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Chapter 5

Inquiring into my consulting practice

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What would I like to capture in this chapter?

I feel a sense of anxiety creeping up on me and I go for a walk with my camera and my question.

I let my eyes guide me. It is a mild day for February, and I notice to my delight how nature is emerging from its hibernation: snowdrops, crocuses, daffodils and even the first cherry blossoms. Without much conviction I try to capture some of the delightful fragile quality of early bloom.

Then I am drawn to trees, bark, pebbles, soil. I become engrossed in the richness of textures. The textures of nature and of things (wo)man made. The beauty of peeling paint, a shining bubble gum on the rough pavement.

I come home with my treasures and, with Nigel Kennedy's rendition of Bach's violin concerti in the background (Concerto for oboe and violin in D minor is included on the CD) I play with the digital images. When I rotate a picture of the bark of an oak it suddenly appears as a rugged landscape, the bark of a birch becomes a moonscape.

Layers and textures. How do I re-present the texture and layers of my inquiry? How do I find a presentational form that is engaging and intriguing? I am keen to produce 'a readerly text' (van Maanen 1988).

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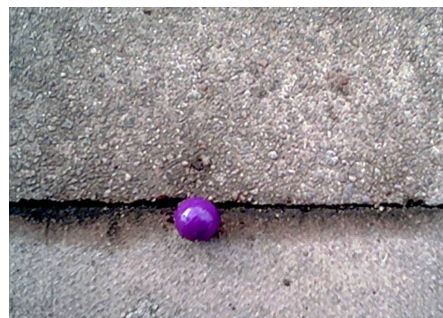
Frame

In this thesis my work with clients and my writing about my role in the ACL community appear in different chapters. This may unintentionally create the impression that I see them as separate. In reality I seem them as deeply enmeshed. The choices I make in my work with clients (whether I chose to work alone, whom I chose to work with, how I handle clients' responses to colleagues in the team), all impact the way I construct myself and am constructed in the ACL community. My work is influenced by the support I receive (or not) from colleagues directly (when we work together with a client) or indirectly (when I discuss client work with colleagues who are not involved). The extent to which I experience the ACL community as flourishing has an impact on my work.

In parallel to crafting the accounts in this chapter, I was conducting an inquiry into joining and belonging to ACL as community of practice, which I describe in Chapter 6. In that chapter some of the concepts I was engaging with during this period, especially about emotions at work (Hochschild 1983; Mumby and Putnam 1992) are covered in more depth.

In this chapter I aim to demonstrate the depth and breath of my inquiry into my work with clients.

I want to show you

- The development of my inquiry into my work with clients
- How I purposefully explored different representational forms and how they influenced my reflective process
- That an inquiring stance became the foundation for my work with clients and with my colleagues in the client team
- That I engaged with literature in my sense making of my client work and collaboration with colleagues and how I went about that
- How writing this chapter is itself a process of inquiry.

By commenting on the writing process itself, I aim to show (rather than only tell) some of my writing processes, and put them in context (Richardson 2000).
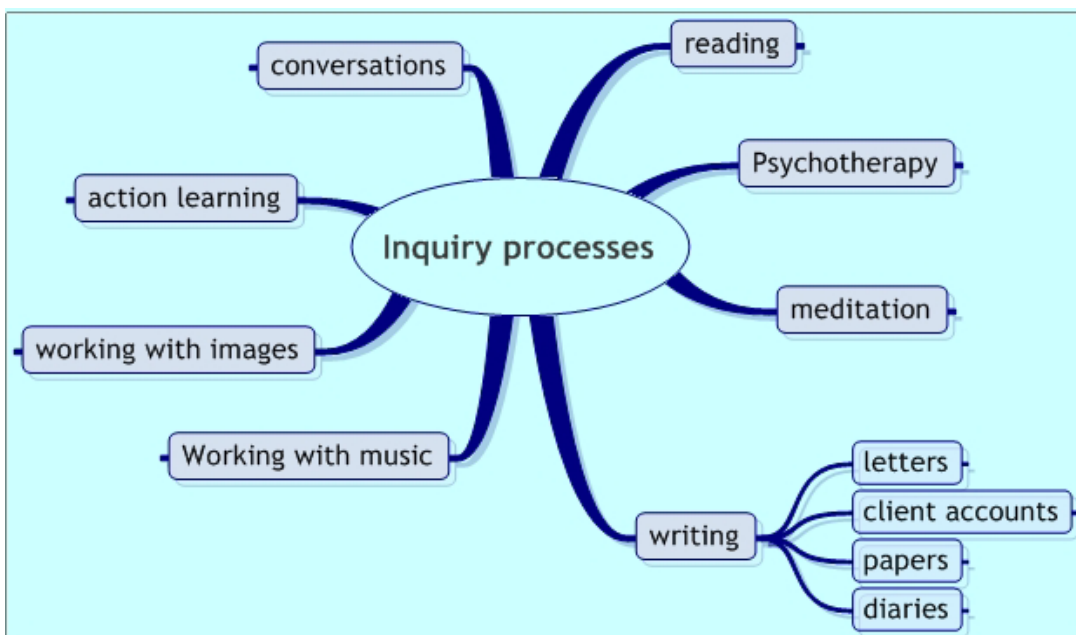
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Fig. 5.1 An overview of my inquiry processes

What was the nature of my inquiry at ACL? How is my inquiry at ACL both a continuation of my inquiry at HPA and at the same time substantially different?

I continued my reflective diary work but developed more sustained cycles of inquiry.

- I broadened my second person inquiry. Whereas at HPA I had been reticent to talk about my research with many of my colleagues (except with critical friends), at ACL I openly shared my interest with colleagues initially, and later with some of my clients.

- My engagement with literature developed.

- I started to experiment with different forms of writing, purposefully exploring the different qualities and attention related to different forms (Winter 1999; Richardson 2000). As well keeping a personal diary, I explored writing letters, poetry, short stories (not my cup of tea, I found), and writing accounts of client work. The latter often contained a number of cycles, developed during and following the period of engagement with a client. On occasions I would bring instalments to CARPP and incorporate the feedback I received from colleagues in the further crafting of the account.

- Working with images, I pushed my boundaries of 'presentational knowing' (Lincoln 2001; Reason and Bradbury 2001 c), creating images of what I was trying to express (Harper 1994). My account of my transfer from MPhil to PhD, Transitions, is the most elaborate example of this exploration and is included in this chapter.

- I continued explore the impact of different kinds of music on my reflective writing (Gagliardi 1996; Strati 1999).

- I pursued emerging themes as questions in my reflective diary and accounts (Marshall 1999; 2001), in informal conversations as well as in purposeful 'inquiry meetings' with colleagues (Torbert 1991 b; 2001), and in my engagement with literature.

- I continued meditation as a form of first person inquiry

Fig. 5.1 gives an overview of my inquiry processes

In this chapter I focus on writing as a process of inquiry. As I discuss my writing references to inquiring conversations and working with music and images emerge and

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are developed.

5.1 writing Client accounts as a method of Inquiry

Richardson (2000) invites us to think of writing as a method of inquiry in its own right:

> "Although we usually think about writing as a mode of "telling" about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of "Knowing" – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable". (p 923)

I was inspired by Richardson's work and set out experimenting with different sustained reflective pieces on client engagements, which I called accounts, as a parallel track to my diary. The accounts are told in two voices (Weil). The narrative voice tells the story of an engagement, or an episode in an engagement, and is accompanied by a reflective voice that loops backwards and forwards in time (reflecting on experience and planning for future engagements) and discusses the literature that informs reflections.

By writing accounts I aimed to create a space for the *cycles* of reflection I had found elusive at HPA. Typically I would produce an account and invite feedback and reflections from my CARPP group and sometimes from colleagues. Their questions and comments generated another cycle of reflection and re-crafting. As a result some of the accounts, especially the later ones, were written over a period that extended well beyond my work with the client. Writing accounts also encouraged me to engage in inquiring conversations with colleagues if I had worked as part of a team: how had they experienced our work? How had they experienced me as a member of the team and in my work with the client? Once colleagues understood how important my searching questions were to me and that I was looking for honest feedback, they started to volunteer their reflections, not as standard a practice in ACL as I had expected. Client work that was not written up in an account continued to feature in
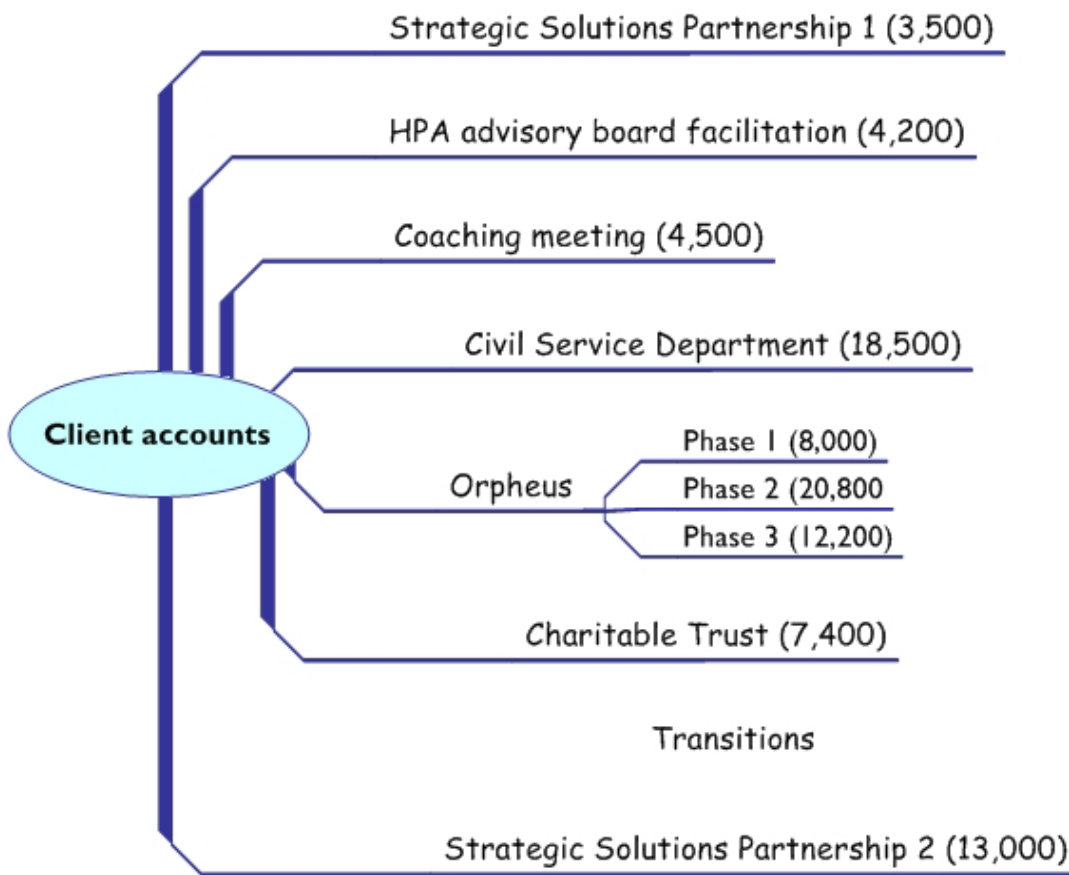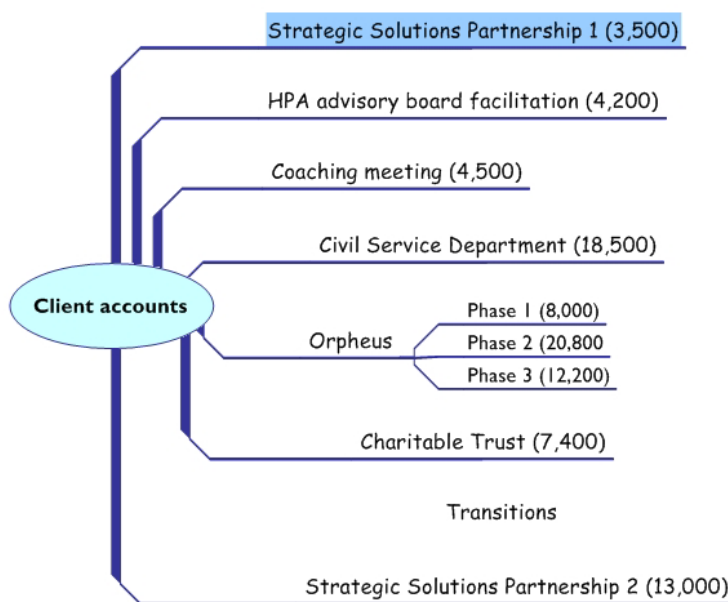
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Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

