of Post-Structuralist attempts to deconstruct and dismantle narrative structures.

In the next chapter the ideas in this chapter will be extended to the domain of self-narratives, or autobiographies. I intend to highlight in much greater depth the self-referential processes by which people construct meaning from their sense of their life story. The significance which these processes have for psychotherapeutic endeavours will be clarified, which will, I hope, provide the necessary backdrop for the next two chapters which contain an analysis and deconstruction of the life narratives of the co-participants in this study.
CHAPTER 4
NARRATIVES OF THE SELF: FROM THE SINGULAR TO THE PLURAL

Introduction

In this chapter the relationship between narrative and personal identity will be examined. The point at which these two concepts intersect is in the self-narrative, a term which I use to denote all those interactive processes, discourses, and codes through which a person negotiates, privately and publicly, a coherent set of meanings which can be called a Self. Self-narrative can be defined as the most basic conceptual framework for determining or ascribing meaning to all perceptions and experiences of Self. This makes it imperative, in the context of a study such as this, to examine the self-narrative as a "unit of meaning" (Epston, White & Murray, 1992, p. 97) and to disclose its cultural and ideological underpinnings.

This chapter starts with a historical view on conceptualisations of identity, including the most recent Post-Structuralist notions which have led to the idea of the 'decentred Self'. Thereafter the interface between concepts of Self and self-narratives is examined, including a history of the use of self-narratives or case studies in the social sciences and in psychotherapy, in particular. In Chapters 5 and 6 this dimension will be transposed to an actual therapeutic context. The enactment of Self of two clients will be analysed by means of an examination of their written self-narratives.

(Note that various terms, life story, life story, life history, self-narrative, psychobiography, psychohistory, case study, biography, and autobiography are used interchangeably in this study to refer to individuals' application of narrative schemas to their own life history. Of course there are differences...
between them, but they are so obvious that it is hoped that the meaning of each will be apparent from the particular context of the discussion in each case.)

Conceptualisations of Self

It is Bruner's (1990) opinion that our understanding of Self as a concept has been hampered by the assumption of essentialism, which was one of the hallmarks of the Enlightenment and of Modernism. Attempts to study the Self were conducted as if the Self "were a substance or an essence that pre-existed our efforts to describe it, as if all one had to do was to inspect it in order to discover its nature" (Bruner, 1990, p. 99). This ontological description of Self has been discarded as part of the transition to a new paradigm in which self-referential assumptions and contextualism replaced the old essentialist ones. Any descriptions are viewed as observer-dependent and intersubjective and follow the culture's dominant narrative forms. In the new paradigm the Self is regarded as a concept which the observer creates (together with others in his or her social environment), much like any other constructed concept. People negotiate their meanings with others in their environment, hence these meanings are 'distributed' between them.

The changes in the description of the Self coincided with fundamental changes in Western society which profoundly influenced the way in which people experienced themselves in the 20th century. Although Structuralism may have been premature in its pronouncement of "a transcendence of the first person singular" (Clifford, 1978, p. 43), it is correct in claiming that the experience of individuality in modern industrial and post-industrial cultures is becoming increasingly problematic.
Levi-Strauss (Bruner, 1990) considers the current 'identity crisis' in the Western cultures to be a passing phase. Those who are afflicted by it, he maintains, are merely realising what ancient cultures have always accepted, and what modern sciences as diverse as mathematics, biology, linguistics, and philosophy are rediscovering, namely that personal identity is largely relational—"that 'substantial identity' can never be assumed, but must be constructed from given historical and natural relationships which are supremely indifferent to our autism" (Bruner, 1990, p. 11).

Summarising the recent developments with regard to conceptualisations of Self, Markus and Wurf (1987, p. 301) state: "What began as an apparently singular, static, lump-like entity has become a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted dynamic structure. Self is seen less as a psychological variable and more as a composite whole which consists of different components. They maintain that the globalising approach to the Self was a formidable stumbling block in the domain of research. Such a fixed, static and undifferentiated concept could not possibly be adequate in any attempts to understand the impressive diversity of human behaviour and experience. An increasing number of investigators have taken to studying the Self as a multi-faceted phenomenon, in other words, as a structure which is composed of activities, goals, theories, ideologies, images, schemas and prototypes (Bruner, 1986, 1987, 1990; Hermans, 1993; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Rosen, 1988).

Whilst relatively new in psychology, the socially constructed view of Self had already been established in anthropology and history for many years, that is, in the tradition of interpretive history and in the interpretivism found in cultural anthropology. The anthropologists and historians were soon joined by the symbolic interactionists in the field of sociology who proposed that our concept of Self is a reflection of how we
believe we appear to others. They emphasised the manner in which concepts of Self are validated through others' perceptions of our enactments of ourselves. They proclaimed that the Self should be regarded as a construction which "... proceeds from the outside in as well as from the inside out, from culture to mind, as well as from mind to culture" (Bruner, 1990, p. 108).

The emergence of the new contextualism prompted the emergence of a new set of questions regarding the Self. What are the processes by which people formulate descriptions of Self? What kind of experiences do people base their descriptions of Self on? What kind of Selves do they formulate? Perhaps, as William James (Markus & Nurius, 1986) suggested, the Self should be extended to incorporate significant figures in one's life as well as possessions, and so forth. Or does Self consist of a cluster of Possible Selves, including a number of 'Feared Selves' and 'Hoped-for-Selves', as Markus and Nurius (1986) suggest? Perhaps the "... proper person is better conceived ... not as the pure and enduring nucleus but [as] the sum and swarm of participations" (Perkings, in Bruner, 1990, p. 106). Questions about the transactional nature of Self also emerged: Perhaps Self can be regarded as a transactional relationship between a speaker and an Other, or more specifically, a Generalised Other? Or perhaps it is a manner in which one's consciousness, one's position in the world, one's identity, and one's commitment to Another is framed (Bruner, 1990). Self as a dialogue-dependent process becomes the focus, rather than as a static, ontological, intrapsychic entity. Self becomes something we design for interpersonal contexts, for discourses, something we sometimes plan and 'manage' (Goffman, 1990) quite deliberately.

This composite view of the Self is not entirely new. Already in 1890 James (Damon & Hart, 1982) made a distinction which was shown to be significant in how Self has come to be seen, namely
the distinction between 'I' and 'Me'. He saw the I and Me as essential aspects of the broader concept of Self. The I he describes as the Self-as-Knower, as the active gatherer of knowledge, and the Me as the Self-as-Known, as the object of knowledge. This suggests that he saw the Self as entailing recursive processes between a kind of 'epistemologist-self' and a Self which is the object of description. Therefore, already a century ago, James rejected the essentialist conceptualisations of Self as a permanent and bodily bounded entity.

In more recent years in the field of psychology, the composite view of Self first developed as a reaction against the austere objectivism in psychology and in conceptualisations of personality in particular (Bruner, 1990). There have been a number of revisionists in the field of psychology who have, in recent years, redefined, extended, and 'opened up' the boundaries of the Freudian Self: Erikson emphasised the sociocultural influences on the personality and Laing extended the concept of 'individual' to include a 'political' network of interpersonal relations.

In the field of social psychology Gergen (1982) was one of the first to incorporate the interpretivist, constructivist and distributive notions mentioned above. In his early studies he illustrated how people's self-esteem fluctuated in different contexts, depending on the relational dynamics which they encountered. In contexts where they had to relate to powerful and egotistical people, they reported lowered self-esteem, while the opposite was the case in contexts where they found self-effacing, disempowered people (Gergen, 1982).

It was Gergen (1982) who alerted us to the two astounding and universal capacities of humans: The first is our capacity for reflexivity, that is, our ability to look back on the past and to change the present in relation to it, or to change the past
(our interpretation of it) in the light of the present. Thus both the past and the present become relational dimensions by virtue of this ability. The second is our capacity to imagine alternatives, the ability to envision alternative ways of being and of acting. Thus, we are part historical creatures, tied to the past, and part autonomous agents. Or as Bruner (1990, p. 110) states:

The Self, then, like any other aspect of human nature, stands both as a guardian of permanence and as a barometer responding to the local cultural weather. The culture, as well, provides us with guides and stratagems for finding a niche between stability and change: it exhorts, forbids, lures, denies, rewards the commitments that the Self undertakes. And the Self, using its capacities for reflection and for envisioning alternatives, escapes or embraces or re-evaluates and reformulates what the culture has on offer.

Initially Gergen (1982) focussed on the 'rules' which we employ to construct and negotiate our social realities. The Self was conceptualised as a mixture of 'decision-maker', 'strategist', and 'gamesman' who carefully managed the business of presenting a Self to Others. Working in the same mould, Goffman (1990) maintains that, in a sense, all utterances in day-to-day conversations, however self-protective, however deceitful, however self-censored, constitute a presentation of Self. At the same time, these only partly conscious strategies are also a part of "that never finished business, the construction of a socially constituted self" (Rosen, 1988, p. 74).

The latest in this tradition of revisionists is Lacan (1986), who persuaded us to see a person who is radically decentred, who resides in an external symbolic order. This leaves us with the
concept of an individual as an ego which is continually outside itself: The first sign of the emerging ego, according to Lacan (1986), occurs during the so-called pre-Oedipal 'mirror stage'. Lacan's use of the metaphor of the mirror is entirely coherent with the views of Self as a composite cluster of meanings which are distributed amongst people. According to Lacan (1986), the child, who is as yet physically uncoordinated, sees an image of itself reflected from the mirror, which has a stable and unified appearance. The child's own image of Self is still merged with its mother's— the boundary between subject and object is still blurred (hence the term 'Imaginary' which Lacan uses to refer to this pre-Oedipal stage of ego development). But when the child sees itself reflected in the mirror in such a unified manner, it commences the process of constructing a centred Self. Contained in the metaphor is the narcissism inherent in the process: We construct a sense of an I by finding that I reflected back to ourselves by some object or person in the world. This object is at the same time part of ourselves (we identify with it) and not part of ourselves, it is the domain of the Other. Therefore the image which the young child sees reflected in the mirror is an alienated one: "... the child 'misrecognises' itself in it, finds in the image a pleasing unity which it does not actually experience in its own body" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 165).

For Lacan (1986) the 'Imaginary' is precisely this process during which we make identifications, but in the very act of doing so, we are led to misperceive and misrecognise ourselves. The child continues this process of somewhat alienating imaginary identifications with objects through which the ego is formed. For Lacan the ego is precisely this narcissistic process whereby we bolster up a false sense of unitary selfhood by continuously identifying with something or someone in the world.
It was stated in Chapter 2 that Lacan reconceptualised Freud's theory in terms of language. He therefore linked the above process to the distinction which De Saussure made between the 'signifier' and the 'signified' (See Chapter 1). The infant who is contemplating itself in the mirror can therefore be regarded as the 'signifier', in other words, something which is capable of attributing meaning, and the image it sees reflected, as a kind of 'signified'. Thus the image the child sees can be regarded as the 'meaning of itself'. At this stage of development the harmonious unity between the signifier and the signified has not yet been disrupted. No divisions or gaps have occurred yet: objects reflect themselves in each other in a perfect correspondence, in something akin to a sealed or closed circuit. According to Lacan (1986) it is a world of 'plenitude' with no lacks or disharmonies. The child attains, for a brief period, a 'fullness', a whole and unblemished identity. No gap has as yet opened up between the signifier and the signified, the subject and the world.

However, as I have illustrated in Chapters 1 and 2, language and reality are not as smoothly synchronised as this situation would suggest. At the Oedipal stage, when the Father enters this tranquil scene, "... the child is plunged into Post-Structural anxiety" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 166)! At this point, according to Lacan, the child has to learn that one's identity emerges only by virtue of difference: Any subject or linguistic term achieves its identity only by excluding another. Lacan (1986) regards it as very significant that the child's discovery of sexual differences and the acquisition of language skills occur approximately simultaneously. In the domain of language the child understands (albeit unconsciously) that a sign has meaning only due to its difference from other signs. The child also learns that a sign presumes the absence of the object it signifies (refer to the 'fort-da' game which was discussed in
Chapter 3). In other words, words are substitutes for objects, and therefore metaphorical.

This process of learning on the level of language is echoed in the domain of sexuality. Through the presence of the Father, the child learns that it has to take up a place in the family which is determined by its gender — thus it is defined by means of exclusion (since a boy cannot be his mother's lover, nor a girl her father's) and by absence (a boy has to separate from the mother's body, a girl from the father's). The child therefore learns that its identity is created by its relationship of similarity to, and difference from the other family members. The child has therefore moved from the 'Imaginary' to what Lacan calls the 'Symbolic' order: The pre-existing relational network of social and sexual roles which forms the fabric of society.

However smoothly the child's passage is through the Oedipal landscape, it emerges as a divided being: Divided between the conscious and the unconscious, which comes into existence at the time when the desire for the Mother (or Father) is repressed. The child now finds itself in the position where it can never again have any direct access to reality (specifically to the body of the Mother or Father, which is out of bounds). The child has been exiled from the 'full' imaginary possession into the 'empty' domain of language. Referring back to Chapter 1, it was stated that language is an endless chain of difference and absence — hence Lacan (1986) speaks of the empty domain of language. So, instead of possessing something fully, the child can now only move along an endless chain of signifiers. No person or experience can ever be fully present in this chain, since words only attain meaning through the absence of, and exclusion of others. Now the child will never again be able to come to rest in a single object, or a final meaning — meaning is forever postponed. The entrance into language is therefore
what separates us from the 'real', that inaccessible domain of fullness, now always beyond the reach of signification, or in Lacan's words: "... language is what hollows being into desire" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 166). From now on the child has to be satisfied with substitutes for the Mother's or Father's body, in his futile attempts to lessen the absence of the 'real'. Not even transcendental meanings (religion) can satisfy this endless yearning, according to Lacan (1986).

For the sake of clarification, it needs to be pointed out that we would not be able to speak coherently or function adequately at all if the process of constantly sliding and postponed meaning occurred on a conscious level. Of course, if I had the whole body of the language in mind when I spoke, then it would be impossible to articulate anything. All this uneasy activity is repressed and temporary and approximate meanings are assigned to words. Lacan (1986) refers to the slip of the tongue or the Freudian slip as that which occurs when a word or segment from the unconscious surreptitiously enters into consciousness. According to him, all discourse is of the same character as the slip of the tongue, namely, we can never mean exactly what we say, and we can never say exactly what we mean. So, meaning is always "... an approximation, a near-miss, a part-failure, mixing non-sense and non-communication into sense and dialogue" (Eagleton, 1986, p. 169). It is therefore clear that we cannot convey the 'truth' in some unmeditated manner.

We manage to create a relatively coherent and unified sense of ourselves on a conscious level, which facilitates action and provides the illusion of meaning. All this, however, occurs at the 'Imaginary' level of the ego, which is merely the smallest possible part of the whole human subject.

The ego which is never quite identical to itself or in unity with itself is suspended somewhere along the chain of signifiers.
and discourses which constitutes it. According to Lacan (1986), the gap or discontinuity between these two levels of Self is most clearly illustrated by the manner in which the Self is referred to in a sentence. In any self-statement the I gives the appearance of a unified and stable point of reference which conceals the "murky depths" of the I who is making the statement (Eagleton, 1986, p. 169). At the time of speaking, these two I's achieve a brief correspondence or unity, but it is not an authentic unity. (Or, stated in the terms coined by James [Damon & Hart, 1982] the I, and the Me attain a temporary, seemingly uncomplicated correlation.) But the I who resides in the "murky depths" can never be fully represented in what is articulated. The Self can only be referred to obliquely, through the substitute pronoun, I. The submerged part of the I will always elude the confines of language, according to Lacan (1986).

Nothing is ever fully present in language: It is an illusion to believe that one person can ever be fully transparent to another in what he or she says or writes, because to use language at all, entails that his or her meaning is always somehow dispersed, divided, and never quite at one with itself. In fact, not only the meaning but the Self is obscured: Since we are constituted through language, (rather than language being a convenient tool which we use), the notion that we are stable and unified entities is not logical. Therefore, not only is it impossible to be fully present to each other, we can never be fully present to ourselves either. We still need to use language to look into our minds or to search our souls, and this means that we can never experience any full communion with ourselves. It is not that we start off with a pure, unblemished meaning, intention, or experience which then becomes distorted and refracted through the flawed medium of language (an essentialist notion), rather, because language is the very air I
breathe, I can never have a pure, unblemished meaning or experience at all (Eagleton, 1986).

The Self, like some modernist literary texts, achieves its apparent unity, by suppressing its mode of creation. Only when the self-referential process of its own production is revealed, or unravelled, does the gap or disconnectedness between I and Me appear. The self-narrative is one such a means of self-production which, when deconstructed, reveals its particular methods used to construct an apparently unified Self. Thus a self-description which remains unexamined in terms of its own construction can be compared to the perceptions of Self during the mirror stage; whereas a deconstructed self-description ruthlessly undermines the idea of a whole and seamless Self.

Althusser's (1984) views are similar to Lacan's notion that the human ego has no essential unity — it can be regarded as the product of various social determinants, structures, or conventions. Although we experience ourselves as unified and independent, as possessing a strong ability to influence our destiny, on the level of social structure, I as an individual, am entirely dispensable. Anyone else could fill in for me, do my work, etcetera. Althusser believes that this discrepancy in our perception of ourselves and our actual insignificance, is bridged by ideology. We tend to experience the world as though we are occupying 'centre stage', as if we are centrally significant to the functioning of the world. According to Althusser, the process through which we attain this experience of central significance, lies at the heart of ideology. As a set of beliefs, practices and discourses, ideology becomes the subtle all-pervasive medium through which we enact our connectedness to society. It includes the domain of codes and conventions that link us to the social structure and give us a coherent and purposeful identity in return. In this conceptualisation, ideology includes a wide array of
presuppositions, actions, and attitudes: It may entail how our relationship to authority figures are shaped through the educational system, it may include the fact that we avoid social taboos, whether or not we cast a vote in elections, our social standing, the way we dress, the suburb we live in.

If Althusser's (1984) notion of the function of ideology is translated into Lacan's terms, ideology serves to provide the individual with the illusion of a satisfyingly coherent identity, much like the mirror does in the 'Imaginary' stage. In both cases, however, the situation is a misrepresentation of reality: The child is not actually as integrated as its mirror image suggests. Similarly, the individual in society is not actually as coherent and self-directing as he or she experiences himself or herself through ideology. In reality we are a composite, fragmentary product of various social roles and functions, according to this view.

**Narrative views of Self**

Looking back on the history of psychology, it is clear that narrative and biography have played a significant role in conceptualisations of the Self. The 'individual' has, right from the inception of psychology as a discipline, been regarded as a central unifying concept. It is interesting that early psychological studies made extensive use of the case study which can be regarded as a special form of the self-narrative. It was partly due to the application of this medium or narrative framework that the individual was able to gain 'centre stage' in psychology.

The case study was also the traditional approach of most clinical research. Bolgar (Polkinghorne, 1988) reminds us that much of the knowledge which has been incorporated as the basics for all clinical training today was derived from information
gained in the case study format. The study of individual lives, as presented in detailed case histories, provides "the only possible way of obtaining the granite blocks of data on which to build a science of human nature" (Murray, 1955, p. 15).

In 1911 Stern was the first to provide a coherent framework and methodological foundation for the study of individuals (Polkinghorne, 1988). It was he who proposed the term 'individual psychology' for that part of the new discipline that would deal with the psychological dimensions of the individual. He created a clear distinction between 'individual psychology' and 'differential psychology', which concentrated on the differences between groups, in which context individuals were reduced to mere vehicles for personality traits. Stern proposed that personal biographies should be studied (in addition to statistical analyses of character traits) in order to understand the unity of the whole personality (Polkinghorne, 1988).

By this time Freud (1893, reprint 1981) had already published the first case studies of his patients to illustrate the functioning of the id, ego, and superego. Still today the case studies of Freud are regarded as rare works of art and a record of the human mind in one of its most unparalleled creative acts. In the same year that Stern published his suggestions about individual psychology, Adler (Polkinghorne, 1988) published his own theory of individual psychology. In 1938, Murray (1938) promoted the study of individuals and recommended the use of the case study, which had contributed such invaluable material in the field of medical science. Allport (1968) also contributed much to the development of a biographical perspective of the individual. He valued the uniqueness of persons and urged psychologists to choose a methodology which would reveal this individuality. As an example of such a method he suggested the use of personal documents and case studies (Polkinghorne, 1988).
During the period between approximately 1920 and 1945 the study of individual lives came into its own. In addition to Murray (1938) and Allport (1968), Dollard (1935) made a significant contribution to the life history method. Historically, psychoanalysis has been the dominant conceptual framework for the approach to life histories, since the early psychobiographers were psychoanalysts themselves and saw the field as applied psychoanalysis. Runyan (1982) argues that psychobiography should be defined more widely to include the application of other psychological approaches as well.

Psychobiography also developed within the epistemology of objectivity and truth, but it attempted to obtain an objective view of the person from the inside-out, that is, by trying to reconstruct the inner life of a person on so-called scientific principles. This genre of life-writing was introduced by Freud with a psychobiographical essay on Leonardo da Vinci in 1910 (Schabert, 1990). This was the beginning of a whole new method for elucidating the world of the psyche. Many psychobiographies about politicians, poets, artists and scientists of the past and present times have subsequently been written using the psychoanalytic framework.

Although theorists have argued for the use of other methods, for example, Jungian, Gestalt, or behaviourist approaches as well, in practice, psychoanalysis still forms the exclusive basis for the genre.

Due to the complex interrelationship which psychoanalytic theory propounds between actions, motives, and personality, the casual inferences drawn in psychobiography tend to be indirect and highly complicated. In contrast to conventional biographies, interpretations in psychobiographies tend to be based on the minimum of documentary substantiation. An unusual drawing, a conspicuous entry in a diary (or the absence of an entry, in
some cases), or an anecdote entailing an instance of abnormal behaviour is typically interpreted as a symptom of a particular psychopathology. This results in detailed descriptions of conscious and unconscious conflicts.

Probably because this form of life-story goes against the grain of traditional ideas and the humanistic ideals usually associated with the genre, psychobiography has received a considerable amount of criticism. The main objections refer to the limitations of psychoanalysis as such, for example, psychobiography reduces the person to his or her internal psychic conflicts; it tends to conceive of human life in terms of psychopathology; it is not concerned with understanding the unique aspects of humans, only with the confirmation of general laws regarding a developmental pattern with inordinate emphasis on early childhood experiences (Schabert, 1990). Many psychobiographers have heeded the criticism and have produced more socially sensitive psychobiographies like Manuel's Portrait of Isaac Newton (Schabert, 1990). The Eriksonian school of psychobiography acknowledged the inadequacy of the predominant focus on childhood history, and focused instead on people's creative potential in adult life. Psychobiographical theory has proposed the ideographic mode of representation so that it could counteract the tendency in mainstream psychology to indulge in generalisations.

However, outside the psychoanalytic field, the use of the life study virtually disappeared in the period after World War II when the epistemology and metaphors of the physical sciences were adopted in the social sciences. According to Polkinghorne (1988) a review of Psychological Abstracts in the period 1960–1978 revealed that only one percent of the contributions reflected research on individuals, and even in these studies biography did not feature prominently as a method of
investigation. In most articles case material merely served to provide credence to a proposed therapeutic technique or theory.

However, since the mid-1970s there has been a renewed interest in life history. Runyan (1982) provides an overview of the substantial body of work produced during this period in areas such as normal adult personality development, life history and psychopathology, and life span development. A central theme in these works is the interaction between individual lives and their social and historical contexts.

**Self-narratives in psychotherapy**

Most forms of psychotherapy can be described as a process by which the therapist and client cooperate to produce a coherent and adaptive self-narrative for the client. But before this coherence is achieved, the client and therapist explore the viability of different aspects of his or her Self during the course of therapy. This resembles Bakhtin's (1981) notion of the multiply manifested Self, in that different positions of the I are examined in the context of the client's life circumstances.

Moreover, it appears that the codes and conventions which have evolved in psychotherapeutic practice regarding the evaluation of success and failure of a particular therapy can best be understood by examining the narrative coherence of the therapeutic relationship as a whole. Therapies which are regarded as successful are those which have reached a point where the client's original life narrative has become more complete, more complex, and more internally coherent. It would follow logically from this that a therapeutic encounter is regarded as successful, not only when it has conformed with the prevailing psychological theories or narratives, but when it has
been brought into line with central issues in the therapist's own life narrative, as well as with the dominant narratives in the community regarding adaptive functioning.

Initially it was thought that the life events which the client related during therapy were all actual and objectively perceived occurrences. Therapeutic procedures were designed to uncover these events and to interpret the relation between them and the symptomatic behaviour. But gradually it was recognised that both the client's life story and, indeed, the therapist's theories of human functioning took the form of narrative structures and schemas. We have already referred to the rich narratives in Freud's psychoanalytic theory, where the narrative structure is less obvious, for example the relentlessly progressive notion embedded in developmental theories, as well as in Jung's notion of individuation.

Spence (1984) and Schafer (1976), both psychoanalysts, were the first to explicitly consider the value of narrative conceptualisations of Self for psychotherapy. Whereas other more conventional analytic techniques such as interpretation are still based on the Enlightenment assumption that truth should be sought, and illusion and mystery should be reduced wherever it occurs, these analysts worked with the assumption that there is no irreducible core Self to discover in analysis.

Spence (1984) regarded the Self as a constructor of narratives about a life. The therapist aids the patient in developing an adequate and coherent life story with a Self as a central figure, regardless of whether the life story which the patient brings into therapy was "archaeologically" true to memory (or to "reality") or not. It was the patient's "narrative truth" that mattered and became the material for reconstruction of Self. He also maintained that neither the patient nor the analyst could gain access to the actual or "real" problem, because it was
"indescribable" (Spence, 1984, p. 63). Nevertheless, therapist and patient can work with the presented narrative truth, provided it contains within its "code" the patient's "real" problem. By code Spence meant something similar to Barthes's notion of different semiiotic codes, which can be applied to extract different kinds of meanings from a text. The echoes of some positivist residues in these statements can still be heard in terms such as "real problem". These aspects of Spence's idea were ironed out later by Polonoff (1987) who maintained that a self-narrative does not adhere to some hidden reality but rather establishes "external and internal coherence, livability, and adequacy" (Polonoff, 1987, p. 53). This corresponds with the distinction which was made in Chapter 3 between narrative as a form of knowing and other forms, such as the logico-scientific or paradigmatic modes of knowing.

Schafer's (1976) contribution to the field drew attention to the dimension of the mode or form of the narrative telling. Besides the straightforward Self-stories we tell others about ourselves, we also tell them to ourselves. In the latter case we are enclosing one story within another: We are relating something to a Self which is also based on a set of narratives. Thus the narrativised Self becomes the audience to which we tell the stories of our experiences. The 'others' in our social world are also narrativised constructions, so that, when we tell others about ourselves, we are embedded in 'double narratives'.

In therapy, according to Schafer (1976), the pursuit in personal development takes the form of altering the important questions that one addresses to one's life story, and to the lives of our significant others. He views the analytic process as a cooperative venture between patient and therapist to co-create a life narrative which will provide the kind of exposition of the patient's meanings and difficulties in which a narrative about therapeutic change will be "conceivable and attainable" (Schafer, in Mitchell, 1981, p. 38). In other words, an
important part of whether the constructed story is considered adequate is whether or not it can accommodate change. The analyst focusses on the content as well as the form (the genre, the circumstantiality) of the narrative. Thus the manner in which the patient tells his story is not regarded as a transparent medium, but the patient's Self is viewed as a narrator with a distinctive style — and this style is incorporated as part of the self-narrative. Bruner (1990) summarises this view of the therapist aptly by describing it as that of an editor or literary assistant.

These narrative reconceptualisations gave a new impetus to the, by now, widespread rejection of the notion of the essentialist Self, the view of the person as a

bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action, organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against such other wholes and against a social and natural background (Geertz, 1979, p. 229).

Self in relation to culture and ideology

Since the Self is not only the outcome of a reflective process but of complex cultural and socio-political factors, we also need to examine the practices in which the meanings regarding Self are achieved and maintained — the conventions through which ideas of Self are buttressed. Such a method would bring us closer to articulating a distributive view of Self. The experience of Self always involves a recursive process between thinking and doing. A culture's or a person's ideology about Self does not only exist on the level of conceptualisation. It is manifested interpersonally, it exists in a complex network of
It can therefore be said that meaning emerges from action as much as meanings give rise to action.

The existentialist philosopher, Heidegger (1967), believes that existential "authenticity" is closely related to the issue of "authorship". He deems it important that the individual should compose the integrity of his or her own life story, rather than drift along according to a script of indeterminate or anonymous authorship. Drifting entails, according to Heidegger, the evasion of responsibility: We are responsible for our own lives only if we are the sole authors of those lives. Or more precisely, we are responsible whether we realise it or not; the question is whether we accept or evade this responsibility.

It is clear that Heidegger's ideas are embedded in an epistemology which does not include ideas of an intersubjective Self or the Self which can never be quite at one with oneself. Hence his ideas have received criticism from Schapp (Carr, 1986), who believes that the interlocking stories of which life consists, are not authored, are not created. Rather, one "finds them" ("man findet sie vor"), that is, they are already there and are ongoing. One is either caught up in one's own story ("in sie verstrickt"), together with the others who are likewise caught up ("die anderen mitverstrickten"), or one takes a distance from them as an outside observer. The vivid term used by Schapp, "verstricktsein", to be caught up or entangled in, indicates the extent to which the story of the Self is enmeshed in the various other stories of which human reality is made up.

MacIntyre (1981, p. 199) also responds to Heidegger's ideas by pointing out that "we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives". MacIntyre's criticism is actually directed at the sense in which Sartre uses the term "authenticity". For Sartre, to be involved in any narrative is to play a pre-established social role and thus to be in "bad
faith', since the role is always other than what I really am (MacIntyre, 1981). But the link with Heidegger is this: The pre-established character of the role suggests that I am not its author. If the I could only correspond fully with my narrative, I would be its author and, in fact, the hero of the story. Thus, both Heidegger and Sartre share the same belief in the ideal of authenticity as self-authorship: However Sartre believes this ideal is impossible to attain (MacIntyre, 1981).  

Both Éschapp (Carr, 1986) and MacIntyre (1981) believe that the idea of self-authorship is an illusion created by modern individualism and self-centredness. According to them the social world consists of pre-established social roles and ongoing stories not of my own making. Living entails fitting into these ongoing stories and existing repertoire of roles. One's own life story is incorporated and contextualised by these roles and social stories. They suggest that we should not regard this as lamentable and alienating from one's 'true' Self. There is no Self apart from the intersection of these roles and stories. Each person's own story was underway in the minds and bodies of our parents even before we became aware of ourselves as distinct individuals.

Chatwin's *Songlines* (1987) expresses this idea of already established patterns which we participate in in a very moving way. He describes the practice in the Aboriginal culture of going on a regular 'walkabout' in order to honour the Ancestors. This practice entails following so-called 'songlines' left by the Ancestors when they walked the earth at the beginning of time and 'sang' every part of the world into being:

Each of the Ancients ... put his left foot forward and called out a name. He put his right foot forward and called out [another] name. He named the waterhole, the reedbeds, the gum trees – calling to left and
right, calling all things into being and weaving their names into verses.

The Ancients sang their way all over the world. They sang the rivers and ranges, salt-abouts and sand dunes. They hunted, ate, made love, danced, killed: wherever their tracks led they left a trail of music.

They wrapped the whole world in a web of song; and at last, when the Earth was sung, they felt tired. Again in their limbs they felt the frozen immobility of Ages. Some sank into the ground where they stood. Some crawled into caves. Some crept away to their Eternal Homes, to the ancestral waterholes that bore them (Chatwin, 1987, p. 73).

When a child is born in their culture, he or she is told by an elder in the family which songline he or she "belongs" to. Each songline is embodied in a particular route through the countryside which the child has to walk along at certain times in his or her life in a celebration of his or her connectedness to the Ancestors in a rather direct way.

This is an example of being part of a collective story which can be viewed as affirming of the child's position in the world and as affirming of the child's relationship with the Ancestors. It is probably due to our emphasis on individuality that, in the Western culture, the idea of collective authorship evokes such negative meanings. Compare the idea contained in Songlines with the works by Kafka. The plot of Kafka's Der Prozess (1960) is so unsettling not because of anything which is explicitly threatening, but because it is anonymous and its authorship and guiding principles are hidden. Perhaps the difference between Songlines and Kafka's work is the fact that the Aboriginal people have not entirely lost contact with their Ancestral
beliefs, while traditions in the modern industrialised society have been devalued and traditional roles have broken down. People are cast adrift in a chaotically changing society and are faced with a plurality of social roles which are as standardised as the mass produced products of the society. Perhaps this is the reason why a metaphor such as narrative with its inherent notion of coherence has emerged in this era, as a means to provide at least an illusion of an intact whole identity.

In an excellent essay in which he attempts to redefine the biographical subject, Clifford (1978) addresses the question of 'Where does a 'person' begin and end?' As part of his attempt to come to terms with this question, he discusses a study of the Melanesian people in New Caledonia, Canada, which provides a vivid counterpoint to the Western ideology of the individual. The Melanesians do not conceptualise a person as a single entity. For example, an unmarried woman would always be referred to in the plural form, in this way already including the children she may one day bear. In this manner her reproductive role is incorporated in her definition as a person. People who are related to one another would be referred to by means of a relational term which contains an element of 'twoness'. Their language shows an abundance of dual terms to denote the relational dimension between, for example, grandfather/grandson, maternal uncle/niece, husband/wife, and so forth. These dual terms would apply, even in the absence of one of the parties in the relationship.

