

**MICHAEL'S STORY: LOVE AND VULNERABILITY IN A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP**

by

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*For my daughters*

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## DECLARATION

I declare that **MICHAEL'S STORY: LOVE AND VULNERABILITY IN A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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## ABSTRACT

Being in love in a close relationship is contingent upon biological, intrapsychic, social and cultural events. Understanding these processes has implications for stability and health in individuals families and society. Various dimensions of love are considered as converging on a more basic concept of vulnerability as a part of the human condition where both love and vulnerability are experiences which shape individual development growth, interdependence and survival or the lack thereof. The objective of this study is to capture the dilemmas which underlie love and vulnerability in a qualitative study. The method is a case study of a story using narrative analysis and the relation of theory to experiences revealed in the story. Analysis included observation of the major premises, setting, structure, imagoes and voices in the story and theories included Lee's (1977) theory of love, Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love, attachment theory, social construction, psychobiological theory and phenomenological theories of love. A summary finds that most theories infer vulnerability as an underlying dimension in processes of love and that vulnerability as a characteristic in human mortality may be implicated in love experiences.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Ah, love let us be true  
 To one another! for the world, which seems  
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
 So various, so beautiful, so new,  
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
 And we are here as on a darkling plain  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

Matthew Arnold (1993)

In many ways much of the process of falling in love is triggered by contingent biological, intrapsychic, social and cultural events which play a part in the surrender of lovers to each other, and the notion of 'love at first sight' more logically, is an imaginative conjunction of form and feeling which depends on co-incidence. Chance provides an opportunity for lovers to make a leap across a disjunction where imagination finds opportunity to fill the perceived gap. Disjunctions are at the heart of human social functioning, where individuals strive for unity within themselves and between each other in a struggle which includes defending against possibilities of disorganisation and vulnerability (Klein in Rhode, 1998).

A relationship is understood to exist when two people are causally and mutually connected at behavioural, emotional and cognitive levels, and the relationship can be considered close to the extent that it involves strong, frequent, and diverse causal connections (Kelley, 1983). Close

relationship research provides a framework which identifies broad concepts germane to different relationship types, interdependence, situations and points in development, and in particular, patterns of mutual influence between partners (Clark & Reis, 1988).

Desire is pivotal in both altering and constituting relationships in ways which involve longings which not only inspire imagination to satisfy wishes, but together with affect and imagination can modify perceptions of, and interaction with the person loved. Expression of love in adult affiliation is an important consideration in close relationships because of love's influence in producing and sustaining desire to be with the loved person and the consequent implications for health, happiness and satisfaction. Love has been recognised as a significant dimension of life by notable philosophers and influential writers since Plato and the Romantic poets particularly illustrated the imaginative ideals of love. Love is therefore a particularly complex, interesting and important topic for psychology to comprehend because of the interplay of wishes and imagination which bring about happiness and/or distress in relationships.

Understanding love in relationships has implications for stability and health within individuals, families and society. Western contemporary culture places a heavy emphasis and focus on individual satisfaction as a valued end, where increasingly, relationships are targeted as a primary area for personal gratification. When satisfaction is not found, relationships end (Westen, 1996).

At the heart of love is a possibility of a freedom to be oneself naturally and to permit others that freedom, a freedom which supports opportunities for meaningful, consistent and coherent self-definition. Gilligan (1982) believes that to have a voice is to be human and to have something to say is to be a person but that speaking depends on listening and being heard and therefore

speaking and listening are a form of psychic breathing. Love breathes in this context of interaction and internalised histories of interactions. This can mean that social interaction establishes a space where both potential for growth and individual vulnerability arises; a context where vulnerability, if contained, can provide a critical moment for change, and a prerequisite to harmony and clarity. On the other hand, vulnerability in a relationship can precipitate pre-occupation and confusion, where thoughts and feelings are constrained from free interaction because they may be experienced as shameful or unresolved, and which may promote destructive interaction patterns and further forms of interactive and internal alienation compounding inner vulnerability. Defences mobilised against painful vulnerability require vast amounts of psychological energy to sustain, and can remove a necessary vitality for loving (Noam & Wren, 1993).

In reviewing the literature on love research, a concept of vulnerability has received little attention and while researchers agree that love is a multidimensional construct, it is also possible to conceive that various dimensions converge on a more basic concept of vulnerability. Vulnerability is an inherent part of the human condition, however, pre-occupation and confusion of inner vulnerability is a point of division or shadow - a loneliness one feels between feeling connected from oneself and others.

Researchers (Kelvin, 1977; Levin, 1993; & Patterson, 1984) have indicated that tension within an individual's internal and external world, engender opposite experiences of isolation and relatedness, loneliness and connectedness which have implications for intimacy and power motivation in interpersonal relationships. Underlying an attempt to balance isolation and relatedness, is a sense of ambiguity which is experienced as threatening because of uncertainties

around predicting and gaining control of a social situation (environment) and because a predictable part of defining and locating oneself in the world (sense of self) is challenged.

Underlying conflicts can be characterized by, on the one hand - an independent self, and union with a person - and on the other hand, the wish to expand and enrich the perception of the self, as well as maintain a secure definition of self and identity within existing boundaries (Cohen, 1994).

Both love and vulnerability are experiences which shape individual development, growth, relationships, various forms of self-reliance and interdependence and survival or the lack thereof as infants grow into mature adults. A competitive and hostile environment requires coalitions be developed for survival. Porges (1998) demonstrated that love evolved to maximise adaptive benefits associated with reproduction and safety, even to the extent where the nervous systems of mammals were stimulated to form enduring bonds with an inappropriate mate. He found that while selection of a monogamous mate reduces individual fear, the nervous system becomes conditioned to love. Love and vulnerability are partners in survival by being complementary and mutually sustaining. May (1969) described care as given power by nature's sense of pain, in other words, vulnerability to pain is the source from which a need for care is identified and from which intimacy grows and as Goldberg (1999) described, enlivens fertile emotions which foster humanness. Different lovestyles may offer human vulnerability different forms of equilibrium or points of risk and at the same time, different levels of awareness to initiate different possibilities for love.

Effectively the limits to which one can love are the limits to which one can tolerate vulnerability,

and inversely the limit to which one can be receptive to another's response, is the limit to which one can be loved and protected (Kelvin, 1977). Moulyn (1982) argues that although pain threatens the temporal-spatial structure and is a destructive agent in the mental space, suffering has intrinsic value because of its capacity to heighten vulnerability in a constructive dynamic process that heals, because existence is constituted in the struggle to create unity out of contrasting elements. Moulyn (1982) identifies physical pain, anxiety, loneliness and dread of dying as four constituent elements of mortality which are fundamental to suffering.

Bakan (1966) argued that individual differences in motivational dispositions can be understood in part by the extent to which the tendency of agency or communion is given priority in behaviour and experience. Agency refers to separation of the individual from others and from context, and communion refers to the coming together of individuals, and a merger with context. Helson (in Kelvin, 1977) found that couples adapt to each other over repeated contacts by way of forming subjective probabilities concerning patterns of behaviour. In this context, McAdams, Healy and Krause (1984) in their studies have distinguished friendship patterns which emerge from intimacy and social control.

Vulnerability in this dissertation will be considered as a context of inherent existential uncertainty that underpins the human condition which is elaborated in close relationships as a point around which the relationship organises itself and coheres.

## METHOD

### 2.1 MOTIVATION

Qualitative research is prompted by a realisation that the human capacity to think and reflect differentiates social science research from natural science research. Guided by an underlying epistemology which may be positivist, interpretive or critical, qualitative research methods are designed to increase understanding and provide explanations for the subjective experiences of people in relation to their social and cultural contexts.

Qualitative research may however be positivist, interpretive, or critical. Positivist studies in general test a theory, to increase the predictive understanding of phenomena using formal propositions, quantifiable measures of variables, hypothesis testing and the drawing of inferences about a phenomenon from the sample tested to the population. Interpretative studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. Interpretative research does not predefine dependent and independent variables but focuses on the full complexity of the way in which individuals create meaning out of their situations (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Critical research assumes that social reality is historically constituted and that it is produced and reproduced by people. Although people can consciously act to change their social and economic circumstances, critical researchers recognize that the ability to do so is constrained by various forms of social, political and cultural domination. The main task of critical research is to raise awareness of the conditions that restrict behaviour and alienate individuals or groups of people (<http://www.qual.auckland.ac.nz>).

Methods in qualitative research vary in design and examples are action research, ethnography, grounded theory and case studies. Rapoport (1970 p.499) defines action research as aiming to “contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework”. Ethnographers immerse themselves in the lives of the people they study and seek to place the phenomena studied in social context (Lewis, 1985). Grounded theory is a qualitative method which aims to develop theory on the basis of close inductive engagement with the context of study (Terreblanche & Durrheim 1999). Case study research may refer to a unit of analysis in qualitative research or refer to a quantitative research method such as the one shot experimental design. Case studies describe and provide rich information on a particular case which may be a person, a family, organisation, community or social policy, allowing new ideas and hypotheses to emerge from careful and detailed observation. The case is considered as a particular case rather than as an element of a population. The aim is to explore certain phenomena rather than generalise to the population. Information gained can provide critical reflection for existing theories (Terre blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

The limits of case studies are that generalisations and causal relationships may not be inferred. Advantages are that case studies may generate hypotheses for further more rigorous testing by other research methods and data that can be re-analysed by other researchers.

Researchers accept that a single case cannot generalise beyond the single case (Abramson, 1992), although a single case may disprove a proposition made for all cases (Dukes, 1965), or disprove one or more hypotheses proposed for the particular case (Campbell, 1975). The function of case studies is exemplification, discovery and comparison. Generally the case study exemplifies an a

priori concept. Comparison is used to contrast: an individual life with a theory; multiple lives in the search of commonalities; with the use of case studies to compare different theories. In the use of case studies, researchers need to avoid forcing case data into predetermined theoretical frames (McAdams and West, 1997). While discovery might not be enough Campbell (1975, 1984, 1986) highlights the use of multiple perspectives in narrative studies that can strengthen the validity claims of case study research.

The method used in this dissertation is a qualitative case study using narrative analysis. A qualitative method has been chosen because the aim of this study is to assist in the development of theory by capturing the dilemmas which underlie love and vulnerability. A case study has been chosen because case studies can generate principles which may be applicable to other cases and because it is an opportunity for discovery which may enrich existing theories. More importantly Allport (1942) maintained the case study has the advantage of focussing attention on the particulars and socially constructed realities of the case, perceived in the person's own terms rather than predetermined terms of abstraction. The choice of narrative analysis is based on a proposal by Bruner (1988) that there is a possible concordance between survival and storytelling and on the assumption that people construct and live a narrative for their lives. Using tape recordings of intensive interviews narrative approaches seek to understand and reveal the subjective meanings and private constructions or schemas that people use in making sense of experience. Unique personal and cultural narratives therefore should capture the dilemmas underlying love and vulnerability.

There are 5 criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) Credibility, transferability, consistency, confirmability and

authenticity. Establishing credibility through member checks by showing the interview scripts and research reports to research respondents allows for agreement or disagreement on the way that the researcher has represented observations. In contrast to generalisability in quantitative research a concept of transferability in qualitative research is achieved by rich description of the setting studied. Rich description allows readers to judge the applicability of findings to other settings which they know. Consistency is achieved by auditing the researcher's documentation of data, methods and decisions as well as its end product. Auditing is also used in confirmability. Authenticity takes into account the political conceptions of the role of research and is demonstrated if researchers can show that they have represented a range of different realities. Different levels of authenticity are considered. Ontological authenticity is found when there is increased sophistication in understanding of a phenomenon. Educative authenticity occurs when viewpoints other than previous research and the views of the researcher are found. Catalytic authenticity is found when action is stimulated from the research, and tactical authenticity is found when respondents to the research are empowered by it (Seale, 1999).

Seale (1999) makes the point that while fairness, sophistication, mutual understanding and empowerment are considered desirable, this is itself a value-laden position which is not resolved and requires further critique. Hammersley (1995b) argues that there are three important considerations when assessing arguments on research. Firstly the claims made should be plausible given existing knowledge, secondly supporting arguments should have supporting evidence rather than peripheral evidence and definitions, thirdly descriptions, explanations and theories should have relevant and different levels of evidence. Evidence to support theory is different from evidence to support description. Hammersley's (1995b) view is that research should be value relevant and not value laden.

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is negotiable and not a matter of proof. Negotiability of trustworthiness rather than proof is based on an assumption of multiple constructed realities rather than a single tangible reality. This means that research accounts represent at the most a temporary consensus of what is considered to be true (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

## 2.2 BACKGROUND

Michael, the respondent in this case study had been a colleague of mine. We were associates in the same organisation and had little contact except for a monthly meeting. I don't recall having any direct interaction with him except at an end of year function when he approached me socially. The function occurred about a month after my marriage of seventeen years ended, and my friends and colleagues were becoming aware that I was divorced from my husband. My recollection of Michael's approach on that day was that he was curious about my circumstances. The divorce came as a shock to most people as it was not explicitly or generally apparent that I had had marriage difficulties and I believe the news shattered many illusions (which inevitably began with myself!). This was the context in which Michael and I first spoke. I think he was surprised by the event of the divorce and came to talk to me about it. I think that I conveyed a position which had moved beyond the painful dilemmas and confusion that inevitably accompanies divorce. Michael mentioned that he was in the middle of a very difficult time in his marriage and mentioned some of the problems. We were interrupted and that was the end of the conversation.

It was several years later (we were never sufficiently friendly to maintain contact) during my internship year that by chance I saw Michael's name and telephone number in an advertisement. At the time I was working on a plan for this dissertation and was thinking about a case study, so I decided to contact Michael. I had the sense the first time we spoke that he wanted to talk to

me about his marriage and likelihood of divorce. It was more particularly a sense of his willingness to talk to me initially, that prompted me to consider asking him if he would be interested in participating in a case study. I believed that he would have the necessary level of trust in me to open himself to me. Another factor influencing my decision was our age difference: Michael is in his late twenties and I am in my late forties. I believed that this difference would contribute to maintaining reasonable boundaries between us to facilitate a sufficient working space. My most important concern was a space where he felt he could be as much himself as possible. I wanted him to tell me a story which I could use to explore vulnerability and love.

After making contact we arranged to meet for coffee and I discussed the idea of him participating in a case study. At first Michael seemed wary that this would be part of a dissertation, but at the same time he told me that the timing was perfect because he was at a stage in his life where he felt a need to give time to talk through the events of his own divorce. He wanted to know the topic of the dissertation, and I said that whatever he chose to speak about would be relevant. It was important to me that Michael generated the story from his own frame of reference as much as possible and so I avoided giving information which would create a focus and structure for him. I said that the dissertation was in the field of close relationships and concerned hurt. Hurt was not actually my focus, but had come up in supervision as related to vulnerability, so I used it in order to direct the story in a way that might include vulnerability. After two weeks I phoned Michael and he agreed to participate. We discussed places and times and I fitted in with what suited him. We decided together to keep the place and time structured. I met Michael at the garden cottage where he lived on Saturday mornings at eleven, and agreed to continue for as long as seemed comfortable for him. The meetings were on average between one-and-a-half to two hours each. In total we had five meetings, they were recorded and transcribed. Michael was

given the transcripts and a copy of my re-telling his story (Michael's story re-told). He said that he did not read through the original transcripts but edited the poetry for me. He gave me feedback on his experience of my understanding of his story and said he was concerned that in the re-telling of the story I hadn't tried to place the events of the story in some logical order and wondered whether readers would be able to follow the events easily. He also felt that in the re-telling that I did not always fully understand his meaning but that it was okay. Changes were made to the original transcript to protect Michael's identity.

# 3

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 LOVE

The topic of love has been recorded in poetry and among philosophers as long as language has been invented. While love generates emotional and spiritual sustenance in individuals, it also shapes societies' values and the social order and is in turn also shaped by society. For example, society can disapprove of love where the context is unconventional - adulterous love, romantic love where there is a significant age difference, or homosexual love - and serious conflict can arise (Person, 1989).

#### 3.1.1 A Constructionist approach

Constructivism is based on a premise that reality is socially constructed and can only be understood by deconstructing the elements which make reality appear meaningful (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Culture as an accumulation of stored and shared meanings, functions as a substructure in organising individual intrapsychic structure and identity, so cultural meaning fundamentally gives significance to experience and is central to the ways in which individuals and societies respond and define themselves. Cultural meaning therefore has a primary effect in integrating values in social interaction. Integrating values is also the essence of a struggle which is never quite achieved because of an ongoing task of constructing and re-constructing coherence consistent with an individual's self-structure, stage of development and life circumstances (Moulyn, 1982).

Allport (1960) theorised that value and belief systems integrate broader theoretical, economic, aesthetic, political and religious domains, all of which influence individual organising tendencies. Therefore, how love is organised in a relationship depends to some extent on physical, emotional, cognitive resonance with family interactions patterns, as well as with cultural values and belief systems. For example, Plato's interest in love in the 4th century, reveals that he was influenced in his thinking by the politics of his day. Since Plato's major concerns were of morality and education he concluded that sexual desire should be directed to higher aims (Bergmann, 1987). His thoughts have persisted and had a significant impact on Western thought surrounding love. Following Plato some 2,500 years later Freud continued ideas resulting from Plato's thinking. Conflicts underlying the experience of love had not previously been given any consideration until Plato first considered the idea of intrapsychic conflict around love (Bergmann, 1987).

Foucault (1990) raised awareness of how the socio-political contexts in different historical periods played a role in influencing values around ideas of love. For example, initially Ancient Greek men were preoccupied with reconciling passive homosexuality with virility, but when the Roman Empire spread and men spent less time in civic affairs and public life, their interests turned to heterosexual love as an ideal in marriage. Whereas the Greeks idealised the power of love, the Romans idealised an anti-erotic sense of duty. Greek love retained vitality and flexibility through the ages and by contrast in the Judaeo-Christian tradition where men were taught by priests, love was influenced by the example of an angry jealous and celibate Jewish God whose love showed no sexual passion. In Christianity for example St. Paul speaks of the body as a temple which is not for fornication.

Romantic love dominated the the middle ages and in the 17th -19th century; the enlightenment

era influenced the beginning of the modern scientific approach to love (Bergmann 1987). Whereas the romantic period laid emphasis on unrevealed, even sacred forces that dwell deep within the person - forces that give life and relationships their significance - the modern scientific approach introduced reason and observation as essential ingredients into the study of love (Gergen, 1991).

Stendhal (1842) began the first objective approach by classifying love into passion, sympathy love, sensual love and vanity love (an instrument to advance self-esteem). Current research efforts on love are distinguishable by their emphases on the extent to which theory focuses on motivational, emotional, cognitive or evolutionary contexts. In the latter part of the 21st century psychoanalytic psychology, evolutionary psychology, social psychology, phenomenology and psychobiology all offer varying and different theories of love.

### 3.1.2 The Psychoanalytic approach

Unconscious processes, motivation and early experiences are the focus underlying behaviour in this approach. Freud (1905b; 1914b; 1915b) brought together elements of both romantic and objective thinking and changed the way Western society looks at love. In addition he described a new form of love called transference love. Freud also introduced development into the love debate by describing infantile origins of love. He developed three theories of love over the course of his life. Initially he described love as an act of 'refinding' because the loved person unconsciously represents the Oedipal parent. After he developed his theory on narcissism he added the idea that the loved person may also represent an idealized aspect of the self, and Freud's third theory indicated a shift from a stage of falling in love to mature love which requires that the ego integrates multiple impulses and affects including hostile ones from the genital

psychosexual developmental stage. From Freud's viewpoint love is an illusory revival of the past destined towards disillusionment. The psychoanalytic theory of love included development as a function and manifestation of a sexual instinct involving the ego in development and as a central concept in love relations (Bak, 1973; Ferenczi, 1929; Balint, 1948; Van der Waal, 1965; Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975).

Bergmann (1971) following Balint (1948) proposed a more optimistic view where he incorporated pre-oedipal experience into a structural model where he viewed love as a compromise formation between id, ego, superego and the repetition compulsion. Bergman's significant addition to the Freudian model contended that the origin of the capacity to love was in the human design which determined a symbiotic relation between mother and child. Symbiosis became the subjective source of yearning for oneness a state which may be partially refound. However separation and individuation, resolution of the Oedipus complex, a single consistent caretaker rather than multiple caretakers and constructive warmth and nurturing determined the success of love in adult union. Bergmann (1987) also contended that experiences of love in adult life could reorganise an individual's conditions for loving. The search for a healing object however complicates love because it creates a difficulty for the ego in attempts to integrate conflicting desires between familiar figures of childhood and a new healing object. Bergmann (1980, 1987) also distinguished between falling in love and abiding love. Falling in love, he postulated, evokes infantile wishes and abiding love requires a mature alert ego. He described five ego functions important for mature love, i.e. reality testing to assess the real qualities of the loved person; integrating representations of former love objects with new objects that effects a strong desire for love; counteracting the forces of the superego and protect the new love from the incest taboo; sublimating the demands of the id; and preventing pathological object choice by negotiating the

demands of refinding on the one hand with the urge to find a safe object on the other. Perlman (1999) points out that whereas Freud viewed love as successive refindings of the same basic prototype, Bergmann's view emphasises a shift from repetition to a possibility of change where experiences of satisfaction create progressive new prototypes.

Proponents of the correlation between love and the primary experiences of bonding argue that the necessary task of love is to manage a tension between closeness and alienation. In other words, being able to allow for closeness or the experience of mutual warmth, harmony and security which began in the mother's womb, and at the same time maintain an independence gained through development to adulthood. Cohen (1994) points to unconscious wishes and fears which involve a motivational dilemma because association with infant-like or vulnerable states of surrendering control and autonomy can mean an emptying of the self. Libidinal and aggressive drives, a superego and defence mechanisms play a role achieving the necessary equilibrium which also gives the conflict specific direction.

The infant-mother relationship as a prototype for later relationships became the basis for the development of object relations theory. Object relations refer in particular to internalised representations of self, significant others and relationships. Object relations theorists explain interpersonal problems as maladaptive patterns laid down in infancy and early childhood (Bowlby, 1982; Jacobson, 1964; Sandler & Rosenblatt, 1962). According to Kernberg (1995) who introduced concepts from systems theory to object relations, mature sexual love focuses on the dynamics of a complex emotional disposition that integrates sexual excitement transformed into erotic desire for another person; tenderness that reflects a capacity for the integration of love and aggression related to internalised object relations with a predominance of love over aggression

and tolerance of normal ambivalence that characterizes all human relations; identification with the other that includes both reciprocal genital identification and deep empathy with the other's genital identity; mature idealization, commitment to the other and the relationship. Kernberg (1995) also argues that the normal development of idealization from early infancy plays an important role in the way individuals are able to integrate live aggression and ideals into mature love. Other forms of idealization however may occur as defence mechanisms.

According to Bader (2002) psychological safety is necessary for sexual excitement. Threats to emotional safety lead to sexual inhibition and unconscious management of psychological safety begins from the moment of birth with a need to maintain a secure attachment. When a parent is angry, intrusive, neglectful or rejecting the feeling of secure attachment is threatened and the child experiences anxiety, or if the parent is unhappy or weak the child feels danger intuitively. In an insecure context children will alter the course of their needs and desires and develop pathogenic beliefs that will not endanger connections to their parents and thereby preserve their psychological safety. Pathogenic beliefs include worry about feeling "bad" because someone important to the child is hurt or fragile. Survivor guilt and separation guilt when the pathogenic belief is that being happier than those we love will harm them or if we leave our families we will hurt or deplete them.

According to Bader's (2002) theory the function of sexual fantasy is to undo the beliefs and feelings which interfere with sexual excitement because sexual excitement requires surrender to one's own pleasure and being free of concerns about the other person, in other words, that the other person does not need to be taken care of. Anything that promotes worry or guilt over the other's welfare will diminish excitement. Other pathogenic beliefs that interfere with sexual excitement are shame, rejection, defectiveness and helplessness. Shame involves feelings that one

is exposed and unworthy and there is a sense of feeling rejected.

Identification and transference can also interfere with sexual excitement. Identification is a way of connecting to parents and at the same time resolves a tension between feeling different from one's parents. Identification is also a crucial ingredient in sexual fantasy and excitement because of resonance with the energy of the sexual partner, and works in the opposite direction of a lack of concern for the other's well being. Identification therefore can release or inhibit sexual excitement. If one partner is depressed identifying with the depression will inhibit arousal.

The situation is similarly complicated by transference when one identifies with the transferred images and feelings about a parent onto a partner. Intimacy opens the way towards feelings of dependency which increasingly resemble the emotional dependence of childhood. Familiarity generates the presumption of understanding and increases identification and deeper awareness of vulnerability which can become the relationship's undoing. Transference can therefore distort certain moods in our partners and resemble problematic moods which result in sexual inhibition. Inhibitions decrease spontaneity and passion the more the partner begins to emotionally resemble primary caretakers.

Sexual compatibility is determined by the extent to which pathogenic beliefs negate or reinforce those of each partner. To the extent that each partner is able to deliberately or inadvertently disprove or counteract pathogenic beliefs, sexual excitement will follow and to the extent that each partner confirms or reinforces pathogenic beliefs sexual inhibition and dysfunction will increase. Sexual arousal is therefore a sensitive measure of unconscious unresolved conflict in a relationship.

Healthy connections occur between mother and child when the mother respects that the child has his/her own identity and the bond is based on simultaneous unity and individuation. Fusion occurs

when the child is viewed as an integral part of the self (Blatt & Blatt, 1992). A mother may see her child as an extension of herself and so not permit a creative space for development. When fusion occurs boundaries are blurred and individuality is lost in the relationship, resulting in a strong urge to defend a fragile self-structure by avoiding close relationships (Cohen, 1994).

Winnicott (1974) also argued that the transition from an undifferentiated state to a differentiated state requires a transitional stage where the mother and the child create for themselves a potential space in which both can simultaneously build an undifferentiated as well as differentiated bond. Only within this space can the child safely integrate his/her sense of self. Cohen (1994) says that love can be seen as the possibility of a return to this potential space in which there is unity and separation. Bak (1973) is also of the view that the ability to love depends on separation of the self from the dual-union of mother and child.

According to Stern (1985) however, the infant is not a state of self-other fusion but a state of self-other relationship. Stern's (1985) view is that reality experience precedes fantasy distortions and he argues that it is the actual shape of interpersonal reality that influences development. Josselyn (1971) adds that the infant is not biologically passive even though its resources are limited, using inherent drives such as the drive to turn his head when the cheek is touched and the rooting instinct. She also emphasizes that memory traces with positive emotional investment is associated with a capacity to turn outward which gradually becomes a foundation for a psychological experience of loving. With development Josselyn (1971) proposes that an inherent capacity to turn outward can atrophy when parents unintentionally deprive the child of the experience of valuing an object and mourning its loss, which in turn constricts development of genuine empathy. This situation prevents objective and insightful awareness of feelings and

empathy which is necessary in intimate relating and is preferable to identification, which implies being the same as another. Cohen (1994) also adds that a severe lack of capacity for empathy leads to severe intrapsychic conflict and temporary or extended loss of individual identity precipitating schizoid phenomena. May (1969) describes schizoid phenomena as meaning out of touch, avoiding close relationships and the inability to feel. He also believes that the source is a distortion of love and trust in infancy. In addition certain traumatic or uncertain events/experiences make one less able to manage anxiety, and apathy becomes a defence against this anxiety. If a person experiences losing his/her identity as a threat, and something they are powerless to overcome, then the final line of defence is to avoid feeling the threat. In this regard sexual activity can be an escape from awareness of what love means and demands, and simply acts as a defence against anxiety. The other extreme is over-identification with the loved person, where one loses identity, and the relationship takes on addictive qualities (May, 1969).

### 3.1.3 The Psychosocial approach

Psychosocial motives are personal and interpersonal motives for mastery, achievement, power, self-esteem, affiliation and intimacy with other people. Social psychologists examine the way thought, feeling and behaviour are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of others. Rubin (1970; 1973) first researched the differences between liking and loving. Following on Rubin's (1970; 1973) work theory development began with scale construction for measuring liking and loving. Lee (1973) developed a multidimensional theory of romantic love in which six dimensions or styles of love are distinguished. Lee (1973) describes his work on love as "an analysis of any intimate affiliation which a person believed was an experience of love, whether it was heterosexual, homosexual, short-lived, lasting, happy or unhappy" (p.5). From this perspective Lee (1973) demonstrated six basic patterns or lovestyles which he called "colours"

of love. This differentiation is based on his systematic analysis of the love experiences of more than two hundred men and women ranging in age from sixteen to seventy. His lovestyles are compared to life-styles which can be changed and chosen. An original instrument was developed to conduct interviews, known as the Love Story Card Sort. All cards were coded so that diverse elements of love could be compared and basic patterns detected, then from using scale analysis and factor analysis six orthogonal love-styles emerged. He identified three primary lovestyles which he named Eros, Ludus and Storge, and three secondary styles each of which is a combination of two primary styles, named Mania, Pragma and Agape. Although logically interrelated each style has qualitative properties independent of the other.

Berscheid and Walster (1978; Walster & Walster, 1978) followed with a study which distinguished between passionate and companionate love. Many studies tried to determine various dimensions of love for example Kelley (1983) identified four distinct elements: needing, caring, trust and tolerance. Dion and Dion (1973) rating subjective experience in romantic love identified five different styles of approaching love: volatile, circumspect, rational, passionate and impetuous.

Hendrick and Hendrick (1986) developed a theory and method of love based on a realization that, while much research is aimed at developing theory, less progress was being made in the development of a comprehensive approach to scale construction. Hendrick and Hendrick's (1986) research on Lee's (1977) love-styles, suggested that the cause of different love-styles may lie in the nature of the relationship with the other person, because a lovestyle may vary with a specific partner. An interesting question which arose from their work, was whether the love-styles measured personality traits or changeable attitudes. Bierhoff and Klein (Bierhoff, 1991)

found in their study of Lee's love-styles that some of the love-styles measure attitudes and others have trait characteristics. Pragmatic love, possessive love and altruistic love prove to be trait-like variables, while Eros, Ludus and Storge tended to be partner specific.

Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love is a comprehensive theory which considers primary components of love and their interaction in close love relationships. Sternberg (1986) identified intimacy, passion and commitment as the three components which underlie different types of loving. Intimacy refers to feelings of closeness, connectedness and bondedness that are experienced in loving relationships; passion refers to the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation; and decision/commitment encompasses either short-term or long-term decisions toward another. Sternberg (1986) reasons that the amount of love experienced depends on the strength of these three components. Further research by Sternberg and Grajek (1984) suggested that experience of intimacy occurs with feelings such as the desire to promote the welfare of a loved one; experienced happiness with the loved one; high regard for the loved one; being able to count on the loved one in times of need; mutual understanding; sharing oneself and one's possessions; mutual emotional support; communication; valuing the loved one. Experience of passion is understood as a state of intense longing (Hatfield & Walster, 1981) where sexual needs predominate, but where needs for self-esteem, succorance, nurturance, affiliation, dominance, submission, self-actualization also occur, therefore passion and intimacy are interactive and manifest in both physiological and psychological arousal. Passion draws closeness while intimacy sustains it, or vice versa. The kind of love experienced, depends on the strength of each component relative to the other, interaction between them, and the actions they produce, and which produce them.

Sternberg's (1986) interest is also in discovering how the three components contribute to stability and satisfaction in close relationships. His theory also offers a potential for understanding the developmental course of love over time. There are variations in awareness of each component, and each component may vary according to whether the relationship is a short-term or long-term one. The three components furthermore differ in the extent to which the person has control over them. If one is aware of one's feelings there is some degree of conscious control over intimacy, a high degree of control over commitment and little control over the amount of passionate arousal one experiences as a result of being with or even looking at another person (Sternberg, 1999). Sternberg and Grajek (1984) found that the structure of intimacy does not appear to differ consequentially from one loving relationship to another for example, towards a parent, sibling, lover, or close friend, suggesting that intimacy is the common core of love. Whereas passion tends to be high in romantic love, commitment is high in love for children.

Sternberg (1986) applies his theory, by examining how actual love which the person experiences, differs from an ideal love as previously experienced, in other words, the expectations of what the relationship can be. Secondly, he examines the difference between the one person's perception of the relationship and the other person's perception of the relationship, with regard to intimacy passion and commitment and thirdly the match of perceptions between how the one partner imagines that the other partner experiences the relationship in terms of intimacy, passion and commitment, and how the other partner actually experiences these components. The strongest predictors of relationship satisfaction in Sternberg's (1986) work was the discrepancy between how the self perceives the relationship, and how the other person feels about the self, and how the ideal other would feel about the self. Sternberg's (1986) evidence shows that tolerance of varying degrees of involvement in relationships, depends on the discrepancies in perception

between the two partners being relatively similar, and he argues that the source of the differences in experience between two people, arises out of a failure of the individuals to express their love fully in action. It is one thing to feel a certain way but another thing altogether to express those feelings. Feelings that fail to be communicated don't translate the components of love into actions.

Aron and Aron's (1994) theory of love emphasises expansion in self-concept because to some extent how we see ourselves in part depends on how others see us. Therefore perceived contents of the self may change in the direction of what they term "expansion", and this effect may be enhanced in close relationships. Supporting this theory, Tice's (1992) research found three factors which influence self-concept change. They are high choice, self-reference and expectation of future interaction with the other person. Aron, Aron and Paris (1995) showed in this study that falling in love is followed by a self-concept change that is not as a consequence of enhanced mood, but as a consequence of changes in the contents of self-concept. They describe these changes as "self- expansion" where individuals include aspects of another into contents of the self and conclude that where partners in a close relationship integrate resources, characteristics and perspectives of another, the intrapsychic structure of the person and sense of self expands. This theory is consistent with other approaches that emphasize intimacy as involving exchange of relevant information (McAdams, 1988; Reis & Shaver, 1988). Other support for this approach includes research done on differences in knowledge structures (Bower & Gilligan, 1979; Aron, Aron & Paris 1995; Keenan & Baillet, in Aron, Aron & Paris, 1995; and Prentice, 1980), and actor -observer discrepancies in attributional processes (Goldberg, 1981; Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, & Merecek, 1973 - Study 3; Prentice 1990). Furthermore Sedikes, Olsen and Reis' (1993) work suggests that in close relationships, cognitive representations are organized in ways that extend

the individual boundaries of a person's sense of self to include aspects of the other person. A supportive context in which to express new aspects is a condition upon which self-expansion is dependent (Aron, Aron & Paris, 1995).

#### 3.1.4 The Evolutionary approach

From this perspective love is understood as a behaviour in the context of adaptation, where the evolutionary function of attachment is protection from vulnerability. Although this theory does not specifically mention love, the concepts used in describing the attachment perspective such as confidence, trust, consistent responsiveness, care and security-promoting closeness, can be considered in conjunction with other theories of love. The basic assumption in Hazan and Shaver's (1987; 1994) attachment perspective, is that patterns of attachment begin with proximity seeking in infancy motivated by security needs, which are directed towards parents, and continue through exploratory and affiliative needs when directed towards peers. Hazan and Shaver (1987) explain how these underlying dynamics are part of the human social condition which produce different relationship styles as well as healthy and unhealthy forms of love. The approach is that styles of love develop as processes of adaption to security needs in different significant contexts, where love includes concepts such as fear of intimacy, jealousy, caring, intimacy and trust (Hatfield, 1984; Hindy & Swartz, 1985; Tennov, 1979; Rubin, 1973; Sternberg, 1986; Dion & Dion, 1973)

Hazan and Shaver's (1987) conceptualization is based on Bowlby's (1973) theory of attachment which is largely based on the premise that "when an individual is confident that an attachment figure will be available to him whenever he desires it, that person will be much less prone to either intense or chronic fear than will an individual who for any reason has no such confidence.

“Confidence in the availability of an attachment figure, or the lack of it, is built up slowly during years of immaturity - infancy, childhood and adolescence - and whatever expectations are developed during those years tend to persist relatively unchanged throughout the rest of life (...) varied expectations of the accessibility and responsiveness of attachment figures that develop, (...) are tolerably accurate reflections of the experiences those individuals have actually had” (Bowlby, 1973, p.235). In other words, infants learn what to expect and adjust their behaviour accordingly. These expectations form the basis of mental representations, which continue to influence feelings and behaviours. Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) have found three styles of attachment between mothers and infants based on Bowlby’s (1973) propositions, which they called secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant styles.

Secure attachment is characterized by confident and competent emotional interactions which are more happy, friendly and trusting. Anxious/ambivalent attachment is characterized by a lack of confidence in the reliable responsiveness of others, obsessive preoccupation with a partner’s responsiveness, intense expressions of distress and anger, diminished exploratory activity, falling in love easily, being extremely jealous, being subject to fear, anxiety, loneliness and low self-esteem. Partners are viewed as reluctant to commit and as inadequate or insufficiently attentive care-givers. Behaviour also shows indiscriminate and overly intimate self-disclosure and an assertion of their own feelings and needs without adequate regard for their partner’s feelings and needs. Avoidant attachment is characterized by consistently unresponsive, pessimistic views of relationships, an avoidance of self-disclosure and discomfort with relationship partners who do self-disclose (Mikulincer & Nachson, 1991). Observation shows susceptibility to sudden religious conversion, and the perception from peers is that their behaviour is hostile. This style of attachment tends toward use of work to avoid social interaction, proneness to engaging in

uncommitted sexual relations and using alcohol and other substances to reduce tension.

Mikulincer and Erev's (1991) research on the relationship between attachment styles and the structure of romantic love found that securely attached people were characterized by high intimacy and congruence of real-ideal and self-partner love. Ambivalent people were characterized by a failure to realize their desire for a warm and secure love and avoidant people experienced less intimacy and high commitment, they underestimated partner's love and wanted less intense love than secure and ambivalent people.