HPA advisory board facilitation (4,200)

Coaching meeting (4,500)

Civil Service Department (18,500)

Client accounts

Orpheus

Phase 1 (8,000)

Phase 2 (20,800

Phase 3 (12,200)

Charitable Trust (7,400)

Transitions

Strategic Solutions Partnership 2 (13,000)

Figure 5.2 An overview of my client accounts

Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

HPA advisory board facilitation (4,200)

Coaching meeting (4,500)

Civil Service Department (18,500)

Client accounts

Orpheus

Phase 1 (8,000)

Phase 2 (20,800

Phase 3 (12,200)

Charitable Trust (7,400)

Transitions

Strategic Solutions Partnership 2 (13,000)

my diary.

Between July 2000 and December 2002 I wrote the accounts shown in Fig. 5.2. The numbers in brackets indicate the word count.

I will show you next how my reflective accounts developed, sharing some extracts. I will discuss the nature of the account and how, as a method of inquiry, it supported my professional practice. I show:

- how I worked with literature in my sense making process
- how I explored different formats and the impact they had on my reflections
- how I worked increasingly with imagery and the impact that had on the quality of my inquiry

Note:

When I quote from accounts I will keep, as much as possible, the original fonts and format, only changing the colour of the quoted material to violet. Fonts in the accompanying text remain the same as in previous chapters.

5.1.1 Strategic Solutions Partnership (1)

My first client account (July 2000) was brief piece about my initial engagements with Strategic Solutions Partnership (SSP), in preparation for a partner event.
I separated the story line (left aligned text) from reflections (right aligned or centred).
The descriptive part covered general company information and the issues presented to my colleague Paul and to me in our inquiry with the partners.

I reflected on the issues my engagement with this client might raise in the ACL community (would people see me as being favoured by Paul, would I be up to the task, etc.) and my engagement with the client, asking myself questions about how I was conducting myself with the client and in my collaboration with Paul, stated intentions for the future, or I noted thoughts and concerns. The next extract describes the pressure I felt having to work 'the ACL way'.

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As I write this down I become aware that I feel somewhat contaminated by ACL's, sometimes explicit but mainly implicit, imperative "We have a particular way of working here, which we expect you to adopt". I am confused. I've had no opportunities thus far to observe the 'ACL way'. How am I to find out? Also, does that mean I have to start from a blank slate? I notice how this is getting in the way of being 'present' with clients. I have had a number of conversations, with my mentor and other colleagues, about how I it's undermining my confidence in my own expertise. Something to watch out for tomorrow, at my next client meeting.

Reflections

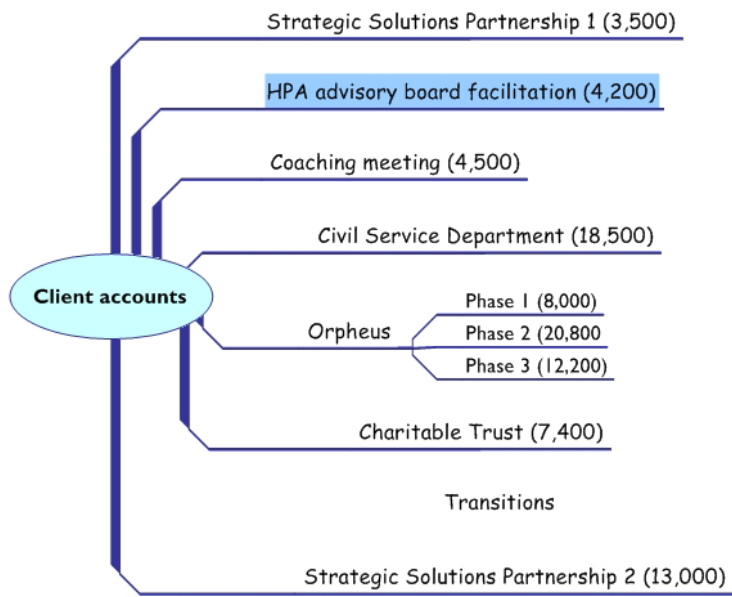The account is rather descriptive, with short burst of interspersed reflections. However, the separate reflections and the explicitly stated intentions for future engagements helped me to stay more aware in the moments of reconnecting with the client. In connection with the above quote I wrote in my diary of the following week how I managed to follow my intuition, rather than to disable myself with worry about the ACL approach to consulting. When I shared my reflective notes from my meetings with various SSP partners (censored to a certain extent) with Paul he thought them "insightful and probing" and we returned to them on a number of occasions in our preparations for the partner event.

In my next account I developed both the reflective content and the format of writing and presentation.

5.1.2 HPA Advisory Board

In October 2000 I was invited to facilitate an HPA Advisory Board meeting. Perhaps because I felt unsure about returning to HPA I decided early on to write an account about the event. It became a brief piece in which I told the story of my initial engagement, the preparations and a short description of (sometimes difficult) dynamics of the day.

I started to experiment with a different story writing style, trying to capture the mood

Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

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in of the moment:

(Following a description of my outline for the day)
Jean said: "Fantastic. Go for it".
Well, the weather was awful and public transport in disarray. So some participants bowed out and others arrived late. Thus the introductions became a rather drawn out affair, with disruptions and repetitions and – reflection in the midst of action – I noticed my enthusiasm waning rapidly. Might this be happening to others too I wondered. It appeared so from their body language. In an attempt to lift the spirits, I invited Jean to express her hopes for the day (something we had agreed in advance). It seemed to work. People sat up, listened attentively, nodded and smiled encouragingly. So far so reasonable.

Reflections took a noticeably more prominent place. I used a different format on this occasion: a different font from the main text and right aligned. Because of the heaviness of the font the reflections leapt out from the page, inviting attention. The themes were:

- My anxiety at the event at being introduced as an ACL consultant. I explored that fear, relating it initially to participants' awareness of steep ACL fees and their ignorance about the fact that I was doing the work for free. When I dug a little deeper I discovered there were other reasons for feeling anxious too:

Sitting here, behind my desk, looking at the candle and out into the rain,
I access a level of insecurity I try not to ponder over when I am working.
It's there, more often than not. I am still stunned when colleagues refer
to me as highly experienced (...)
I feel annoyed now, thinking about it.
And then I hear Margaret (CARPP4) say I don't need to be so hard on
myself, I only perpetuate a long established pattern of
"not good enough".

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Depreciative Inquiry.

I stay with the angst and anger for a while.

Listen to the music (Handel) and follow my breath. Until I find a space

where I can acknowledge and accept the part of me that is anxious and

needy. Until I can move on, having looked my fear in the face, no longer

feeling annoyed about it. Just letting it be and knowing that I can deal

with it.

- What did it mean to be surrounded by ex-colleagues?
- How did I decide, in the moment, to make a fortuitous intervention? I made a connection with
    - tacit knowing (Polyani 1958; Schon 1995) and the difficulty of articulating it.
    - Lewin and Birute's (1999) assertion that creativity and energy reside at the edge of chaos, and how it had inspired me to create space for dissonant views when things appeared to go off the rails.
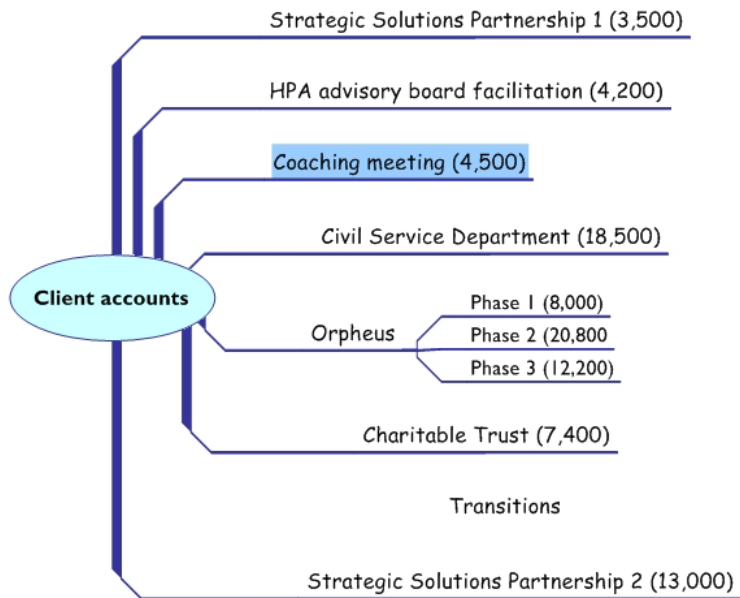
One month after the event, following glowing feedback from participants, I returned to my account and compared the confidence I had at the time *not* to intervene at a tricky moment with my earlier tendency to 'Rescue' (Stewart and Joines 1987).

Reflections

This account was markedly different from my writing when working for HPA. Moving through the anxious moments, and staying with them (Beck 1989), accepting them as an integral part of my work and of life, rather than going down a spiral of self-criticism did not appear in quite that way in my HPA writing.

The reflections in a different font were more prominent and made it easier to keep the thread. The second cycle of reflection, after one month of writing the initial account, helped me to notice the progress I was making.