Thus for them, relational entities are not, as we tend to see them, composed of two entities. For them, two is the basic unit, "An individual who cannot be circumscribed with a locution of plurality (relationship) is ... adrift, without consistency, not a 'person'" (Clifford, 1978, p. 47). The person exists only as a double in reciprocation with another. This example illustrates that it is possible to live as a 'decentred' Self,
even if this would be hard to achieve in our present society. But the opposite — a Self entirely enclosed in an insular singular identity — is also not possible, therefore we have to attempt to find a compromise.

Following this idea, Clifford (1978) suggests that biographers should attempt to portray a person's different doubles, that is, those relationships and social niches within which the person enters the space of the Other. These participations should be portrayed as recurring constituents of the person's identity. Care should be taken that the sum of these occasions are not depicted as the sum of the person's personality configurations. However foreign this idea is to the biographical and cultural tradition of depicting a person as a compromise of different influences which he or she negotiates once and for all, however much biography insists on constructing a Self, we have to begin to visualise a Self-narrative of 'transindividual occasions' (Clifford, 1978, p. 52), and visualise a person as a "sequence of culturally patterned relationships, a forever incomplete complex of occasions to which a name has been affixed, a permeable body composed and decomposed through the continual relations of participation and opposition" (Clifford, 1978, pp. 53-54).

The notion of a narrative Self led to the consideration of the contexts within which certain stories gained preference in relation to others. Such analyses supported the idea that groups who propounded official or desirable notions of Self were able to thereby gain control over other groups in their battle for dominance. (It should be borne in mind, however, that this is, of course, yet another narrative construction!) An example of this relates to the manner in which dominant Western forms of Self are taken as the touchstone to which the functioning of other marginal, 'non-Western' cultures are compared. The predominant Western view of Self currently refers to clear Self-
Other boundaries, and control over Self and personal context, in other words, persons who are in control of their own personal destinies. According to Parker and Shotter (1990) this view of the individual has been firmly entrenched by psychological theories and practices. Moreover, psychotherapy has helped to maintain this particular set of conventions regarding Self. This theme will be elaborated on in the last chapter of this study.

Another very obvious example is the manner in which male self-narratives appear to be valued more highly than female self-narratives in the Western culture. Feminist critics maintain that women's autobiographies have been marginalised due to predominantly male conventions and canons for writing and judging autobiographies (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981, Gilligan, 1982, Kristeva, 1974). Men present their life stories as a series of self-aware, self-directed acts, a rational pursuit of clearly defined goals (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981). Their life stories typically revolve around the sequence of occupations they have had, as if their work is the area where they are more active. In sum, they present themselves as the authors of their own lives. In contrast, according to the study by Bertaux-Wiame (1981), women typically focus more on their relationships. Their own life stories will include parts of the life stories of others. Their stories therefore take the form of communal stories. These differences are reflected in the expressions and speech forms that men and women use in their narratives. For example, men use I more often than women. From the context of the narrative it appears as if men use I to indicate they are referring to the subject of an action, whereas when women use I, it does not necessarily designate the narrator as subject, but the one pole of a relationship (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981). In the study women often preferred to use we or one, to denote a particular relationship. They therefore often subdued the active Vf. These differences illustrate that, not only do people have
different stories to tell, they see themselves in a different relation to their own life, which is reflected in how they speak about it.

Clifford (1978, p. 41) describes a researcher's efforts to document the life narrative of a Wintu Indian woman as follows:

When I asked Sadie Marsh for her autobiography, she told me a story about her first husband, based on hearsay. When I insisted on her own life history, she told me a story which she called 'my story'. The first three quarters of this, approximately, were occupied with the lives of her grandfather, her uncle and her mother before her birth; finally she reaches a point where she was 'that which was in my mother's womb', and from then on she speaks of herself also.

It is clear from this example that the boundaries of this woman's identity overlapped with several other people's.

Rosen (1988) disagrees with Barthes (1982) who says that narrative is present at all times and in all places. According to Rosen there are places which are tacitly declared as prohibited to stories, where, as Foucault (1970, 1977) suggests, both the space and the discourse which belong to it are closely 'policed'. In this regard Bakhtin (1981) refers to the difference between internally persuasive discourse and authoritative discourse. Contained in this distinction are two important 'forces' which are always at work in language, the centripetal and the centrifugal (Rosen, 1988). Bakhtin distinguishes between these as follows:

The centripetal is constituted from everything which pulls us towards a centre of linguistic norms at every
level, the pressures to conform to one language, one dialect, one set of rules, the order of certain discourse etiquettes, and, indeed genre conventions. The counter force is centrifugal which is constituted from everything which pulls away from the normative centre, the mixing of dialects, lexical and syntactical innovation, play with language, defiance of the genre conventions, use of a genre considered to be inappropriate, persistence of stigmatized language, phonological mockery (1988, p. 82).

According to Bakhtin, these two opposing forces are brought to bear on every utterance we make, this is where they intersect. He maintains (1981, p. 272)

... centripetal forces control or even suppress the crucial attempt we all make to struggle against the given and already determined in language, a struggle which is an attempt to assert our own meanings against the matrix of already codified meanings lying in wait for us.

Bakhtin (1981) identified the essential differences between discourses which are centripetal (the religious, moral and politically authoritative word, the word of the Father, in Lacan's sense, the compulsory, the word of the teacher, and of adults) and centrifugal (which is not backed up by authority, which is frequently not even acknowledged by public opinion, or scholarly norms, but which satisfies because of its sense of authenticity). Authoritative discourse, he maintains, demands our unconditional cooperation, the authoritative discourse is entirely 'fused' with its authority and allows no flexibility, no variation from the norm. The internally persuasive, or centrifugal discourse, on the other hand, is not finite, it is
open to ever newer ways of constructing meaning, it is tightly interwoven with people's own word'.

Self-narratives clearly fall within the domain of centrifugal speech. The diversity of intentions and meanings found in autobiographical narratives, and its inherent context of interaction and participation make it fundamentally centrifugal. The narrator has a different kind of authority from the official authoritative voice. This is because the narrator negotiates or can be offered the right to narrate, or, as Lacan (1986) would say, can be offered a chance to recruit the Desires of the Others, to be given a temporary authority without being authoritarian. According to Rosen (1988), analyses of everyday discourse have revealed that narrative occurs easily and without inhibition when the conversation is among intimates. It is oppressive power that distorts and muffles it. But narrative prevails, even if surreptitiously, in the "sly and gossipy practices of everyday life" (De Certeau, 1980, p. 42).

Self-narrative is a resource which is utilised by all members of a culture and yet the "autobiographical impulse", as Rosen (1988) calls it, is constantly thwarted, put down, apart from being explicitly forbidden in our educational systems and in official or lofty discourses, such as in research endeavours. For example, the most central instrument of research, the interview, has been re-examined in the light of narrative considerations by Mischler (1986). He analysed the differences in conventions for natural conversations and for interviews. He illustrated that interviewers assume that respondents will answer their questions in the categorical form required in formal exchanges, rather than in the narratives of natural social intercourse. Interviewers frequently interrupted respondents when they started to tell stories, in order to guide them back to more categorical forms of explanations. Mischler noted that, if researchers did listen to respondents' stories,
they did not often include them in an analysis of the respondent's life situation. Thus the Selves that emerge from such an interview were moulded by the interviewer's template for how they should describe themselves. And yet, in fact, it is the interviewer's assumptions which are out of place, rather than the respondent's stories of Self. This study illustrates that traditional research instruments used to study Selves were originally based on assumptions which were taken over from the physical sciences. They are not at all coherent with the narrative configuration of how people themselves describe and understand themselves.

Rosen (1988) warns, however, that the nature of narrative has changed over the years. The original folk stories have become "domesticated into cosiness" (Rosen, 1988, p. 86) and have been made subservient to sociopolitical ideology. Rosen maintains that the very universality of folk tales contains its own surreptitious menace. It means they can be used to manipulate, control, to create a market for ideas, and often to "massage us into forgetfulness and passivity" (Rosen, 1988, p. 86). In South African an examination of the Apartheid era offered many examples of how this is done: The history books turned complex sociopolitical events into over-simplified stories about valiant heroes who trekked across the mountains to be free, and about the barbarous deeds of the indigenous villains, who were to be conquered and kept under control. These distorted narratives contained more than sufficient justifications for White supremacist ideology.

Rosen (1988, p. 86) also reminds us that alongside the 'autobiographical impulse', there is the 'autobiographical compulse' of the courtroom, of the government inspector, of the psychological evaluation, of the curriculum vitae, and of the torture chamber. He states:
We are not free to limit our pasts to unpoliced crannies and congenial moments. Stand and deliver. There are many ways in which power attempts to wrest from us our past and use it for its own ends.... Such invitations do not coax and tempt memory for they surround it with caution, fear, and even terror.

An examination of this nature inevitably has to include the psychotherapeutic context. What are the unspoken conventions regarding telling one's life story? Do they form part of the domain of the autobiographical compulse? The analysis which follows in the next chapter will attempt to include this question as part of its parameters.

But first we need to examine the form of self-narratives in greater detail in order to achieve a clearer understanding of how they provide the scaffolding for the continuation of the illusionary notion of the unified Self. Since self-narratives can be regarded as one of the best vehicles for our Western culture's current dominant ideology of Self, the specific manner in which this is expressed should become clear in the next section.

Self-narratives and literary autobiographies:

From monologue to dialogue

Surprisingly little has been written about autobiography, with virtually nothing being written on the philosophical and psychological foundations of the genre. A complete list of studies would include only a handful of books in English. However, this state of affairs should improve due to the resurgence of interest in self-narratives in the social sciences over the last decade or two.
In 1810, when the Enlightenment was already under way, Coleridge (Clifford, 1988) described an emerging cultural trend which he termed 'the age of personality'. It was in this context of 19th century 'individualism' that the biographical genre developed, that most Anglo-Saxon of literary forms, according to Clifford (1978). It emerged from, but transcended its traditional forerunners, the spiritual autobiography and the religious hagiography (the biography of the saints). The history of autobiography in the literary field has been interpreted as the history of European self-reflection and individuality (Kohli, 1981). In fact, biography would be out of a job in a culture where notions of individual uniqueness did not exist: The autobiographical format assumes the presence of a self-conscious I, who is able to conceptualise itself as the organiser of its own life story, an I with a developed sense of individuality who experiences itself as distinct from its social world.

In a prefatory note to his own autobiography, Mark Twain (1960, p. 3) comments on the limitations of the autobiography in the following manner:

What a wee little part of a person's life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, and every day, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not those other things, are his history. His acts and his words are merely the visible, thin crust of his world, with its scattered snow summits and its vacant wastes of water — and they are so trifling a part of his bulk! a mere skin enveloping it. The mass of him is hidden — it and its volcanic fires that toss and boil, and never rest, night or day. These are his life, and they are not written, and cannot be written. Everyday would make a whole book of eighty thousand words — three hundred and
sixty five books a year. Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of a man -- the biography of the man himself cannot be written.

Yet, despite its limitations, it can probably safely be said that, for the ordinary reader, autobiography is one of the most appealing forms of literature, followed closely by biography. It appears that autobiography is the genre that most immediately and deeply engages our interest, probably because it brings an increased awareness, through the understanding of another's life, of our own and our connectedness with the human condition. It is therefore probable that, in reading an autobiography, we are as involved in our own life story as we are in the story of the narrated life. Informal and ongoing self-narratives are a fundamental manifestation of people's internal 'stream of consciousness' (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974). It is also a pervasive phenomenon: In fact, even quite young children can be heard saying, "When I was little ...".

Labov (1972, p. 396) noted that oral accounts of personal experience command a unique kind of attention from listeners: "Many of the narratives cited [in his study] ... commanded the total attention of the audience in a remarkable way, certainly a deep and attentive silence that is never found in academic and political discussion". Rosen (1988) suggests that the particular quality of attention which personal life stories elicit is due to the following:

- It is cloaked in narrative form; it corresponds with a communal way of thinking and imagining through which we all experience our kinship.

- It is spoken in the voice of common sense, a realm of popular knowledge which is informal, but which is considered to be valid.
It invites us to consider not only the end product of the narrator's understanding of his or her experiences, but to join in the experience, to live through the process of reaching that understanding — it's therefore a kind of participatory folk-drama.

It is regarded as testimony; it moves us by allowing us to enter the living space of the Other. The structure of self-narrative is such that it engages the listener in a complicit manner, it suspends the boundaries between Self and Other for the duration of the telling.

Apart from requiring the 'suspension of disbelief', a code which is universal to the role of the Listener, it also requires a code of 'identifying fully with the Teller' for the duration of the telling. Listening in this context is therefore a profound act of empathy. In fact, Rosen (1988) maintains that to participate in any conversation means, among other things, to stay alert to autobiographical information, however obliquely it may be presented. Thus what he calls the 'autobiographical impulse' is a way of listening as well as a way of telling: It is, in essence, dialogical, even when we are alone, because the monologue is always dialogical even when the Other is silent (Bakhtin, 1981). In fact, even when we are listening to ourselves telling an autobiographical anecdote, we become part-listener to our own story. Rosen (1988, p. 77) writes:

I know of someone who wrote about her childhood, setting out to recount the games and inventive pastimes which seemed to her both inexhaustible and full of meaning. At the end of it she said thoughtfully. 'It's about a lonely childhood.' Thus in the art of articulating autobiography, we do not simply unmask ourselves for others, we too await to know the face under the mask.
In contexts where the conversational participants have a shared history, the personal narratives become part of a continuity of disclosures which began in the past and which will proceed beyond the ends of stories. Written autobiographical discourse is different. It has to "enter the silent unknown" (Rosen, 1988, p. 79).

There are certain occasions when the Listener is not only a co-producer of the meaning, but takes over the main function. The Teller is reduced to a data source; the autobiography becomes a 'heterobiography' (Kohli, 1981) which is then ascribed to the Teller and is often objectified in the form of a record or reference document. This is typically the case in the interactions between agents of social control and deviants or clients, for example, in police or psychiatric work.

Self-narratives can be regarded as a kind of "longitudinal version of self" (Lejeune, 1989, p. 132) of which the telling itself is an enactment of Self in pursuit of fitting into a social environment. Therefore, as I pointed out above, the Teller has to leave room for the meanings of the Other, in a generalised and a particular sense. The telling itself is inevitably influenced by the format of the medium itself and the circumstances in which the Teller finds himself or herself during any particular telling. In this regard Medvedev and Bakhtin (1978) maintain that all speech genres constitute a way of thinking and learning, in other words, a particular aspect of reality can only be understood through the medium in which it is represented. And every genre has its methods and means of seeing and conceptualising reality which is available to it alone. According to these authors we think in the genres which we have been provided through our experience of discourse.

The structure of the autobiography as a genre is unusual in that it is a story by a narrator in the present time about a
protagonist who bears his or her name, who existed in the past. The account ends in the present at which point the narrator and the protagonist merge into one figure. To increase the complexity of the structure even further, the narrating Self also acts as an audience during the telling, evaluating the coherence and adequacy of the tale as the telling proceeds.

However, in relinquishing essentialist notions, we also have to give up the hope of ever knowing, in a pre-Lacanian sense, who the author of the autobiography was. However, we are able to know what humanity has been, what forms of living have been possible through history and literature. And thereby we can know how we can live, how to think of our own lives, how to set the parameters for a life which will fit into this tradition of humanity.

One of the conventions regarding self-narratives in Western cultures is that they should have a developmental or emergent plot structure. These developmental plots consist of smaller subplots, smaller stories (occurrences, plans, diversions, projects) which achieve meaning through their relation to the larger scheme of 'a life'. In this sense they illustrate a universal convention in narrative.

On the level of the schema of life-narrative, tellings in our Western culture can be expected to often take the form of the most prominent narrative genres, that is, heroic tales, (more recently, anti-hero narratives), tragedies, comedies, black comedies, the Bildungsroman, Wanderung narratives, and so forth (Bruner, 1990). The main character is a Self which is still in the process of emergence. In each life story there will be turning points or critical junctures which are told (and experienced) in a culturally recognisable format. These critical junctures are almost always evoked by gaining new insight or a new consciousness after an experience of defeat or
victory, by a betrayal, a great loss, or recognition of the protagonist's value in a new context. This apparently universal phenomenon is what prompts Bruner (1990, p. 121) to state that "... not only [did] life imitate art but ... it did so by choosing art's genres and its other devices of storytelling as its modes of expression".

Sometimes the form and conventions of storytelling are so compelling that we end up telling anecdotes in a way which is entirely different from the meanings we wanted to clothe them in originally. As Rosen (1988, p. 80) says, "... no sooner [is the first sentence uttered] than a set of choices beckons me which are all narrative choices, some of which will be so imperative that they might betray me into a loss of meaning" or, as Derrida (1978, pp. 4-6) puts it, to "stifle the force under the form".

Another part of the narrator's task is to select the material which is to be told, but this narrative of how this selection is made and on which premises it is made is hardly ever revealed. It remains implicit, unless the Listener asks to hear it. But if the Listener should ask for this level of the narration, it will undoubtedly alter the course of the main narrative, since the Listener will be accentuating his or her participation in the narrating process. The Listener will then become an explicit part of the "swarm of participations" in which the intersubjective Self participates across contexts.

Autobiographical memory depends much more on what was perceived than on what actually occurred. Something has to be registered perceptually before it can be remembered. Rubin (1986) maintains that it is higher order schemas which determine the likelihood that something which is consistent with one's prototypical self-concept is remembered more accurately than inconsistent information (Markus & Sentis, 1980; Rogers, 1980; Mischel, Ebbesen, & Zeiss, 1976, in Rubin, 1986). Thus the
higher-order self-schema helps to mediate incoming information so that it is made more compatible with one's existing self-knowledge. Inaccuracies generally tend to increase as time passes because generic aspects of events and activities may become condensed and blended further with continuing exposure to similar incidents.

The life story differs from other stories in the following way: We cannot remember (and therefore 'author') our own birth. Nor can we experience our death. Although we cannot witness the beginning and cannot view the whole from a retrospective position, we behave as if we can --- we tell our story from a quasi-retrospective position, as if we were someone else looking back on the whole, even though we may only be halfway through our life. In literature and in historical narratives, the narrator has control over which events are selected to be included in the narrative. But in the life narrative, by contrast, the Self is the 'author' and the 'actor'. This means the narrating Self has to restructure the plot continuously, without knowing how the story will end. The author of the literary and historical narrative is therefore able to sustain a stable and coherent orientation and perspective, while the author of the autobiography has to do the best he or she can, from moment to moment.

There is also a difference between ordinary narratives and life narratives with regard to the dimension of the interrelation of parts. In ordinary stories actions obtain their meaning from a higher-order theme, but the events in a life may be linked to a larger schema only in the trivial sense that they all happened to that person. Biographies of well-known people are often written as if all their actions and experiences occurred in such a way as to lead to them becoming president or writing beautiful symphonies, for example. This convention in biography is probably responsible for the tendency which 'ordinary' people
have, of insisting that one's life should have some single purpose or end, the performance of some particular feat, or the production of something remarkable. However, very few of us lead such single-minded lives. Most people are involved in different aspects of living which simply run parallel, rather than serving some larger goal beyond them.

According to Dilthey (Carr, 1986) autobiography is only one example of the kind of reflection on life as a whole that we all frequently engage in, namely that which entails rendering the past coherent with and comprehensible in terms of the present and the future. Sometimes the framework which we construct in such a process undergoes a sudden change, as during political or religious conversions. Such a conversion usually entails changes in the person's expectations of the future, which necessitates a reinterpretation of the past. Psychotherapy can also produce this kind of radical revision. The events which were congruent in terms of one story are now seen as part of another, for example, what was lived as the innocent, self-interested pursuit of life's pleasures is suddenly seen as a life of sin; early family life is radically reconceptualised as an Oedipal drama in which sex and violence are prominent themes (Carr, 1986).

Although these radical shifts in framework are not that frequent, we are all inclined to engage in some form of autobiographical revision, especially at certain transitions between life stages, because the relationship between the parts and the whole of life is never static or completed. A complete view of one's life could be attained only at the hour of death, from which vantage point one could obtain a view of the whole and all its relations to the parts. Unfortunately until then, the meaning of the whole can be construed only from the perspective of one of the parts. Understanding always hovers...
between the perspective of the part and the whole. This is why our view of the meaning of life changes constantly.

Thus a self-narrative is not a static set of meanings which is extended and added to as new events are experienced, but it entails a continuous restructuring of past events within the framework of the contingent aspects of the present situation (Fischer, 1978). The author of the self-narrative ensures that there is sufficient consistency and continuity across time and circumstances but it is flexible enough as a schema to accommodate the demand characteristics of the context in which it is conveyed. In this sense self-narratives are coherent but highly adaptable, evolving theories of Self.

Yet, despite our need for a coherent set of meanings which add up to a Self, it is impossible to get an understanding of the Self directly, due to the many different interferences in this endeavour which have already been mentioned in our discussion of Lacan's ideas. The closest we can come to such an understanding is not to look straight at the Self, but obliquely, or sideways, as Olney (1972) suggests, to an experience of the Self, as in self-narratives. We have to, in our tellings, create an approximation of this experience in each others' minds, through which the real experience can echo or be reflected. In this process the other individual's experience of Self may be evoked more fully than in everyday being (Olney, 1972).

Aaron (1978, p. 38) describes autobiography as "... the knotting up of incoherences into coherence". When someone tells their life story they are busy with coherence on a level which has more to do with consistency between story schemas, the demand characteristics of the context of the telling, and all the abbreviated versions of the previous tellings, than with historical truth. We gloss over interruptions, inconsistencies, discontinuities, we reorder events so they fit into tellable
sequences. Therefore, the existence of a genre such as the personal narrative, which we have all participated in through a thousand tellings, offers us a coherent framework in which to order events and to control the chaotic flow of our experiences.

Already as children, we learn to grasp the unity of an anecdotal event in life. We also learn how to apply these anecdotes in a manner which will promote the progression of conversations. The particular methods and means of the narratives of personal experience include a strong social dimension. Such narratives are an interplay of concern for the material and a concern for how the material will be received by others. They are offered as part of a social interchange.

The self-narrative typically contains an aspect of justification: Great care is usually taken to explain exceptional events in terms of their significance to the overall coherence of the story. But not only exceptional events are dealt with in this way. It appears to be a common part of the narrator's function to justify why the life as a whole had taken a particular course. This justification is not so much a causal, but a moral or psychological justification.

The biographical genre is part of a collusion we all participate in to satisfy our need for a coherent and whole Self. According to Clifford (1978, p. 45), we "... strain for an unlivable identity". This effortful process is upheld by a set of codes which produce and perpetuate what Clifford calls a cultural myth, the 'myth of personal coherence'. The conventions of the biography can be regarded as belonging to these codes.

When we become aware of our expectations when we read an autobiography, we discover that we expect to find
... not only the public and private events of a life but its intimate existential and perceptual textures, all adding up to the whole sense of the person. Freud and Jung on the one hand, and Proust and Joyce on the other, are among those who have provided models for the intricate and nuanced notation of interior states of being.... We tend to believe implicitly that biography can deliver the essential person and that there is a core personality, the 'real Me', which we will find if only we dig deep and long enough (Kaplan, in Aaron, 1978, p. 2).

We can attain the illusion of unity, at least vicariously, through the reading of biographies. Because of the demand on the genre to deliver a Self, it emphasises closure, certainty, and celebrates the progression towards individuality, rather than communality and discontinuity. The biographers and people in everyday life who tell others about their lives, tend to be sceptical of abstract theories. The idea of Selves who are forever losing and recreating themselves in their social contexts, in 'others', and 'in language', seems to make it impossible to tell a good story.

According to Clifford (1978, p. 44) "... biography contracts to deliver a self. However riven the personality described, however discontinuous the experience, the final written effect is of wholeness". It is, in fact, a remarkable feat that so many biographies produce such a coherent, apparently unified Self, especially in a culture whose philosophers, psychologists and poets cannot reach agreement about which structures, practices and discourses add up to a 'person'. It appears that, without a great deal of theoretical sophistication, by relying merely on the well-worn tools of the storyteller, biography manages to make us believe in the existence of the Self as a bounded individual.
Thus biography is caught up in producing a one-sided picture of life. It creates an illusion of wholeness which is a reflection of how we would like a life to be, instead of portraying life experiences in their incompleteness and discontinuity. In his Carnets, Camus (1966, p. 17) wrote the following notes on this subject: "Nostalgia for other people's lives. This is because, seen from the outside, they form a whole. While our life, seen from the inside, is all bits and pieces. Once again, we run after an illusion of unity."

It should be clear from the above that narrative is fundamental to our sense of coherence, even in the face of our discontinuous and incomplete experiences. Biographers and autobiographers rely on the knowledge that everybody creates his or her own ontology of Self, his or her own theory about the history and the course of his or her life by linking his or her unique successes and fortunes, gifts and choices, misfortunes and private disasters, together to form a coherent, explanatory narrative. Through the selective grid of memory, we highlight, emphasise, rearrange, and give new colour to the events of our lives. We endow certain fundamental episodes with symbolic meaning, often to the point of turning them into myths. These mythological structures are created by virtue of their centrality in the explanatory system of the Self. Presumably these myths are intimately related to the primary life strategies or scripts. These myths are only relatively stable, since they have to bridge the gap between past and future, the old and the new in the process of accommodating to the ever-changing context.

Apparently the validity of depicting individual lives as ends in themselves, was challenged almost from the inception of the genre, despite the ongoing fascination with individual people's lives on a popular level (Clifford, 1978). However, the genre has, to date, not been very responsive to these pressures. In
recent years this challenge was intensified by Structuralist and Post-structuralist thinkers, who undermined the assumptions regarding the status of the individual subject.

Yet despite the efforts of the Structuralists and Post-Structuralists, our culture has not yet developed a literary form for the experience of an interrelated Self. Clifford (1978) believes the break with the biographical tradition of personal coherence does not have to be so sharp: The more successful biographies have always been those which have woven the communal and the personal threads together into the experiential world of the individual. Since biography cannot relinquish the narrative of identity entirely, it should aspire to attain something of the openness and flow of some novels, for example those of Achebe, Woolf, and Eliot in which the cultural and personal narratives are inseparable.

Because the genre is embedded in a long tradition of cultural expectations of individuality, it is understood that biography cannot 'dissolve' the individual entirely. However, it is hoped that the myth of personal coherence which biography embodies can make room for a concomitant myth of transpersonal participation. In this way, a less centred biography can emerge which will be peopled with less centred characters.

Conclusion

No doubt the pressure on the biographical genre not to cling to its subject will continue, since we live in a time when the 'beginnings and endings' of the mythical entity that we call a 'person' have become uncertain. In the words of Woolf (1942, p. 195-196), the biographer "lives in an age when a thousand cameras are pointed, by newspapers, letters, and diaries, at every character from every angle. The life writer will be increasingly obliged to admit contradictory versions of the same
face. And yet, biography will enlarge its scope by hanging up looking glasses at odd corners. And ... from all this diversity, it will bring out, not a riot of confusion, but a richer unity."

In the next two chapters the central issues which were discussed in this and previous chapters, will be applied to a therapeutic context, by means of an analysis of the self-narratives of two clients.
CHAPTER 5

THE SELF IN ACTION: THE RESEARCH STORY

Introduction

The purpose of this part of the study is to examine the intersubjective Self in "practice", namely how a Self (in the form of a self-narrative) is negotiated with an Other in a relational context. In this case the relational context is a complex one: It includes the numerous Others in the participants' lives, as well as the therapist/researcher. The self-narratives which are presented in this chapter are those of two clients from my psychotherapy practice.

In this chapter I wish to provide a brief overview of participatory research (the research format of this study) and deconstruction before I articulate my own assumptions regarding the procedures involved in the analysis. The latter is necessary in order to remain congruent with the proclaimed observer-dependent nature of the study. This is also meant as a deconstruction of my own meanings and formulations in order to foreground the mode by which I arrived at them. By omitting or by not emphasising this level of the procedure, I would be participating in one of the conventions regarding academic discourse which Van Maanen (1988) calls "interpretive omnipotence". While it is unavoidable that I will select, organise and maintain or temporarily "fix" certain preferred meanings in this analysis, I can prevent them from gaining an undeserved status of permanence, truth and authority by highlighting the procedures by which they were constructed.
Participatory Research

The concept of participatory research is linked to the notion of an action science and emerged from a tradition of critical theory and humanistic psychology (Reason, 1990). It refers to an emerging form of research which is done for and with people, rather than on people. It follows from this that the usual distinctions between 'researcher' and 'subject' become blurred in a process where all the participants' ideas and needs are regarded as equally significant. Ideally all the participants should contribute to the format and focus of the research as well as to the action which is the end product of the research.

From these descriptions it is clear that participatory research falls within the realm of the post-positivistic research paradigm. Participatory research can be regarded as a part of the new world view which is emerging in opposition to the mechanistic, atomistic, and reductionistic nature of positivistic science. This new world view is advocated and manifested in different realms, for example, ecosystemic thinking, feminism, education, as well as in the philosophy of human inquiry. Many authors come to mind as representatives of post-positivistic inquiry: Bateson (1972, 1979); Capra (1983); Lincoln and Guba (1985); Reason (1990); Schwartz and Ogilvy (1979).

Geertz (1983, p. 21) summarises post-positivistic inquiry as follows:

It has thus dawned on social scientists that they did not need to be mimic physicists or closet humanists or to invent some new realm of being to serve as the object of their investigations. Instead they could proceed with their vocation, trying to discover order in collective life, and decide how what they are doing
was connected to related enterprises .... Many have taken other approaches: structuralism, neo-positivism, neo-Marxism, micro-micro descriptivism, macro-macro system building, and ... sociobiology. But the move toward conceiving of social life as organized in terms of symbols (signs, representations, signifiants, Darstellungen ... the terminology varies), whose meaning (sense, import, signification, Bedeutung...) we must grasp if we are to understand that organization and formulate its principles, has grown by now to formidable proportions.

In the USA the fundamental ideas associated with participatory research were originated by Torbert (Reason, 1990) who has endeavoured to develop a form of research which would be of practical use in the work setting instead of a "reflective science about action" (Reason, 1990, p. 2, italics added). The emphasis in the participatory research format is on experiential learning. In the UK participatory research has similarly been linked with experiential learning and humanistic psychology. At the forefront of this movement in the UK is Heron (Reason, 1990) who emphasised the relationship between personal development and research. In this holistic format of research the divisions between inquiry, learning, and action or intervention become diffuse and insignificant (Reason, 1990).

The different versions of participatory research all conform to what Maxwell (Reason, 1990, p. 3) calls "a philosophy of wisdom". He states (Reason, 1990, pp. 47-48):

The basic [humanitarian] aim of inquiry, let it be remembered, is to help promote human welfare, help people realize what is of value to them in life .... But in order to realize what is of value to us in life, the primary problems we need to solve are
problems of action — personal and social problems of action as encountered in life.

Participatory research is an endeavour which is therefore not entirely restricted to the domain of scientific enquiry. This form of research promotes the notion that the boundaries between inquiry, education and political action in the community should be dissolved. According to Reason (1990, p. 10) "... participation means empathy ... and empathy implies responsibility". This requires that the researcher immerses himself/herself in the research context in order to develop a deep understanding of the social and interpersonal issues which form the backdrop to the research project in order to ensure that the participants benefit in a tangible manner from the research.

In this form of research there is a preference for procedures which are useful to the practitioner in the field, rather than on procedures which emphasise reflection about the phenomena in the field. There is an emphasis on a search for that which is of pragmatic value, rather than for that which is esoteric. As an example of participatory research, this study demonstrates some of the aspects of this kind of methodology, especially with regard to the shared benefits obtained from the endeavour. In the first few discussions I had with the participants in this study, we explored and agreed on themes which had been central in their therapy with me. These themes were included in their self-narratives as a specific point of focus. The new insights gained during our collaborative efforts were fed back to the therapeutic context. This is an important departure from more traditional forms of research, where, more often than not, only the researcher benefits from the research 'product'.

This study is also consistent with the participatory research model with regard to its self-recursive format, that is, it
contains the elucidation of my own assumptions and framework for the analysis in order that the readers may scrutinise them. According to McNamee and Gergen (1992, p. 1), "we bring to the field of observation a lifetime of cultural experience, languages that provide the rationale for our looking, and vocabularies of description and explanation for what is observed". Thus we "confront life situations with codes in hand, forestructures of understanding" (McNamee & Gergen, 1992, p.1). The reader needs to be cognisant of such forestructures if he or she is to interact with the text in a meaningful way.

The present study is also consistent with participatory research in that it assumes and promotes pluralistic descriptions and multiple voices in its depiction of the self-narratives. The analysis contains the co-evolved meanings of the researcher and the authors of the self-narratives, which were developed during many discussions. It is hoped that in this manner the analysis will produce networks of understanding, rather than the single authoritative voice of the researcher. This analysis is a product of collectively construed patterns of meaning-making, which include the following:

* psychological theories (predominantly aspects of ecosystemic theory. However, since no theory of psychotherapy can be regarded as entirely 'uncontaminated' by other theories which form part of the therapeutic tradition, the analysis also includes aspects of client-centered, psychodynamic, interactional, gestalt, and existential theories.)

* aspects of psychological theories which have, over time, become incorporated into popular culture and common sense knowledge
* common sense theories of how the Self should be construed and of human functioning in general

* literary theory, (e.g. Post-Structuralism) in the form of the deconstructive conventions and perspectives which I bring to the texts

* literary conventions regarding how characters have been portrayed in contemporary literature and other media.

