Educational Action Research

Reflective reproduction: a figurative approach to reflecting in, on, and about action

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Reflective reproduction: a figurative approach to reflecting in, on, and about action

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This article explores the use of active imagination and dialogics as constructs that can be applied reflexively to health care education. Drawing on student data, it discusses some of the primary elements of these ideas, and how they may inform reflection, human inquiry, and pedagogical approaches to personal and professional growth and development. It is essentially a first discussion on the synthesis of these constructs and their transformative potential across the fields described above, concluding that the outcome of engaging in these processes leads to a collective unconscious of multiple possibilities and voices that are not truths in themselves, but conjectures upon which further sharing of knowledge can be built.

Keywords: image; dialogic; symbol; reflection

Introduction

In September 2004, Suffolk College re-approved its postgraduate certificate/postgraduate diploma/MA in Interprofessional Health Care Education. Aimed at people from a wide range of professional disciplines in the health services within the United Kingdom who have an educational role, a balance in its modular format between the need to develop teaching, learning and assessment skills and reflective practice was felt to be required for this programme. As a result, the module 'Reflexivity in Professional Practice' was developed, and this sits between two other modules within the postgraduate certificate element of the programme, one around teaching and learning and the management of the learning environment, and the other around assessment and supervision.

Underpinning this module is the premise that practitioners often sleepwalk their way through the working day. Practice itself becomes mechanistic, but so also does the use of reflective models designed to facilitate a deeper understanding both of self and the situations practitioners find themselves in. In this view, the models themselves become reductionist, facilitating mainly superficial description. This module has sought to take a more creative approach in its content, delivery, and assessment that focuses on reflection as a self-realising process, utilising the literary and visual arts as a means to this expression. Broadly speaking, the learning and assessment methods fall within an active imagination and dialogic domain, utilising the work of the psychoanalyst Carl Jung and the social theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. The concept of 'Practitioner Researcher' (Fish 1998) is also used to refine these ideas within the context of health and social care.

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The content of the module takes an interdisciplinary approach, tying together philosophical constructs such as phenomenology with the philosophy of neuroscience; consciousness and unconsciousness; the literary, film, and visual arts; the use of metaphor; women's studies; and feminist writing. Individual sessions are given over to explore these subjects – for instance, the use of poetic language, constructing and interpreting images, metaphor, narratives, story-telling and editorial control form a significant part of the programme.

The assessment is constructed in two parts: The formative element of the assessment is the development and submission of a reflective portfolio based in the individually chosen media of the student. The summative element is the submission of a 3000-word critical commentary of the reflective portfolio, evaluating the reflective process produced through the portfolio development, and drawing on established theoretical constructs.

In the formative assessment, the term 'portfolio' is a loose description. It can include storyboards, photographs, poems and short stories, collage, sequential image frames, line drawings, music CDs, DVDs, sculpture, etc., or a mixture of media.

Importantly, the summative assessment focuses not on the nature of the reflective event, but on the reflective process triggered by the portfolio development. Learners are asked not to restrict themselves to traditional health care reflective texts, but to seek out literature which explores their own insights, and which adds critical depth to their sense of self realisation and understanding.

This article focuses on the synthesis of active imagination and dialogics and the transformative potential that this approach has both pedagogically and as a method of human inquiry. Examples of student portfolio work are used to support the theoretical approach.

Archetypal imagery as critical reflection

First, I would like to say from the outset that this is a methodology very much in its infancy. As such, it draws upon a wide range of theory and practice in its development, and the strands of these theories and practices are interwoven to form colour and texture, and of course, in good action research tradition, this is not the end, only a series of beginnings. What this means is that the process of development of this construct of research is not linear, for it veers into areas of practice that do not usually form part of an action research domain, and ordinarily may not be considered as action research at all as their roots lie in the domains of psychoanalysis and linguistics. This is of real significance as I move towards the findings and recommendations.

First then, as an educator I would like to start from a curriculum point: *'how can we determine whether these purposes* [of the learning strategy] *are being attained?'* (Tyler 1949, in Stenhouse 1986, 3). In this instance, the mode of production of the archetypal images and the subsequent critical commentary is through assessment, a vital component to the meeting of academic and professional standards. However, the principle that underpins the whole philosophy of the programme is in relation to the practitioner-researcher, as ascribed to by Fish (1998). This critically reflexive approach can also be seen from within an action research construct, as it is fundamentally aimed at a better understanding of self, and of practice – a transformative process, and it is the grasping of the process and its theoretical underpinning that is required to be demonstrated in the work.

However, what I have come to realise through the institutional assessment processes is that the portfolio (the reflective reproduction) in programme terms is a means to an end – a catalyst to the assessed work – the critical commentary. No account is taken within the programme of the importance of these reflective reproductions in their own right as possible methods of action

research, or as symbolic, meaningful activities, and it is in this article that I intend to discuss this.