Telling the story of the event I tried to craft 'evocative representations' (Richardson 2000), depicting vividly how I had felt and how had I tried to make sense of what was

Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

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Phase 2 (20,800
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Charitable Trust (7,400)

Transitions

Strategic Solutions Partnership 2 (13,000)

going on in the moment. On occasions that blurred the boundaries with the reflective voice. It does however make for engaging reading in a way that the SSP account does not achieve.

5.1.3 A coaching meeting

This account, however brief, was an opportunity for me to take an inquiry I was conducting at that time into the emotion work involved in joining ACL into another realm of my work.

In our first meeting Catherine expressed her aversion of dealing with negative emotions at work, which she ascribed to her strong Thinking preference on the MBTI (Briggs and Myers 1995). Her initial question was: "How can I change them (her subordinates)? How can I stop them complaining, and make them get on with the job?"

The account gives a brief summary of this first meeting and how we had explored the theme of 'emotions at work': the role they play in organisational life (Rafaeli and Sutton 1987), who decided what emotions were allowed, what Catherine's emotional response was to others' emotion display. I then state my intention for our next meeting, the main subject of the account. I quote:

My aims for our next meeting are as follows:
- Paying attention to my own emotional response to what C. was bringing to this session.
- Listening for feelings as well as content
- Paying attention to the nature of interventions I make (Will use Heron's (1990) six intervention categories).
- Good summarising at the end

Emotions, their impact, and the value of expressing them (Heron 1990), were the core theme of the account. Interestingly at the start of our meeting Catherine talked at length about the personal distress she had experienced since our previous meeting,

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something that only struck me as significant in the process of writing the account.

The account further explores how I attempted to be congruent with what I was inviting Catherine to do: give space for feelings in our conversation, and help her develop an awareness of feelings by offering her 'emotional labels'. I illustrate with an extract:

I registered various emotions in the course of our conversation: concern, admiration, confusion … as I registered them for myself, I expressed them in short interjections, trying to give a sense of their intensity: "I'm a bit confused, I really admire, I'm greatly concerned" in an attempt to model sharing and labelling feelings, something C seems to find very difficult indeed. After the first half hour of our meeting I started to gently elicit her emotional state: "How do you feel about that?" When I got a 'thinking' reply I tried to probe some more, labelling feelings for her: "Do you feel comfortable with that? Are you confident? Do you find that exciting?" Once a label was offered C seemed more able to elaborate how she felt. I was *feeling* very happy about that!
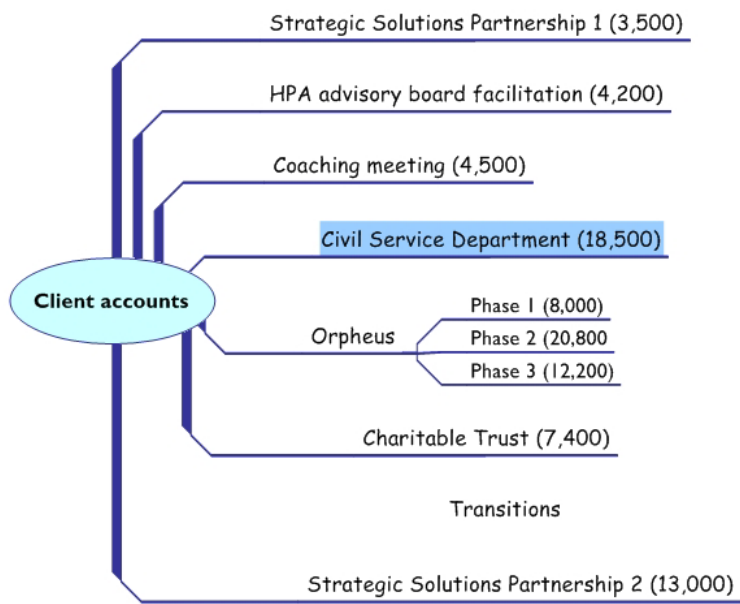
Reflections

The format of the account is rather similar to my reflective diaries. The story line and reflections are blurred. If anything it is rather dry, somewhat strange for an account about emotion work. In my pursuit of a parallel strand of inquiry (about emotion work at ACL) I seemed to focus on propositional knowing, at risk of losing sight of my intention at to pay more attention to presentational knowing.

However, the process of writing about an engagement improved the quality of my attention in the moment, as I knew I would be holding 'myself to account' after the event.

5.1.4 A Civil Service Department

This long account was crafted over a period of weeks, from 27 March to 17 April 2001. It is an inquiry into my most traumatic experience with a client to date. I summarize the story:

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Coaching meeting (4,500)

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In February (2001) Guido facilitated an event for Collette, a senior manager. I had been part of the preparation, but was absent at the event due to sickness. During the event Collette, a woman with a tough exterior, had cried in front of other participants at the memory of a traumatic event which took place whilst she was at Ashridge, an occurrence that appeared significant in the unfolding events.

In March we were asked by Astrid, a subordinate of Collette, to facilitate a large group event for her. Preparations went well, until Collette became involved and drastically changed the design from 'a shared inquiry' to a more directive information sharing design. She also complained about our fees and a lack of value for money.

I had serious questions about her intervention and the new design and suggested to Guido we withdraw, or discuss the matter with ACL colleagues. Guido was not keen on either suggestion and, after some deliberations, I gave in.

The event went well, according to participants, but not Collette. She contacted one of our colleagues to complain, especially about Guido's 'lack of professional expertise'. The complaint was taken to our MD who, having checked our side of the story, gave us his unconditional support. We agreed he would offer to discuss the matter further with Collette, an offer she initially accepted, but avoided following through subsequently.

The incident was all the more traumatic because the department in question was a long standing client of ACL, generating lots of work and with powerful connections to some of our other clients.

The account starts dramatically with Colette's complaint to a colleague, and our conversation with our MD about the best way forward. I worked backwards from there, exploring with hindsight how events and relationships had evolved, in an attempt to make sense. In the intertwined reflections I asked myself questions about my conduct, my assumptions, my choices (Marshall 2001). I also commented on the experience of writing about this client and how I looked after myself in the process.

In a parallel inquiry I wrote a letter to Colette, not with the intention to send it, but as a means of making sense and reclaiming my agency (Richardson 2000).

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I shared two drafts of the account with my CARPP group, incorporating their feedback in the re-crafting. Despite my best efforts they continued to find themselves lost in the narrative, much as I had found myself confused by the whole episode.

Why did I write this account?

- To make sense of what I experienced as inexplicable through the process of writing (Richardson 2000)
- To explore different perspectives by using others' frameworks
- To heal
- To inquire with my CARPP group into the way I had conducted myself and the assumptions I was holding

I quote an extract from my inquiry questions:

- How did I conduct myself in this?
- Could I have done things differently?
- Have I taken on a 'Parent role' with Guido and/or with Astrid? Is that appropriate? Does that set up a Complementary Interaction (Stewart and Joines 1987)? Is aiming for an Adult-Adult interaction always appropriate (a question raised by my CARPP group)?
- Why did I not insist on discussing the matter with other ACL colleagues? My instinct told me we should. What are appropriate systems boundaries here?
- In 'Pragmatics of human communications' Watzlawick (Watzlawick, Bavelas et al. 1967) points out the difficulty of punctuating interactions. How is that playing out here? How do unhappy associations with Ashridge feature in Collette's behaviour? Watzlawick also invites us not to make any computations about people's personality, internal states etc. I'm not sure that is possible and I do find it helpful to think about Colette's and Astrid's internal state and what might be going on for them. Second positioning as it is called in NLP (Knight 1995).
- Obholzer and Roberts' (1994) point out how institutional difficulties are often attributed to the personalities of particular individuals, identified as 'troublesome'. Those individuals are then sucked into performing the trouble-maker role on behalf of others and themselves. There is often a shared belief in the organization,
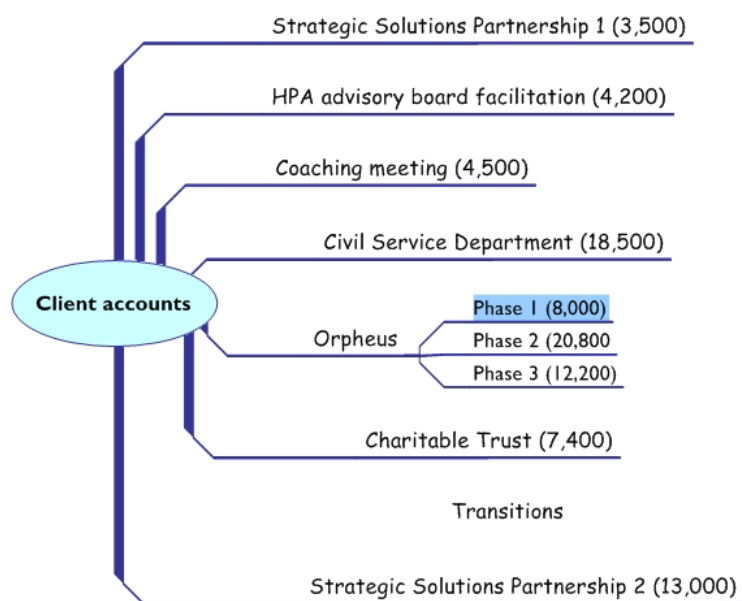
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according to the authors, that everything would be fine if only that individual would leave. The client organization certainly struck us as troubled. Was Collette's troubling behaviour a feature of this pattern? Did the organization consider her as troublesome? It seemed so from the innuendo in conversations between her colleagues. Obholzer and Roberts warn against seeing this pattern in terms of individual personality and advise interventions that focus on the institutional process. We won't work with this client again, but there are lessons here for my consulting practice. I'm reminded of HPA and how David was constructed as troublesome, also by myself. Mmm.

- What emotions can be expressed here? I had the impression of opening an ever so small window for Astrid to talk about her anxiety and her need to please her superiors. What about our emotions as consultants? What can be talked about with whom and why, and who decides that? What is the emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) involved in being insulted, screamed at, told we were incompetent? Will facilitating the event tomorrow require deep acting? I certainly will have to do some acting with Colette.

- How does gender feature in this? Powerful women taking a more masculine approach than the most masculine men (Huff 1990; Fletcher 1998). Randall's research (1997) on adult bullying was interesting but didn't offer any strategies for dealing with it.

Reflections

The account shows a number of developments in my inquiry practice (not all of them apparent in the extract):

- The sustained nature of this account, written over a period of weeks, incorporated different cycles, leading to new insights.

- The practice of writing out a series of questions with the intention of holding them in the over a sustained period, enabled further inquiry with my CARPP group and with colleagues.

- This account is an inquiry 'for me'. The process and the outcomes (I see questions as an outcome too) relate directly to my being-in-the world and spur me on to a particular course of action (Reason and Marshall 2001 d) (e.g. the conscious decision not to work with this client in the future).

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It is also 'for us', as I purposefully engage in "relevant and timely" (o.c.) dialogue with colleagues. The account captures some of my inquiring conversations with Guido in particular, and with our shadow consultant.