Research shows that partners are selected for their ability to confirm attachment-related expectations, even if the expectations are negative (Kirkpatrick & Davis in press; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Swann, Hixon & De La Ronde, 1992). Hazan and Shaver (1994) argue that individual differences in attachment, mediated by internal working models, may underlie many of the interpersonal differences that have been discovered by researchers working from other theoretical bases. Furthermore, insecure attachment might be at the root of many dysfunctional behaviours, contributing to relationship dissatisfaction and dissolution. Change can occur if experience of just one important relationship disconfirms insecure expectations of unreliability or rejection and increases the likelihood of forming a secure attachment. Whereas infants require physical contact with an attachment figure, adults need to feel secure. Adult attachments are largely reciprocal, with each partner being both a provider and recipient of care. Mutual attraction and sexual interest may precipitate attachment, but satisfaction of needs for comfort, and security will provide the nature of that attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Kotler (1985) found that sensitive and responsive care, not sexual attraction was the most accurate predictor of marital strength. Attachment quality therefore depends on trusting one's partner to be available

and responsive to one's needs, and trust in turn promotes self-disclosure and the development of intimacy (Reis & Shaver, 1988; Rempel & Holmes, 1986; Rusbult & Zembrodt, 1983). Relationship satisfaction in this approach reduces to whether needs are being satisfied, and the importance of needs over time. Confidence and trust in the responsiveness of others is most important, and from these two components, a few broad categories of individual styles in attachment and loving develop. The environment can be perceived to be consistently responsive, inconsistently responsive or consistently unresponsive to an individual's attempts to establish security-promoting closeness (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985).

MacDonald (1999) distinguishes attachment and warmth/nurturing as two separate systems underlying attachment and fulfilling different functions. He points out that attachment contains the two subscales avoidance and anxiety. Anxiety being a measure of fear of abandonment or relating to security needs, and avoidance a measure of the extent to which a person is attracted to a close personal relationship in relation to warmth and nurturing qualities.

### 3.1.5 A Phenomenological approach

Phenomenology focuses on subjective experience. Giles' (1994) phenomenological theory of love suggests that the experience of being in love involves a complex set of desires for reciprocal vulnerability in order to care and be cared for. Sexual desire involves the physical expression of these desires in the form of mutual baring in order to caress and be caressed. Unlike love however, sexual desire need not refer to the other person's desires, as is the case with, for example, sexual fetishism. Giles' (1994) hypothesis is that at the core of the experience of love lies a complex of intense desires involving the desire to be nurtured or cared for by the loved person, and at the same time, desiring vulnerability from the other person in order to nurture and

care for that person. This concept of vulnerability relates to a need for care and an awareness of another's similar need and implies where, should needs for care not be met, experiences of rejection, suffering, frustration and fear are experienced. In Giles' (1994) theory, vulnerability and care are concomitant elements in the desire to love and be loved. Giles' (1994) describes deep intimacy as risking our innermost selves with another, in order to enter into a mutual state of emotional and psychological vulnerability. Sharing these personal feelings and information is possible only by lowering defensiveness and exposing vulnerable aspects of ourselves. It follows that an added factor in this self-disclosure is trust. From this perspective, trust is the expectation that one will not be emotionally betrayed, that is, not have needs disregarded or confidences broken, and betrayal can only occur when one is vulnerable. While researchers agree generally that trust, intimacy and self-disclosure are important concepts of love, Giles (1994) traces these components to a more basic process of vulnerability. Giles' (1994) view is that the presence of vulnerability in love does not mean that we desire vulnerability, but that vulnerability is a fundamental consequence of interpersonal closeness, so that if we allow that a desire for care is basic to love then a desire for vulnerability can also be considered as basic to love.

Giles (1994) argues that desire for care can only be properly understood as an element of love if it is understood as a corresponding desire for vulnerability. He distinguishes between love and care in a non-reciprocal relationship by using an example of a nurse/patient relationship. The patient does not care for the nurse nor desire her to be vulnerable. Only when there are reciprocal desires for vulnerability does the relationship change in a significant way. He compares baring of the body to self-disclosure, where the person who is totally naked is vulnerable because there is nothing left to hide. Sexual love can stand as a metaphor for intimate acts of baring and caressing. A desire for mutual baring of bodies is a form of desire for mutual vulnerability as is a desire for mutual caressing a form of desire for mutual care. Therefore sexual desire is a

dimension of expressing what love expresses: a reciprocity of vulnerability and care. Being in love implies desires toward another person concerning mutual vulnerability and care, and a desire that the other person has similar reciprocal desires. Giles (1994) recognises that love is not an isolated phenomenon, and that it is situated in a broader context of desires and concerns. For example desires for intellectual companionship, blue eyes, religion, and children. He contends that the multiplicity of desires that overlay love, are however, not basic to the structure of the love experience, but are rather preferences for the way in which love is realized.

Similarly Sovatsky (1993) believes that the source of the exciting quality of love is in the nature of uncertainty. He decries conventional psychology's attempts to explain away this mystery. He argues that love is demystified too easily by explanations of family history, theories of instincts, developmental need fulfilments, and boundaries. He argues that there is an allure in the hidden, undisclosed, unconscious, latent quality of mystery. Vulnerability in this sense is an experience of having to trust uncertainty itself and preserve the interpersonal as an unfolding mystery where intimate caring is a demonstration of respect for the other's growth and mystery. May(1969) agrees with Sovatsky (1993), that part of the excitement of love is not knowing where it will lead. May (1969) describes the experience as one where the centre of oneself is thrown into a void from which there is uncertainty of return. Loss of identity versus fulfilment can be at the centre of the experience of uncertainty which can be both frightening and/or exciting.

### 3.1.6 A Psychobiological approach

Biology is basic to experience and behaviour. The biological perspective emphasises the physiological events that facilitate social attachments in the function of reproduction, providing a sense of security, and reducing feelings of stress and anxiety (Uvnas-Moberg, 1997).

Physiological processes are controlled by organs which respond to the autonomic nervous system and are involuntary. Theory and research in neuropsychology and endocrinology have found that physiology is not only directly involved in arousal of loving feelings and behaviour between individuals but that love is also basic in facilitating the normal function and structure of neuronal activity and brain development (Rosenzweig, Bennett, & Diamond, 1972; Heritch, Henderson & Westfall, 1990). Most of the involuntary aspects related to love in the nervous system are controlled by the limbic system. According to theory (Papez, 1937; LeDoux, 1986; 1989; 1992 in Westen, 1996) sensory information is received by the thalamus and relayed simultaneously to the limbic system and the cortex. The fundamental purpose of the limbic brain is to monitor the external and internal environments in order to co-ordinate their congruence. Limbic functioning controls retention of memory in relation to pleasant and unpleasant experiences and regulates behaviour by comparing similar situations (Jordaan & Jordaan, 1984). Initial emotional responses in the limbic system produce autonomic and endocrine changes (eg fear and anger) which are interpreted and evaluated on the basis of stored knowledge. Emotional reaction passes through two circuits or stages representing two independent processes. An autonomic response through the limbic system and voluntary cognitive evaluation of the stimulus by the neocortex which presumably provides further stimuli for appropriate behaviour. It is believed that the limbic cortex plays the largest role in controlling emotion and patterns of behaviour (Guyton, 1969).

Certain hormones and neurotransmitters promote affiliative and reproductive behaviour while others promote self-defensive or aggressive behaviour (Porges, 1998). Evidence of oxytocin and in some cases vasopressin hormones have been associated with the formation of new social bonds from a variety of species and in different paradigms. Systems involving oxytocin inhibit defensive behaviours facilitating positive social interaction and the development of bonds (Carter, 1998; Cho, DeVries, & Carter (in press), in Carter 1998; Insel, 1992). Serotonin, opiates and oxytocin

function by reducing pain and generating warm contact.

Lewis, Amini, and Lannon (2001) have formulated a psychobiological theory of love and limbic response. The theory uses a comparison between implicit acquisition of emotional knowledge (Tranel and Damasio, 1993; Bechara, Damasio, Tranel & Damasio, 1997) and acquisition of language (Pinker, 1995). When confronted with repetitive experiences, the limbic system automatically extracts rules and/or uniformities in emotional response underlying those experiences, initiating a physiological memory (imprint) of attachment. This unevaluated derivative knowledge of love, functions like a lens which structures expectations of relatedness. Imprinting is contributed to by limbic resonance, regulation and revision in relation to parents and siblings in combination with other factors such as chance, physical illness, cognitive ability, physique, poverty, race and cultural factors to create a person's emotional identity.

In this approach the closer a potential partner matches a person's emotional identity, the more the person will feel that he/she belongs with this person, and most people will choose misery with a partner their limbic brain recognises over a relationship that their attachment mechanisms cannot detect. The limbic imprint activates compatible aspects of relatedness and emotion without evaluation of incompatible aspects and "shoehorns reality into the mould of the familiar" (Lewis et al. 2001, p.166).

Emotional identity develops as the limbic system confronts various and infinite pleasant and unpleasant experiences and good mothering has been shown to override disadvantages (Suomi, 1991). The developing infant apprehends feelings through limbic resonance and receives whatever the parents' vision contains including deficiencies. Limbic regulation orients the

emotional organisation of the person's experience and facilitates communal connection and mutually responsive interaction before language development (Trevarthen, 1993). Lengthy parental absence which deprives the child of limbic resonance and synchronicity initiates a physiologic response where there is disruption in bodily rhythms, heart beat is altered and decreases, sleep is lighter with less dreaming and more nocturnal waking, levels of blood growth hormones drop, and immune responses alter (Hofer, 1984; Shapiro & Insel 1990). In Lewis et al.'s (2001) theory steady limbic connections with a resonant parent, lay down emotional expertise, and provide adult lovers simultaneous regulation where each meets the needs of the other, an ability to modulate each others emotions, neurophysiology, hormonal status, immune function, sleep rhythms and stability so both thrive. Anxiety and depression are the first consequences of limbic omissions. While the nature of love cannot be altered, understanding the biological basis of attachment enables us to become more in tune with ourselves and others.

### 3.2 VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is a core characteristic of mortality in the human condition. Human mortality furthermore is different from animal mortality because humankind is able to be both part of and transcend instinctual adaptation. Therefore in the human condition, because survival depends more on reason, human life is as Fromm (1980, p.14) describes it, "life being aware of itself". Subjective knowledge of mortality heightens a sense of risk, threat and uncertainty which requires protective mechanisms to prevent overwhelming anxiety. Culture provides buffers against existential anxiety with world views which inculcate life with meaning permanence and stability and standards of value which individuals can live up to and in so doing gain self-esteem (Greenberg, Pszcznski & Solomon, 1986). People also use complex psychological protective

mechanisms to protect themselves, which evolve developmentally in response to the individual's ability to tolerate positive and negative feelings.

Awareness is significant in human vulnerability because awareness extends in different directions (awareness of self, of oneself as a separate person, of others, of past, and of future possibilities) and levels (conscious, subconscious and unconscious) of being. Awareness is also entirely subjective and immaterial so that continuity of self is essentially an illusion, which only appears real in consciousness. Awareness affects subjective organisation of a person's internal world and requires flexible and imaginative internal activity and a strong sense of being. Experience of threat, danger, or feelings of being unprotected or insecure can diminish robust integrating activity between ideals and reality. When family or cultural values are inconsistent with experience, or simply unclear or lacking, the activity of integrating meaningfully will be diminished.

Vulnerability pivots around a struggle between changes in internal organisation of self, and many possible directions of free will (Mouly, 1982; Jaynes, 1990). Factors which influence the ways in which behaviour is fashioned by vulnerability are development, the neuroendocrine system, and interpersonal and cultural influences.

A deconstructionist standpoint is that signifiers themselves are not informative, but rather it is the process of deferral that generates meaning. Vulnerability then is not simply related to direct threats of danger or insecurity but also connects with association of previous vulnerable experience from the complete dependence of an infant on a caretaker for survival. Vulnerability therefore can be understood to be deeply woven in development in ways that shape future expectations. A fragile self-representation emerges when experiences between an infant and significant caretakers are to varying extents incongruent and inconsistent. These experiences remain unacknowledged, unsymbolised, and unintegrated within the person, and a source of anxiety which continuously undermines possibilities for resilient intrapsychic organisation.

Vulnerability in intimacy can be avoided by repressing awareness of the person one loves. Repression protects the person from the vulnerability of engaging in a full range of emotions and instead the relationship only provides a sense of safety and security that is stale and empty (Lantz, 1992). Noam and Fischer (1996 p.170) describe vulnerability in close relationships as a point of risk that involves awareness that is “a high form of consciousness which creates its own risks and vulnerabilities which can also end on a rather high note of resilience..[and]..create a context to explore and experiment, and in turn produce new windows of opportunity to bring into focus earlier vulnerabilities as well as to overcome them, or at least live with them...[and thereby]...embolden the self to seek deeper forms of intimacy and autonomy”.

Vulnerability underpins human experience as an essential and central activating force in behaviour as both a source of fear and courage. It is dependent upon and will be compounded to the extent that one is capable of being conscious of, and able to integrate tensions which inevitably contain uncertainty and risk. Conscious discovery and feeling through one's own being is dependent upon the limits which a cultural world view provides, and self-esteem which plays a role in the way in which an individual tolerates subjective knowledge of uncertain or painful events. Lack of courage, lack of a belief system, and avoidance of vulnerability can lead to disconnected and unintegrated experiences which foster a compartmentalised, (and necessarily less resilient) self-structure, which functions disjointedly and subsequently compounds vulnerability, and an increasingly limited capacity to realise ideal love.

Different experiences and ways of coping with vulnerability facilitate or prevent responsive opportunities, confidence and trust to fully express love in action. Avoidance and denial of subjective knowing devalues vulnerability and prevents felt experience. It restricts possibility and

a reality of lived conscious awareness and replaces it with unlived fantasy. In contrast accepting the facts of uncertainty, ambivalence and fragmentation, can transform fragmentation and discontinuity into a constructive, future oriented, meaningful process. When individuals feel secure enough to trust their experiences and sense of being, congruence and integrity is possible.

# 4

## MICHAEL'S STORY RETOLD

Michael and Gillian were married in November 1993. It was a garden wedding held in the morning, and it was the best wedding Michael had ever been to. Michael and Gillian divorced in September 1997. It is April 1999 when he tells me his story.

### **“Nothing really lasted”**

The year after Michael's divorce he dated two or three times but found “nothing really lasted”. Since then he had been involved in a relationship three times. With the first relationship the girl already had a boyfriend who was living in another city, in the second relationship the girl had recently broken up with her boyfriend and it seemed that she wasn't really over the break-up, and the third girl became involved with someone shortly after Michael began to date her. Michael began to question what was happening in his relationships, where he seemed to date girls who were already involved. It became clear to him that he wasn't yet over his divorce. Although he went into new relationships wholeheartedly he realised that in some way he had a strong fear particularly at times when he was alone and loneliness crept up on him, of never finding someone else like Gillian, and he would “flip into” a hope (remembering the good times) that somehow things could work out in the future with Gillian perhaps when they had both matured and grown up more, a hope that then things would somehow be different.

Michael realised also, with frightening desperation, that he would not be able to get on with his life or begin a new relationship because he was still holding onto his past. He struggled with how to manage what seemed to him like an extreme kind of break. Gillian had gone to live overseas soon after the divorce which forced them to be apart, however she returned once a year and during that time they saw each other. They would also phone each other several times during the year. On some occasions they would re-discuss their relationship. Michael believes that staying connected in some ways allowed them to face the fantasies they had of getting together again. This was a preferable alternative to what he calls an “extreme break” or “staying in an eternally hostile situation of fighting over money or children”.

However Michael sat himself down and made a decision to get on with his life. He wanted to let go in a concrete way something more than just a rational decision, which somehow didn't seem like enough. He wanted to do something “really strong and big to make a clean break, not just sitting working through”.

Two months after the divorce Michael made a special trip to the coast. When he arrived the weather was terrible - windy, misty and rainy. He spent his time going for long walks along the beach and thinking about ‘letting go’ of his ex-wife. One night he had a dream in which he threw his wedding ring into the sea where immediately afterwards he found a girl and everything turned out okay. When the weather subsided he packed his little bag with lunch and juice and an old book which he found in a second-hand bookshop and for which he thought he'd paid too much, but because it was a special book of poetry by a favourite Indian poet and dramatist, Rabindranath Tagor, he bought it. He found the poems had a powerful effect on him they were very spiritual and spoke of separation and endings.

Poetry plays a huge part in Michael's life. It touches him in ways that help him to cry and experience hurt, pain and loss. In telling me his story Michael read to me from both his own writing and quoted well known poets to help me understand and capture some of his experience. Through poetry Michael finds a connection to himself which seems difficult to achieve in other ways.

With his pack on his back and hiking along the bluff to the cliff at the edge of the sea, Michael was deep in thought...at one stage he took out his wedding ring and put it on his finger, didn't like the feel of it and took it off again. After some time he arrived at the end of the bluff. There were tourists in the spot where Michael had intended being alone, chatting happily amongst themselves. Their presence aggravated Michael, anxious to be in this particular place alone and knowing he would have to hang around until they left. However he managed to find a quiet place where he sat by himself and began to read his book and some poems he had written. The tourists left and he went to his preferred spot at the very tip of a promontory. Tearfully Michael told me with great sadness how he could not cut Gillian out of his life because he felt that she was a part of who he was and that he wanted her to be part of his life and even though his relationship with Gillian was over, to cut her out would be to cut out a part of himself and throw it away. What he treasured was the immense learning that he gained from his relationship with Gillian and although he was pretty much over the relationship she was still a huge part in his life and would always be.

Looking out towards the sea Michael began a private ritual ending to his relationship, by reading a poem he wrote which he called "With This Ring" :

*I stand trembling  
Awkwardly balanced  
On the rocky tip of a massive promontory facing the open sea.  
To my left and behind me  
Lies a calm still bay created by the very promontory on which I stand.  
This bay has been to me  
A tranquil haven  
And a safe harbour sheltering me during much of the turmoil  
Of my life's turbulent crises. But today  
I face the wild ocean  
Stretching to the horizon,  
Filling my vision and I clutch in my right hand  
A ring. A simple ring:  
The eternal symbol of eternal love.  
A plain gold ring.  
My wedding ring.*

*"With this ring  
I thee wed". With this ring  
Five years ago  
You gave me life.  
With this ring  
Five years ago  
You gave me love.  
With this ring  
Two years ago  
You broke my heart.*

*How could I forget that day  
When I broke down and could not speak, and you  
For the first time, I saw  
You shattered into pieces  
And shed tears of death; and I held you tight  
In that ante-room*

*Between two worlds; between the decaying dispensers of justice in Johannesburg and  
the crime-riddled streets outside. But now*

*To-day,*

*Fear grips me*

*At the thought of what I intend*

*To do, fear,*

*Like the shadow*

*Of death. "Yea though I walk through*

*The valley*

*Of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil". Evil.*

*Fear.*

*Angels.*

*Tears.*

*Fears.*

*Years.*

*Seven years ago*

*You*

*Came into my life, and now I shiver here*

*The cruel cold sea*

*Lashing out at me,*

*Crashing its tears at me*

*Over menacing*

*Killing ground rocks. Seven years;*

*A life, a lifetime.*

*How many angels would it take*

*To cry the tears*

*To fill an ocean? How many angels*

*Crying how many tears*

*For how many years? With this ring*

*That five years ago I thee wed,*

*With this ring*

*To-day, I seek to lay thee*

*I seek to lay me  
I seek to lay my heart's yearning for thee to rest  
And to sever my soul  
From yours. I place my golden wedding ring  
On my finger  
For one last time. With this ring  
Once again, on my finger  
I feel the weight of the world, the weight of the ages  
Since time began. I slip the ring off  
And grip it tightly in my right hand: A weightless piece of metal nothingness.*

*The ocean  
Cries out  
For what is hers.  
The ocean  
Of tears  
Will reclaim her source and hold it  
To her bosom  
Forever. My hope,  
My prayer,  
Is that as this ring slowly sinks  
Into the ocean's grave-littered waters, it will free my soul  
And enable me to move on  
With life. Life;  
My life;  
New life,  
Life after death.*

*I want life  
I want love  
I want hope  
I want freedom from this living death.  
I want to rise  
Phoenix-like from the ashes of my death*

*And fly away.*

*"Away! Away! for I will fly to thee*

*Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards but on the living wings of Poesy".*

*"But the fancy [does] not cheat so well*

*As she is famed to do, deceiving elf".*

*And I read from my prayer book of poetry: "We two lay sunk in the dusk of dreams;  
the time of awakening has come waiting for the last word from you.*

*Turn your face to me*

*And with a tear-dimmed glance make the sorrow of parting  
ever beautiful.*

*And lo!*

*Three glossy black shapes*

*Surface from the deep; three ocean hardened seals*

*Emerge from the turbulent waters*

*Travelling from the sheltered bay*

*To the open sea.*

*I sob out loud and my body shakes*

*In joy and sadness*

*As these messengers of the Deep acknowledge my libation.*

*My tears unite*

*With their salt water sisters on the glistening rocks below. I conclude the poem:*

*The lost glory of my love will remain*

*Woven in my visions. Open with your hands the door*

*Towards final separation".*

*I turn the pages of my prayer book*

*To the next serendipitously chosen verse: "My eyes feel the deep peace of the sky  
and there stirs through me what a tree feels*

*when it holds out its leaves like cups*

*to be filled with sunshine. A thought rises in my mind,*

*like the warm breath from grass in the sun; it mingles with the gurgle of lapping water  
and the sighing of weary wind in village lanes - the thought that I have lived along*

*with the whole life of this world and have given to it  
my own love and sorrows”.*

*My voice strengthens*

*As I proclaim*

*To the infinite universe: “Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer*

*The courage to speak, to do,*

*to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone. Strengthen me on errands of  
danger,*

*Honour me with pain, and help me climb to that difficult mood*

*Which sacrifices daily to thee. Give me the supreme confidence of love,*

*This is my prayer - the confidence that belongs to life in death*

*To victory in defeat....” but I am interrupted*

*By five more*

*Messenger’s of the Deep*

*Suddenly breaking the surface and then submerging again.*

*The time is here. The angels*

*Are ready to accept my sacrifice. I shift the ring in my hand,*

*Preparing to fling it*

*To the Divine messengers.*

*But first*

*I must conclude: “Give me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer*

*The confidence that belongs to life in death*

*To victory in defeat to the power hidden in frailest beauty*

*To that dignity in pain which accepts hurt*

*But disdains to return it. I raise up my eyes*

*And three seals*

*Resurface*

*To accept my offering. With all my soul,*

*With all my heart, and with all my might I flinged*

*My golden wedding band*

*To the divine messengers,*

*And to the ocean’s devouring depths.... and the never-ending*

*Ebb and flow  
Of lunar-tugged water  
Laps, gurgles, rushes and crashes. In its everlasting attempt  
To conquer the earth  
On which I stand.*

*Now  
Will follow a time of solitude,  
Of quiet,  
Of singing and crying. To the ocean.  
To the angels  
To the Lord of the Deep  
To the Lord of Life. But the deed is done;  
All is over now,  
Laid to rest,  
At last,  
Hushed,  
At peace.*

**“Honouring the soul of the relationship” \***

On one occasion during the process of his divorce with Gillian, Michael found a temptation to let anger, hatred and hostility dominate his mood, as this would have been easy to do. But something in him wanted to do things differently, to sit with the pain to feel it and to mould him into a person with more depth and richness, something he says “you can’t buy in a shop”. In a bizarre way he said he was grateful to Gillian and to life and the universe for the experience. After he had thrown the ring away and cried and sat for a while and sang to the ocean he experienced a palpable lightness of being, “an amazing lightness, really physical and palpable”.

**\*Thomas Moore**

Five months after the divorce, Gillian visited from overseas. Michael spoke to her on the phone and as he spoke he found himself slipping back a couple of times into fantasies where he thought to himself that even though he'd thrown the ring away and undergone that whole experience, maybe it meant nothing and maybe when he saw her again he would want to get back with her. Then Gillian and Michael met and this time within a few minutes, even seconds Michael was aware of a sense of there being nothing between them, a barrier, even a sense of wanting to push her away. He sensed that Gillian felt differently and wasn't as far along toward the ending as he was. This was the first time Michael felt this way and it was with a huge sense of relief that he became consciously aware that his and Gillian's relationship was finally over for him. As Michael tells me this he cries again as the memory nevertheless touches a need in him to be in a relationship, and a fear of not finding a suitable partner with whom to share his life persists.

Before Gillian left again to return overseas she sent Michael a Valentine's Day Card which said "this isn't really a Valentines card but a paper hug" and later as she was about to leave, Michael met her at her cousin's house where he took time with her to clarify his position, that the relationship was now over for him, realising that Gillian was still feeling some ambivalence, yet Gillian agreed, they hugged and said good-bye. After the divorce Michael often found that when he was lonely and needing to talk to someone, it was only Gillian he wanted to speak to, so he had phoned her overseas a couple of times. However since saying goodbye to Gillian after she visited from overseas his need to speak to her diminished.

Michael not only had to separate from Gillian but from her family too. He had grown fond of Gillian's family, who had been delighted to have him as a son-in-law. After Gillian left for overseas her family were reluctant to lose contact with Michael; however, aware that when a new

relationship began for him, things could become awkward, Michael consciously and gradually cut ties with them. I asked Michael what he thought it was that he was most attached to in Gillian and he told of a really unconditional acceptance and love that she gave him, and that although he expected that from his parents Gillian had no blood ties to him and yet loved him despite awful things which he claims he did to her. The things that Gillian did after the divorce when she had no obligation to him made Michael realise just how much she actually cared for him because he believed that after they were divorced there was no reason for her to do things like giving him a good-bye gift which was a Charlie Brown mug which said on the mug "Guess who loves you!". Michael and Gillian had let go of each other very gradually. They did this by remaining in the same house, although in separate rooms after the civil divorce and up until the Jewish divorce. Michael's father almost cut him off, for the month that he and Gillian remained together after the civil divorce and for quite some time after that. Also many of his friends were disturbed by what they perceived as a very peculiar situation. In order for the Jewish divorce to take place Michael and Gillian had to be separated and so moved into separate homes. The separation was a very sorrowful and painful time for Michael and he and Gillian still maintained contact. After three months he felt a huge need to find a way to stop crying. Friends and family put pressure on him to cut contact with Gillian completely but Michael made another conscious decision to write to Gillian about how he was trying to cut her out of his life and how something inside him didn't want to. As a way of managing his dilemma he asked Gillian whether she would be prepared to "become his sister" in relation to him. Gillian said she would be honoured to be Mike's sister. In a bizarre turn of events many months later Gillian told Michael that she met a psychic who had asked her whether she had a brother called 'Michael'?

During the two and a half years after the divorce Gillian and Michael sometimes wrote to each

other in letters or via e-mail and expressed how they had experienced each other during their marriage and discussed how they understood what happened between them. Michael found this way of separating profoundly important, and for which he is deeply grateful, because he believes it enabled him and Gillian to separate properly, unlike people who he feels separate physically but remain attached in other powerful ways.

At the time of the civil divorce Michael was undergoing a series of intense job interviews, in retrospect he realises that he detached himself from his relationship in order to focus on the interviews, but he remembers that at the time, Gillian was more upset and disturbed about the break-up than he was. It was only after the interviews that the reality of their decision began to sink in for Michael. Michael received the news that he had been accepted for the job and he remembers that it was Gillian who more than anyone else understood and shared his joy. While due congratulations were being given to Michael by friends and family, when he had phoned Gillian from a call box to tell her he had been accepted she cried for him which he understood as showing the depth of her caring for him and his life.

Michael described a part of the pain in their marriage which involved a shared perception he and Gillian had of themselves as children. Both Gillian and Michael felt like outsiders who played marginal roles in their families of origin. They tried to manage their shared pain but the relationship wasn't working and seemed unfathomable. When tension arose between them, Gillian would withdraw and Michael would be desperate to engage with Gillian, and the more Michael wanted to engage the more she would withdraw and so on.

Michael realised there were difficulties before he and Gillian married but he never thought they

were serious enough to be unresolvable. He was very committed to her and he never thought that their relationship would end in divorce. One and a half years into the marriage Gillian and Michael were becoming increasingly upset with each other, tension was mounting and Michael decided to go for individual therapy and together they went for couples' counselling. At one of the couples' therapy sessions, after having completed an assessment questionnaire of their relationship, they were told that their relationship was very low on the scale of a reasonable marriage. Michael was confused and quite shocked at this information, he thought they had a pretty good relationship, and he believes that Gillian was also shocked. At some point in the therapy, the therapist mentioned the word divorce, or the possibility of divorce. Hearing the word divorce was frightening and horrifying for Michael, but at the same time he said he experienced an element of unconscious or preconscious relief that it was out in the open.

The idea of divorce occurred with the counsellor about a year before Michael and Gillian actually decided to get divorced. From then they began to work with the idea between themselves in the open. Neither of them wanted to get divorced so they decided to continue with more therapy and did various courses. During this time they seriously discussed divorce on three separate occasions.

Michael was more inclined to the idea than Gillian. Gillian wanted to keep on working at the relationship, but after a particular incident Gillian also thought that maybe it was time to seriously accept the idea of divorce. This was a turning point in the relationship. It occurred about a year before they actually divorced.

After writing exams that year Michael went to the coast on his own for a break, to a special place

where he had visited regularly with friends and family since he was 13 years old. At the coast he spent his time riding running and swimming and looking for shells which have special significance for him. One rainy day as he was walking, Michael stopped to sit on a log which had been washed up by the sea, and contemplated whether or not to get divorced and tried to figure out what was happening between him and Gillian. He decided to give it another six months to a year, he would stick it out, give it another try, go for more therapy and see what happened. After he made that decision a massive shell washed up from the sea.

Prior to this incident Michael had experienced other occasions when, whilst walking on the beach he had thought about, and made various life decisions, and immediately after having made a certain decision had found one of these shells (shells which are generally difficult to find). Michael believes that these are synchronistic events, and that his finding these shells confirm the decision or conclusion he has just made.

Michael told me a another story about how he developed a faith in these shells. After finishing writing his matriculation exams, Michael and his friends went on a holiday at the sea and while there, they experienced anxieties about their matric results. Because Michael has always had a struggle with God, one day alone and down at the beach, he was having a friendly private conversation between himself and God, regarding whether God existed or not and he decided he wanted it sorted out once and for all. He was expecting one distinction from his Matric exams and had calculated that it was possible to get two but no more than that. So he negotiated with God that the next morning when he went out for a walk on the beach, the number of these shells that he finds would be the number of distinctions he gets. The next morning however was rainy and wet and he was unable to go for a walk, but during that night he had a vivid dream where he found himself walking along the beach and he picked up three of these shells. A day or two later his results were phoned through and he received three distinctions.

He returned home. That was the second time Michael and Gillian had considered divorcing and decided not to. They went for more therapy, and continued working on their relationship. The decision to divorce was also complicated for Michael by practical and financial necessities. He was aware and partly feeling guilty about staying together because of the practical financial considerations for him. He expressed a sense of feeling mercenary in this respect and shocked at himself that he would take into consideration his own practical and financial needs in the whole process, and it was something he would not admit to anyone.

As time wore on both Michael and Gillian became more and more depressed, friends and family began to notice that Michael was down. Michael became aware of a flatness in himself increasingly numbing out the terrible pain. On one dark day he remembers thinking about a gun that he had - in fact two - a small one and a bigger one. He saw himself taking the gun and blowing his brains away and then visualised Gillian coming home and finding him with his brains splattered all over. Michael tearfully thought of the effect this would have on Gillian; he believed it would destroy her given all the hell she'd already gone through in their relationship, and he feared it would wreck her emotionally for life.

Gillian was sexually abused as a child and this had played a huge role in their relationship. While Gillian had made much progress in dealing with many aspects of this, he believed that if he killed himself she would lose a lot of what she'd gained and be destroyed by it. In effect Michael said he realised that much of his involvement with Gillian was around wanting to heal her and wanting to help her get over the earlier abuse. Sadly Michael discovered that what often happened in relationships is that the abusive patterns can be replayed.

He specifically remembered a conversation he had with Gillian where he told her that he feels as if she wants to make him angry and she confided that sometimes she fantasizes about pushing him so far that he rapes her. This admission of Gillian's gave Michael a sense of relief that he hadn't been turning into some kind of monster.

About three months before the divorce their marriage became filled with unbearable pain, the enormity of which was difficult to conceive. Michael and Gillian were participating in a personal growth and development course and were staying with Michael's parents at the time because it was close to the venue. As things were becoming very bad between them, Michael decided to sleep at their house separately from Gillian, who slept at his house. For the first time in their relationship their problems became blatantly visible to their parents. Michael experienced immense pain that night and phoned Lifeline for help. He didn't remember how long he was on the phone, but it was a very long time and was very grateful to the person on the other end of the line and the opportunity to work through some of the intense emotions he was feeling. The course continued another two days and inevitably touched emotions, Michael found himself like dry tinder just needing the hint of a spark to flare up. He used the opportunity to consciously deal with what he was feeling, and it was on that weekend that both he and Gillian decided, that they would actually divorce.

They found their therapist, whom they had been seeing for a while, to be very helpful. Michael wondered whether, had they seen this therapist a year earlier, whether they would be in the same predicament. However after two or three sessions they decided not to continue with the therapy but to get divorced. The decision came after considering the care they had for each other, which they wanted to preserve. They decided that divorce was necessary to stop them from destroying

each other. To explain and rationalise his need to divorce Gillian, Michael read a passage from a book by Thomas Moore to her.

*...the ending of a relationship is as mysterious as its beginning, and in the origins of the relationship fate often plays a dominant role, and as time goes on, fate continues to give a relationship its twists and turns. Yet when a marriage or relationship breaks up or when a friendship fades we tend to look for rational causes and to blame one of the parties for committing the crime of ending, fate and its important relationship to the soul is forgotten. And we take for ourselves both authorship and blame for developments which are clearly the work of the soul. If we are going to honour the soul of a relationship we will have to do so all the way, even if necessary through its ending. If we see soul seep into a relationship at the beginning through fate we might watch it slip out fatefully at its end. Blaming the other party for the ending of a relationship is understandable as a way of avoiding the pain caused by the inexorable, sometimes heartless demands of fate, but by avoiding that pain we may condemn ourselves to years of being haunted by the very emotions and images we are attempting to escape.*

Gillian cried listening to him.

Some of the motivation for getting divorced was the hurt each inflicted on the other. Michael and Gillian felt in many ways that it was destructive to stay married, as they were destroying each other's souls. Michael began to experience and understand the bittersweet of life where intense sadness and joy reside together.

**"Some shape of beauty moves away the pall from our dark spirits" \***

Picking up the pieces of his life meant starting to make a place of his own and buying his own things. Michael did this with an enthusiasm which marked his life with unusual tenderness. He

\*Keats

bought a kist in which he keeps all his treasured mementos, books, poems and diaries. Dated approximately 5 months before the divorce, although it is written by someone else, one of the poems that was very meaningful to Michael at this time and which he read to me is called 'Not Waving But Drowning' by Stevie Smith.

*Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning: I was much further out than you thought and not waving but  
drowning  
Poor chap he always loved larking  
And now he's dead it must have been too cold for him his heart gave way  
They said.*

*Oh, no no no, it was too cold always  
(Still the dead one lay moaning)  
I was much too far out all my life  
And not waving but drowning.*

On one occasion after their divorce Michael went back to visit the house where he and Gillian had made a home. Being there brought back vivid memories and a sense of familiarity of a time gone. In spite of the divorce being the most painful experience of his life, Michael believes that his whole experience with Gillian "gave him life", and opened up his heart to life and experiencing life fully.

Another poem which was meaningful to him at the time of his divorce, which Michael used to tell me of his suffering and which he read to Gillian just after their divorce was Dover Beach by Matthew Arnold. Reading it again brought back sorrowful memories and Michael cried, overwhelmed, as he read,

*The sea is calm tonight,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the strait; - on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!  
Only, from the long line of spray where the sea meets the moon blanch'd land,  
Listen! You hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw  
Back, and fling  
At their return up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.*

*Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant Northern sea.*

*The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full and round the earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world.*

*Ah, love - let us be true to one another! For the world which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams, so various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

Michael knelt next to his kist as he continued to tell me of the events of the divorce and interspersed the story with anecdotes which he and Gillian shared and which he keeps in his kist.

Having decided to divorce, there would be two divorces; a civil one and a Jewish one. The civil divorce would be a month before the Jewish divorce, although uncontested, a lawyer was consulted regarding legal procedures. There was no dispute over assets, just a painful process of deciding who would take what of their few possessions.

An anecdote punctures the story:

*Winnie the Pooh and Piglet are walking down the road together and Piglet says to Pooh, he says Pooh "What do you say first thing when you get up in the morning?" And Pooh says, I say, "What's for breakfast." Pooh says, "What do you say Piglet?" and Piglet says, "I say: I wonder whats going to happen exciting to-day". So they walk for a little bit and Pooh thinks and after a while of thinking he turns to Piglet and he says, "It's the same thing!"*

One of the ways in which Michael heals the hurt (because he loves reading) is to collect quotations and poems that move him and which he thinks are beautiful and wonderful. He writes them down in books and keeps them to read. When he feels down, he reads through them, because they are what give meaning to his life. In explaining how these little things give meaning to his life, Michael tells of a 'Peanuts' cartoon.

*Snoopy is sitting on top of his kennel...*

[ "and again all the time I'm quoting other stuff but obviously I'm speaking about me" ]

*...he's sitting on top of his kennel and he says, "Meaning! No meaning in my life."*

[ "next frame" ]

*I look up at the skies I search the skies for meaning there's no meaning...then out*

*comes Charlie Brown with a bowl of food*

[in the last frame]

*Snoopy pounces on the food and says, "Ahh meaning!"*

As part of his finding meaning in little things as a way of dealing with the lonely after-effects of his divorce, Michael began to do some fabric painting. He spent lonely and contemplative hours turning the dull, bland and boring fabric on his sofa into something beautiful and lovely. Using these paints he lifted out formerly unnoticeable patterns of birds and butterflies, and felt that what he was doing was in some way metaphorical of what he does with his life, that is, turning something mundane into something beautiful. The fabric painting was something which helped Michael deal with the emptiness in his life at the time and move towards feeling repaired.

### **The divorce**

The civil divorce required that either Michael or Gillian be a plaintiff and the other a defendant. It was an anathema to Michael that one of them had to apparently criminally charge the other. He was the partner asking for the divorce and therefore ought to have been the plaintiff, however he did not want to sue Gillian, more particularly because of her history of sexual abuse and self-blame. He told Gillian that he wanted her to be the plaintiff.

At the time Gillian was struggling much with the pain of the reality of divorce whereas Michael had detached himself to some extent because he was involved with a series of intense job interviews.