The methodology described above approaches what Van Maanen (1988, p. 136) calls "jointly authored texts" which are characterised by what Clifford (1983a, in Van Maanen, 1988) calls dialogic or polyphonic authority. Clifford (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 136) maintains that such texts display the "discursive and shared character of all cultural descriptions", but they contain an obvious and probably unavoidable flaw: Even though jointly told tales are negotiated until a consensus has been reached with regard to the meaning, the researcher is always in charge of the final product, that is, the researcher is in charge of the editing and gets the credit for the publication (Tyler in Van Maanen, 1988). So the process of negotiation is always tipped in the favour of the researcher as far as the final text is concerned. Work of this nature often takes the form of a "monologue about a dialogue" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 137) which Tyler (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 137) attributes to the following: "No amount of invoking the 'other' can establish him as the agent of the words or deeds attributed to him in a record of dialogue unless he too, is free to interpret it and flesh it out with caveats, apologies, footnotes and explanatory detail". Unfortunately this study falls prey to this same shortcoming. Even though sincere efforts were made to involve the participants in the process of interpretation, we did not fully share the same frame of reference, the theoretical orientation or the responsibility for integrating the text. As this is a
central methodological issue in the participatory research format, it warrants further investigation and researchers should be encouraged to find solutions to it.

Since participatory research promotes subjectivity and "honours personal experience as the touchstone of valid psychological inquiry" (Reason, 1990, p. 2), it is no longer appropriate to strive for results which can be generalised to other contexts. Such a methodology can be said to be consistent with the Post-Structuralists' ideas regarding the preference for localised or particularised narratives, as opposed to 'grand narratives' due to the implications they have for power dynamics in society, as discussed in chapter 2. 'Official knowledge' is seen as inadequate. The promotion of such a stance has given rise to a recent upsurge in interest in local knowledge, or 'common sense knowledge', that kind of knowing which is generally 'taken for granted' (McNamee & Gergen, 1992).

Furthermore, notions of empirical validity and objective representations are discarded in favour of the notion of knowledge as a social construction — an active, cooperative enterprise of people in relationship. In this study the term 'validity' cannot be used in the same manner as in positivistic studies, that is, it does not mean a measure of the empirical correspondence between an observation, statement, or claim, and the 'real' world. The nature of a study such as this requires a reformulation of how validity is understood. Instead of assuming that the 'real' world is reflected to us in an uncontaminated way, it is proposed in this study that our perception of the world is mediated through language, and will therefore inevitably be experienced in a subjective manner.

The validity which is possible in a study such as this can be described as the shared domain of meaning which emerges from numerous discussions (between myself and the participants) and
interpretations of the self-narratives. Reason (1990, p. 47) calls this form of validity 'authenticity'. He maintains that the authenticity of a concept or an interpretation is established through agreement in action or use. This form of validity is based on the idea of conducting numerous research cycles, that is, the repeated progression through phases of:

* reflection on the material of the self-narratives
* discussing the interpretations that ensue from the reflection, with the participants
* integrating the new information obtained in the discussion with the participants, with the previous interpretations
* repeating the cycle.

Reason (1990) suggests that this method of establishing validity does not make it objective in the positivistic sense of the word, but it maximises the input at the individual level and at the collective level at which consensual domains operate. The researcher's own thinking needs to be fully open to influence by his/her experience, the experience of each participant, the participants' reflection on the researcher's experience, the participants' reflection on their own experience, their reflection on their reflection, and vice versa.

However, the format of participatory research described above needs to be relativised in terms of the notions suggested by deconstruction, which will also form part of the analysis of the self-narratives.

Deconstruction

The analysis in this study will be done along deconstructive lines in a general sense. It is not meant as an example of
deconstructive practice in its purest form, but will contain some of its elements.

Although deconstruction follows from hermeneutics and semiotics, it heralds a discontinuous shift from its forerunners with its emphasis on differences instead of identities, fragmentations instead of unities, philosophy of language instead of ontology, rhetoric instead of epistemology, absence instead of presence, on undecidable spaces and gaps instead of closure, playfulness and hysteria instead of prudence and rationality (Leitch, 1983; Sarup, 1988).

In a deconstructive reading the logocentric oppositions in the text will be reversed and questioned in such a way as to neutralise them. This endeavour is aimed at uncovering the exclusive domination of logocentric thinking. But since its power over our thinking and linguistic habits is so pervasive, the best we can do is to dismantle its substructures from the inside, according to the deconstructivists (Jefferson & Robey, 1985). However not only logocentrism is under attack — deconstruction goes against the convention of upholding any traditional classifications and categories of thought; they are deliberately collapsed.

According to Eagleton (1986, p. 133) the tactic of deconstructive criticism ... is to show how texts come to embarrass their own ruling system of logic; and deconstruction shows this by fastening on the 'symptomatic' points, the aporia or impasses of meaning, where texts get into trouble, come unstuck, offer to contradict themselves.

Deconstruction is the unravelling of any idea in terms of the particular system of meaning which supports it. It is the
critical operation by which the oppositions contained in an argument can be partly undermined, or by which they can be shown partly to undermine each other in the process of textual meaning (Eagleton, 1986). In the deliberate process of inverting traditional oppositions the deconstructor illuminates the play of previously invisible and often illegitimate concepts that lay unnoticed in the gap between opposing terms. The text "explodes beyond stable meaning and truth towards the radical and ceaseless play of infinite meanings" (Sarup, 1988, p. 59). Thus, critical analysis which previously prided itself on its coherence, profundity, and meaningfulness, now becomes anarchical, playfully illogical, and fragmented.

Deconstruction also dismantles the traditional conceptions of the 'author', 'work', as well as the conventional notions of 'reading' and 'history'. "There is an abandonment of all reference to a centre, to a fixed subject, to a privileged reference, to an origin, to an absolute founding and controlling first principle" (Sarup, 1988, p.59). It offers textuality in the place of imitative, expressive, and didactic theories. "It kills the author, turns history and tradition into intertextuality and celebrates the reader" (Sarup, 1988, p. 59). Yet even the reader, like the text, is unstable.

The deconstruction of the Self is one of the most prominent features of Post-Structuralist theory. It proposes a multifaceted disintegrating play of Selves, instead of a unified and stable entity of awareness, as indicated in the previous chapters. The self-narratives in this study will be interrogated and unpacked with these ideas in the foreground.

However, before the analyses are undertaken in Chapter 6, a number of interpretive conventions need to be foregrounded and questioned in the light of the notion of deconstruction.
The conventions of the interpretive process:

A deconstruction

What follows are a number of the assumptions which underlie the framework for the analysis of the texts. As stated before, these assumptions need to be foregrounded in order that the reader can participate in the decoding of the texts and judge the adequacy of the analysis.

The illusion of interpretive omnipotence

Van Maanen (1988, p. 51) lists the different devices and conventions which are frequently used to sustain the 'godlike pose' of 'interpretive omnipotence' in academic discourses:

* the use of abstract definitions, axioms, and theorems that are linked in a coherent and logical manner to serve as explanations for phenomena.

* the use of 'aseptic' and impersonal language.

* the use of a theoretical system which originates from honoured and respectable figures or academic traditions (e.g. reference to Freudian and De Saussurean theories, and to the ideas of Post-Structuralist figures, such as Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida in this study) which Van Maanen (1988, p. 51) calls "standing on the shoulders of the giants".

* the selective presentation of coherent and unambiguous information to conceal the often chaotic and complex situations from which this information emerged.

* "Footnotes and theoretical asides are orchestrated to support a particular interpretation, and when other views
are presented they are given short shrift; they are merely foils representing mistaken or foolish perspectives" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 54).

Van Maanen (1988, p. 73) calls the set of conventions on which such intellectual practices are based, the "Doctrine of Immaculate Perception". This emphasises the numerous strategic choices, selections, and constructions which form part of the elegant and articulate documents which scholars are taught to write (e.g. which details to include or omit; how to represent controversial or ambiguous data in an acceptable and unambiguous manner, which quotations to use, etc.). Instead he advocates multivocal texts, in which "... an event is given meaning first in one way, then another, and then still another" (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 52), and the construction of theories which reflect how people achieve communal understandings.

While this study inevitably falls prey to the same tradition of apparent omnipotence, the methods which I use to uphold this tradition will not be concealed, thereby providing the readers with the opportunity to judge the merits of the text for themselves, instead of having to accept the authoritative voice of the researcher.

The illusion of uncontaminated original meanings

According to Jameson (1984, pp. 9-10)

...texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations, or if the text is brand-new -- through the sedimented reading habits and categories developed by those inherited interpretive traditions.
We cannot gain access to an uncontaminated text, we only have access to it through our codes for confronting and appropriating it. According to Jameson (1984) interpretation is an allegorical act which entails rewriting a particular text in terms of a specific interpretive code. Therefore in this analysis I do not assume to discover meaning which is located in the texts themselves, nor do I assume that I can gain access to the uncontaminated meanings which the authors of the self-narratives had intended when they constructed them. An echo from Chapter 2 reminds us that there are no meanings which are not contaminated by an open-ended play of signification, shot through with the fragments of other ideas and texts. Thus, meaning cannot be encapsulated and stated unequivocally. The Post-Structuralist notion that meaning is both present and absent, that it is a flickering rather than a constant, will prevail in this analysis. The analysis will be done with respect for all the gaps in the process of attributing meaning. Starting with the processes which preceded the act of writing the self-narratives we need to consider the meanings the participants did not convey, could not convey, or did not want to convey?

In the analysis of the self-narratives I assume that the texts are a set of coherent signifiers which do not stand in a simple one-to-one relationship with the signified. I will attempt to conduct the analysis with a full appreciation for the web-like complexity of language with its tenuous and illusionary interplay with meaning ... the back and forth, the present/absent, the forward/backward movements in language (Eagleton, 1986).

The illusion of the separation between the Author and the Interpréter

Another illusion which needs to be dispelled is that of the
separate positions of the Author and the Reader/Interpreter of the text. To assume such a distinction would be to build the rest of the discussion on a false dichotomy.

McDermott (Tannen, 1988, p. 63) states: "Our words are tools we use to shape each other". Thus, the self-narrative texts can be regarded as one part of a dialogue; I will add to it my part of the 'conversation'. And conversation, according to Schleghoff (Tannen, 1988, p. 6) is the "primordial site of sociality and social life" and, one could add, of co-constructed meaning. Harré (1983, 20) maintains that

the fundamental human reality is a conversation, effectively without beginning or end, to which, from time to time, individuals may make contributions.... The structure of our thinking and feeling will reflect, in various ways, the form and content of that conversation.

This view reiterates the view expressed in Chapter 4 that the individual is no longer conceptualised as a natural object but as a cultural artefact.

Commenting further on the essentially social nature of language, Friedrich (Tannen, 1988, p. 91) states that one of the conventions of dialogue in narrative is that it makes story into drama -- "a drama staged in the speech of one individual and enacted in the mind of another. The creation of drama from personal experience and heresay contributes to the emotional involvement that is crucial for understanding and becomes the basis for human interaction." We activate each other's imagination through speech. It is this ability of language to activate the imagination of the Other, that makes it possible to at least partially understand someone's utterances. So humans
are interlocked in language in their creation of mutuality and meaning. Descriptions are both guided by and limited to the shared conventions of discourse, or 'textual histories'.

As Anderson and Goolishian (1992) suggest, the development of a narrative with others is a recursive process of continually redefining who we are in conjunction with others' perceived understanding of us. Lax (1992) elaborates on this idea when he states that not only do we arrive at an understanding of the world and ourselves through our discourse with others, but our understanding is our discourse with others. In other words, what we regard as reality is encapsulated in our descriptions of experiences, but we are seldom aware that these descriptions evolve through social interchanges that are themselves shaped by those descriptions.

Therefore texts such as the self-narratives used in this study should be conceptualised as products of relationships. They reflect the notions that information is socially embedded and constructed and that the unfolding of meaning emerges through interaction. Such an approach is coherent with the social constructivist view, which assumes that knowledge, views or ideas are social constructions which are evolved in social interaction and which are mediated through language (Fruggeri, 1992). Descriptions, instead of being objective accounts, are social products emerging in a context of communal interchange (Gergen, 1985; Gergen & Kaye, 1992; McNamee, 1992).

During the discussions I had with the participants a communal narrative was developed which will be reflected in this and the next part of the chapter. An interpenetration between Author and Reader/Interpreter occurred even before the participants in the study put pen to paper for the first time. The fact that we had been linked through a therapeutic relationship, with all the traditions, meanings, and conventions which that entailed,
already shaped the texts even before they were actually produced. For example, it can be presumed that the stories would reflect aspects of this relationship, such as depicting themselves as 'learners' in the process of life, possibly as somewhat disempowered and faltering. They were more likely to include descriptions of their so-called problems or inadequacies, since this is the traditional 'fare' of the therapeutic discourse. The therapeutic encounter can be described as a process of becoming increasingly articulate about the nature of so-called symptoms. An analysis of any therapeutic relationship over time would reveal an increase in the degree of clarity and sophistication in how the client's symptomatology is verbalised, both by the therapist and by the client. Thus symptoms are an intrinsic part of the conversation which the client conducts with the therapist. This particularised discourse which evolves in each therapeutic relationship can even be viewed as an explanatory model, reflecting varying degrees of sophistication, coherence, clarity, and explanatory power, much like any other explanatory model. Over time symptoms come to be viewed by both the client and the community as standardised and collective 'truths' which evoke standardised responses (e.g. pharmacological and psychological treatment, social stigmatisation, helpless/helping interactions). Thus from the above it is clear that symptomatology is a specialised form of discourse. The present analysis will include an examination of how this discourse manifested in the self-narratives of the participants.

Already in the very first meeting when the outlines of the study were discussed with each of the participants, the boundaries between these two functions of Author/Reader became blurred: I indicated my preferences regarding the structure, content and the length of the self-narratives before I had started reading any texts on the Post-Structuralist conceptualisation of the Self or on narrative theory. I include these guidelines for two
reasons. First they obviously had a significant part in shaping the self-narratives of the participants, and should be included, in keeping with the self-recursive format of this study. And, secondly, they should be included because they provide an excellent example of how pervasive the Modernist assumptions are regarding the conventions about Self and autobiography.

The following guidelines were given:

* The participants had to write an account of their life which was "entirely their own". They were asked not to discuss it with anyone, lest these people "influence" their own perceptions of their lives. This guideline was given when the participants expressed uncertainty as to their ability to produce an adequate narrative and was meant as assistance and encouragement. However I later became aware that this guideline enhanced and entrenched the notion of a bounded and separate Self. This is an example of how I participated in creating descriptions of individual rather than more intersubjective Selves. Or stated differently, in the cultural context in which the study was conducted, the view of Self which is currently dominant, "wrote itself into" our discourse.

* I suggested that the participants could give any structure to the story that they preferred, but that, if they wanted to check that they did not omit any significant material, they could scan their lives in five year periods. Though this guideline was merely meant as a possible structure if none other emerged through the author's own efforts, it clearly contained the implicit assumption that the narratives had to be as comprehensive as possible. While comprehensiveness was not an essential requirement for the narratives in this study, it is one of the traditional
conventions by which the adequacy of autobiographical texts is measured. Although narrative 'adequacy' was furthest from my mind when I made this suggestion, the culturally predominant requirements for such texts were so much a part of my conceptualisation of them, that they inadvertently became incorporated in the study.

*I requested the participants to include their perceptions of their own futures in the narratives. This was explicitly requested, since this dimension is not usually understood to be part of conventional autobiographies and was intended to provide a glimpse of their 'anticipated selves'. In this case I was guided by a current omission in the culture regarding autobiographies.

It can be seen from the above that it would be fallacious to assume that the texts which the participants produced, started off as inscribed only by them. Even if these guidelines had not been given, they would still be influenced by the prevailing conventions guiding narratives of this nature, as well as by the authors' expectations about how I was going to receive them, even before they were written. As Bruner (1987, p. 32) states: "Mind is never free from precommitment. There is no innocent eye, nor is there one that penetrates aboriginal reality. There are instead hypotheses, versions, expected scenarios". The texts were a product of our relationship, rather than of a single individual. Just as I had expectations about what they were going to write, they had expectations about the reading of the texts. Thus the stories were in fact begun at the end— at the interpretation.

According to Efran, Lukens and Lukens (1990) memories are not 'historical records' or true transcriptions of actual events, but 'performances' which are enacted by people in a particular context, with specific goals in mind. Similarly, for Bruner
(1987), life is not 'how it was', but rather how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold. Instead of adopting a Modernist stance by describing self-narratives as being "notoriously inaccurate and unreliable" (Gergen & Kaye, 1992, p. 168) we can say that they are constantly evolving, and highly sensitive to cultural, interpersonal and linguistic influences (Bruner, 1987). Thus the text of any self-narrative exists only in the particular interaction. The story is continually altered in accordance with new insights, and with the need to reinterpret and embellish our life history in the context of each new Other we tell it to. Every narration is therefore an "arbitrary imposition of meaning on the flow of memory" (Epston, White, & Murray, 1992, pp. 97-98). Thus every telling is interpretive, is coherent with the norms and standards of what is currently worth telling, and proceeds in accordance with the prevailing conventions of the particular social group or relationship.

The illusion of a separate bounded Self

In the analysis of the self-narratives I subscribe to Lacan's notion of the Self as 'subject', as a substitute for the traditional notion of ego (which is imbued with all the assumptions derived from the Enlightenment and Modernist era, discussed in the previous chapters). 'Subject' in this context indicates a way of understanding and organizing the discourses that relate individuals to culture. We are reminded of Foucault's (1972) notion of the individual as an object of knowledge which comes into being at the interface between the Self and the social sciences. He proposes that the emphasis on normative thinking in psychiatry and psychology has led to an increase in the control which ideologies about mental health have over people's perceptions of themselves.
A person is therefore conceptualised within a context of social and cultural meaning, rather than as an intrapsychic entity, and the process of developing this narrative about one's life in conjunction with Others and with the dominant ideology becomes the basis of personal identity. Therefore there is no deeper, hidden Self to be discovered and interpreted — the narrative is our Self in discourse with all the Others (personal and culturally institutionalised Others) in our life. This is echoed by Gergen and Kaye (1992, p. 180): "... selves are only realized as a byproduct of relatedness".

Even when we attempt to conceptualise a Self ourselves it is also a reflection. And like all reflections or attempts of consciousness to grasp itself, it always turns the subject of contemplation into an object. Lacan (1986) states that we exist only in our retrospective linguistic representations of ourselves, but that these representations are always inadequate. Moreover, we leave these representations open to interpretation by others. Thus this creates a tension because one's identity depends, in part, on its recognition by others. Although we attempt to create an illusory coherence and stability, we often misconstrue and misinterpret these reflections — the inevitable gap of misrecognition according to Lacan.

Mutual recognition is also not possible. Intersubjectivity never achieves a completeness because we can never enter another's consciousness completely. This is partly due to the ambiguity of signifiers — there is always a gap between what is said and what is meant. Therefore our need to obtain a sense of wholeness is forever frustrated. This yearning for wholeness or completion through the Other is evocatively expressed by Gertrude Stein (1966, pp. 489-490), who was one of the most subtle explorers of everyday conversation:
Slowly every one in continuous repeating, to their minutest variation, comes to be clearer to someone. Every one who ever was or is or will be living sometimes will be clearly realized by someone. Sometime there will be an ordered history of everyone. Slowly every kind of one comes into ordered recognition.

Research procedure

I originally obtained five self-narratives from clients in my practice but I eventually used only two. I did not apply any formal selection procedure to obtain the five participants. I mentioned my intention to undertake a study of this nature to all my clients and seven of them volunteered. One client dropped out even before attempting to write the self-narrative and another gave up after she had already written parts of her self-narrative. Four of the five remaining clients/participants are still in therapy at the time of this analysis. I had terminated therapy with the other client/participant shortly before I commenced the study.

All five clients were enthusiastic about participating in the study, either because they were interested in the theme of my study, or because they saw the endeavour as having value for their understanding of themselves — and in this sense, as enhancing their own therapeutic process. The client/participant who had completed therapy, saw the task as a meaningful way to review and to round off the therapeutic process. Those clients whose self-narratives I did not include in the study were each given verbal feedback.

The self-narratives of one female and one male person were included in the study. I shall call them Freda and Trevor.
(Their names have been altered in accordance with the usual conventions regarding confidentiality.)

After the participants formally consented to take part in the study, I had a meeting with each one, during which I explained the rationale of the study. Due to the participatory nature of the study no information was withheld from them. I maintained total transparency regarding my research goals and procedures in my discussions with them throughout the study.

After the self-narratives were completed I conducted a series of interviews with both of the participants during which we discussed and analysed the self-narratives together. Thus the ideas presented in the analysis reflect the interpretations which we constructed together.

These discussions were experienced as personally beneficial by all the participants. In Freda's case, for example, the process of dealing with her life narrative in such depth became a very significant turning point for her. She regarded it as an invaluable opportunity to come to terms with the past, which enabled her to continue her life in a manner which introduced new themes and possibilities. Telling her story had enabled her to gain control over her past. She had become less of a victim of the patterns of her past.

Conclusion

The self-narratives in this study are perceived in much the same way as Post-Modernist texts and discourses are viewed generally, namely they are regarded as self-contained and self-reflective entities which do not invoke anything outside of themselves. In addition, writing is no longer seen as that which establishes some kind of structure or meaning, a fixed principle, a stable
centre, a solid foundation. Writing is rather regarded as an endless deferring and differencing.

The self-narratives presented in this study can all be regarded as self-conscious performances of Self, mind turning around upon itself, self-referentially. Moreover it is essentially a public performance: One of the selective 'grids' or 'lenses' which the participants utilised for this particular telling is that of 'Self which is public' in contrast to 'private Self'. In addition, it is not only Public Self, but 'Self-in-psychotherapy' which is performed here. These themes will be explored and elaborated on in the next part of the chapter.
CHAPTER 6

THE SELF IN ACTION:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE SELF-NARRATIVES

Introduction

In the aforegoing chapters we examined the implications which the cultural shift from Modernism to Post-Modernism have for conceptualisations of identity. In this chapter I wish to particularise the discussion of these changes by examining two self-narratives in detail. The analyses which follow below are not an attempt to chart the phenomenology of the Self or its essential nature or structure, but rather an examination of the language and codes of self-reference. In these self-narratives we find a public presentation of the private Self, a Self-conscious-of-Self, in other words. We are presented with a narrative format in which Self reflexively contemplates itself. In this analysis I will attempt to identify the interpretive schemas used in this self-contemplation. Obviously these interpretive schemas are not found in the texts themselves nor can they be regarded as the actual interpretive schemas of the participants. They have been co-constructed by the participants and myself in the discussions about the texts.

The interpretive schemas found in the self-narratives take different forms: Some of them conform to the conventions used in the narrative tradition, some of them are predominantly linguistic in nature and others are predominantly cultural, reflecting the dominant notions regarding lifestyles, social trends, fashions, political ideologies and gender stereotypes. Regardless of their particular classification, they are all collectively organised patterns for creating meaning which we all share and participate in every day.
The self-narratives in this study reveal both Modernist and Post-Modernist aspects which characterise a transitional phase between the two cultural paradigms, as I will illustrate in the analysis which follows. Both the Modernist and Post-Modernist assumptions on which the self-narratives are based will be highlighted.

Both self-narratives are based on two sets of discourses: One discourse is organised around the notion of romantic self-fulfillment. The other is a discourse reflecting aspects of alienation and dispossession which can be described as Post-Modernist. As I have described in the aforegoing chapters, the Self-centred-in-itself has gradually become decentred in the vast socio-cultural shift towards Post-Modernism. The belief in essences and objective truths have waned. Words and meanings are no longer fixed and dependable — there are only deferred, postponed meanings and a confusing array of multiple viewpoints. I will endeavour to deconstruct the two self-narratives in order to reveal the interplay between the above two types of discourses in the process of constructing the Self.

Trevor's Story

(See Appendix I for Trevor's self-narrative.)

Every story is like all other stories in certain aspects, like some other stories in certain aspects, and like no other story in other aspects, according to McAdams (1985). In reading Trevor's self-narrative every reader will recognise something of his/her own life story, since all autobiography is universal on a fundamental level: By its very nature the genre implies a chronology, a coherence in terms of nuclear episodes, plot and other conventional narrative features, and a central pivotal character. This self-narrative also contains some of the elements which are found in all Modernist tellings, namely the
characterisation of the Self in terms of the Romantic tradition, while in other respects it contains elements of Post-Modernist narratives, especially in its self-consciousness and self-deconstruction. But this self-narrative contains many unique aspects which reflect a singular life, albeit a life plagued by uncertainty, alienation, and ambiguity.

The Modernist features in Trevor's self-narrative are overshadowed by the more Post-Modernist aspects of his story. While the conventions regarding the Self which are usually found in stories of Self (namely the conventions of a substantial, coherent, continuous, and whole personhood) form the backdrop for Trevor's self-depiction, they are often undermined and ridiculed in this story. The character which he constructs is shot through with doubt, insecurity, and yearning for the impossible reunion with the Other. However, even though he undermines the ideal of the Modernist Self throughout his self-narrative, the latter is still upheld as the ultimate goal to which he aspires.

The Modernist ideal is also evident in an inverted sense in the characterisation of the Self that Trevor depicts. He clearly regards his Self-as-character as having failed: His central character failed to live a progressive plotline in which there is a gradual increase in agency, intimacy, and wisdom. The following excerpts from his text serve as illustrations: "I just couldn't physically be anything"; "I wasn't all there"; "... there was just a touch of something missing"; "I was unable to formulate my problems"; "A life was unfolding which had a cul-de-sac sign at the start"; "The world threatened"; "Puzzled by my attraction to this woman, and also by a feeling of alienness that I felt with respect to my very own self ..."; "... not really having a sense of who I am".
The narrative codes or conventions which Trevor used in his self-narrative (such as plot, imagoes, nuclear episodes, characterisation) can also be regarded as modernist elements. These codes are the means through which the notions of essentialism, consistency, and coherence are manifested. These will be examined in the sections which follow.

Narrative codes

The beginnings

The beginning is not quite the beginning in Trevor's narrative, since he starts telling the story twice. The first story starts with a series of positive memories of his childhood and ends with the Kundalini experience (an unusual mental state which will be discussed later). The second story starts with a number of unhappy anecdotes from his early childhood. These two beginnings are in part due to the suggested structure that I proposed during the initial interview, but it is interesting that these two beginnings reflect a juxtaposition of the ideal and the non-ideal, a theme which permeates the whole narrative.

The first beginning provides a montage of close-ups to the reader: "I have quite a few memories of when I was small, such as a very vague memory of seeing a red light probably when I was born, of pushing my mother's nipple into her breast when I was feeding, and some of the toys I received when I was only 1 or 2 years old. Until I turned 7 or so, I was happy; life was sweet. I used to be fascinated by the fire we had in the fireplace. When I was about four years old, I remember having had all my teeth removed. My mother used to make me lick a handkerchief to clean my face with."

These pictorial glimpses present disconnected fragments of a childhood. They do not reflect the continuity of a chronicle,
rather, the reader is invited to supply the continuity, to fill in the gaps. And like a montage in a good film, it is evocative enough to suggest a richer and more 'whole' childhood than is actually presented. The effect of the montage as narrative convention is precisely that it presents a few parts that represent the whole. It also involves the viewer/reader in a more active role in supplying the interrelations between the selected events or images as well as between the told and the omitted, untold dimensions.

**Plot**

Elsbree (1982, in McAdams, 1985) maintains that all storylines are reducible to a few generic plots: Archetypal actions, or "universal action sequences intelligible to all people in all cultures which are felt by the audience to have something like the authority of those rituals which articulate basic phases of human growth and express primary human needs" (McAdams, 1985, p. 56). These are:

- establishing a home
- engaging in a contest
- taking a journey
- enduring suffering
- pursuing consummation.

Trevor's story contains elements of all the generic plots proposed by Elsbree and McAdams (1985) but most obviously resembles the last plot, namely 'pursuing consummation'. He tells a tale of a heroic and sometimes tragicomic striving for wisdom, spirituality, integration, wholeness. It is an account of a courageous but thwarted attempt at obtaining the unobtainable, the forever Lost — the perfect reunion with the Other. This corresponds closely to Elsbree's delineation of this kind of generic plot, namely the striving for transcendence,
liberation or self-actualisation. In essence, stories with this kind of plot (like *The Divine Comedy, War and Peace, The Wasteland,* and *Revelations*) involve a striving for goodness, truth or beauty. It also often involves the merging with something more inclusive, more encompassing (see the so-called Kundalini experience which is discussed later).

Trevor actually presents two stories. The first storyline can be regarded as more successful in that it ends on a high note with the Kundalini experience and the implied transcendence which usually accompanies it.

In the other story the Kundalini experience occurs in the middle and his depiction of how his life continues subsequent to that does not bear out the hope and suggestion of transformation. This is therefore a less 'successful' presentation.

At this juncture it is interesting to consider the stories which were excluded in this telling. What were the omitted experiences, meanings? One possibility would be that he has omitted positive experiences in his selection of material. Since failure and rejection are such primary or nuclear themes it is likely that he has reported predominantly those experiences which are coherent with that theme. The same can be said of his idealism: since he is so bent on having virtually no life at all if he cannot have a perfect, ideal life, he evaluates all experiences by those stringent standards.

After Trevor had scrutinised my interpretation of his self-narrative, he felt surprised that an Unintended Self had sneaked into his self-narrative! He had intended to ironise himself but he had still intended to emerge as a kind of heroic figure. He had not intended to emphasise the anti-hero as much as he had done. He thus conveyed meanings which he had not intended to convey.
How would his story have been different if he had also recounted episodes of acceptance, contentment, and joy? Although it would have conformed to most readers' expectations, his self-narrative would have lost some of its dramatic impact. In Chapter 3 it was mentioned that loss (and the ensuing effort to regain that which is lost) is an essential element of a successful narrative. According to Lacan (Eagleton, 1986, p. 185) it is the Mother's body -- the original lost object -- which gives impetus to narratives, thus choosing "substitutes for this lost paradise in the endless metonymic movement of desire". This therefore is narrative at its best, except that the striving is in vain -- there is no resolution of this dramatic tension at the end of the narrative. Instead of a conventional ending, Trevor conveys the seemingly endless continuation of a struggle against unfortunate odds. The proper, conventional ending is deferred, postponed. But the author is not entirely without hope: "... whilst I do not exactly have faith that I will of necessity survive this harrowing process, nevertheless I do sense an improvement in myself and at long last, an increasing sense of self-worth and some inner stability".

Nuclear episodes

Trevor's self-narrative contains frequent references to the theme of success and failure which reflects a strong Modernist influence. The Modernist ethos of progress and success impinge on most aspects of the tale, mostly in the form of the unattained ideal. Although he strives to obtain recognition from others for his good qualities in his work milieu, all he gets is humiliation, embarrassment, and disillusionment. He is rather merciless in his portrayal of his Self as failing to live up to the Modernist ideal of a progressive plot in which there is a gradual increase in wisdom, power and recognition. Instead the main character which he portrays feels confused and alone, at the mercy of others' rejection, or carelessness. There is a
painfully wide discrepancy between his vision of the future (highly idealised, and thus utterly unattainable) and the present. His failure to achieve power and dominance by means of his masculinity is expressed poignantly in his account of one of the conventional cultural rituals of masculinity, the 'stag party': "I considered it inevitable or necessary to have a stag party — in retrospect, I just don't know why. So I organised it myself. If I had not done so, it would not have happened. I wanted to be a man, I suppose, even if it meant pretending that these guys were my hearty friends. I was duly sick. I had had my party."

Imagoes are described by McAdams (1985) as dominant 'characters' or symbolic 'positions' in the story. He defines imagoes as follows:

Unlike Jung's structural components of the collective unconscious, life story imagoes are by definition personified and exist not as a part of a phylogenetic collectivity but rather as highly personalised, idiosyncratic images defining how a person is different from others as well as similar to them.... They are structured as personified and idealised images of self, highly individualised and created to play roles in specific life stories (McAdams, 1985, pp. 182-183).

An examination of the imagoes used in Trevor's self-narratives reveals the powerful and competent Self and the tragicomic figure who has failed. In terms of imagoes these two positions can be described as the Hero and the Anti-hero and are linked in a complementary fashion. The discourse of failure automatically invokes the discourse of the ideal, the idealised, and the
The Heroic Self is illustrated in the following: "I used to enjoy the philosophical debates, in fact [I enjoyed] any opportunity to demonstrate my superior understanding. ... I liked to impress others in this way. For once I had some respect." The Modernist ideal of the unique and successful Self emerges at certain points in the narrative: "Initially I was still very much in the psychological grip of my parents, in the sense that I would tell them with great enthusiasm of my plans for the future. These plans were always intended to demonstrate my ability to inevitably forge ahead and rise above everyone else." It is interesting that his ideals for his heroic and exceptional Self are reported as occurring in conversations with his parents. This suggests that his ideas about what constitutes an ideal Self are inscribed by the expectations which he thought his parents had for him.

But at other points in the self-narrative, Trevor undermines and ridicules the character which he constructs and thus depicts him as an Anti-hero. He dismantles the Hero as rapidly as he creates him. He mocks his own very lofty romantic ideals for his personhood, by referring to the gaps, the inadequacies, the painful meaninglessness: "I aimed for authority but was hopelessly immature"; "Sometimes, very occasionally, I felt that I impressed girls with my sheer brain-power and warrior-like attitude. At other times I simply felt alone and even stupid".

Trevor uses many of the conventions which are associated with the anti-hero figure. He is caught up in ambiguities and double meanings and remains entangled in his own ambivalences. He is therefore unable to resolve problems in any clearcut way. He is the victim of his longing for affirmation from the Other. So intense is this longing, that he experiences himself as
fragmented, his sense of significance and wholeness perpetually postponed until the moment of recognition by the Other.