- Issues of power, as exercised by Colette, were at the heart of this account. One purpose of writing this account was to reclaim my personal power. With Guido I explored power dynamics with the client and between us. With our managing director we reflected on power dynamics between ACL and its clients.

- In this account I referred extensively to the literature I was engaged with at the time. I worked with Transactional Analysis throughout the account. Other frames (e.g. psychodynamic literature (Obholzer and Roberts 1994), Hochschild's concept of "Emotional Labour" (1983) (see chapter 6) and Dialogue (Isaacs 1999) were touched upon, often as sources of questions.

- The account appears somewhat amorphous in places (especially in the long narratives) and different styles were not systematically applied, but the variation between left and right aligned created a rhythm to the text that gave a sense movement between narrative and reflection. I added dates to indicate writing from different cycles.

Overall the account had a sense of sustained engagement, with the content of my inquiry as well as with the craft of writing. I believe it captures the impact of my reflective conversations with colleagues and with CARPP.

5.1.5 Orpheus (Phase 1)

ACL worked with this client – an organisation with a high public profile - from April 2001, over a period of about 6 months. It was the first time I was client director, leading a team of 3 other consultants. The work consisted of running a management development programme, initially for the executive board and directors (a total of 22 people) in phase 1, and subsequently for the next level of managers in the organisation (about 60 people) (Phases 2 and 3).

Parallel process and projective identification

The roles assigned by the client to the consultant, or the intragroup dynamics induced in the consulting team, reproduce important and unconscious dynamics in the client system (Krantz and Gilmore 1991). Kets de Vries and colleagues (1991) call this the 'parallel process'. This process, according to Krantz and Gilmore (o.c.) is a result of 'projective identification'.

The authors describe 'projective identification' as a two stage process. First an individual denies and rejects feelings in his/her unconscious image of a situation. The person therefore alters an uncomfortable experience by imagining that part of it is an attribute of something or someone else, rather than of himself or herself. This process is called projection. In the second stage the recipient of the projection is subtly pressurised into thinking, feeling, and behaving in a manner congruent with the feelings or thoughts projected by the other person.

Thus projective identification is a type of defence, in that it unconsciously serves to insulate the projecting person from an aspect of his or her experience. At the same time it is a mode of communication. By inducing the feelings that are congruent with one's own inner image in another person, once creates a sense of 'being understood' by the other.

In the account of Phase 1 I explored a new two column format, one for the story line and one for reflections, in an attempt to facilitate further cycles of reflection. I changed type faces in the reflections to indicate different cycles.

I offer a few extracts. In the first I describe how I gently challenge the formidable CEO.

During our meeting Craig asked me what my first impressions of the organisation were. In my response I referred to Kantor's 3 languages (cited in Isaacs): the language of affect or feeling, with as primary concern: "Are we taking care of the people and how they feel?", the language of meaning: "What are the implications of this?", and power or action: "What are we going to do about this?" (Isaacs 1999, p.209). I explained that I had perceived the dominant languages in Orpheus to be those of meaning and power and expressed the hope that at the event we would be able to create space for the language of feeling, as I perceived key barriers to changing behaviour often to be not of a rational, but of an emotional, 'feeling' nature. He seemed unconvinced about 'feelings' having a place in organisations.

The extract on the next page shows reflections on parallel process (see textbox on adjacent page) and the role of client director.

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9 May, another cycle

I had a number of thoughts last night:

One

I have been mirroring some of my clients' anxiety. My description above of "wanting to make it work while being concerned about the safety of the space and what will happen when they return to work" was almost verbatim what some of the clients had expressed in our individual interviews before the event. I suspect that the anxiety inside the organisation is related to Orpheus being constantly under scrutiny in the public arena

(…)

Directors work hard at drafting papers, only to see them carefully criticized by the MDs. When the final work hits the public arena a next round of fierce criticism is to be expected. Craig had explained how this could get in the way of people in Orpheus feeling they made a positive contribution. It was easy enough to see how this could lead to an atmosphere of siege and the sense of being constantly on a knife edge.

Moylan (1994) describes how the experience of a consultant can mirror some of the painful experiences of the client organisation. According to Moylan projective identification (see textbox on page 336) can be helpful because it opens up a channel of communication that contains otherwise hidden information. She invites the consultant to avoid adopting the same defence mechanisms as the client and to use his/her feelings to understand the clients' experience.

So far I have always thought of 'projective identification' as 'to be avoided'. At ACL we have regular conversations about 'staying out of the client dynamic, not getting caught up', much as Moylan advises. However, to notice my emotional response, rather than to try and avoid having one, and then to work with it, opens up a range of possibilities which I had not considered before.

(…)

Two

(Offers thoughts on working more critically with literature and on how my reading is informing my practice – focuses on Isaacs and Hochschild)

Today is Easter Monday (2002). It's a sunny but breezy day and the temptation to take the day off, go for a long walk, clear my head, is almost irresistible. But I want to finish the first draft of this chapter today, before I go on a long holiday at the end of this week. It's long overdue... (the chapter as well as the holiday).

I sit on the floor of my study which is gradually beginning to look as if a whirlwind has been through it. I'm surrounded by books, folders, half-empty water bottles, tea, a scented candle and flowers. It feels like a giant nest and a good place from which to engage with this thesis. I've been writing without music for a while now. I have rather enjoyed the silence, or rather the humdrum of the daily comings and goings of people in this large apartment block, and on occasions John playing music, mostly Jazz, next door. But today I want some music in my nest, something exuberant, for Easter, the main celebration of what was once my religion. I chose Pergolesi's Concertini.

Three

The confusing business (for me) of being client director. I have explored with colleagues the different sense I have around a client when I have the role of client director. They were somewhat puzzled. The fact that it feels a distinctly different role to me seemed somewhat strange to them. (I describes role of client director and the impact I had felt of it in the Orpheus work).

I do seem to feel the burden heavier than the colleagues I talked to. So what is that about? I was reminded of Anton Obholzer's concept of the 'Authority from within':

"*Apart from the delegation of authority from above and sanctioning from below, there is the vital issue of the authorization or confirmation of authority from within individuals. This largely depends on the nature of their relationships with the figures in their inner world (…), in particular past authority figures. The attitude of such 'in-the-mind' figures is crucial in affecting how, to what extent and with what competence external institutional roles are taken up*" (1994, pp. 40-41). Obholzer does not elaborate much further except for explaining two key patterns: a 'barracking' by inner world figures that leads to self-doubt, versus inner world figures playing into a state of psycho-pathological omnipotence that is likely to lead to authoritarian attitudes and behaviour. I am at risk of dabbling in psycho-analytic concepts about which I don't know enough, but the framework started to ring all sorts of bells, and seems worth exploring.

Reflections

- It is not clear from the account whether the two column format made cycles of reflection easier. But the reflective voice does become much more prominent, making up about 70% of the account.

- I developed a parallel track with my reflective diary, quoting on occasions from my diary in the account.

- My engagement with literature develops in the course of writing this account: from a stage of 'trying on a framework for fit', what McLean and colleagues (1982) consider characteristic for an 'unintegrated consultant', to a more critical use of
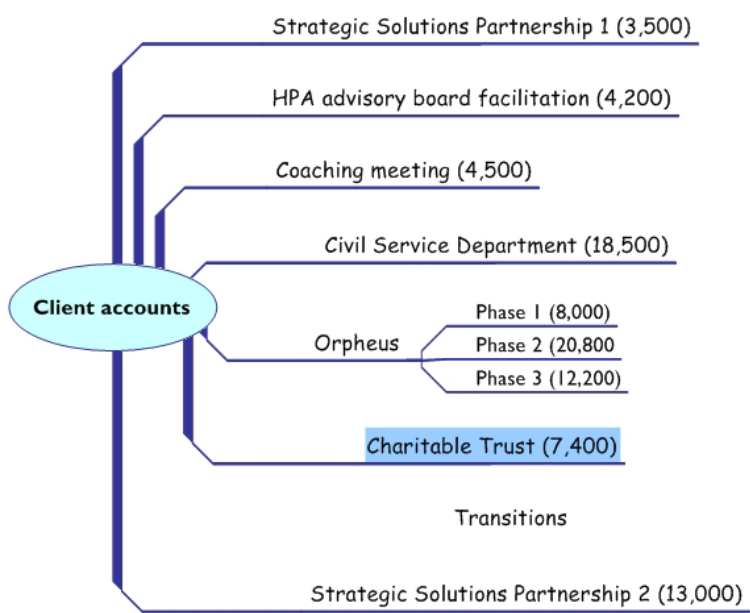
frameworks, a characteristic, according to McLean, of a more centred practitioner.

- The account is written over 4 weeks. CARPP colleagues returned my text with comments and questions, which I explored in our next CARPP meeting and followed up with further reflections.

- I contrast my work at HPA with my client work for ACL, seeing myself as 'part of the system' in the former, but not in the latter. I thus imply that I experienced myself to be outside the client system. I see that differently now. I no longer experience myself, when working with clients, as an observer, standing on the outside looking in. As Block (1999) points out and as I know from experience, the pressure on an internal consultant is considerable more intensive. However, in every engagement with clients I am an inseparable part of the meaning we make together (Stacey 2000), I cannot stand on the outside, looking in.

- Being client director and the 'Authority from Within' is an ongoing subject of inquiry. It was explored in this account and, in a parallel track, in my diary where I refer to conversations with colleagues about how they experience my leadership as client director. In a second person inquiry with colleagues and in my learning set we explored the (rather ill defined) nature of the role in ACL.

5.1.6 A charitable trust

This account concerns a brief engagement with a charity. I was asked to facilitate a day long board meeting. In preparation I had a meeting with Jack, the HR director.

This is a long account, especially considering the brief engagement with the client. However, I think there may be value in including it almost in its entirety, because it shows:

- The development in my account writing process
- A number of cycles of inquiry
- The themes I was working with and how I developed them in spirals of attention
- The nature of my inquiry and my use of theoretical frameworks in this process

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December 2001

Reflecting on my work with a charity in November 2001

I choose, tongue in cheek, Handel's Music for the Royal Fireworks as I sat down to write. Not that it's one of my favourite pieces, but it carries some of the pomp and circumstance that played such a major part in the occasion I am about to reflect upon.

What are the questions I am asking myself here and why?

There are a number of obvious questions. If I set out to co-create a 'space in which people can flourish', then I need ask myself:

- What did I think was needed here in order for people to flourish?
- What did I think flourishing could be in this context?
- How did I think I contributed to creating a generative space?

I also hold other questions. If 'co-creating generative spaces' is not limited to the context of client interventions, then I need to be mindful of how I conduct myself with colleagues, how I make decisions about which work to accept and why. And I need to notice to what extent I am finding a balance between my own 'flourishing' and that of others.

I will indicate some of those themes as I go along.