So to turn then to the application of the image: Edgar (2004) notes that imagework has gener-ally existed across disciplines under a number of guises; 'active imagination', 'visualisation' and 'guided fantasy' are all terms under which the notion of imagework falls, and the basis for such work is grounded in the concept of the collective unconscious as developed by Carl Jung (2005). On the subject of imagework from within the qualitative research domain, Edgar (2004) notes the dearth of image-based research methodologies in existence. It is in the field of transpersonal psychology that the use of imagework has emerged more purposefully as a method of research. As Edgar (2004) notes in the work of Anderson (1998):

> [Transpersonal psychology] seeks to delve deeply into the most profound and inexplicable aspects of human experiences, including mystical and unitive experiences, experiences of transformation, extraordinary insight, meditative awareness, altered states of consciousness, and self actualisation. (Anderson, 1998, 69)

Edgar (2004) feels that experiential methods (imagework being one) can evoke and articulate self-identities and implicit knowledge in ways that other methods cannot. Furthermore, Edgar identifies a number of fields within imagework: *introductory imagework*, *memory imagework*, and *spontaneous imagework*. It is the process of *spontaneous imagework* that Edgar (2004) sees as being inclusive of Jung's notion of active imagination – a 'spontaneous journey into the imag-ination' (128). Edgar (2004) suggests that the processing of imagework into forms of data gener-ally has up to four stages:

(1) A descriptive stage where respondents 'tell their story'.
(2) An analysis of the personal meaning of their experience and of the symbols used.
(3) An analysis of the models used to inform their imagery.
(4) A comparative stage where respondents share and compare their imagework with the rest of the group.

For the purposes of my work, these stages consist firstly of a visual or literary narrative which occurs through the production of the image, which is followed in stage two by some critical think-ing as to why the meaning and symbols are so resonant to their creator. The third stage is where these images and the analysis of them is placed within a theoretical context – the theories and literature which support a deeper understanding of the self in the creation and interpretation of the image(s) – and a final stage where the images become open to others, and therefore open to differ-ing forms of interpretation and new understanding.

For the purposes of assessment in this programme, then, the students develop an image, or a series of images. In this process they form a *reflective 'reproduction'* – an 'account' of an event or an experience is constructed. These images do not exist in isolation. They are grounded in what the learner understands as the 'fact' of a situation – such as particular patterns of institu-tional behaviour, perceptions of self, and the consideration of what is normal within these given situations.

The work of three students is used to illustrate these concepts; the first provided a series of 'frames' with accompanying narratives as her portfolio (student 1), the second a series of montages and letters to self (student 2), and the third an anthology of poems (student 3). These are all accompanied by their critical commentaries, of which some excerpts are also included.

Below are extracts from this work to illustrate Edgar's (2004) stages of imagework. This concentrates on stages one to three, as stage four is not a stage within the pedagogic process of this study.

Example 1, Student 3

(1) The descriptive stage.

Figure 1.

(2) The personal meaning of the symbols used.

Critical commentary excerpt

"*Using a pen and ink made the writing seem natural, raw and rough around the edges; I was making my own mark.*"

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(3) An analysis of the models used to inform their imagery.

Critical commentary excerpt

"I could have decided to ignore certain aspects that I felt would be uncomfortable. I think this is how the writing transformed at times into third person. Creative writing permits story telling. But not everyone is able to do this because they do not know who they are (Johns, 2002)."

And a second example:

Example 2, Student 1

Phase 1 (descriptive).

Figure 2.

Phase 2 (symbolic).

Narrative 2

"*Frame three represents the memory, the assembly of the Trust Board members, a lucid recollection of people sitting fused by the table between us. I failed to see them as individuals, but a gathering of bodies. The **TABLE** appears a vast expanse, an obstacle between us. The **MOUNTAINS** represent the enormity of the task ahead, the scale of responsibility I faced. Mountains I was not convinced I could scale. The faces around the table are represented only by **EYES** and **OBJECTS** staring intensely in my direction, no features apparent. I have no other recollection of the individuals just the sternness of their stare. My sole task was to represent facts and data in the most precise manner possible to attain permission and funding to instigate change. Towards the rear of the frame are **QUIET WATERS, SUMMER CLOUDS AND SUN RAYS** (and £ signs) representing the **PEACE** I began to experience part way through the session as I realised I was making an impact. I became surprisingly **CALM** and **CONFIDENT** as the session progressed, these relaxed feelings were out of character. The seasonal outlook beyond the darkened silhouette are images I associate with **CONTENTMENT, EASE AND PEACEFULNESS** I was experiencing*'

Phase 3 (analysis).