**Characterisation**

Trevor's style of telling the story of the Self is exceptional because he clearly foregrounds the processes and discourses through which the character of the Self is constructed. One of the features of his self-narrative is that he utilises two distinct *I*-positions in his text. As I have pointed out in Chapter 4 the *I* and the *me* or the Self-as-subject and the Self-as-object of consciousness are acknowledged by James (Damon & Hart, 1982) as definitive aspects of the Self. These two positions are thought to have an ontological existence in the fluid procession of experiences. However in this study an alternative view of these two positions has been proposed. According to Harré (Potter, Stringer, & Wetherell, 1984) these two positions of *I* and *Me* are merely the products of linguistic conventions, of rules of grammar of personal pronouns. These two positions are inevitable aspects of the construction of any account of events and experiences. According to Potter et al. (1984, p. 159) this distinction emerges through the "conventions for explaining and justifying one's actions, a conceptual possibility which is then extended until it becomes a complete self-diagram". In addition it is a narrative convention which is more likely to occur in the format used in this study, namely autobiography, since it is a genre in which the Self is both author and main character.

Usually in self-narratives the *I* is but one position which is designated as the 'speaking subject'. The 'speaking subject' due to linguistic and narrative conventions, sustains the illusion that it has a controlling influence on the discourse in which it is embedded. It is this *I* that has the task of convincing the Reader of the 'success' (the agency, continuity, wholeness, and
boundedness) of the Self-as-character. It is this I which therefore utilises the narrative conventions (coherence, continuity, wholeness, substance) in presenting a believable and adequate character to the Reader.

If we were to depict the nature of this relationship between The-I-as-Narrator and The-I-as-Character, it could be described as reflecting a degree of congruence between the two 'positions'. However, in Trevor's narrative, there is a significant tension between The-I-as-Narrator and The-I-as-Character. The Self-as-Narrator does not take the position of an omniscient Eye, as is congruent with the dominant convention. Instead, it sometimes offers a bitterly ironic commentary on the actions of the Self-as-character, actions which spring forth from the impossible romantic ideals which the Self-as-character is pursuing: "I tried to move quickly away from G, and find the archetypal woman with whom I would live ecstatically ever after." He mocks his own hopelessly grandiose dreams as follows: "...perhaps I wanted recognition as the philosopher who had discovered all the secrets of god and life, time and space". Sometimes this biting sarcasm from the Self-as-narrator is also aimed at other figures in the tale, for example, "A few months later, in May 1991, I consulted a psychiatrist. He said some interesting things, and reviewed some of my writings. Having diagnosed hypergraphia, the clever chap, he proceeded to prescribe anti-depressants". Instead of 'supporting' The-I-as-Character, The-I-as-Narrator ridicules and undermines The-I-as-Character throughout the text. There is virtually no congruence or overlap between these two I-positions.

The I-as-Narrator's voice is prominent in the text, he makes numerous interpretations, especially of a quasi-psychological nature. His dialogue with the reader is therefore prominently foregrounded. It results in a highly Self-conscious presentation of the Self. However, instead of alienating the Reader from the-
I-as-Character, The-I-as-Narrator successfully involves the Reader — in fact, through his disarmingly honest, transparent, frank style of narration, he seduces the Reader all the more to feel a great deal of empathy for the hapless and vulnerable Anti-hero in his monumental struggle for meaning through a reunion with the Other.

However, thanks to the ironic voice of the Self-as-narrator, the story only barely escapes the description of 'tragedy'. From time to time the Narrator makes a comment which disrobes and dismantles the 'tragic' figure of the Self-as-character to reveal his melodramatic playfulness and vulnerability. He does not believe his own parody as Tragic Hero fighting against impossible odds and deconstructs him as fast as he creates him. The Self-as-Character is treated as a shifting set of flimsy and sometimes melodramatic constructions which are held together only very tenuously. For example, he describes his mother's death in the following manner: "My mother died at age 75. This is an event that is remarkable in that it did not upset me, as far as I knew". This event gains significance in an inverted sort of way — it is signified by the absence of significance. The phrase "as far as I knew" is an example of how the Self-as-narrator treats the Self-as-character as an object, as an externalised figure whose meanings are not accessible to even himself, almost as if his Self is also an Other from which it is alienated.

His presentation of the so-called Kundalini experience is another example of his alienation from himself. He describes it as if from a distance, almost as if he treats himself as an object under observation. He juxtaposes formulations of certainty side by side with statements which undermine that certainty again almost immediately: "Regardless of my speculations as to what has caused this Kundalini experience, that it has occurred as a specific event is the surest thing in
my whole life". His assertions about the verity of the experience, his certainty about its exceptional nature is repeated so often in the text that, paradoxically, it reveals his own uncertainty about its significance. He invests so much energy in the attempts to convince his audience, that it flips over into the opposite meaning. In this instance particularly we are reminded of Lacan's notion that the use of a signifier (here taken to be the assertion and affirmation of profound meaning and transcendence) often leads to an awareness of lack and absence (Jefferson & Robey, 1985). The subject, and particularly the reader, becomes aware of the alienation from what was originally represented. Therefore, viewed as an example of how he presents and manages his Self interpersonally, the discourse about this experience, (centrally placed as it is in the self-narrative) does not quite succeed.

Trevor provides the reader with a glimpse into the interpersonal context of this experience. He was in love with L, a woman at work. "As to L's role in all this, I know she admired me and thought me intelligent. It seems amazing that someone else respecting me in this way could be sufficient cause for this transformative experience to have occurred. Perhaps there were other reasons as well." He mentions other reasons: in Eastern mysticism such an experience is viewed as an experience of illumination. He also thought it heralded the reintegration of the separate parts of his personality. He describes it as a kind of rebirth: "It was as if I ... came to life for the first time". But he adds another, very interesting reason, namely: "The novelty of this experience made me unique; not only intrinsically, but also in my capitalising on it to try to achieve an even greater identity than the one I already had". Therefore he presents some traditional explanations based on Eastern mysticism, another explanation based on popular psychological notions, and an interpersonally useful explanation, which he presented to L in their romantic
conversations. The presentation of multiple clarifications can be seen as an invitation to the Reader to decide which is the most suitable explanation. He therefore relinquishes his right as omniscient Author/Interpreter and gives the Reader the chance to complete the process of interpreting the experience.

Moreover, it seems that an important aspect of the experience for him is how it defines him interpersonally; he is unusually conscious of the impact which this experience makes on others. He presents this experience to others as if to obtain their affirmation of the experience — as if to legitimise it for himself.

However, it is not only the experiences of the I-as-Character that is depicted as alienating and insubstantial. He creates insubstantial characters and relationships throughout the text: He depicts his parental figures as insubstantial figures who could and were 'replaced' by 'surrogates' from time to time: "When I was in standard five, my parents went on long leave overseas and we had a Mrs Ross stay with us as a kind of hired mother. ... My eldest brother choked me off as if he were my father. I came to respect him as a kind of father image, and he came to respect me a lot less. I was twelve years old, he was nineteen." Elsewhere he mentions a rejecting experience with his father and concludes: "I was quite prepared to say to him, 'Go — and find another son!'" Another example of the apparent interchangeability of characters is the following: "I left the meeting at which my boss, B, had made a faux pas on my behalf, early, and went home". This suggests that others (like his boss) could represent him, speak on his behalf.

The discourse of the Romantic Self

There are two major literary conventions with regard to depicting a character:
the Romantic discourse of an entire and unique Self which is striving for and guided by the ideals of self-fulfillment and self-actualisation; of "people [who] are their personalities with no remainder" (Potter et al., 1984, p. 139). These Selves are depicted like characters from a Dickens novel who portray and manifest their disposition as a consistent continuity, as the sum of a unique set of determining traits (Potter et al., 1984).

the discourse of the Post-Modernist fragmented Self, the dissolved ego, of the alienated, inauthentic and disintegrated consciousness (Potter et al., 1984).

Both participants in this study base their descriptions of Self on Modernist assumptions which reflect the predominant codes and conventions of consistency of personality traits across time. In producing their self-narratives they are guided by cultural discourses of Self which require the characters to show consistent characteristics and dispositions across different situations and which endure throughout a lifetime. This is a convention which is used to provide a character with coherence, to give it the illusion of a centre that can hold it together. However, as I have pointed out before, their characterisations have not escaped the influence of the Post-Modernism. But before we take a closer look at how these different sociocultural trends are manifested, we need to examine the conventions regarding the Romantic Self, a common form of Modernist Self.

According to Potter et al. (1984, p. 155) there are two forms of Romantic Selves: One which they call a "natural, authentic, impulsive" Self which is in "mystic, harmonious union with nature". This discourse contains ideas such as "one can find one's true Self only once one has relinquished the inhibitions created by culture". Only then will one experience one's "natural, wholesome instinctual and unconscious nature".
other form of Romantic self-fulfillment is the volitional Romantic Self or the "willed self that one deliberately creates out of the wreckage of the cultural debris which clutters up the psyche" (Potter et al., 1984, p. 155). In this discourse one has to overcome a number of impediments before attaining a proper Self.

The two forms of Romantic Selves differ primarily in terms of how much effort and control it entails to create and sustain the Self. Obviously the 'natural Romantic Self' requires very little effort or concentration, since spontaneity and 'simply being' is emphasised. Once one has demonstrated the courage to let go of 'civilised restrictions', one achieves an 'authentic' Self. The other form of Romantic Self, in contrast, requires hard work in order to construct and arrange the different essences and elements which should be artfully combined so as to ensure the attainment of a self-actualised future.

Cohen and Taylor (1978) point out a strange irony with regard to this process of self-construction. Each person is required to assemble an individualistic, unique identity from elements which are, in fact, culturally shared codes: Idiosyncratic modes of presenting a public Self, leisure activities, material objects, musical styles, clothes, and so forth. They describe the difficulties and paradoxes which ensue as people attempt to elude the 'collective mythology' (Cohen & Taylor, 1978) in their search for a unique Self, only to choose elements which will soon also become 'cultural clichés' (Cohen & Taylor, 1978). This search is doomed to be stuck in a self-perpetuating, self-deluding, self-eluding vicious circle.

Literary examples of The Romantic Self abound: One example is Joseph Conrad's character, Kurtz, in Heart of darkness (1981). The romantic aspect of Kurtz's nature is emphasised through its
juxtaposition with the character, Marlowe, an inhibited, civilised Englishman. Kurtz, who has relinquished the trappings, conventions and moral codes of society in order to explore his darker nature, manages to win the respect of Marlowe, despite his savage ways. Kurtz is portrayed as having the courage to explore this aspect of human nature which we all share. He achieves a kind of authenticity through the expression of that which lies below the veneer of civilisation.

Other depictions of the Romantic Self are more positive, less instinctual. There are discourses in which the Self discovers a more natural and authentic Self through mystical experiences. This occurs when the individual achieves a peak experience which is brought about by a special quality of awareness during fatigue, drugs or meditative contemplation. Examples of these experiences can be found in the works of Maslow (1968), Castaneda (1973) and Lilly (1973). These peak experiences are usually inexpressible, indescribable. They reunite the individual with a 'cosmic force' or 'primal scource of harmony' found in all things in the universe, while simultaneously reaffirming the individual's uniqueness and wholeness. This type of discourse divides people into those who are able to 'get in touch with' their mystical fountainhead, and those who cannot, who are confined to experiencing only the mundane and the trivial.

A similar kind of cosmic harmony is depicted in the novels of Virginia Woolf and D H Lawrence. It is particularly vivid in D H Lawrence's work where the union is experienced as something organic as well as spiritual or mystical. Typically the setting is rustic: A simple man or woman lives in atunement with his or her environment. Embedded in the wholesomeness of nature, the person experiences the turmoil of subterranean forces in his or her innermost being which is the prerequisite for the emergence of the individual's 'real' or 'true' Self.
Volitional romantic self-discourses follow a different course: They require a more laborious process of self-investigation and self-disclosure. The prototypes of these discourses in literature frequently involve characters who struggle through the problems of social and inner pressures and restrictions. After many painful experiences they discover their 'own' 'authentic' identity. Especially if the young child is exposed to damaging interpersonal patterns, the Self becomes obscured behind layers of neuroticism. The person has to gradually relinquish the distorted Self and discover his or her 'authentic' and 'real' Self through therapy, political reorientation, social movements, or just through life itself. This process is always depicted as an arduous journey: There are several pitfalls and delusions along the way. In some versions the 'real Self' is never actually discovered, the person merely moves toward a series of approximations of the 'authentic' Self. Counterparts in psychology are found in the texts of the humanists such as Rogers (1961) and the neo-Freudians, for example, Horney (1950).

Both these forms of discourses of the Romantic Self appear in the two self-narratives in this study. At different junctures in the two tales, either one or the other form is emphasised. One of the most fascinating aspects of Freda's self-narrative is the way in which she consciously incorporates artefacts from Romantic cultural discourses in her composition of her Self.

Even though the fragmented, dislocated, dispossessed Self predominates in Trevor's self-narrative, he still advocates and strives for the ideal of the entire and unique Romantic Self, which possesses exceptional powers and which has exceptional experiences. For example, he recounts the previously mentioned Kundalini experience which occurred at a crucial juncture in his relationship with his ex-wife, as giving him the impetus and justification he needed to separate from her. He describes the
experience as though it were orchestrated by his unconscious, thus invoking the uncontaminated, more authentic, romantic part of his Self: "The scene was set, I think, for my subconscious mind to generate the most significant transformative experience in my life — the kundalini experience, probably intended specifically to boost me out of the marriage, which my unconscious mind had no apparent intention of doing". Further on he states: "It seemed as if my subconscious mind was doing all the talking, and what it said wasn't nice".

Thus the manner in which he presents the Kundalini experience appears to be coherent with his strong desire to live up to the ideal of a unique and exceptional Self. However, instead of depicting the subsequent Self in a more positive light, in other words in coherence with the romantic ideal of a more integrated and fulfilled Post-Kundalini Self (which would lend legitimacy to the authenticity of the experience), the Self which he continues to portray is as hapless, alienated, and confused as before. Thus he not only undermines the romantic ideal as a plot and framework of the narrative, but he transgresses a fundamental narrative convention.

It is clear from the above deconstruction of Trevor's self-narrative that the Self which he presents reveals a number of cultural and ideological influences. Trevor's self-narrative reveals many examples of essentialist assumptions about the Self, thus linking it firmly to the Modernist tradition. The influence of Modernism can also be seen in the narrative structures and conventions which were used in the depiction of the Self as character. However Trevor's self-narrative also contains aspects of the Post-Modernist characterisation of the Self. In the next section I shall examine the Self as inscribed by the Other.
Trevor relates a brief period during his early childhood in which he "was happy; life was sweet". Again at the 'second beginning' of his narrative, he describes his relationship with his mother in terms of a perfect union. He describes himself as being "cheeky" towards her. This suggests that he felt secure in the knowledge that he would not be punished by her. It conveys the idea of perfect acceptance by her, of acting in the security of knowing that he is cherished.

This is reminiscent of Lacan's idea of the Imaginary phase when the young child has a sense of perfect union between the inner/outer dimensions of his/her being, a unity with the figure at the centre of the identification process during the Imaginary stage, the mother. There is no discrepancy between his experiences of himself and how he is reflected in his mother's face (symbolic of the Mirror) at this stage. Thus the child misrecognises its reflection for itself. So even during this seemingly idyllic stage, misrecognition lies at the heart of identity -- a false sense of wholeness and unity which barely camouflages the already-present alienation.

However, this illusion of harmony is of short duration: At the end of the Imaginary stage the child's sense of union and wholeness is destroyed since he/she reacts to the Self as an opponent (the child identifies with its own body as if it were a figure external to the Self; the Self becomes its own rival). This causes a sense of discord, distress, and anxiety which permeates all subsequent experiences. In Lacan's terms the ego therefore becomes an imaginary structure whose goal is to deny and repress at all costs the absence and lack at the centre of its own origin (Dean, 1992). Therefore it is only through repression that the illusion of wholeness and authenticity can be upheld.
In Trevor's narrative this painful emergence of the separate and alienated Self is poignantly portrayed: "One day [Mother] exploded in anger, shouting at me that I should stop it. This happened in the presence of my brothers. It had a profound effect on me, as if from that moment in time, I realised that I wasn't protected by her anymore. I had to please her rather than just expect unconditional love." (It is extraordinary that he has virtually no response to her actual death, many years later—perhaps for him she 'died' symbolically when he was four years old? However, a few months after her death he reports having an intense and, for him, profound spiritual experience (Kundalini), which can be viewed as the reunion with the (M)Other in the spiritual realm.)

This traumatic separation opens up a chasm which Trevor attempts to undo from that time onwards. The rest of his self-narrative can be summarised as a series of painful attempts to heal this divide between his perception of himself as adequate and lovable versus the presumed reflection from others that he is unworthy of their acceptance. The very next episode he describes is the first in a long sequence of rejections: "I wanted to be popular and could not understand why I had not been invited to Lorry Bean's birthday party, to which almost half the class had been invited. I gate-crashed the party, and was allowed to stay although I was reminded that I had not been invited." The next episode is another example of the discrepancy between his own sense of worth and that which was reflected back to him by others: "I was puzzled at not having been chosen as a prefect in grade ii". He acknowledges the pervasiveness of the theme of loss and discrepancy in his life and announces it as follows: "These experiences set the scene for the rest of my life, in that I would forever be wanting recognition and not getting it".

But the ego undergoes another repression during the Symbolic stage: After the Imaginary stage the child forms an
identification with the father as a symbolic figure who represents language, social institutions and structures. In other words, he represents the cultural discourses on norms and values. During this stage the child is expected to repress his/her sexuality and to sublimate the inevitable aggression which the child feels toward the figure of identification. Thus the child enters the social order and becomes inscribed by the social relations which are typical in his/her particular culture. The Self therefore becomes constituted through the dominant discourses about being a Self in a particular society.

Such was the process by which the Self emerged and became conscious of itself in Trevor's narrative — it led to the inscription of the Other in the Self in a very specific manner: The devaluation that he experienced from others became reciprocal. In other words he started devaluing others. In time he developed an apparently stable set of codes which appeared to guide his functioning which took the shape of "an outcast, a rebel, and a heretic" (his description). The identity of Rebel, Outcast and Heretic resolves the tension created by:

* his need for acceptance
* his rejection by others (selectively reported as it is)
* his distress, anger, and refusal to accept their view of him.

Thus he creates a particular discourse with others about his acceptance/rejection. This discourse appears to follow a popular plot line of increasing severity — the Self-as-character is depicted as bravely struggling against others' negative perceptions of him, attempting in vain to prove his worth and to gain their respect. If one accepts the apparent coherence of the story line of increasing severity, one can see a crucial turning point when, at the beginning of Standard 7, he started to internalise or introject the negative view which Others had of
him: "The family was involved in a car accident in which my mother's face ended up being very badly scarred. My father had driven into a stationary car in front of him. Kevin, the middle brother, told me that I had pushed the passenger seat that my mother was sitting in from behind, and that was why she had hit her head on the windshield. Of course it was the momentum that did it. I was guilty anyway." From that time he waged a battle against the Internalised Other who had now become entrenched as part of his presentation of himself.

Trevor's self-narrative can be regarded as the depiction of an alienated Self, teetering between humiliation and ridicule on the one hand, and a Self who is nevertheless striving to gain recognition for his uniqueness and exceptional status as an intellectual and philosopher. It is important to note, however, that Trevor's self-narrative was written at a midway point in the therapeutic process, while Freda's autobiography was written at the conclusion of therapy. Although no conclusive ending or final perspective is possible in an autobiography of a person who is still alive, Freda's self-narrative has a more 'satisfying' conclusion in the sense that it is more 'complete'. She reports that the process of writing this self-narrative had the function of reappraising herself in terms of the past and the future. The author's vista in this story is therefore wider, more encompassing than in Trevor's tale — his perspective of his life is limited by his struggle to attain a position from which he could determine the meanings about his life. Most often it is Others who define (and therefore limit) him. Trevor has not yet attained full 'authorship' of his life story (Heidegger, 1967).

Freda's Story

(See Appendix II for Freda's self-narrative.)

Freda's self-narrative contains many dichotomies and dualities
which could be regarded as conflicting ideologies. First there is the dichotomy between conventionality and marginality. Her family belonged to a church which is regarded as not belonging to mainstream religious groups. The strict code of conduct which was enforced by the church further marginalised the parishioners in the wider community. The ideology of marginalisation was further entrenched by her father who was a minister in the church. It is therefore not altogether surprising that Freda selected her first boyfriends from this church community, and later on from other marginalised groups (e.g. Portuguese, Polish, Hungarian, and Black). She tended to avoid the normative and conventional in her relationships but thereby invoked precisely that which she presumed to be absent. This will be elaborated on in a later section.

There are many discontinuities or dichotomies in her depiction of herself: Throughout the text there are references to herself as both Madonna-like (virginal, pure, passive, feminine) and sexually initiating, active, dominant; as both shy and bossy; as popular or desireable as well as inadequate and rejected; as submissive towards her father and rebellious towards her mother.

Another dichotomy is that of rebellion and oppression: During her adolescence her rebellion and anger against her mother resulted in harsh, physically and emotionally abusive discipline by her mother. Later on she also rebelled against her father's (and, later, her partners') double standards for men and women with regard to sexual behaviour. But she could not sustain the defiant position of rebellion; she frequently succumbed to the oppression of the discourse of male dominance over women. Her struggle to liberate herself from the categorisations and meanings which men impose on her is a long and arduous one.
The above is merely an introduction to many other examples of a self-definition through exclusions, oppositions, and omissions. Freda's self-narrative therefore does not present a whole, saturated Self or a sum of personality configurations. Her Self is almost entirely colonised by the Other. Her depiction of herself is an example of what Clifford (1978, p. 52) calls a self-narrative of 'trans-individual occasions'. Her identity can be described as a "sequence of culturally patterned relationships, a forever incomplete complex of occasions to which a name has been affixed, a permeable body composed and decomposed through the continual relations of participation and opposition" (Clifford, 1978, pp. 53-54).

Characterisation of the Self

Embeddedness

Freda's narrative exemplifies a Self which is almost entirely inscribed by others. In this aspect her self-narrative conforms to the pattern found in many women's life histories. In Chapter 4 Bertaux-Wiame (1981) referred to women's autobiographies as stories of relatedness — they are communal stories.

The communality of Freda's story is most vividly evident in how long it takes her to introduce herself in the story. She preludes her own story with the stories of (in the exact sequence):
- her paternal grandfather
- her paternal grandmother (short)
- her father
- her maternal grandparents
- her mother
- her brother
- her sister.
Her own story begins only on Page 7 of her text. Even at that point, she starts her own story by briefly recapping her parents' histories. Even when she does eventually recount the events in her own life, she uses relational descriptions very frequently. Her self-narrative 'opens up' to include the stories of several other people -- a story of interlocking lives, one embedded in the other. In Gilligan's (1982, p. 6) words: "It all goes back, of course, to Adam and Eve -- a story which shows, among other things, that if you make a woman out of a man, you are bound to get into trouble. In the life cycle, as in the Garden of Eden, the woman has been the deviant". Gilligan (1982) proposes that it is because the masculine pattern of development has been regarded as the blueprint for all human development, that concepts or characteristics like 'relatedness', 'dependence', 'embeddedness', 'affiliation', and 'responsibility and concern for others' are actually regarded as a failure to develop to one's full potential or to reach one's full maturity and individuality. According to Gilligan (1982) there are two ideological 'voices' or clusterings:

- justice, rights, abstract principles, autonomy.
- compassion, care, concrete responsibilities to others.

These two views may exist in both males and females, but males are more likely to interpret success and failure in terms of autonomy whereas for women success depends on how adequately they have negotiated the bonds of interdependence in their relationships. Gilligan (1982) warns that the predominantly male interpretation should not be regarded as the more mature ideal -- both these patterns are equally valid expressions of maturity. They merely represent two different discourses. Male prototype patterns of functioning are regarded as preferable only within
the broader ideology which predominates in patriarchal societies.

The notion of embeddedness is exemplified in several different ways in Freda's self-narrative: It is best illustrated in the issue of names. In her account she pauses to trace the origin of her name. Typically, however, she starts with the naming of another, in this case, her mother, who was named after her paternal grandmother. This led to trouble between Freda's mother and grandmother, since Freda's grandmother redirected her negative feelings regarding her husband's family (who apparently treated her as lower in social standing in relation to themselves) to her daughter (Freda's mother) by mocking her about her name! So strong was the power of the name, that Freda's mother later changed her name. The name was so potent that it invoked a complex set of feelings and attitudes in the relationship between Freda's mother and grandmother. It stood for, and symbolically represented the entire relationship. The plot of Freda's self-narrative is introduced and encapsulated in this seemingly insignificant aside: Freda was named after this disgruntled grandmother who tormented her own daughter by equating her name with what her in-laws stood for. The theme of the transference of relationship patterns across generations and across individual boundaries is one of the ways in which the embeddedness manifests itself. Some of the collective family meanings which were generated regarding her maternal grandmother (mostly negative ones) became part of the network of meanings regarding Freda. By naming Freda after herself, Freda's mother could perpetuate the feud between her and her mother into the next generation. Predictably, the set of expectations which accompanied the naming and the history which it invoked, set the scene for Freda's turbulent relationship with her mother. But more of this relationship later.
The above is an example of how the Self can be viewed as a particular position in a symbolic order. The Self becomes the receptacle of collective meanings from the past. Therefore the concept of 'heredity' should not be limited to the level of biology (i.e. the transmission of genetic material) — it also refers to the transmission of meanings regarding a person's position in a social-symbolic order within a patriarchal system.

The Romantic Self

In Freda's self-narrative (as in Trevor's) the two forms of the Romantic Self (i.e. the natural and the volitional Romantic Self) are clearly present. The first part of her characterisation of herself conforms mostly to the natural Romantic Self, whereas the latter part of her story reveals aspects of the volitional Romantic Self. The change in the format of these two Modernist discourses of the Self occurs after her suicide attempt: After this event she undertakes a slow and deliberate attempt to rebuild herself, guided to a large extent by the process of therapy. However, this division of Freda's self-narrative into these two versions of the Romantic Self is somewhat oversimplified. While there is a clear process of shedding the ideology of the church and a return to a more uncontaminated natural Self in the first part of her self-narrative, this process simultaneously contains elements of the volitional Self: Freda reconstructs a new Self in a rather conscious and deliberate manner from selected aspects of the Alternative Pop culture of the sixties and seventies. Thus these two forms of the Romantic Self cannot be entirely separated in this self-narrative.

In the first phase of the natural Romantic Self, Freda rebels against the imposition of the church's values and norms which had formed part of her Self throughout her childhood. She replaces these with a Self constructed from the cultural
artefacts which she encounters outside her home environment. It is interesting to note that this process focusses very specifically on her depiction of herself as a woman. This particular emphasis on her femininity probably developed from a heightened sensitivity to masculine and feminine discourses which stem from her relational context in which patriarchal values and norms were particularly dominant.

Freda was in contact with two dominant ideologies regarding femininity: One ideology was represented by her parents and the other she acquired through her contact with the different social and cultural niches in her environment. Predictably, her identification is not with her mother, but with the female heroines in the books she read and figures from the Pop culture of the sixties and seventies.

Her mother's behaviour as a woman was strongly coloured by the rules laid down by their church and by Freda's father. Sexuality is devalued by the church and therefore adornments, fashionable clothes, and other attempts to beautify oneself, were strictly prohibited. Because these prohibitions were primarily propagated by her mother, mother and daughter had frequent confrontations around this issue. This pattern became particularly intense during adolescence when her mother disapproved strongly of her explorations of conventional femininity, for example, shaving her legs and varnishing her nails.

The images which provided Freda with fictions for a Self came from the books of the Bronté's and D.H. Lawrence, amongst others. At 13 she is so deeply touched by the plot of obsessive and passionate, but frustrated and thwarted love, that she read Wuthering Heights six times! She incorporates romantic love as one of her primary goals in life which lays the foundation for a future which is narrated in a manner which strongly resembles the plotlines of the novels she had read — tragically thwarted
romantic love. Thus her identity is formed by the omission of what her mother stood for. In this process she systematically sheds all the influences of the church. The void left by this omission, is promptly filled by heroines from selected texts which proceed to have a dominant influence on the course of the rest of her life.

She therefore actively constructs a Self out of the artefacts of her literary milieu during adolescence. Later on at university, she incorporates the elements of hippie culture into her presentation of herself: She wears the long flowing cheesecloth dresses which were typical of that era, she meditates, wears black lipstick and nail varnish and John Lennon sunglasses. The music and the poetry of that cultural revolution had a strong impact on her consciousness, more so because of her already strongly entrenched sense of idealism and romanticism. The music of Janis Joplin with its searing intensity and despair expresses her barely disguised sense of rebellion, anger, loneliness, and her identification with an unconventional lifestyle.

Still later on she develops a fascination with Marilyn Monroe, whose life story resembles her own to such an extent that it would be reasonable to speculate that she was also incorporated as a role model — they share features such as naughtiness, vulnerability, setting themselves up in relationships with men as sex objects, experiences of being simultaneously adored and exploited by men, intense despair which ultimately leads to suicide, or in Freda's case to a serious suicide attempt.

She is highly selective and specific about the imagoes ('real' or literary) from whom she constructs a Self. Like a montage of images or a pastiche poster, she collects and combines certain features of other Selves and presents this combination to the world. In one of our discussions about my interpretation of her
self-narrative, Freda added a few more names to the ones she had mentioned in the text:

Zelda Scott-Fitzgerald, who was a colourful, but extreme, disturbed person who spent a large part of her life in an asylum;

Edith Piaf, the French singer, who was a very intense and passionate person, and although she was promiscuous, she never became the victim of her relationships with men;

Simone de Beauvoir, the emancipated French feminist writer who focussed her entire life on Jean-Paul Sartre; and

Anaïs Nin, a French novelist and sexually emancipated woman who was obsessed with relatedness.

Although she rejects the kind of woman whom her mother represents (submissive, passive, dependent, and 'boring') these features play a role even in their absence. She is never free from the desire for recognition by the Other, the first of which (in the succession of figures of identification or misrecognition) is the Mother. In Jameson's (1977, p. 367) words: "a previously biological instinct must undergo an alienation to a fundamentally communicational or linguistic relationship — that of the demand of the Other — in order to find satisfaction". Thus the Self is formed through the absence of the Other, in this specific case, the Mother.

However her father problematises her identification with these fictional figures by communicating two mutually exclusive messages about her femininity to her: As the representative of the values and principles of their church for their community and therefore for his family, he has to endorse the prohibitions regarding physical attractiveness. Yet, when she starts dating a
boy at the age of 14, he conveys his relief about her ability to engage the attentions of the young male and confesses that he had feared that she might never develop any sex appeal. He also comments on her (typically adolescent) self-consciousness and clumsiness in the company of boys. She reacts very strongly to this confusing message from her father: The illusion of being fully accepted by him is shattered. Her father endorsed the dominant male ideology regarding womanhood: The paradoxical dual imago of woman as Madonna and as Sex Object.

This theme is repeated in almost every one of her relationships with men. The pattern is originally strengthened by the fact that her first boyfriends are from her church community. Predictably, they are simultaneously attracted to her and respectful towards her (the latter especially so, since she is the daughter of their minister). She responds negatively to this idealisation by men and regards it as sexual rejection and moral condemnation.

She is immobilised and trapped in this acutely ambivalent ideology, not because she accepts it, but because she, as a woman, cannot transcend it. Even though relatedness is still a primary need, she experiences the conventional features of a love relationship (the traditional female passivity during courtship, the notion of 'belonging' to a male, etc.) as stifling and oppressive. She rejects the culturally dominant female stereotypes (e.g. submissiveness, passivity, dependence, chastity) and chooses to become sexually daring and uninhibited. Unfortunately her brave attempt to debunk the Madonna/Sex Object ideology does not succeed. She does not manage to transcend this image of herself successfully. Within the patriarchal system in which she lives women's meanings were inscribed by men. She cannot break through. Their meanings eventually supercede her own. They diminish and devalue her definition of herself as inappropriate, unproper. In a few cases, the men become so
intensely threatened by her demanding emotional appetites, that they become either emotionally abusive or impotent.

The Desire of the Other

In the words of Roudinesco (Dean, 1992, p. 49): "... human consciousness is formed through interaction with the desire of the other". Freda's self-narrative can be interpreted as a dramatic and near-tragic struggle to liberate herself from the Other, whose recognition she strongly desires, but cannot obtain. In this sense she tells a story of her struggle to free herself from the 'mirrors' which are "... at once the source of human slavery and human pleasure" (Dean, 1992, p. 52).

The first manifestation of the alienation which the Self undergoes in the struggle for recognition by the Other occurs early on in Freda's life, during the stage of narcissism which Lacan calls the Imaginary. During this stage (between 6 - 18 months) the Other is represented by the Mother who is the first figure whom the child identifies with. Misrecognising the image of its own reflection by the Mother/Mirror as its Self, the child experiences a Self which is unified and whole. However, the illusion of wholeness is soon shattered since the child identifies with its own body as an Other (a figure outside the self), thus becoming its own opponent. This gives rise to distress and aggression which, in Freda's case, is expressed towards the mother. In her self-narrative she recounts how she had allegedly refused her mother's breast and pushed her away when she tried to cuddle her. In the very same paragraph she recounts her jealousy of her younger brother, who became the subsequent target for her projected aggression. Thus at an early age an Other is placed at the centre where the Self is supposed to exist. So "... the ego [is] now an imaginary structure whose function was to resist at all costs the absence at its origins" (Dean, 1992, p. 54). It is only through the
successful repression of the awareness of this absence that the illusion of unity, coherence and authenticity can be achieved.