In court, however, Michael found himself disgusted with the court process which he found

despicable. He felt that the judge turned the proceedings into a 'sitcom', and specifically compared it to the flavour of the sitcom 'Married with Children' where comments like "Does your husband know you're getting a divorce?" were bandied about by the judge, prompting the public in the courtroom to laugh. Gillian was overwhelmed, took her turn before the judge when it was her turn to take the stand. Michael was present and watched, and after she finished they left the room. Michael cried when he told me that, "When we went through those first lot of double doors I could see she was like badly shaken; we went through those doors into that place between and sh..sh..she broke down and cried, I mean that wiped me out because I mean she never did that, I mean her body was just wracked with sobbing she was wiped out....and I just took her and I just held her...". They walked through the streets and outside the courtroom for a while holding hands.

According to the Jewish Bethdin Court of law they had to be living separately in order for a Jewish divorce to take place. Michael moved out on the eve of the Jewish New Year and two months later, the divorce occurred.

In the Jewish divorce Michael was required to sit down with a scribe who wrote in beautiful writing on leather parchment made from an animal, using a feather which is cut with a razor and dipped in ink. The wording was to the effect that, 'You are no longer my wife and I hereby renounce...' Michael didn't remember the exact ending. He and Gillian, three witnesses and the rabbi came together and Michael had to give the inscribed parchment to Gillian saying he renounced her and that she was no longer his wife. Gillian had to receive it. During the ritual Michael was unable to speak, eventually sobbing and simply saying a word or two at a time. Gillian managed to remain contained, and she supported and held Michael. They stayed together

for about ten minutes afterwards, and then Gillian had to return to work. Michael drove around in his car and eventually visited a woman friend and told her about the divorce and to express what he was feeling, read her a poem from his collection.

Michael adopted the view that both the marriage and the divorce were ordained, he supported his belief with birthdays and names which co-incided on both sides of his and Gillian's family.

Because Michael's family and father in particular became very hostile towards him and Gillian between the two divorces, in a bizarre turn of events Michael and Gillian were left to give each other the care and support they needed during that traumatic time. Looking back Michael is pleased at the turn of events as it was a rare opportunity to discover a depth and richness within himself. Michael read an extract from Keats' poem Endymion to describe the pain and beauty of his grievous ending with Gillian.

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever, its loveliness increases it will never pass into nothingness but still will keep a bower quiet for us and a sleep full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing therefore on every morrow are we wreathing a flowery band to bind us to the earth spite of despondence of the inhuman dearth of noble natures of the gloomy days of all the unhealthy and overdarkened ways made for us searching. Yet in spite of all some shape of beauty moves away the pall from our dark spirits.*

**“And now I shiver here, the cruel cold sea lashing out at me  
Crashing its tears at me over menacing killing ground rocks”**

After the divorce Michael was extremely fragile he cried at “the drop of a pin”. He walked around with his sunglasses on, even inside shopping centres as he found himself weeping

spontaneously. He found particularly when he ate, that he felt the pain in his stomach, so he avoided eating and not eating too, made him tearful. The food seemed to stick in his stomach and trigger "all those feelings .....that nervousness and apprehension". At the same time Michael tried hard to cut off the feelings and get over the pain.

He was renting a flat temporarily and worked part-time before moving closer to his work the following year. He didn't install a phone because he would only be there for four months. Although he occasionally went to his parents when he needed to use the phone, he largely withdrew into and isolated himself. He made friends with a girl who lived upstairs who was having difficulties with her boyfriend. He would listen to her stories but soon tired of them. It was a lonely time for Michael but he found time to mourn and grieve. Many times he would take out his album of all his photographs and cards that Gillian had given him.

An incident which stands out for him during that time was the day Gillian's mother and her sister wanting to maintain contact, visited him. It was a difficult day, Michael had been sitting on the floor looking through his photos and he became overcome with loss. He found himself screaming, sobbing and howling, beating the carpet with his bare hands - the pain was almost unbearable. Shortly thereafter Gillian's mother and aunt came to see where Michael was staying. They found Michael shaken, Gillian's mother being very unemotional became awkward and Michael asked them to leave.

Michael anguished over whether their decision to divorce was a mistake, and something he couldn't reverse. Yet the image of a marriage "similar to Gillian's parents, where her mother cuts herself off completely from her emotions" and she and her husband are in many ways estranged,

convinced Michael that he didn't want to be in that kind of marriage. This vision of the future prompted Michael to change his own way forward, in spite of it being extremely difficult physically, emotionally and spiritually, fearful that he might never find someone suitable for himself.

Another incident in this four-month period after the divorce, which stands out for Michael, was when he attended a growth and development course.

One of the activities of the course was a guided meditation exercise. The aim of this exercise was to ask for forgiveness from significant people in your life and to experience forgiveness. During the meditation Michael visualised being at a type of school desk on a beach, Gillian was sitting opposite him and he asked her to forgive him and she did. This was a new experience for Michael who hadn't understood or experienced or been able to accept that Gillian could forgive him. It was a powerful experience which made him weep.

On the same weekend Michael spent time with a woman who was on the course with her husband, and who collapsed from emotional trauma. The woman had been placed apart from the group in a bed because she couldn't move. After spending time working with her and finding himself connecting with her, Michael walked out of the room and outside into the rain. Walking in the drizzle he was physically struck by the beauty of the black and blue sky. With his own emotions bare he wept simultaneously at the beauty he saw and the sadness of the woman, and again understood more deeply what bittersweet meant. He cried for the woman's sadness and pain, which resonated with his own, and with joy at being able to share, understand and connect with her in a way that was mutually healing.

Later on the same weekend, Michael again went outside the meeting, wanting to be on his own. He was unable to sit on the ground because it was wet from the rain. So he crouched down on his haunches, as he was looking down at the mud he felt a strange fascination to rub his hands in it. A voice inside him told him to “cut your crap Michael !” but the urge persisted. He began to dig his hands into the mud and rubbed it all around, he then got an urge to smear the mud all over his face and in his mouth when another voice said “you are out of your fucking mind, just control yourself” but the urge wouldn’t go away, while another voice pleads “fuck off and leave me alone!” In spite of being smartly dressed, Michael dug his hands into the muddy clay took it and smeared it all over his face, tasted it, and put it into his mouth.

On reflection he felt that he connected with the earth with his feelings, emotions and with life itself. What was important to him was the experience, the raw physicality of desire to “take the earth and be engulfed by it”. Afterwards Michael made his way to the bathrooms cautiously avoiding bumping into anyone on the way, and managing to get there without anyone seeing him, because as he said, when he saw himself in the mirror he thought he resembled a savage. He also thought it necessary to reassure me that he wasn’t crazy.

At the end of that weekend Michael went White Water Rafting on the Orange River. Although it was financially difficult for Michael to make the trip he really wanted to go and made a plan. Sleeping in a tent along the river bank was something Michael really enjoyed.

On the first day with life jackets on, Michael volunteered to be the first to negotiate the first big rapid which was called Hubbly Bubbly. Guides positioned themselves strategically for safety reason along the river while the volunteers made a start. Before leaving the bank of the river the

guides instructed those participating on how to handle the rapids. Michael explained how he had had to swim quite far to get into the current of the river so as not to get whipped along the bank and into the rocks. By the time he found himself in the current he was already quite tired and out of breath. He was swept down with the water enjoying the ride immensely and waving to the others on the river bank yelling that 'this was great', when he suddenly found himself pulled under the turbulence. Already out of breath Michael didn't come up. He remembered being told that the more one flails about in a 'hubbly bubbly' the more one gets stuck and that the thing to do was to fold up and make oneself small, and not to let go of the oar. Folding himself up small, Michael expected to pop-up to the surface, but it didn't happen and now he needed air. He reasoned to himself that he had a life jacket on he would surface at some time which kept him going, however he reached a point where he was about to suck in water, he was thinking he needed to fill his lungs and he would open up and breathe in water. He was about to do this just to get something in. He remembers that his life didn't flash before his eyes but he began to reflect that "this is how people drown - this *is* how people drown, and I could drown *now*", when he eventually popped up. There was great relief in Michael's mind. On surfacing he tried to breathe, but he couldn't because he had taken in water and was choking, at the same time the guide in the raft asked whether he was okay. Michael couldn't speak but hung onto the rope on the side of the raft for about five minutes, grateful that he had survived and was already very shaken, nevertheless Michael ventured through the next rapid which was called Hell's Gate.

At the end of the trip Michael thought of the near drowning, his experience with 'the mud', and the his connection with the woman on the course. This left him with an extraordinary sense of feeling fully alive. He noticed that the green of the grass and the blue of the sky were extraordinarily vibrant. He found that symbolically in all three encounters, a powerful sense of

having gone through 'Hell's Gate' literally, and having got to heaven on the other side.

Michael was still grieving, when he returned from the rafting trip, in spite of feeling on a high after the wonderful experience. He wrote poems to Gillian which he recorded on cards and anecdotes which were meaningful to Gillian and him as a way of managing his sorrow. These are some of the poems. Extracts from Kahil Gibran's 'The Prophet':

*To Gills*

*On love*

*When love beckons to you, follow him though his ways are hard and steep,  
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,  
Though the sword hidden among his pinnions may wound you,  
And when he speaks to you believe in him,  
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the North wind lays waste the  
garden,  
All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your  
heart  
And in that knowledge become a fragment of life's heart.*

*On Marriage*

*You were born together and together you shall be forevermore  
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days  
Ay you shall be together even in the silent memory of God*

*Joy and Sorrow*

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked,  
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being the more joy you can contain  
When you are joyous look deep into your heart  
And you will find that it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy  
When you you are sorrowful look again into your heart*

*And you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight,  
They are inseparable, together they come  
And when one sits alone with you at your board,  
Remember that the other is asleep upon your bed*

Then from his own heart he wrote 'Farewell my love'

*Farewell my love*

*It was but yesterday that we met in a dream, you have sung to me in my aloneness  
and I of your longings have built a tower in the sky but now our sleep has fled  
and our dream is over and it is no longer dawn the noontide is upon us and our  
half waking has turned to fuller day and we must part, if in the twilight of  
memory we should meet once more we shall speak again together and you shall  
sing to me a deeper song and if our hand should meet in another dream we shall  
build another tower in the sky. Farewell my Lovely and God bless you, Mike.*

And 'Breakers'

*The ocean's hammering waves pound and crash and smash,  
And break the naked strand and my heart and my heart,  
My aching heart that never never more  
Shall walk hand in hand with yours along the virgin beaches of my world.  
The wavelets lapping at our feet the rain drizzling in our faces.  
For you, you are lost to me, lost forever to the cruel sea of fate,  
And I, I am all at sea, all at sea and too lost to even hate.*

Michael went to the coast again in December 1996 for the holidays. People had been swimming out to the dolphins which were swimming unusually close to the shore. Michael looked out at the turbulent sea quite afraid, given his recent dunking in the Orange River. He waited for a day when the sea was calmer and swam out into the bay to where he could no longer stand, and to where the dolphins lent him their tender friendship. Michael captured another emblem of his

sorrow and pain during his holiday and finalised it late in January 1997. He called it 'Swimming with Dolphins'

*I stood at the threshold of a vast bay,  
The crying of seagulls swamped by the crying of people's faces  
Smiling faces, laughing faces, faces shrieking with delight,  
Little faces crying with beach sand in their eyes.  
And I alone in stillness at the water's edge,  
And you all one, thrashing and leaping about in ecstasy at the ocean's ledge.*

*And then not yet unconsciously I heard your silent call,  
And as I waded tentatively into the frothing waves  
I glimpsed you racing to meet me.  
No longer hesitant my heart pounding the breakers  
I swam past the faces and through the surf until of a sudden  
The comber's crashing was muffled far behind me.*

*And as I was wafted upon the gentling swells rising and sinking  
Rising and sinking, I found myself alone on a sacred sea  
And I shivered, though the water was warm  
Alone completely alone the ocean gripped me  
And my desolate heart slowly sank,  
Sank far beneath the murky waters*

*They say that death is merely the beginning of new life  
It would be nice to believe that sinking to one's deaths  
Is somehow the beginning of new light emerging.  
Light emerging - perhaps illumination begins  
With a fettered stench of fish and an earshattering blast  
Of eggs bloated, exploded from deep inside  
A leathery black embattle scarred hide*

*Perhaps revelation begins with a terrified heart  
Tremulous before the banal majesty of a merciless killer become curious  
Surfacing to sound out what ungainly interloper  
Dares disturb the tranquil waters.  
Perhaps the home-coming blessed belonging  
The yearn for union begins with a moment  
Of consummate surrender to a dark marine deity.*

*Here I am take me if you will for I no longer have the strength  
Or will to fight life's soul sapping currents  
I offer myself before you my warm-blooded brother  
And I sacrifice my tears to you.  
My salt water mingles with your salt water  
And we are united in fear and death.*

Michael had had two divorces, the growth and development course, a River Rafting Trip and a Coastal trip all in the space of four months between September 1996 to January 1997. Gillian left for overseas in November towards the end of January.

That period was a distinct time of grief, mourning and trying to get on with his life. On returning from his coastal holiday, Michael prepared to pack up his flat and move. He chatted dispassionately with Jennifer from the upstairs flat, he was growing weary of listening to her relationship problems. Michael's first sexual relationship was with Gillian, apart from her, Michael had not been sexually active with a woman. He became aware of Jennifer trying to seduce him. He was ambivalent about casual sex with Jennifer, because he believed that he should "sort of save himself for [the] next relationship". Before long however Michael found himself on two occasions engaging in sexual encounters with Jennifer, which were incredibly free and satisfying, lifting a huge burden hanging over him and leaving him with an unexpected sparkle,

given the very intense and trying difficulties he and Gillian had experienced.

And so Michael moved further away from the torment which had been so much a part of his recent past. Although he wasn't particularly attracted to Jennifer as a person and subsequently avoided her advances, in some ways he wished he had just lost himself in her but he didn't want the responsibility of a commitment to her.

Michael spoke to his brother Peter, about his liaison with Jennifer. He rarely confided in Peter, however his brother surprised him by telling him a story about his own experience, after a similar traumatic relationship break-up, where he "got himself laid" by a woman, which he too, to his surprise found "did him wonders".

**"My eyes feel the deep peace of the sky and there stirs through me  
What a tree feels when it holds out its leaves like cups to be filled with sunshine"**

Michael moved to a new place and began to make a new life for himself, buying little candles and things, aromatic oils, getting pictures and putting them up, writing, brightening the cushions of an old sofa with fabric paints, and wondering whether he and Gillian would ever get together again. After a year of mourning Michael finally threw the wedding ring away and when he met up with Gillian three months after that, he realised that it was finally over. He continued piecing his life together. Two and a half years later, when he told me his story he believes he is finally at a point where he is freed up and able to move on with his life and at a point where he may be 'in love' again.

Michael was reminding himself (just as he did with Gillian), that 'when love beckons, follow even

though his ways are hard and steep'. He found that by opening himself up to his dreams with Gillian he found himself "shattered to become a fragment of life but with a big 'L', a part of life's heart". Pondering the words of the poem after he read it to me, Michael however again became aware of fears he had in venturing into a new relationship. He mentioned particularly a fear of not being loved as much as he loves, but that it was important to him to love in spite of the fear.

I asked Michael what made him feel most vulnerable? He said immediately that he could not answer that question, but what came to his mind was that his whole experience of his relationship with Gillian was one of "making himself vulnerable [of] opening himself up to feel hurt and to be shattered and to be vulnerable and to be willing to be vulnerable and to take what comes with that, because the other extreme which most people seem to do is to shut themselves off and hate and joke". I said that it seemed that Michael's vulnerability was something that gave him a sense of purpose, a sense of life. Michael responded by way of another story.

At one point during their marriage when his and Gillian's difficulties were becoming more recurrent, he wanted to get away camping or something. Gillian was unable to take time off from work and encouraged Michael to go on his own. Michael was grateful that Gillian would let him go like that. He decided to go camping in the Drakensberg. On a particular day he had been on a difficult hike, alone, and decided to come down the mountain by a different route. Before long he found the route he had taken to be extremely steep and rocky and required hanging onto chains to climb down. Although Michael was an experienced climber he had not encountered the kind of frightening terrain he found himself in. He had come too far to turn back and it seemed he had no choice but to try to go down. Terrified and tired he sat down on a rock and cried with fear. He talked gently to himself and encouraged himself to feel the fear and not deny it, and then

decided, slightly amused, that if he was going to die, then he would die, but he was going to go down anyway.

Michael compared his relationship to that climb. He said that his whole experience had been like that, looking fear in the face and that fear was often because of vulnerability. He told me that he had made himself vulnerable to fall down the mountain and be killed, and had made himself vulnerable to be emotionally devastated and that something keeps on pushing him to do this and not give up on himself.

In recalling his story Michael was reminded with hindsight of just how difficult things had been. He had forgotten just how helpless, hopeless and desperate, even a bit suicidal he'd been. He had forgotten what a huge part sex had played in their relationship or didn't play. The first six months after becoming involved with Gillian things had been great, but began to deteriorate rapidly, and by the time Michael and Gillian were married their sex life was virtually non-existent. Apart from no sexual activity Michael found the relationship equally emotionally barren. Looking back at that time Michael became aware that while he is able to be self-sufficient and independent he was now also aware that he has an "incredibly strong need to be nurtured particularly in an intimate relationship". In his relationship with Gillian he found her unable to respond to him in either a physical or emotional way, which exacerbated his needs and developed into an intractable cycle of interaction between them.

Michael remembered an incident from a counselling session where he and Gillian had a fight over him not cleaning out the basin. They eventually negotiated an agreement, where it became apparent that Gillian's need was for Michael to clean out the basin and Michael's was for Gillian to give him a hug occasionally. When he confided to a friend and his friend's father about this and

the extent of their marital difficulties it was his friend's reactions that alerted Michael to the painful realities of his marriage. The painful process of gradually facing reality had been very frightening indeed. Michael said that it was terrifying having to reconcile with whether, quite early in their marriage, it was going to work.

It was difficult to even consider or acknowledge or speak about. In therapy Michael agonised over questions of whether there was something wrong with him, whether how and if he should change himself, learn to get over, or be content with less affection. He slowly began to think about whether he and Gillian were compatible. The realisation that he too had needs, brought Michael to the conclusion, that if his needs could not be met, the marriage would not work.

Michael experienced a pattern in his marriage with Gillian where he found he was particularly caring towards her and yet found no response. He found this aspect of his relationship with Gillian to be the essential difficulty with which he struggled. He felt unloved, uncared for and desperately wanting to be cared for and loved. In the beginning he wasn't that desperate, but the less physical and emotional affection he received the more he seemed to need it until he felt quite desolate. Michael recalled three distinct incidences where he cried desperately to his therapist about the lack of sex, nurturing and care in their relationship and how the therapist gently stroked him physically as though he was a child. Michael found from this that it was easier for him to acknowledge needing sex in a relationship, but extremely difficult to acknowledge a need for love and nurturing, and the difficulty of allowing himself to be held and cradled like a baby. He found the experience absolutely "freaky and totally unacceptable as a man" but he realised in retrospect just how much he needed it.

Both Michael and Gillian were in need of caring and while he was willing and able to give it to Gillian she was unable to reciprocate generally. He found this difficult to understand and he found himself trying to survive from day to day not really aware of how miserable and unhappy he was. He attributed the main difficulty to Gillian's having been abused when she was younger, and he tried to rectify the problem, by using more and more psychotherapy. In retrospect Michael found that it is important that he maintain a balance between his partner's needs as well as his own and not fall into a trap of focussing only on his partner's needs. He also tried to manage their difficulties by assuming that there was something wrong with him. So he attended all kinds of, and more and more courses, some on cognitive behavioural techniques.

When he went away on his own to the Drakensberg Michael rationalised that it was great that he and Gillian were able to give each other their own 'space', however looking back he saw a difference between "giving each other space and desperately trying to fulfil that unsatisfied thing inside him". More and more, as the divorce drew nearer Michael realised when he went away without Gillian, that he was hoping that somehow he would just be 'laid' by a woman. Michael explained that he preferred to be committed and intimately connected to the woman he was sexually involved with. He found that in his relationship with Gillian he was unable to get close to her. Wanting to engage with her precipitated Gillian withdrawing from him, whereupon Michael would try harder and Gillian withdrew further until the situation became very destructive.

I asked Michael to tell me about his family.

Michael has a sister two years older than he is, and a brother three years younger. He remembers his sister as being the 'apple of his father's eye' and he and his brother always being compared to

her. He experienced his brother as being his mother's darling. Michael feels very different from his father and more similar to his mother and as a result of this difference he found he was constantly in a battle with his father where they clashed in many ways. Similarity with his mother meant she saw things in him which she didn't like in herself and for which she showed constant disapproval. Michael's experience was of rejection from his parents. He often found himself protecting or defending his mother against his father. When things went wrong at home Michael's mother would retreat into her room with a huge headache and no-one was able to speak to her. The lights were put off and everyone had to tip-toe around. Michael always felt that he had to make things better, and make reparations.

After the divorce Michael went through much turmoil with his parents as well. He stopped individual therapy and entered into group therapy which facilitated an understanding of his own family dynamics. He came to a point of accepting the limits of his parents involvement with him. He had always been irritated with his mother's need to constantly feed him. He became aware through therapy of a resentment of having to take in, other than what he needed from his mother and felt almost angry and resentful for not receiving the physical caring and affection he longed for as a child. Now as an adult his mother is available to shower him with affection, which seems to be more her need than his. His rage was so strong at times that he couldn't bear to be in the same house and at meals was unable to accept the food she offered him. Michael told how having faced much of the pain of unreciprocated love he is now able to accept food from his mother with a certain decorum and has been able to be more considerate and polite towards her. Michael accepts that his relationship with his father will always be a parallel one where they will never communicate in a way where there is an experience of connection.

One of Michael's deep resentments, was that his mother never protected him from his father. A particular incident stands out, where at the age of about sixteen he wanted to stop doing Karate which was against his father's wishes and his father never spoke to him for a month. He remembers begging his mother to do something to say something to him. He tried and tried to speak to his father, he spoke to his father's friend but to no avail. When he was older Michael noticed that his mother never opposed his father even when she disagreed with him.

Michael then remembered an incident before he and Gillian were separated but during the time that they were considering a divorce. Michael's sister gave birth to her second child and Gillian was excluded and not invited to the Bris. Michael felt that he and Gillian were still very much together, however even though his brother-in-law had wanted to invite Gillian, his sister would not invite her because of their father's wish not to do so. Michael understands that this is his father's way of "managing things ...just to cut off". It was also at that time that Michael's father was very angry at him, as well as angry that he and Gillian were still living together after deciding to get divorced. It was the hardest time of Michael's life and he experienced his father as completely hostile toward him and Gillian. At the time he experienced enormous rage towards his father.

Michael was grateful that he and Gillian were able to repair an awfully destructive relationship even though it meant parting. He is grateful that he and Gillian are friends and that they can call each other up on the phone and chat as close friends. He is grateful that they came through hell and destruction without cutting off from each other. He says that he knows with Gillian there is someone out there who really loves him and cares for him, not because she's obliged to out of family ties, but because she chooses to.

One of Michael's deepest fears is that he is not going to find somebody who is 'the woman of his dreams' and he is afraid that if he does meet someone who appears that way, that he won't be able to have her, because the feelings might not be reciprocated. This awareness is something Michael feels however is not related to Gillian.

Michael's story was tapering to an end so I asked him how he had experienced sharing his story with me. He said that the first three sessions had been great very cathartic for him. Then he explained that "having someone witness it and I think that's what happened ....I think that to go through something like this by myself wouldn't have such an effect it was really great for me having someone containing to witness it for me and give me that space to go through it once again and in a different way".

### **"Give me the supreme confidence of love"**

Michael sustains a fervent belief that he will make a relationship work the way he wants it to one day, and will get into a relationship that he wants, but at the same time fears that perhaps when he does, life will give him "another klap!"

Michael ended his story by reading me Keats' Ode to a Nightingale. He finds in Keats' poetry a powerful feeling of the "transitoriness of life" and "loss", while he was already familiar with and had studied the poem formally when he was younger, he felt that he never really understood it until after his marriage, journey with, and divorce from Gillian.

*My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains*

*One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk.  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thine happiness  
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full throated ease.*

*Oh for a draught of vintage that hath been  
Cooled a long age in the deep-delve'd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green'  
Dance and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
Oh for a beaker full of warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth,  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim-*

*Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget  
What though among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness the fever and the fret  
Here where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad last grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs;  
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.*

*Away! Away! For I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards.*

*Already with thee! Tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Clustered around by all her starry fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verduous glooms and winding mossy ways.*

*I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild-  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;  
And mid-Mays eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.*

*Darkling, I listen; and for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy.  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain-  
To thy high requiem become a sod.*

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path*

*Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.*

*Forlorn! The very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! Adieu! Thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now tis buried deep  
In the next valley glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music...Do I wake or sleep?*

## MICHAEL'S STORY REVISITED

In revisiting Michael's story I will observe how Michael manages his experiences through narrative. Secondly, I will look at how useful different theories on love are in understanding Michael's experiences. Thirdly I will integrate my findings in the context of vulnerability as an added dimension that has a part in managing love in a relationship.

### 5.1 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

Personal narrative is a spontaneous form of integrating different parts of ourselves into a reassuring whole in order to make our lives meaningful and hopeful.

#### 5.1.1 Major premises

The major premise at the outset of Michael's story is that no relationships which he became involved in after his divorce from Gillian, lasted. He argues that this is because he is still holding onto the memory of his relationship with Gillian. Michael's memories of Gillian are mixed with assertions of absolute hurt and loss, as well as an unconditional love which he experienced with her.

*...quite clearly and especially from her, and in fact I realised this most just a few months after the divorce, was the really unconditional acceptance and love she gave me...(p.12).*

A second premise is of a strong commitment to marriage. When Michael's psychotherapist questioned his desire to marry Gillian just before the wedding, Michael was shocked and confused

but committed to the marriage. Both this encounter with his therapist and a subsequent encounter with another therapist after the marriage indicates that commitment overrode difficult realities in the relationship and which to a large extent eluded Michael and Gillian before they were ready to acknowledge them.

*...(Smiling, slightly amused) Well the first time I began to realise, was maybe even before we got married, well, not about divorce, I mean I began to realise, and I was aware there were difficulties and problems, I didn't think they were that serious, and one thing which I can actually tell you, which quite shocked me, I was going for therapy, individual therapy ...umm ...and I went to ....it was an intern [psychologist],.... but anyway about a month or so before I was about to get married... it was something about questioning actually getting married and I was totally thrown by this and I was actually quite angry at her....hey...how dare she say something like that especially as I was so close to getting married and I was really certain about it.... so and I was quite angry at her.... so I mean at that time I never had any doubts.....I knew there were problems in the relationship but I never ever thought it would come to divorce. I thought this ...you know....it was..... I was very committed and certain that this was it...(p.18)*

When Michael and Gillian's difficulties became more prominent, they consulted a therapist and Michael re-experienced shock and confusion.

*..I thought we had a pretty good relationship (laughs) and...what happened she..this therapist at one point... she... I think she mentioned the word divorce, or the possibility of divorce which was in some ways shocking for me.... I think maybe for Gillian too...and yet (pause and letting out breath ) it wasn't at the time, but theres almost if I think about it now ...almost a relief of somebody saying this...because I mean we were going through such difficult times and just not even wanting to consider that possibility and denying it.....and for somebody to say it was incredibly scary and frightening and horrifying and all the rest and*

*yet... as I say ....an element very strongly of unconscious or preconscious relief that its out in the open and that was when we started working with it out in the open and that was probably maybe a year before we actually decided to get divorced....(p.19)*

A third premise in Michael's story was that it is important to face one's fears and not give up on oneself.

*...I mean this whole thing its been looking that fear in the face..and that fear is often because of vulnerability ...I was making myself vulnerable to fall off and be killed...I was making myself vulnerable to be emotionally devastated...and ...ja something in me keeps on pushing me to do this and to not give up on myself...(p.58)*

A fourth premise is that Michael found it frightening not to be certain beforehand about how a relationship is likely to turn out.

*..and thats really really frightening because it says that anybody can get in a relationship ..you can be so sure about it.. you can think you know so much stuff and psychologically sophisticated ...and think you know yourself well ...(p.65)*

### 5.1.2 Setting

The setting of the story reflects a struggle in the way that the order and emphasis of different episodes, times and places unfold. The story does not follow an even unfolding of events but rather moves between more or less painful episodes, places and times in a struggle to manage the experience of these events.

Michael intends to begin his story in the present. But immediately goes back two years to September 1997 when he and Gillian divorced, he begins by contextualising the story with significant times and dates - when he and Gillian were married; the engagement; the length of time they dated; and deliberately returns to the present. The social circumstance Michael uses

to locate his story in the present is his current dating pattern and a difficulty in making relationships last.

Michael does not want the narrative to jump back to the beginning but to move back in time

*...bit by bit...(p.18)*

Initially he continues the story with the period six to nine months before he and Gillian were divorced and then moves to a therapy session where the idea of divorce first became a possibility.

The setting continues back in time to the previous year when Michael went away to the coast by himself and the scene shifts to an earlier holiday just after Michael had finished his school Matric exams.

A style of various vignettes inserted into the story continues to the end. Michael describes returning from a holiday; becoming seriously depressed; fantasies of suicide; arguing and fighting with Gillian; and a period that Michael stops himself from including in the story.

A weekend where Gillian and Michael joined a growth and development course which was interrupted by a vignette where Michael describes the struggle which justified the idea of divorce.

The story skips to the present and the setting is Michael's current home and the momentos and treasured items which he keeps to remind him of his time with Gillian as well as activities he engaged in after they were separated.

The story moves to the home which he and Gillian shared and which Michael had decided to visit shortly after the divorce, and then a reading of poetry and meaningful anecdotes which Michael keeps in a private journal.

Then a shift to the day of the civil divorce followed by a Jewish divorce ritual and ends with a reading of poetry.

The immediate present is the setting for the beginning of our third meeting. The story is interrupted when Michael talks directly to me about the effect of having someone present to the telling of his experiences.

I understand that in some way my presence has been a support to Michael as he manages the events of his story. The story then continues to the time after the

divorce, of intense loneliness; wandering in shopping malls; being alone in a new flat; an emotionally charged rainy weekend which included different vignettes of emotional exhilaration including, a strong urge to smear himself with mud and a rafting trip where Michael nearly drowned. The setting returns to a reading of some of poetry to me and the story is lost when Michael and I just talk to each other. I had asked him more about the marriage itself but Michael was reluctant to talk about that.

A scene evolved of a sexual relationship with a new friend, followed by a conversation with his brother, and after my asking Michael about his feelings of vulnerability in his relationship, the story moves to a scene about being dangerously lost on a mountain and risking falling to one's death. Again the setting is the immediate present where Michael sifts through recordings of various therapy sessions. The recordings take him to the time when he first began to struggle with the idea of divorce. He first focuses on the hopeless and desperate reality of his and Gillian's sexual relationship beginning early in their marriage and which Michael finally confides to his close friend's father. The next focus is the time when divorce was first discussed and the plaguing question of whether the problem lay within himself or in the relationship. Then the focus moved to a therapy room where recognition of a desperate need to be loved and cared for - to fill an unsatisfied thing inside him coincided with a realisation of a difficulty of allowing someone to physically love and nurture him and which is illustrated by a poignant image of being held like a baby and which felt more particularly unacceptable for him as a man. The focus shifts to a scene of leaving home, going away from Gillian, alone, to the mountains accompanied only by wishes for sexual abandonment and conflict between this and a strongly held belief and practice of sexual restraint which Michael describes as

*...a woman's approach to sex...(p.64)*

The flow of Michael's recollection is interrupted in the present setting by me at the point where he begins to describe desperation leading to destructiveness. The setting returns to the present interview and revolves around a defensive disturbance in which I involved my own anxieties and the focus of Michael's story became lost. When Michael returns to his story the setting is his relationship with his parents and a recollection of a therapy session in which he came to terms with conflicting needs in his relationship with each of his parents. The setting moves to a history of Michael's experience of rage around his perception of his father's apparent intransigence, particularly when Michael and Gillian continued living together after the divorce and when Gillian was not invited to a family Bris (circumcision ceremony for a newborn baby boy). At this point I again allowed my anxieties to disturb the story and the setting returned to a confused exploration from me of parts of Michael's story.

Michael returns to his story in the present and his struggle to formulate a strategy which will see him find in a new relationship the lasting happiness he longs for. His story ends with a scene of loss where Michael reads Keats' poem Ode to a Nightingale to capture the landscape of his feelings of loss.

The narrative direction culminates in the reality of a lack of sex and warmth in the relationship, trying to understand that problem and the correspondent sense of lack of fulfilment, and a certain degree of acceptance of the loss and pain that accompanies the loss of all these.

### 5.1.3 Structure

Significant to the structure of a story is what is included in the story and what is left out. Michael preferred not to include the marriage or life before the marriage in his story. He intentionally contextualises the story around his and Gillian's divorce, the circumstances surrounding the divorce, and to some extent the marriage and current attempts to begin a new relationship. What

is not included in the story and therefore not part of the context, is Michael as a child, teenager and young adult before he met Gillian, what his hopes were then and how he sought to achieve them, what work he did or what his other ambitions are. The main motive in the telling of his story is a constant attempt to remain in the present and not move too far beyond his current adjustment to the divorce and the divorce itself. The focus is generally how Michael has managed the divorce and later attempts to find a new close relationship.

#### 5.1.4 Imagoes

Imagoes are idealised and personified images that represent real persons rather than correspond to real persons. They connect thoughts and feelings meaningfully and can define a central conflict as well as constitute motivation in the story (McAdams, 1988). An idealised image in Michael's story is unconditional love. It is personified in Gillian.

*...quite clearly and especially from her, and in fact I realised this most, just a few months after our divorce, was the really unconditional acceptance and love she gave me...(p.12)*

*...I mean people speak about love and unconditional love and [at] times since then I've been on my own and felt very lonely and unloved (lets out a deep breath) and I can't think of many people in the world (still very emotional) who can be....you know....as loved as I have by Gillian...(p.27)*

*...just out of happiness for me, and I've never really...she was the only person of all my close close friends ..and they all said ...yes well done... great et cetera ..... but she was the only person who.. (huge sigh).. who really knew how how important it was for me and how special it was for me and I was so touched that she started crying for me.(p.15).*

*...I mean the honesty and levels of honesty and openness we reached at some*

*times were just mind blowing...(p.24).*

Being part of Gillian's unconditional love and acceptance was a wholly new experience for Michael.

*...well I'll tell you what it is...quite clearly and especially from her, and in fact I realised this most, just a few months after our divorce, was the really unconditional acceptance and love she gave me. I've never had....I mean.... parents are different okay....parents love you for sure... 'cos you're their kids.... but still with parents its difficult.....but with Gill.....here was somebody with no blood ties.....she came and she loved me and I did some really awful things to her in our relationship....(p.12)*

Other images which permeate the story are images of remoteness in the way Michael feels connected to others. Michael describes a biographical event which explains the image of remoteness

*... in our families, we were both kind of the outsiders, the outsider child in our families and [we] have these various rejections so we'd gone through these very similar experiences and it was almost like perhaps because of that that unrecognised unconscious identification that we got together and we could understand and identify with that.....(p.15)*

Images of remoteness are embodied in Michael's father,

*...and then with my father, it was also just reaching a stage of recognising that umm..our relationship is a certain way I'll never be able to relate to him like I might have liked...[ ]...we can't communicate about stuff you know so thats how our relationship is and its I've gained an acceptance of that as it is...(p.69)*

*...as a result of the difference from my father he just fucking fought with me all the time...umm just cause of the clash on various levels...(p.66)*

Gillian,

*...she would withdraw more, so the more she withdrew the more I wanted to engage, the more the more the more you know...(p.15)*

*...so now sex became something of a way where I was hoping I would get some of that contact and love and nurturing and obviously there wasn't that either ... (p.62)*

*...and that's what wasn't happening in my relationship with Gillian we weren't... I didn't feel that close to her and I didn't feel loved by her and that nurturing and all the rest umm...and so I got more and more desperate and as a result we had lots of fights...(p.64)*

Gillian's mother,

*...her mother is very... lets use the word... unemotional, cuts herself off from emotions all the time and on to an extent too...(p.43)*

*...like Gillian's mother and father did, and where her mother cuts herself off completely from her emotions they live different lives...(p.44)*

and in new relationships that Michael tries to establish, the image is of a form of distance between him and his new date usually because of a third person in the background with whom Michael is competing.

*...it looked like things were really going nicely, then she found this other guy who she met more or less at the same time...(p.1)*

*...with the first one ....that was quite clear, she actually had a boyfriend who was living in Cape Town ... (p.2)*

*...one [ ] had recently broken up and it seemed to be a thing in the relationship that she hadn't let go of...(p.2)*

### 5.1.5 Voices

All stories are told in voices - a dynamic chorus of styles (Lindegger, 1999). A voice which speaks of the intolerability of continuous struggle, pain and despair in coming to terms with his relationship with Gillian, is revealed in moments of defeat where Michael surrenders all internal reference and resorts to blind faith in fate. Co-incidences with names and dates of significant people in his and Gillian's life give 'proof' of the appropriateness of their love. Similarly Michael relied upon the chance of finding a certain sea shell to decide whether he and Gillian should divorce or not, and he tells of a belief that happiness is found in serendipitous events. The voice which flirts with fate, superstition, serendipity and uses unreasonable and groundless notions, tells of the frustration of a fundamental vulnerability.

Another voice speaks of mixed feelings of pain, fear and ambiguous relief around exposure,

*...‘what I can tell you’; ‘the first time it was opened up’; ‘it was the first time there was quite an almost public splitting between us that people could see...shoo...I was in such pain, I was desperate...’ (p. 19; 19; 25;)*

*...(letting out a big breath)...there's almost if I think about it now almost a relief of somebody saying this...and for somebody to say it, was incredibly scary and frightening and horrifying..(p.19)*

There is also a voice that wishes that life could be as simple as Winnie the Pooh and Piglet walking down the road together.

While one voice in the narrative speaks of Gillian's unconditional love another voice speaks of lack of care, a lack of nurturing and a lack of a sexual relationship.