Critical commentary excerpt

*When anger or despair dominates reason the **Child** is in control, at this time my internal reactions to an external event were making it impossible to make any rational plan to resolve the issue. I remained within this frame for over 10 years. Further text accompanying the imagery expresses:*

"*…I realised that my Child and Parent Ego state continued to greatly affect my ability to explore beyond familiar social and working class boundaries. I retained beliefs that my position in society was one of subservience,*"

In these developments, there is a teasing out of issues, and the development of significance in the work, achieved through the utilisation of a 'dialogical landscape'. Significance emerges through internal discussions on phenomena and context. It is at this point that the participants encounter a crisis – the 'threshold', as Bakhtin (1984) would suggest.

Folch-Serra (2003) notes that Bakhtin wanted to find connections between all degrees of plurality and otherness. He suggests that Bakhtin had an awareness of how human beings use language as a means to their agency. Landscapes in these terms can be defined as the geographical conditions in which voices are allowed to express themselves in ways that they would not do ordinarily in other conditions. The dialogues emerge out of dialectical or partitive thinking and become relational with regard to their significance, rather than as infinite possibilities. As Shotter and Billig (2003) eloquently put it:

> (In other words), dialogical events always give rise to something unique and unrepeatable … it is in these only 'once-occurrent events of Being', in these brief and fleeting moments that we not only express ourselves and 'show' each other the nature of our own unique 'inner' lives, but we also shape our living relations both to each other and to our surroundings. It is in these unique, dialogical or relational moments also that we can reshape (in some small degree) the already existing historical and ideological influences at work in spontaneously and routinely shaping our ways of relating ourselves to each other and our surroundings. (Shotter and Billig 2003, 322)

In the process of moving away from 'the literal word' to more symbolic approaches to representation, the question shifts to one of interpretation. The dialogic experience is not so much that one speaks or writes repressively, for instance, but is one of what is seen in the image – whether what one sees or reads appears to contain these qualities.

The expression of our inner worlds in such surroundings through this process not only reshapes our own existing relations to ourselves, but contributes to the reshaping of others through their exposure to it. The 'data' in these 'reflective reproductions' are essentially self-generated and self-generating, for they set up an individual propositional framework for inquiry, both for the composer of the work and for the viewer/reader of it.

I hope that what I have discussed above so far provides an introduction to the concepts of the two elements that form the basis of the methodology in theoretical terms which have ultimately led to a method for data collection, for there is a necessity to uncover what occurs within mental representations, and within the interactional events which unfold with 'the other'. These are:

(1) Active imagination (Jung 2005)
(2) Dialogics (Bakhtin 1981, 1984)

What I wish to do now is to explore briefly the ideas inherent within these constructs, and how they may be used as a methodological approach.

Active imagination

Barbara Hannah (2001) begins her chapter on the confrontation of the unconscious by making a statement: 'The first point to establish for any reader who is not familiar with the psychology of C.G. Jung is that what we know of ourselves is not all that we are' (5). On the basis of this statement, she asks a number of questions as illustrators of this type of unknowing: Why might we miss a train we are anxious to catch? Why do we do and say things which we may regret afterwards? Why do we wake up depressed for no apparent reason, or wake up cheerfully for no reason that we are aware, and why might we surprise ourselves by doing so much better than we ever expected of ourselves? Jung set out to engage in the task of finding out the qualities which contribute to the known and the unknown, and it is through his work that Hannah (2001) notes his discovery of the technique that he called 'active imagination'.

So what is this 'active imagination'? Samuels (1999) sees that it as a 'temporary suspension of ego control, a "dropping down" into the unconscious, and a careful notation of what one finds, whether by reflection or some kind of artistic self-expression' (6).

In this sense, then, the act of active imagination must be to temporarily 'give up' one's sense of identity and allow the 'other' to flow into consciousness. In this model, it is the ego (identity) which controls what is allowed to be known and what is not. Once the ego is put to one side temporarily, then there is the potential for the unknown to emerge. As Stevens (2001) cites from Jung (Adler, Fordham, and Read 1953–78, para. 125): 'In sleep fantasy takes the form of dreams. But in waking life too, we continue to dream below the threshold of consciousness'. Stevens suggests that Jung sees that the soul acts in constant companionship with us, but we generally ignore what it has to say because we fail to hear it. It is in the act of active imagination that this can be rectified.

In the case of the learners, this is most starkly seen in the work of Student 2, demonstrated as a continuum of her experience:

Part 1

'I have collected pictures + words expressing how stupid this assignment is. I don't want to do it and I don't think I can do it.'
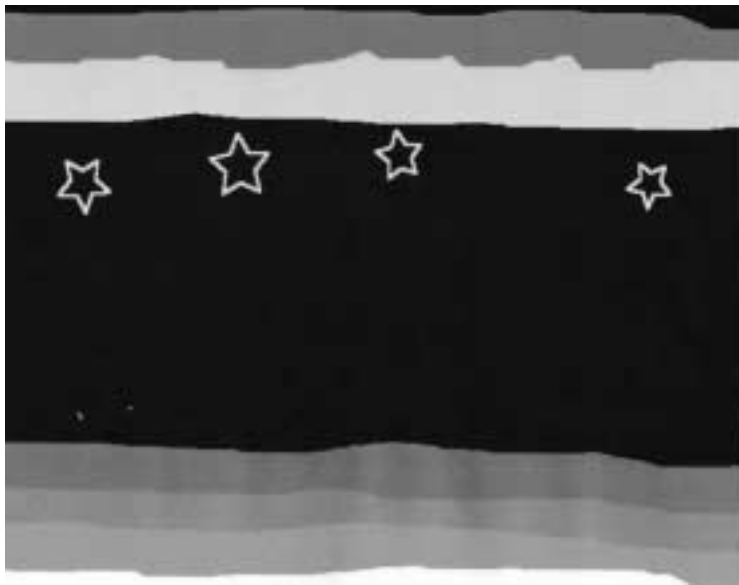
Part 2

Figure 3.

Figure 4.

Part 3

Critical commentary excerpt

'The colour chart helped me to look at myself objectively and reach a better understanding. Using artwork helps you to "feel" the situation and can be more expressive than words.'

'The narrative story that accompanies the symbolic piece provided relative safety in that there was a process of dissociation which provided some neutrality.'

So how does active imagination have potential as a methodological tool? Hannah (2001) suggests it is empirical and scientific in character, and as a method has a long tradition in man (Hannah's term) as a dialogue between eternal powers and the coming to terms with them. In Jung's therapeutic terms, this suggests the uncovering of opposites that live within the unconscious and uniting them within ourselves. Salman (1999) notes that Jung conceived the relationship between the ego and the remainder of the psyche to be one of continuous dialogue, a never-ending process within which the nature of the conversation is one of constant change (55).

Jung harnessed the symbolic images of this dialogue through active imagination processes, such as painting and drawing, and as Salman (1999) describes it, once these expressions are 'in the bottle' the dialogue can be much more easily entered into.

See, for instance, the images below captured 'in the bottle', the initial gateway into the dialogue.

Student 1   *Student 2*

Figure 5.   Figure 6.

As we see in these images, they serve very different purposes; the first facilitates an accompanying narrative to illuminate and explicate, while the second is a direct message to the reader. The motivations are unique, the psychic energy evident in both.

Within the field of imaginal psychology, this method encourages the individual into the proliferation of evocative images which enable descriptive qualities and implicit metaphors in adherence with particular phenomena. The images themselves, and the qualitative descriptions of

them, therefore allow for elaborate metaphorical implications to be placed upon them. Vannoy Adams (1999) suggests that this process is a matter not simply of inducing people to be more realistic, but of supporting the thinking that imagination is reality, and conversely that reality is imagination. In this notion what seems most literally real is in fact an image with potentially profound metaphorical implications (105). It is in this construct that the beginnings of the empirical and scientific methodology in the application of active imagination emerge.

Vannoy Adams (1999) suggests that for Jung the dream is more reflexive than referential, and for my purposes the same can be applied to the image. Perhaps the clearest example of this in the data is the reflective reproduction of student 1 (see Figure 2 and Figure 5) which, when accompanied by her narrative, provides us with a very useful illustration.

"Commencing this I assumed that my whole learning experience would be centred round the Trust Board presentation [see figure 2] *and my feeling before and after. I was wrong, the majority of self analysis has come from the first frame* [see figure 5] *that spanned a decade. This frame interestingly was a late addition to the imagery as my prime concern had always been centred around the audit presentation, in reality only totalling 20 minutes of my existence. I am now travelling through what would be stage 5 as I address the fear of freedom."*

Vannoy Adams (1999) also takes a very brief look at the nature of analysis of the image. In this he identifies two conflicting approaches to the purpose of this process. First he suggests that for Jung, the function of the unconscious is to construct compensatory perspectives to the biases that may be held by the consciousness, such as partial or defective attitudes. The aim of this process is ultimately the individuation of the ego in relation to the self. What is repressed, ignored or neglected by the conscious is compensated for by the unconscious, and it is the opportunity that this provides to the integration of the psyche that is sought through it.

In the work of student 3 there is a striking example within her anthology of this compensatory process:

ME
I am born, I enter the world,
Dazed and weary.
Relief as I nestle
In my Mother's warmth.

I'm a child, comforted
With a threadbare toy,
I suck my thumb,
My world is my parents.

I start school, dressed
Smartly in my uniform
I conform to the rules
Yet I enjoy it all

Secondary school begins
My confidence that was
Begins to fail me,
I do no longer like school

Sixth form College,
With relief I part from

School, Freedom calls,
I start to find myself.

I am a student nurse
I have found myself
Wonderful place,
Loyal friends.

I am a Sister,
Responsibility looms
Kind and fair
I'd like to think.