The second significant identification occurs during the Symbolic Stage when Freda turns to her father as the patriarch, the representation of culture and the symbolic system, language, which forms and shapes the unconscious. It is through the identification with the Father that the child accepts and incorporates the normative demands of the culture. It requires of the child that it represses its sexuality and achieves sublimation, which enables the individual to live peacefully in the world of others.

Patriarchy

For Lacan (1986) patriarchy is the preferred social order because it was the symbolic vehicle through which language is transmitted. So deeply is this notion embedded in Western culture that in Indo-European languages the generic form is represented by the male and the female form is considered alien, Other (Dean, 1992). Patriarchal structures "expressed and facilitated the progressive evolution of humanity toward ever higher levels of civilization, in which men became increasingly gentle toward and respectful of women" (Dean, 1992, p. 85). (It is beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a critique of Lacan's position on this.) Freda's father exemplifies this kind of patriarchal influence — strong but benign and wise. Instead of behaving in a domineering manner toward women, he acts protectively, albeit patronizingly.

It is important to distinguish between the real person of the father and the symbolic Father — the imago which is constructed and maintained through social discourse. This symbolic Father operates as an agent of society's norms, values, sublimation and prohibition. It is through its identification with the symbolic
Father during the Oedipal phase that the child enters into the patriarchal system. Once again repression plays an important role in this process. The hostility and ambivalence which can be expected to surface in relation to the object of identification, is repressed and sublimated. Thus, one can gain access to the symbolic Father only through sublimation. No direct 'knowing' is possible.

Thus in the resolution of the Oedipal conflict, the child's true Self is accessible only when it is lost, repressed, barred. Furthermore, the Self's illusionary sense of unity with the Other has to be broken, the Self has to realise that its desire for the Other can never be satisfied. The child's entry into the symbolic world of social relations can therefore only be achieved through its acceptance of the chasm between Self and Other.

As mentioned earlier Freda was born into a patriarchal culture, particularised in a unique way in her family. The overarching context, that is, the ideologies regarding male and female roles in the South African culture perpetuate the social conventions which sustain this mode of family life. It is therefore not at all surprising that the male members' stories in the self-narrative precede those of the women in each generation. Even the organisation of the text therefore reflects the male-dominated hierarchical structure of the family.

Her father throws a big shadow over most of the characters in her story: His meanings, wishes, interpretations dominated not only her own life narrative, but those of his family of origin, especially his brother's. He adopts a sectarian religion which initially marginalises him in his own family, but they soon follow him into this church. He also interacts with his brother in such a way that he not only supports him when he experienced difficulties, but he behaves in ways which actually camouflaged
his brother's shortcomings. He writes a number of books himself, but publishes them under his and his brother's names. He uses the funds from the sale of the books to buy a farm which he transfers to his brother's name. But it is more than a farm which was transferred: It is almost as if he transfers some of his prominence and confidence to his brother. In this sense the boundaries between his and his brother's ego's became blurred. Once his brother coped better again, he proceeds separately with his own life again.

Naturally he is the pivotal figure in Freda's family. He is the dominant figure in the marriage relationship. She describes her mother as totally dependent on her father, as passive, naïve, a bit incompetent, as having poor coping skills, and as entirely dominated by him. Her father determines the meanings in the family. Freda relates to him through a haze of idealisation. His public image is very positive: He is regarded as charismatic, popular, and is revered for his wisdom, especially in his capacity as a minister in his church. For Freda there is no separation between his public and private personas. The public and private domains merge.

Her early relationship with him she describes as characterised by behaviour one usually associates with a child who knows she is adored and cherished. She even describes herself as quite flirtatious towards him. She learns how to please him. This description evokes Freud's notion of the Electra complex. It invites one to speculate about an unsuccessful resolution of this psychosexual stage of development: Freda continues to feel a strong if somewhat ambiguous attachment to her father. She fails to sublimate her sexual feelings for him in order to identify with her mother. The failure of her identification with her mother is reflected in her problematic relationship with her mother, which remains so until, significantly, after her father's death. In Freud's theory the identification transfer of
the girl infant from the father to the mother is a prerequisite for both appropriate future sex role identification and the incorporation of the standards and conventions of the culture. This interpretation is tempting, since Freda certainly does not wish to conform to her mother's notions of femininity. However, unlike Freud who views the ego as emerging from the perception-consciousness system, or as governed by the reality principle, Lacan (1986) regards the ego as emerging from the repression of the misrecognition and subsequent self-alienation which originates during the Imaginary Stage. The Self emerges after it has acquired the "regulatory fictions" (Butler, 1990, p. 33) regarding how to be a Self which prevails in the particular culture through the acquisition of language during the Symbolic Stage.

The male/female ideology or regulatory fiction which emerges in Freda's self-narrative should not be regarded as representing the biological differences between men and women. It is maleness/femaleness as part of the relational-linguistic discourses which govern the social relations between men and women. It is the unequal distribution of power between men and women in social structures and institutions which she addresses in her self-narrative. Lacan regarded patriarchy as the anchor of cultural fictions regarding men and women (Dean, 1992, p. 96). We should, however, distinguish between the real father and the symbolic one or the "totem that effects sublimation" (Dean, 1992, p. 93) during the Symbolic stage. The father remains the "fundamental condition of normative identification, regardless of the foibles of real men, regardless of the lack of natural or scientific basis for his authority" (Dean, 1992, p. 93). Thus, the kind of patriarchy which Lacan refers to is the pervasive and systematic linguistic patterns which organise, maintain and perpetuate the relations between men and women.
Patriarchal family and marital structures form the ideological backdrop to her telling. The form of male authority (i.e. her struggle to obtain the recognition of her father and of each of her male partners in her story) which she describes in her self-narrative is not based on nature or physiological differences, but rather on cultural forms (e.g. language structures and social systems). Freda's self-narrative can be described as that of a woman who defines herself almost entirely through the linguistics of maleness. She experiences herself not as a point of reference, but as a receptacle of the meanings of the Male Other. In fact what she describes is a monumental struggle to liberate herself from the ever-postponed affirmation by the male-as-the-Other. Her Self is therefore always inaccessible, always repressed, deferred.

Ending and beginning

Whereas Freda's earlier life story opens up to include the lives of (predominantly!) her forefathers, her account of her life from the time she goes to university, is entirely equivalent with and totally inseparable from the story of her relationships with men. At this point her preoccupation with obtaining approval/disapproval is transferred from her father to other men, yet she is unable or unwilling to conform to the expected female role. Thus both the struggle and the outcome remain unaltered. The acceptance of these men is so pivotal in her definition of herself, that her sense of Self, her life, her future collapses totally when each relationship ends. The Self is almost totally dismantled each time her attempts at relatedness fail. This occurs so frequently that it creates a steeply descending plotline until she, driven by hopelessness and despair, attempts to take her life. Paradoxically, however, from this point onwards the plotline starts ascending again slowly, because she undertakes a deliberate reconstruction of her Self through therapy.
The paradox evident in the idiomatic expression 'take her life' is particularly relevant in the context of Freda's self-narrative. The conventional meaning of ending one's life is, in her story, not an end, but a beginning. It is the turning point in her story. Thus in this case 'take her life' can be interpreted as 'taking ownership of one's life'. She gives up a number of the less successful 'regulatory fictions' (Butler, 1990, p. 33) through which her life was constituted, (e.g. the patriarchal pattern of relatedness between men and women, a particular plotline of thwarted love as discussed earlier) in order to put together a new Self.

Yet unfortunately the Reader's anticipation of a 'happy ending' plot structure has to be frustrated .... The deliberate and self-conscious reconstruction which Freda undertakes occurs within the context of a therapeutic relationship (which is not an ideologically neutral context, no matter how much the therapist strives to remain neutral) in which she is exposed to the psychologically dominant conventions regarding how to be a Self, as expressed through her therapist (in this case, me). So, in fact, the reconstruction of her Self could be describes as the exchange of one set of 'regulatory fictions' for another.

Psychotherapists have obtained official 'license' to provide people with knowledge about their Selves. A person's ideas regarding their Selves are defined, demarcated, controlled and managed through the ideologies expressed in the field of knowledge called Psychology. In an addendum to her self-narrative Freda describes her experience of therapy in the terminology which she has acquired in therapy, that is, 'control', 'assertiveness', 'resistance', 'obsessive fixation', and so forth. These terms all rely on the Modernist assumption of a separate, coherent, bounded Self which is typical of the prevailing notions about Self in the field of Psychology.
Thus Freda's 'taking ownership' of her Self is an illusion. She places another Other at the core of the Self — thus continuing the process of repression and alienation, albeit in a subtle form. Through the interaction with the desire of the New Other, the therapist, a different awareness of Self emerges: It could probably even be argued that it is a more 'adaptive' Self, but the Modernist ideal of an emancipated, authentic, whole, and saturated Self cannot be achieved. The Self is still imprisoned by the mirrors it has constructed through its identification with the new Other. (We will examine the particular processes through which the Self is 'colonised' by psychological ideology in greater detail in the final chapter.) Freda's story thus illustrates how interlocked the struggle for so-called freedom and autonomy is with the ever-unsatisfied desire for recognition by the Other, which continues to perpetually displace the Self.

Conclusion

In this analysis I have examined how the Self is presented in autobiographical form. Autobiography is shown to be one of the many codes which are available in our society to 'authenticate' a Self, it is a set of conventions within which one is provided with the opportunity to display a Self which is coherent, consistent, unified, and real. There is nothing in the phenomenology of experience which validates our experiences as authentic. It is not an assertion or claim of truth or a personal history as it really was. Instead autobiography (or any other everyday telling of ourselves to others) provides us with an opportunity to validate our Selves publicly. Autobiography is a socially constructed narrative code which is used to validate the author's theory of Self (a code through which the author constructs and organises his or her beliefs, plans, feelings, actions, as well as attributions, explanations, and justifications for all the foregoing).
It was the intention to provide a fine-grained analysis of the many different codes and conventions which are used in methods of situational self-characterisation, to study the construction and organisation of self-discourses. The two self-narratives which I examined in this chapter illustrate that the concept of Self is a set of meanings which are coordinated and negotiated within a socio-cultural context. Thus in these two self-narratives the authors have depicted decentred Selves which can be regarded as positions in a symbolic order (Lacan, 1986) rather than as seamless, whole unities which are stable across time and context.

In the next chapter I will conclude the ideas which have been developed so far by applying them to the field of psychology, and in particular, to the context of psychotherapy. The different ideologies which form part of the therapeutic context will be examined and deconstructed in order to consider how they influence the clients' depiction of their Selves.
CHAPTER 7
FROM CENTRIPETAL TO CENTRIFUGAL MEANINGS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

Introduction

As psychology emerges from the Modernist-empiricist era it faces the enormous challenge of reflexively re-examining its own premises and practices in terms of the Post-Modernist movement. Such a re-examination requires the uneasy process of moving away from those 'truths' which had, until recently, created the illusion of certainty for psychologists. It requires a reappraisal of precisely those concepts which we have taken for granted until now. The Self is one of those taken-for-granted concepts which served as a receptacle for numerous Modernist assumptions about human experience. In Chapter 1 I stated my intention to produce a reconceptualisation of the concept of Self which is more coherent with the current Post-Modernist ideas. From the preceding chapters it should have become clear that such a reconceptualisation requires a radical departure from our traditional views regarding identity.

In this, the concluding chapter, I wish to start with a brief overview of the main themes of the study so far, before I examine the influence of power and ideology on the intersubjective creation of meaning. In the final section of this chapter I will conclude with recommendations for transforming the discourses and practices of psychotherapy in accordance with the shift towards Post-Modernism.

An overview

As we have seen in the analysis of the two self-narratives in the previous chapter, the twentieth century Self has been described primarily in the vocabulary of Romanticism and
Modernism (Gergen, 1991). The Romantic conceptualisation of Self emerged from the nineteenth century and was characterised by the ideal personal qualities of passion, self-fulfilment, uniqueness, and self-actualisation. However, with the advent of Modernism, roughly in the first part of the twentieth century, these notions of Self were challenged by a new vocabulary: reason, rationality, conscious intentions, beliefs and opinions. Thus individuals' experience of themselves were shaped and constrained by the languages of Romanticism and Modernism. But now, towards the end of the twentieth century the conventions, codes and discourses which have supported these ideas of Self, are being relativised by Post-Modernism.

Instead of replacing Romantic and Modernist assumptions about Self, Post-Modernism proposes the free expression of multiple discourses and frameworks, while acknowledging that they are mere representations of Selves, and not a reflection of the true nature of people's identities. For the Post-Modernists the "vocabularies of personhood are less mirrors of truth than they are means of relating" (Gergen, 1991, p. 247).

When paradigm shifts occur, the metaphors through which their theories are expressed (e.g. the earth was viewed as a magnet, the heart as a pump, light as a wave, the brain as a computer, the space as a balloon) also change (Geertz, 1983). In psychology, as in those other social sciences which have moved away from reductionistic and mechanistic views, the new metaphors are derived from the domain of culture, i.e. from the theatre, the visual arts, literary theory, and literature. But whenever paradigm shifts occur, the representations of the Self are also altered: While narrative theory may not fully deserve the description of a paradigm, it has made a valuable contribution to the current debate on the representation of reality in scientific fields. The depiction of humans as homo narrans has provided an alternative to the model of rationality.
which has dominated Western thought since the time of Descartes. There is a clear departure from the representation of individuals as "simply in society as objects are in boxes" (Morley, in Stringer et al., 1984, p. 139) towards representations of a person as "like a stone in a wall or a drop in a stream through which the energies of the whole pass" (Musil, in Stringer et al., 1984, p. 139).

Thus Post-Modernism frees the Self from the narrow constraints of the previous systems of representation of Self and encourages the free interplay of discourses. It is acknowledged that reality cannot be represented directly or objectively, hence narrative is preferred as a useful metaphor for the representation of reality instead of empiricism. According to Paré (1995, p. 7) "if the modernist is an engineer guided by the laws of science, the postmodernist is a storyteller inspired by the imagination".

It is recognised that there is an unstable relationship between words and that which they signify. As I demonstrated in the self-narratives of Trevor and Freda, the Self is created through narratives in language and should therefore be regarded as a domain in which intersubjectivities meet, rather than as a set of discrete, coherent, and continuous personality traits. In the words of Clifford (1978, pp. 53-54) the Self is a "sequence of culturally patterned relationships, a forever incomplete complex of occasions to which a name has been affixed, a permeable body composed and decomposed through the continual relations of participation and opposition". Moreover, human experience cannot be seen as existing separately from the realm of language, culture, and ideology.

The concepts one uses to describe the Self open up a particular set of possibilities as well as constraints for experiencing one's identity and for participating in interpersonal
relationships. In the Modernist framework it would, for example, entail organising relationships in hierarchies, having expectations of progress, building for the future, using science as an explanatory basis for the world. A different example can be found in Freda's self-narrative: Her experience of her Self was profoundly shaped and limited by the moral codes of her church community and by patriarchal norms. In Trevor's case the Modernist framework of success/failure kept him perpetually locked into dichotomous experiences which he described in the same terms. However, such frameworks cannot be regarded as true or superior to other frameworks, instead they are "potentials" or "cultural life-forms that possess internal coherence and a local validity" (Gergen, 1991, p. 247).

Any attempts to restrict people's choice of frameworks is to limit their scope for relating. Post-Modernists endeavour to prevent any totalitarian domination of single discourses, for example, in politics and education. They promote the coexistence of different discourses to ensure that the widest possible reservoir of potential solutions which are made possible by different frameworks, are available to a society.

In Chapter 4 I referred to Bakhtin's (1981) notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces in society. Modernist discourses act as centripetal forces since they result in the suppression of our essential struggle against "the given and already determined in language, a struggle which is an attempt to assert our own meanings against the matrix of already codified meanings lying in wait for us" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.272). Post-Modernism promotes centrifugal discourses which celebrate diversity and complexity, and which are neither scholarly nor authoritarian, but which embody local wisdom and are intuitively persuasive.
As the Modernist preoccupation with singular truths, with machine metaphors for depicting people and society, with narratives of relentless progress recedes, greater value is attached to local cultures, marginalised truths, and unusual traditions. Human patterning in all its splendid diversity emerges more fully. In architecture there is a preference for regionalism (incorporating local designs in structures, instead of striving to represent the International Style of Modernism). In the visual and performing arts there is an emergence of localised ethnic values and views, or tribalism, and on the political front, there is a tendency towards localism. Regions or cities opt out of their dependent relationship with central powers and link up through technology with regions which share a common vision with their area (Gergen, 1991).

In Post-Modernism we are encouraged to accept the inherent interdependence of human functioning. All that remains is dialogue with the Other. We should seek dialogues that transcend the existing signifiers, that facilitate new discourses and language structures, and that allow diverse discourses to coexist. As we erase the boundaries between genres, it is possible to see that antagonisms develop through language itself, and that the signifiers of a particular field of knowledge are defined by those of another (Gergen 1991).

Both self-narratives demonstrated that we live and communicate through the linguistic, cultural and political codes in which we are embedded. In both analyses the Self became a code in itself, a more or less continuous trajectory of point of view through which the ceaseless flow of coded, colonised experiences could be organised and conveyed. In other words, the Self became a mere utility, a function through which the codes of society were expressed. In a well-known quotation from S/Z, Barthes (1975, p. 17) claims that in our Post-Modern times our subjectivity acquires the generality of stereotypes, our identities are
merely the "wash of all the codes which make up the I". Hochschild (1983, p. 13) describes it as follows: "To manage private loves and hates is to participate in an intricate emotional system. When elements of that system are taken into the marketplace ... they become stretched into standardized social forms. In these forms, a person's contribution of feelings ... is seen as coming less from the self and less directed to the other. For this reason [one's feelings are] susceptible to estrangement".

This alienation, partly enhanced by the introduction of a vast number of technologies (the proud achievement of Modernism), has not only led to a steady increase in the number and types of relationships people are engaged in or to the amount of information available, but it has also altered the quality of our awareness of ourselves. Gergen (1991) refers to the extraordinary proliferation in communication technologies (from railway to air travel, from radio to television, from the mail service to the telephone and the cellular phone, from the business computer to the personal computer, modems and E-mail) and describes their contribution to a contemporary Post-Modern condition which he calls the "saturated self".

As we participate in an ever increasing number of social relations, we are increasingly exposed to portrayals of other people's lifestyles, values, opinions, actions, and we engage in an increasing number of plots, we acquire a Post-Modern consciousness (Gergen, 1991). The notion of a true and knowable Self is lost. In Gergen's (1991, p. 256) words: "As we become aware that our sayings lack foundation in either passion or reason, and as our commitments slowly reveal themselves as postures, we can scarcely avoid a sense of deep humility. We can hardly advocate our own beliefs, reasons, and passions above all others, for the very effort attests to the hollowness of their bases. And we are thus invited to defuse the hegemonic explosive..."
Any attempts to retain one's uniqueness becomes an exercise in paradox due to the fact that the choices regarding how to be unique are culturally fully prescribed. Images and lifestyles come prefabricated and preprogrammed as part of a pattern of collective identities which are externally controlled through the media and commercial enterprises. The Self has become colonised by ideologies and inscribed by the prevailing cultural trends.

Commenting on the "perilous predicament" in which individuals find themselves, Parry (Friedman, 1992, p. 439) states that Modernism has produced the technological means through which we can gratify ourselves: We regard our rights as sacred, we demand to be happy, we are free from obligations to others. However, at the same time we "... find [ourselves] powerless in the face of massive social and economic forces that [we] are utterly unable to influence; that is, [we] may think that we are making free choices when, in fact, [we] are making choices that corporate, political, and entertainment bodies want [us] to make" (Parry, in Friedman, 1992, p. 440). Therefore instead of relishing the freedom from political, religious, economic, and hygienic factors brought about through Modernism, our desires and fantasies are managed and organised by those massive corporate institutions which were produced by the technological advances and rationalisation process of Modernity. Through the astounding advances of technology, products and services (and therapeutic techniques) were developed on a mass consumerist level to fulfil every desire. At the same time corporate and sociocultural powers of influence marketed these commodities in such a manner that people's desires were shaped to need exactly those products which were already available. They only needed to purchase it or vote for it. The paradox is clear: While
Modernity attempted to free people from the grip of non-rational regimes of enslavement, it created a new system of enslavement. As Parry (Friedman, 1992, p. 436) states "the citizen of the modernist world is a powerless person with boundless desires".

Modernism produced economic, scientific and sociopolitical structures which opened up prefabricated 'spaces of meaning' into which people could fit. The 'spaces' were designed by discourses which 'fixed' the meanings about how to be a Self in such a manner that it ensured the enhancement of those very same economic, scientific and sociopolitical structures that produced the meanings about personhood. In the next section I will explore the influence of power and ideology on how intersubjective meanings are constructed.

I. Ideology and the struggle to control meanings

It should be clear from the previous chapters that ideology or power is not always a visible, prominent part of socio-political processes. More often than not they are manifested in subtle and indirect ways.

According to Paré (1995, p. 7) "... cultures do not create their realities through language in a neutral way; rather, the language distinctions that cultures make are inherently ideological". Parker (1989, p. 17) describes language as the "cartilage of culture"; it does not merely describe, it entrenches or changes the relations between people in the very process of description. Mair (Paré, 1995, p. 7) adds "... we think and speak and act in the forms our culture has prepared. It is through these already existing and unquestioned means that we are molded toward what we suppose we know". Thus we are inscribed and 'coloured in' by the ideologies of a particular culture.
It should also be evident from the previous discussions that power is not a state of mind or the intrinsic and enduring characteristic of a particular person or group of people. Instead it can best be described as a set of practices which are collectively expressed in human systems and which undergo periodic shifts and reversals.

These practices have the goal of fixing the meanings in a particular context in such a manner that they can only be interpreted in prescribed and predetermined ways that promote the position of the prevailing power hierarchy. Any alternative interpretations are discouraged or, if necessary, punished. According to Parker (1989) power becomes a dynamic in socio-political relationships in which resistance is suppressed. Wherever disagreements over meanings occur, the practices which accompany ideology and power are present.

According to Clegg (1993, p. 28) we should not think of power as consisting of certain dimensions or as having a particular set of characteristics, but as a process which may undergo periodic shifts from phases of power to phases of resistance. He therefore refers to 'circuits' of power. The present broad Post-Modernist revolution is an example of one such a shift in the circuits of power dynamics: The Post-Modern consciousness has brought about a deep concern about the oppressive effects of organisational and institutional power on the everyday public and private experiences of the individual. Through strategies such as deconstruction Post-Modernist thinkers have made the invisible processes of colonisation and suppression visible. They have challenged the status quo by inverting and reversing current power dynamics. Interesting examples of reversals can be found in TV commercials in which the stereotypical roles of men and women, poor and wealthy, black and white are reversed (e.g. the Vodacom commercial in which the old, apparently disadvantaged black man is confronted by an arrogant, wealthy
urban white man who accidentally locks his keys in his car and who is assisted by the black man and his cellular phone to retrieve them; the detergent petrol commercial in which well-known sportsmen men make statements about the cleaning ability of the petrol which are identical to those statements usually made by women in washing powder commercials).

Clegg (1993) proposes that any study of power dynamics should include a description of how "power arrangements are fixed, coupled, and constituted so that, intentionally or not, certain 'nodal points' of practice are privileged in this unstable and shifting terrain" (Clegg, 1993, p. 28). The fixing of meanings typically occurs through language and inevitably lead to the establishment of hierarchies in which those persons higher up in the hierarchies have greater privileges, or more access to desired commodities, or more communicational access to others in the organisation than those in the lower echelons.

In a typical classroom, for example, the teacher is the one who controls the pupils access to information and who interprets this information to the pupils. The power of the teacher is derived from at least two sources: His/her position is ensconced through the institutional power of the educational system, which is linked to government power structures and political ideology; in addition the teacher's role is further ensconced through the traditional power of adults over children, which is so clearly evident in family dynamics. Should this teacher be a male, his authority is even further enhanced by the patriarchal discourses and codes in our society, which, according to feminist writers, leads to the marginalisation of both women and children, especially in the family. In addition the knowledge which is propounded in the classroom is never value-free: Knowledge is always embedded in language (which is never neutral) and often serves to ensure the continuation of the dominant culture.
The recent political transition in South Africa provides a valuable source of examples of how a change in institutional power dynamics brings about a revolution in people's perception of themselves and others in their culture. Many South Africans undoubtedly experienced profound discontinuities in their own private as well as public values and yet most of them seemed to move effortlessly into the new 'spaces' designed by the meanings which had recently been fixed in an entirely different way by the new regime's ideologies. This transition from one set of ideologically inscribed meanings and values to another which is almost diametrically opposed to the former, is an example of a shift in the circuits of power. Relationships between Blacks and Whites were officially redefined, thereby opening up interpersonal 'spaces' which are regulated by a different set of prescriptions for relating to one another.

Power should not be regarded merely as a negative. Clegg (1993, p. 26) maintains that "the conception of power needs to be freed from its 'sovereign' auspices as a prohibitive concept". Power can open up new 'spaces' rather than being "merely the zero-sum of a set of antagonisms" (Clegg, 1993, p. 28). Instead of regarding power only as a constraint or a prohibition, it could be viewed as the dynamic through which realities are produced. According to Sarup (1988, p. 82) it produces "domains of objects and rituals of truth". Foucault (1977) also regards power as a natural and inevitable aspect of all social and cultural relationships. In his work he emphasises the omnipotent role which power and ideology plays in psychology, i.e. the individual is almost entirely brought forth through ideology and cultural power structures. In the next section I will examine some of the processes in psychology, and psychotherapy in particular, which relate to ideology and power.

Centripetal discourses in Psychology
In this section I wish to examine the procedure through which psychology creates and reproduces certain relations between people in Western culture through ideology and power. In particular, I wish to trace the processes through which experience was individualised, problematised, and quantified.

During the Modernist period human behaviour became "scientized" (Gergen, 1991, p. 14). Modernist science maintained its own status by developing discourses of legitimation, usually by referring to the grand narratives, for example Truth, Objectivity, and Rationality. In the modernist era any field of knowledge protected its domain by delineating its opposition to other fields of knowledge. This provided adherents to this knowledge base with a false sense of solidity and permanence. Post-Modernist scientific inquiry, on the other hand, insists on the examination of self-referential processes of knowledge creation, rather than the discovery of "objective truths".

Until recently psychology has participated in the dominant discourse of Modernist science by aligning itself with the empirical ideals in an attempt to enhance its credibility and academic standing. This endeavour has led to the development of many useful procedures for the improvement of people's quality of life, despite the fact that its methods have proved largely unreliable and its theories often contradictory and non-predictive. According to Smelslund (Gergen & Davis, 1985, p. 85) "[t]he ingenious and heroic attempts by methodologists to make the irreversible appear reversible, the unrepeatable appear replicable, the local appear general, and the subjective appear objective are, indeed, the stuff of a major tragedy". We need to understand how psychological knowledge achieved such a position of privilege even though it displayed these shortcomings.

One of the reasons was that it used a scientific framework, in particular, the medical-biological science's framework, from
which it originally emerged during the Modernist era. One of the
many consequences of presenting psychology as a science, is that
it presented its findings as if it were objective,
decontextualised and depoliticised. For decades psychology was
considered to be devoid of cultural and ideological influences.
The actual presence of such influences were obscured behind the
insistence that knowledge produced by psychology was true,
ahistorical, apolitical, and universal. This kind of 'scientific'
discourse ensured that psychological knowledge acquired an privileged position with regard to its authority to
explain human functioning.

Psychologists and psychiatrists developed diagnostic systems
which described abnormal or undesirable behaviour in deficit/excess terms. The vocabulary of psychopathology terms
with its underlying unspoken normative prescription for
behaviour was disseminated through the popular press and through
personal contact with professionals from these fields. Soon
these terms were incorporated into everyday parlance. The
pejorative descriptions continued to expand as new syndromes
were encountered and old concepts were honed and refined
(Gergen, 1991). Thus, we now have an ever-increasing vocabulary
of deficit and incapacities, which was entirely absent a century
ago. As people absorb the vocabulary, the deficit terminology
influences the way they describe, and hence experience,
themselves (Gergen, 1991).

Gergen (1991, p. 15) cautions that one of the disadvantages of
this phenomenon is what he calls the "spiraling cycle of
enfeeblement" which ensues. This occurs because people who
describe themselves and others in these terms of deficit, have
come to regard psychiatrists and psychologists as essential for
"recovery".
But since the emergence of Post-Modernism it has been acknowledged in more and more spheres that science is "forged in the crucible of ongoing cultural concerns, framed within the culture's linguistic codes, and rewarded or neglected in accord with cultural needs" (Marecek, 1995, p. 163). Any knowledge base becomes ideological if it does not allow self-reflexive scrutiny. It runs the risk of becoming totalitarian knowledge. So it is essential that psychology should reflexively examine its foundational questions and basic assumptions.

We need to reveal the ways in which societal struggles and cultural politics shape psychological thinking, for example, how it outlaws marginal groups such as the poor, women, blacks, etcetera. In some contexts psychological research has even been employed to justify the status quo, just like any system of knowledge serves to promote the goals of the dominant culture.

Foucault (1977) contended that psychiatry and psychology have fundamentally changed the relationship between social power and the human body. Socio-political systems maintain their own power base best by regulating human behaviour through codifying, quantifying, supervising, and enhancing individuals' levels of functioning. According to Foucault (1977) psychology proved to be a useful device since it could produce inscription devices which individualised subjects and which opened up the human soul as a domain which could be described, quantified, and, hence, controlled.

Psychology was useful to the regulatory systems of power, because it produced diagnostic categories, assessment techniques and tests which could portray the individual's experiences (some of which were of a transindividual and communal nature) in terms of classifications, statistical figures and standardisations which endorsed the notion of stringent individualism. According to Foucault (1977) tests and diagnoses embody power, truth, and
subjectification' simultaneously, thereby transforming human experience into a domain of public knowledge: The person becomes a subject which has to submit to normative assessments and a hierarchical relationship structure, in other words, to a discourse of disempowerment and even punishment (Foucault, 1977). Thus the power to describe something is tantamount to owning and controlling it. Gradually psychology broadened its sphere of influence and control to include institutions like schools, factories, prisons and the army to enhance the individuals' efficiency and productivity, as well as personal satisfaction and contentment.

Although psychological power is not politically partial, its claim to objective truths makes it amenable to utilisation by political structures for governmental mental health programmes. Thus psychology operates at the interface between public structures such as mental health systems, law and order, industrial relations, parent-child relations and the dreams, needs, anxieties, and frailties of individuals and families (Parker & Shotter, 1990). Thus psychology has played a key role in the discourses which have produced the modern subject. "In the family, the factory, and the expanding systems of counselling and therapy, the vocabularies of mental hygiene, group relations and psychodynamics are translated into techniques of self-inspection and self-rectification.... Through our attachment to such technologies of the self, we are governed by our active engagement in the search for a form of existence that is at once personally fulfilling and socially beneficial" (Parker & Shotter, 1990, p. 114).

Psychology has 'colonised' descriptions of the Self and Self/Other interactions. Through the 'scientising' of human behaviour, it has provided the grand narrative about Selves. Psychoanalysis, in particular, reflects conventions which perpetuate the power position of the analyst: For example, their
interpretations refer to the function of the unconscious, a
domain of meaning which is only accessible to the analyst and
requires expert interpretation — it no longer belongs to the
Self. Thus clients learn to devalue their own meanings.

Modernist characterisations can be found throughout the history
of psychology, but are especially apparent in the work of the
trait theorists who depict people as firmly bounded and
internally coherent narrative characters who participate in a
clearcut plot (Stringer et al., 1984). Theorists such as Allport
(1968), Cattell (Polkinghorne, 1988) and Eysenck (Polkinghorne,
1988) claim that human behaviour is ordered and guided by the
personality. They believed that people's personalities consisted
of quantifiable amounts of intelligence, self-esteem,
aggression, and so forth, which can be classified in terms of a
taxonomy and assessed along a continuum of normality-
abnormality. In therapy individuals were evaluated in terms of
this prescriptive framework and the goal of therapy was to
correct imbalances which deviated from normative behaviour. In
this manner psychotherapy became an instrument through which the
public was made controllable and governable.

But in psychotherapy the best portrayal of the pragmatic,
objective Modernist paradigm is found in the Behaviourist
approach with its rigorously linear-causal model of human
functioning. Embodied within the Behaviourist approach is the
Modernist ideal of human conquest over all phenomena through
scientific method. In this approach it is assumed that by
disrupting and altering the established linear-causal
contingencies in human behaviour, the therapist could bring the
clients' actions entirely under rational control. This
illustrates the grandiose Modernist ideal of obtaining total
control over our environment and our own functioning.
In contrast, Post-Modernist thinkers regard knowledge as paralogical (Mumby, 1993) and use it to destabilise dominant views of the world. Post-Modernism has led to a reduction in the therapist's influence as an expert in mental functioning. It has also questioned the legitimacy of the therapist's ability to 'know' and 'change' the 'mental state' of the 'patient'. Instead the client is regarded as a participant in a large network of relationships and the client's problem is considered a problem because it is construed as such in some of these relationships. Thus the therapist is required to help the client to change those relationships in such a manner that the meanings that are expressed and maintained within them, can be altered, thus making the problem behaviour redundant. The therapist's role therefore becomes that of a co-participant in helping the client to create new realities, metaphors, or narratives for experiencing his or her life. At the end of therapy the client should have learned the skills for re-negotiating and maintaining new discourses in his or her relationships.