*...[I have] an incredibly strong need to be nurtured in many ways especially in*

*an intimate relationship umm.....and what was happening in the relationship, Gillian just wasn't able to give me that at all, and you know I got more and more needy for that and wanting it and needing it and it built up and obviously the... it came into the whole sexual thing as well because there was no sex but it was also the lack of physical affection and touching... (p.60)*

*...its really interesting for me because its coming across now huge... there was very little response ..umm..from her side and it started tying into this feeling of me wanting to be nurtured and cared for but it not happening ..(p.62)*

*...the biggest thing that I struggled with in the relationship with Gillian that I felt unloved and uncared for and she just...and I was desperately wanting that...(p.62)*

*...this love nurturing thing and on three separate occasions umm...she [my psychotherapist] almost held me like a child and sort of stroked me physically and well I cried and that and it was...I cannot tell you how difficult it was for me to be able to to do that to allow myself to...to be held like a baby.....she held me like a child and stroked me and you know..how freaky that was and just totally unacceptable as a man and I think I can see now that I needed that and I need that...(p.62)*

## 5.2 RELATION TO THEORY

### 5.2.1 Lee's (1977) theory

The nature of Michael's relationship with Gillian most closely resembles a Storge pattern or best friends love. Storge refers to a close friendship which develops over a longer period of time and frequently develops on the basis of same interests or common social background. Joint activities predominate and sexual contact is less emphasized and begins relatively late. Lee's (1973) theory only offers a typology that shows that a relationship falls into one of six particular styles but does

not offer any conceptual ideas with which to understand a particular lovestyle or how it would develop.

### 5.2.2 Sternberg's (1986) theory

In the context of Sternberg's (1986) theory, Michael's relationship is moderate in intimacy, low in passion and high in commitment. Moderate intimacy is indicated because Michael's intimacy with Gillian is mixed. He was interested in Gillian's welfare but also acknowledged that he did some awful things to her. He found difficulty in experiencing happiness with her, had a high regard for her but they struggled to reach mutual understanding. Information gathered from the story is not sufficient to gauge whether Michael and Gillian shared their possessions or inner selves with each other easily, but it is evident that they could count on each other in times of need. After the divorce they turned to each other for support and supported each other through the divorce. To some extent they were able to give each other emotional support but Michael felt on the whole that the relationship never offered him enough emotional support. At times they were able to communicate and had a high regard for each other's lives. They chose divorce rather than hurt each other. Passion is constituted in sexual needs, self esteem, succorance, nurturance, affiliation, dominance, submission and self-actualization. The passion component also interacts with the intimacy component. Michael's story indicates that the relationship lacked passion on all levels. Commitment in contrast was very strong both in the short and long term. Michael and Gillian decided that they loved each other and they were committed to maintaining that love even after the divorce.

There is a large discrepancy in overlap between real and ideal involvement in Michael and Gillian's relationship. They were both shocked to learn that their relationship was low on the scale of a

reasonable marriage. On the degree of match in assessing the relationship on each of the three components intimacy, passion, and commitment the relationship is severely mismatched. Sternberg's (1986) theory is very useful in gauging stability and satisfaction in the relationship, but does not provide an explanation of how intimacy, passion and commitment develop or why the different components vary.

### 5.2.3 Attachment theory

Attachment theory relates the structure of romantic love to attachment styles. Michael's attachment, interaction goals and love appear to be consistent with many of the interaction goals of the anxious/ambivalent style. In ambivalent people in general there is a failure to realize their desire for a warm and secure relationship. While there is a desire for a warm and secure relationship, experience of a partner's lack of intimacy and the fact that one chooses a non-intimate partner fit the description of this attachment style. Michael has a lack of confidence in the reliable responsiveness of Gillian, he not only views her as an insufficient care-giver but is preoccupied with this. He falls in love easily and feels intensely distressed angry, lonely and anxious at finding a suitable partner. There is no evidence that Michael shows diminished exploratory activity. He attended growth and development courses and psychotherapy to explore the difficulties in his relationship and loves adventure, enjoys the challenge of mountain climbing and river rafting. There is no evidence of whether he may be jealous or fearful and does not have low self-esteem. Michael asserted his feelings and needs in the relationship and appeared to have regard for Gillian's feelings and needs. Attachment theory goes further than Lee (1977) and Sternberg's (1986) theories in explaining how an attachment style develops and is useful in understanding a person's adult attachment style.

Aron and Aron's (1995) theory of self expansion is also reflected in Michael's story when he speaks of Gillian having become a part of him and of having gained and learned from her

*...I gained.....I learnt immensely from it..... so umm.. now where I'm at is pretty much over her and I feel quite differently, but still she's a huge part and always will be a huge part....(p.5).*

#### 5.2.4 Psychoanalytic theory

Psychoanalytic theory explains the ways in which wishes, imagination and unconscious motivation influence behaviour and provides an in-depth understanding of complex developmental dynamics. The method of psychoanalytic assessment requires a specific therapeutic structure which was not used in this study and therefore concepts of the model cannot be applied. Kernberg's (1995) theory however would offer some understanding of the aggression in the relationship. His theory explains the development and balance of love over aggression in internal object relations. Psychoanalysis also uses processes of identification, transference and idealization to understand aggressive behaviour and sexual difficulties.

#### 5.2.5 Social Construction

In the context of a social constructionist view Michael had romantic notions towards the relationship. He placed importance on co-incidences which he found significant to their relationship.

*...And I believe we were meant to get married I mean I can tell you the co-incidence of dates of...birthday is on the same day as her father's Gillian's birthday is on the same day as my grandfather. This one got married...its freaky...it is freaky the co-incidences ....her brother's name is John, my middle*

*name is John. I mean just the...its totally freaky....so I believe it was meant to be...(p.38).*

Marriage among twenty-year-olds is considered appropriate and socially acceptable, and would bring approval from Michael's family and friends and confirm an identity that conforms with the norm. Divorce on the other hand while more widely accepted than a few decades ago is not easily approved of. When Michael and Gillian realised that their marriage was malfunctioning it was with great difficulty that they came to privately but also publicly acknowledge the idea of divorce. Divorce also confronts strongly held values and beliefs. A significant part of Michael and Gillian's relationship was their religious value system and in order to accommodate the practical realities of the disintegrating relationship they had to thoroughly re-understand their values. This not only challenges a person's sense of coherence but also the significant relationships with whom one shares beliefs and values. Michael became severely depressed on realising that the relationship was disintegrating and was not supported by close family who disagreed with the way he managed the separation. The social constructionist view is useful in understanding external pressure on maintaining a coherent internal structure and the way that this will maintain belief systems about how love should be managed.

#### 5.2.6 Psychobiological theory

From a psychobiological point of view limbic functioning influences choice of partner on the basis of resonance with a similar emotional identity. Both Michael and Gillian felt like outsiders in their families. The story does reveal that relations between Michael and his family were strained. He is closer to his mother than his father, distant from and almost resentful of his sister's relationship with his father and to a lesser extent of his brother and his relationship with his mother. At the

same time as being attracted to each other, the nature of this attraction-feeling like outsiders-may ironically precipitate underlying discordance, a sense of similarity but at the same time not feeling completely 'at home' with each other. The psychobiological approach is useful in understanding attraction and that very real difficulties arise when unevaluated attraction is confronted with reality that can be evaluated.

### 5.2.7 Phenomenology

Phenomenological theories of love have included vulnerability in the structure of what love means.

Michael discovered this vulnerability in his relationship Gillian.

*...I mean this whole experience has been one big making of myself vulnerable opening myself up to feel hurt and to be shattered and to be vulnerable and to be willing to be vulnerable and to take what comes with that... [ ]... when you ask me about vulnerability...I think its been one huge lesson in vulnerability for me and in opening myself up and to be hurt and to be vulnerable...(p.58).*

## 5.3 SUMMARY

Michael makes his fears and his attitude towards his fears explicit. The images that emerge in the assumptions, motivation, setting and imagoes of the story fit in with the developmental explanation of attachment theory.

Vulnerability is intrinsic to dependence and most theories agree that patterns of behaviour are established in response to the way dependency is managed in infancy and childhood and that during the course of development the person integrates information from the environment to enable stable confident and adaptive behaviour in an uncertain world.

An existential perspective extends integrating information to include the condition of human mortality. In addition to the vulnerability of dependence a core characteristic of vulnerability in the human condition exists because of our mortality. Existentialists argue that in addition to assumptions and core beliefs that enable confidence and coherence there is a shared sense of mortality in being that provides a sense of belonging that is also essential for coping with the groundlessness of life. Vulnerability around mortality is not expressed directly because it is too disruptive and overwhelming. Instead it is expressed through fears about specific things, rather than expressed as anxiety about nothing and may also be felt in relationship (Becker, 1973 & Yalom, 1980 in Vandenburg, 1991).

Michael alludes to this vulnerability in association with being and nonbeing (death)

*...I was shaking I said okay...(amused ) if I fall and die, I fall and die I felt the fear I'm going to go down... and its almost once again another metaphor...thats what I've been doing ....I mean this whole thing its been looking that fear in the face..and that fear is often because of vulnerability...I was making myself vulnerable to fall off and be killed...I was making myself vulnerable to be emotionally devastated...(p.58)*

Most theories infer vulnerability. Attachment theory infers vulnerability because it underlies a need for secure attachment, and is an intrinsic motivation in the way adaptation is expressed. The psychobiological perspective infers vulnerability to the extent that individuals have evaluative control or awareness. Similarly vulnerability is inferred in the psychoanalytic perspective to the extent that individuals have conscious awareness and understanding. While various theories infer vulnerability from early dependent relationships in affecting adult relationships they do not specifically include mortal vulnerability as a core component in the theory. In addition while vulnerability generally may be understood to imply a limiting capacity, it can be at the same time a core catalyst for action and living.

Michael married Gillian with high expectations, his own primary relationships played a role in his development and the ways in which he understands his relationships. Like most people he conforms to societies' expectations and his own needs, unaware of how his own and Gillian's vulnerabilities would unfold. Although he and Gillian in many ways showed each other love and care in the face of their vulnerabilities they were overwhelmed and as Michael implied in the poem by Stevie Smith, he was 'Not Waving But Drowning'.

# 6

## REFLECTION

*If I just do my thing and you do yours,  
We stand in danger of losing each other  
And ourselves*

*I am not in this world to live up to your  
expectations;  
But I am in this world to confirm you  
As a unique human being.  
And to be confirmed by you.*

*We are fully ourselves only in relation  
to each other;  
The I detached from a Thou  
Disintegrates.*

*I do not find you by chance;  
I find you by an active life  
Of reaching out.*

*Rather than passively letting things  
happen to me,  
I can act intentionally to make them  
happen.*

*I must begin with myself, true;  
But I must not end with myself:  
The truth begins with two.*

Walter Tubbs

Looking back on my experience of this research I am immediately aware of the enormous task and discipline involved in integrating a vast variety of ideas (theories of love, research on love and attachment, my own ideas and experiences as well as the experiences of Michael) into a constructive and logical form. When I first planned the dissertation I was attracted to the goals and methods of quantitative research because the quantitative approach fitted my sense of logic. I wanted to be detached and do what I imagined would be an objective study.

I began considering the topic of love after considering integrating Lee and Sternberg's theories of love. I thought the theories were interesting but believed that neither really reflected an understanding of the underlying dynamics of love. My dissatisfied view of these two theories proved to be a powerful stimulus for my own thoughts on love and so I began a journey of trying to understand my own experiences thoughts and feelings on love together with the different theories which I had begun researching. It was during this process that I began to think that vulnerability may be a core process around which patterns of behaviour in close relationships are shaped. I also considered that responding to vulnerability defensively removed awareness of an authenticity in human frailty that is pregnant with opportunity for growth and connection. During the most difficult times of my own divorce when I was most vulnerable I discovered that the more open I was to my own vulnerability the more open I felt to creative and constructive opportunities, and the less I was open to this, the more confused and helpless I felt. This led me to wonder about the ways in which vulnerability influenced the managing of relationships. I also began to consider different contexts of vulnerability and what vulnerability effectively means in the human situation.

Before I began the research I had a bias toward a psychodynamic approach to understanding relationships and felt frustrated that I didn't have sufficient knowledge or training in this approach to fully apply myself to this perspective. To temper my bias I researched as many theories as I could find. In addition I found different voices in my own head arguing for and against different perspectives and this motivated me to follow unanswered questions and explore my own assumptions by researching more. Wanting to pursue my own point of view ahead of other theories made me aware of a need to want to prove something ahead of carefully weighing and considering the facts and I became more aware of the ways in which I could undermine my own

clear and sound logical thinking, however, I also realised how spontaneity and discipline in a kind of internal dialogue became partners in the way that my understanding unfolded. I really enjoyed all the reading involved and I continually engaged with doubts and questions and a struggle in the background of my mind to anticipate and determine the thread of the research.

The interviews with Michael were mixed with comfort and trepidation. At the start I was relieved at Michael's diligence and enthusiasm. He made a genuine and concerted effort to provide me with rich material and I was touched by that but concerned that he use the opportunity as much as he could for himself. I think that we did find a balance in the interviews for both our purposes. I wanted to be relaxed to enable Michael to feel relaxed but found while this worked on the whole, at times it was difficult to maintain. I realise on reflection that in the interviews I also wanted something to happen that would somehow prove something. Reading the transcripts I realised that I wasn't able to fully trust my intention to allow the material to emerge on its own and that whatever emerged would be useful enough. At the same time I felt the material was very rich and rewarding and in retrospect have been able to see it is a trustworthy process.

Looking at my responses to Michael I was able to examine the many levels at which I unconsciously engaged with him. This was interesting to me because I also became a third person in the process and I was forced to examine my role in our conversations. I realised how responses such as 'good'; 'wonderful'; can place conditions of worth on the text and I think it would have been better to be more conscious of remaining neutral.

I had some anxieties around how I was going to analyze the data because I had not planned the details, I trusted that the narrative approach would achieve what I expected it to. I became constantly aware that whatever I represented, I was also representing Michael to himself and it

was this process that I eventually engaged with.

I was consciously aware of a need to be sensitive to how Michael would experience my work. I realised that I didn't want to simply use this material in whatever way I could just to serve my own purposes. I began to take direction from Michael's story and to let go more and more of a tendency to follow some form of predetermined logic. I let go of what I wanted to see in the material and began to let the material speak to me. I began to adopt a disciplined approach to the material and I began to lose the idea of wanting to prove anything and wanted to reconstruct a story that would itself speak of love and vulnerability. I found it useful to use narrative ideas to understand Michael's story because I found these concepts worked closely with the way that Michael managed his experiences. I experienced a kind of wonder at the way theory came alive when applied to Michael's story. I also realised the different roles that different theories play and that sound research based theory is very useful for assessment, particularly Ainsworth's work on attachment theory and Sternberg's triangular theory of love. I was able to recognise Michael as fitting a particular attachment style and began to understand more clearly how relationships function.

I was pleased that Michael's response to my question around vulnerability concurred with some of the ideas I had about vulnerability in a relationship but there wasn't sufficient evidence to indicate that vulnerability is a core around which love relationships are shaped, only that a type of vulnerability is particular to close relationships.

This research has been a valuable discipline and rewarding exercise for me. As a contribution to theory I hope the value of this research is that it raises awareness of a pivotal significance that

vulnerability plays when elaborated in relationships and in the ways that love is expressed.

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## APPENDIX

## TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEWS WITH MICHAEL

5th April, 1999.

Michael: Do you want to start of with a question?

Me: Do you want me to start?

Michael: Well I don't know, you must tell me. You obviously don't have a specific research question you want to ask me.

Me : No, I think I'll get there. What I really want it to be, is a story that you want to tell, but your story. I thought about it after I saw you, and I thought that whatever you say is going to be relevant.

Michael: Okay

Me: I thought about it and I think whatever you say will be relevant. What I think is important, is just the way you structure it. Your beginning, your middle and your end.

Michael: I've actually thought about it and I'm actually going to start at the end.

Me: Thats fine.

Michael: Because starting off there is actually where I am now

Me: Good

Michael: I want to contextualise it for where I am now

Me: Ja... ja...so as its happening for you, and you'll take yourself to other places.

Michael: Okay, so let me tell you, I give ...some ....ummm ....I got divorced in September, October 1997. We were married for about two and a half years, and we went out for about two and a half years before that.

Me: So that's September 1993..

Michael: I was married in November 1993. We were engaged for a year before we got married and we went out for a year and a half.

Michael: My wedding was the best wedding I've been to. ...[laughs]... okay so ja.... I'm wanting to start with where I'm at now and where I am .....I need to go back a couple of months ..... last year so what was that the year after my divorce .....1997..... the year before that..... the year after my divorce I dated a couple of times, but nothing really lasted, and last year I had three sort of two more like relationships, didn't last very long, but it was more than one or two dates and on the third one which was more towards the end of last year, it looked like things were really going nicely, then she found this other guy who she met more or less at the same time , and I was really pissed off. And what I started doing

for the last couple of years..... what I 've been doing is to look at what's happening in my life. So I said what is it telling me.... because when I looked back at all three relationships, with the first one ....that was quite clear, she actually had a boyfriend who was living in Cape Town and I got involved with her, the second one she had recently broken up and it seemed to be a thing in the relationship that she hadn't let go of it, the third one, she didn't have a boyfriend to start off with, but then shortly thereafter she got involved with another guy and I started thinking what the fuck is happening? I keep on getting involved with girls who are involved and I tried to read it back to myself, not just as a random thing.

Me: Do you find that that is a pattern?

Michael: No its not a pattern, but it was a pattern last year. Okay ....and I asked myself and I answered and then it was quite clear, it was because I hadn't got over my marriage yet, partly, and I'm aware of that and in the time since my divorce and I'm sure in subsequent sessions we'll go more detailed.

Me: So it kept you in a sort of ambivalent way in your new relationships

Michael: No. I thought, and I was, a hundred percent sure about the relationship, the new ones, consciously I was there a hundred percent, but when I was forced to look at what this was telling me, I realised that on a perhaps a deeper level, maybe on a more unconscious level, but it wasn't all unconscious, I was still holding on to the hope of having my ex-marriage work out some time in the future.

Me: A kind of a fantasy

Michael: Absolutely, and I'm very aware that that was a strong theme in the two and a half years since my divorce. In the beginning I tried to deny it, I thought over and done with...but it was a constant thing that at various times, I went back and sometimes it is quite clear...in the beginning certainly and it was quite clear, and quite a relief that it was over, but then I would slip back and the loneliness and being on my own and not having somebody within, and the fear of never finding someone else again, would often flip me back into thinking, well maybe we can make it work, we've both grown and matured now, maybe things have changed, we did have a lot of good times.

Me: You really liked her

Michael: Ja. And it was mutual she went through that too, as well. Thank God shortly after we got divorced she went to live overseas which forced us to be further apart, I saw her about once a year, I've seen her three times, four times since she's been gone, and each time we've got together and spoken and gone through this whole process.

Me: It really is a process is'nt it, its never final.

Michael: And I think...okay well, I could start philosophizing about other people and their breaks and trying to make this extreme break and yet it doesn't get resolved and they stay forever in hostility and fighting over the kids and money, but thats a way of not letting go and still staying connected in my experience. It was a having to go through these fantasies, are we going to get back together?, Are we not? Yes I'd love to, I wish we could or couldn't, getting together once a year and seeing is it different? Okay so now I'm coming to the exciting part, I reached that point where I realised that, I'm not getting into a relationship because of ....well I decided .....its a belief .... that I wasn't getting into a relationship because on some level I was still holding on to my other relationship, and I decided fuck it, its long

enough, I want to get on with my life.

Me: ...and that was a deeper feeling...

Michael: Yes; it was scary to decide that, but it was really out of desperation, of saying, I'm not getting into a relationship because probably, or I believe I'm holding on, and I need to do something about it, and you know there are all sorts of things I could do, so I thought sit down assess, rational emotive shit, and I thought bullshit, you know that, you know how ever much you try, you can't force it.

Me: In a way its just like holding on to something else.

Michael: Yes, what I realised I needed to do and I actually resisted the feeling, I needed to do something really strong and big to make a clean break, to make a break, not just sitting working through...

Me: Rationalising, doing it in your head..

Michael: Ja, ja, ja I needed to do something really big, I once had a fantasy of this image...okay... what happened was, I'd kept my wedding ring after the divorce, it had been stuck away in a drawer, umm but I kept my wedding ring, but once, quite a while ago, probably a year ago, I had this fantasy, this image of me standing on this cliff over the sea, and throwing this ring into the sea, then I was going to do this, I was going to make this huge ritual, and I was going to do this, so in November last year I went to a place at the coast, I was there for two weeks, a place that is a very special to me, I have spent a lot of time there when I was growing up.... do you know the place ...

Me: Yes, in fact I'm going down there at the end of this year..

Michael: umm and I've hiked there a lot and its really lovely, a nature reserve, lovely wild place, so I decided I was going to hike out to this place and throw my ring out into the sea. And what happened, I was there a week ....and I got in, and the weather was terrible, it was windy and misty and rainy and because of that I had to put off .....because its just not feasible that kind of weather, so eventually it was my last day that I walked out there and all this time, this was very much on my mind, in my dreams...

Me: Yes...

Michael: it was coming up in my dreams and I had this very vivid dream that I did this, and immediately after this I found this girl and everything was okay and so it was very much on my mind almost because of the forced time to think about it, with lots of time walking on the beach, so anyway the day finally came when I packed my little bag and my lunch and my juice ....umm and quite serendipitously I'd found an old book which I'd found in an old second-hand bookshop that I'd seen and I hadn't bought because I'd thought fifty bucks was too much for it, but it was really very special, he was an Indian poet and dramatist called Rabindranath Tagor, he's got quite spiritual poetry, anyway so I stuck that book in my bag and where I'd first come across it I'd come across a mixed book of poems umm I'd come across one or two of his poems which at the time had a powerful effect on me it was about separation and endings of relationship and yet its almost spiritual. I'm going to side track a bit now..

Me: Okay..

Michael: and I think and you'll see and maybe in my whole story as it comes out, poetry had played a huge part in my separation, there were some poems that I read, and I cried about it about loss and

separation and I wrote poems then and now and a lot of it was about this ending and letting go and separation, and [a huge sigh] you know the other day when we got together and we spoke about you said about you wanting to look at hurt ...and between relationships, and I guess I was thinking how does a person say okay I was hurt, I was fucking sore, this is what happened, since before we'd met I've been thinking ....and what expressed so much of the hurt and pain for me, a lot, was poetry and a lot of poems, and I don't know maybe it'll come out, I'll read you some of the stuff..

Me: Wonderful... yes.. I think too.. What you're trying to say is that we try so hard to break things up into discrete bits and like you say hurt is this thing, but its a living thing and poetry is also a living thing, has a life of its own..

Michael: Ja because its an expression of words which evokes feelings and evokes things and even evoke different things for different people and even different things for the same people at different times you know..

Me: Ja, so its a living thing its moving and when you talk about separation and loss its very much a kind of seed and a shoot thing, you know a dead seed and a live shoot in each moment theres something new..

Michael: Ja..ja.. and if I think back, I was going for therapy at that stage and I remember at times reading certain poems to my therapist which were ...you know ...and crying a lot at the time, in fact perhaps the most powerful was one .. I don't want to get into that.. but obviously if.. ...When I got divorced, and I got divorced twice [laughs] because I'm Jewish, so we had to go through a civil divorce and a Jewish divorce, about a month apart, so I'll go into that at a later stage, but after the Jewish divorce which was the last divorce, the final one, I was really wiped out then, because it was over.... I had a desperate need of just being with someone, I never phoned up I just drove to this one woman, and thank God she was there and I was really in quite a state and I remember when I was there just saying these lines from Keat's 'Ode to a Nightingale', to her and I'd never understood it before and now I understood that it was about this absolute loss and this heart-rending thing and I just remember saying this and crying and so poetry...

Me: What did you say Michael? What were the lines do you remember? [sighs]

Michael: You want me to get it now, you know what..

Me: We'll go back to it

Michael: Yes, I'll remember too, I'm not in the mode to go into that at the moment, I think lets go back, so what happened then, I've got my little pack on my back and I'm hiking along Roberg, and obviously I'm hiking out there and I'm thinking about this a lot, and while I was walking at one stage I stopped and I took the ring and I put it on my finger [expresses delight] and I didn't like it so I took it off..

Me: was it her ring to you, or your ring to her?

Michael: It was her ring to me..umm so then I came to the point and there were some people there some German tourists, the place is full of [laughs] wherever I went "spreken zu Deutsch..spreken zu Deutsch.." okay anyway, so I was really pissed off, so I decided to hang around until they moved off there were three people there so I could have the place to myself, which again turned out to be just right, because while I was there ....so ....I pulled out my book and was paging through it, and I came across these lines, maybe I'll read them to you now...

Me: okay...

Michael: .. which like, it blew me away about how, it was about where I was, so I decided that, as part of my ritual of throwing the ring into the sea those would be some of the things I would read out there and I already had one poem by the same man, by Rabindranath Tagor, which I had decided that I was going to read, that I had written down and then I came across those two other verses, so eventually they moved off and I went there and I started reading, umm....[tearful] maybe the best way is for me to read it...[Michael goes to fetch a book]... I wrote a whole poem about the whole thing afterwards ...

Me: ....its still quite raw for you...

Michael: Ja.. ja..umm... I guess.....no I've spoken to quite a few of my friends about since then, but I haven't felt like I'm feeling now maybe its because I don't know, just because of the space and thinking about..I'd say its not so much raw as..umm..its a part of who I am you know and its really close to me and yes its over and behind...

Me: Other people are a part of who we are, what was her name Michael?

Michael: Gillian, and thats been a part of the whole thing...

Me: ...a beautiful part of you, its hard to give it up, its not really something you want to give up..

Michael: ...but its more than that, I reached a point where I consciously decided that.. in some way that I didn't want to cut her out I wanted her to be part of my life.. okay and even though its over it was because ...to try and cut it out would almost be to say well here's a part of my life ...cut it out throw it away ...I gained.....I learnt immensely from it..... so umm.. now where I'm at is pretty much over her and I feel quite differently, but still she's a huge part and always will be a huge part umm.. Ja okay when did I say this was November, but I wrote this thing more recently, you don't mind me..

Me: No..

[paging through his poetry book]

Michael: here we go...okay I've written a whole poem about this experience..

Me: read it

Michael: umm.. I don't know cause its long this one, maybe I'll read you an extract.. But I'm looking for that..

Me: can I read it some time?

Michael: you can if you want to..

Me: Its up to you, I don't know, maybe you don't want to let it go..what it means to you.. okay read parts that you want to..

Michael:... if you want I can give you a photocopy, its very personal,

Me: ....okay, when you're ready..I'm just interested..

Michael: You know what, I mean I can read it, probably this can explain more succinctly and you'll get more of a feel than me speaking,

Me: Mmm

Michael: Okay its called 'With this ring'

*I stand trembling  
Awkwardly balanced  
On the rocky tip of a massive promontory facing the open sea.  
To my left and behind me  
Lies a calm still bay created by the very promontory on which I stand.  
This bay has been to me  
A tranquil haven  
And a safe harbour sheltering me during much of the turmoil  
Of my life's turbulent crises. But today  
I face the wild ocean  
Stretching to the horizon,  
Filling my vision and I clutch in my right hand  
A ring. A simple ring:  
The eternal symbol of eternal love.  
A plain gold ring.  
My wedding ring.*

*"With this ring  
I thee wed". With this ring  
Five years ago  
You gave me life.  
With this ring  
Five years ago  
You gave me love.  
With this ring  
Two years ago  
You broke my heart.*

*How could I forget that day  
When I broke down and could not speak, and you  
For the first time, I saw  
You shattered into pieces  
And shed tears of death; and I held you tight  
In that ante-room  
Between two worlds; between the decaying dispensers of justice in Johannesburg and the crime-  
riddled streets outside. But now  
To-day,  
Fear grips me  
At the thought of what I intend  
To do, fear,*

*Like the shadow  
Of death. "Yea though I walk through  
The valley  
Of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil". Evil.  
Fear.  
Angels.  
Tears.  
Fears.  
Years.*

*Seven years ago  
You  
Came into my life, and now I shiver here  
The cruel cold sea  
Lashing out at me,  
Crashing its tears at me  
Over menacing  
Killing ground rocks. Seven years;  
A life, a lifetime.*

*How many angels would it take  
To cry the tears  
To fill an ocean? How many angels  
Crying how many tears  
For how many years? With this ring  
That five years ago I thee wed,  
With this ring  
To-day, I seek to lay thee  
I seek to lay me  
I seek to lay my heart's yearning for thee to rest  
And to sever my soul  
From yours. I place my golden wedding ring  
On my finger  
For one last time. With this ring  
Once again, on my finger  
I feel the weight of the world, the weight of the ages  
Since time began. I slip the ring off  
And grip it tightly in my right hand: A weightless piece of metal nothingness.*

*The ocean  
Cries out  
For what is hers.  
The ocean  
Of tears  
Will reclaim her source and hold it  
To her bosom  
Forever. My hope,  
My prayer,  
Is that as this ring slowly sinks*

*Into the ocean's grave-littered waters, it will free my soul  
And enable me to move on  
With life. Life;  
My life;  
New life,  
Life after death.*

*I want life  
I want love  
I want hope  
I want freedom from this living death.  
I want to rise  
Phoenix-like from the ashes of my death  
And fly away.  
"Away! Away! for I will fly to thee  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards but on the living wings of Poesy".  
"But the fancy [does] not cheat so well  
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf".*

*And I read from my prayer book of poetry: "We two lay sunk in the dusk of dreams; the time  
of awakening has come waiting for the last word from you.  
Turn your face to me  
And with a tear-dimmed glance make the sorrow of parting  
ever beautiful.  
And lo!  
Three glossy black shapes  
Surface from the deep; three ocean hardened seals  
Emerge from the turbulent waters  
Travelling from the sheltered bay  
To the open sea.  
I sob out loud and my body shakes  
In joy and sadness  
As these messengers of the Deep acknowledge my libation.  
My tears unite  
With their salt water sisters on the glistening rocks below. I conclude the poem:  
The lost glory of my love will remain  
Woven in my visions. Open with your hands the door  
Towards final separation".*

*I turn the pages of my prayer book  
To the next serendipitously chosen verse: "My eyes feel the deep peace of the sky  
and there stirs through me what a tree feels  
when it holds out its leaves like cups  
to be filled with sunshine. A thought rises in my mind,  
like the warm breath from grass in the sun; it mingles with the gurgle of lapping water  
and the sighing of weary wind in village lanes - the thought that I have lived along with the  
whole life of this world and have given to it  
my own love and sorrows".*

*My voice strengthens*

*As I proclaim*

*To the infinite universe: "Give me the supreme courage of love, this is my prayer*

*The courage to speak, to do,*

*to suffer at thy will, to leave all things or be left alone. Strengthen me on errands of danger,*

*Honour me with pain, and help me climb to that difficult mood*

*Which sacrifices daily to thee. Give me the supreme confidence of love,*

*This is my prayer - the confidence that belongs to life in death*

*To victory in defeat...." but I am interrupted*

*By five more*

*Messenger's of the Deep*

*Suddenly breaking the surface and then submerging again.*

*The time is here. The angels*

*Are ready to accept my sacrifice. I shift the ring in my hand,*

*Preparing to fling it*

*To the Divine messengers.*

*But first*

*I must conclude: "Give me the supreme confidence of love, this is my prayer*

*The confidence that belongs to life in death*

*To victory in defeat to the power hidden in frailest beauty*

*To that dignity in pain which accepts hurt*

*But disdains to return it. I raise up my eyes*

*And three seals*

*Resurface*

*To accept my offering. With all my soul,*

*With all my heart, and with all my might I flinged*

*My golden wedding band*

*To the divine messengers,*

*And to the ocean's devouring depths.... and the never-ending*

*Ebb and flow*

*Of lunar-tugged water*

*Laps, gurgles, rushes and crashes. In its everlasting attempt*

*To conquer the earth*

*On which I stand.*

*Now*

*Will follow a time of solitude,*

*Of quiet,*

*Of singing and crying. To the ocean.*

*To the angels*

*To the Lord of the Deep*

*To the Lord of Life. But the deed is done;*

*All is over now,*

*Laid to rest,*

*At last,*

*Hushed,*

*At peace.*

I think that can say more than I can tell you about....

Me: Its beautiful Michael...very very big...

Michael: ...and you can hear [still crying] that's [brief pause] that's not just a poem I whipped off, you know, I spent months on that, and it was pouring my soul into that, and it really expresses what I went through.

Me: and I think it quite profoundly expresses your willingness to be part of it. I can hear you said there to accept the hurt and not give it with disdain...

Michael: ja.. and I think umm.. [sighs] thats something for which in many ways I'm profoundly grateful for, that I've been able to do that, because in this whole process of separation there was the temptation to get into anger and hatred and hostility, and it's in many ways, its a lot easier to do that, than to sit with the pain and to feel it, and yet something in me wanting me to do it the way I've done it, and having done that...has.... I can recognise in retrospect has made me the kind of person I am and has given me a depth and richness that you don't just buy in the shop.

Me: ...no you have to go there to know it..

Michael: ...and yet its fucking painful and I often think why the hell does it have to be that way, that you have to go through this to get there...thats how it is.

Me: ...and I suppose in a way to pray that you can survive it...you know I mean in the depths of it it feels as if umm its very much like you say letting go and holding on...

Michael: ..and you know what...

Me: ...because there's love that you hold onto there's love with that hurt its a funny thing...

Michael: ...absolutely....you know and....and in an almost bizarre way, rationally, you know, I'm grateful to Gillian, my ex, and to life, and the universe for having given me this experience and yet its.. ja, [softly] its so much.... [recovered and more boldly] ....and you know what I want to do now is I want to read to you two other poems that I wrote a couple of months after my divorce. I made them as I was walking on the beach in the mornings, remembered them and then finally wrote them down, and they're in the same bay that I speak about, which I hadn't really thought about up until I spoke just now. This one I made up more as a sitting down, those I made up in my mind as I was walking on the beach as I was walking...most of them. It will be interesting for me, because I've never done this, to compare the tone of them to the tone of this one. Look there's still the loss, but I'm sure 'because what got me thinking about it when you said 'when you're in it' you know, and you'll see from there it was just blackness it was hell it was.....and one thing I do want to say before I read them is, after this experience, before I get to them I just want to finish off contextualizing. When I'd thrown the ring away and I cried a lot and I sat there for a while and I sang to myself ... to the ocean...and there was a palpable lightening and a lifting and I felt lighter, it was amazing, it was really physically palpable, and I hiked backed and etc. and etc, and then so that was in November, and now in February.....so it was three months later, my ex came out again and for the first couple of weeks, a month after throwing this ring away, I was quite clear that it was over, and then I spoke to her, and then I did again slip back a couple of times into having fantasies 'well she's coming out again now and maybe even though I've thrown this

ring away and done this whole thing maybe it means nothing and maybe I'll see her and just want to get back with her' and it was quite a thing for me and she came out and we met and within a few minutes of being with her, and its the first time it happened, a few minutes, even seconds, I was just aware of this nothingness between..... from my side this barrier and almost a wanting..... me wanting to push her away, I think from her side there was more..... wanting to..... you know..... be a... come together, and it was..... I was wanting to push her and it was the first time I felt that, and it was the first time it was over, and at the time I wasn't so consciously aware of it, and when I thought about it afterwards it was like a huge relief because it was now finally, two and a half years later, it was over. And sure its never over you saw how I cried now it touches me, because its part of me ....umm ....but in terms of me and hanging onto the future of a relationship, getting back together that's over, I know its over, its just not meant to be, we won't.... we aren't suited in that way, as much as we can be friends etc.

Me: The relationship in a way gave birth to a new person, gave birth to something new, not a new person

Michael: Ja, it gave birth to a heck of a lot new, and fuck did I go through the labour pains [laughs]. So when I started off earlier on today I said I wanted to contextualize it because thats where I am at the moment is that.... that happened about a month ago that I saw her, so in November I did this whole ritual, and now in February.....the beginning of February I saw her, and it was clear it was over, and then I saw her once again.....

Me: What did you do in that moment... how did you.... were you different towards her? Did you tell her?

Michael: Not then, I was aware of almost pushing her away and.....

Me: .....in what way?

Michael: .....emotionally....in that.... she was kind of wanting to engage and we spoke about stuff... but I kind of held back.....

Me: .....verbally or physically?

Michael: .....verbally.... not physically.... and even physically.... I sat further away from her [smiling] and then about a week later, she was leaving and I saw her again, and I was at her cousin's place and I was going to go, and I said "Gill can.... can I just speak to you for a couple of minutes?" because what had happened she had sent me a Valentine's card, but not a Valentine's card, it had said 'this isn't really a Valentine's card but its a paper hug' or something like that and I actually hadn't spoken to her about that but I realised from her side there was more of a 'maybe still thinking about it', even though that had switched a lot during the relationship where at one point she was a lot clearer that it was over..... so I said to her..... I don't even remember..... I said Gill..... I said look, you know I think you know..... us getting back together its over..... for me.... it took a minute or two..... I said that to her. And she didn't say much, she kind of agreed with me, she nodded, though I guess I still had my doubts about where she was, given that card she'd sent me, and.... but she seemed to agree with it..... and...we hugged and said good-bye. I've spoken to her, we've spoken I think once or twice on the phone umm.. she phoned and that's another big thing, in all the time, since my divorce, in the times that I've felt really down its her, I've wanted to speak to, and phone to, and on one or two occasions, I did phone her overseas. And since that time I saw her and she left, I no longer had that need to phone her at times, in fact I was putting it off and she phoned me ....ummm ....and I put it off.....put it off ..... ja..... so it really is a vastly different place I'm at..... from where I've been.

Me: Ja, it sounds as if you have let go of something too.

Michael: Very much so, and, it is, and there's one thing that's really really clear for me, and that is I'll never get back in a relationship with her, which wasn't....

Me: .....so it puts the relationship on a different level, it doesn't mean that you don't have to see her or speak to her again but its certainly a different level....

Michael: .....we will be friends.....ex wife and husband.....people who shared their lives for a time in their life which was great and then moved on.... and I do wonder what will happen now when I get involved in a relationship and how it will be because of my relationship with her. I have consciously, you know her, her parents were sort of loved....nuts about me as a son-in-law [laughed] and if it was up to them, and her brother here, I would have cont...., in fact when we got divorced and she went overseas, her mother said to me, I've lost a daughter and now I don't want to lose a son, and they phoned me a lot and they've wanted to maintain a lot of contact, in the beginning I had a fair bit but I've consciously started cutting off more and more and more. Not because I couldn't spend time with them, I could spend time with them you know, they're nice enough people, but its part of moving on and letting go, its just not appropriate, what happens when....when.....when I now have another girlfriend and I.....I.....I can't exactly... you know take her across to meet my ex in-laws, well I could, but I don't think I want to [laughs] so its been a definite conscious process of letting go and separating more and more and Gillian....yes I think I always... will always have contact with her, even when I'm married, from time to time I might pop in there, but its going to be quite clear what the boundaries are.