I am a Lecturer
I am struggling
I am fighting
I am surviving

Shadow

I walk the short distance to college. The sun is beating down on me, and I enjoy feeling the warmth through my clothes. It seems so unfair that I must go indoors. Suddenly something black darts around me. "Hey!" I shout "Watch out, you could have knocked me flying. Yet when I look around me, I can see no-one. Then again, a shadow dashes around me. It's my shadow, it's not supposed to do that.

"Come with me!" it says, teasingly. "Why would you want to be indoors on a day like this?" Is this really happening? I look all around me once again. Thankfully no-one is there, except a shadow, my shadow tapping its foot menacingly. I look at my own feet; they are firmly planted on the ground.

"Well make your mind up. Why are you always so indecisive? Let's go, we can escape from here and have fun, not like this college lark. There is so much more to see, so much more to be!"

I look up at the college façade: bricks, windows, scaffolding; hardly enticing. But I take a deep sigh. I can't escape today. I grab the shadow, my shadow, and shove it in my bag quickly, before it is seen. How did it work loose again? The trouble it could have caused me. I will stitch it back on when I get home. I brace myself, put my shoulders back, and hold up my chin. I can do this, and I climb the college steps. I go inside to face another day.

These two illustrations show in complex ways this differentiatory process. The ego, persona and shadow are seen to actively operate in ways which compensate and equalise within the psyche.

The activity of 'freeing up' the ego so that it is able to allow in 'the other' is the crucial factor methodologically in this process.

In the second part of active imagination it is consciousness which takes the lead. As the images of the unconscious flow into awareness, the ego begins to participate in the experience. It is in this part that there may be a string of insights which occur, which require evaluation and integration, and these will undoubtedly involve questions of meaning and moral demand. Chodorow (1997) writes, 'All the parts of an issue are laid out so that differences can be seen and resolved' (10).

This initial model has since been built upon by Jungian authors, often subdividing it and extending the original framework. For instance, Chodorow (1997) cites the examples of von Franz (1980), who proposed:

(1) Empty the 'mad mind' of the ego
(2) Let an unconscious fantasy image arise
(3) Give it some form of expression
(4) Ethical confrontation (added later was 'apply it to ordinary life')

Chodorow (1997) further cites Henderson (1984) in saying:

> the important thing is to develop a self-reflective, psychological attitude that draws from both the aesthetic passion for beauty and the scientific passion to understand. The task is to express both, yet not be consumed by either. (Chodorow 1997, 12)

In this sense it could be easy for an individual to become engrossed in the engagement of one of these actions to the detriment of the other, and in so doing what is looked for may not be found, for the author may be searching for the 'perfect image' or the 'deepest analysis' rather than allowing the unconscious to emerge.

What this describes is the way in which initially the conscious interferes in the process, stifling the opportunity to 'let things happen'. This 'letting things happen', where the irrational and the incomprehensible become 'real', is the catalyst to the imaginal reality – the recognition that these images exist in some form of reality just as other more material objects exist. As these images become 'archetypal' they become concrete entities upon which abstract themes can be developed. In essence, this is a kind of 'relinquishing our conscious grasp' on what we want to represent or understand as real. By producing these 'fantasy images' on the page or in some other form they become real, concrete forms upon which abstract ideas can be applied, either by the creator of the image or by the viewer of it.

Student 2 provides an excellent example of this process in her production of a collage (see Figure 6) and her commentary on it:

Phase 1

> *"This module is so stupid. I feel so bloody cross that I have got to do this.*
> *I just don't think I can – I don't understand it + I know that I can't write poetry or draw."*

Phase 2

> **Critical commentary excerpt**
> *"The process became effective when I reflected on the artwork and my feelings. The initial collage provided a means of expression which facilitated reflection. The process of writing during the reflection process was empowering and involved free-sflow writing, diary entries and letter writing"*

By the creator of the work 'letting things happen', a collage emerges as a concrete entity upon which the abstract themes within the reflection were enabled to take place and facilitate other

forms of image. Initially she sees herself as entirely uncreative, and to represent her anger and anxiety at being asked to challenge her own perception of self as an uncreative being she produces a collage – ironically she uses a creative medium to inform us of her anger at being asked to be creative because it is not something she can display in words.

Dialogics

Nealon (2003) refers to the work of Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) on the idea of the Enlightenment subject. In this notion, the enlightenment subject seeks to escape from static forms of knowing, such as those built on nature and myth, through knowledge-gathering adventures and experiences. The 'instrumental' subject actively confronts 'otherness' through seeking out hazards and engaging in risk. Using classical mythology to describe this, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) suggest that Odysseus (a wanderer) has to lose himself before he is able to find himself. On this basis, Nealon (2003) suggests that in order to find oneself, one must turn not inwardly to the unity found within the cogito, but outwardly to the diversity and risk of the other so that one may lose oneself in order that an adventure of appropriation occurs that can confront and conquer these new and never-ending forms of otherness. In doing so, one is able to make use of the other, and is able to finds oneself by means of the other. The other effectively becomes a mirror upon which we are able to see ourselves at new and deeper levels.