One of the logical consequences of Post-Modernist influence in psychology is the emergence of 'common sense psychology', sometimes referred to as 'folk psychology' or 'cultural logic'. With the Post-Modernists' celebration of small or local narratives and their appreciation of the uniqueness of cultural circumstances, psychologists are beginning to focus on the subjective meanings and explanatory models which ordinary people produce collectively to depict their lives. In the next section I will briefly explore the outlines of this new development.

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Bruner (1990, p. 35) maintains that all cultures have a folk psychology, a "set of more or less connected, more or less normative prescriptions about how human beings 'tick', what our own and other minds are like, what one can expect situated
action to be like, what are possible modes of life, how one commits oneself to them, and so on". It is a form of communal knowledge which we learn very early on, when we learn our mother tongue and which provides us with the appropriate guidelines for negotiating shared meanings with others. As such, it serves the purpose of organizing experience, in much the same manner as the Modernist prescriptions for progress and successful living do, but it embodies the accumulated local wisdom and reservoir of stories about the history, the 'heroes' and the 'villains' of a particular community.

Folk psychology includes a wide variety of communally held beliefs, including traditional idiomatic expressions, superstitions, for example, notions about the characteristics of different nationalities, guidelines for lower and upper class people's behaviour, for women, men, and children's behaviour, guidelines for parenting, how to treat strangers, etcetera. It also includes communally held beliefs about significant transitional experiences in life such as birth, falling in love, marriage, and death. The reverence usually shown towards psychologists is partly due to the authoritative position derived from the so-called scientific nature of psychological knowledge, and partly due to notions derived from folk psychology: It reflects the same mixture of respect and fear traditionally reserved for the druids, mystics, and healers of bygone days.

Folk psychology is conveyed in narrative rather than conceptual form. It contains all the narrative elements which were discussed in Chapter 3: It is structured around the actions of characters (the agentive Self, in particular) who exhibit needs, ideals, and desires, and who encounter obstacles along the way which they try to transcend (a plot); it contains sequentiality within a time frame; and it forms a coherent unity. Thus in much the same way as it does for the mediating of experience of the world in a general sense, narrative also serves as a "symbolic
schema for mediating between sign and the world" (Bruner, 1990, p. 46) in folk psychology. Bruner (1990, p. 52) maintains that folk psychology is structured in the format of narratives since it concerns itself with human action and human goals. "It mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires and hopes".

Already in 1916, Wundt, one of the pioneers of psychology, maintained (Gergen & Davis, 1985) that all the material which the human sciences study are, in fact, produced by the social community itself. While this is true of the social sciences in general, it is particularly true of psychotherapy which deals with meanings and perceptions which are created and negotiated with others. The autobiographical stories which clients tell psychotherapists are centrifugal in character, since they are idiosyncratic, internally coherent stories which have local validity, and which contain non-rational insights into the vicissitudes of living. We all participate in folk psychology in that we are all linked to the world of culturally determined meanings which we co-create through language with others. In this sense folk psychology "taps into people's knowledge of the local rules of the game in the part of society which surrounds them" (Bertaux, 1981, p. 40).

Wundt (Gergen & Davis, 1985) maintained that the concerns of the social sciences cannot be comprehensively explained merely in terms of individual consciousness alone; it assumes an interindividual connectedness and socially co-created meanings. This view suggests an acceptance of the notion of Self which is proposed in this study, namely Self as embedded in relationships, as opposed to Self as a singular, separate experience. It is extraordinary to imagine that if history had taken a different route (in other words, if the human sciences had not appropriated the methodology of the physical sciences) this interrelated view of Self may have continued to prevail. It
would not now be necessary to reinstate it as a valid alternative concept.

Since its inception psychology has stood in direct opposition to common sense, and has replaced it to some extent—it has competed for the same space in people's minds. Yet, in fact, psychology's field of knowledge overlaps with that of common sense. It has taken psychologists a long time to acknowledge that the domain which they had claimed as their enclave of expertise, in fact, belongs to everyone. The big divide between common sense knowledge and expert knowledge is gradually being eroded. Despite the Modernist psychologists' attempts to 'colonise' the territory of the Self, the current Post-Modernist thrust ensures that those meanings (such as folk psychology) which were previously marginalised are reinstated, restored, and valued anew.

Students of psychology already have opinions about many of the aspects covered by psychology. Drawing on their own experiences as well as collective common sense experiences, most people can give lay explanations for the phenomena which form the core material of psychology. And yet students are discouraged from using their common sense knowledge in discussions primarily because it is considered to be unscientific and it contains many contradictions. The latter criticism is founded on the notion that truth has to be rational, unitary and agreed upon by the scientific community (Nelson, Megill, & McCloskey, 1987). This viewpoint stands in contradiction to the position taken in the field of rhetoric, where it is acknowledged that contrary truths can exist side by side. In addition it accepts that truths are open-ended and evolving (Rorty, 1987). In psychology the ideal of producing theories which can offer clearcut explanations for human experiences, has not materialised. Instead a vast and complex body of research has emerged which itself contains innumerable contradictions, even in its theoretical structures.
However, I am not suggesting that folk psychology is the panacea for oppressive practices in psychotherapy. Folk psychology contains many constraining or even oppressive narratives itself: It reflects many sexist, racist and classist biases and stereotypes. These should be scrutinised and guarded against with the same care as those limiting influences which sociocultural ideologies have on people's life options. It is also true that folk psychology embodies the norms of society in much the same way as other sociocultural ideologies, but at least it does so without becoming overtly regulatory and oppressive. The value of incorporating folk psychology into psychotherapeutic practices is to subvert the power dynamics which usually prevail between the client and the therapist when the therapist is seen as the embodiment of Modernist scientific Truth. It is meant as a counterpoint to those particular centripetal forces in therapy.

It goes without saying that the knowledge which psychology has accumulated, has to be retained. But we need to examine self-referentially how we apply it, in order to prevent these practices from subjugating and controlling others.

The implications of Post-Modernist trends for psychotherapy

In the final section of this study I wish to conclude with a number of tentative suggestions and recommendations for therapy. These suggestions are not meant to be comprehensive nor prescriptive. In the spirit of Post-Modernism they are meant as starting points for a dialogue with the Reader. I hope that some of the Readers' responses will take the form of continued exploration of how psychotherapy can align itself more congruently with the Post-Modernist movement in the field of the social sciences.
The Post-Modernist insistence on self-reflexivity has far-reaching consequences for human consciousness. Reflexivity in psychotherapy would entail that the therapist's scrutiny should not only focus only on the client's world, but should encompass the whole context of therapy, thus including the therapeutic practices we use.

This is, of course, not a new idea: Reflexivity has been propounded by family therapy theorists for some time now. But its application was, until recently, a reflection of their concern with circularity and complete feedback loops. In the context of Post-Modernism reflexivity has a different function: It is meant as a kind of bulwark against oppressive practices in a political-ideological sense. It presupposes an acknowledgement of the interdependence of the social and the political domains. For example, in the personal realm even a seemingly simple process of attempting to reach consensus about a certain issue, the social construction of meaning always involves a struggle between ideologies, and in that sense it is always a political process. Meaning systems (such as psychological theories) are always in flux and open to negotiation. There is a constant struggle over meaning. And this is as it should be since it ensures an essential relative balance in force and counterforce as in any other domain in nature. The nodal points which fix meanings in a particular way will be changed each time that a particular ideology is overturned. It is essential that we understand our own participation in those processes — especially how we are more willing to accept certain 'realities' than others and how we become constrained by these 'realities'.

The illusion that psychotherapy is a politically neutral context is a legacy from psychology's Modernist scientific phase and needs to be abandoned. We need to become more sceptical of the wider sociocultural discourses, codes, and prescriptions in which the practices of psychotherapy are embedded. We need to
become aware of the manner in which practices in psychotherapy perpetuate ideologies which are sometimes limiting and counterproductive in the lives of our clients. We need to examine these practices in terms of the kinds of power relations and Self-images they perpetuate. This means we have to become more critical of our discipline's history. We need to assess whether our practices reproduce "oppressive social structures" (Parker, 1989, pp. 3-4). We need to "uncover the framework of assumptions, language practices, and interpretive schemas on which scientific inquiry practices and help to construct psychological theory that incorporates its own situatedness in culture and history. Recontextualizing psychology in this way can help psychologists see more deeply how economic, social, and political forces are implicated in all endeavours to know the world, even scientific ones" (Marecek, 1995, p. 163).

We should ensure that ideologically based practices are not camouflaged, 'sanitized' (Parker, 1989, p. 16), and justified in subtle ways. One way of ensuring an awareness of the aforementioned problems is to create "spaces of resistance" (Parker, 1989, p. 17) within therapy. In other words, not only should clients' doubts about therapeutic practices be accepted without defensive justifications and reference to theories, but we should constantly question our own assumptions, ideas, and actions. Since we cannot remove power relations, we have to abandon the ideal of a harmonious society. We can only ensure that spaces of resistance are present in contexts where power relations exist. Such spaces of resistance should become an essential part of the dynamic evolution of ideas in therapy.

Therapists should become aware of the pervasive process of selection which occurs in therapeutic conversations. It is unavoidable that the therapist will prefer to focus on certain aspects of the client's history to the exclusion of other aspects. This is a natural and unavoidable part of conversing in
daily life. But in the context of therapy where the official meanings and expertise of the therapist already disproportionately favour the therapist's meanings over the client's meanings, the therapist should at least be aware of which information s/he favours and which is left unattended to. In fact, Moscovici (1972, p. 55) goes so far as to suggest that the "proper domain of our discipline is the study of cultural processes which are responsible for the organization of knowledge in society". Until this happens the best that therapists can do is to show respect and concern for how our favourite theories predispose us to determine which statements are desirable/undesirable in the therapeutic context and how this process determines the content of the 'knowledge' which we work with in therapy. If, upon closer scrutiny, these preferred meanings of the therapist reflect ideological assumptions which are limiting to their clients, the therapist should take great care to restructure their selection of information in a manner which prevents this from happening.

In psychotherapy our theories are about the ordinary practices of living. It is therefore even more essential that the "dialogue between theory per se and other practices of life occur. Otherwise, one claims a position of privilege from which only ex cathedra judgements of revelation or concealment could be anticipated" (Clegg, 1993, p. 42). Therapists should show great respect for people's ordinary stories. However, this does not mean that we should elevate the significance of these ordinary stories to a new kind of grand narrative of the ordinary. These mundane stories should also not be taken at face value, but should be examined to foreground the subtle covert manner in which language serves to "stabilize circuits of power", (Clegg, 1993, p. 42). The practice of power in everyday life is also conducted through language as in power games in totalising theories.
Therapy should be approached as an exploration and co-creation of alternative meanings, without assuming that there is one correct meaning or solution to the client's problems. The clients' view of the therapist as the oracle or expert who has access to the Truth, should be deconstructed. Therapists should guard against perpetuating this hierarchical relationship with clients, since this establishes a power differential in the therapeutic relationship which is limiting to the process of therapy. The relationship should rather be more egalitarian.

The therapist has to stimulate and guide the conversation in such a manner as to ensure that many different meanings are formulated for the client to select from. The client can then select those meanings or solutions which suit her or him best. The therapeutic encounter should be regarded as a non-linear and relatively unstructured imaginative process. Therapists should acknowledge that therapy proceeds in non-linear cycles and that change often follows unpredictable and illogical circuits. The therapist should help the client to explore the unsaid, the unspoken, the undeveloped, underutilised, and neglected Selves.

By bringing forth the marginalised and neglected meanings in the client's repertoire of meanings, truly new domains can be opened up. The therapist has to learn to conduct the therapeutic conversation in such a way that closure is postponed. Formulations should be kept open-ended and tentative.

Clients should be helped to become aware of the subtle cultural prescriptions for living and of the constraints of these ready-made personal ideologies that they and others live by. They should be able to deconstruct the discourses in which they are embedded. A heightened awareness of these ideologies can minimise the impact which they have on their lives, even if they cannot be entirely eliminated.

A Post-Modern consciousness requires a constant concern with language, how it "frames the world, establishing the ontology
and the array of values in which people invest their lives" (Gergen, in Friedman, 1992, p. x). Any formulation in language has certain specific possibilities and solutions. Each text or narrative, according to Gergen and Kaye (1992, p. 173) "invites certain actions and discourages others". What is meant here is not language as an external expression of inner thoughts and feelings, but language as that which shapes relationships and Selves and is shaped by them in return.

Therapists should avoid using language which depicts Self-descriptions as fixed and stable, and promote Self-descriptions which are depicted as being in process and constantly changing. Space should be created in therapy for the notion of the dialogical Self which is an expression of the multiple relationships in which the client participates. Reductionistic ideas of Self as a kind of essence with fixed personality traits should be discarded in favour of the combined concept of Self/Other, while acknowledging that even this concept is merely an heuristic fiction which is shaped by our language structures and culture.

Therapists should be sensitive to expressions of Self as a composite experience. The Self cannot be regarded as a kind of reservoir into which experiences accumulate over time. According to Minsky (Rosenbaum & Dyckman, 1995, p. 27) "we are not only different in different social contexts, but, at any instant, we are engaged in a process of 'summation' of different selves-in-action that produce the working 'draft' of our consciousness". Thus, as I have suggested in this study, the Self does not possess inherent continuity and coherence. It attains the illusion of coherence and stability across time and across different contexts due to the narrative conventions which we superimpose on that interpersonal space which we call the Self.
As indicated in previous chapters, the narrative metaphor is used as an overarching concept to describe the organizing and patterning of perceptual experiences. The narrative metaphor depicts a variety of perceptual processes through which chaotic sensory input is ordered into meaningful mental schemas which are stored in memory.

According to Gergen (Friedman, 1992, p. x) the clients' accounts of their dilemmas of living should not be seen as representations of their true experiences, which are slightly biased by their needs or cognitive abilities, but rather as accounts which consist of narratives, family myths, metaphors, folk psychology, and so forth. Gergen regards these stories as more like musical accompaniments than as mirrors or maps of reality. Their value do not lie in their reflection of reality, but in their social communication.

There is a parallel between what Post-Modernist writers are doing (i.e. making readers aware of their need for narrative structures in various ways) and what occurs in therapy, in other words, that clients and therapists should become aware of how they construct and represent themselves through narrative forms. Through this awareness or self-reflexivity (or meta-narrative) they can gain greater flexibility and creativity in how they live and story their lives.

Therapy therefore entails enabling the client to substitute the previous types of narratives for alternative forms which allow a more useful way of construing life meanings, or in Gegen's (Friedman, 1992, p. x) words "to shake loose the taken-for-granted world and to open new linguistic spaces" which offer new opportunities for living. In many cases it means liberating clients from self-narratives that keep them locked into disempowering grand narratives. People who accept society's cultural story of them often pay the price of oppression and
restraint. By accepting society's definition of them they replace all the other descriptions of themselves which were possible.

As stated before, the life history of a person is not an accumulation of all the different experiences he/she has lived through. For every choice to be or to portray oneself as this or that kind of person, we exclude a large number of other possibilities which we could have lived or portrayed. Thus we develop into the Self which we portray by eliminating many potential Selves which are actually still available to us. It can therefore be said that a Self incorporates all the excluded or Possible Selves. And it is this reservoir of alternative Possible Selves which the therapist can help to bring forth in the client.

Psychotherapists should abandon attempts to use a unitary body of theory or grand explanatory concepts which directly or indirectly disempower clients. By insisting on interpreting the clients' actions in terms of a centralised and normative body of theory we are insisting that the client's experience is not acknowledged as his/her experience. Therapists should rather appreciate the singularity of personal narratives and should rather focus on those forms of knowledge which do not fit into our scientific and theoretical discourses, forms of knowledge which are often denied and suppressed, rejected as inappropriate and naïve, such as common sense formulations of experiences.

This is one example of how power can be utilised to "open up spaces" for being and of liberating the client from centripetal Self-descriptions. In this process the client may discover patterns of living which are resourceful and creative, rather than prescribed and entirely inscribed by the outdated Modernist notions of how to be a Self.
Psychotherapists should learn to incorporate the marginalised meanings of the Ordinary in their work. It requires that therapists explore the reservoir of common sense theories, which already exist in the client's cultural niche, and attempt to look for alternative behaviours to problematic life situations in cultural and social narratives, rather than in prescriptive scientific, potentially oppressive grand narratives. The local theories of living belong to everyone; their narrative plots, metaphors, and characterisations are the common property of every member of a community.

The modernist assumption that knowledge liberates people has been turned on its head by Post-Modernism. Instead of liberating people, it subjugates them. This is, as stated before, because knowledge conveys the power to the expert to define others, to create linguistic and sociocultural 'spaces' in which the defined are obliged to live. These defined 'spaces' determine how they experience themselves. Thus knowledge becomes a mode of surveillance, of regulation, and control.

It may be said that someone's standing and power (whether in a family or in an organisation) can be measured according to how much their stories are valued by others in that system (Madigan, in Paré, 1995). The subjugating power of scientific theories in psychotherapeutic practices become evident when one considers that clients willingly seek out the psychotherapist's so-called superior theory of who they ought to be, and thus devalue their own definition of Self. Parry (1991, in Paré, 1995; p. 10) maintains that just as the modernist critic or scholar could claim a privileged position by virtue of an understanding of the underlying structure, myth, or subterranean force that the text expressed, the therapist has retained a privileged vantage point arising out of access to a
body of knowledge that explained the client on a different and superior level to her experience of herself.

Regardless of how benevolent the intentions of psychotherapists are, the clients' lives are inevitably described and interpreted in terms which are alien to them.

Psychotherapists can no longer justify using normative theories to define their clients from an imaginary centre. Centripetal definitions of Self, or of anything else, for that matter, inevitably contain 'shoulds' and 'oughts' that align human behaviour with the normative prescriptions for behaviour which, inter alia, serve to perpetuate the dominant power structures in society.

These suggestions do not entail explaining the Post-Modernist movement's philosophical background to the clients (they usually have enough complex issues to deal with as it is!). At the level of remembering and recounting one's experiences we are obliged to rely on the everyday language and narrative conventions which depict Self as stable, coherent and continuous. However, at the next order of recursiveness, at the level of the therapist's self-reflexive descriptions, an awareness of these ideas is indispensable to a therapist.

**Conclusion**

The ideas in this study are not meant as a final set of answers to questions regarding the nature of meaning and Self. They are tentative formulations in a dialogue with the Reader. They are meant to be seen as part of an evolution of communally created ideas which will continue to change. Given that reflexivity is built into the process of perceiving and understanding, conceptualisations of human functioning and of Self will
continue to become destabilised by new paradigm shifts. However, at this juncture in the move towards Post-Modernism, it is imperative that psychotherapeutic concepts and practices should be examined in order to establish their relevance in this particular tide of change.

The scope of the study goes beyond that which is usually demarcated as the domain of psychology. I included ideas and conceptualisations from a number of different but related fields, such as literary theory, cultural history, sociology, and linguistics in this study. This is in keeping with the present Post-Modernist trend to move beyond the artificially created boundaries of specific fields of knowledge in order to enlarge and enrich the present discussion. In keeping with Post-Modernist trends the methodology used in the study is participative and collaborative, rather than objective and reductionistic.

This study is an attempt to examine those processes through which meanings become fixed in interpersonal contexts and during therapeutic procedures in particular. The relation between narrative codes and conventions and the communal construction of meaning was examined. The Post-Modernist notion of the reflexive relationship between the knower and the known was demonstrated by focussing in particular on the concept of the Self. Narrative was used as a framework to demonstrate that the notion of the Self attains its illusion of seamlessness and stability through a number of conventions, such as using the perspective of an omniscient narrator, the continuity of characters' identities, coherence, prescribed and specified plot structures, and so forth. I attempted to demonstrate how the Self can be viewed as a mutually agreed upon and heuristic convention in interpersonal contexts, which is negotiated with the Other in relationship and which is never quite at one with itself.
Following Derrida (1973; 1976; 1978; 1987, 1988), Foucault (1967; 1970; 1977; 1979), and Lacan (1977; 1986), the notion of the Self is deconstructed to demonstrate its embeddedness in language and current cultural ideologies which still contain aspects of Romanticism and Modernism, but which are also influenced by the forms of technologies which were produced in the Modernist era. This suggests a Self which is presented as autonomous and individualistic in some respects, but which is virtually fully controlled and colonised by corporate commercial enterprises which offer prescriptions of how to be a Self.

As psychology moves into the Post-Modernist era, its foundational assumptions and metaphors have to be examined to ascertain their coherence with these emerging reformulations of the Self. More specifically the psychotherapists need to reflexively examine the assumptions on which they base their approaches and practices. While the idea of a centered and unified Self cannot be discarded in the context of psychotherapy, therapists should (at least at the second order level of reflexivity) be aware of and examine the conventions through which the Self is negotiated and maintained in interpersonal domains. Therapists who are sensitive to the emerging Post-Modernist ideas should be able to discern how Modernist practices in psychotherapy which are based on the scientific assumptions of objectivity, neutrality and rationality lead to power imbalances in the therapeutic relationship. Instead of using restrictive psychological theories based on the Modernist grand narratives of 'objectivity', 'truth' and 'rationality' which define clients from an imaginary center (centripetal theories) therapists should endeavour to deconstruct the power dynamics inherent in the therapeutic relationship. While it is no longer possible to return to the strictly Modernist definition of Self, it is also not possible to liberate ourselves entirely from the impact of restrictive cultural ideologies. However if we can become
vigilant and aware of these influences, we can at least become sceptical and resistant in relation to them and thereby become part of the ongoing "struggle to assert our own meanings against the matrix of already codified meanings lying in wait for us" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272).


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TREVOR'S SELF-NARRATIVE

An account of my life

I have quite a few memories of when I was small, such as a very vague memory of seeing red light probably when I was born, of pushing my mother's nipple into her breast when I was feeding, and some of the toys I received when I was only 1 or 2 years old. Until I turned 7 or so, I was happy; life was sweet. I used to be fascinated by the fire we had in the fireplace. When I was about four years old, I remember having had all my teeth removed. My mother used to make me lick a handkerchief to clean my face with. I was quite cheeky towards my mother as a child.

My first few months at school were the best in my whole school career. I befriended another chap, D... W..., and took care of him, consoling him on his first day at school. It seemed as if he was destined to be my boyhood friend. But throughout the rest of my school career, I would find it very difficult to make friends and gain their respect and love.

During grade 1 my father took long leave and the family visited Britain. I have quite a few memories of this also. This affected my schooling somewhat. My performance was pretty average.

Initially I struggled to learn to read and write, and only reached any kind of competence in standard four. Apart from D... W... I had no friends, except for some other kids who lived in the neighbourhood. They were all much younger than I was. I used to play a bit with P... S... who was two years younger than I. I remember Mrs S... telling me to rather go and play with someone my own age.
In my early primary school years I used to ignore the gripes in my stomach and end up constipated. Physically I was quite strong but I used to be very happy to have some reason to rather stay at home. On occasion I was victimised by D... M.... I tried to play cricket and soccer but never seemed to get going. My father and mother tried to get me interested in tennis. My mother had been a very good tennis player, winning many tournaments and also getting her Springbok colours for badminton. But I never fulfilled the expectations of my parents in any kind of sport. My father used to say I was a sissy if I complained that the water in the swimming pool was too cold.

My father was very wrapped up in his own problems and used to ignore me completely. There was one exception to this general rule. With his interest in photography, he liked to take pictures of me but began to complain that I was no longer natural. I suppose I was pulling faces.

Steadily my performance relative to the rest of the class improved until I was amongst the top three to five pupils. I was very artistic.

My brothers disliked me, or at least wanted to establish their own ego on the basis of rivalling mine. In their presence I was usually unwelcome and ridiculed. All they needed was an excuse to condemn me.

At high school I again became fairly obsessed with being popular. I used to like to hang out with the boarders, particularly a chap by the name of D... B.... I think I had a bit of an obsession with him. Academically I did well, and raced ahead of the class particularly with Latin and Geometry. I befriended C... D...-S... and used to spend almost every second weekend with her. We used to swim for hours on end and play card games and spill and spell. That was real fun, like
I've never experienced again. Thank God I had some contact with a girl at this stage of my development.

It was at more or less this time, in standard 6, that the onset of puberty occurred. I didn't visit C... very much after that. I became more and more introverted at school. Whereas previously I had actively sought popularity I now wanted only to survive, to escape. I used to fantasize about various things, for example a model jet engine, or novel model railway track layouts. My more practical ideas never came to any fruition because my parents always considered them too much trouble to do anything about. They labelled my ideas as impractical, and the more they did this, the more impractical did my ideas become.

Later on in high school I tried again with various sports, rugby as well as hockey. I suffered from asthma. I just couldn't physically be anything. I used to get incredible hunger pains. It seemed I was strong, but vacant, and stupid, and even so with incredible intellectual potential. Always, potential. Nothing more.

I stood up to my brothers with some success. At least I got that right. But I wonder if, in the end, I wasn't defeated after all; because in the process, I learned to conceal my own feelings, and to try to impress others for the sake of gaining their acceptance by being clever and intellectually superior.

I was not totally without friends. I had one friend, C... C... who used to spend almost every lunch break with me. Towards the end of my high school career I met his cousin, M... H..., with whom I went steady. I went to boarding school during another of my parent's long-leave visits overseas. It was a good experience. I befriended one J... S....
M.... She was very religious and also very fond of me. We went to dancing lessons. I wonder if I might not have taken her to bed if I had only asked her. Perhaps a sexual encounter at that stage would have changed my life, in the sense that I would have valued myself as having a little substance.

After school I went to the army. Initially I had wanted to go to Parabats to show everyone how tough I was. My brothers talked me out of it, and I went to Kroonstad Engineers instead. I resolved to switch off psychologically until it was over. M... met somebody else at Pietermaritzburg. I became fairly religious, carrying on by myself the influence that M... had had on me during our relationship. I became confirmed as a Methodist, and tried so hard to be genuine, by forcing myself to pray openly – to be a witness. I felt very embarrassed about it all. God didn't answer my prayers, either.

Towards the end of my one year, I shared a bungalow with some guys who were fairly antagonistic towards me. I tried to win popularity by doing favours, but this one chap, B..., openly insulted me because he just didn't like me. These people used to confess their sexuality openly, while I shied away from such 'indecent' openness.

Based upon an aptitude test, it was decided that I should become a Civil Engineer. My first two years at university were really quite a bore. Initially my performance was only average, but it improved during the second year.

During the third year I determined to step out a bit. I edited the student engineering journal and I must admit, it came out very well. I was also a member of Wits Choir during the last two of my four years at university. This was great fun, and I socialised much more than I had ever done before. I had several brief one-sided love affairs where I did the chasing and nothing
ever materialised. Sometimes, very occasionally, I felt like a king and felt that I impressed girls with my sheer brain-power and warrior-like attitude. At other times I simply felt alone and even stupid.

It seemed as if I was still the victim of rejection by others, although when this occurred it was 90% because I expected it and only 10% attributable to things that other people really did or thought about me. I had learnt to perpetuate the pattern, all by myself.

My ability to study varied. I tended to be a brilliant theoretician, sometimes the only one who could understand complex mathematics and whom the other students would ask for help. I was also unmotivated, often laughing off the tutorials, and going home instead. But I ended up being the best student in construction materials — and barely scraping through design. I attained the degree of civil engineering in the minimum period of four years.

During my last year at university I was introduced to my wife-to-be by a friend, M... J.... The scenario for the introduction was a trip down to Swaziland to the George Hotel. Mike had planned it with true naughtiness in mind. He nearly made love to my blind date — G... — and I nearly made love to Mike's wife-to-be, S.... Thank God I did not. And Gail and I did not make love but it was close. There were topless showers, etcetera. I think M... really did make love to S... — in any case he had to marry her shortly afterward. In future years M... was to become a right royal pain in the proverbial. He and S... used to visit us unpredictably, and given the incredibly egotistical way that he used to flaunt his opinion on whatever subject, I came to dread the times he would come to visit. Powered along by a king-size inferiority complex he ultimately ended up in Tara having tried to kill himself. I discovered him
there quite by chance whilst visiting with a choir singing Christmas carols. It seems strange that I should come to hate this man, who introduced me to my wife, so much.

I wonder why I fell in love with G.... I think it was not so much because of sexual attraction, but more simply because she was available. I just couldn't get close to anyone else — I was always rejected. Even though I have left her now, perhaps I owe at least this much — that she was indeed available, and that buffered me from some of the problems that I had accumulated during my childhood years.

My work as a civil engineer lasted for three years. I worked for the city council of Johannesburg. It was horrendously boring until the third year, when I worked for the construction division. I aimed for authority but was hopelessly immature which sometimes resulted in pure embarrassment, such as the time when I — as an employee of the council — advised a member of the public to consult his city councillor on a matter on which he was dissatisfied, which he did, and which backfired on me because in advising him to do so I had compromised the work the Council wanted to accomplish.

During this 3-year period I did some astronomy and applied mathematics studies at UNISA and simultaneously registered at WITS for a Master of Science in optimisation of structures. The former studies went quite well, the latter disastrously — I did nothing. How could I possibly have done all this — whilst doing a full-time job at the same time? Not even an intellectual superman could do all this — not if he could not be stable and reasonably self-reassured emotionally.

At the conclusion of this three-year period it is normal practice for the engineer to apply for registration as a professional engineer. I spurned this entirely and went back to
university, having found real-life civil engineering to be an entirely boring exercise. No wonder. I wasn't all there. Some part of me only ever got a chance to dream, nothing more.

At the conclusion of my Civil Engineering studies I was courting G.... I married her in July 1975. K..., my brother, was my best man and D... W... and K... C... my two groomsmen. I considered it inevitable or necessary to have a stag party — in retrospect, I just do not know why. So I organised it myself. If I had not done so, it would not have happened. I wanted to be a man, I suppose, even if it meant pretending that these guys were my hearty friends. I was duly sick. I had had my party. When I got married, I must admit I felt really happy on the day. I did not feel so very self-conscious, and I spoke easily when I addressed everyone. On our way to honeymoon in Durban, G... and I stayed at the Jan Smuts holiday inn overnight, catching a plane in the morning. We made love 4 times in one night. What a breakthrough it seemed for me!

The wedding day had been a peaceful and a happy one. During the honeymoon, however, there was a distinct cooling off. I think we were still very much in love, but there was just a touch of something missing.

Since leaving the City Council I returned to university, to simultaneously study towards a M.Sc in Applied Mathematics and to lecture to first and second year students. The studying was disastrous, and I failed one critical subject that I could not repeat. I withdrew my registration and registered for an Honours B.Sc. at Unisa instead. Now this was plain sailing, and I passed all the required thirteen modules (ten postgraduate plus three undergraduate) in a single year. Not bad, quite an achievement, in fact.
During my lecturing years at Wits I sometimes lost students to other lecturers giving the same subject, at other times gaining confidence in material I was presenting for the second or third time. Perhaps I was learning some humility on the one hand, and a bit of courage coupled with dogged determination on the other. After three years of lecturing, however, I became a little bored with academic life. I wanted to get out into the real world, and earn some real money. I joined Anglo Alpha, which was a disastrous decision. They practiced a kind of intellectual dishonesty which they passed off as statistically derived information.

I resigned and joined Dunswart Steel. There I worked for a chap by the name of B.... He was at least genuine, if a little misguided. We had some friction because he used to magnanimously pass off his foolish ideas as mine.

I went to Olivetti. I had been recruited by a charismatic individual who believed me to also be charismatic. Great minds think alike. His first assignment was for me to spy on rival companies posing as a potential customer. I hated the job, but I did it all the same. He was fired about one month after I joined Olivetti. I was left as the product manager of a range of computers launched three months even before the official launch at Olivetti head office in Italy. But even so I did have a little success there. The product budget was adjusted downwards so we made a small profit. I transferred to a new subsidiary of Olivetti, namely Nikuv Computers. The work was technical. I did OK. The company went bust after nine months. I joined Isis.

The MD of Isis wanted us all to be like a family. It was virtually compulsory to go to the tearoom at 10h00 and 15h00 every day. I remember going in there, feeling incredibly shy, and also with the strange feeling that I had a peculiar kind of
myopia that made the people on the other side of the room appear
to be a little blurred. Most often, I did not go at all. I have
been working at Isis for eight years now. During that time I
have become far more open with my ideas, and even able to
control meetings with several people all wanting to go off at a
tangent, but nevertheless I have been able to stay in control.
The work has varied from technical to management (on a small
scale), and has varied from being peaceful to quite traumatic.
I have seldom been bored. The people are good technically and
mostly very kind-hearted. I like them.

So, married life proceeded. Initially I was still very much in
the psychological grip of my parents, in the sense that I would
tell them with great enthusiasm of my plans for the future.
These plans were always intended to demonstrate my ability to
inevitably forge ahead and rise above everyone else. Our
daughter E... was born in 1984. G...'s enthusiasm for
love-making steadily diminished over the years.

In trying to make progress in terms of house-building, I began a
fairly ambitious plan to extend the house. Because it seemed
that we didn't really have enough capital, initially I did all
the skilled work myself. G... provided only token help, not
really getting going on Saturday and Sunday mornings so that I
used to get the children and the workers fed before beginning
what would often turn out to be a day's work in which
frustratingly little progress would be made. All the same, I
did quite a significant chunk of house - three rooms - all by
myself. I think she didn't go along with the idea of building.
I used to blame her for my plight because her income was so
small, in the belief that it was our narrow income-to-expenses
ratio that made it necessary for me to do the building work
myself. It also seemed sometimes that it was beyond womanly
disregard for straight lines, and plain common sense, when she
tried to help, often causing more effort in the long run than
would have been the case if I had just done the job myself from the beginning. In situations where she would have to approve work or negotiate on the family's behalf, she would often under-represent our interests and make costly mistakes. So did I, of course, but she seemed to make more than I did; and I suffered the consequences not only of my own but always of her mistakes as well. It was beastly.