Setting the scene

> One aspect of creating generative spaces is to make this writing space as comfortable a reading space for you as I can. Hence this setting the scene. If I knew how to do it, I would add Handel's music for you…

> This section contained information about the trust that I have omitted for reasons of confidentiality. Suffice it so say that the occasion for the external facilitation of the board meeting was the hand-over from one chair to another.

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In October this year, a request came to ACL to facilitate a board meeting for the trust. I was asked by one of the administrators whether I'd be interested: "This has been bouncing around the office without any takers. Would you be interested?" And, in my usual enthusiastic style I said: "Well yes, of course. Do we get paid for it?"

I did not ask why no-one seemed interested in this piece of work. We were well below budget in ACL at the time, and I was keen to take on any work that looked valuable. Did I take our 'financial crisis' more seriously than others? Am I at risk of accepting work thoughtlessly, because of fee earning pressures? Something to be mindful of for the future. On this occasion I was vaguely aware of the work of this trust and I was glad to be able to make a contribution

First phone contact with Jack, HR director

Jack and I had the briefest of conversations, in which he explained that he had hoped to work with one of our associates, who is now retired and had therefore referred Jack to ACL.

He asked me whether I had any objections to working with members of the royal family, to which I replied: "If members of the royal family don't object to working with a Belgian woman with a Scottish accent, I can't see any problems." Jack laughed and we agreed a date and time for us to meet.

Jack had wanted to work with D, a highly experienced consultant, whom he had worked with in the past. A white, middle class, middle aged man. He found himself with a woman, 21 years D's junior, with a strange regional accent. I did not give any thought at the time to what that might do to his levels of comfort. I was aware, dimly, of the importance in this society of regional accents, hence my quip about mine…

I was somewhat defiant in response to his question about working with 'royalty'. As far as I am concerned they are people and it was important for me to establish my perspective early on. I had no intention to be deferential to 'titles'. Looking back now my defiance was more about a 'good' space for me than for my client. I could have handled the situation more sensitively. As it turned out, my lack of deference proved the right response…

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I ponder over the complex nature of this (and any) engagement with a client. I could have been more thoughtful, certainly. (It did not even enter my mind to ask whether Jack would have preferred a male facilitator. It would not have been congruent with my values. Later I found out what a male dominated environment this board is: 1 woman amongst 12 men). At the same time I needed to be sufficiently spontaneous for my client to have a sense of me, as I behave in social situations. And I need to be true to myself. How to find a balance? Block (1999) talks about the need to be authentic, as a key condition for 'flawless' consulting (as if there was such a thing). He defines authenticity as 'putting into words what you are experiencing with the client'. I seem to do that quite naturally, and colleagues as well as clients tell me it's one of my strengths. But I also believe it is worth paying attention to what I say, why, how, and when. I am learning to pace my 'authentic interventions', trying to match the level of trust I sense I have established with a client. On this occasion, being up front was probably appropriate, it would give my potential client an opportunity to pull right back and demand to speak to one of my colleagues. But it was, at the time 'authenticity leaking', rather than thoughtfulness on my behalf.

Meeting with Jack at the Trust's Office, 22 October.

I had left myself ample travel time, planning to get to the office an hour early. Public transport let me down badly and I arrived with ten minutes to spare, chilled to the bone from a long wait on a platform in Clapham.

I had taken care to dress formally. Jack had been rather formal on the phone and I expected a formal meeting. I wanted to present myself as a professional woman from a professional organisation, in the hope to bring some first impression re-assurance.
 (ctd.)

How do I make decisions about how to present myself, without pandering to stereotypical views of what women are supposed to look like? A fine balance, I find. Being continental I am prone to pay more attention to dress style than some of my English colleagues, and I sometimes get comments
(ctd.)

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Jack proved to be friendly, humorous and insightful. He briefly explained the situation: now that Lord Peter Layton was taking over the chair, trustees wanted to take the opportunity to review some key issues facing the trust, one of which was the relationship between the trustees and the executive team.	about that. It's also important for me to feel right in the skin I present to the world, for myself. So for the time being I am likely to settle 'for more formal'

Another day. Eventful and interesting. I noticed how tired I was at the end of it, and how I needed to clear my mind before I could return to this writing. Tonight with Chopin's nocturnes. A candle flickers in front of me and the light in neighbours' windows is soothing. I am surrounded by presence.

Back to my account of my meeting with Jack.

(*) I tested the water with some more probing questions. Why a facilitator? How was the relationship between the executive team and the trustees? How did one become a trustee of the trust? Why would people invest considerable chunks of energy? I was impressed with the rapid progression to a level of openness I have rarely experienced with a client at a first meeting. I also noticed how he described some tricky people dynamics without becoming judgmental. Different people with different territories to defend, some friction between some trustees and some executives… • The previous chair ran a very tight ship: sitting at the head of a long table in the most intimidating of venues, he chaired meetings by asking detailed questions to the executive and giving his views.	(*) I was aware of needing to find a balance between process and expert consulting. The business of staying out of 'expert consulting' (Schein 1987) is a difficult one for me. I have a tendency to revert to it as a way of coping with my anxiety. At the same time I need to establish myself with the client. On this occasion I talked about my previous experiences in working with groups and tried to ask 'intelligent' questions.

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- Trustees spoke when addressed. Generally trustees' meetings had been a detailed review of executive issues.
- To many of the trustees the prestige of being in Royal company was a key attraction. No judgement passed.
- One of the trustees, Derek was particularly hands on and made life for executives (especially Jack) rather difficult. Jack explained the history and how he was gently trying to help Derek to let go. He also explained to me how Derek had insisted on speaking to me (a vetting call) before the event.
- There were some difficult dynamics around the succession of the chair.

(**) I remember listening attentively and considering carefully how to pace my questions, gently probing our level of rapport as we went on. I did become increasingly aware of the complexity of the situation and the need not to get swamped by too much information, which might get in the way of staying spontaneous and in the moment during the trustees' meeting.

 We went to see the room where the meeting was to take place. First time not in the usual venue, so disappointing for some of the trustees. But lunch was to be provided with an opportunity for trustees to meet staff…
The room was beautiful. Oval shaped, with lots of natural light. I wanted the tables removed and chairs in a circle. But I waited to voice my opinion. To my delight Jack made

 I was curious about Jack's openness. As he described, tentatively at first, some of the dynamics, I was careful not to judge, but to offer, on occasions, an appreciative frame (eg. when he described the very hands on approach of one of the trustees, I framed that as the person taking his 'governance' role very seriously). It was a frame congruent with his. He also seemed keen to ensure I would be as prepared as possible. Also, he was relatively new to the organisation and had been through a phase of sense making for himself which he was keen to share.

(**) I was difficult then, and it seems ever, to judge how much information to acquire. Especially when talking about individuals and dynamics between them I felt myself on occasions metaphorically (and maybe physically) leaning out of the conversation. Sometimes I can treat information as background music. If I listen too closely (and remember too consciously) I am at risk of becoming distracted from what is actually happening there and then in the room (Nevis 1987). I was to find that the 'leaning out' of the conversation, not getting too attached to the descriptions Jack gave me, proved to be useful. Some individuals behaved very differently in the meeting from what I would have expected. Not being wedded to pre-

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the suggestion: "I think it will help to create a more informal atmosphere". I then asked for chairs with armrests, so that people could sit comfortably. It would require an extra effort but Jack readily agreed.

We put a rough draft programme together. The executive had planned to start with a presentation of key issues as they saw them. I invited them to reconsider as I thought it would re-create the familiar dynamic. Could we invite key themes from all attendees and then work with the themes that arose? And maybe start with a little appreciative inquiry, instead of introductions. After all everyone knew everyone else. So maybe we could ask people to say very briefly what had been most rewarding/exciting for them in their association with/work for the trust.
Jack agreed.

conceived ideas, gave me more space to work with what was there, in the moment.

Lots of opportunities for anxiety for the participants. From the very formal meetings, in **formal** surroundings, with a formal agenda, we were bringing people to a different room, in a different set up, and with no predetermined agenda. We wanted to create a new, fresh dynamic, and this seemed one way of clearly indicating our intention. I was aware, however, that a more informal set up might increase anxiety, whilst it was impossible for me to ascertain, knowing only one of the participants, how well they would cope with this. But I had to try it, at least.

My next contact with the organisation was a conversation with Derek, a vociferous trustee.

I had braced myself for a grilling. What Derek asked for was reassurance:
- That this facilitated meeting was a good idea
- That I understood the dynamics in the board
- That I would be able to create space for the trustees to have their say
- That I hadn't been 'usurped by the executives'

His concern about my 'relationship' with the executives made little sense for me at the time. I understood it better talking to the CEO later. Derek seemed reassured that I hadn't yet spoken to the CEO

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The event

Meeting the CEO

I had agreed to meet the CEO and the Chair before the start of the afternoon.

My meeting with the CEO was supposed to last 15 minutes, and we were to discuss the process of the meeting. After 45 minutes of conversation with lots of social status drops by the CEO I needed to make a move, if I was to have a chance to meet any of the other trustees. Jack had joined us and I could feel him fidgeting nervously beside me. I asked the CEO how he felt about the idea of having this meeting and, after a brief exchange ("fine, fine, it was partly my idea"), I asked how he felt about taking somewhat of a back seat so that trustees would feel encouraged to contribute (one of their outcomes – they had been mainly 'in attendance' at previous meetings). He replied laughingly: "This is the most polite way in which anyone has ever told me to shut up". I laughed with him, and then probed some more: would it be difficult? He asked me to signal when I felt he talked too much. I agreed. "How will you let me know?" "I will give you one of my cold stares." "What does that look like?" I stared at him with one eyebrow raised and told them how I'd practised for hours as a child after watching Roger Moore in 'Ivanhoe'. Laughter all round and we went on to discuss how I saw the process evolving. He explained his need to get the trustees to sign up to the strategic issues as set by the executive. Surprise! I hadn't known that was part of the plan, and it did not fit with the stated outcome. I took a deep breath and carefully explained why that might not necessarily happen, if we were to explore some of the issues raised by the trustees. Back to the drawing board: what was the purpose of the meeting? Did we really want to hear the trustees' voices, concerns, wishes? Did we want their engagement on a very different level from before? "Yes", said the CEO, "of course". But my heart knew that his heart said no.

Establishing credibility. Creating a generative environment by creating enough trust in my ability, without 'selling out'. A fine balancing act. Hidden agendas emerging at the last minute. Acknowledging the importance for that person of what he wants to achieve, and holding others' outcomes up as equally important. Contributing to a space where everyone can have a voice. Looking back I am amazed at the complexity of it all. I can't but think how much processing went on for me in that meeting with the CEO. I did not feel anxious.

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/k_king.html

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Meeting the Chair

A very different affair. I had been warned. An intense man. Doesn't suffer fools gladly. Flown in from abroad and will not want to waste time. Cut to the chase, etc.

I did get questioned on my credentials and seemed to pass. Past experience, qualifications, etc. We talked about his business a little.