Me: thats it, isn't it

Michael: Ja..

Me: ...it will be a different relationship..

Michael: ...ja....

Me: I was just thinking, that I wonder what it is that you get from the friendship that you have with her family and her, there's something that we all need I guess, and she was the one and her family and now... you have to look elsewhere...

Michael: ja, well I'll tell you what it is...quite clearly and especially from her, and in fact I realised this most, just a few months after our divorce, was the really unconditional acceptance and love she gave me. I've never had.... I mean..... parents are different okay.... parents love you for sure.. 'cos you're their kids.... but still with parents its difficult.... but with Gill..... here was somebody with no blood ties..... she came and she loved me and I did some really awful things to her in our relationship.... okay umm..... and after our divorce.... when there was no reason for her to have any obligation towards me or anything like that.... where you know....even after some of the things I'd done to her..... and she still and I remember it clearly..... she gave me a card.... but more than the card she gave me..... in fact I've got it here.... she gave me this Snoopy mug.....this is a picture of Gillian....if you want to see Gillian... while I'm here.... all these little things around here..

Me: ... they're still here...

Michael: .....this has progressed it was here, out in the open [both of us laughing] okay, and I had a lot

of this stuff out in the open, now its stuck away in the cupboard there, one day it will be folded away.... that was quite early on in our relationship, when we first met. She was very happy there and you can see it, if I was to show you other photos you'll begin to see how unhappy she was, but now this mug she gave me, after we got divorced as a divorce gift [laughing] almost as a goodbye gift.... its a Charlie Brown mug.... and it says..... it says, 'guess who loves you', and I think this more than anything..... touched my heart and made me realise how much she cared for me and how much she loved me..... that after our divorce when there was no more reason for.... you know, she still she expressed that to me ummm...

Me: she sounds lovely..

Michael: ...ja..

Me: .....you may have ...even have gone through similar processes..

Michael: ...what do you mean?....

Me: ...in separating you know that umm...or I don't know because I don't actually don't know anything about you ...but just the marriage but I'm just thinking that when when she saw you now she still wanted to be close to you... you're clearly giving her something too that still she feels is part of her...

Michael: ...ja... and at various times during the two and a half years after our divorce sometimes the communication was just 'hi howzit' that sort of thing this is whats happening with me...but on occasion when we got together and on occasion on an e-mail or whatever ...we both put down like really deep stuff ...stuff about what happened in the relationship and what happened between us and again it was part of the process of letting go ...coming to terms looking back reflecting ...this is how it felt and this is how I felt and so there were those times and those letters which were really important and again I can only say I'm deeply deeply deeply grateful that I've been able to do that because I can see that a lot of people who don't do that ...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...think that they've separated from the person but they're not and still remain attached in quite a powerful way and I believe that my..[tape ended] ...my father like almost cut me off from himself, for a month in the time after my divorce, he didn't want to know me, because I was having contact with her at the time of our divorce and I was speaking with her. For a month or two after we decided to get divorced we still stayed in the same house [laughs] together although in separate rooms, I mean it was convenience and everything but we could live together, and we also, I mean it was a very important time.

Me: Knowing whats happening, being together knowing whats happening, knowing together, ja...

Michael: ...Ja, you know and you know that freaked people out, you know a lot of my friends cannot understand..... I mean I saw a friend whom I hadn't seen for a year, he was out here on the weekend, (sniffs) and he knew Gillian.... when we were married... in fact he was a pole holder at our wedding...

Me: ..mmm...

Michael: ....and, I said to him, Gillian was out here, and I went to see him on the weekend, he was with the family.... on Friday night for supper and he said to me, "How can you do that, how can you do

that!?"...he says to me.... you know.... and a lot of people just cannot understand... you know with them they just cut it off, finished and out, never speak to the person again, et cetera..

Me: ...There's something unreal about that...

Michael: ...And for me, yes, they can cut off, but I believe that, as much as they try block it off, unless they do some sort of processing on some level they're you know still there.

Me: ... you're talking about again ....about staying with it ....is actually staying with the hurt and trying to figure it out...and knowing it....I mean in that month that you stayed together... I had a similar situation I'm sure that a lot of raw.... I don't mean raw in the same sense as just now... but very truthful.... very basic things become very sobering things in the relationship which are there to talk about in a way that.... umm..... you're not afraid because its over..... and you both know its over.

Michael: Ja.

Me: I think.... I don't know whether it was the same for you..... but in the last week.... umm we spoke to each other truly for the first time.... I mean we talked a lot before and thought it was the real thing.... but we really talked about real things in the last week (laughs).

Michael: Ja..I think with me it wasn't quite like that...

Me: ... and hurtful, stuff.... I wasn't afraid to say..... that I'd hidden.... rather cut off and rather not talk about..... I was even scared to know it. But in that last week when it was over I was no longer afraid to say it..... because I wasn't afraid of rejection.. umm umm, closeness..... I knew it was over I could say how things really were for me.

Michael: mmm.. ..ja I think that happened too. It was quite strange we had spoken a lot about things beforehand, we really had communicated a lot about it, so it was not that that wasn't there, but, ja, at the time of the actual divorce as I say, first there was the civil divorce and at that time I was very busy with my career.

Me: ..... I remember seeing you around that time....I think...

Michael: Ja, of course (laughs) okay, what happened.. I never realised at the time but what happened, at the timing of the civil divorce, I cut off... umm a lot of my feelings almost just to cope with the intensity of the interviews.

Me: Yes

Michael: .....and I remember that at the time Gillian was a lot more upset and disturbed, and I couldn't understand what she was.. you know.. she and I were in two very different places at the time of the first divorce that was the civil divorce... umm.... so I was quite cut off then.... whereas she was going through those emotions then.... and then what happened once the interviews were over and I started allowing the things to sink in a bit more... umm then it started hitting me and she was over that first stage already and we were a bit out of sync in terms of that..... umm but still we spoke a lot and communicated and the other thing which really touched me and I shared with Gillian last year sometime only..... was when I finally got accepted, and I phoned my family and my parents I think.... ja I phoned them and I phoned Gillian right away.... and later on I told various people and it was all .....you know..

Me: ....exciting...

Michael: ... most people said great, well done and all the rest, and I phoned Gillian and I spoke to her over the phone, I remember, I'll never forget, I was standing at the public phone and I told her, she just started crying (Michael cries too, I felt like crying too) and I mean we were getting divorced we had already split, I think we had separated then, we were living separately and she started crying ....you know ....and it was like things...[tape unclear....]

Me: She was happy for you

Michael: Ja just out of happiness for me, and I've never really.. she was the only person of all my close close friends ..and they all said ...yes well done... great et cetera ..... but she was the only person who.. (huge sigh).. who really knew how important it was for me and how special it was for me and I was so touched that she started crying for me.

Me: It sounds as though you shared a lot of emotion ...a shared umm very close internal worlds.

Michael: Ja, you know and the funny thing was and to a large extent what what was a big problem in our relationship was even though we had these shared emotional worlds which is very true, Gillian had great difficulty expressing it and communicating ....verbalising what was going on with her ...umm and what would happen if she was emotionally upset about something her way of dealing with it is to withdraw into herself and my way of dealing with those things is to want to engage with the person. So she would withdraw a bit and I would say "speak to me"... and she would freak out by me saying "speak to me" so she would withdraw more, so the more she withdrew the more I wanted to engage, the more the more the more you know.... (laughs )... and obviously that didn't work very well. And she did have and I think still does have and she's spoken about it difficulty in getting in touch with whats going on inside her.... umm

Me: You were very close in many respects

Michael: Ja.. you know, and I'll tell you something really weird, you know as you say very close in many respects somebody else once said to me (deep sniff) I think it might even have been my therapist about... both in our families, we were both kind of the outsiders, the outsider child in our families and have these various rejections so we'd gone through these very similar experiences and it was almost like perhaps because of that that unrecognised unconscious identification that we got together and we could understand and identify with that.....

Me: there was an aspect of safety.... that knowing..

Michael: ...it wasn't the safety it was an identification you know..

Me: Ja..

Michael: umm and perhaps also something else thats very important I thought I'd get to it later but its coming up now ....is I got divorced when did I say in about September, October so like in about January the next year a couple of months later and I'd gone through a lot of pain in that time then et cetera ...and I was now just about to start in my new position and (sigh) I'd had this huge debate even then and I thought ...you know what ...I've cried enough about it... it must be over now I must finish it off ...and again there was a lot of external pressure from all my friends and family to cut it off and sort of not have

contact with her and I made a very another conscious decision...I wrote her a long letter.... I wrote a lot of stuff in the letter ....but one of the things I said ...I said I've tried to cut it off and to cut you out and forget about it.. but I can't... and something inside me doesn't want me to (small sniff) and I've decided that I want to have contact with you ...umm ...but I don't know its kind of weird and all the rest so I said.. I wrote down.. so I said ..so I would like you to be my sister (laughs) ...yussus..and I sent her the letter and I got the reply a while back later where she said and again.. I'm coming along with all these things here that I hadn't thought of that that really touched me and moved me she said whatever it was and she said Mike I'd be honoured to be your sister and for you to be my brother and ..ja..

Me: she sounds wonderful..

Michael: ja.. that was a key turning point because it was a decision in me to maintain contact until I needed to, but the brother sister thing was ...you know my attempt to separate from the relationship thing....that I wanted a relationship ..... I thought how can I have a relationship with her that..and we're very close I can't deny that .. so how can it be that we don't get caught up in this thing..so that's probably why I came up with the brother sister thing...but what made me think of it now was what you said about us being very close and very similar... I think that also speaks to the brother sister thing....

Me:..yes..

Michael:.. and while we are speaking can I tell you something really bizarre..

Me: ..(laughing) no no this is exactly what I like.. its not bizarre...

Michael: ...so probably I know when it was last year sometime, I mean we spoke a little bit she said you know I'm going out with some guys and haven't met anybody and me too and that...so she met this one guy he was quite keen on her but she wasn't keen on him and she said he was into this psychic spiritual stuff, I don't know, he was a bit strange, and I mean he didn't ...I don't know whether she told him that she was married, divorced, she might have or might not have ... I don't know but she just like ....the first or second time she'd met him.... he said something to her... he ...I don't know the context...if he picked up a vibe or whether he had a dream or something but he said to her...he says "the name Michael comes to me, he says have you got a brother called Michael?"

Me: ..you're kidding..

Michael: Now she's got a brother called John, which is my middle name, I'm Michael John, but he said do you have a brother called Michael. Now that was freaky.. (laughs).

Me : ...that was bizarre...I wasn't expecting that...(we both laugh).

Michael: But I think from my side, what that speaks to again is this ....I guess what you said ...the closeness... if there is one person in the world who I know really cares about me profoundly its Gillian, and vice versa, despite the fact that I say I've let go, if anything happened to her I'd be there for her I really would.

Me: ja, both ways I think.

Michael:.. ja...okay

[I suggested we stop and Michael agreed it was about the right time to stop - aprox an hour]

**13th April, 1999**

[I asked Michael whether the previous session had been okay, we hadn't turned the tape on yet, I said I had been thinking about the last session and so he had been in my thoughts during the week. He said he hadn't thought much during the week, but that...]

Michael: After last week I guess I did think about it but last night I was thinking a bit about what I'm going to speak about to-day.... umm... and what occurred to me to speak about was not to jump back to the beginning after having given you where I was but almost to move back bit by bit ..its quite strange.. so its almost like....I told you pretty much where I am now in terms of having ....I felt that I've really terminated and ended and got over this relationship and am ready to move on and now its like I'm wanting to go back not to the relationship itself ....but the ending of the relationship and the divorce and the period I've gone through getting to this point of being ready to move on.

Me: Mmm

Michael: (Sigh) and in all that I'm not sure where to start. Okay well lets start with the divorce. And I'll go back a bit before that as well. Our actual decision to divorce, we decided two or three time to get divorced, in like the six to nine months before we actually finally decided, and then we pulled out of it.

Me: When was the first time you began to realise, this is something you might have to think about?

Michael: (Smiling, slightly amused) Well the first time I began to realise, was maybe even before we got married, well, not about divorce, I mean I began to realise, and I was aware there were difficulties and problems, I didn't think they were that serious, and one thing which I can actually tell you, which quite shocked me, I was going for therapy, individual therapy ...umm ...and I went to ....it was an intern [psychologist], and I saw her for about a year in total, before and after I got married, maybe it was even a bit more, I don't remember but anyway about a month or so before I was about to get married ..... and she obviously picked up something in me some sort of ambivalence or uncertainty and she hit me with a ..... I think she intended it as a reflection but is was more of an interpretation.... umm ...where she said something to the effect that..... it was something about questioning actually getting married and I was totally thrown by this and I was actually quite angry at her....hey...how dare she say something like that especially as I was so close to getting married and I was really certain about it.... so and I was quite angry at her.... so I mean at that time I never had any doubts.....I knew there were problems in the relationship but I never ever thought it would come to divorce. I thought this ...you know....it was..... I was very committed and certain that this was it. But to answer your question more in terms of when did I start thinking maybe in terms of separation or divorce....umm its quite difficult to locate it exactly time-wise, (pause) shoo,

Me: ...or an incident..

Michael: .. ja...you know there wasn't one incident there were a whole lot of incidents....but I mean lets say... one to one and half ...no... no .....one and a half years after we got married....things had been building up and we'd been getting more and more upset....okay I do remember the incident.... and we'd gone for some therapy.....couples counselling... and I was going on my own and she'd gone..some on

her own...and I can't even remember which therapist, when, how, why, but we were... we went there for an interview and.... this woman did one of their little like assessment questionnaire thingies and gave us feedback the next week and the feedback was that (showing amusement) our relationship is pretty low on the scale of you know relationships which was quite a shock to me..

Me: ..and confusing..

Michael: ...ja...because I thought we had a pretty good relationship (laughs) and...what happened she..this therapist at one point... she... I think she mentioned the word divorce, or the possibility of divorce which was in some ways shocking for me.... I think maybe for Gillian too...

Me: ...feels like that for me too...

Michael: ....and yet (pause and letting out breath ) it wasn't at the time, but theres almost if I think about it now ...almost a relief of somebody saying this...

Me: ...a reality..

Michael: ...ja... because I mean we were going through such difficult times and just not even wanting to consider that possibility and denying it....and for somebody to say it was incredibly scary and frightening and horrifying and all the rest and yet... as I say ....an element very strongly of unconscious or preconscious relief that its out in the open and that was when we started working with it out in the open and that was probably maybe a year before we actually decided to get divorced.

Me: So there was actually some real resonance with what she said..

Michael: ..ja ...ja...and of course after that we thought about it and we said no and we're going to give it another try da da da and it went on for a while and we did that for a while but that was the first time it was opened up....and I think we both were not wanting to get divorced we didn't want to ...so we more therapy, and other therapy and did this and that and courses and I can't even remember something else happened between us not in therapy and I think we spoke about divorce. ( silence)..... here is one incident I'm thinking of and I'm not sure whether it was then or later.... umm and I'm actually quite hesitant to speak about this incidence because its very personal.

Me: Thats fine

Michael: ...umm so anyway there was that incident and I think up until then I had been the one who was maybe more leaning towards divorce although perhaps Gillian wasn't.... umm wanting to carry on trying and after this particular incident she said well Mike maybe we should get divorced so that was quite a big shift, in that both of us were now seriously thinking of maybe this is an option and that was probably at the beginning of the year that we got divorced which was 1996. We decided in June July in July we decided..... so that was at the beginning and we had quite a big decision point then when for a while we thought that maybe we would get divorced, at the beginning of the year and then we decided ...oh, no...I can tell you what happened...is that I had been on a training course... the year... in the November... the year before.... you know a relationship skills type of course ...you know?

Me: (I gesture with my head that I don't)

Michael: Okay its one of these sort of growth courses and stuff, and then Gillian ...I'd wanted her to

go.... there was one in February and while she was on it I had just finished exams....thats right and when she went on the course I decided I wanted a break and I went away. ... umm ...we thought of me being involved in the course because I can be involved having done it ... but we decided not to.... that it would be best for her without me there.... and I went away and I went again down to the coast ....I'll come back to my poem yesterday ...and I was there by myself and I did a lot of running and riding and swimming and very much on my own and getting into some more weird stuff...(laughs)

Me: ...that's good...

Michael: ... do you know what pansy shells are?

Me: Yes.

Michael: .... and I find these pansy shells, and pansy shells have played a big part in my life, in terms of finding them and having meaning and other symbolism and all the rest.... so anyway I remember one day ...and it was a rainy....sort of rainy day and I had my jacket on me ....and I walked down to the lagoon and I was sitting on like a log that had been washed up.... there was nobody around because it was out of season.... and (big breath) I was thinking you know should get divorced...or not... what's happening and all the rest and ....something happened where I decided okay.... you know what ....for various reasons let me give it another.... I thought six months then.... ja....I think maybe I thought six months then....I actually thought til the end of the year which would have been our anniversary ironically ...umm...but I ...something ....I decided.... I'd gone through all the thinking and thoughts and stuff in my head and I decided.... okay.... umm lets... I'm ...go for... going to go for it.... I'm going to stick it out ....give it another try.... go for more therapy and see what happens.... and just after that I made that decision I found a massive pansy shell and I took it as a sign that ....umm ...you know I don't remem.. I don't think I asked for a sign.... and since in my life its actually often happened when I've been there... I've been thinking of quite important matters.. that its amazing how sometimes.... and I don't know if you know ....but its not easy to find them.

Me: No, and for various people they have all kinds of significance, did you know that.

Michael: Uhrr, well, I don't know ...

Me: It doesn't matter, but for me there's a link in a lot of things you've said...ja

Michael: Okay, so that.... it was almost though..... for that I almost took as a divine sign...but it was more than that it wasn't just the pansy shell.... it was in myself I decided to give it a go and the pansy shell almost confirmed it for me.

Me: I suppose the important thing is what sort of significance have pansy shells for you, previous to this? What sort of connection do you have with them?

Michael: Umm well how weird do you want to get? (Laughs)

Me: (Laughing) Whatever comes to your mind.

Michael: Well I'll tell you my biggest connection with pansy shells.. I had finished my matric okay and I was on holiday with my friends .....and, in my whole life I've had a bit of a struggle with God and

believing in God and not..and umm even when I was young then, and I remember thinking, we hadn't got our matric results and I remember thinking and saying to God, I said okay listen here China (laughs and draws breath) for once and for all we're gonna sort this one out, whether you're there or not and I thought you know it was unrealistic to sort of ask him to pick up a chair and swirl it around in the air you know (laughs)..

Me: ...talk in the burning bush...

Michael: ja... so I said, umm I said you know what, I'm expecting my matric results...I know there's a fair possibility that I got a distinction maybe if I'm really lucky that I got two, umm I knew I couldn't have got more than that so I said tomorrow morning when I go for a walk on the beach let the number of pansy shells I find be the number of distinctions I got...you know... and that was... its fairly realistic...cause you're lucky if you find one pansy shell on one morning, you're hellava lucky if you find two, more than that I mean its possible but highly unlikely, so it was quite feasible and anyway I was a kid what did I know.... I decided okay thats it.... so as it turned out the next morning it was rainy and stormy and I never went for a walk, but that night I had a dream [that night] that was clear clear clear as day..... that I picked..... I was walking along the beach, and I picked up three pansy shells in my dream clear, and of course I was in total turmoil about it the next day... can it be its nonsense and you know all this kind of stuff... and a day or two later they phoned our results through and I got three distinctions. And it was actually not possible because I mean the three subjects I knew I couldn't have, those other three... and the two.... umm ...maths ...oh no no science and biology I knew I could have got.... thats what I was hoping for.... maths I couldn't have because I'd left out on the one paper out of 200 marks... I left out 40 marks.... I never had time to finish so thats already my distinction gone...

Me ...yes...

Michael: ..... and it wasn't impossible and I got it and it was a very difficult paper, and they obviously pushed the marks up. .... So aside from the absolute...

Me: ...so it couldn't have been unconscious....

Michael: ...no..you know...umm and beside the absolute thrill of getting those results it blew my mind you know because I really as I say..... I thought okay I've got a fair chance of getting one... please hopefully two..... I never thought there would be anywhere near three never.

Me: So pansy shells are almost like a medium for you.

Michael: ja ..ja.. and they've become that.... umm.....and that whole incident when I told you last week about when I went and I threw my ring off there so in the week building up to that.... and I was walking on the beach, I don't remember the things but I've got it written in my journal when I was certain.... thinking certain things and I haven't found any pansies and just after I've thought this thing ..... I found a pansy and it was really important and it was a game about this termination, so in many ways you ask me whats the symbolism of them for me ..... it is I think you used the word its some kind of medium some kind of ....umm .....whats the word I'm looking for trans....or what do .....they call it... paranormal almost or transpersonal...

Me: Ja...

Michael: ...or super .....not super ...conscious or collective

Me: I'm thinking of transformative....

Michael: ... or whatever you want to call it the fact is that.... ja oh no no I think the word that I'm trying to use is to say..... say something beyond the sort of normal logical rational laws...

Me: ...that we know of...

Michael: that we know ... that's how I interpret it, and that's the symbolism for me, so....ja....so to get back to that incident, I found that and it was the biggest pansy I've ever found and it was in a lagoon, where you don't normally find them ...umm ...and that then decided me okay lets give it until I think at that stage until the end of the year... so that was like the second time we had thought about divorce and decided not to. So anyway I came back home and we went for more therapy and... umm .....so we came back and we worked on it and we carried on and and you know what, even then it was very bizarre for me and in some ways I felt quite guilty about it that a fair part of my decision not to get divorced ...not the whole thing... was very practical ...I'm thinking about first of all telling family and friends.... second of all if I get divorced now ....umm where am I going to stay and I don't have finances and it's just going to be too difficult ...and things aren't happening and that actually became a concern a consideration for me...

Me: ...well it is...

Michael: ...ja ...but...

Me: ..its real...

Michael: ...it might be.... but at the time I thought God you're mercenary you know umm...

Me: ...could you talk about that ...

Michael: ...I was quite shocked...I never spoke about that to Gillian never

Me: oh I see

Michael: ...and I don't think I've spoken to anyone about that not even to my parents.. I mean I do... I understand and accept it now... but I was quite shocked at myself that I actually considered that as a consideration in getting divorced.

Me: You have to survive Michael.

Michael: Ja... I guess so....ja... and I guess... ja.... its true I mean its good for me to hear you say that because I probably do have some judgements on myself about that... ja. so.... ja.... then we carried on together and I think we went..... I think we were both very down and probably depressed and I mean I know afterwards I found .....and I found that my family and all my friends.... more my family had noticed that I was down and you know just.... and I think we almost went into... you know when these depressed people go onto medication..... they go into this sort of flat numbness sort of thing..... I think we were both in that.... in order to numb out from the pain.... because there was so much fucking pain..... it was too terrible....and I remember.... I don't know..... I can't even tell you at what stage this was but I remember one day one day thinking.. I. I. I had I still have a gun..I had two then (ugh) I've now got one a small one....a baby one.... I had quite a big gun then and I remember one day.. I mean I

thought about suicide before I think a lot of people have but it wasn't really an option but I remember one day where it was really really real and I thought about....what would happen if I

Me: ...well it reflects where you were..

Michael: .....ja...and I actually I saw it, I saw myself taking my gun blowing my brains away and then I saw Gillian coming home and finding me (giggles) with my brains splattered all over there, and in many ways that's what stopped me taking that further or even the fantasy because I thought that would destroy her.

Me: mmm.

Michael: so it was umm.....I don't know just the thought, I don't think I would have done it anyway I think you've got to have a lot of courage or real just desperation to kill yourself but what really stopped me as I say taking it further was seeing Gillian coming home ....thinking of the hell she's gone through I mean as part of our relationship and that I didn't want to do that to her.... because I knew that would wreck her for life.... you know... (big sigh).....and I guess I'm feeling tearful about it...I don't know why...maybe because of my....well whatever.

Me: You feel sad about it..sad that...

Michael: Its its about my caring for her.....

Me: ... mmm its not just about your pain, yes, its about you also knowing her pain...

Michael: Ja... and that's very much part of it....I might as well say it now is that ...umm ....Gillian was sexually abused as a child and I don't know if I said it to you..

Me: ....I think you told me ...ja...a long time ago...

Michael: ...and that was a ...obviously it played a huge part in our relationship and all the stuff around that, and obviously it was a lot of what we were working through et cetera and ....umm ....so and I knew she'd come through a lot of things and a long way ...and again if I had to kill myself all that she's gained and... I mean at the time it wasn't that clear but I knew it.....maybe I'm wrong.... but I had it in my mind that it would have destroyed her for life and it might well have.

Me: Did you want to undo what she'd been through?

Michael: well ja (amused) we can go into a lot of philosophising about that but yes I recognise now that that was a big part of my involvement with her was wanting to... to heal her and wanting to help and get over that.... umm ....and I learned the hard way ...that that doesn't work... thats what I'm finding out and ...umm ....and I'm finding out...

Me: ....well for you to know that ummm there are two people involved in this and its almost bigger than yourselves..umm.. that she's part of your behaviour and you're part of hers...

Michael: ...mmm...

Me: ...you join on one level on a very positive optimistic level but there are all kinds of other dynamic

that are fixed in each of you...

Michael: ...mmm...

Me: ...that start playing together...

Michael: ...it was a very very important point.....

[Me: excuse me I just want to put my bag somewhere else, its my beeper going off and I don't want to hear it

Michael: Oh okay..... okay ]

Michael:.. it was a very very important point for me where one night after..... I don't know a fight or something had happened and we were speaking again ....and I mean at that stage I didn't know all this stuff ...or maybe I did... and I said to her... I said sometimes it feels like ...you know ...you're just wanting to make me angry and she... I mean the honesty and levels of honesty and openness we reached at some times were just mind blowing... and she said to me ...she said sometimes she fantasizes about pushing me, and so much and so hard, that I actually end up raping her. ... umm and I mean the fact of that... I mean I think the main effect was in some ways ...it also gave incredible relief.

Me: ..ja..

Michael: ..because I was thinking... am I some sort of maniac?... some kind of monster ...umm or and what you were saying now about two of us... you know recognising that its not just me that it is her and there is this stuff going on and umm...

Me: ..I'm also thinking that when she says that to you its.. its.. so full of paradox and irony that her need is to be purged, not to be hurt, but its the hurt that purges if you like...

Michael: ...ja there is... I mean I don't want to get really into a you know theoretical discussion about that.... I see it as.... and I mean I've had it since in therapy about people pushing you to.. to.. try and do what other people have done to you...to to try.... its almost to try and see this time will the person not do it and care for me and love me.

Me: ..or that she can take control of it...

Michael: ..ja...

Me: ...where she was helpless before....

Michael: ..ja ..ja.. again..... I don't want to get into it...

Me: ..its very complex..

Michael: ...anyway....so....then there was this period of time and in many ways I wasn't... I wasn't that

aware of how bad it was....and when I said about being flat and numbed out ...like people....a lot of people on medication.... I think that's how we were both ...going through it ...we were in terrible terrible pain (takes a big breath) and yet to a large extent we weren't feeling it we were kind of blocking it out.... or it was there and it was very unconscious... and we didn't realise at the time the absolute enormity of it. And then what happened.... this training course.... I meant to tell you they have it on a weekend and we were both due to be on team which means you're involved in helping to give the course as I say it was June or July of 1996...June... June of 1996 and ja its a whole long story...I want to see how I can cut out all the nitty gritty details .....so I don't know if we'd even had a fight we had supposed to be sleeping over somewhere closer to the venue because its late hours... at my parents place....and obviously something wasn't going right between us...and I said look....you go sleep at my parents I want to be alone here tonight, I'll meet you tomorrow whenever.

Me: It was quite chaotic...

Michael: Ja...and that was quite difficult to do.... because it was the first time that there was quite an almost open public splitting between us that people could see...and that night... shoo... I was in such pain.... I was...and I was really... I was desperate.... and I phoned up Lifeline...thank God for Lifeline...I'd never phoned them up before and it was quite a big thing for me to do so I thought, you know, I must cope and I'm in therapy and all the rest what do I need this for...but I really did...and ....I don't know how long I spent on the phone to this person...and ja it was very... it helped clear a lot of those emotions and stuff that I was caught up in, but obviously I was still very much in it, and then I'd arranged that morning, or the morning before, to meet with one of the woman there and go through some stuff with her and again I was doing a lot of kind of conscious work on this. Anyway so then we ended up we were on the weekend itself involved in giving the course and it triggers a lot of emotional stuff obviously which, with us didn't need much triggering at that time and I can't quite remember where or when or how it was on the weekend but we actually decided, this is it, we are going to get divorced and Gillian actually left before the end and I stayed on and oh God it was just terrible and I was in such pain and so was she and (lets go breath) so that was when we decided to get divorced we were going .....we had started going to a new therapist it was actually quite good and I guess I still wonder what would have happened if we'd gone to him a year and a half beforehand instead of some of the others we went to.....but anyway ...ummm...and then we saw him the next time or whenever and even though...we'd only been to him two or three times and things had seemed to be going well and we said look, this is it..... and he was quite surprised and taken aback and.... umm.... but I think then he understood where we were coming from and there'd been a build up and.... I think we went to him once more to sort of terminate once or twice more..umm..so that was the decision to get divorced.

Me: It sounds from the confusion there were two....it seems to me there were two things happening, one was that umm, your care as was so much for each other that you were afraid of hurting each other more..... that you had to stop it.

Michael: ..ahh...you've really put your finger on it because in the end our rationale for getting divorced and I think we actually used these words we said we are starting to destroy each other, and out of care and love for each other we decided not to ...in fact.... I remember and it might have been shortly before this, not poetry but a quote from this book I remember sitting down with Gillian and reading her ....

Me: .... I like the poetry.....

Michael: (laughing)...

Me: ... I feel very privileged....

Michael: ....you'll get more of it....I remember reading her... something here...and we were sitting on the couch and she was crying and the umm...what did you say to me now you said about caring for each other being so much and I read this to her...

Me: ....that you parted in order to care more...

Michael: .....ja.... and I want to read this to you because it really is (taking a deep breath in and out).[Michael pages through a book] I think I read her this whole chapter but there was a particular part, do you mind if I take a couple of minutes...

*[Me: ....not at all.....I've got time, I make sure I've got time before and after. Michael: Okay..do you want to stop the tape? Me: Just let it run, its fine.....I'll tell you what I'll do.....stop it. I went to look at the messages on my pager, to give Michael time to look in his book]*

Michael: I'm not... I'm not a hundred percent sure that this is the exact part I read to her there might have been another part but I remember reading this to her and she just started crying and umm ja... let me read this to you and we'll see...

*...The ending of a relationship is as mysterious as its beginning, and in the origins of a relationship fate often plays a dominant role, and as time goes on, fate continues to give a relationship its twists and turns. Yet when a marriage or a romance breaks up or when a friendship fades we tend to look for rational causes and to blame one of the parties for committing the crime of ending fate and its important relationship to the soul of forgotten. And we take for ourselves both authorship and blame for developments that are clearly the work of the soul. If we are going to honour the soul of a relationship we will have to do so all the way, even if necessary through its ending, if we see soul seep into relationship at the beginning through fate we might watch it slip out fatefully at its end. Blaming the other party for the ending of a relationship is understandable as a way of avoiding the pain caused by the inexorable, sometimes heartless demands of fate, but by avoiding that pain we may condemn ourselves to years of being haunted by the very emotions and images we are attempting to escape....*

...Ja... that isn't the whole of what I wanted to read its here somewhere...

Me: Who is the author ?

Michael: Thomas Moore, he wrote another book called, "The Care of the Soul". Anyway so I remember reading that and another section of this to her, and why I wanted to speak about that was the caring... and we very much.... we decided to separate because as I said that we were starting to destroy each other, and as painful as it was, it would be in our own best interests, and best interests isn't in the wrong words, for our own mental, psychological spiritual, emotional health, and survival, to get divorced, that we needed to do that, no Gillian's parents in particular, where there's a very sort of a negative relationship cycle, which goes on and on and on, and they're always threatening to get divorced, and they never get divorced , and we looked at them and we said you know we could carry on and stay together and have great times and yet be like that and go over and over and over and actually become hardened and sad...

Me: ..cynical..

Michael: ..cynical... lost people in many ways. And that was our motivation for getting divorced that we were hurting each other too much and out of care and love...and thats what I didn't find there, its there somewhere, I mean he expresses that about sometimes the most caring and loving thing we can do is to divorce the person and I think our relationship was quite unique in that way...our divorce you know umm...

Me: I'm sure

Michael: Ja...(big sigh) ..so...ja... so we decided to get divorced.

Me: It's an interesting...I know.... I don't know.... I have this thing about irony as well.... but its an interesting paradox..... that it seems like a highly moral thing to do.

Michael: (amused) you know thats the amazing thing that people ..people ..I mean just take the Catholic Church where you know it's...what God brought together man shall not pull apart...whatever the words are... umm... and what certain ....this book... or the attitudes behind this book ...and the attitude I took on this, to start listening to... what God in the world and in life is telling me, that actually in many ways for me it would be a sin to stay in the marriage because we would have destroyed each other we would have, we would have destroyed our souls.

Me: ...a much deeper and finer morality...

Michael: ja...ja...umm we really would have, we were on the way to destroying each other...ja... but..but.. it was freaky for me because I... I..[had] been having also having fantasies about raping her and coming on to that, and it was really freaky for me as a person, that here I am, and I see myself as this nice kind sweet sort of person and yet what the fuck is going on with me.... umm.... and that was the point a bit earlier on, when she said I think well maybe we should get divorced.... and I actually saw it later on, almost as I had then been pushing her ...in my way, because she was withholding and saying no lets keep on trying...keep on trying... and somewhere I was wanting to break it, and that was in some way.. my way.... pushing her to the point where she also had to acknowledge... look you know... its not going to work....but we reached that point and after that we still decided to give it some time....you know...I mean... I recognise all that stuff now you know, and its not a problem for me now but again whats getting to me is this....I mean people speak about love and unconditional love and [at] times since then I've been on my own and felt very lonely and unloved (lets out a deep breath) and I can't think of many people in the world (still very emotional) who can be.... you know.... as loved as I have by Gillian.

Me: I can hear that in your poem

Michael: ja....(lets a deep breath out)...

Me: ...something that you're also deeply sad and deeply joyful about...

Michael: ja...its an amazing paradox which shortly after our divorce I also went through some experience of that.... I mean it was...it was the first time I understood this concept of bittersweet... I mean bittersweet isn't strong enough but this intense sadness and intense joy together ummm....ja....(lets out a deep breath)....I just need to breathe a bit....(silence)..ja...I'm actually not sure where to go now I mean I could start speaking about other things but its almost like a part of me's wanting to sit where I'm at with this.

Me: ...you don't have to feed me

Michael: ...okay....

Me: ....don't feed me..just go with where you're at and where it takes you...and time is not a problem....

Michael: ....okay so lets skip out.... I was going to go into the whole chronology of chronological events and what happened and all the rest...umm.... in this lovely kist which you see here which is a very important part of my getting over a relationship, which was having my own place and buying my own stuff which I haven't really been aware of before, and this was a big part buying this lovely little kist...and I keep

Me: ...your treasure chest...

Michael: ...exactly.... and I keep my treasures in here, I've got pictures of Gillian and me anyway I have some of my journals in here, and I'm looking for this one in particular (lets out a big breath). [Michael looks through his journals] I've come across a whole lot of other things here....well...if you like poetry I'll give you another poem. This is dated 26/4/96, April 1996, we decided to get divorced in June. So this is two months before we decided to get divorced and its after that whole pansy shell incident and so its in the midst of the pain, so I mean you probably know this poem maybe you don't, but I'll read it to you anyway.

Me: So its not yours

Michael: Its not my poem..I mean up until I found it now I didn't even know it was here at that time, but I know the poem and it obviously says a lot...umm its called "Not Waving But Drowning" by Stevie Smith, Stevie Smith being a woman, I don't know if you know her.

*Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But still he lay moaning: I was much further out than you thought and not waving but  
drowning  
Poor chap he always loved larking  
And now he's dead it must have been too cold for him his heart gave way  
They said.*

*Oh, no no no, it was too cold always  
(Still the dead one lay moaning)  
I was much too far out all my life  
And not waving but drowning.*

So umm I guess that also says a lot about where I was and where she was umm people..... I guess our parents when we told them they kind of expected our - respective parents... they kind of weren't overly shocked, but everybody else all our other friends, everybody was totally wiped out they couldn't believe that we were getting divorced and I think we were waving they thought we were waving but we were drowning, you know.

Me: It also seems to me that its still quite vivid....your experience...

Michael: Well when I go into it is but very much in my daily life its not, its receded but its almost like I... I'm unearthing it again for you, for me as well, I wouldn't do it just for you.

Me: mmm...no because you're in a different place...

Michael: ...no, you know what happened.... can I tell you Wendy, I... probably about six months ago umm.... I was where...I was passing through the place where we used to stay together (a big sigh) and I got this thing into my head I wanted to go see the place and what they've done with it and all the rest....and again I accused myself of .... well I'm not letting go anyway.... so I went there and there was a young guy there and he let me in and I took a look around at the place.... and the garden that I'd done and the kitchen that we'd done ourselves and I mean the whole place and everything and and the weird weird thing was that...when I was there it was so clear..... it was like I'd never been away..... and since then I've realised that I mean even in my mind now I can go back there or to any other memory I've been through I've never realised how its actually with you in your mind we ...it recedes into the background but when I was there it wasn't just the physical house that was with me, it was the familiarity .... it was there and I could if I tried now I could go back and visualise....that house.... ...and other places in my

Me: ...like you were there again...

Michael: ...ja...and when you speak about the vividness I think that one thing that I've learnt, I've never realised how incredibly vivid [tape ended] and yes when you say vivid when I go back to it yes its vivid its there its always a part of me.

Me: ..what you're saying is that its not at any time less vivid its just that it recedes...

Michael...ja...if you get into it, it becomes very vivid you know when its not there and when it recedes its not vivid and I think my whole process has been going through just letting it go in the in the background so it doesn't have this need to make itself vivid. But it seems, as evidenced by whats happening with me and you right now that if I choose to go into it I can experience it as strongly, you know...