Eventually, in about 1987, I relented and stopped my nagging and criticising. But it was too late. She had formed a hard and fast impression that I hated her working for enjoyment and convenience rather than for money, and no amount of reassuring could reverse that impression. I was only being tolerant of that anyway. Our love-making had become sterile, and only took place on a Sunday night if she wasn't too tired, after I'd been slaving like a dog all day anyway and she hadn't. A deadly loop. Work harder, play less ... and so work harder, and play even less.

She did have some reasons for not feeling like making love, I suppose. Our second child, K..., was born in 1987 and was an incredibly difficult child suffering from an allergy to milk. He used to keep G... up most nights for several years. I didn't help much, since I used to sleep through his cries.

Several times, I used to say to G... that I thought something was wrong. I guess my attitude was very one-sided on my own behalf, but at least I was trying to say something. I used to get a stony look, with no questions or responses. Nothing, absolutely nothing, would happen from her side. I was unable to formulate my problems, but I tried; and she seemed unwilling to listen.

What was even more significant, G... and I began to lose touch generally; she was more interested in her science fiction, and I
was more and more preoccupied with some meditative experiences I was beginning to have. Only the Lodge (Rosicrucians) held a common interest for us both. But in the long run, it was not enough.

Our marriage had taken place in the Methodist Church, and I think G... and I were both very sincere about it all. We had one specific experience—a weekend in the Magaliesberg—during which I felt very peaceful, very close to God. And I think she experienced it too. But although it seemed pleasant enough to go to the Sunday night church services, the minister and the congregation started bullying us to be more committed.

It was during my three-year stint with the City Council, working as an engineer-in-training, that I encountered I... G..., who introduced me to the Rosicrucians. It was not so much that he offered to introduce us, but that I sensed a romantic attraction to a philosophy full of mystery, in which I would be free to pose whatever questions I might choose. It was very much due to this enthusiasm on my part that got G... and me involved with the Rosicrucians. Intuitively, it just seemed to me to be the right thing to do.

G... attuned quite well with the Rosicrucians, although it was mostly for me. I held several offices: Guardian, Chaplain, Secretary, Master, and G... several also, including Master. This mystical career has for each of us so far lasted for sixteen years. It represents a significant force in my becoming what I have become. The heavy involvement at Lodge required me to overcome my inherent nervousness so many times. I used to enjoy the philosophical debates, in fact any opportunity to demonstrate my superior understanding. I even wrote, and read, several discourses. I liked to impress others in this way. For once I had some respect. During the ritual dramas, I would enjoy being impressive.
But this mystical career was by no means purely intellectual. I certainly did become psychologically stronger, and more able to deal with others. Not that I have no room for improvement, now; but my abilities in this regard improved by an order of magnitude compared with what they had been previously. I even presided as the Master at a funeral ceremony. Quite an experience. During the convocations, and the initiations, as well as during private meditations, I began to feel a current of energy, surging through me.

This was exciting to me, since I believed that at last something was happening to me, that I was changing and therefore evolving. I used to push this experience to the limits, boosting it through intensive meditations, and feeling disappointed if I had a meditation during which I could not feel this energy.

In August 1990, I had what I call the Kundalini experience. This term is derived from eastern mysticism, and to my knowledge the phenomenon is not recognized in western culture; I have only recently found vague references to it in the Rosicrucian doctrine. Even if I had read about it, however, I don't think I would have been prepared for what was to happen to me; suffice it to say for now that it resulted in the fundamental substance of my personality undergoing irreversible change. Whether this was a spiritual experience, or not, is very simply besides the point. As a result of it, I could no longer stand being with my wife, becoming attracted instead to L..., and adventurous in the extreme ... a warrior who had suddenly come to life.

From September 1990 onwards I experienced a severe inability to concentrate which lasted six months. During that time L... gradually withdrew, and one time even deliberately sabotaged my first-ever job as a project manager.
Initially the Kundalini energy gave me such a sex drive that I made love to G... frequently, far more frequently than before. But it was a purely sexual aspect of the relationship. I needed, and she was willing, only too willing, to give. Gradually this new-found sex urge died down to the point where I could not even come to orgasm.

I wrote several discourses. I think that they are significant in that they highlight my preoccupation with the distant and ethereal. They covered topics such as the origin of the universe, including a refutation of the Big Bang theory, Love and Karma, the role of the ego in spiritual development, and true self-knowledge. Not that I truly knew myself. After an incredibly long period of time -- twenty months -- only one of these discourses has been approved by the Rosicrucians; possibly because, in the opinion of the higher officers of the Order, they represent heretical and egocentric (highly individualistic) views. I was deeply offended, as if my own identity was dependent upon getting recognition for having written something very clever. Which they probably are, anyway.

I encountered severe problems at work, cornered between a stupid old hen and my boss, who was sympathetic towards her but even more stupid. My health declined and I developed an inner ear infection as well as Mennier's syndrome, which resulted in me experiencing motion sickness even whilst lying absolutely still on the bed. I became so weak and dehydrated I was taken to hospital by ambulance. The pain in my ears was incredible. This happened in July 1991. As a result of the long-term effects of this, as well as the other factors, I was asked to step down as project manager.

It was when I was on my hospital bed that I made my decision to leave the marriage. Somehow I believed that my illness was purely psychosomatic, and that such a decision was what my
subconscious mind wanted. When G... visited me in hospital, which she very dutifully and faithfully did, I couldn't stand her coming near me — I became very sensitive to the smell of her breath. I think the ear infection I had probably accentuated my sensitivity towards her halitosis. But whatever the causes, I made a decision which in spite of the most severe self-condemnation and self-questioning I have never wanted to change. I advised G... and the children on my return home from hospital, that I was going to leave her. I started looking for accommodation as soon as I was physically able. I moved into another house in November 1991.

I swept into a vindication phase, trying to exploit fully my philosophical insights so that they might in some way show that I was becoming a great man, and that G... had just been a nuisance all along. The Kundalini, though dormant, had given me tremendous resources with which I thought I might impress the world.

I tried to move quickly away from G..., and find the archetypal woman with whom I would live ecstatically ever after. It was as curious as it was desperate. I would go through depressive phases, almost once per week only managing to get in to work at around 10h00. Fortunately I had transferred to another department and was surrounded by caring people, who did not see my Mr. Hyde.

I could not bring myself to actually divorce G.... I kept on threatening to — mostly to myself — until October 1992. I think the reason was that I was unable to find any philosophical justification for doing this and so I believed that I was the guilty party, and that I was unworthy to negotiate with G... in a way that might at least protect my own chances of a full life in the future. But eventually I did do so, and currently am in a state where all has been verbally agreed in the presence of
attorneys, so that the emotional deadlock, I think, is over now. By March 1993 I should be divorced and free.

A few months after the Kundalini experience, in November 1990, I sought psychological counselling for the first time. I saw a psychologist in Kempton Park about six times or so. I got irritated with him because he believed that the Kundalini experience was invalid, and he would argue philosophically with me. Whether my complaints about him are rational, I don't really know. I think I was extremely impatient to get on with living, now that I was appreciating the significance of life for the first time; I only wanted confirmation that I was truly divine, perhaps, and that my life's mission could best be accomplished without G....

A few months later, in May 1991, I consulted a psychiatrist. He said some interesting things, and reviewed some of my writings. Having diagnosed hypergraphia, the clever chap, he proceeded to prescribe anti-depressants which I took for four weeks before I became thoroughly fed up with side-effects. He treated me as an object of clinical curiosity but I believe that he had nothing of significance to offer. Again, perhaps I wanted recognition as the philosopher who had discovered all the secrets of God and life, time and space.

In July 1991 I consulted a psychiatric nurse. She certainly attempted to talk to me in terms I could understand. We never talked about philosophy, but touched on how I felt about G..., and how I could minimise the effect of the separation on the kids. She adopted a slightly confrontational approach, making me genuinely express how I felt. I think I came to understand in depth, the effect of my upbringing. She wanted me to be comfortable with untidiness, to be aware of my depressive phases. I saw her seven times, and G... saw her also. The last time I saw her, I expressed the intention to see a clinical
psychologist. This psychiatric nurse said that I should watch out for 'mind-f...ers'. [You know, that word actually passed the auto-spelling checker. I had to try it, just out of curiosity. We are enlightened, aren't we!] G... has maintained contact with her.

And lastly, I have been seeing S... G... from November 1991 until now. As a result I have come to confront and to acknowledge myself. Of particular significance is Santjie's conviction that I use my philosophizing to distance myself from others in relationships. In terms of loving myself, I am still somewhat of a beginner.

My relationships with women have been quite problematic. In November 1991, I had a brief relationship with someone who became concerned that I was in fact still married, and she quite rightly did not want to become a consideration in causing or accelerating my intended divorce. In February I had a more extended relationship with an older woman of 54 years, a very caring person, J.... I made love to her many times, and we had a fairly good relationship. But I could never free myself from the idea that such a relationship should not be visible to the outside world. J... was an outstanding lover but from my point of view, sometimes quite irritating to talk to over the telephone. She was highly dependent upon me psychologically, and that worried me. The relationship ended with me trying to make love when I realised I didn't want to.

I have been through another two girlfriends. My values are changing quite rapidly, including a definition of what constitutes a good relationship. I do not intend to have sexual relations with anyone unless I believe that a sound long-term relationship will develop. May God help me to make a good choice, and to live my life to the full.
Description of transformations

In this section I have identified several events in my life, that I believe have had transformational content.

Choked off by my mother

Until age 4 I was quite cheeky towards my mother. Once she exploded in anger, telling me that I should stop it. This happened in the presence of my brothers. It had a profound effect upon me, as if from that moment in time, I realised that I wasn't protected by her anymore. I had to please her rather than just expect unconditional love.

Not invited to L... B...'s party

I wanted to be popular and could not understand why I had not been invited to Lorry Bean's birthday party, to which almost half the class had been invited. I gate-crashed the party, and was allowed to stay although I was reminded that I had not been invited. I was puzzled at not having been chosen as a prefect in grade 2. These experiences set the scene for the rest of my life, in that I would forever be wanting recognition and not getting it.

I put sugar in Mrs R...'s bed

When I was in standard five, my parents went on long leave overseas and we had a Mrs R... stay with us as a kind of hired mother. A friend of mine inspired me to put sugar in her bed. My eldest brother choked me off, as if he were father. I came to respect him as a kind of father image, and he came to respect me a lot less. I was twelve years old, he was nineteen.

I caused some damage to my Dad's car
Once I inadvertently left one of the rear doors slightly open whilst my Dad was reversing the car out of the garage, this door swung open and caused some damage. Actually the damage was incredibly minor; two square inches of car bodywork were affected. But my father was extremely angry. I cried and cried. I became aware of just how important material things were, to the detriment of my own personal values. I had acquired his materialism. To this day my relationship with my father is not great. In fact, even quite recently he indicated his reluctance to visit me at my home, even though he went to G's house quite frequently. I have often been quite prepared to say to him, "go and find another son".

The family was involved in a car accident

At the start of Standard 7 I had an extremely traumatic experience. The family was involved in a car accident in which my mother's face ended up being very badly scarred. My father had driven into a stationary car in front of him. K..., the middle brother, told me that I had pushed the passenger seat that my mother was sitting in from behind, and that was why she had hit her head on the windshield. Of course it was the momentum that did it. I was guilty anyway.

Onset of puberty

Once visiting C... I think that after swimming with her in the pool she peeped on me and saw me masturbating, though I had no idea that these feelings were linked to being around her. I didn't see her very much after that.

I became unable to concentrate at school and extremely absent-minded. N... and K..., my brothers, caught me masturbating and reported this to my mother. She said to me
that they had said I did dirty things. I denied that I did. She caught me once herself after that, and pretended not to see. In my guilt I unfortunately swore on the Bible that I would never do it again, in the belief that daring God would scare me into doing the right thing. It didn't work. Possibly this oath influenced me in later life, to become somewhat of an outcast, a rebel, and a heretic.

My father made my career decision for me

During my army year I had an aptitude test. The result indicated that I should do architecture, aeronautical engineering, agricultural engineering. The last choice was civil engineering. My father convinced my to do civil engineering because it was the safest, most secure way for me to go. How sorry I am I let him impose his value system upon me, since I started my career on the basis of having a safe, secure job rather than one that might be fulfilling. A life was unfolding, which had a cul-de-sac sign at the start.

I was caught by some confidence tricksters

When I was at university, I was taken in by some confidence tricksters. They took R100 off me in 1971 money. I felt a fool. I told my mother but asked her not to tell my father. I lost confidence. The world threatened.

I had an open fight with my boss at Dunswart

I remember one particular incident in which I felt peculiar, like I had screw loose in my head. In retrospect this was an early firing of the Kundalini which was to erupt a few years later. I left the meeting at which my boss, B..., had made a faux pas on my behalf, early, and went home. The next day I returned to work with a vengeance, with the intention of wiping
B... off the face of the earth. I incited two other of his subordinates to rebel and move to other departments. Bob wasn't terribly pleased. In fact he fired me on the spot. His boss rescued me, however, and we all lived uneasily ever after, until I became bored again with Dunswart, since none of our work and recommendations were being accepted by the rest of the company. I suppose I learnt that it was possible to work with someone that I'd had the most terrible argument with.

Mother's death

My mother died at age 75. This is an event that is remarkable in that it did not upset me, as far as I knew. For a long time, I never even thought about my mother, nor did I obtain any photographs of her. I can't say I know why. I've wondered if my mother's death precipitated my Kundalini experience, in some way. Now sometimes I do see her image inside my head, especially when I'm making love or in some other way being close to a woman. I think of her face, as she must have looked when she was anything between forty and seventy.

Experiences of ecstaticy

At one point in time I experienced the most profound ecstasy. It lasted for twenty minutes. It seemed to come with an incredibly simple message: It does not matter what you have done, and what you have not done; you are worthy, and you are loved. Thank God for this experience. In all my life, I had been desperately waiting for some kind of miracle, and this seemed to be it.

This ecstasy recurred at intervals of time anything between 3 and 12 months. I sometimes received psychic impressions and phrases beyond explanation via fantasy or coincidence, and which seemed significant in terms of what was happening to me. The
scene was set for the most profound mystical experience in my life, which was to occur in August 1990. The scene was set, I think, for my subconscious mind to generate the most significant transformative experience in my life - the Kundalini experience, probably intended specifically to boost me out of the marriage, which my conscious mind had no apparent intention of doing. The balance of power between my subconscious and my conscious mind, had been fundamentally changed. And G..., who had expressed her disapproval of what was going on, was to become a victim of this most powerful energy. So to speak.

L... and the Kundalini experience

Regardless of my speculations as to what has caused this Kundalini experience, that it has occurred as a specific event is the surest thing in my whole life. Through it I became transformed in a short period of time from one state, to another state of being; virtually from one personality, to another. Even those who have viewed the resulting disruption in my life, are only to a very limited degree aware of the deep psychological changes that have taken place on the inside. The peculiar episode of events was heralded on August 19th by another waking dream, this time a vision of having a close relationship - at least telepathic, if not intimate - with a divorcee, named L..., also employed at Isis. The same day I attended a seminar at which she was also present. Puzzled at my own attraction to this woman, and also by a feeling of alienness that I felt with respect to my very own self, I nevertheless enjoyed every moment of being with her. L... and I never made love, but we often talked during the next few months. I think that after a while she withdrew from having any kind of relationship with me, in order not to be responsible for the breakup of my marriage.
Within a few days of the seminar, I began to say things to G... that I would never have contemplated saying to her before. It seemed as if my subconscious mind was doing all the talking, and what it said wasn't nice. I tried to analyse the difference between G... and L..., and G... caught me red-handed doing it on the computer.

By September 9th, I began to wonder what this strange episode was all about. It was a Saturday afternoon, and I lay on the bed, looking out of the enormous windows at the beautiful blue sky, the bright white clouds, the patterns of sunlight, the green of the garden. I was happy to be there, and to receive all this visual beauty in all its intensity. I thought that this episode was over, interesting and enlivening as it had been up to then. I did not know how wrong I was.

That night, I meditated from 23h00 to 24h00. It was a very powerful meditation, in which I managed to create and sustain a tingling sensation in all of my body. When I went to bed, the doorway started to move around - as if I was drunk. I stood up, went to the toilet just to do something, and came back to bed. Then these vibrations began - similar to what I had created and sustained during meditation, but this time totally beyond my instigation and also my control. I said to G... to pray for me. She said yes and rolled over and feel asleep, I think very much unaware of what my real needs were at the time. These vibrations covered my entire body, from head to toe. I was quite scared. I felt as if my soul would be carried away by some dark unseen force. I prayed to every living soul I knew. The vibrations were not unpleasant, in fact they were rather like an overall orgasm that lasted from three to four hours, non-stop. I did not sleep at all that night. I was not really tired in the morning. But I knew I had undergone a change to my psyche, and that I would never be the same person again.
As to L...'s role in all this, I know she admired me and thought me intelligent. It seems amazing that someone else respecting me in this way could be sufficient cause for this transformative experience to have occurred. Perhaps there were other reasons, as well; I know that I admired and respected her very much, too. In retrospect, this experience, although it has so much in common with the experience of illumination in terms of eastern mysticism, can basically be thought of as the event of two different aspects of my personality that once were separated, becoming integrated. I forgave and welcomed my own demons back into myself — if that makes any sense. It is as if I was integrated, and in a manner of speaking, came to life for the first time. The novelty of this experience made me unique; not only intrinsically, but also in my capitalising on it to try to achieve an even greater identity than the one I already had.

Making love to a power-house

I am a little embarrassed about this episode, but here it is. In December 1992 I went to the Buddhist Retreat in Ixopo. There, I had an entirely unintended sexual encounter with another older woman, very much like L..., and also much older than myself. She was an incredible power-house, a person with multiple master's degrees in social psychology and management. At the time, I had been preoccupied with the fact that my sexual desire was steadily decreasing, and virtually non-existent; so when I was close to her, and realised that I actually had an erection, I was more than willing to go ahead with sexual intercourse. Unintended, whatever next?

My experience of therapy

By the time a friend of mine suggested that I see S..., I had already had a few attempts at getting help from other people. Firstly, I saw an analyst who gave every indication of getting
nowhere slowly. Secondly, I saw a psychiatrist who charged a fat fee for diagnosing depression and not much else. Thirdly, I saw a psychiatric nurse who really did help in the sense that I had someone who challenged me a little, and to whom I could turn for advice on how to approach certain problems, such as what to do about my children, but who could not get into the depth of my own personality.

My expectations were that I could get an objective view as to what was happening to me, probably because I knew that something was very wrong in spite of my grandiose ideas of being divinely called, as it were. The therapist induced memories in me that were pretty uncomfortable, and in the early stages of therapy it often happened that when the session was over I would be driving my car with tears in my eyes, on my way home or returning to work. We dealt with several uncomfortable issues during the therapy. The therapist succeeded in clarifying a lot of my experiences so that I could understand them better. So I gradually achieved greater self-awareness.

I need therapy for those occasions when I feel overwhelmed by what's happening, should I feel worthless again or unable to cope. In my whole life I really haven't had much by way of intimate and meaningful communication with other people. Therapy gives me a chance to get someone else's viewpoint regarding myself, to the point of confronting me where necessary. I hope to establish my own values. I need help in establishing criteria for what constitutes a good relationship and who would be a good choice for me to have a relationship with.

I think that, in my case, therapy has come in the nick of time. In retrospect I realise that my life has been a progressive building-up of defence mechanisms, which might have become so strong that I might have successfully resisted — as well as
rebuffed - any attempts from someone else to help me, and held myself safely within self-imposed isolation for who knows how long ... maybe even forever.
APPENDIX II

FREDA'S SELF-NARRATIVE

(This self-narrative was produced in Afrikaans, since this is Freda's medium of preference. After some deliberation I decided to present it in the original Afrikaans, since by translating it into English some of the intended meanings and nuances may inadvertently be altered.)

MY LEWENSVERHAAL

My Pa se agtergrond

My Duitse Pa, F... H..., het saam met sy twee broers en 'n suster na Suid-Afrika geimmigreer aan die einde van die vorige eeu. Hy simpatiseer met die Afrikaners en veg teen die Engelse in die Anglo-Boere-oorlog, word gevangene geneem en beland op Ceylon waar hy my oupa-grootjie, H... N..., bevriend en saam met hom terugkeer na die Vrystaat. Hy trou toe met my ouma -- 'mooi' A... N... en hulle het vier kinders waarvan my pa die jongste was.

My ouma se plasie is gedurende die Depressiejare onder hulle uit en my oupa gaan werk op die diamantmyne in Lichtenburg waar hy velkanker opdoen en hy sterf daaraan toe my pa-hulle nog redelik jonk was. Sy huwelik was klaarblyklik nie gelukkig nie -- my ouma was baie moeilik en hy meestal weg van die huis. My pa onthou hom as 'n soort skadufiguur. Vandag is daar net een familieportret en 'n ongemerkte graf in die begraafplaas op Frankfort van hom oor ...

My pa-hulle het onsentdend arm grootgeword en hulle is op skool gespot oor hulle klere. Die oudste broer verlaat die skool in standerd 7 en slaan pik om die gesin te help. In sy matriekjaar,
toe my pa 15 was, sluit hy aan by die Sewendedag Adventistekerk, ná 'n reeks evangeliedienste op sy tuisdorp, Frankfort. Sy onderwysers is ontsteld en my ouma jaag hom uit die huis uit. Met een pond in sy sak gaan hy na Helderberg Kollege (ons kerkkollege in Somerset-Wes) om teologie te swot. Hy verkoop vakansies boeke en werk gedurende die jaar in die kafeteriakombuis om sy studies te betaal. Aanvanklik is hy baie skaam en voel baie uit tussen al die Engelse maar gaandeweg ontluik hy, word baie populêr en klaspresident. Intussen word sy een broer, H..., en sy ma ook Sewensedag Adventiste. Sy suster wat in Johannesburg verpleeg, verengels heeltemaal en verdwyn uit hulle lewens uit.

My pa begin werk by die kerk se pers as vertaler en begin ook kortverhale skryf wat eerste pryse wen op Stellenbosch se Eisteddfods. Dan gaan boer hy saam met sy broer, H..., en hulle skryf saam jeugverhale (gebaseer op hulle eie jeug), kortverhale, 'n novelle, 'n paar romans, ensovoorts, waarmee hulle die plaas afbetaal. Hulle het 'n baie hegte verhouding waarin my pa altyd my oom 'boost'. Hy doen dit die res van sy lewe as 'n soort kompensasie, dink ek. Blykbaar is hulle op skool saam in dieselfde klas gesit en my pa, wat die jongste was, het altyd beter presteer.

My ma se agtergrond

My oupa aan my ma se kant, J... P..., is 'n kleinkind van Andries Pretorius en Sarel Celliers. My ma het vandag die familiebybel. Hy is vroeg uit die skool om te boer, maar al sy ander broers en susters word dokters, predikante, onderwysers, ensovoorts. Sy familie is baie gekultiveerde en vroom mense.

My ouma, F... S..., is die jongste en bedorwe dogter van 'n gesiene boer in die Tweeling distrik by sy tweede vrou wat baie jonger as hy is. My ouma verlaat die skool in st. 7 omdat sy nie
van die onderwyser hou nie en trou met my oupa op haar pa se aandrang — hy hou nie van haar Joodse këreltjie nie. Hulle het twee dogters waarvan my ma, A... J..., die jongste is. Sy is vernoem na haar pa se ma en my ouma haal al haar minderwaardigheidsgevoelens jeens haar skoonfamilie op haar uit. (Sy het ryk grootgeword, maar haar familie is ruwe boere en nie gekultiveerde mense nie.) My ma haat vandag nog haar naam en ons noen haar G... eerder as A....

My ouma het my ma ook gespot oor haar groot 'Petoorspote' (nr. 7) en gedwing om té klein skoene te dra sodat haar 'pote' moes ophou groei. My ouma — anders as haar man — is baie onsimpatiek met die kinders se siektes en dissiplineer hulle op 'n baie 'abusive' wyse. My oupa, egter, is baie sag, liefdevol, 'caring', ensovoorts, en as hy tussenbeide tree wanneer sy vrou die kinders slaan, dan is daar éers drama! ('Sound familiar?')

Die oudste dogter, E..., is die appel van my ouma se oog en word tot vandag nog byna aanbid deur haar.

Na matriek gaan my ma na Pretoria Universiteit toe om maatskaplike werk te swot maar sy skop op na 'n paar weke en gaan weer terug huis toe waar sy as 'n bankklerk werk vir vyf jaar. Sy gaan vyf jaar met my pa uit en trou op 23 met hom teen haar ouers se wense.

Wat vir my interessant is, is dat albei my oumas oorheersend en 'moeilik' was en dat hulle albei hulle mans (vermoed ek) as swakkelinge beskou het. Albei oupas het uit gekultiveerde huise gekom en was sagte mense. My Duitse oupa vlug na die 'diggings' en my boere-oupa gaan werk in die handelshuis op die dorp en laat die boerdery grootliks aan my ouma oor.

Albei oumas was kwaai en die dissiplineerders in die huis — my ma se dissipline was net meer 'abusive', dink ek. My pa en ma
Karaktersketse van my ouers

My pa is 'n warm, gemoedelike, sosiale mens wat baie 'caring' is en simpatiseer met die 'underdog'. Hy is ook 'n virige vegter vir Afrikaans in sy kerk en is gevolglik as 'n boere-rebel beskou, maar is BAIE gewild onder sy studente en gemeenteledes. Hy preek wonderlik, skryf interessant, is baie joviaal en grappig, en kan lag én huil. Hy is ook baie haastig, ongeduldig, onprakties, dominerend, veeleisend en geniet vroulike aandag!

Hy is baie streng in sy godsdienstige opvattings maar is ook baie 'human' -- vertel stoute grappies, vat aan my ma se 'boobs' en is redelik 'tolerant' van 'weird' mense. Hy het seksuele dubbele standarde wat my WOEDEND maak en waaroor ons baie baklei. Sy kombinasie van rigiditeit en 'humanness' verwar my redelik -- ek sukkel al my lewe lank om die 'physical' en 'spiritual' bymekaar uit te bring en dis een van die redes waarom ek die kerk verwerp -- ek voel dat ek nie 'measure up to what is expected' nie.

My ma is stiller, passiewer en laat my pa toe om haar te domineer en vir haar te dink. Sy het geen lewe buiten hom nie en is totaal op sy behoeftes ingestem. Sy krop wel griewe op en ontplof dan op 'n dag -- 'in fact', sy raak heeltemaal beserk.

Haar huishouding is baie ongeorganiseerd en my pa stel tot die 'grocery'-lyste op. Sy brand gereeld die kos, lees tydskrifte, is dikkwels in 'n dwaal, slaap sleug, het die baie kwale, maar kry weinig simpatie by my pa op dié gebied. (As hy egter die dag siek is, kom die hele huishouding tot 'n 'standstill'.) Sy is baie stadig wat my pa én my erg frustreer. Sy leef heeltemaal in
sy skadu maar is ook die stille krag in sy lewe en hulle is lief vir mekaar vir 40 jaar van getroude lewe.

Sy het weinig vriendinne of stokperdjies, het 'n lae selfbeeld, kan nooit 'n fout erken nie, is baie skaam en selfopofferend maar raak baie defensief en reaktief. Haar politieke idees dryf my tot raserny en sy veralgemeen verskriklik oor die "Ingelse", die swartes, ensovoorts. Sy sukkel soms baie om haarself uit te druk en vra talle vrae as 'n vorm van gesprekvoering -- "both of which drive me crazy". Maar terselfdertyd voel ek 'n ontsettende deernis vir haar.

My broer, F...

Op skool is hy 'n prefek, doen baie goed in sport en kry 4 onderskeidings sonder om ooit te swot. Hy is 'n dromer en ry op sy fiets rond of is op die gholfbaan of tennisbaan. Na matriek loop hy 'n jaar medies op Stellenbosch maar doen baie swak -- die vryheid weg van die huis is een te veel vir hom. My pa is baie ontsteld en ek en my moet mooi praat om hom te kalmeer.

My broer wou altyd 'n wildbewaarder word en het geleef vir vakansies wanneer ons na wildtuine gegaan het. My ouers wou niks weet hiervan nie.

My broer besluit toe om ook Teologie op Helderberg Kollege te swot. Ongelukkig word hy altyd met my pa vergelyk, en omdat hy na my ma aard en stiller, sagter en minder dinamies as my pa is, kom hy die slegste daarvan af. Ek en hy en my neef, L..., is baie "close" tydens ons studentedae in die Kaap. Hy is aantreklik, goed versorg en gewild onder die meisies. Hy het twee vaste verhoudings voor hy verlief raak op 'n Engelse meisie van Zimbabwe -- wat baie na my lyk -- en trou met haar toe hy 22 is en sy 19. Sy is fyn en tenger en nie baie gesond nie en het 'n lisensiaat in klavier. Hulle woon in Oudtshoorn tydens sy
diensplig, trek later na Zimbabwe en weer terug Kaap toe. Hy behaal 'n MA-graad in Teologie deur ons kerk se universiteit in Amerika maar werk nou by die kerk se pers as redakteur en fotograaf (soos my pa ook vroeër). Sy vrou swot ook (deur Unisa) en maak twee seuntjies groot. Die gesin is vegetaries, luister net klassieke musiek, kyk nie TV nie en is hipergodsdienstig. Hulle het ook weinig kontak met ons — sy het nie van my pa gehou nie en hou ook nie veel van ons nie. My broer het die baie 'grievances' wat hy koester en verder is ons 'te materialisties, te wêrelds', ensovoorts.

Hulle is baie lief vir mekaar maar wat my betref is dit 'n simbiotiese verhouding. Hulle versterk mekaar se 'insecurities' en 'hangups', laat min ander mense naby hulle toe, sy 'insist' om my broer se hare self te sny en dat hy nie mag mooi aantrek of 'aftershave' gebruik nie. Hy lyk soos 'n sendeling deesdae. Sy dra mini-rokkies, lyk oulik en mooi.

My suster, E...

Sy doseer fisioterapie aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch en haar man is besig om te spesialiseer in Pediatie. Sy is brandmaer, perfeksonisties, baie beheersd, rasioneel en 'assertive' maar ook redelik 'introverted', nie baie spontaan nie, minder 'compassionate', redelik rigied, goed georganiseerd, trek elegant aan ('understated chic') en het die baie goeie smaak in haar huis en tuin en weet hoe om my swaer te hanteer — na 'n aanvanklik ontstuimige en selfs gewelddadige aanpassingstydperk.

Sy het glo in 'n stadium bedreig gevoel deur my. Sy't gedink ek is slimmer (seker my pa se skuld want hy het so gedink) en meer spontaan en meer 'likeable'. Ek was ook baie maerder as sy en al was sy baie 'sexier', het dit haar gepla. Ek het haar ingelig oor die 'birds' en die 'bees' en haar gewaarsku oor wat om te verwag van mans sodat sy nie so naïef soos ek die wêreld sou
ingaan nie. Sy is baie deur my idees en smaak beïnvloed. Ek het haar ook fisies beskerm toe my ma 'n paar keer teenoor haar 66k in onbeheerste woedes uitgebars het. Dit het egter nie so dikwels gebeur nie want sy was minder 'cheeky' as ek en ook my ma se 'kleintjie'.

Op skool het sy baie goed presteer, was 'n prefek, het 3 jaar na mekaar die redenaarsbeker gewen en was baie gewild onder die seuns. Toe sy Stellenbosch toe is en op Helderberg Kollege begin inwoon het, het sy egter baie verander. Die kollege mense het gedink sy is baie wild omdat sy baie 'sexy' was, modern aangetrek het, ensovoorts, en het haar so behandeld. Op universiteit is hulle ge-'pressurize' op akademiese gebied en sy het chemie ge-'plug' en moes die hele jaar herhaal. Gevolgens het sy begin glo dat sy dom is en het onseker van haarself geraak, asook baie stil.

Sy het twee vaste verhoudings gehad met 'unsuitable' ouens tot sy besluit het om met swaer te trou omdat hy baie goeie troumateriaal is, eerder as wat sy so mal oor hom was.

Sy wil glad nie graag kinders hê nie maar haar man wil. Verder is sy baie geheg aan my en my ma en bel ons elke Sondag, maar huiwer ook nie om ons uit te skel nie! Sy is die middelpunt van haar eie wêreldjie — haar man en beste vriendin het geen ander vriende nie en is byna volkome afhanklik van haar. Sy, egter, het ander vriendinne en is redelik selfstandig. Haar finansies reguleer sy met 'n ysterhand en sy was nog nie naastenby in soveel moeilikheid soos ek nie — nie finansieel of emosioneel nie!

*Mý verhaal*

Mý pa was 33 en my ma 23 toe hulle getroud is in 1952. Haar ouers was daarteen gekant omdat my pa 'n 'Duitser' was en 'n
Sewenedag Adventis -- hulle was "klipdoppers" en trots op hulle Voortrekkerafkoms. My ma het na die troue 'n lidmaat van die SDA-kerk geword en is daarvoor onderf deur haar ouers.

My ouers se eerste huweliksjaar was traumatis. Hulle het in een huis gewoon saam met my pa se broer, H..., en sy nuwe vrou (hy is drie dae na my pa getrou, op 35, met 21-jarige meisie) en daar was baie jaloesie en onenigheid as gevolg van my pa en sy broer se te hegte verhouding en 'n wedywering tussen die vrouens. My pa los toe die plaas met al die implemente vir my oom en gaan terug Helderberg Kollege toe waar hy 'n BA-graad deur Unisa begin loop. Ek is daar "conceive" en word die volgende jaar op Heidelberg, Transvaal, gebore waar my pa toe plaasvoorman by die kerk se hoërskool is en aangaan met sy studies.