And then another surprise: "Let me tell you something. If this was my company I would not have you, nothing against you personally, but I wouldn't have a facilitator for this kind of meeting". "I understand". "I don't think you do". "Can I test my understanding?" "Go ahead". "My understanding is that you are used to being in control, that you like it and that you do not gladly hand it over to an external facilitator." Long and intense look. "Right. I must tell you that most trustees are of the same feeling". "Right". So another surprise. I had known Derek had had his doubts, but as far as I could see now I was not very much wanted. I explained (as Jack had done before) the purpose of having an external facilitator: freeing him up to take part in the meeting. Not that I thought for a minute that being in the chair would have stopped him from doing that. Au contraire.

We talked more about my work, my role in this meeting ("And you will produce notes"), and his experience in his business and on the board of a global company, and I felt we parted on good enough terms.

With hindsight I realise I was matching. Firm handshake. Firm look, holding eye contact. Matching speech patterns: short sentences, at the edge of abruptness. That too is about 'spaces where people can flourish'. Your time is precious and I will not waste it. I match my sharing of personal experiences to yours, giving you most of the space. I am on your territory and I respect that. I expect to be respected in the role that has been assigned to me today.

I know that it's hard for you to let go and I understand that.

I did become defensive when I explained (again) the reason for my presence. I could have given him the option of sending me away. It may have made for a cleaner starting slate. But by that stage I had decided I wanted to be there, and I wanted respect for that too. I may have earned more respect by presenting the choice. And I am human too.

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/k_king.html

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Into the meeting

I introduced myself and acknowledged the considerable amount of experience in the room: "Of course I am not at all intimidated by the combined experience in the room". Laughter, and I had made my point in a way that I hoped could be heard.

I acknowledged the fact that the executives had prepared a presentation and had gracefully agreed not to present in order to give trustees ample opportunity to set the agenda for the day.

The round of "What excites me most about working for the trust" was a success. I noticed from the participants' reactions that they were learning new things about each other and that they were pleasantly surprised by what they heard.

In small groups participants (trustees and members of the executive – who had been allocated to different groups) generated themes for discussion which I gathered on flipcharts.

Then came the difficult process of making choices. Our royal patron was the person who eventually swayed the group to spend at least the first half of the afternoon to talk about their process: how do we want to work together in the future? "If we get our process right we should have ample time to discuss content matters on a regular basis." (I was delighted, it felt absolutely right, and many trustees were obviously in agreement)

I was aware that one of the trustees hardly contributed and checked over coffee whether he was OK with his quiet contribution. He assured me he was,

It seemed to me to be really important here, in order for people to 'flourish' that

- they had an opportunity to influence the agenda
- they had opportunities to speak, or to remain silent but present, as was the case for one trustee.
- we started on a safe topic: "What excites me?"
- they were physically comfortable. When I noticed people getting tired I insisted on a pause, explaining why I thought is was important, despite the fact that they were reluctant to move from their chairs
- some of the hidden conflicts could be gently surfaced and acknowledged as important and a 'natural' result of people's different views and roles
- people's needs and hopes were acknowledged, if not necessarily met, as was the case with the CEO.

It was delightful to watch all those people, who'd been in 'attendance' at trustee meetings for many years, speak with passion about their needs, concerns and issues.

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/k_king.html

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as he was new and still finding his feet. There was mild pressure from the CEO and Jack to draw him in, but I refrained. Nothing worse than being singled out to voice your opinion against your better judgement…

It was hard on occasions to stop the executives from dominating the process, but on the whole the trustees got much of the air space, which was one of our outcomes. I did notice how both the CEO and the chair refrained from dominating the conversation, and were measured in their contributions. I mentioned it over coffee to the CEO, who seemed pleased with the feedback.

Although the group was still buzzing, I encouraged them to have a rest over coffee. I wanted people to have an opportunity to stretch their limbs and felt that we had come to a natural closure of one part of the afternoon.

After coffee I invited people to put post-its on one of two flipcharts: what I think we have agreed, what I think we still need to discuss further (thank you David for the suggestion). It was a wonderful way to surface different views on what was agreed and what wasn't. We re-arranged the notes as the conversation and agreement progressed. I made sure I asked people to state any little niggles they still felt. Using the post-it notes was also a way for me to have a written record without having to scribe, so that I could pay as much attention as I could muster to the group process.

Although the executives appeared concerned about the one quiet trustee, he had appeared very alert and engaged to me and I followed my instinct not to single him out to speak. (By naming his presence as a 'quiet contribution' I intended to value his presence in the group, and aimed to avoid being experienced as challenging)

The pause (I do not like to invite people to a 'break') was an opportunity for me to check in with individuals, or make myself available for comments. I did invite people to do that, and made sure that for part of the time at least I was on my own, at the periphery of the group, so that people could come to me and talk. Some of them did, saying they thought it was going well, but mostly they were talking amongst themselves in little mixed clusters of trustees and employees. Lovely.

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At the end of the meeting the CEO quickly tried to push through his 'themes' prepared by the executive. By that stage people had enough voice to stop him in his tracks. I gently supported him in the moment. Validating his positive intention of moving the business on, and pointing out that there would now be ample occasion at their next meeting to discuss some of the issues that were really pressing for him. It was a very difficult moment for him and I made sure I had some time with him after the event to check how he was coping with his disappointment. I invited comments from participants before closing the meeting. Most of them made a statement about what they were most keen to take forward. To my delight our very quiet trustee (an expert in IT) made a passionate plea for better IT systems and committed to take that work forward.

To people's surprise I ended with a process review (having been invited to summarise, I could not resist the opportunity). I pointed out how I had noticed silence was sometimes interpreted as agreement, and how it had been helpful to give people an opportunity to consider their understanding of agreements and voice questions and concerns.

(***)I promised to send the notes by an agreed deadline to Jack.

After the meeting there were snacks and drinks, and although I was exhausted I duly stayed around and talked to various people. I had brief conversations with the trustees, who all seemed very pleased with themselves and the way they had felt able to contribute.
The executives, who had by default dominated previous meetings and had not been able to give their well pre-

I had not expected the CEO would try to push his agenda at the last minute. There was an awkward silence and some gasps of amazement around the room. I stopped myself from filling the silence, waiting for the response from the group. How tempting 'rescuing' was at that time. But when the clear answer from the trustees: "No that's something we need to discuss at our next meeting" came, I felt it was safe for me to support the CEO from a more 'Adult' (TA) place. Nevertheless, I knew this was a difficult moment for him. And I made a decision I'd do some follow up after the meeting.

(***)Jack was my contact client, but I did open up the topic for conversation. I did want to be seen to be open (no hidden messages to executives) and even handed. People seemed to appreciate the question, and very relaxed that the notes should go to Jack for further distribution.

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pared presentations, were polite but had obviously found it a more difficult experience. I spoke to most of them, (one had to leave) and concentrated on the CEO and Jack. We talked about future developments and I gave them very genuine feedback about staying with the process. Jack commented that at one stage he had felt things were getting very slow, but we'd got back on track…

I found it really difficult to move around the room and speak to people. I am not good at that at the best of times, but it did seem an important that people should have an opportunity to talk to me, and yet they were very engrossed in their own small talk… I chose to get my voice in the room by talking about my appreciation for the hard work, the patience people had brought to a new and very different process… it got people talking. Derek tried to get my undivided attention but didn't succeed as I felt myself surrounded by a number of people at any one time.

After the meeting II

There was a little unexpected follow on. Derek called me, in his usual, a little anxious sounding voice, wanting my opinion about the meeting. I asked his view. When he said he was very pleased, and other trustees seemed very pleased, I asked whether he had any concerns. He did, he wanted to know whether the CEO would be OK? I invited him to "maybe check it out?" He said he would. I then told him about the impressive outcomes in the notes I had sent to Jack. He asked for a copy. I was reluctant, that was not what I had agreed with the group. I prepared for giving an explanation, but the little pause was enough for Derek to suggest he'd contact Jack for a copy.

I came to appreciate this man as a conscientious, sensitive person, who was very concerned about the wellbeing of the trust. Despite his frequent run-inns with the CEO in the past he was still concerned about how the CEO had survived the little rebellion at the end. A less generous view of Derek would be that of a meddling, insecure individual. But I am convinced that staying with his positive intention made a dialogue much easier. In the end I just needed to give him space to come to his own conclusions. I want to remember how powerful that was for future occasions of dealing with 'difficult people' (and I am aware that it's sometimes an awful lot more complicated than that too.)

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/k_king.html

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I summarize the topics contained in a section "Further thoughts" from the original account:
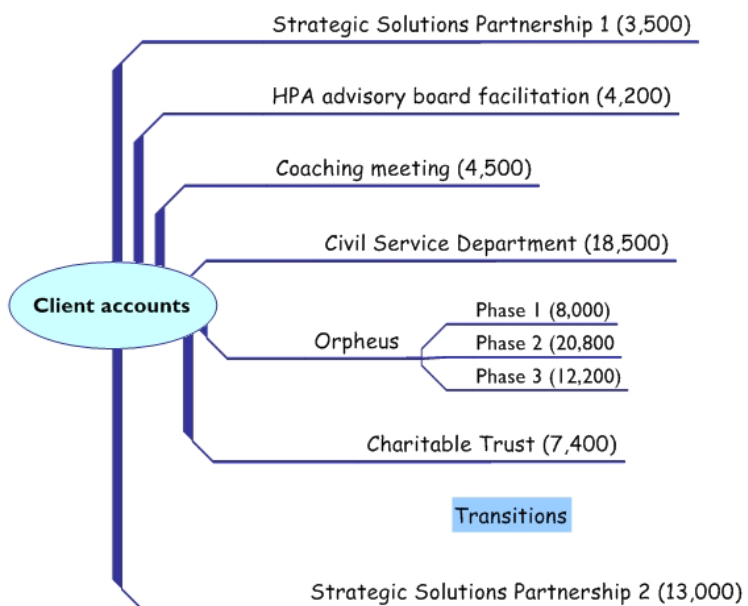
- I develop the concept of 'feeling preparation' as preparing oneself to be in an emotionally good place and grounded. I describe my strategy: conversations with a trusted colleague including asking for reassurance the day before the event.

- In a later cycle I return to the concept, following a question from my CARPP group about my strategy for 'feeling prepartion'. I make connections with
  - being on leave, thinking about the client intermittently, but without being able to indulge in familiar 'defense against anxiety' behaviour (Hirschhorn 1999)
  - with photography. In the process of taking pictures on holiday I had applied used it as a metaphor for the upcoming client work: 'zooming in' on what is interesting and good, whilst capturing what is difficult and challenging without letting the latter dominate the image. I compare my photographic experiments with the Gestalt concept of 'figure against ground' (Nevis 1987).