Me: ..you've got a great lust for life...Michael...

Michael: (amused) I've got that book here...you know Lust for Life its about the life of Vincent Von Gogh? And I guess I do have... yes... you know...umm... and thats thats the thing I've....The Dead Poet's Society with Robin Williams where he speaks about "sucking the marrow out of the bones of life" and I think... ja...thats very much me and even if its fucking painful I ...something in me pushes me to go for it ....(letting out a deep breath)...which is wonderful... (overwhelmed)....you know.....umm..... this whole experience with Gillian its given me life it really has umm...its been the most painful experience in my life but the most wonderful its really given me life...umm...sure I was living before but I wasn't, umm...its opened up my heart to life and to experiencing life and yes its fucking painful and I sit and I watch ....I mean I can cry seeing an advert on TV now...you know...ummm...that moves me (lets out a deep breath)...

Me: ...you know you're alive...

Michael: ....(laughs, still overwhelmed) ....and...ja...yet its beautiful and its wonderful and....okay... so I'm going to read to you another poem ....all these poems...and then I'm just going to read to you in the order I've got it here and then I'll come to a letter I wrote to Gillian a couple of months after our

divorce. NO! it was JUST after our divorce. Okay....so this poem I've written the 5/5 so this is again once again before we decided to get divorced about a month, or so, finally, and I remember reading this poem probably about a year later to my therapist.....just let me get a tissue.... its by Mathew Arnold...

Me: ...On the Beach...

Michael: ...ja....and its called Dover Beach..

Me: ...Dover Beach ..that's right ...I can't remember it..

Michael: (blowing nose) ...and if you want to see a very good movie in which also they quote this poem I'm sure you've seen it with Greta Scaachi its called "Salt On Our Skin".

Me: Oh yes... I havn't seen it.

Michael: You must see it.... especially with relationships and pain and stuff...do yourself a favour...get it.

*The sea is calm tonight (overwhelmed again) the tide is full, the moon lies fair upon the strait  
On the French coast the light gleams and is gone  
The cliffs of England stand glimmering and vast out in the tranquil bay  
Come to the window sweet as the night air only from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon blanched land, listen  
(still very overwhelmed)  
You hear the grating roar of pebbles which the waves draw back and fling at their return  
At the high strand begin and cease, and then again begin, with tremulous cadence slow  
And bring the eternal note of sadness in  
(letting out a deep breath and pacing his breath)  
Sophocles long ago heard it on the Aegean  
And it brought into his mind the turbid ebb and flow of human misery  
We find also in the sound of thought, hearing it by this distant northern sea.  
The sea of faith was once too at the full  
And round the earth's shore lay like the folds of a bright girdle  
Filled, but now I only hear its melancholy long withdrawing roar  
Retreating to the breath of the night wind down vast edges drear  
And make it shingles of the world. Ah love - let us be true to one another  
For the world which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams  
So various so beautiful so new, hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.  
And we are here as on a darkling plain swept with confused alarms of struggle  
And flight where ignorant armies clash by night (breathes deeply and lets it out).*

...you know and I have to say once again I mean I can go through this and my therapist came up also with theories about you know...why it moves me like it does...but at the end of the day I mean just the imagery and the ...(lets out long breath) ...to me a lot this is almost beyond analysis and... ( still slightly overwhelmed)..the power of it..it just...expresses so much of humanity..

Me: ....there's a grindingness about it...and a shining....the stones they grind and they shine...

Michael: ...but theres so much more to that I mean when I started reading about “the seas calm tonight and the tide being full and the moon” and it brings associations and you know its just so..

Me: ...resonant...

Michael: ...ja....and just so powerful and expressive of so much that.... for me cannot be put into words, no matter how hard one tries and thats why I’m reading this poetry and thats why I’m actually uuh.. I’ve got sort of thoughts running round in my head... you know ...you come here and you want to listen to me.... and I end up reading you poetry... and yet I’m thinking once again for me expresses it so much more..

Me: Its rich very rich...

Michael: ...ja....

Me: ...its so full of many layers that’s the thing, that you’re talking about many layers, there’s you... there’s the poem and there’s the poem and there’s you... there’s me listening to you...

Michael: ...and there’s things in the poem that relate quite clearly to to what was happening with me ....“ah love let..” you know ..“let us be true to one another desperately wanting to cling to each other because this world which seems to lie before us like a land of dreams... so various so beautiful so new, hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain”... and thats reflecting this absolute space of despair ...and you know all that kind of stuff that you’re at...that I was at, and yet there’s just so much more..ja...(lets out a deep breath)..... okay I’m just going into this stuff, and if you’re being flooded you must just tell me..

Me: ...thats fine....

Michael: ...okay...

Me: ... go for it...

Michael:...so the next thing I’ve got in this book is dated the 7/10/96 and we got divorced...

Me: ..in June..

Michael: ...no no we decided to get divorced in June, so I’ll fill in a bit of chronology now, I think it was September, as I said last week we had two divorces - a civil divorce and a Jewish divorce. Beginning of September I think we had the civil divorce....

Me: ...that was quick...

Michael: ....ja....

Me: ...three months...

Michael: ...well look ....there was no....there wasn’t any bitter fight or battle, we didn’t have major possessions or assets and stuff, you take this and I’ll take that which was very painful in itself.

Me: ...so you didn't use a lawyer?

Michael: ...we did... we did....just for the technicalities...

Me: ...did you both go to court together?

Michael: ..ja...ja..I'll tell you about that too...okay lets leave this for a bit because this comes after that..[a truck drives past making a huge noise] let me just close the door...it says [reading from a journal] "I wonder whats going to happen exciting to to-day" its a quote from Winnie the Pooh. *Winnie the Pooh and Piglet are walking down the road together and Piglet says to Pooh, he says Pooh "What do you say first thing when you get up in the morning?" And Pooh says, I say, "Whats for breakfast" he says, "what do you say Piglet?" so Piglet says, "I wonder whats going to happen exciting to to-day". So they walk for a little bit and Pooh thinks and after a while of thinking he turns to Piglet and he says, "Its the same thing".*

[We both laugh a lot]

Me: (softly) ...oh thats nice..

Michael: Now I mean that has been a part of my healing process...I've got here four books...I mean I love reading and I'd often come across wonderful quotes and just like lost them...and since my divorce what I've done is in many ways I've had to fill my life and make it meaningful...and one of the things I've done is taken quotes which move me and I think are beautiful and wonderful and write them down in my books for times when I'm down and feeling down..

Me: ..mm..

Michael: for me to go back to and that one of them and thats why I know it so well

Me: ...mm.... its one of your healing..one of the things you hold ont...that helps you hold together...

Michael: It gave me meaning I mean after the ending of my relationship I had nothing...my life was empty and devoid and it was so much...and a big part of getting to where I am to-day has been doing stuff to make my life meaningful and meaning I mean for years I went on this whole big kick of trying to find meaning in my life... theres a Snoopy cartoon I'll quote you. *Snoopy's sitting on top of his kennel... and again all the time I'm quoting other stuff but obviously I'm speaking about me...he's sitting on top of his kennel and he says, "Meaning! No meaning in my life." next frame - I look up at the skies (laughing) I search the skies for meaning there's no meaning...out comes Charlie Brown with a bowl of food and (Michael with amusement and much liveliness) chunks it down in front of him and in the last frame Snoopy pounces on this and says, "Ahh meaning!" (Laughs)... and I think meaning is made up out of lots of little concrete daily meanings rather than having one big meaning to life, and so my quotes is one of the things that gave meaning to my life, and finding quotes that I found very meaningful and moving and deep and...*

Me: ...you connect to many things....quite profoundly..

Michael: ....ja...and like I said this kist ....another thing you see this chair...the one you're sitting on..

Me: ..mmm...

Michael:... take a look at it...I mean and take a look at the one you're sitting on...it was as dull and bland and boring sort of thing and it bugged me for ages and I thought of getting it recovered it was expensive and then I discovered that you can get fabric paints ! And I got these paints... I've painted this all myself ...

Me: Did you?

Michael: ..Ja...

Me: Stunning...

Michael: ...and I'm still getting there..... I've practised at the back because I had to try and get it right but I've spent hours...

Me: ...that is so typical of...of the way your mind works...[both laughing]

Michael: ...and I think its beautiful and lovely and just lifts the whole thing you know ...it will take me forever to get the whole things done.

Me: ...and so personal...have you painted this?..

Michael:..ja...its paint... look here all my paints are. I spent a hundred and ten bucks...getting all the different paints...

Me: ...because it looks like embroidery....

Michael: ...and brushes look here we go.... and a variety of brushes...

Me: ...fabulous.....you know you said in your poem "a lightness".... you experienced a lifting...its interesting that you put birds and butterflies...

Michael: ...and those light bright col...well no no the birds and butterflies were there... you see if you look here... you don't see it look, here you don't see the pattern, look here the butterflies...and, but it just gets lost in this drab sort of colour.

Me: Oh they're here..

Michael: ...they're here.... yes.... ja...you see you didn't even see them...

Me: ...thats so phenomenal...

Michael: ...yes ...thats the thing they're there but you don't see them, its just this dull drab thing and thats what I've done I've lifted them out, and as we're speaking well we can really go to town and take this as a metaphor of what I've done with my life...

Me: ...yes...[both laughing].

Michael: ..brightened it up..lifted it out... its been there all the time I've just brought it out...

Me: I couldn't understand it looks like its in the fabric but it actually is....oh I see, yes, I didn't notice. I thought it was something you added, but it wasn't you just gave a different texture and colour to it.

Michael: ...ja ...and I brought it out

Me: ...that's so beautiful...I'm wondering whose going to get more out of this experience.

Michael: I'm not worried about that, I mean its really wonderful for me to be able to share this, because you know, I can tell people about these things but I don't think most people can fully appreciate it, to the extent that you are and are going to be, because of all the other stuff I'm giving you umm ..and so its very gratifying for me to have somebody there to to be witness to...

Me: ...good... and its a real privilege.. (laughing) ...I didn't want to structure this too much but saying its a privilege almost seems like an understatement.

Michael: Okay ...I'll take that...okay so....I mean that was a big part of me getting over the healing process getting over the pain process getting into the healing was little.... lots of little things like this.

Me: Do you want to stop now Michael?

Michael: Ja...I'm just thinking....umm ja... its been probably about an hour now an hour...umm. Okay lets not stop right now..

Me: Thats fine...

Michael: ...but I won't go into all that because once again...

Me: ..Let me just tell you, because I've got another...its quarter past eleven and I've got a meeting at twelve..

Michael: okay..

Me: ..ja..my concern...yes...that's not too important, but my concern is leaving you in a ...if you get into something and then I have to rush out...

Michael: well you know what I think I'm already coming out of it, you know, speaking about this, so....so so...

Me: ...but I can also sense that you need to go on...

Michael: ..ja...

Me: ...if you've got time we could do it tomorrow or the next day...

Michael: No, no I'd rather keep it at the weekly thing...

Me: ..okay...

Michael: ...so let me think what I want to do now then (long silence) let me just sort of talk it to an end now.. Yes okay, okay so let me give you... I'll fill in the technical details about the divorce ...so I was saying about September so the beginning of September we had the civil divorce ...end of September we had the Jewish divorce. Ummm...Gillian had initially said to me...and its crazy our divorce system and the courts you have to have a plaintiff ...

Me: ...yes one person has to accuse the other..

Michael: ...ja...ja...its crazy...I saw a movie a little while ago it was in England...a couple of years back and what you had to do to get a divorce you had to prove.... you had to get five investigators....and it was terrible...

Me: ...you had to find fault...

Michael: ...yes, so I guess we should be glad with ours to-day, but it is still in the system that one person is criminally charging the other...

Me: ...is it criminal?..

Michael: ...well its not criminal, its not in the criminal thing, but to me a plaintiff and a defendant is criminal its you know the whole concept...

Me: ...that you have to find fault...

Michael:...ja... ja..

Me: ...you have to show fault, I also find that very difficult..

Michael: ...so what happened was because I was the one pushing for the divorce, you... you know you must be the plaintiff..and I said no...

Me: ...ja...gosh..

Michael: ...and I said no...no ways...and I said I want you to be the plaintiff..

Me: ..oh gosh..Michael ...it was complicated...

Michael: ... ja...and I mean ...you know ....umm I think especially because of her background and this whole abuse thing and self blame and all of that stuff there was no ways I was prepared to accuse her of stuff... and I was very glad to do that...so anyway so then we came to the divorce ... the civil one, and as I said last week I wasn't quite in the same space then because I had been like hanging on surviving for job interviews. And Gillian was more upset then and also the way it worked out the plaintiff is the one who has to go up there...

Me: ...and speak...

Michael: ...ja ...and Wendy ...umm ...I don't know if you've been through it...

Me: ..yes..

Michael: umm...those courts ....I.... it is the most horrific...the judge made it into a sitcom...in our court...he was joking he was...but cynical jokes...I don't know if you know the sitcom 'Married with Children'? this like really cynical...that was the feel in the courtroom because he would make comments like that to the people..to witn...the plaintiffs...the women...he'd say "does your husband even know you're getting divorced...divorcing him?" but ..and he would make comments to the lawyers...and the ....really trying to be funny and he'd have the courtroom laughing.

Me: I remember the courtroom laughing when I was there...at somebody...I think they laughed at me...

Michael: ....really...

Me: ...anyway thats beside the point...

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ...it was something I said..and look ...I mean ..like you know...I was in such a space, if I can remember it, it is resonating...I laughed at myself too afterwards...but maybe that was just a defence....you're quite right...ja..

Michael: ...but he was like actively promoting this..and it was horrific...it was disgusting....it was despicable....if I was more proactive or something I would....you know our whole South African system...and not....its disgusting...this system is absolutely disgusting and of course, that of course that doesn't come nowhere near the child trying to get child molesters....you know... in court, but anyway....so I think it was devastating for Gillian and one thing you've got to know about Gillian is that she hardly ever cried...and she went up there...and thank God he was a nice... he was an elderly man and I think he was also taken aback at how, we were going about this he was her aunt's lawyer ... attorney...very nice ...and ...the courtroom...it was...and that was a reference in my poem if you go back to it...there was a lot of double doors from the passage outside and you go in and then there's a little room a couple of maybe two metres by two metres you know to make the silence and then another double doors when you go into the courtroom and Gillian went up there and did her little thing with this cynical judge or whatever and came out ...

Me: ..didn't you go in? ..

Michael: ..no ... I was in the court...I was in the room...I was in the courtroom, and then she came back...I went to support her..I didn't have to be there...I did it because it was part of the whole thing...and then when we went through those first lot of double doors I could see she was like badly shaken (overwhelmed) we went through those doors into that place between and sh..sh..she broke down and cried I mean that wiped me out because I mean she never did that I mean her body was just wracked with sobbing she was wiped out....and I just took her and I just held her..

Me:...this reminds me of Shakepeares' "let us to the marriage of true minds not admit impediments"...you know it sounds so true to me so...so profoundly deep the relationship you have...its beyond impediment...beyond that level of being...I think that's something you do acknowledge but its hard to share... you and Gillian know it...but its very hard to ....its not something you want to persuade anyone of.

Michael: ...ja...I guess I've never thought of that, I'd often heard that but never really understood it...but now that you say it I guess ....ja....I do understand it...

Me: ...I don't think I understood it before either...

Michael: ...ja...so ja..thats what happened...and I just held her and we walked..down...it was in town we walked down...whats it called the Small Street Mall holding hands and then....I feel we need to finish this off...umm it won't be more than ten minutes is that okay..

Me: No I don't want to be in a hurry...I just don't want to leave you in the lurch.

Michael: No...no... and then as I say about a month later okay ....and all this time in between... I decided once again for practical reasons to carry on staying together for two months after we got divorced, before I moved out and that was the thing because the Jewish cou...now this makes a lot more sense... the Jewish... the Jewish Bethdin court of law...wouldn't give us a divorce until we'd moved out of the same house, even though we were living in separate rooms. So according to civil courts well I mean it was whatever, whereas the Jewish court said look until you're separate we're not giving you a divorce. You know.... so then...we had the Jewish divorce...'the get' as they call it ...

Me:... the what?..

Michael: ...its called 'the Get' its the Hebrew word the Hebrew word for the actual divorce its the actual paper and its a whole big thing of I had to sit there with the scribe who writes it on parchment on leather parchment made from an animal and he uses..it has to be feathers...and he cuts with a razor and ink...and he scribes this in beautiful writing.. and its quite a big ritual...

Me: ...thats nice it has the dignity which it deserves..

Michael: ...unfortunately a lot of Jewish divorces like that get very messy (amused) But the ritual is there I guess if you're able to use it.

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...so then what happened ...so I'm very involved in that and the divorce...the wording says something like you know "you're no longer my wife and I hereby renounce or" I can't even remember and then they call Gillian in we come together and there are the three witnesses, the rabbi's and stuff and so this is about a month later and now I had to give this to her...

Me: ...you have to give it to her...

Michael: I have to give it to her... she has to take it... and there's a little formula I have to say to her ...(overwhelmed) ...Jesus, Wendy I couldn't say it...I couldn't say it ...it was again about renouncing and saying you know...you're no longer my wife and I here.....I couldn't say it....because if I said it I would just burst out sobbing and I tried and I said a word or two and I was crying it was terrible I mean its really weird the way it worked out, that we both had an opportunity to go through that...Gillian had the civil divorce where she was more active and involved and I had the Jewish divorce and she was more..she was supporting me in the Jewish divorce and afterwards you know and held me a lot ... and then we did that and afterwards she had to go back to work I think we stayed together for ten minutes or so and that was when I told you that incident .... I drove round and I went to this woman's house and I spoke to her and this whole poem and ..so...so that was our divorce the actual divorce...umm..

Me:.. and you'd moved out now...

Michael: ...I'd moved out a couple of days before that and it was also symbolic that I'd moved out on the eve of the Jewish New Year...and it was just after that so just between the New Year and Yom Kippur the day of repentance and you know without it meaning to be... it was very symbolic about endings and new beginnings and all the rest...

Me: ..an invisible sort of support system...

Michael: ja....umm...its amazing the ..... I mean one of the English words they use is serendipitous events...you know...collective unconscious stuff whatever... what is it synchronicity you know...events that happened around this kind of stuff...so that was that...umm one thing I never finished...

Me:... in another way it was the pansy shell, it wasn't the actual pansy shell, but it was...

Michael: ...another force...

Me: ....something coming forward for you...

Michael: Ja...ja...and in many ways showing us just like in that book where he said fate is often seen in the beginnings of a relationship it was meant to be we bumped into each other this is how we met but people don't see that in the ending of a relationship and I think...

Me: ..or in your ongoing life...

Michael: ...but only that its specifically in the ending of a relationship cause in the ending of a marriage you tend to see this anger, and hatred and bitterness and not that its meant to be its just a total fuck up and failure whereas the way Gillian and I got divorced it was like it was meant to be just like we were meant to get married. And I believe we were meant to get married I mean I can tell you the co-incidence of dates of ....birthday is on the same day as her father's Gillian's birthday is on the same day as my grandfather. This one got married...its freaky...it is freaky the co-incidences ....her brother's name is John, my middle name is John. I mean just the...its totally freaky....so I believe it was meant to be...

Me: ...its part of some divine unfolding...

Michael: ja...and ....and...I guess for the record I would stay away from the word divine....even though I might I believe that...but I would say something beyond ourselves... you know.. So then the other thing I wanted to end off on .... say was in that time in those couple of months that we stayed together ....we separated and then got divorced it was a very important time at one point we almost slipped into that anger and fighting and hatred there were one or two days where we got into that and thank God we managed to get out of that and it was a very important time where we worked through stuff amongst ourselves and at the same time it caused endless hassles for me... it freaked my father out completely and my parents and my friends and relatives...they could not understand that we were living in the same house after we decided to get divorced they cut off contact it was terrible I got no support from them and I got active animosity and hostility from my family my closest family, umm so in a bizarre way it was up to Gillian and I to give each other support because there weren't people there for us. (Lets out a big sigh).

Me: Which you both gave quite willingly

Michael: ...and I say over and over again thank God over and over again that I was able to do it and we were able to do it the way we did it because it made me...it wasn't only that...but in many ways it made me the kind of person I am to-day with a richness and depth which I know there are not many people around. I mean I'm as you can see I have a fairly healthy self-esteem and too a large large measure it comes from going through this whole process with Gillian.

Me: ...a gift...

Michael: a terrible gift...and 'afgo, do you know what an 'afgo' is - another fucking growth opportunity - and thats it, its the paradox its a growth opportunity it does this to you its wonderful and beautiful but its another but its another fucking one and its so painful.

Me: ...Afgo doesn't have the richness and beauty of despair that you weave into the blackness...I think that Keats said truth is beauty, beauty truth..there's a paradox in that too because we tend to think of truth as clean and neat and tidy but truth is profound...

Michael:...Ja...I've got that Keats...I mean thats Ode on a Grecian Urn....There's another Keatsian thing which I sent to a very close friend of mine whose actually my friend's father he was going through quite a difficult time and we in many ways were kind of soul..well I don't know... soul mates ...whatever...where is it I hope its in here ....I want to read it to you ...and then we'll finish off ...because its wonderful.

Me: okay...

Michael: ..let me look under Keats...p.199...oh I know I've got it in my book of quotes...oh no...oh here it is...okay. Its in a long lengthy thing of his called the Endymion....which... I haven't read the whole thing....umm..

*A thing of beauty is a joy forever, its loveliness increases it will never pass into nothingness but still will keep a bower quiet for us and a sleep full of sweet dreams and health and quiet breathing therefore on every morrow are we wreathing a flowery band to bind us to the earth spite of despondence of the inhuman dearth of noble natures of the gloomy days of all the unhealthy and overdarkened ways made for us searching. Yes in spite of all (shaken and overwhelmed) some of shape of beauty moves away the pall from our dark spirits (lets out a huge sigh and still moved)....you know...*

Me: ...mmm...

Michael: ...(overwhelmed) ...what can I say more than that...and I guess so...you know.. and I guess this is kind of stuff that I've been doing without even knowing it and the poetry I'm giving to you and the things I'm telling you is almost an attempt to verbalise the experience....

Me: ...the poetry is the butterflies and the birds...ja...ja...

Michael: ... this poem is some ways verbalising my experience of doing this cushion...and the cushion as a reflection of what I've done with my relationship with Gillian...created a thing of beauty to move away ....

Me: ..definitely..

Michael: ...the dark pall from our spirits....okay lets stop there....okay.

**19th April 1999**

Michael: ...(letting out a huge sigh)...okay...I think unlike the other weeks I haven't thought so much about stuff thats..you know... came up since last week..immediately afterwards I spent some just time getting in touch with those feelings or letting them go out whatever...it was...it was nice for me again to...

Me: ...was it Michael?..

Michael: ...I do ...I....umm....you mentioned about my lust for life...and I think that's part of it that ...that...I...feel alive when I experience that kind of thing and often I've gone through periods in these last couple of years where I felt quite cut off from my emotions and feelings, and I've actually been quite frustrated with that and been wanting to get in touch with that, even if it means crying about something like this...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...and there was something very important I realised about it...this whole process last week was that the stuff I read to you last week ...some of the poems and speaking about it and that I cried about...if I had done that just by myself with nobody there I think it would not have had the same effect on me...I'm pretty sure it wouldn't have, and I started wondering about you know the effect of having somebody there who is really listening that..that presence..

Me: ...thank-you..

Michael: ...well when I say what came up ... was those feelings...and how I was crying ...and just felt emotional..

Me: ...yes...that the experience was different when somebody was...there is a different presence...

Michael: ...was there to, contain it, reflect it, whatever words you want to use ...

Me: ...just contain it, ja, make it possible in a way...

Michael: ...to witness it...I liked the word witness it..

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...you know...and it obviously ...it has to be somebody who you or in this case I feel safe and comfortable with...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ....its not going to work if its somebody who is... you know...

Me: ...no...

Michael: ... unable to do that...

Me: ...thank-you...

Michael: ...okay ...well...

Me: ...I also think its very...umm...I like that kind of...way of being...put it...that way...ja...maybe it also touches on that 'lust for life' because its very .... but I also get very frustrated when I'm cut-off...

Michael: ...ja ...

Me: ...ja.....and I know it...I know when I'm there (amused)...ja.

Michael: ...okay...umm...so now let me go back to where we were. I spoke last week about divorce part of the build-up to it..... what..... can't even remember, I told you about the two divorces for me and for Gillian I think what I haven't spoken about so much, or not in so much detail, was the time after the divorce...

Me: ...no...ja...

Michael: ...so...I touched on some of it but maybe I'll go more into that now ...umm...like I say there was the decision to get divorced then there was a couple of months and we stayed together for about a month or two I don't remember, after the decision to get divorced, I mentioned that last week.. and worked through some stuff...then we got divorced civilly while we staying together and then I moved out ...and then we got the Jewish divorce...

Me: ..and the different experience ...you each broke down at different occasions...

Michael: ...so at that stage, I'd also... I'm sure I'd gotten accepted for my new job then...so it was almost like then, I could start grieving whereas before and to an extent I'd been cutting off the grieving...

Me: ...holding together...

Michael: ...just to survive and cope...ja...and I moved out to a flat and I just remembered during... it was about four or five months before my new job... at the beginning of the next year...and during those months...okay I was obviously I was going for therapy...and I was doing a lot of emotional work there and stuff but what I remember about that time ...I mean theres a couple of things I remember...I remember one distinct incident that I'll come to which was a couple of months later...but I remember crying at the drop of a pin...I would walk around inside shopping centres and things with my Ray-Bans on because I was just like crying the whole fucking time...umm...and I remember...this is weird ...often especially when I would eat ...you know so I would eat a little bit....and then I.. I'd you know ..feel it in my stomach and I.. I couldn't eat and that would often..it would get me very tearful and its quite strange I've noticed that um...(letting out a sigh)...I'm going to digress a bit...I don't know if its relevant but saying we're exploring what comes up...

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...whats happening in my life now...a while ago I met this ...this lovely young girl (laughs with much delight) and I mean I guess its very relevant that it happened after my whole letting go process and

throwing my ring away...that I've spoken about and all that stuff...

Me: ...mmm...

Michael: ...anyway so I'm not sure whats happening, but I think I've actually fallen in love with her (laughing and drawing a deep breath) and ...

Me: ....I don't think you'd be mistaken about that..

Michael: (laughing more) ...and...

Me: .....and that its possible...

Michael: ...ja...ja...

Me: ....thats the surprising thing....isn't it ... that you realise that theres actually something new...

Michael: ...it actually happened once before when I was a bit infatuated and besotted about a year ago about this one girl and that wasn't that healthy, but umm...what I wanted to say and how I got onto this was the eating so often ...you know...so I'll eat a little bit and it almost like...it sticks in my stomach and then brings up all those feelings...so its quite strange how the physical act of eating.... getting food in my stomach...and feeling that stomach often triggers off a lot of feelings for me so in this case its...I don't know...that nervousness and apprehension...and that whole thing in the case of when I was mourning about the loss of the relationship it was...just...I just get tearful and want to start crying the minute I get a little bit in my stomach...its very strange...I just remember that...so I was very tearful during that time...at the same time I was trying to cut it off and get over it .... I think part also...when I moved in there, there was a girl upstairs who was going through stuff with her boyfriend...and I...I almost got into my old sort of...my pattern of sort of wanting to rescue her and you know ...umm...but I soon got a bit 'gatvol' of her (amused)...and ...okay... and then that other incident that I...it was a lonely time...oh yes what else happened...I was only going to be there for about four months because I was moving to another town for the job, so I decided it wasn't worthy cost-wise to get a phone installed there, there wasn't a phone and I wasn't prepared to get a cell ...umm...so for four months I was without a phone and this was a time when I really needed support and to speak to friends and stuff like that and it was really really really tough on the one hand I would go to my parents sometimes and use the phone there, but that was difficult you know, it wasn't private... so it was quite strange because in, many ways I like just kind of withdrew into myself, I was doing some part-time work...

Me: ...you were cut-off...

Michael: ...ja...I was very cut-off and isolated and maybe it wasn't that great ... on the other it was very good for me, it almost gave me the opportunity to mourn and grieve, and that incident which I spoke about... was...

Me: ...do you find, Michael that you find your own boundaries in that kind of...or not ...the opposite ...that you feel lost ...that you need somebody to know your boundaries ?

Michael: ...I don't know...but I know it worked for me ...you know it worked for me to have that space and that cut-offness....and just go inside myself and do what I needed to do and I did have a lot of that time, because it wasn't full-time work I was doing it was part-time so it was flexible, so I had that time

to grieve and so coming back to that incident I remember...I don't know how long it was after the divorce, and by this stage Gillian my ex had left the country ...and I did then what I have done quite a few times since my divorce was take out my album of all our photos and the cards she sent me and gave me and went through them ...and ...I think I might have done that before ...I think I had done that then...and... it was really really weird, because what was happening that day, was that Gillian's mother and aunt, who still wanted to remain very attached and involved with me like I said were coming to visit me and see my flat where I had moved in ...and... I don't know I'm sure it was connected that as a result maybe I was going through some of the photos and stuff ...and... I just remember for the first time it it hit me so hard and so clear what I had lost in the relationship with Gillian, and I remember I mean I had I had the same sofa and most of the same furniture there but I was on the floor ...I was on the carpet...and I was I was screaming I was...ja... I think I was almost screaming I was howling I was beating the carpet with the floor with my hands I was sobbing it... I was...I mean...

Me: ...it was impossible...

Michael: ...ja...it was absolute...

Me: ...to accept...

Michael: ....no... it was just absolute.. absolute loss and grief and pain that...I mean I'd felt a lot of it before but not to that intensity as I say it just felt devastating and I mean we bandy the word loss around, but that's what it was about, really realising the loss of what I had lost, I had lost this wonderful, wonderful person in my life who'd come along and brightened up my life. Of course we'd gone through hell before and of course for the initial period afterwards there was this huge relief that we were over that, but I...probably after a while of settling in with that relief it dawned on me, you know, what we did have and the loss of that...

Me: ...the positive side of it...

Michael: ...ja...and the loss of that and that was just the most unbearable...I mean pain isn't even the word, just the recognition of I'm divorced now and I've given that up and I'm probably not going to get it back and shew!... it was...and...it was shortly after (laughing nervously) after I did that, that her mother and then her aunt arrived... and to see my place... and they were... and I was of course quite tearful and her mother is very... lets use the word... unemotional, cuts herself off from emotions all the time and on to an extent too...and I was quite tearful then and they were very much not wanting to know about this and I was quite...and I actually said to them, at one point, you know what I just can't..... please will you go, (amused) I mean I'd never done anything like that before...basically said fuck off and leave me alone...umm...so in many ways that's like *the* incident which stands out for me during that period after the divorce and the initial separation of that ...umm...absolute devastation and recognising what I'd lost...ja.

Me: ...there was some ambivalence then...

Michael: ...ja...I mean I think that was probably the first time when I thought maybe I made a mistake...

Me: ...mmm...

Michael: ... you know...and I've done it...its over...

Me: ...so it wasn't all bad, there was quite a lot of good that was perhaps overshadowed...

Michael: ...ja...I mean you know it deteriorated towards the end where it was more and more...(taking a quick breath) and to a large extent one of the rationales I used for divorcing... I think for Gillian too, was that, you know, if a relationship is at least sixty percent of the time... its good and you've got forty percent bad ...even thats okay, but with us it was like seventy-eighty percent bad and twenty-thirty percent good, you know and you just can't live with that and obviously it shifted ...it started off being majority good and slowly the percentages changed more and more and more until it was just unbearable or we could have borne it and gone on like Gillian's mother and father did, and where her mother cuts herself off completely from her emotions they live different lives, but together they love each other but they hate each other he throws his tantrums and ...umm...has a suicide attempt every ...only one in fact...but he's very very unstable you know and I think that's what would have happened if we would have carried on living together.

Me: ...thats not what you wanted...

Michael: ...no...and still it was so damned difficult to get divorced, and I understand now why they stay together despite the fact that they're killing each other, physically and emotionally and spiritually, I understand it.

Me: What do you understand?

Michael: ...why they stay together?...because of ....the absolute pain and devastation of the loss, the fear of never finding someone else...

Me: ...oh I see... yes...

Michael: ....you know all that kind of stuff...

Me: ...what they're avoiding...

Michael: ...ja....

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...that would happen....

Me: ...yes...

Michael : ... if they had to get divorced...so its easier to carry on the...

Me: ....the confrontation with yourse..with...(holding back) ..its a confrontation isn't it...

Michael: ...with ?...

Me: ...with umm...(long silence) one's *worst* nightmares...

Michael: ....ja.....

Me: ...or existence...

Michael: ...ja.....I like that...it is...it is your worst nightmare...a nightmare from hell... I mean that's what it is its a nightmare from hell...

Me: ...its the opposite of the perfection of love and...its the absolute opposite...hell...

Michael: ...its even worse that that...its a nightmare from hell...

Me: ...mm..

Michael: ...so thats why I understand why people will live together and slowly destroy each other rather than split up and... and start growing again...

Me: ...or even integrate those realities of life...those realities of being I think...umm...it is a reality...its a willingness to reach the bottom as well as the top...

Michael: ...mmm...and thats one thing that I discovered...oh yes...(smiling)... there were quite a few things that happened during that time. I went...I mentioned the life skills training last weekend, one of these courses...so I went on one of those, it was in November ...participated in one and then I helped...I was on what they call ...and on the one day they have ... they call a meditation, but it was more like a guided visualisation ...and...you do it as a group and you close your eyes and they sort of take you on a journey and you get on this boat and you go over the water and you come to and island and you go to this very special place you meet all people from your life then blah blah blah blah and so it goes on...and...I mean I've done it a couple of times before and anyway... I'm actually...okay...I'm just...I..I'm wandering a bit...

Me: ...thats fine...thats absolutely fine...

Michael: ...umm...so during that meditation at the one point they ...what you do is ...umm...you see various people in front of you in your life...living and dead...and what you do, after having gone through a whole build-up is you ask that person for forgiveness and see if they can forgive you, and then ...so I did that ...and I did that with Gillian and I saw her in front of me and asked her for forgiveness ... (overwhelmed) ...and obviously I mean even though all of this is in my mind umm... I remember I was sitting...it was really weird...I think I was ....I was sitting like in a school desk on a beach I think and she was there opposite me I don't know why one of those old school desks and I asked her for forgiveness and she, she forgave me...and...I mean it blew me away... because I'd never thought of it like that before or experienced it...or been able to understand or think or accept that she could forgive me. You know I mentioned last week about ...that I'd realised when we'd split up and she gave me a card.... and that mug and stuff... that it... how much she cared for me but this was somehow different that I was able not only to identify in my mind that she could forgive me and I think maybe also part of the thing was her recognising my qualities and stuff like that and so that was incredibly powerful for me...I mean I was sobbing then as well...and there was a whole sequel to that...anyway what I must....you know what I actually started on... speaking about this...so the following weekend I was partici...no it was that weekend... that weekend ....so I'd been with a lady who'd come on the course with her husband and had actually physically collapsed (amused) because of a whole lot of emotional trauma and I'd spent a lot of time with her and helping her...and...I came out ... I remember it had been raining and it was separate from the group where everything was going on, because she was actually stuck in the bed she couldn't (giggles) move, it was really freaky..anyway I remember walking out there...I'd really done..done a lot

of work with her and I came out and it had been raining..I think there might have still been a bit of drizzle and it was out in the country somewhere and it was a lovely environment...and the sky was black but the.. blue.. it was lovely... it was beautiful...and..and I was crying at the beauty of it...and I was crying at the sadness, her sadness then... and you know what... I think it was before the meditation... that I had this experience with her ..but it was the first time that I understood this concept of bitter-sweet that I was crying from sadness at the pain she'd been through in her life and obviously connecting with my pain and at the same time I was crying at the joy of being able to connect with her on that really profound level and be able to help her and to see her come over some of that stuff...and I did that as I walked outside...as I say it was very much... I mean it was triggered by the work I did with her, but as I came outside..

Me: ...oh...

Michael: ...it was seeing the natural beauty around me...

Me: ...like a sign again actually...

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ...of..of of what we're contained in...

Michael: ...I don't even know how to put words to it...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ....and while I'm speaking of that I'll give you another experience that I can't put words to...is on that same weekend ...so it was probably about a day later or that afternoon it had been raining and it was all muddy and it was I think it might have been after the meditation now that I told you about...and I wanted to go and sit outside by myself...I'm actually mixed-up it might have been the next weekend or the weekend.. ja...after now (speaking very softly) I don't know and I wanted to go sit outside by myself, and I went, and the ground was wet so I kind've squatted there and everybody else was inside okay... they were...I'd just taken a break and I sud..I got this urge to sort of rub my hands in the earth ...so I thought 'oh Michael cut your crap' (I start laughing and we both laugh a lot) ...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ..and this urge came again and I thought okay big deal...so I stuck my hand in the mud and I rubbed it around and it felt like very good and THEN..then I got this urge to take this mud and I wanted to smear it all over my face and even stick it in my mouth..and I thought 'Michael - you are out of your fucking mind' you know just control yourself...and it wouldn't go away and I kept on saying you know - 'fuck off and leave me alone' and eventually I decided....and you know I'm dressed smart, I'm involved in presenting this course there are people just around me..

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...eventually I stuck my hand in this mud and there were..there was... clay...it was like a mix...and I took this and I like smeared it all over my face and I.. even... I tasted it I put it in my mouth...it was...it was really bizarre ..I mean I'm sure you've learnt from these last couple of things, (with amusement mixed with a little delight) that I do strange things sometimes ..but for me..even then

that was very weird..

Me: ...and what ...what...what did it..were you satisfied by it?... what happened?..

Michael: ...ja...I was satisfied...

Me: ...did it have the effect you were hoping for?

Michael: ..well the effect was that it got rid of the urge to do it...umm...you know..afterwards I've looked at it and tried to analyse what was it all about...I think... I mean on a literal and metaphoric level it was re-connecting with the earth, it was getting in touch with the earth you know.. umm...getting in touch with my feelings my emotions with life I mean life...I don't know ...but ...you know...this is all analysing and symbolising and stuff but it was...the experience for me was a *r.r.raw ph.physical* desire to take this earth and just be engulfed in it...feel it even in mouth as I say and have it all over my face..

Me: ..were you..you were still together now..

Michael: ...no no no..