   It is within this system that an ethical framework begins to emerge which is inclusive of the subjects of dialogics and metaphor. As Nealon (2003) writes:

> In response to this difficult problem [the problem of agency] postmodern thinkers have increasingly turned to a dialogic, intersubjective understanding of ethics. Dialogic intersubjectivity, understood in terms of an impassioned play of voices, has displaced the dominant modernist and existentialist metaphor of the monadic subject and its plaintive demand for social recognition and submission from the other. As Dorothy Hale writes, 'Voice has become the metaphor that best accommodates the conflicting desires of critics and theorists who want to have their cultural subject and de-essentialise it too.' (Nealon 2003, 138)

Whilst all that is discussed above is important at a number of different levels, there are two constructs within this paragraph that are significant to me: first, the construct of dialogic intersubjectivity understood as an impassioned play of voices; and second, voice as a metaphor that best accommodates conflicting desires. The dialogic as multi-voicedness is therefore a powerful metaphor in itself within which forms of otherness can be considered from non-threatening positions, and through which voices and responses can occur.

   What we begin to see emerging in this writing is a different form of philosophy or ethic. It does not place phenomena within certain parameters which, in so doing, places limitations on the exploration of that or any other connected phenomena, but rather it suggests that there is a plurality – a latent plurality within consciousness, which can flourish within the 'dialogic'. For Bakhtin, this plurality within dialogics appears to be attacked from the sociological perspective – that the dialogic serves as a metaphor upon which the intersubjectivity of society can be viewed and explored. However, the notion of selfhood and the way it is both informs and is informed by the other is not excluded from the concept. Nealon discusses this by suggesting that the dialogic offers the opportunity to understand differences and ethical commitments without the requirement to fall upon a universalising or norm-giving structure in the way that other ontological schemes are constructed. The ethical dialogic then becomes one of social contexts rather than one of ethical rules. As Nealon (2003) suggests, 'they open up a productive horizon to rethink the social landscape of self and other in our groundless postmodern landscape' (141). The suggestion is, therefore, that the terms of engagement in this process are found within the dialogics themselves. It is not until we are in them that the 'ground' – the ethical context – begins to emerge, and as a result this ground is not universal, but unique.

In the examples of Student 1 (see Figure 2), Student 2 (see Figure 6) and Student 3 (see Figure 9), visual and textual dialogics with the social other are beginning to emerge.
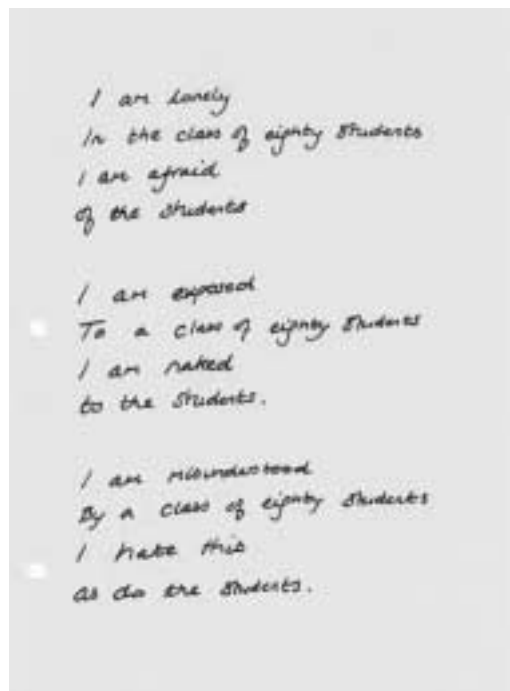
As Nealon (2003) suggests *"they open up a productive horizon to rethink the social landscape of self and other in our ground-less postmodern landscape"*.

Figure 9.

Discursive territories

Let us then think about this process in discursive terms: Shotter and Billig (1998) look at the nature of cognitive processes such as memory, the languaged claims attached to memory, the strategic roles attached to those memory claims, and the rhetorical functions served within their varying formulations. What they discuss is that memory appears to be a social rather than individual action, and that the action of 'remembering' and the types of experiences to be 'remembered' are developed and reinforced through a socialisation process – they are around the activities of social life.

For Shotter and Billig (1998), the advocated approach is fundamentally one of uncovering the almost unnoticed events and features that exist in social practice. In this construct, it is the unfolding of the activities within which we relate to our surroundings and the responsiveness of ourselves to these features which is key rather than the idea that there is a form of 'inner landscape' which we come to know. It is in these fleeting, unique discursive activities that we can begin to understand how the unique nature of our inner selves can be expressed to each other. However, there is the possibility of representation of an inner landscape (see Figures 2 and 3), as found in the work of Student 2.

A vital dialogical component, then, is our affective involvement in social practices and of our capacity to 'read' the specific variabilities that can occur in both languaged and non-languaged activities with others.