- I question the concept of authenticity, as advocated by Block (1999) and describe an inquiry with colleagues. I make links with emotional labour (Hochschild 1983)

- I discuss 'expert consulting' (Schein 1999) and 'technical skills' (Block 1999) and my increasing reticence to take up an expert role. I make a connection with Hodgson and White's (2001) concept of 'Ambiguity Type 2': complex situations where no-one actually knows the right answer and with earlier thoughts on the 'Authority from Within' (Obholzer 1994)

- I inquire into why none of my colleagues took on the work (serendipity) and reflect on our client allocation processes in ACL.

- I close with questions to take forward around authenticity and expert interventions.

Reflections

This account is an illustration of how my research became increasingly focussed on my question: "How do I contribute to human flourishing?"

The theme is more developed than in previous accounts:
- I started my writing with questions specifically related to it and returned to them throughout the account and in the subsequent reflections.

Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

HPA advisory board facilitation (4,200)

Coaching meeting (4,500)

Civil Service Department (18,500)

Client accounts

Orpheus
Phase 1 (8,000)
Phase 2 (20,800
Phase 3 (12,200)

Charitable Trust (7,400)

Transitions

Strategic Solutions Partnership 2 (13,000)

- I believe I demonstrated an increasing awareness of the importance of taking care of myself, before, during and following the client work, as well as within the ACL community (e.g. by exploring reasons for people not to take on this work).
- I stayed alert to the quality of my writing environment and introduce the ways I look after myself into the text.

On this occasion I pushed the boundaries of the two-column format, creating space for reflections. As a result I appeared more disciplined (and detailed) in asking questions as the narrative unfolded (the reflection on the way I choose to dress is a good example of that). After the 'story was told' I abandoned the format, reclaiming the entire page for reflections (though with inconsistent use of fonts).   Although I experienced the two-column format helpful to establish a reflective discipline, I found it made for awkward reading, one of the reasons I abandoned it in future accounts. To craft writing that is 'a good read', thus looking after my readers, is one of my aspirations.

In this account (the second version) I have added information where my CARPP group indicated lack of it (e.g. elaborating on the story line) and explored issues from the first draft further (e.g. how I worked with my colleague David and 'feeling preparation').

I believe this account demonstrates how I continued to develop an inquiring stance in my client work and my engagement with ACL. The sustained period of reflection allowed me to return to my initial questions (as stated at the beginning of the account) from different perspective and frameworks.

5.1.7 Transitions

"Transitions" is an account of my experience of transferring from MPhil to PhD. Although this is not a client account I include it here, because it is a good illustration of the way I developed my 'presentational knowing' and a significant development in my account writing practice.
I think the account speaks for itself.

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Transitions

An impressionistic account

of my transfer process

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Frame (1)

What am I trying to do here?

I attempt to capture the richness of the experience in a way I have not been able to do by just using words. A verbal account it seems to me, tends to appeal to a 'propositional' knowing. If I were a poet words might have been able to do justice to the rich texture of what I believe I have learned. I find visual imagery helpful, both in the process of making sense and in the presentation of that sense making to you.

There is a story line in this account, the memory of a series of events: preparing the paper, the transfer meeting, the subsequent conversations with CARPP colleagues , the sinking feeling of inadequacy during my reflections on holiday, the re-connecting with Judi Marshall upon my return to the UK, the CARPP 6 meeting in December 2001, where I invited colleagues to share their experience of the meeting and their sense making, the black hole of felt futility I tumbled into as a result, and then, in a conversation with Judi, looking up, finding new meaning and moving on.

I offer the 'underlying' story lightly, acknowledging my own tendency to search for 'the story' when I am presented with an account and my fantasy that you reader may have a similar interest.
On the other hand, my 'construct' of the transfer experience is not a sequential one. Different themes, thoughts, events, surface on different occasions. I have tried to present this account in a way that allows you to engage with different parts as they engage your attention.

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Frame (2)

How did this account take shape?

Late December, the between Christmas and New Year vacuum.
I am sitting on the floor of my study surrounded by images and muse over
my memories of 'transferring'.

I chose, arrange, select images that speak to me as I
remember and relive.
I let the imagery guide my experience.

I sit back and listen. Vivaldi's sacred music takes me back
to the highs and lows. Through the highs and lows as I relive
my 'current construct'.

There is a movement in two directions. Images resonate with
my reflections and also invite further, different perspectives.
They inform my current construction of the experience and
invite me to pay (even) more attention to experiential (as
opposed to propositional) learning.

I allow images to grab me and attempt to capture verbally
what I experience as I pick them, one by one, to share with you
in this account.

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Frame (3)

Constructing the image of writing the transfer paper

Constructing, from the images surrounding me, an account of the transfer process, I noticed that no image seemed to resonate with the experience of writing my transfer paper.

So I decided to create an image.

Since I thought of the writing of my transfer paper as a project,
my mind wandered to flow diagrams and their icons.
I jumbled together a large collection of icons,
to reflect my sense of hop-scotching during that long summer of
writing. It hadn't felt very 'flowing' at the time…
I chose icons which seemed to represent some of the phases I had been
through.

To reflect my delight with some of the learning in the course of the writing
I painted my icons gold: little golden nuggets of insight.

Because I had been so immersed in the whole project I painted
the background deep blue (the sea) and held the icons in what's intended
to roughly represent a scallop.

The colour of the document, at the bottom of the deep blue sea is bronze:
I got my bronze medal in the end.

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Summer 2001

382
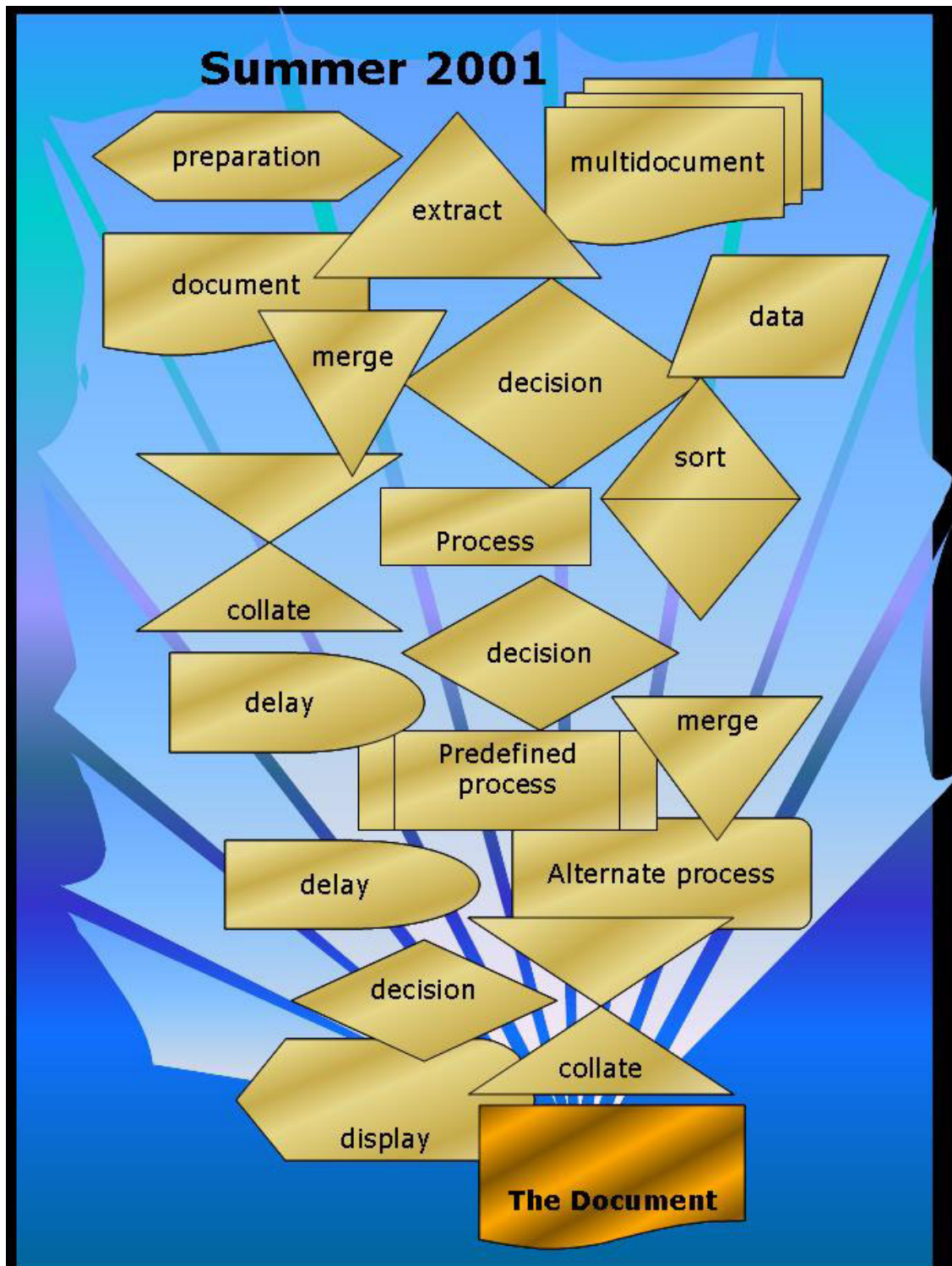
The meeting
of minds

We sit round the table
We are many
nearly new faces

It feels like school, where I stand outside

My wobbly voice betrays my passion
it is lacking substance and conviction
I am told

Is it true?

Kind support Respectful challenge
A gentle invitation to speak for myself and my
work

The voice, the voice
that can be heard
that is 'my voice' and speaks for me
So I am told
is not the one I like
I make a plea for my quiet voice