Me: ....this was the period between..

Michael: ..ja ..this was the period between the divorce and...

Me: ....Gillian was there...

Michael: ...no no no she was..that was another one..

Me: ..oh you were apologising in your imagination...

Michael: ...yes...that was all my imagination...the one when we were on together when we decided to get divorced was in June, this was now in November after we had gotten divorced....umm...so there was that...and then afterwards I went round to the back to go to the loos, and I was thinking ...please don't let me...and thank God I never met anyone on the way to the loo, because I walked into the loo and I looked at myself in the mirror and I looked like a savage... (laughing)... I looked like a savage Wendy...and...and maybe...and I think ja...thats probably what it was about...it was getting in touch with ..the elements ...with the elemental nature with...which I guess I'm part of and maybe up until I'd gone through this whole process of getting divorced with Gillian...I...to some extent...to a large extent I hadn't really been in touch with it myself...being alive..being fully human experiencing...as you say the very bottom of this you know...I don't know...maybe you've (laughing) got some ideas about what its about..

Me: ...mm..

Michael: ...because I still ...I think I just filed it away and accepted it... that it was something very special for me and maybe I'll never fully understand it and maybe...

Me: ...it was very special for you then?...

Michael: ..ja...and maybe one can't fully understand something like that maybe one just has to experience

it and... and...

Me: ...mm...it seems...feels like to me and from everything you've described... is your willingness to ...to explore yourself fully... you know...without fear.....you know...(laughing).. no matter..(giggling)...you know...what people might think.. (both laugh) ...between you and your own... your own world...you kind of ...you contain yourself in it, but perhaps the fear is what other (laughing) people will think.

Michael: ...ja...ja..

Me: ...you're exploring yourself ..you know...I mean a lot of people have bizarre ideas which they won't even allow themselves to know...and wouldn't even venture ..

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ... to go even.. physically into that kind of thing...

Michael: ..ja..

Me: ...I think some people do...

Michael: ...ja...and some people probably because its so ..taboo ..or whatever...will...you get all these ...I call them kooks...or I don't know ...space cadets...you know ..who make their life out of you know weird shit..you know...

Me: ...yes...

Michael: ... and I'm not one of those, I want you to know and I want to say it loud and clear for the record. I'm not...I'm not a space cadet...my feet are (laughing) very solidly on the earth..and I don't make a life out of this stuff. These are just incidents that stand out along the way.

Me: ...can I interrupt you?...somethings just occurred to me...I don't always think about things as they happen...are you afraid of getting into a new relationship because you might be restricted from being yourself? And in a way with Gillian you were able to...

Michael: ...I wasn't with Gillian...I was restricted from being myself...in the divorce what I did and in the process after that I think I allowed myself to be myself more and more...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...but a big part of our relationship was I think that I was restricted from being myself...

Me: oh...okay..

Michael: ... very very much so...

Me: ...so thats what you would sort of be monitoring and testing..

Michael: ..and I think... I mean I hadn't identified it consciously like that... but when I think of the various brief relationships I've had so far...

Me: ...yes...

Michael: ...and why this one...I say now...that I 'think' I'm in love (laughs happily) I think one of the things that I pick up with her is that I am and would be able to be myself ...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...and umm you know...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...and not have to monitor and restrict...

Me: ..those are the kind of things maybe you need to test out for yourself and see how it goes...

Michael: ja....okay so that was that period and..

Me: ...sorry I interrupted you..

Michael: ...ja...no...ja so then I want to tell you about the white water rafting .....ja... it was also very nice ... I enjoyd sleeping in the tents alonside the river....and a lot of things I experienced (nonchalantly) I nearly drowned..and that was also quite a big experience in my life...ohhh how could I forget...the symbolism again.. okay...so we do this ...this...white water rafting and the first big rapid we came to...it wasn't that big it was Hubbly Bubbly which we did and once we'd done it...I think it was that first day, we beached before the next rapids which was a big rapid called Hell's Gate okay ..and we went back and we said who wants to swim through Hubbly Bubbly with your life jacket of course so course Michael the adventurer has to be first to volunteer, so we all go and we...its quite a schlep to hike back...and go into the middle of the river and get there...so anyway...I go first...now for safety they had a guy below the rapids a guide, you've got a couple of guides with you..[tape ended].....and then a bit further down they had another guy waiting on a rock just in case you know ....now I mean they told us lots of stuff...anyway so what had happened to get into the rapids you had to swim quite far to get into the current so you didn't get whipped along the side into the rocks so I swam across....where were we..so I was already quite tired and out of breath..and then I was going and as I started going down and the life jacket keeps you up it was great and I was...the others were standing on the other side and watching...and I put my hands up and I was like shouting... Yes!...and I got pulled under so it wasn't like I took a breath I just got pulled under and I was out of breath etc...and.. I didn't come up ...and I didn't come up...and I mean its not that you ... its all turbulent...

Me: ...I've been caught in a something similar thing...

Michael: ...have you....

Me: ...under a rock....I was pulled under a rock so I couldn't come...so I actually.....I had breath....so I know what the pulling feeling is like....it was there before I even...

Michael: ...before you know what happens...

Me: ...and in the sea once...

Michael: ...and then I start remembering that he says to ...well they said to us before we started...he said that if you get caught in a whirlpool ...

Me: ...it will push you out...

Michael: ...you open up your arms...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...and if you've got the oar with you.. the oars... because then, the other things will pull you out, okay but if you get caught in a bubbly turbulent thing, the more you flail about the more you're going to get stuck in it, so what you've got to do is like fold yourself up make yourself small, whatever you do don't let go of the oar, he says I'll kill you if you come up and you (highly amused) let go of the oar (still laughing) - I'll drown you we've lost too many oars. I didn't have the oar because we were swimming through, anyway so I ...I suddenly remembered this so then I thought okay I'll make myself small and I'll pop up and didn't come up so now and now I'm wanting to take in air and I'm remembering he said, look you've got a life jacket you've got to come up some time and that like just kept me going and it reached a point where I was about to suck in water, I was thinking, I was thinking I need air..I need to fill my lungs and I'm going to open up and breathe in water I was about to, just to get something in because...I..and I remember thinking.....no life etc. flashed before my eyes...but I remember thinking this is how people drown, this is how people drown...

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ... and I could drown now..

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...and I came up.. eventually I popped up... and of course there was a huge relief in my mind...and I tried to breath in and I couldn't because I had obviously taken in water, and I was choking and I was (breathes in, in imitation) I..I..Iwas like...I was like trying to breathe and the guy in the raft was saying to me okay and I couldn't speak ... I was (imitating choking).. it was terrible... it was horrific and I managed as I came past I just hung on to the...the rope it was on the side of the raft.....I just hung there for about five minutes, now the others were all coming through...

Me: ...mm..

Michael: ..anyway so I survived that....then we went on to the next rapid and I was quite shaken...which is called hell's gate (laughs)...which says it all...and... anyway we went through that and da..da..da..da..da.. and at the end of the trip we were speaking around the fire and about this whole experience and somehow the phrase came up and...we wanted to print a t-shirt for all of us which we never got round to doing.. get one designed and printed...was the motto.. 'I got to Heaven through Hell's Gate'..and.. I don't know when it was, if it was then or a couple of days later that I related this to my whole relationship and the divorce and the break-up with Gillian that ...this experience after this whole week-end when I told you about the earth and all that stuff and connecting this woman like for a couple of days I was in a total high, I could see how green the trees were how blue the sky was I was on such a high I was really fully alive and so I was really identifying that I went through heaven...to heaven...through hell's gate...literally on the tri..on the white water rafting trip and in my whole journey with Gillian...had been...

Me: ...psychologically as well....

Michael: ....I had gone through hell, I'd gone through hell's gate be fucking sure about that and I'd got to heaven on the other side so that..THAT...I mean you can see again how incredibly symbolic and powerful that was for me ...

Me: ...mmm...you didn't tell me... umm...you havn't spoken about the marriage...

Michael: ...ja..

Me: ....do you want to do that?

Michael: ..I do... but not..

Me: ...yet..

Michael: ...not yet...I've been..

Me: ...the hell...I mean...

Michael: ...as I said I've just been going...I've been dealing more with this now and then ja... and I don't even think I'll get to it to-day because there is still more that I want to speak about...umm... so that was November...oh yes okay and what I wanted to do...so after that I went again at the end of the year to the coast ... with my friends I've been going for many years and my friend's parents and while I was there I spoke last week remember ..I made up a poem in my mind when I was walking along the beach and in fact two...

Me: ..we didn't get to them...

Michael: ...ja...and those were very powerful and I want to read those to you now cause that will also give you more of an idea of the space I was in that even though I'd gone through these positive experiences and stuff...but I was still very much in the grieving and it will give you an idea of where I was at. You know what before I do that, I've got something else here that I'm going to read to you... I've got written her.... I wrote a card to Gillian after we got divorced and when she was going away that I had for a while and I copied down what I wrote in the card, I don't usually do that but I just wanted to you'll probably see why..the card was a picture of Charlie Brown in front Charlie Brown played a big part in Gillian and my ...in our lives, we'd give each other Charlie Brown cards so on the front it had Charlie Brown knocking his head on a tree ..and inside you open up and it said Sorry. So... I ...so you know... I guess ...anyway...so I wrote I think ...I think this is actually verbatim what I wrote to her and often I would write her cards and I would write my own words and poems and stuff and Gillian would always say that I could write stuff and she can't so she would write words...quotes that she got from other places and this time I resorted to quotes because there wasn't so you know The Prophet by Kahil Gibran so I took a couple of things from there and wrote it. Its dated of 2/11/96 so I think was before I went on that trip...the white water rafting trip after... those experiences...I don't know...

*To Gill*

*On love*

*When love beckons to you follow him though his ways are hard and steep,  
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,*

*Though the sword hidden among his pinnions may wound you,  
And when he speaks to you believe in him,  
Though his voice may shatter your dreams as the North wind lays waste the garden,  
All these things shall love do unto you that you may know the secrets of your heart  
And in that knowledge become a fragment of life's heart.*

*On Marriage*

*You were born together and together you shall be forevermore  
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days  
Ay you shall be together even in the silent memory of God*

*Joy and Sorrow*

*Your joy is your sorrow unmasked,  
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being the more joy you can contain  
When you are joyous look deep into your heart  
And you will find that it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy  
When you are sorrowful look again into your heart  
And you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight,  
They are inseparable, together they come  
And when one sits alone with you at your board,  
Remember that the other is asleep upon your bed*

And then the last heading I've given which is different from what he had in this section I've I've written here

*Farewell my love*

*It was but yesterday that we met in a dream, you have sung to me in my aloneness and  
I of your longings have built a tower in the sky but now our sleep has fled and our  
dream is over and it is no longer dawn the noontide is upon us and our half waking has  
turned to fuller day and we must part, if in the twilight of memory we should meet once  
more we shall speak again together and you shall sing to me a deeper song and if our  
hand should meet in another dream we shall build another tower in the sky.*

And then I've just written here on my own, Farewell my Lovely and God bless you, Mike.

...and two days later...one day later its dated 3/11/96 at five past midnight (giggles) in the morning I've written here. I've written because this stuck out for me. My thought on my last wave goodbye to Gill at the airport, because I went with her family to see her off as I waved goodbye to her this just stuck in my mind...was...Goodbye my life, goodbye my love. (Long silence) ja there's something I've written though...okay ...so then...the basis of this poem which I made up which was on the 29th December 1996 and I finalised it on the 17th January 1997. I called it Breakers.

*The oceans hammering waves pound and crash and smash and break the naked strand and my heart  
and my heart my aching heart that never never more shall walk hand in hand with yours along the  
virgin beaches of my world the wavelets lapping at our feet the rain drizzling in our faces for you, you  
are lost to me, lost forever to the cruel sea of fate and I, I am all at sea all at sea and too lost to even  
hate.*

Me: ...that sounds angry that one...

Michael: ...ja...I guess its angry and devastated...

Me: ...you won't allow yourself to hate...

Michael: ...ja...well...I think its too lost to even hate, I mean there's a part of me that would maybe want to hate but I just feel too wiped out to hate.

Me: ...I had a sense last time that there were two kinds of pain one is your own..

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ... and one is Gillian's...in you...almost like you carry her pain.. and that seems to to be the more... umm.. sore one, when you said just now umm the loss ..you know..that we don't even understand this loss that we bandy about this word..umm..I think theres much more to this loss in terms of what you carry for her...I think you carry some of her stuff? ...would you agree with that?...her pain...

Michael:...mm..once again, I need to say that on some level I was probably aware of it, but not as clearly as you've put it now..

Me: ..ja..

Michael: ...that ..as you say there's two types of pain...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ... no. I is my own...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...and its true, that I did carry a lot of her pain...and maybe thats..

Me: ...ja...that the one that you really battle with...and feel kinda...it seems stronger with...the one that moves you to tears more...umm..its my sense...

Michael: ...I'm not sure about that, I'd have to think about that...

Me: ...I not saying that you don't feel equally sorry about this whole thing but there's a difference in the two pains and I can almost see but I can almost see two people in one...you and you carrying her... I'm wondering if its what she can't carry for herself.. you know...

Michael: ...ja...I definitely agree with that as I say I don't want to undermine my own pain...so to speak...

Me: ...no...no ...not to diminish it...ja...

Michael: ...ja...not to diminish it but what you're saying I think...

Me: ...theres a different quality, I'm not saying more or less...

Michael: ...and probably part of what went wrong was it just wasn't ...you know...all relationships I think contain an element of healing for the other person and containing their pain but it probably just

got too much, and too out of hand that Gillian wasn't doing enough for herself and I was doing it all for her...

Me: ...thats my sense...and when you use these rituals, on one level theres... umm...you know even the ritual of the mud umm...theres almost like theres a process of ...the ring too...of let it out... throw it away...you know...get this out of me...and then the mud I was thinking that... you were wanting to make...or it was symbolic very symbolic of this other muck...you know kind of...you want to..I said to you the previous time that it sounds as if you want to undo her the harm...cause...you're taking in the mud the crap..whatever...and trying to undo it in yourself and as you said, she had to do it herself.

Michael: ...and maybe...but I really don't like you using the mud as the muck and the crap and stuff because for me it was very earthy..

Me: ...mother earth...

Michael: ...and life-filled and life...

Me: ...oh okay...

Michael: ...it wasn't the association of negative muck, it was rich and it was full of life..ja..

Me: ...it was fertile...

Michael: ...it was very fertile...you know...

Me: ...oh I see...okay ...maybe I got the wrong idea...

Michael: ...it wasn't like just plain mud it was very earthy...and...ja

Me: ...so you wanted to be part of this fertility more...

Michael: ... ja...it was very much more associated to...as you say fertility and to ...ja...aliveness... life...feeling alive...feeling in touch with the earth with the rain.... life giving water and the you know...

Me: ...oh I see okay...

Michael: ...but ja... about the pain...ja...two types...it helps ...and I think it might help still more for me to think about that about the distinction...okay... so while I'm here the last poem probably for today...for a while....which I also made up in December 96 and I finalised it in January 97. Its a longer one...okay... you ready...okay...so the incident was...the incident was...that year the dolphins had been coming in quite close and the people were swimming out to like be close to the dolphins and the one day I wanted to go out but I didn't because the water looked quite rough and after my.... being dipped under the water incident, I was quite scared, but then another day the water was calmer and I saw dolphins out and they weren't coming in yet but I...well I don't know...well you'll see in the poem...I kind of knew they were going to come in and I swam out to ...where I couldn't stand in the bay and the dolphins like came right next to me...so...on the surface thats what this poem is about, but you'll see there's a lot more to it...I've called it Swimming with Dolphins.

*I stood at the threshold of a vast bay the crying of seagulls swamped by the crying of people's faces  
Smiling faces laughing faces faces shrieking with delight little faces crying with beach sand in their*

eyes

*And I alone in stillness at the water's edge and you all one thrashing and leaping about in ecstasy at the ocean's ledge*

*And then not yet unconsciously I heard your silent call and as I waded tentatively into the frothing waves I glimpsed you racing to meet me*

*No longer hesitant my heart pounding the breakers I swam past the faces and through the surf until of a sudden the comber's crashing was muffled far behind me*

*And as I was wafted upon the gentling swells rising and sinking rising and sinking I found myself alone on a sacred sea and I shivered though the water was warm*

*Alone completely alone the ocean gripped me and my desolate heart slowly sank, sank far beneath the murky waters*

*They say that death is merely the beginning of new life it would be nice to believe that sinking to one's deaths is somehow the beginning of new light emerging*

*Light emerging perhaps illumination begins with a fettered stench of fish and an earshattering blast of eggs bloated exploded from deep inside and leathery black embattle scarred hide*

*Perhaps revelation begins with a terrified heart tremulous before the banal majesty of a merciless killer become curious*

*Surfacing to sound out what ungainly interloper dares disturb the tranquil waters*

*Perhaps the home-coming blessed belonging the yearn for union begins with a moment of consummate surrender to a dark marine deity*

*Here I am take me if you will for I no longer have the strength or will to fight life's soul sapping currents I offer myself before you my warm-blooded brother and I sacrifice my tears to you*

*My salt water mingles with your salt water and we are united in fear and death*

(Michael lets out a huge breath)

Me: ...wonderful...

Michael: ...ja...so...I don't know what that says to you or does for you or...but I think that's very much a very powerful expression of the kind of place I was in at that time...

Me: ...that was December...

Michael: ....so that was I mean we'd had the divorce and I'd been on these courses I'd been on the white water rafting all in the space of four months and then that was December, I mean Gillian went overseas in November we'd got divorced umm the second one at the end of October...September so its all in that period...and that was an interim period almost between moving on with my life cause when I came back in January that was when I started ...umm...towards the end of January... my new job and so it was almost a shift then that I started like it was like that period of time was very much a mourning, grieving period of time getting over this and after those couple of months then even though I was still going though the mourning process umm..it was more getting on with my life then..

Me: ...a new focus..

Michael: ...ja...what helped me to get over it (laughs) was... umm.. so in January when I came back from holiday so ...and I was about to move out and this girl who I had mentioned who was still upstairs and I was quite keen on her at one stage but then I was put off and she'd broken up with her boyfriend so what actually happened and I realise in retrospect...was she actually seduced me...she was a very attractive girl...lots of guys were dying to get into her panties as they say but I wasn't ..I didn't...I was

a bit 'gatvol' of her and as I say in retro... I'm very....I mean..... Gillian was the first girl I had sex with and the only one at that point ...so this one comes along...and I mean there's no question..like it was a whole set up...which I didn't even realise (laughs) at the time she seduced me (giggles a lot)..

Me: ...(giggling too) ...you think thats funny...

Michael: ...and even at the time... it was great.... but I was quite ambivalent about having sex with her because I was thinking well...do I want to sort of save myself for my next relationship which will be you know *the* one and all the rest and... so there were two incidents you know sexual incidents I had with her and afterwards I was really really pleased because what it had done for me was also this whole sexual thing had become a whole with big thing in the relationship with Gillian and in some ways even had become an obsession with me ...

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...and having I mean I'll be quite frank with you, Jennifer fucked my brains in (laughs and laughs)...okay...

Me: ...(laughing too)..

Michael: ...and its never happened before (laughs more) ...

Me: ...it was quite healing...

Michael: ...and it was... it was like really good just to... have a fuck...I'd never had a fuck before...

Me: ...thought about that...

Michael: ....I mean with Gillian being very intense and making love and with Jennifer it was just a fuck (laughs) and it was *great* just to get that off my shoulders... it wasn't off my shoulders but...it was (laughs)...and you know I think...I mean... beside just giving me that sparkle afterwards...

Me: ...it was a new perspective...

Michael: ...ja...so it was good...

Me : ...and relief....and unfettered...

Michael: ja ...ja.....and subsequent to those two experiences...I actually had more opportunities of having sexual interaction with her which I actually avoided and in some ways I'm sorry I should have just gone with it..you know...just lost myself in it ...but she as a person just bugged me too much and I didn't want to have the...have to put up with her as a person...so... I'm.... umm...ja...and what I wanted to say is ... it did help ..you know.. me to move on..from my mourning with Gillian you know just ..ja ....and its interesting cause...

Me: ...it was another way of ending..

Michael: ...well..another ending, another beginning I don't know what..it was quite funny..that I once...my brother's living overseas and I..I hardly speak to him...but I was once at my parents when he phoned and I answered the phone and we chatted a bit...there was another relationship I had last year

that hit me quite hard [1998] and my brother told me...and he doesn't speak ...my brother's not like me he doesn't speak about experiences..and stuff like that..anyway but he said...because he had one relationship which really wiped him out and you know broke up..and he said ja..he was really wiped out and he'd gone overseas for like seven months and he was going to come back he was in such a bad way... and hey he says...it was in Washington DC..and I got laid..he says..you'd be surprised what it did for me what wonders it did ...(laughing)...and I think it does..it probably does to do something in helping you get over that...

Me: ...ja...marriage is a different thing..I think...marriage has other responsibilities...

Michael: ...so ...ja...so then...and maybe then we should stop...is this a half-hour tape you've got here...its not 45 minutes I think ..it must have been...

Me: ...I've turned it already...

Michael: ...umm...

Me: ...its fine... its eleven... thats fine...

Michael: ...and then next time we can look more at my marriage...so what I wanted to say was from then...from then on...so that was when I moved it and brought my stuff here and started doing my new job ...and very much its been making a life for myself...I've spoken about the cushions and my books..and getting curtains and buying little candle thingies and aromatic oils and getting pictures and putting them up ...very much making a life for myself ...and during that whole period I went through times of feeling the loss of Gillian...and thinking well maybe we can get back together and she came out once or twice and we spoke about it ...and we both went through periods of thinking ...yes it will work...no it won't work...so it was a period of what... about after I'd moved here...so its like two years now...its about two and half years since the divorce...but two years since the end of the mourning period so to speak ...umm...that initial mourning that I've gone through this process and finally to the point where I mentioned at the end of last year where I threw the ring away and then a month or two ago I saw Gillian when she came out and I realised that its over (lets out a big breath) and I feel freed up and able to move on in my life...

Me: ..mm..

Michael: ...to the point where I'm now *in love*...

Me: ..thats wonderful..

Michael: ...when I was reading this thing to you I was so glad I had this because I've been quite unsure of what's happening between this other girl and me now we've only seen each other a few times and as I say I've fallen like a ton of bricks umm.. and I've been quite ambivalent about it because of the fear of where she is and you know so when I read this thing it was really good for me.. 'when love beckons, follow even though his ways are hard and steep'...

And this is reminding me...I mean thats what I did with Gillian...I mean this whole thing opening myself to that kind of life and to I've my dreams and myself shattered has got me to become a fragment of life with a big 'L'..life's heart and as I was reading it...here's an opportunity theres this wonderful girl and I'm terribly afraid because maybe she won't like me as much as I like her and the whole thing and I was reading this and here it is... 'when love beckons...

Me: ...my sense of you is that you do things without fear...but obviously...

Michael: ...no..no..I do it in spite of the fear...

Me: ...in spite of the fear...ja..umm..you know the fear ...would you say [tape ends]...what is your... when do feel most vulnerable what does the word mean to you?

Michael: ... I can't answer that question but what comes to mind..is I think...I mean this whole experience has been one big making of myself vulnerable opening myself up to feel hurt and to be shattered and to be vulnerable and to be willing to be vulnerable and to take what comes with that...because the other extreme which most people seem to do is to shut themselves off and that...and you hate the ex and you cut yourself off...and you joke about it and umm...so when you ask me about vulnerability...I think its been one huge lesson in vulnerability for me and in opening myself up and to be hurt and to be vulnerable...I don't know if that answers your question...

Me: ..mm..that's what I've noticed..in a way drives you...its the...its...its..from a point which umm..gives you a sense of living...

Michael: ja ....you know...and in relation to that you said.... I don't seem to feel (amused) the fear...I remember one time and this will also probably tie in with the vulnerability...umm...it was one time and this was probably when we were married and the problems were starting to come up more and more and I was ...and I just needed to get away... and Gillian couldn't get away she was working and I wanted to go camping or something...and she said "go by yourself" and I said no...and she actually pushed me, she insisted that I go, which was really good of her, because I needed it and I actually went camping in the Berg by myself..and I went on this one hike the one day and I came down...I mean it was hectic going up and I came down a different way and I was by myself, and Wendy it was so fucking steep and there were rocks and there were like chains you had to hold onto and ...I mean I've climbed high places before and been scary places and I sh.. shat myself and I thought theres no ways am.... I can go all the way back and down the other side not only am I too tired but its bad enough the other side and I don't want to go down..I nearly sat down and cried I was so scared so I said okay just stay here...don't deny it and feel the fear...and I sat there I stood there I acknowledged it I felt it I shat myself I was shaking I said okay...(amused ) if I fall and die, I fall and die I felt the fear I'm going to go down... and its almost once again another metaphor...thats what I've been doing ....I mean this whole thing its been looking that fear in the face..and that fear is often because of vulnerability ...I was making myself vulnerable to fall off and be killed...I was making myself vulnerable to be emotionally devastated...and ...ja something in me keeps on pushing me to do this and to not give up on myself...

Me: ...for the big L

Michael: ...the big L...ja...ja...so...

Me: ...we can stop there...

Michael: ...ja...ja...maybe just think a bit to tie it together...but I think ja...so...just for myself ...

Me: ..ja...

Michael: ...I need to tie it together...and so thats that period the initial mourning period as I called it...and what I went through then...extreme pain and suffering and depression and loss and all the rest

and at the same time some really wonderful highs and experiences ...and thats again what I wrote in that thing...the deeper that sorrow carves into your being the more joy you can contain and thats what I experienced...

Me: ...mm....

Michael: ...and it was also it was at the end of that period again in January and I'm not sure if this was before or after I got laid but it was about that time....(laughing)

Me: ...the milestones...the significant milestones...

Michael: ...that I wrote to Gillian in that letter I mentioned to you when I said you know ... I said I tried to cut you off but I can't...I need to ...and I decided the only way I can do it is...will you be my sister and I'll be your brother and we'll carry on a relationship on that basis so it was at that time then that I did that...maybe it was almost at a culmination of that mourning period that I was able to say lets shift gears now...

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...and then it was the last two years that I've probably been doing that to a lesser and lesser extent until as I say I'm at the point now where...thank God I am over... I am over ...and when I say over...obviously once again I know I'll never be fully over it there'll always be a part of me...over to the point that I feel free to move on with my life and don't don't...I know I won't fantasize again about getting together with Gillian cause I know its over... its over.

Me: ...its a deliberate process of...I'm thinking ...of cleaning out the cupboard...moving...I think one lives inside each other and you've deliberately taken it and dealt with it and put it outside...let it go...

Michael: ..yes...and I've deliberately taken stuff and put it inside me...I mean and maybe thats the earth thing its not that I've throwing it away okay the ring was symbolic probably of throwing something away but this whole process for me has been a taking in I've been taking in experiences I've been making things part of my life...

Me: ...oh yes...

Michael: ...I've been integrating and in the process its enabled me to let go of certain things so I don't want to make it a thing of throwing out or letting go its been an integrating and a letting go, digesting what I need to and excreting what I don't need it sounds quite gross but umm ...ja...ja...

Me: ...thank-you Michael....

Michael: ...okay...

Me: ...and I'm learning a lot too I must say...

13th May 1999

Michael: ...After last time's session I don't remember exactly but..I think part of it was to do with my going away on a hike, something I've been meaning to do for a while is..the last lot of therapy I went for which I started when I was still married ..umm...that was my really big therapy ..I can say....it was for about two years and umm ..ja... so...after about the fourth session of my therapy....after each session I recorded I wrote down from memory umm...like the important things that stood out for me and what happened now before going away on the trail and after our last session I started going through that and I also started going through some other bits and pieces notes I'd written down and things that was happening at the time of my marriage and it was really good for me because I had forgotten how bad it was...

Me: ...ja...you do hey..you do...

Michael: ...just reading through this stuff I thought...fucking hell...you know I couldn't believe how bad it was and when I read this stuff I was ...you know it just reminded me again...I really had forgotten how bad it was...so I mean in terms of this whole thing...in the sessions so far I guess I've given you a broader perspective... the afterwards...the things but we haven't really got in to the ....

Me: ...do you want to...

Michael: ...umm...well yes...I don't know what kind of depth I'm going to go into but certainly after having read this stuff...I haven't gone through the whole thing yet..you know....the whole file but it reminded me of what a bad space I was in...umm...in fact I can't quite believe ...I mean I was just totally hopeless and desperate and ...at times a little bit suicidal....and umm...ja absolutely hopeless..feeling like theres no hope in life no meaning no purpose it was really really bad..umm....this is nice and I also don't drink coffee often...umm..ja...one of the things that stood out for me and in fact is what has been brought up now as well ...well related to it...I'd forgotten what a big part sex played in our relationship or didn't play and one of the huge things that I see from my notes umm...was what a big issue it had become for me...I mean (lets out a big breath) our sexual relationship before we got married, I mean the first six whatever months were great and slowly started I guess getting worse and worse and worse even when we got married it wasn't that great and I mean what I've written there ...I don't remember ...but there...when I said I didn't have much sex I *mean* I didn't have much sex I would go for six months a year and I wasn't married that long without having sex and it wasn't just the sex obviously...

Me: ...no...

Michael: ... it was the whole emotional and caring thing around that...and one thing ...

Me: ...you feel cut off..

Michael: ...ja...one thing about me and that I've learned in particular and it got brought up on this trail now umm...is even though in many ways I'm very self sufficient and independent and acknowledging of my worth and good self-esteem and all the rest I have an incredibly strong need to be nurtured in many ways especially in an intimate relationship umm..and I don't think...

Me: ...(seriously) well thank goodness...

Michael: ...(laughs) ..

Me: ...it would be a problem if you didn't...

Michael ... and...I don't think its excessive I don't think its unhealthy or pathological I think its quite a healthy ...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...and what was happening in the relationship, Gillian just wasn't able to give me that at all and you know I got more and more needy for that and wanting it and needing it and it built up and obviously the... it came into the whole sexual thing as well because there was no sex but it was also the lack of physical affection and touching and I mean I remember at one point it was quite weird ..that I took for granted, I think we were going for some sort of counselling at that stage ...and I don't know we'd had a fight over something, that I hadn't cleaned out the basin properly and whatever and we trying out some sort of fancy communication technique you know that okay so what can you do for me and what can I do for you and what we sort of came to was that I... was that what I was going to do for her was clean out the basin and what she would do for me what I wanted was for her to give me a hug...and you know ...every now and again and I remember .... I mean it seemed quite okay ....I remember mentioning it to my one very close friend who I went on a hike with...and to my friend's father...

Me: ...gosh thats tough hey...to negotiate that kind of stuff..

Michael: ...ja...you know...and I'd taken that for granted..and when he heard this..he said...he was like dumbfounded I mean he didn't make a big thing of it... but afterwards he told me he says you know if its so bad that you negotiating to clean the basin just to get an hug and a bit of physical affection...

Me: ..its huge...ja..

Michael: ...umm..and that suddenly woke me up ...because I just took it for granted ..okay well ... we're struggling along and we're doing this and that but but to get it from somebody else's perspective kind of woke me up a bit umm..

Me: ...the very painful things you tend to put in the background and not raise its head because its so painful...I mean to really acknowledge it...to realise the extent of it is frightening..its terrifying...because you have to reconcile with the whole thing of whether this is working...at that stage it was probably the last thing you wanted to do.

Michael: ...ja...you know and another thing I came across in the notes was when we first considered divorce and put it off and then tried again and even though we sort of spoke about it but it wasn't really real it...you know...it was like you said so difficult to consider or acknowledge or even think about..so...

Me: ...you keep trying to work out whats going on...there must be a way...and if only we could get over this hurdle..we'll find a way...

Michael: ..... ja...and in fact last night I read through some more of my sessions last night ..yesterday afternoon...and one of the things I came across and a big question that I discussed in therapy and I asked my therapist I said .. Is it me?...that theres something wrong with that I have to change and that I have to learn and get over with and get less affection and be okay with or is it our relationship thats just not compatible and my therapist at the time answered and said well until you know the answer to that question you're not in a position to make a decision about divorce you need to find that out... and I don't know if I ever came back and sort of clearly answered that question again...but I think but I think I did come to the answer to that question the question is its the fit between the two of us, because thats

how I am and I have those needs and umm..and I have to have those needs met in a relationship ...and if I'm not not going to have them met its not going to work....

Me: ..its not a one way thing...

Michael: ...ja... and no matter how much I try, process, and love myself and you know whatever the shit is umm..if I'm not going to get that in a relationship its going to cause major problems if not the break-up of the relationship..and its really interesting for me because its coming across now huge, because I don't know if I mentioned to you...I mentioned to you before I was going away that there was this girl that I really liked who was coming on the trail and well it turns out that its not going to develop into a serious relationship, she's not into that at all but what I was aware of and this was also a pattern in my marriage which already gave me a warning signal...umm...was that I was then caring very much for her ....like I did for Gillian...and yet there was very little response ..umm..from her side and it started tying into this feeling of me wanting to be nurtured and cared for but it not happening ...

Me: ...you're giving what you would like..

Michael: ...ja...giving what I'd like to get and not getting it and not getting it almost then pushes me into more of a cycle of...maybe if I give more you know blah blah blah the whole thing..umm..[I just want to shut the windows..]. so in the last few days in particular I've been taking a big look at that and whats happening and the kind of situations I'm getting myself in...but in terms of the relationship maybe thats the biggest thing that I struggled with in the relationship with Gillian that I felt unloved and uncared for and she just...and I was desperately wanting that..

Me: ...mm..

Michael: ..I don't think it was desperate in the beginning..I think it was normal but the less I got the more I wanted and the more desperate I became ...

Me:...mm..

Michael: ..and that I think then ..that also tied into the sexual thing that you know so..so now sex became something of a way where I was hoping I would get some of that contact and love and nurturing and obviously there wasn't that either so so maybe its easier especially for a man to acknowledge a need for sex than acknowledge a need to be loved and nurtured..

Me: ...it seems more acceptable...

Michael: ja ....and in fact again when I was going through that yesterday afternoon...I only remember this happening once in therapy but what I've read so far it happened three times in therapy and some people would question a therapist who does this I did at the time but ...umm..she was a female therapist and as I say I read on three separate occasions when we were dealing with the whole sexual thing and what we came onto through the sex was this love nurturing thing and on three separate occasions umm.. she almost held me like a child and sort of stroked me physically and well I cried and that and it was ...I cannot tell you how difficult it was for me to be able to to do that to allow myself to ...

Me: ..to cry...

Michael: ...no not to cry..to be held like a baby...

Me: ...to be held...

Michael: ...she held me like a child and stroked me and you know..how freaky that was and just totally unacceptable as a man and I think I can see now that I needed that and I need that...to be loved and cared in that way and I wasn't getting that and I needed it umm.. and I wanted it and so if I think back to the relationship and what went wrong and the pain and the hurt I mean I can tell you hundreds of things about it but it seems to me now that maybe that was almost at the essence of it that umm..we were both very in need of caring and I was there and willing and able I think to give it to Gillian a lot but she wasn't able to reciprocate, obviously there were individual times but the general trend was like that and I just couldn't deal with that..

Me: ..how did you deal with it ?..

Michael: ...how did I deal with not getting that?

Me: ja ....well first of all at that stage, how did you understand what was happening then?

Michael: ...I didn't understand it...I was really blown to what was going on I was like surviving from day to day I knew I wasn't that happy but I never knew how miserable and unhappy I was umm...a lot of it I attributed to...I think I told you that Gillian had been sexually abused when she was younger so a lot of it ...and obviously because it manifested in the sexual area..I attributed it to that and I thought okay so I pushed her and I wanted her to go for therapy and more therapy and it was like that whole issue so...a lot of it was focussing more on that as opposed to lets say on...on taking it beyond that..to our relationship..

Me: ..or you were looking at her needs and you weren't focussing ....

Michael: ...well you know what that became a huge huge thing which I only saw afterwards I never understood it at the time and thats a big thing with me and it happened on the hike with this other girl and something I really need to be aware of is umm...falling into the trap of focussing on the other person's needs rather than my own ..umm..so your question to me was how did I deal with that...I dealt with it to a large extent by thinking there's something wrong with me not wrong with me, but I'm in a relationship and I need to keep on working on myself to be able to deal with this to cope with it, so I did all sorts of things I went on courses....whatever I just ... you know ...and ...I tried and I tried and tried...

Me: ...like trying to squeeze blood out of a stone...

Michael: ...exactly...it really was... and had I not read these notes I probably wouldn't have been able to speak about it like this because I'd forgotten how bad it was but it really was like that trying to please...squeeze blood out of a stone...umm...you know .. after I got divorced and everything a lot of my friends said to me that they saw that I was unhappy and down and that and I hadn't been that aware of it even though the divorce came as a big shock to them they were aware that the sparkle had gone out of my eyes and my life whatever...umm..

Me: ...its even hard to to to let it re-emerge and come back into your life.... its hard to find that spark again..

Michael: ...ja...I mean it was a long process of getting it back..that spark I mean we tried things like...I

remember once...this was quite soon into the marriage before it got bad I felt like I needed a break and I wanted to go away but Gillian was working and I wasn't going to go and but she insisted she said 'you go away' and I am a person who needs my space and that kind of thing and she was ...and you know I kept on rationalising and thinking to myself wow you know I've got such an amazing wife and she supports me to do that and I went away I went by myself to the mountains for a week or two...and ja... umm it was great but what I'm trying to say is like even in that.. you can see there's a desperate trying to find ways of dealing with what wasn't working in the relationship umm ..I think there's a difference between two people giving each other space to go away and what.... what that was...that was another way of trying to fill that unsatisfied thing inside me and...again I was reminded by it last night..that on another occasion when I went away this was closer to the time we got divorced..I went away by myself...and I wrote in my notes (amused)..that I told my therapist that one of the things when I went away ...I went away with the intention ... I wanted to get laid...I didn't..... it didn't work out that way ...

Me: ...thats what you've been waiting... wanting all that time...