In dialogism, consciousness is found in otherness. Its role is one of multi-voicedness rather than one of self-centredness. However, this is not to say that the nature of multi-voicedness is not

problematic in theoretical terms, for the threshold across which this dialogue occurs is built upon language, and to communicate one's intention, one must have a sense of owning, or acquisition of, a language that belongs to oneself. Again, Gurevitch (2003) provides us with a statement from Bakhtin (1981) that explores this idea:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes one's own only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expression intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not after all out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own. (Gurevitch 2003, 353)

The construct of the threshold

Gurevitch (2003) notes that Bakhtin considers the threshold as a turning point and a moment of crisis. For him it is not so much a matter of looking inwardly towards the self, it is when the individual feels the pull towards the other, and where the nature of self can be expressed in that relational space.

> Not that which takes place within, but that which takes place on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness, on the threshold. And everything internal gravitates not toward self but is turned to the outside and dialogized, every internal experience ends up on the boundary, encounters another, and in this tension filled encounter lies its entire essence. (Bakhtin 1984, 287)

Gurevitch (2003) feels that the threshold should be regarded as an actual reality, experienced and practised as a dialogical endeavour, symbolized through its characteristics of convening and dispersing, opening and closing, searching for common topics, silence and forms of speech. In essence, comparisons may be drawn between this articulation of phenomena and that of the archetypal image, where the image is seen as the concrete form of abstract themes. The threshold in this notion can be seen as a discursive, as opposed to visual, archetypal image. To develop this notion further, the citation from Bakhtin (1984) above provides a marvellous example of this – 'that which takes place on the boundary between one's own and someone else's consciousness … every internal experience ends up on the boundary, encounters another, and in this tension filled encounter lies its entire essence'. Figure 10, as written by Student 3, supplies us with a powerful example of this.
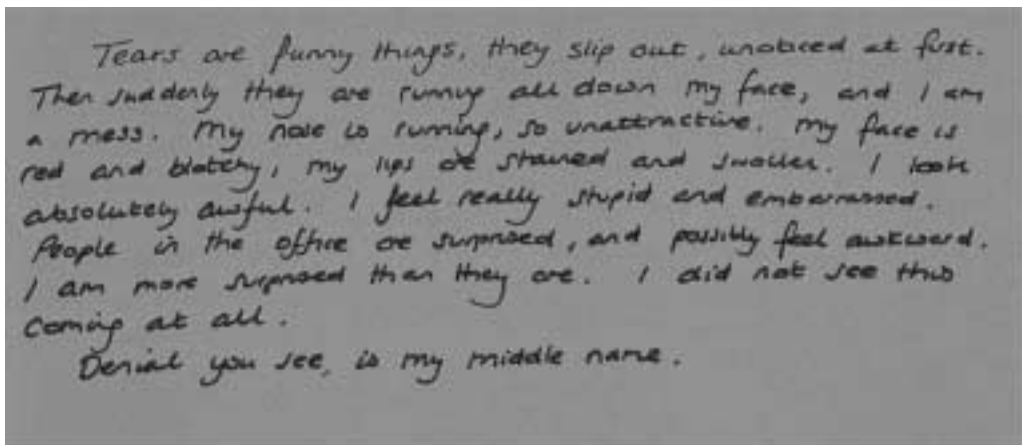

Figure 10.

Whilst Jung talks of the collective unconscious and Bakhtin talks of the boundaries of consciousness, there is no doubt that they are both referring to an emergent consciousness that can only come into existence in that space between self and the other.

This moves us into an interesting area, and it is one which has something of a twist in its tale. I have come to suggest that there is something comparable between the process of dialogism and the generation of an archetypal image in that it supports a consciousness-raising experience between oneself and others. This is not, however, the way that Bakhtin (1981) appears to see the application of images, for his focus is clearly that of language, linguistics and literature. Paul de Man (2003) notes that Bakhtin made some very clear delineations between what he considered dialogism and discourses found within poetry and prose. This separating out of multi-voicedness from multi-signedness (i.e. that poetry is semiotic, whilst dialogism is voiced) is illustrated in de Man's (2003) citing of Bakhtin (1981) on this subject:

> no matter how one understands the interrelationship of meanings in a poetic symbol (or trope), this relationship is never of the dialogical sort; it is impossible under any conditions or at any time to imagine a trope (say a metaphor) being unfolded into the two exchanges of a dialogue, that is, two meanings parceled out between two separate voices. (345)

So, under what principles does Bakhtin come to this conclusion? De Man (2003) suggests that for Bakhtin, the trope is an intentional structure directed toward an object and as such a pure episteme and not a fact of language (poetic and prosaic tropes are therefore excluded from literary discourse and are placed within the field of epistemology) (345). In essence, de Man argues that Bakhtin's dogma on the nature of dialogism forces a situation whereby as dialogical refraction develops, he is forced to contain and frame the nature of the dialogic experience to the point where there is no room for otherness of any shape or degree. The exclusion of metaphor within dialogue, for instance, has potential to narrow its proportions – precisely that which he seeks to avoid. Polyphony within dialogue, it would appear, is legitimate, whilst polysemy within poetic voice is not. The question for me then is whether 'poetic symbols' (to use Bakhtin's term – in which I include visual images) can be utilised as a dialogic principle.