My pa was verskriklik in sy skik dat ek 'n dogtertjie was en het oorgelope van trots op my. Hy het later in sy boeke selfs daaroor geskryf. "I was his delight".

My eerste vyf jaar op Sedave onthou ek nie veel van nie -- net 'n paar insidente en wat my ma my kon vertel. Ek het glo geweier om geborsvoed te word en my ma weggestoot as sy my ge-"hug" het (te styf, as ek reg onthou). Toe ek twee is, is my boetie, F..., gebore en ek was baie jaloers. Hy was baie soet en 'beautiful' en my ma se "delight". Hy wou niks by ons vat nie, my ma moes alles vir hom doen. Ons het gestry oor na wie ons aard, met "obvious" voorkeure.

Verder onthou ek ons huisbediende, T..., my ouma, "Gran" (aan my pa se kant) wat vir 'n paar weke per jaar vir ons kom kuier, my nefies en van die skoolkinders. Ek het een maatjie gehad, M.... Ons het seksuele speletjies gespeel. "Sabbatskool" was die hoogtepunt van die week. Ons was vegetaries en baie streng godsdienstig -- elke week in die kerk, geen radio/koop/werk,
ensovoorts, op Saterdae nie, elke aand 'n Bybelstorie, ensovoorts, ensovoorts. 'n Hoenderhaan het my glo eenkeer onderstebo geskop en sy kop het 'n paar minute later gewaai! (My pa.) My ma het vir my mooi rokkies gemaak maar my gedwing om juis die een waarvan ek nie hou nie aan te trek! Nog 'n boetie is gebore toe ek 4 is, maar hy is na 4 dae oorlede. My ma het Duitse masels gedurende die swangerskap gekry by Oom H... se kinders (nóg 'n wrok teen hulle, vir haar) en die seuntjie se dunderm was iets mee fout sodat hy niks kos kon inneem of verteer nie. Ons was baie hartseer en ek onthou hoe my boetie in sy kis gelyk bet. My pa het dit egter nie so erg soos my ma gevoel nie. Sy het self sy grafsteentjie gemaak.

Blykbaar was ek as kleinkind baie ekstroverties, spontaan, afwyserig en baasspelerig, asook selfsugtig met my speelgoed en MAL oor my pa. Ek onthou egter 'n minder aangename ervaring met hom — ons was by die see en ek sien 'n stomp en dink dis 'n haai (seker my ma se vrese en waarskuwings wat dit veroorsaak bet) en skree blou moord en weier om in die water te gaan maar my pa forseer my. My ma en pa het heelwat argumente oor sulke goed gehad — sy is bang en versigtig en hy wil dit weer uit ons kry met geweld. Verder het hulle baklei oor familie, meesal oor sy broer.

Verder onthou ek nie veel van hierdie tydperk nie. Ek onthou my pa se duiwe, veldblommetjies wat ons gepluk het en 'n kwaai bul in 'n kamp agter ons huis. Dis omtrent al.

Toe ek so 5 jaar was, verhuis ons na Helderberg Kollege, Somerset-Wes, waar my pa Afrikaans doseer en besig is met 'n Maverhandeling op Stellenbosch onder DJ Opperman.

Die Kaap is vir my wonderlik mooi en die kollege kampus is teen die hange van die Helderberg, 'n paar kilometers van die strand, kyk oor Tafelberg en het pragtige bome, al die bure is
Amerikaans of Engels. My pa stuur my op ses jaar na 'n Afrikaanse laerskool op Somerset-Wes maar haal my na 'n paar weke weer uit dié skool en skryf my in by die laerskool op Helderberg waar ek 'n Amerikaanse onderwyseres het wat nie 'n woord Afrikaans kan praat nie. Die kinders het glo 'Afrikaner vrot banana' vir my gesing, my ma dwing my om langbroeke aan te trek as gevolg van chroniese mangelontsteking wat ek kry en die ander kinders sê die heidens. Ek was dus redelik UIT!

My laerskoolrapporte sê ek is skaam, baasspelerig en het 'n gebrek aan inisiatief (die Afrikaanse laerskool was BAIE streng en het glad nie inisiatief aangemoedig nie) maar ek doen baie goed en moet altyd die 'stadiger' kinders help. Die skool het 'n paar boelies wat ek haat en my broer en sy maatjies spot my oor my ontluikende borste in standerd 2 maar andersins gaan dit 'okay'. Ek het een goeie maatjie B... en twee of drie 'boyfriend'-jies wat vir my liefdesbriefies skryf, huisie-huisie saam met my speel en my soen. Die soene is opwindend en my hart bons en my wange brand maar ek voel ook skuldig — hoekom weet ek nie. Ek lees ontsettdend baie, tot 15 boeke per week, en vorm bendes met my broer se maatjies. Ons het boomhuise, geheime plekke in die bos, ensovoorts, wat baie 'exciting' is.

Die bure se kinders en ek speel etlike kere dokter-dokter. My ma vang ons uit een keer en het ons seker uitgeskel want ek onthou ek het gehuil en my neus is toegepoeier voor my pa sou huis toe kom sodat hy nie sou weet nie (miskien wou ek nie hê hy moes weet nie). Maar ek was lank agterdogtig dat sy hom dalk wel vertel het daarvan. Kinders by die skool het my ook vertel van seks/voortplanting en ek was 'horrified' om te dink my ouers sou so iets doen. Ek het ons huisbediende daarna uitgevra en sy het net gesê ek sou anders daaroor voel as ek eendag groot is. Nie 'n slegte antwoord nie!
In die stadium het ek gedink my maatjies en juffrou is wonderlik en my pa en ma — en ekself, dink ek — is minder 'nice'. Dit was ook nie vir my lekker dat my pa 'n onnie was op die kampus nie want al die rebelse kinders was teen die onnies gekant. In standerd 2 het ek die eerste keer liedjies van die Beatles gehoor by die ander kinders.

In standerd 3 presteer ek so goed dat die prinsipale besluit ek moet standerd 4 'spring'. Gedurende die Desembervakansie moes my ouers my breuke (nagmerrie!) en Geskiedenis en Aardrykskunde leer, ek skryf 'n eksamen in Januarie, slaag dit met 90% en is dan skielik in standerd 5. Ek kry twee nuwe maatjies in hierdie jaar, menstrueer vir die eerste keer (baie erg vir my) en raak MAL oor perde. My pa koop vir my 'n perd en maak vir hom 'n stal, ek sluit aan by 'n ponieklub en ry saam met ander kinders. Ek verslind boeke oor perde en maak selfs plakboeke oor hulle. Ek maak ook self die perd en die stal skoon, voer die perd daagliks en dis heerlik.

Ek swem baie en lees nog steeds 'voraciously'. My ouma 'Gran' aan my pa se kant is oorlede in my standerd 5 jaar en ek kry haar Bybel en haar horlosie. In hierdie jaar het ek die eerste 'fight' met my vriendin, L..., en haar ma — ons onderwyseres — roep ons saam in en bid vir ons oor die saak. Ek is 'moved' maar sy lag daaroor. Ek is hipergodsdienstig en baie ongemaklik met my eie lyf. Ek weier om 'n bra te dra tot in standerd 8.

In standerd 6 luister ek skelm popmusiek en rook agapanthus-stammetjies gestop met dennenaalde. Dis stout en 'fun'. Ek skeer my beenhare met my pa se skeermes en my ma spoeg op my toe sy dit uitvind. Ek koop 'n botteltjie lippiel naellak maar my ma gooi dit in die vuur toe sy dit ontdek om te wys wat sy daarvan dink. Ek sny my lang blonde hare af in 'n kort 'Twiggy' styl en almal noem my Twiggy.
Ek besit net twee rokke en twee paar skoene. Vakansies werk ek in die kafeteria vir 'n bietjie sakgeld. Ander vakansies kuier ons by my ouma en oupa P... op die plaas. Ek voel my ma is outyds en ek raak redelik modern en skoonheidsbewus, maar voel minderwaardig teenoor van die ander gewilder meisies in die skool. My beste vriendin is W... en ek ken haar vandag nog. My Engelse onderwyseres maak 'n vreeslike 'fuss' oor my omdat ek as Afrikaanssprekende die beste presteer in 'n Engelse skool. Sy toets my leessoop en sê ek lees teen die spoed van 'n volwasse tersiëre student en gee my allerhande ekstra opdragte. Ek verslind al die Engelse boeke op die biblioteek se rakke — Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, die Bronté's, ensovoorts. 'Wuthering Heights' lees ek seker ses keer en huil my elke keer katswink (obsessiewe liefde, intensiteit, ontoepaslike liefde, 'heartache'...). Ek kry ook my laaste pak slae in standerd 6 — my ma takel my met 'n kasplankie en ek skop haar weg, sy sê my pa aan om my met 'n belt te slaan en ek staan doodstil sonder om 'n traan te stort. My pa besluit toe ek is te oud om nog pakke te kry.

Ek kry dikwels sinusaanvalle tot die dokter bevind ek is allergies vir perdehare. Die perd moet toe verkop word en ek praat in my slaap daaroor en kry nagmerries. Ek kry ook vir die eerste keer 'n migrainê-hoofpyn die dag voor my graad 4 musiekeksamen en dop die eksamen. My pa sê ek hoef nie meer musiekeksamens af te le nie en daarna speel ek net vir my eie plesier op die Hofmeyer vleuelklavier wat my pa vir my gekoop het in sy armoede.

In standerd 7 verhuis ons na Benoni want my pa besluit uiteindelik om die bediening te betree en word soontoe beroep. Ek gaan na die Afrikaanse staatskool en moet skielik als in Afrikaans leer. Ek het 'n 'nice' maatjie, C..., maar voel ontuis in die groepie by wie sy pouses sit en raak baie stil en in myself gekeer. Tuis het ek geen sosiale lewe nie. Ons woon die
kerk se sosiale funksies by maar ek voel baie lomp, selfbewus en skaam met die seuns. My pa lewer gedurig kommentaar hieroor en dit maak my nog meer selfbewus. Niemand mag aan my raak nie — nie eens my broer nie — of ek kry die stuipe.

'n Outjie stel wel in my belang en my pa is baie verlig want, sê hy, hy het nie geweet of ek aantreklik vir mans sal wees nie. Die opmerking maak my geweldig seer.

In standerd 8 verhuis ons weer eens na Randfontein op die Wes-Rand. Daar maak ek drie goeie vriendinne. Ek begin weer 'relax' en geniet die skoollewe sowel as die kerk se sosiale funksies. Ek eksperimenteer met kleredrag en begin 'blue jeans' dra tot my ouers se ontsteltenis. Ek en my ma baklei soms verskriklik en ek sny een dag al haar belts stukkend met 'n skêr.

Standerd 9 was 'n jaar waarin ek meer aandag aan my skoolwerk begin gee het maar ek het nooit baie hard gewerk nie — my pa het gesê hy wil ons nie 'pressurize' om te presteer nie. 'n Outjie in ons kerk, D..., begin by my kuier en leer my soen. Hy los my vir 'n ruk en kuier by 'n ander meisie in die kerk. Ek is nogal hartseer en my ma koop vir my 'n horlosie en troos my soos wat sy doen wanneer ek siek is. Ek is verstom deur haar 'kindness'. Hy begin na 'n paar weke weer by my kuier asof niks ooit verkeerd was nie en gee my sy ring om te dra.

In my matriekjaar is hy nie meer tevrede om my te soen nie, maar begin vry ook. Ten spyte van my fantasieë is ek totaal onkant gevang, fisies siek vir twee dae — wat is verkeerd met my dat hy sulke dinge met my doen? Maar ek is nie in staat om myself hieroor te 'assert' nie. Seks is nooit met my bespreek nie en in 'n huis wat deur wat totaal deur my pa gedomineer is ('Kinders het nie 'n wil van hulle eie nie', het hy altyd gesê) en waar enige selfgeldendheid aan my kant as 'cheek' deur my ma beskou is ('Jy sal nog in die hel brand omdat jy nie jou moeder eer
nie', ensovoorts) was 'assertiveness' nie een van my sterk punte nie. Verder het ek gedurig by die kerk gehoor — 'Jesus first, others second, myself last'.

My skuldgevoelens en tranedal het egter my këreltjie se beter kant na vore gebring en hy het belowe om dit 'nooit' weer te doen nie. Oor die volgende paar maande het ons baie nader gekom aan mekaar en baie verlief geraak. Ek het heeltemaal uit my 'introverted' dop gekruip en ure met hom gesels, tot my pa se verbasing. Na 'n paar maande het ons weer begin vry, maar hierdie keer wou ek dit doen, ten spyte van my skuldgevoelens. Ons het baie vak lei omdat hy so besitlik was. Hy het my oorlaai met geskenke, briefe, gedigte, boeke, plate, maar wou my nie die spase gun om ander vriende ook te hê nie. Hy was ook emosioneel manipulerend en het later gedreig om sy studies op te skop of selfmoord te pleeg as ek hom sou los.

My universiteitsjare op RAU was intellektueel baie opwindend — ek het gevoel daar is WêRELTE om te ontdek in boeke — maar nie sosiaal opwindend nie. Ek was 'n dagstudent en het by my ouers bly woon, en was dus ver van my ander vriende af. Ek het my kamer begin mooi maak, altyd vars blomme uit die tuin gepluk, geperde kerse gebrand, baie musiek geluister en poësie gelees en soos 'n 'hippie' aangetrek. Ek het swart lipstiffie en naellak gebruik, 'cheesecloth' rokke, John Lennon sonbrilletjies, maxi-rompe gedra en my bra weggegooi. Ek het ook in my kamer gedans op die maat van 'rock'-musiek en Janis Joplin op top volume gesit as ek op my rebelste gevoel het of woedend was vir my ma. (Ek en sy het nog baie vak lei.)

In my finale jaar maak ek uiteindelik uit met D... en voel baie verlig en vry. Ek gaan bly in Melville by 'n vriendin en haar ouers, want my ouers verhuis na Nelspruit. Ek en sy raak boesemvriendinne en doen alles saam — rook, drink koffie en
wyn, luister 'rock'-musiek, swot saam, trek 'weird' aan, gaan saam op 'dates', lees poesie en het vet pret.

Ek begin kaal slaap, begin lag met oorgawe, lees D.H. Lawrence (alles wat hy nog ooit geskryf het, selfs 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' wat toe nog verban is) en begin my eie filosofie oor seks en godsdienis ontwerp, naamlik dat as dit mooi en 'passionate' is en in liefde geskied, dit onmoontlik nie sonde kan wees nie maar selfs 'n vorm van 'spiritual experience' kan word ('the dark gods'). Ek voel bevry en juig in my nuutgevonde outonomie. My seksuele inisiatiewe voel skielik nie meer na sonde nie maar na bewyse van my 'aliveness', my 'vitality' en 'passion for life'.

In 1975 vertrek ek Kaap toe om Engels honneurs te swot op Stellenbosch — waar ek altyd wou swot — en bly op my pa se aandrag in die koshuis op Helderberg Kollege. Voor ek arriveer het ek al 'n reputasie — vir 'weird' en eksoties aantrek. My broer en neef laat my dadelik tuis voel. As my pa se dogter het ek 'n sekere status op die kampus. My skugterheid word as 'unattainability' interpreteer. Ek word as die mooiste meisie op die kampus gekies en is verstom. 'In fact', ek is 'n 'hit'. Stellenbosch is wonderlik maar die rigiditeit en dissipline van Helderberg 'stifle' my. Etlike kere trek ek my bra en skoene uit, koop 'n bottel wyn en pak sigarette (Kollegemense sal flou val) en gaan lê by die Bergrivier vir die hele dag in plaas van klasse bywoon.

In die universiteitsvakansie gaan ek op 'n 'date' met 'n oënskynlik 'sweet' man wat verlangs familie is. Ek drink wyn en begin huil, hy sien 'n 'gap' en neem my 'virginity'. Ek haat dit, huil en soebat dat hy moet ophou maar hy weier. Ek gaan huis toe, neem 'n warm bad om my te reinig, huil 'n paar dae om en voel totaal 'depressed'.

Terug op Stellenbosch begin ek met C... uitgaan. Ek het 'n klomp Portugese pelle ('underdog' sindroom) en 'n klomp bewonderaars. Ek lig C... in oor my 'sexual views' en my duistere verlede. Hy wroeg maar aanvaar dit. In die vakansie wy ek die praktiese sy van my 'views' in met hom en geniet dit om die 'seducer' te wees. Ek kompliseer van tyd tot tyd als met my angste, trane, depressies, maagpyne en vrese dat ek ontrou aan hom sal wees oor ek nie seker is of ek so lief is vir hom as wat ek al vir ander ouens was nie.

Gedurende 'n Julievakansie gaan ek per trein Kaap toe en bly by L... (my neef). Daar sien ek vir D..., 'n ou saam met wie ek 'n dinee op Helderberg bygewoon het. Ek en hy gesels ure, gaan flik, loop op die strand, ry rond saam met L... en raak verlief. Hy sien my af op die stasie, soen my totsiens en beloof om te skryf al weet hy van C.... By die huis gekom, vertel ek C... daarvan. Aanvanklik gaan dinge maar voort maar D... kom die Desemhervakansie op en my broer nooi hom saam met ons Suidkus toe. C... -- wat intussen op Messina gestasioneer is -- kom kuier ook vir my by die see en ek voel verskeurd tussen die twee.

Nadat D... my amptelik gevra het om met hom uit te gaan, gee ek vir C... die slekte nuus. Ons huil 'n nag saam om. Die volgende dag vertrek hy en los 'n brief op my kussing -- 'I love you madly and always will'. Dieselfde dag arriveer 'n telegram van D... -- 'I love you and want to be yours forever'. Ek huil weer (my ma saam met my) en weet nie of ek die regte ding doen nie.

Terwyl hy 'n kursus in Johannesburg loop, woon D... 6 maande by ons. Ons is vreeslik verlief, hy vra my om te trou en ons raak amptelik verloof. My ouers is gelukkig -- hy is 'n goeie ou, kom uit 'n vooraanstaande en 'genteel' familie in ons kerk en is 'n regte 'gentleman'. Seksueel, egter, verloop dinge nie so vlot nie. Hy is vreeslik 'tender', soen my onophoudelijk, bring elke
aand vir my 'n watersak en 'cuddle' my voor ons gaan slaap maar doen niets verder nie. Ons bespreek dit en hy sê hy voel mense moet sulke goed 'negotiate' maar moet nooit 'all the way' gaan voor hulle getrou is nie. Vir my is 'negotiate' 'n vreemde, onromantiese idee en ek het geen idee wat om te doen nie. Ek voel te bang om hom gewoonweg net te verlei uit vrees dat hy sal dink ek is goedkoop. (Hy maak allerhande sulke geluide oor vrouens en seks.)

Op 'n dag vertel hy my dat sy broer vir 'n tyd lank in die tronk was en vra of ek dit kan aanvaar, ek sê ja. Toe sê hy hy wil met 'n maagd trou want hy is self een en ek gaan in 'n toestand in. Ek sê vir hom ek is nie een nie en as hy dit nie kan aanvaar nie, dan is dit 'tough'. Hy wroeg vir dae maar besluit om my te 'vergewe'. Hy kom egter daarna na my bed in die nag en 'insist' om seks te hê ('proving he's as good as the previous man') maar dis aaklig elke keer. Ek kan nie glo dis dieselfde 'tender' man van vroeër nie.

Ten spyte van tallose briewe, telegramme, geskenkies, uitneem na plekke en my verloofring, voel ek totaal 'insecure', 'unwanted' en 'unloved'. Hy weier om daaroor te praat, my troudag kom nader en ek weet GLAD nie hoe om te 'cope' met my vrese en onsekerhede of met die verhouding nie. Ons is albei dom en onervare en te bang om hulp te vra maar ek 'insist' dat ons vir berading moet gaan voor ons trou. Ons sien iemand by Lifeline 'n paar keer maar dit help weinig.

Woede en konflik is ook 'n probleem. Ek krop op en ontplof en hy onttrek sonder om iets te sê. Ons besluit om die troue uit te stel. Hy gaan op 'n 'army'-kamp en sê ons moet kontak verbreek in hierdie tyd, tog stuur hy poskaarte. Na die kamp skryf hy vir my 'n afsêbrief. Ek raak hysteries en moet 'n inspuiting by die dokter kry om my te kalmeer. Later skryf ek vir D... en vra wat regtig verkeerd was -- hy antwoord en sê ek het hom 'castrated'
laat voel. Ek voel morsdood en my selfbeeld stort heeltemaal in duie.

Ek vra my dokter om my na 'n sielkundige te verwys en hy stuur my na 'n psigiater wat toetse op my doen, my diagnoseer as obsessief-kompulsief en my ses keer vir 15 minute sien. Ons kom nooit eens uit by die seksuele nie en ek verstaan weinig van wat hy sê behalwe dat hy sê ek moet minder analities wees en ophou `worry' oor goed(!) Ek huil vir 6 maande en my pa huil soms saam met my en toe gaan die lewe maar weer aan.

C..., my `ex', skryf nog altyd vir my en vra my weer om uit te gaan maar ek kan nie, ek's te `cut up'. Ek besluit om my `reg te ruk' en begin `gym'. Ek neem ook bestuurlesse en op 25 kry ek my lisensie. Ek bedank my werk, wat my R600 pensioengeld en vertrek Kaap toe om daar werk te soek. Ek kry 'n woonstel in die Tuine en woon vir die eerste keer alleen.

Ek begin by 'n Kleurling onderwyskollege in Roggebaai klas gee, maak twee kleurling vriendinne en sien al my ou vriende van die Helderberg Kollege weer op 'n gereelde basis. Ek begin `social' soos nog nooit tevore nie — fliek, teater, uiteet, partytjies, kuier, pieknieks, uitry in die veld en berge en stap op die strand. Dis vir my wonderlik.

Intussen het ek 'n Portugese ou van Helderberg se dae geken bet weer raakloop wat toe, in Windhoek woon. Ek sien hom een maal 'n maand en hy `push' my om Namibië toe te trek en te trou. En `push' en `push'. Hy bel tot my pa en hy `push' ook — ek sê net NEE, dis my lewe, ek weet waarvoor ek kans sien en wil nou eers in die Kaap bly en my eie ding doen. Maar intussen wil ek die man fisies met alle mag en geweld hê en hy soen my net op my voorkop en wil met my trou... Weereens raak seks 'n `issue'. Hy sê hy respekteer my en my pa en ek is so `insecure' en woedend
oor sy dubbelstandaarde, ek sien net verwerping en chauvinisme in sy houding.

Ons baklei en baklei. Naderhand word verwyte rondgeslinger, ek raak depressief en voel soos 'n 'freak'. My dokter sit my op anti-depressante en probeer my oortuig om die man te los. Na nog 'n ruk van intense verwarring en teleurstelling is ons wel uitmekaar uit.

Terug in die Kaap mis ek hom baie maar gaan redelik goed aan tot ek by my Portugese vriendinne hoor wat hy als te sê het oor my: 'Never an intellectual woman for me again; she's so analytical', ensovoorts). Aanhoudend moet ek sulke goed hoor tot ek eendag 'crack' en soos 'n besetene by Gordonsbaai se berg opry en besef ek is uit beheer uit. My dokter hospitaliseer my vir 10 dae, besoek my elke dag en stuur my huis toe vir nog twee weke.

Daarna trek ek na 'n woonstel in die Strand wat direk oorkant die see is en oor Tafelberg uitkyk. Dis pragtig. C... bel en skryf nog steeds al die jare en vra my in die vakansie om hom in Johannesburg te ontmoet. Hy is baie goor met my en sê hy sou my verkrag het as hy my nog wou gehad het, maar hy wil my nie meer hê nie.

In 1983 op 29-jarige leeftyd trek ek skielik terug Transvaal toe as gevolg van politieke redes. Blankes word gewoonlik net in tydelike poste aangestel in Kleurlingonderwys en dus moet my pos elke jaar hernu word. Die rektor van die kollege kom glad nie klaar met my Kleurling vriendin, F..., nie en ek is bevrees hy gaan my die volgende jaar in haar pos aanstel, al belowe hy om dit nie te doen nie. Ek kry 'n pos by 'n technikon in die Transvaal en ek trek terug, hoewel ek nie eintlik in die Transvaal wil bly nie.
Hierbo ken ek niemand nie. Dis droog en warm. Ek haat die plek en is ontsettend eensam. Ek woon weereens by my ouers omdat ek nie kans sien om in 'n klein woonstelletjie in Sunnyside te woon nie. Ek gaan elke vakansie Kaap toe en is baie 'depressed' hier bo. Om my 'sanity' te behou begin ek swot (Afrikaans honneurs deur Unisa) en beplan 'n oorsese toer in Juniemaand saam met 'n vriendin. Sy trek kop uit en ek besluit om alleen te gaan. Ek begin ook terapie by dr. K... en is weer op anti-depressante. Ek voel dikwels alleen, soos 'n volslae mislukking, 'n oujongnooi, en 'suicidally depressed' maar sit ook tien voet 'mure' om my vir die volgende twee jaar om mense weg te hou. My sussie trou toe ek 30 is en almal vra my wanneer trou ek dan. Ek voel soos 'n 'freak' -- 'unable to move outside of my fear and reach out to other people'.

My terapie met dr. K... verhoed dat ek wel selfmoord pleeg maar nie veel meer as dit nie. Met sy aanmoediging begin ek weer 'date' maar omdat ek nie meer kerk toe gaan nie begin ek vir die eerste keer met ouens uitgaan wat 'daar buite in die wêreld is'. Dis 'n nuwe wêreld vir my.

Intussen het ek vriende gemaak en 'social' baie. Ek is minder by die huis by my ouers en hulle meng nie in my lewe in nie. My pa sê net altyd, 'As jy gelukkig is, my kind, dan is ek ook gelukkig'. Dr K... is baie ondersteunend en moedig my aan om net myself te wees en myself te aanvaar.

Daarna het ek 'n 6 maande verhouding met 'n Poolse plastiese chirurg wat 7 jaar ouer as ek is -- dis 'n baie goeie verhouding en hy laat my 'wanted' voel en beskou nie my inisiatiewe as onvroulik nie. Ek is egter baie onseker want die verhouding is baie 'open ended' en hy sê nooit hy is lief vir my nie al is hy baie sjarmant en 'affirming'. Na 6 maande vind ek uit hy is getroud en sy vrou kom Suid-Afrika toe uit Poland. Ek is
shattered' en probeer aanvanklik nog die verhouding voortsit maar stort in duie 2 maande later.

Ek 'verloor' 2 dae êrens (totale geheueverlies) en word gehospitaliseer in Denmar deur 'n psigiatra. Hy 'push' my om alle bande met die man te verbreek wat ek toe doen, maar ek huil baie, wil net doodgaan, is so maer soos 'n plank en kan nie eet of slaap nie, ten spyte van sterk medikasie. Dr K... is baie ondersteunend en geleidelik kom ek weer reg.

Ek skryf in by Unisa vir Engels honneurs en lees ook omtrent al die Russiese en Franse 'classics' gedurende die volgende jaar. Verder besluit ek om my eie huis te kry, koop 'n erf, trek planne op en laat bou. Ek maak ook al my eie beddegoed, gordyne, ensovoorts. Daarna begin ek tuinmaak en 'settle' in in my huisie. Ek geniet dit ontsettend en onthaal baie dikwels mense al het ek min meubels.

My ma kry in die stadium borskanker en dis baie ontstellend vir ons. Sy gaan Tygerberg toe vir behandeling eerder as om hier 'n onmiddellike en volledige mastektomie te ondergaan.

Na nog 'n ongelukkige verhouding met my nuwe buurman beland ek weer in die hospitaal nadat ek 'n klomp pille gedrink het. Die volgende week skryf ek 2 Engels honneurs-vraestelle en slaag dit met lof! Ek is so maer soos 'n kraai wanneer ek by die huis kom. Ek leen R300 en sit mure op tussen my en my buurman se huis.

My pa kry 'n melanoom aan sy been en dit word uitgesny sonder enige bestraling of chemoterapie of iets (ek weet nie hoekom nie). Die dokters lig ons ook nie in oor wat om verder te verwag nie. Hy bou intussen 'n huis vir my ma reg by die dam op Hartebeespoort en werk soos 'n besetene -- seker om te vergeet van die kanker. Na 'n paar maande raak hy verlam en 'n invalide
hy het nou sekondêre breinkanker. My ma is verpletterd en ek neem dadelik 'n beskermende rol in teenoor haar.

Na nog 'n kortstondige en 'abusive' verhouding met 'n jong man oortuig 'n vriendin my om weereens terapie te probeer, die keer by jou. Dis vir my erg om my hele 'sorry' geskiedenis aan 'n vreemdeling op te dis maar ek besluit om tog te gaan en beland toe by jou. Kort daarna begin ek en A... te 'date' vir 6 maande en dié hele storie ken jy. My pa is ook oorlede 3 maande na my 35ste verjaarsdag. Voor sy dood vra hy my om terug te kom kerk toe en om met so 'n oujongkêrel vriend van my by die werk, te trou sodat hy gemoedrsus kan hê. Ek wens ek kon sê ja, ek sal, maar ek kan nie. Ek sê net vir hom ek is BAIE lief vir hom en spandeer baie tyd by hom gedurende sy laaste weke -- ek is dankbaar dat ek my selfmoordpoging oorleef het sodat hy minstens dit gespaar is so kort voor sy dood.

Na A... voel ek ek het genoeg gehad van my destruktiewe lewenswyse en weet ek kan nie meer een so 'n verhouding oorleef nie.

In die jaar na my pa se dood bly ek 8 maande by my ma en kry wonderbaarlike geduld om te 'cope' met haar hartseer, passiwiteit, afhanklikheid, ensovoorts. Ek raak ook stil en onttrek my van byna almal. Meestal doen ek introspeksie en werk aan my terapie met jou -- jy's die enigste mens wat glo dat wat met my aangaan goed kan wees.

Ek neem waar as mede-direkteur vir 6 maande en vind dit baie stresvol al doen ek redelik goed. My vriendskappe gaan deur krisisse, ek bevraagteken alles wat ek doen en verloor my spontaneiteit, voel soms soos 'n 'freak', en baie 'lonely'. Oorweeg dit om huis op te sit saam met my ma maar verander, goddank, van plan. Sy verkoop haar huis, koop 'n kleiner een en skryf haar kar af in 'n ongeluk. Vir 6 maande moet ek haar orals
rondneem en ek raak ontsettend 'resentful'. Moet ook 'cope' met verveeldheid soos nog nooit in my lewe nie. Ek en my ma doen baie dinge saam en raak 'closer' as voorheen al is ek baie ongeduldig met haar van tyd tot tyd.

Sekere van my vriendskappe versuur heeltemaal, maar ander kom weer reg. Dan kom my absurde en misplaaste obsessie met J... in 1992, waarvan jy al die detail weet. Teen die einde van verlede jaar is ek baie moeg vir my 'celibacy' en eksperimenteer weer seksueel met my eerste kérel, D..., wat nog altyd kontak behou het en mal is oor my, Met A..., L... se broer en G..., 'n ou 'varsity'-pël. Al drie is/was in my kerk!

Aan die einde van verlede jaar ontdek ons ook dat my ma se kanker nou sekondêr versprei het na haar longe toe en sy reageer glad nie op die terapie wat sy by Tygerberg ontvang nie. Sy hoor sy het seker 6 maande oor om te lewe. Dis verskriklik vir haar en baie erg vir ons. Sy besluit teen chemoterapie en is nou op 'n 'naturopath' se gesondheidsprogram en ons kan maar net wag en sien wat gebeur en bid vir krag om haar te ondersteun. Ek wil inskryf vir 'n MA op RAU maar weet nog nie of ek moet nie -- dis dalk net te veel stres. Ek voel ook my eie 'mortality' aan my lyf en dink — ek weet nog skaars hoe om te léwe en ek kan more doodgaan... Dis 'frightening'! Ook die gedagte om totaal alleen agter te bly met net my sus in die Kaap, my paar pêlle en my hond en myself.

Wat die volgende 2 jaar tot ek 40 is betref, wil ek my ma bystaan en haar dood verwerk as dit moet, en ook my vrede met haar probeer sluit oor die verlede. Verder wil ek werk aan my terapie, vriendskap, verhoudings net kollegas, 'n MA-graad en 'survival on my own' — outonomie, seker.

Daar is nog baie werk nodig in terapie en baie geduld en 'perseverance' nodig aan my en jou kant. Goddank vir jou geduld
en liefde, ook jou kreatiewe en praktiese denke, dat jy soveel moontlikhede kan voorstel en by die `skills' en `nitty gritty' uitkom sonder om in vae teorieë vas te haak. Ek is nog baie bang vir die uiteindelike losmaakproses van jou af, maar, nou ja. Verder is 'n mens onseker oor jou werk, huisubsidie, pensioen en selfs jou veiligheid in die `nuwe' Suid-Afrika, `but what to do'? `But to carry on and hope for the best'.

Ek het nou die aand afgekom op 'n paar goedjies wat ek geskryf het 'n paar maande voor ek terapie by jou begin het. Hierdie gedigie wys duidelik hóé ek gevoel het.

**And what then?**

- Hospitalized
- medicated and sedated
- freed from this obsession
- and recurring depression
- self seemingly in repossession ...

**And then what?**

- A new lover?
- and a new hurt.
- a dying father
- absent and exhausted mother
- work, yes
- debts, yes
- an old car
- and rejected body
- over-used friends
- and a garden overgrown?

**That's what.**