Michael: ..ja and it wasn't just getting laid, and then I started remembering you know through my marriage there were times when...I mean it wouldn't have been sort of overt flirtation or anything like that..but there would be almost a subtle thing between me and other women....where it was this sort of vibe a little bit and I think I rationalised at the time that my relationship wasn't working and umm..if I think of it now I have to say that its because I just wasn't being emotionally fulfilled in my relationship and I needed that and on one occasion there was one girl who shew! umm..it got really close to being....and my therapist ..I only told her a couple of weeks afterwards ...I'm not a woman's man, I'm not a womaniser who goes out looking for women and needs to...I mean Gillian was my first sexual relationship, since I've been divorced which is like two and a half years I've had sex once you know and of course I miss it and I would like it but I...and if I'm in a relationshipI definitely want it but I..I'm not....I don't have to have sex a lot and.....

Me: ...you kind of frame it umm...with some degree of permanence some degree of stability ,,maybe...

Michael: ja....I want to be in a relationship a..for me.. sex is ...its very woman ...typically a woman's approach where its not just getting laid but where there's a relationship and I feel close to the person and thats what wasn't happening in my relationship with Gillian we weren't... I didn't feel that close to her and I didn't feel loved by her and that nurturing and all the rest umm...and so I got more and more desperate and as a result we had lots of fights and stuff but I think they all came as a result of that and often what I would do...a pattern [I] would get into.. I think I might have mentioned before one of my ways of dealing with conflict...is I want to engage with the person and speak to them..... Gillian's way would be to withdraw and I would try and try to engage and push her and she would withdraw and withdraw and withdraw and I would push and push and push and then I see in retrospect til we had a huge explosion maybe and after the explosion then it would be a way of sort of getting close and she might open up a bit or something like that but I would push her and push her and push her just to try and connect with her..

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...even if it meant hurting her first..

Me: ...mm..

Michael: ...umm...so it just became hellava destructive....

Me: ...its sad...

Michael: ...ja!..

Me: ...it also seems that your focus and goal was on this kind of permanence...and that ..its a huge step to get married...and you give up all other thoughts and this is what you're going to do...so even the thought that this might have been not compatible wasn't going to enter your head ..or that this couldn't work or that this wouldn't work that there was something you would be able to do...

Michael: ja...it wasn't a consideration...it wasn't not going to be a consideration ..it just wasn't ..it wasn't part of my mind set to even consider that we couldn't work it out..

Me: ..yes ...exactly..

Michael: ...it just wasn't there and thats why it was such a shock when we went to this one therapist who first said well maybe you should consider divorce and I couldn't believe it and yet there was some relief when she said it ..

Me: ..ja...somewhere it was there..

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ...it needed to be contained ...the idea...

Michael: ...ja...and thats really really frightening because it says that anybody can get in a relationship ..you can be so sure about it.. you can think you know so much stuff ...and think you know yourself well and SHIT! ...(we both laugh) ...hey.... and especially for me you know whose really wanting to get into a relationship and like this thing that happened on the trail and and yet I can see how quickly and easily it is to slip back into those old perhaps negative patterns...

Me: ...ja.. its tough...so you can see that you have a kind of habitual way of approaching things and ...you take the lead and show what you can give..you set an example or model what you want...or need

Michael: ..well part of it I don't have to go into the theory of it but I I recognise that often its with women who are in some ways damaged and needy and in need of a bit of rescuing and I mean its gotten better over time but there does seem to be that thread and then I seem to throw myself into...you know... loving them and caring for them and yet they're not ...its not that reciprocal and as I say its something I've really become aware of now and I'm making a conscious effort to be aware of it...

Me: ...what about ...can I ask you this...tell me to shut up...

Michael: ...you can ask me whatever you want but whether I answer or not is another story...

Me: thats fine....I can't help thinking...umm..what about your own damage?

Michael: ...well... ja... umm...once again probably through therapy...its important that you say this because I probably haven't given it so much focus..is that ja...in many ways in wanting to repair their

damage its probably mine that I'm wanting to repair through them..

Me: ...mm..

Michael: ..umm ...my damage certainly I don't see as being as severe as their's I wasn't sexually molested I wasn't.... come from a divorced family ...or whatever ...but certainly as a child and I mean this ties into what I've been speaking about very much in many ways I was the outsider of three kids...

Me: ...tell me a little bit about the family structure...

Michael: ...okay I've got a sister who is about three years older than I am or two, two years older than I am and a brother who is three years younger than I am. So my sister was sort of like the darling and apple of my father's eye and we were always compared to her, 'we' being my brother and I and then my brother was always my mother's little baby and I'm very different from my father ...I think I'm very similar to my mother so as a result of the difference from my father he just fucking fought with me all the time...umm just cause of the clash on various levels... and as a result of my similarity to my mother..I think she saw a lot of things in me that were in herself that she didn't like and so I got a lot of flack for that..

Me: ...she wanted to correct her own things in you...

Michael: ja ....and she couldn't handle seeing her things in me so she sort of just came down hard on me...

Me: ...mmm..which is quite insightful..

Michael: ...I've only seen this I guess afterwards or in retrospect...

Me: ..in a real sense then you were taking care of her damage...

Michael: ...umm I'm kind of with you...but just say what you mean...

Me: ...its a kind of symbolic idea I'm not saying that the damage is real..I almost think that its not..but if she was continually correcting what she perceives to be not nice in you which is her own...

Michael: ..okay ...then I was carrying it for her...

Me: ... you were carrying her perception of not so nice parts...or damaged parts or not perfect parts..so not perfect being the real thing... so you were a vessel in a way and even the way you said it seemed ...sounded to me ...that you were quite willing to do that...quite happy you realised it and...

Michael: ...no... you see it wasn't (laughs) that...

Me: ...not happily? ...

Michael: ...no...I recognise that thats what I was doing but the way you put it I hadn't thought of it like that...what I thought you were going to say and what I'd seen was that umm...for example in the relationship between my father and my mother I often felt protective and defensive of my mother and my mother and this whole rescuing thing and something that came up in the relationship with Gillian...my mother...when something went wrong at home...she would sulk..she would get this huge headache and

we couldn't speak to her and she withdrew and and she would be in her room and with this huge headache ...the lights off and everybody had to tip toe ...and I always felt - here it is...that I had to make things better and I had to repair and I was and I must do something and make nice and all the rest ...and I mean its quite apparent that thats what I was doing with Gillian ..

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ..and ...ja ...that umm...I have that and thats something I think I've worked on quite a lot and tried to put a side and to an extent I think I have umm...

Me: ...its not easy though...

Michael: ...no its not...

Me: ...one can do it intellectually but its very hard to do emotionally...

Michael: ja ....I think ..no...I'm aware... I have changed a lot in that regard and with my mother... I think and with other women, but its always I mean those neural pathways are there ...umm...so... ja... that was how I understood it more and I just want to go over and say for myself what you said now about that I was carrying damage for her cause the part in her that she couldn't accept...

Me: ...yes...

Michael: ...that she was projecting on to me so I was literally carrying that for her and I think as a result ummm...something thats still an issue for me is as much as I'm able to acknowledge my good side and stuff and all the rest I do still ...I'm very hard on myself and unaccepting of myself in many ways and now when you said that ..ja ..thats probably also.. could well be where it comes from that I'm still carrying that rejected despised part...

Me: ...its amazing the way we...I mean not just you everybody is trying to sort out things like...so many levels of sorting out what belongs to you...I'm not theoretically an expert but I'm just thinking that this is an object around which you've organised...and you talked about the primary mother-infant relationship being primary and sexual relationship that umm...this is your primary relationship that you bond with and thats an object that you carried as well this damaged part not that she's totally... but this part...

Michael: ...ja....

Me: ...that was your role not your brother's not your sister's but your role ...that was the part you and in a sexual sense something thats inside you..

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ...and if you take gender way ...

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ...it was...its not easy to manage that either...we ought to know how to untangle that...

Michael: ...and I think one of the things in the marriage that like really surprised me and shocked me

and that I couldn't believe..was the intensity of my reactions you know I thought before I got married ..you know..I know myself pretty well and then I got into the married and sometimes I would just want to freak out like an absolute child I mean I kicked the door in ..I kicked a hole in the door and I broke things like a real child umm and it was quite scary..the absolute *intensity* of those emotions and almost uncontrollability and unrecognisability of where the hell they came from and I think ja my explanation and understanding of it now is exactly this its going back to that quite a primitive infantile pre- verbal state that gets re-evoked because of the similarity between the mother-infant relationship and the sexual relationship..

Me: ...mmm...and its not something we have control over at that time...

Michael: ...no...

Me: ...we fall into a role hey...in a way the whole system organises the role you'll play..

Michael: ..what are you talking about.?

Me: ...your family system....

Michael: ...oh... ja...

Me: ... organises the role you're going to play

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ....and like you said your brother was your Mom's baby and your sister was your Dad's..

Michael: ja..

Me: ....I wonder what other shit you carried...the sad thing is that it may not even be real its just your mother's perceptions of her own objects..rejected objects...whats the relationship like now ?

Michael: ...with my parents ?

Me: ...mm...

Michael: ...I think its quite good probably about as good as its going to get I went through a lot of turmoil with them and especially after the divorce I mean I had lots of ups and downs with them I mean and ja I carried on with therapy after the divorce..individual therapy actually I think it was about five six months after that and then just because of time wise and everything I stopped individual therapy and joined a group for about another two years so that also helped me work through a lot of stuff and largely during that time I worked through my relationship with my parents with my mother..let me start with my father...I don't even know how to say it I just come to a point of ...ja maybe this is it..of accepting that I'm not going to get what I want or what I would like from my parents umm...yes this is a big thing I used to be hellava angry at my mother in particular a lot of the time get ratty ..and my mother is sort of this very Jewish mothering kind of thing wanting to feed me all the time and you know wanting to sort of...with this and that and I'm like just saying back-off just stay away from me and what would happen is I would get really angry and ratty at her and in therapy I became aware that it was almost angry and resentful at her for not having given it to me ...what I wanted... when I was younger and now its like

almost out of guilt she's trying to shower me with physical caring and affection which I almost felt was her need still and ja.. and it was just too late and it wasn't what I wanted and what I've been able to do over the last year or two..which I think is a really good sign is that anger towards her most of it has gone away..I mean at times I was really raging...she can get on my nerves if I stay there a bit too long if I stay there a couple of days or something but I deal with...but what I can do now ...which at one stage I couldn't do is like when she offered me food or this or that I would just say no...no..I don't want it...all the time ...just leave me alone whereas now I can say thank-you ...yes... I'd like that whatever..umm so I can take ...I can take from her and if its bugging me you know... and I have become more considerate towards her where I used to be sharp and ratty you know..I have become a lot more considerate towards her and sort of accepting ...

Me: ..so theres more of a separation ...

Michael: ...ja...umm...I guess...ja...I guess ..ja..sort of emo...its strange for you to say separation because in some ways we're closer...

Me: mm..

Michael: ...but its probably as a result of ...

Me: ..two whole people...

Michael: ..ja ...ja...so separation in the sense of separating into two whole people

Me: ..you become yourself ...

Michael: ...ja...

Me: ...rather than a fit..

Michael: ..an attachment to her that wants to be detached but doesn't and all that kind of stuff...so thank God for that (laughs)

Me: ..could have happened sooner but we grow through these things hey...

Michael: ..and then with my father it was also just reaching a stage of recognising that umm..our relationship is a certain way I'll never be able to relate to him like I might have liked so the way I relate with him is sitting down and watching a rugby match with him or helping by the pool and him talking about the pool and the tree and a this and a that ...

Me: so you're next to him its like a parallel relationship..

Michael: ..its not even parallel..we're very different but just sometimes coming together to be a bit parallel or do something together because we can't communicate about stuff you know so thats how our relationship is and its I've gained an acceptance of that as it is...

Me: ...mm its something you have to mourn the loss of..

Michael: ..ja... and I think I have...and I was really ang...another thing is I felt... I guess during my

childhood is that my mother never protected me from my father I mean there was one...it happened a lot while I was growing up and there was one incident ..I think when I was in standard eight and I think I decided to stop karate ...and was doing karate...and my father had a total fit and he didn't speak to me...he didn't speak to me for a whole month..he didn't say a word to me...and I mean you can imagine what it did to me ..and I remember begging my mother to do something say something and she said well I just can't you know and I tried and I spoke to him and I tried to speak to his friend but...umm..and it I saw it later as I was growing up that my father would do stuff that my mother wasn't happy with and would be upset with and disagree with but she would never stand up to him and I guess would never stand up for me to him and when Gillian and I got divorced.... so my sister just shortly afterwards...in fact before we even got divorced but after we decided to get divorced my sister had her second kid and it was the Bris and Gillian wasn't invited and we were still very much together and I know that my brother-in-law had wanted to invite her but my sister hadn't because of my father...and my father had wanted...thats the way my father deals with things...just cut it off and he also I think also close to my ...he hardly spoke to me and he raged at me because I was still living with her for a month or two after we decided to get divorced and that ....ja...I was raging at about that...

Me: ...you didn't feel supported...

Michael: ...absolutely...I think I mentioned it before it was the time..the hardest time in my life and my father said..fuck you to me...umm...and to Gillian and *that* I was raging I was so..raging at him about that I was so angry...funny how it slipped and gone now its not so much an issue its not an issue anymore..but I was furious really furious umm...ja ...so...I don't know where to go from here...

Me: ..does Gillian stand up to you...did Gillian stand up to you...

Michael: ...to me ?

Me: ...mmm...when you got out of control..

Michael: ...shew... umm...yes and no its really difficult to say ...she wouldn't stand up and say Michael thats not acceptable she would often give in and then sometimes maybe not immediately but after a while she would say just don't do that again I can't handle that thats just...so she probably didn't she gave in a lot ...ja.. she did...she gave in a lot to me at times probably when I pushed her close to the edge...

Me: ...but you were in cohorts with this you were colluding with each other...she had needs in it as well...it wasn't just your needs...I mean we talk about you saying that you had certain needs that just weren't met but on another level on a more primitive level its almost like you were resolving previous stuff from other worlds...

Michael: ..ja

Me: ...those kinds of needs were certainly being replayed and dramatically being replayed and trying to be resolved ...initially I was thinking that when I said to you your focus was on making this work ..now I'm beginning to think umm..on a more unconscious level perhaps both of you were wanting to resolve past things ...

Michael: ...mmm...

Me: ...and that was happening..I think...not that it was ever resolved.. But there was energy

....coming...to do that

Michael: ...mm...so let me just ask you .. so why did you ask then whether Gillian ever stood up to me

Me: ...I'm trying to think about..umm....as I was listening to you I was.. I was imagining you again as being a vessel of earlier dramas you know..of who's fighting with who and who's doing what and you said my mother had never stood up to my father ...

Michael: ..okay...

Me: ...because ..maybe this happens because you want for once see the mother stand up to the father..you will feel satisfied if your mother will just stand up to your father...

Michael: ..mm...

Me: ...so its not going to happen in that setting you'll find another setting..

Michael: ..mm...

Me: ...to make it happen...

Michael: ..ja..

Me: ...but its complicated by the fact that she also had to protect herself and at some level she would have to survive and maybe it didn't quite fulfil the need you theres another kind of need that you had for your mother to stand up to your father...all kinds of ...like a dream in a way all kinds of bits...that come together in another time another place...

Michael...ja...

Me: ...I just wondered..

Michael: ...ja...and then the really really scary thing for me now is so you can't get away from this I'm thinking of future relationships so if I get into a relationship like this one which could have happened might still...I don't know .... and I see similar things coming out ...do I say to myself forget it because you're getting yourself into the same shit or do I say well thats part of me these things will come out but lets see if ....if it can be different if it can work out this time its ..its just so unknowable ...

Me: ...mmm...it is hey...somebody once said to me Wendy... it was like parting words...somebody who knew me quite well test out that relationship fully (laughing) before you get into it...it was somebody who cared somebody who knew what I'd been through too...umm...and I think who didn't want to see me fall into the same pattern...and I must admit I noticed it with myself I also had a relationship between the divorce and now... and I could not believe with all the knowledge that I've gained and all the ...how I actually felt attracted..and I find it hard to really feel attracted to somebody and I've got it in my head the kind of person that would be right but then I don't have those feelings I don't have the sexual attraction and then there was this one guy ...and it was like a complete replay..so what did you say before that...

Michael: ..mmm..

Me: ...ja that its very difficult to know except just to observe that this is you...

Michael: ... the freaky thing ..I mean like I say ... theres this girl I went away with who I'm besotted over still I'm trying to like get her out of my mind now..

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ..okay and yet I see a lot of a similar pattern there and then just a while ago I went out with another girl who...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...it just makes so much sense it would be so much better between the two of us and yet I don't feel that physical sexual attraction to her..

Me: ...yes...

Michael: ...what do you do! (both laugh)

Me: ...I must admit that I'm trying to work it out myself too....I'm not so ...maybe I've had a bit of a life already...the children are nearly grown up so I've lived this life for about 17 years so I'm not that keen to start a life and a family...so I'm more relaxed about it but umm...it puzzles me too..

Michael: ....ja...

Me: ...another thing you said there...I find it quite interesting ...I'm scared of saying...I don't want to influence you and don't be influenced by me I'm no expert..

Michael: ...well one of the ways that I gain from this is to get different insights...

Me: ...keep your own mind...just because I may have said things that are spot on doesn't mean...its just things that occur to me....I'm not theoretically...I never got five distinctions....but umm something else you said...these are some things that strike me and maybe its my own projections and all kinds of stuff...umm its an interesting thing about your pattern of taking care of a wounded person ...yet the way your face lights up when you you got laid and you were just normally friends with this girl and it ...you know it happened in a other frame...a completely... perhaps you frame sexuality as you said in line with the primary relationship...and on another level you said my mom is like a Jewish mother who is always giving and cuddling and holding like the woman who laid you in a way...and you push her away and I'm eventually able to say yes ...I'm thinking that there are interesting dynamics there of what in your mind is right and wrong ...and I may not have this absolutely right umm...but your Mom shouldn't be like this and now you've managed to keep her away and you're not going to get laid again because its really not quite right you know..and yet your face lights up with a kind of freedom and you know ...I'm not making suggstions ...but I'm just saying a part of you thats very relaxed....where you don't have to take control and where you don't have to heal the wounded..that seems such a relief..

Michael: ..so what are you saying Wendy...

Me: ...just an observation....what am I trying to say...with following the same patterns and I can understand it in the context of your age and your future you're looking for a wife and to have a family

so it can be stable and theres but does it really matter now maybe it will happen anyway if you didn't try so hard to have it that way...

Michael: ...I'm still not sure what you were trying to say when you spoke about me and Jennifer...lets call her.....and I've got to tell you too that I got into the rescue bit there too...she had this boyfriend and it wasn't working out and in some ways it was a bit abusive too and I think part of it and I think from my side the big part was the rescuing...

Me: ...oh ...oh

Michael: ....and it was after I'd got to know her after she'd broken up with him and I didn't like her much as a person...

Me: ...ja...what I'm trying to look at here is the dynamic what you move towards ...what you move against and in your primary family..kind of emotional movements...I mean thats what I kind of think about for myself as well and how would it be if it was different if I could just let it be different...this is it..let things happen to me instead of me following this kind of set pattern....what would happen if...

Michael: ...if I stopped trying to do all the spade work...

Me: ...yes..

Michael: ...ja..so....thats perhaps a dilemma for me and it ties into the relationship with Gillian as well...because the question is...if you look at it in terms of psychologically...it could well be a pathological relationship...on the other hand it seems to be that people get into these relationships and that just as much as its dysfunctional, it can provide the avenue for healing...

Me: ...absolutely...exactly...

Michael: ..so once again I come back to the question...with Gillian and I in some way it lead us to a certain level of healing even though the relationship didn't last and I recognise that and now that its over so to speak and moving on and getting into other relationships do I just...okay this is changing the focus...you rambled... I'm going to ramble..do I just go with this and say well hey this is leading me umm..I do but I need to be damn aware if I'm going to get into a relationship.... just like your friend said to you.... make sure you test it out...

Me: ...test for the things that are your worst fears...and see how the person responds...but you know I'm not even sure if thats right because I almost felt that my husband did that with me he was so unsure ...that he tested me to the limit and I resent him for it...I'm cross..at the time I knew that he was testing me and I thought thats fine...but it seems like the test never ended...so I don't know...

Michael: ...ja...it really is difficult cause I mean at what point do you say ..you know ...this is life let me go with it

Me: ...ja...I think one reaches that point...I'm not there yet...I think wise people probably do...but maybe you ...Michael you're still young you need to live who cares at your stage ...you care too much..I think..

Michael: ...one of the people who knows me best who's umm... my friend's mother, the wife of one of the guys who came on the trip...who I sort of grew up with..I'm sort of part of his family his mother

knows me very well and she's often said to me ...Michael your worst trait is your seriousness...

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...in many ways... I think .... alright it might be my worst...but its also my best...

Me: ....ja...

Michael: ...my seriousness and my intensity and my ...ummm....ja

Me : ...I'm like that too...thats what people say about me...don't be so serious...but I also think my seriousness is a strength ...you know...I'm very responsible...and oh..

Michael: ...ja...its easy for people to say lighten up and all the rest...but if you're not that kind of person you know

Me: ..ja..then maybe its something one just needs to be aware of..lets put the tape off.

#### **24th May 2000**

Michael: So I'm not sure where to start to-day....umm...what have you thought ...

Me: I was wondering about last week..I mean last time..what your response to some of the things I said and I wondered...

Michael: Well I was thinking that I'd actually like a copy of the tape just to go over some of the things you said because they were valuable to me but I couldn't get it all...

Me: ..there was something happening...

Michael: ...ja... definitely...

Me: ....I realise about myself when I'm picking up something I don't always formulate it well you know I don't give it shortly and concisely and one at a time...like I said I ramble...I kind of say too much...

Michael: ..well the advantage of working with me is that we can sort of bounce it around and clarify...

Me: ...but I was wondering whether anything I said was there something opening up or knocking on a door or resonating properly.

Michael: There were quite a few things and I can't remember but I'm sure I wrote down in my journals one or two of the things that really stood out for me I can check up if you want me to look now...

Me: ...well at some time I would like it on record whatever it was..

Michael: ....let me... just for the record...so it was the wanting to repair the damage in them because of

almost as a way of repairing the damage in me...and then the idea of carrying that negative stuff of my mother...ja...anyway so since our last thing I carried on reading I read the last like twenty-five ... thirty sessions of my therapy that I told you about that I was going through umm...and.. ja so I kind of finished that off it didn't bring up anything really new I mean it brought up some stuff and patterns but it wasn't that intensity of the first time when I read it when I'd forgotten how hectic the relationship was umm..again I don't know how this ties in but I'm just going to say it is I'm not sure if it was since last time or even before last time that I actually ...I resisted doing this for quite a while but then I did it ...was phoning up my 'ex' in London...umm...I was feeling pretty low and this thing with Amber not really having worked out and umm...you know I kept on saying you know I'm over this and I'm over her and I shouldn't go running to my 'ex' each time I'm feeling like this..well I don't..but in the end I just decided to phone her we had a nice long talk ...it probably cost me a hundred bucks for the phone call and thats something that is really important for me and that I said to you and in fact I said it to Amber when I saw her last week that I still care very much for Gillian and I I think I mean I don't know if the word is love ..I think I do in some way love her even though I recognise we'll never get back together again and it wouldn't work and its not going to work and I don't want that but theres you know a very strong caring for her..number one.. and from the other side too that I feel very loved by her and cared for by her even though again we're not partners and we're not going to be partners umm..

Me: so there were positive and negative aspects of the relationship and you're not denying one or the other..

Michael: ..ja ...and its more than that umm..its you know having gone through this hell with her and really having done awful things to each other umm..and I'm just so grateful that I've been able to come through it in such a way that for me is really life enhancing you know rather than being destructive...and in a way that I can phone her up.. its two three whatever months at the moment whatever it is ...and have a chat and...umm not...and it doesn't affect any relationships in terms of...okay I start thinking well you know this is going well and maybe I can get back..it doesn't affect it in that way ..I but it just almost reminds me that theres somebody out there who really cares for me you know...

Me: ...is that what she indicated...

Michael: .. well...ja ... I mean she doesn't say it literally but just how we speak thats what it reminds me of..

Me: ...that must be quite difficult put you in a dilemma...

Michael: ...in what way..

Me: ...well the closeness and the distance superimposed...or you accept both parts..you accept this warmth and you accept that it cannot be.

Michael: ...ja...I think thats it for me its not a dilemma any more it used to be..and there is still a small element like I was thinking well you know I shouldn't phone her now and ..and I decide oh fuck it you know thats the way it is...it not like I'm not wanting to get back together again we all need our nurturing at times..and certainly one thing I have noticed is that over time umm..my need for that from her has got less and less so that umm in the beginning...in the initial period and after the break-up I had quite a lot of contact with her umm okay then we had e-mail and spoke to each other probably at least once a month even though she was in London whereas now I phone her maybe once every three months or even less and she'll phone you know...

Me: ...so its happening both ways...

Michael: ..ja..ja...and ja pretty much in many ways like with the rest of my life what I'm trying to do is not... try force it into this is how it should be just going along with what happens and if it gets less and less and less to a point where we don't have contact well thats what happens and if we have a bit of contact well thats what happens ...going along for the ride..

Me: ..it also sounds as if there is some separation ...

Michael: ...very much so, very much so and I'm sure if I mentioned in one of the beginning sessions... when she came out here in Feb was a couple of months ago and I after seeing her I was quite clear it was over and before she left I made a point of saying to her...took her aside and said look its over from my side..you know ummm and so ja we both understand it is over and yet we're able to have this other relationship which I'm really glad for because umm...I know theres somebody out there who really loves me and really cares for me and its not because I'm her child but because she's chosen to do so for of who I am...and its a really powerful thing for me just to know that umm just to know that...cause sometimes I do get quite lonely and feel unloved and all the rest and umm at the very worst I mean I know there're lots of other people but I know you know..

Me: ..theres something that still plagues you?...

Michael: ...no...

Me: ...not about Gillian...

Michael: ..ja? ...

Me: ... about umm maybe more the future ...how and why and how can I..make this work in other situations..

Michael: ..ja...well umm..what plagues me about the future is the fear that I'm not going to find somebody...the woman of my dreams...

Me: ..ja..

Michael: ..and I mean Gillian is way out of that category...you know the current one Amber I had lots of hopes for that because of lots of things but I realised the other night...umm..that my hanging on to her has to do with that that here I come across somebody who has so much of what I want, she hasn't got it all but just so much and more so than anybody else I've ever come across and I'm scared that if I don't hang onto her now or if this doesn't work I won't find it again or I won't find more in somebody else ...so thats the fear that plagues me ...and I mean I could be wrong but I believe from having spoken to anybody else and everybody else I know who has gone through a relationship hassles thats always always a huge huge thing..

Me...mm...for me too...

Michael: ...but I want to make it clear that its not to do with Gillian that plagues me...

Me ...no I can see that there is some unmastered anticipation ...some sort of reservations about next

time...you know next time you're involved ..some unknowns...

Michael: ...ja and I think that has been an ongoing thing I've had to deal with..and I deal with it and I have dealt with it at different levels of you know better and worse at different times depending on how I'm doing in general...but I like to believe ... this is true ...I think that it is that I deal with it a lot better than many other people I've come across who escape from it by throwing themselves into relationships right away or being promiscuous as hell or running away from themselves throwing themselves into their work ummm or avoiding it and running away from it...whereas I really believe I faced a lot of those demons and that you know face on...and sure its there and will probably never go away until..this one guy I know who was divorced and I was speaking with him once about it he was he was remarried after quite a time...and I was speaking about this this was in the beginning times after my divorce and he says you know what Michael you never really get over the person until you're in another relationship and ...well..I think I went with that .... now though I think I am over Gillian even though I'm not in another relationship but maybe there will be another level of getting over it that will happen when I do get into another relationship you know...I don't know...

Me: ....its never neatly and cleanly over...

Michael: ...ja and packaged and packed away...

Me: .mm.. its part of who you are...your relationship with her is part of who you are...

Michael: ..very much so....and once again I'm glad that I dealt with it the way I have because I think that its always part of who you are whoever you are and these people who end up fighting each other viciously its even more part of them because that just can't let go of that and yet they're denying it like hell... but they're more in the thrall of this other person than you know...they still struggle with that other person...I can say I still love my ex-wife ..umm..but I believe I'm a lot less attached to her than many of these other people who say they hate their spouses but they can't let go of them...

Me ....mm....Michael how has this whole five weeks ..five sessions been where are you in it ? Are you comfortable would you like to go on?

Michael: ..no I think the first three sessions for me in particular were really great and I think I mean there was a lot of .... as you noticed ... catharsis in that for me and speaking about it again and umm ...one of the things that Sylvia said umm ...when I was giving this part of this course with her and something came up in the group and the group clapped and I said I was a little bit uncomfortable about the group clapping with the one girl and she said that Michael White's concept of witnessing of having someone to witness it and I think thats what happened with.. like I said to you I think that just to go through this by myself wouldn't have such an effect it was really great for me having somebody containing to to witness it for me and give me that space to go through it once again and in a different way and I think the first three sessions in particular I got into that ..you probably noticed last session it... well we know last session it wasn't so..sort of..and maybe thats because...maybe a combination of things maybe its because I got most of the stuff out in the first three sessions but it was also split by my going away..

Me: ...mmm..

Michael: ...in a ...which wasn't just going away...it was going away in about where I am in my life with this other girl and a lot of stuff so maybe it was maybe it was also sort of finished in a way then and now its been more tying it together a bit but I do feel.. ..where I am now ... I do feel like theres not much

more really I can say I mean I know there is something and there is one poem I still want to read to you

...

Me: ....please do...

Michael: ...but in terms of where I'm at it does feel like an appropriate time to end, I don't feel really like theres more from my side to speak about...

Me: ...nothing happened last week that opened up a can of worms..

Michael: ...no no

Me: ...so that was...okay it was valuable rather than.....I don't think you're the kind of person that...you seem to welcome connections...rather than shy away...

Michael: ...I do because I mean one of the things that gives meaning to my life is this kind of stuff and speaking about it and you know ja... its one of the things that really gives meaning and excitement and life to my life...

Me: I'm very grateful to you you've given me a very rich and interesting five sessions..

Michael: okay I'm glad I guess I had a bit of concern with the last two sessions not being meaty enough...

Me: ..thats the way things are even in therapy sometimes you have space more than content its not always full and packed with ...is it..

Michael: ...no..no..sometimes its quite boring...

Me: ..I don't think its ever boring...

Michael: ...it is...I find it boring sometimes which also tells you a lot about yourself or the patient or whatever but thats another issue...umm...no but I think its true...I think that I mean therapy and all this stuff isn't always exciting and wonderful there's a lot of slog work its like life theres a lot of just one foot in front of the other..slog work and then you get moments....you know...

Me: mm...

Michael: ....in a relationship too...

Me: ..mm..

Michael: ...and thats something that maybe this ties into my relationship and I see its a bit of a thing now..I'm very idealistic in case you never noticed...(laughs)

Me: ..umm...(also laughs) ...certain things I realise are fundamentally important to you...

Michael: ja...and idealistic I'm speaking now specifically in terms of relationships.. so like one of the things I'm dealing with now is I went out with a girl a while ago an she said something to me she said

she's come to accept that she'll never get the sort of relationship with a guy she wants and I was thinking I'm going to see her this weekend..I'm going to speak to her about that because I was thinking that thats something that umm..I still resist and fight against I still believe that even though I've been through this shit and I'm not perfect and get into patterns and all the rest I still hold out this fervent belief that I will I will make it work the way I want it I will get a relationship and a girl like I want umm...I don't know how I got onto this and maybe life's going to give me another clap...

Me: ..you what I'm noticing in terms of time...in terms of your thinking about it in time umm..umm..it seems that you formulate your goal about the relationship and then you look for it..and I'm wondering whether it can be done retro -spectively that you go out and then you live your life and then you notice hey but that fits so that you rather look...this is what I tell myself, I must be honest...I also think...these are the bottom lines based on all my past unhappiness I now realise these are non-negotiables for me..and I wonder about opportunities missed...that umm I just didn't get to know ...maybe I'm very different from you because I withdraw I don't get involved I don't even mix ordinarily (laughing) I'm waiting for the perfect situation and I was thinking that one should just get to know someone...just get to know them and not with any specific aim of ...but just get to know someone and see what happens... its a 'see what happens' rather than a 'make it happen'...

Michael: ja...I recognise it this is one of the huge lessons that I've learnt out of this whole thing with Amber umm..and .at the same time I recognise its difficult with me...and for example I've decided I'm doing that with this other girl I mentioned now its more okay my initial thing was to think nothing's going to happen but I've decided look she's a nice girl and ...there's another girl I met recently who I thought I'd do a similar thing with but after meeting her once I decided I didn't want to but I recognise with some people like Amber I'm just fucking besotted...

Me: its wonderful that you can feel like that..

Michael:... and ...and even though I've now made a decision to do more what you're saying and I've also in many ways let go of that and I'm now going to leave it up to her she needs to make some of the initiation umm..but I realise with some women its going to be really difficult for me just to get to know them because well I have ..its happened twice since my divorce this is the second time its about a year ago last that I felt this...

Me: ...me too I'm the same...I also have the same kind of dilemma...I've thought to myself well just acknowledge that this person just gets your hormones going and don't think that this is necessarily a cue for 'this is it'....I also find that I want to be a container in a relationship and make it wonderful and ensure that it blossoms and I also find that I fall for fragile people...I also had a damaged mother she was she lost her mother when she was very young and she had a difficult time and I know that my personality is moulded around her needs emotionally...

Michael: maybe that and also what I was struggling with and in fact maybe our conversation last week triggered this...a lot for me and got me thinking about it is...you know I believe quite strongly in a certain spiritual...spirituality is quite important to me and that we're here for a reason and all the rest ..and part of that I believe is that we're landed up with certain parents ...

Me: ..ja..

Michael: ...because theres something in us that we need to work through and so yes.. and my big question is this maybe thats the very thing I need to work through and maybe yes I screwed it up in some

relationships but maybe its possible to get into a relationship where there is an element of that..

Me: ..ja..

Michael: ..for example if I think about Gillian probably that just overwhelmed the whole relationship my sort of rescuing her whereas now with Amber its not quite the same she is stronger there is that element...

Me: ...you're more aware...

Michael: ..and not only more aware the decision I've made in the relationship now is umm...not to establish you know this is...a relationship in a certain way ...umm..but not to define the relationship now at the very beginning the 'I'm the caretaker' and 'she's the receiver' I'm making a point in our interactions that I'm not just taking care of her that she is fulfilling some of my needs that she is listening to me so yes there is an element of that and maybe thats just who I am and maybe thats just part of what I need in a relationship and what I'll be good at and helping somebody but the thing is not to make that the basis of the relationship almost to have that but to go beyond that and to add to that as well to have other parts too...

Me: ja and I think there's a difference between.... I mean what you're saying in a way is that what your parents give with all their flaws is a gift to you..their flaws are a gift to you..

Michael: ..ja...another fucking gift..

Me: ...but umm thats your life really but I think theres a difference between going into something unconsciously and going into something consciously one can't change those early...organizations in oneself that is who we are..

Michael: ...ja..

Me: ...that is who we are we can't hope for some miracle cure there is no cure its not meant to be cured its a gift in a way a resource and awareness makes it a resource ..

Michael: its two things awareness and acting on that awareness because some people have that awareness and get into it over and over again...

Me: ja

Michael: ...so Freud was half-way there when he said making the unconscious conscious

Me: ...ja...

Michael: ...so I think thats the first step...

Me: ..ja..

Michael: ...so you do need to act on it

Me: so may be those kind of matches are right

Michael : use it as material for moving on...so now what

Me: you read me the poem

Michael: this is a very well known poem you might ask yourself what the hell has this got to do with..so this is the poem I told you about its Ode to nightingale by Keats and after the Jewish divorce so that was our second divorce I went to this woman and I remember like just from memory saying a couple to her in the time after the divorce and I read this poem a lot and I understood it like I'd never understood it before and what made it even more poignant for me is that umm...I don't know if you know anything about Keats, he died at about age 28 and he knew he was ill and was going to die...he had a terminal illness and he knew he was going to die and I've just found in his poetry theres this feel of the transitoriness of life and this transience and loss and I'd studied Ode to a Nightingale umm..at varsity.. And thought it was a wonderful poem but I'd never really understood it ...and only after my divorce I don't know I came across it again or whatever and I started realising that you know how powerful it was...its about loss and in his context I understand its about the loss of his own life...that he's speaking and in my context its about the loss of a relationship so thats the poem I'm going to read to you...ja well not all of it seems pertinent...but umm I'm going to read it. Its quite long...Ode to a Nightingale...

*My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk.  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thine happiness  
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full throated ease.*

*Oh for a draught of vintage that hath been  
Cooled a long age in the deep-delve'd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green'  
Dance and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
Oh for a beaker full of warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth,  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim-*

*Fade far away, dissolve and quite forget  
What though among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness the fever and the fret  
Here where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad last grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs;  
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,*

*Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.*

*Away! Away! For I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards.  
Already with thee! Tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Clustered around by all her starry fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verduous glooms and winding mossy ways.*

*I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild-  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;  
And mid-Mays eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.*

*(This verse was most moving for Michael)  
Darkling, I listen; and for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
\*While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy.  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain-  
To thy high requiem become a sod.\**

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn.*

*Forlorn! The very word is like a bell*

*To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! Adieu! Thy plaintiff anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now tis buried deep  
In the next valley glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music...Do I wake or sleep?*

Michael: (Lets out big breath) ja...so there you have it and obviously in the earlier parts there are lots of allusions and things going on that if you haven't studied you may not necessarily go on but I think you get a feel for it and certainly the sense of loss and he's listening to the nightingale's song and speaking 'now more that ever it would be rich to die' and umm...I think the thing that really gets to me or got to me in the end about 'Adieu Adieu thy plaintiff anthem fades' when he hears the nightingale fading away up the hillside 'now it it is buried deep in the next valley glades was it a vision or a waking dream? Fled is that music ...do I wake or sleep?' and he's speaking about his life and for me its my relationship with Gillian you know. 'was it a vision or a waking dream? Fled is that music ...do I wake or sleep?' Ja...so its probably also a good sign that I didn't crack up at reading this at the end now like I have now very much in the past..and I think it is probably a sign that I am getting over this more or even though there probably is a lot of emotion to it..

Me: How long is it since you've been divorced?

Michael: It will be about two and a half years it was September 1996. Ja...and I don't really know what else to say

Me: Michael I'll phone you when I've got the transcript ready and we'll make a time to meet

Michael: Okay great

Me: ..and thank-you very very much

Michael: ..its a pleasure ..thank-you Wendy