As a tentative answer to my question, I believe that poetic symbols have the potential to form polyphonic structures within dialogues, and it is this which this work attempts to address, and it is upon this problem that the following discussion focuses.

The formulation of a conceptual framework

What I have not come to yet is a model under which this process can become a conceptual method which addresses the issues of pedagogical research, the application of metaphor, and transformation. There have been various accounts of theoretical approaches and the application to the data itself, but as yet these have not reached a useable construct, and this is the subject of this discussion.

What I would like to do now is to propose a schematic through which the thinking outlined previously becomes more clear and accessible. In effect it is a conceptual framework which could be tested out in various teaching and learning environments.

Concept 1: the reflective reproduction

Utilising the 'active imagination' process through the development of 'images' acts as a method of data collection. The data are in effect both self-generated and self-collected by the individual who engages in the active imagination process. It is in the act of imagining and the construction

of the image that significance and questions resulting out of the *reflective reproduction* begin to be formulated. As ego-control drops, questions emanate from the unconscious to confront established personal forms of knowing.

Concept 2: immersion in reflective reproduction

In this concept, the underlying principle is that imagination may be found in reality, and reality may be found in imagination. Through the developmental process of the forming of the reflective reproduction and the critical commentary, relationships are made between experience and the image as individuals immerse themselves within it, and the literature used to explore the emergence of unconscious thought. In this work the individual chooses their own method of representation, the relationships they find within it situated within their experiences, and the literature that they seek out to understand it. In this approach the individual engages in a process of establishing a reality and seeks out 'other' (such as theoretical models) to establish significance.

Concept 3: establishing dialogic potential

The reflective reproduction emerges out of the unconscious and becomes located within a space of consciousness upon which it can be worked metaphorically, textually, and linguistically. The reflective reproduction moves from being solely an image to one upon which an analysis is constructed whereby it becomes archetypal and open to view. Once each stage has been exhausted, the dialogic potential lies in the increasingly more established collective unconscious and the possibility of it being located more clearly within a social context.

Concept 4: establishing transcendent potential

In this process there is the opening up of ourselves to significance; there is no choice, for even if we choose not to submit to something of ourselves, then we have still found something out. In this process individuals may establish 'findings' that are in effect only the beginning of an analytic; the ego may still wish to dominate the decisions over what is and what is not relevant in the process, and indeed consider that the process itself may not be logical or coherent. Once one recognises that, if nothing else, one can change their own sense of being, with it comes the recognition of autonomy and responsibility to their self; a reflexive ethic.

Concept 5: hearing and orchestrating the reflective voices

The author of the reflective reproduction begins to subject the voices within the dialogue to some form of unification (for instance an archetype) in which they are heard singularly and in harmony. They may not be saying the same, but placed together they are harmonious, for one can hear them together or pick them out individually. The closest analogy to this is in music, where the polyphonic voices can be heard across the score. Different instruments play different parts of the score, but they all contribute to an overall sound. Voices are heard to exist in the dialogue, both internally and with relationships established with the other, and are amplified in the process of analysis.

Concept 6: reflexive emergence

In this concept there is a natural process which enables interdependency to occur in the generation of data, in its analysis, and as a mechanism for change. Illumination emerges out of the

imaginative and dialogic process which triggers an engagement in theoretical bodies of knowledge. Personal experience and understanding is then critiqued from within these bodies of knowledge in the form of a commentary, itself a secondary level of dialogue, and this process is reciprocal as theoretical propositions become questioned by insightful observation of internal sensations and personal meaning. It is in these experiences that transformation begins to occur, or as Jung (2005) might argue for the case of active imagination, they act as the trigger to individuation.

Conclusions

In summary, what I believe this leaves us with are a number of concepts consisting of the synthesis of dialogic and active imaginal theories which enable the capture of both personal and professional reflexive spirit, and which combine to produce a philosophical approach to engaging in human enquiry and pedagogy. Active imagination provides the means to the establishment of data, while constructs of metaphor and dialogue provide the methods for analysis and understanding at an intensely personal level. The images become pregnant with multiple possibilities that are not truths in themselves but are conjectures upon which further sharing of knowledge can be built.

Why images rather than more traditional forms of narrative? Perhaps the answer lies somewhere in the process of the development of the image rather than in what is uncovered. The production of such images offers a different way of internal processing and the telling of a story, of seeing and representation. Once open in the world the images *induce* rather than *reduce,* in the way that written literal text does. Dialogues are multiplied and co-created in their viewing by others, and it is amongst these that reflexive essences can be found.

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