'voice' is a nominalization here
make no mistake said Bush

Relief
Concern
Questions
my confidence
close to my shoes
and a cheeky pride

384
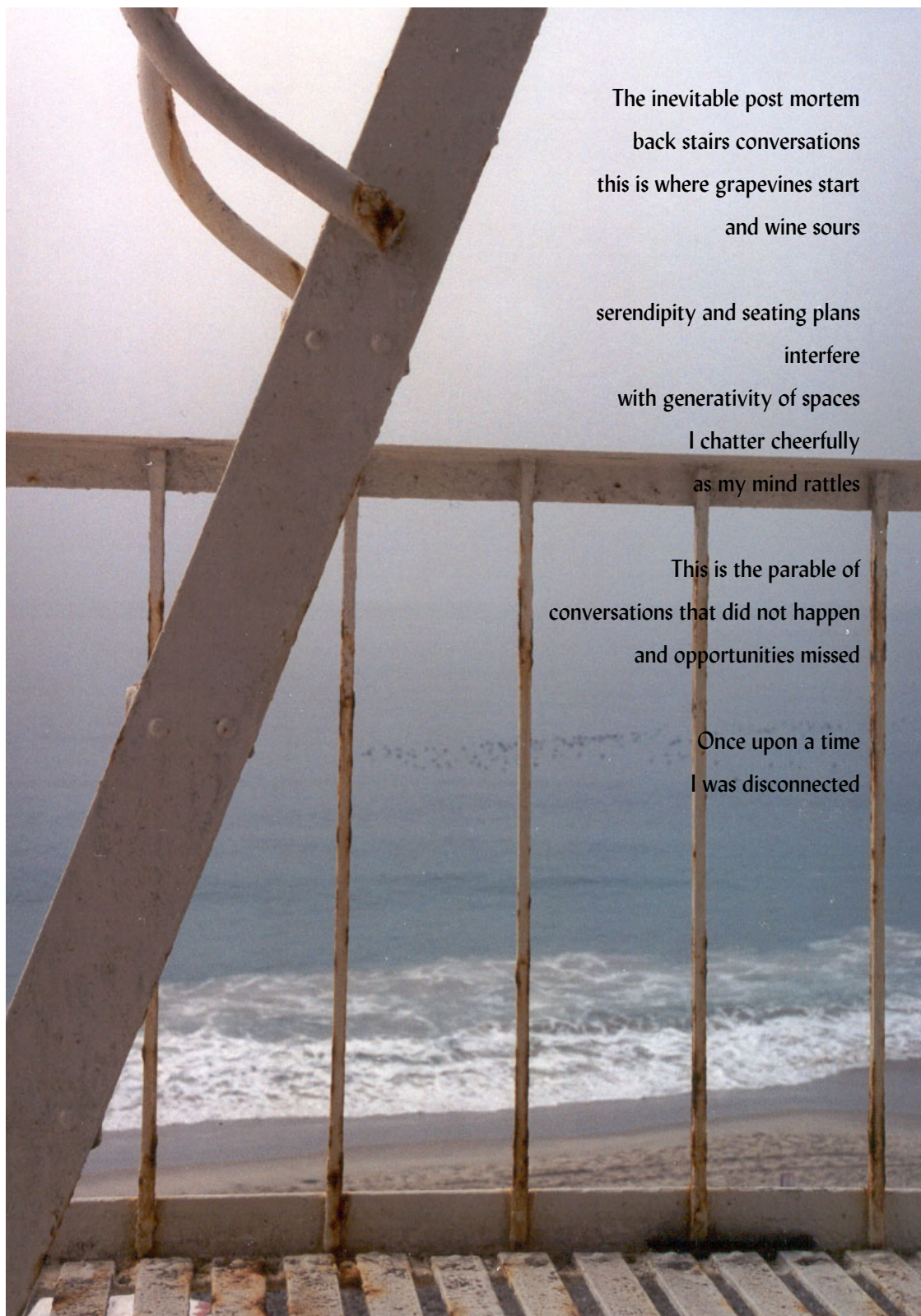
The inevitable post mortem
back stairs conversations
this is where grapevines start
and wine sours

serendipity and seating plans
interfere
with generativity of spaces
I chatter cheerfully
as my mind rattles

This is the parable of
conversations that did not happen
and opportunities missed

Once upon a time
I was disconnected

386
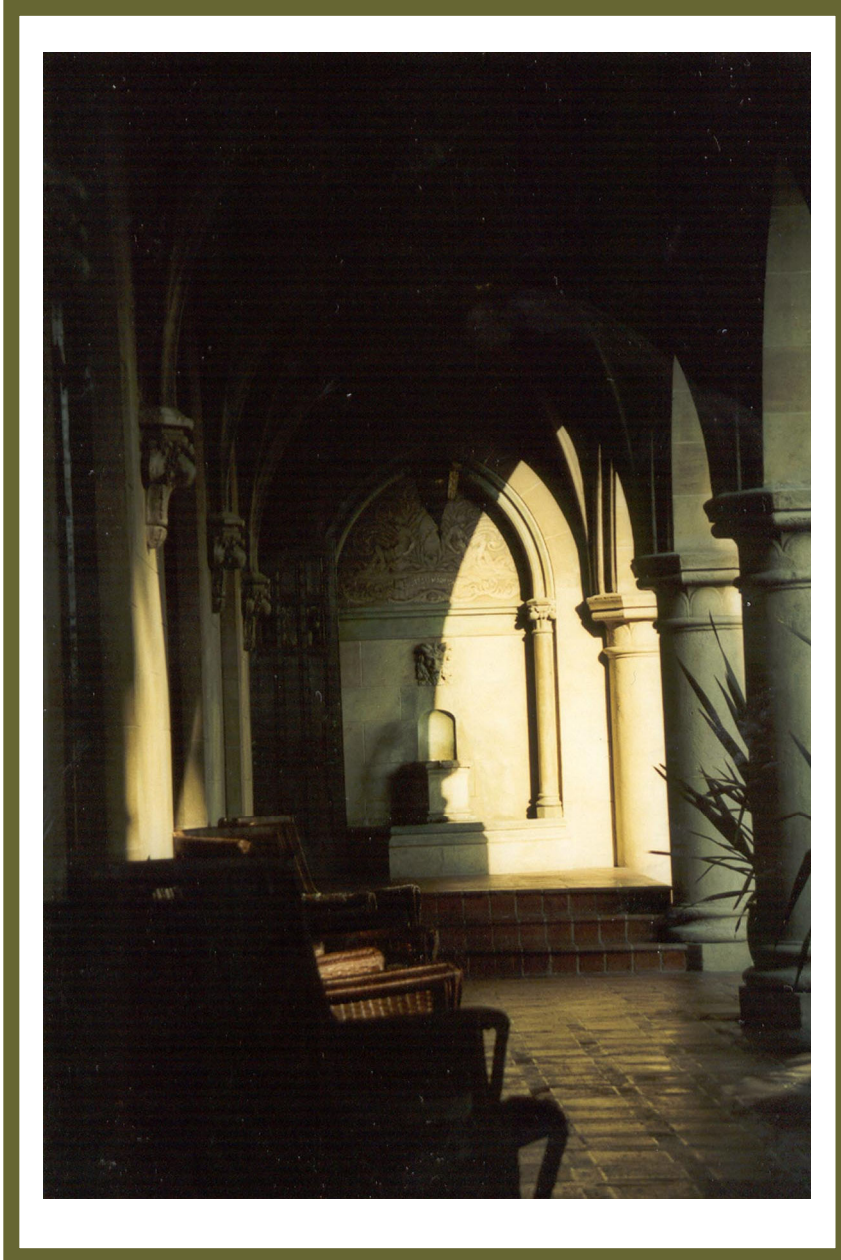
A not so distant voice

Your voice warmed
my heart

My weary mind came
to rest
in the shaded garden
of your thoughtful silences

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Meetings in our minds

Revisiting the experience

Piecing together

some of the jigsaw

Bringing the lenses

in the room

fragments what felt

uncomfortable but coherent

I frazzle

fizzle out

disintegrate

deconstruct

my picture of my observatory

my perspective

on the universe

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The riddle of the breadcrumb
on the skirt of the universe

What does it take a consultant

to create a generative space

in a complex situation

with multiple relationships

past and present

where everyone brings their personal history

their perspective their hopes and worries

where past and future conversations matter?

What if the light is cold

the seats hard

the room bare

and the minds wander?

Answer

The consultant cannot create a generative space.
She can contribute to the opportunity
for a generative space to emerge
by being as prepared as she can be
and by bringing as much of her attention,
experience, expertise, openness

392
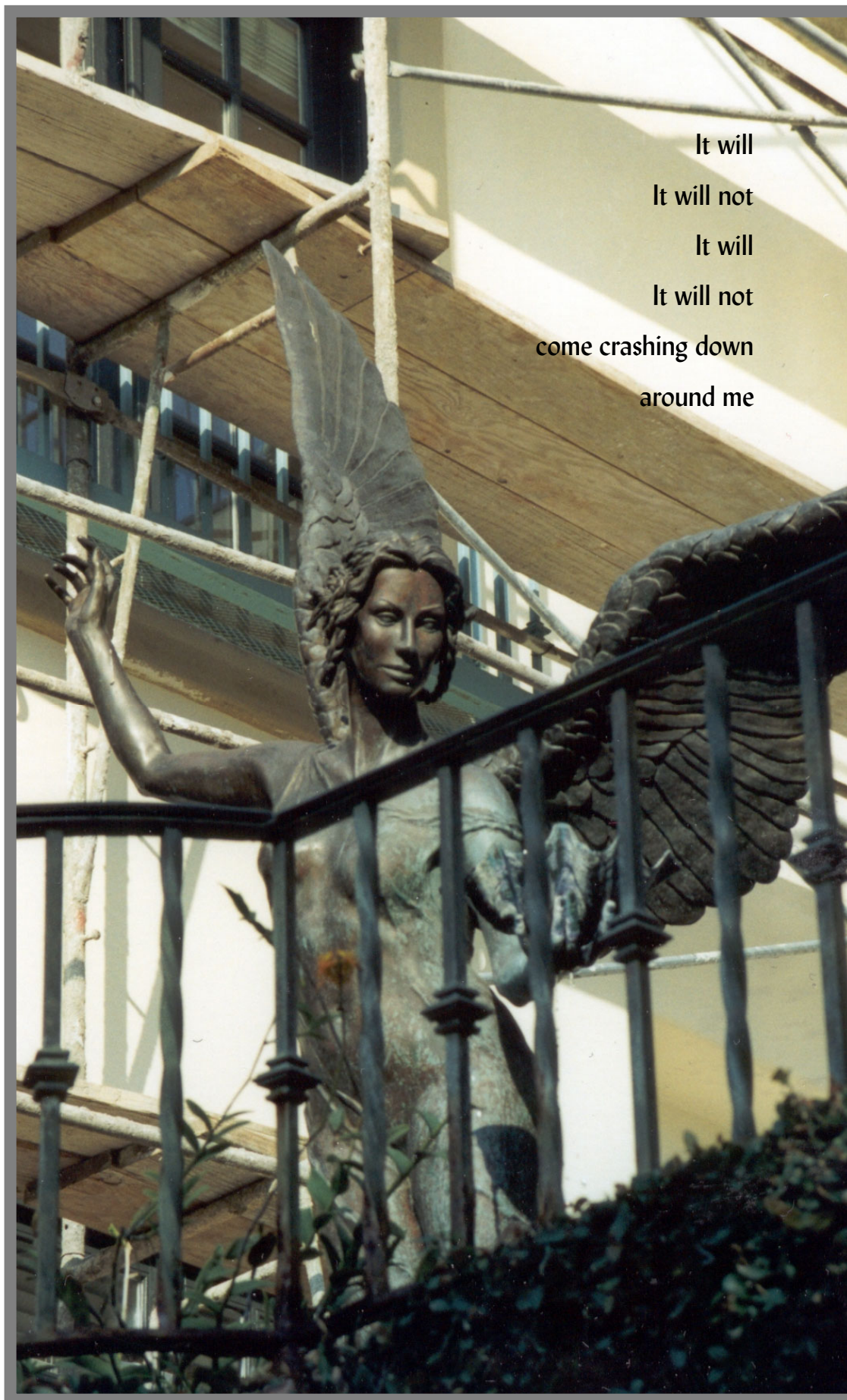
It will

It will not

It will

It will not
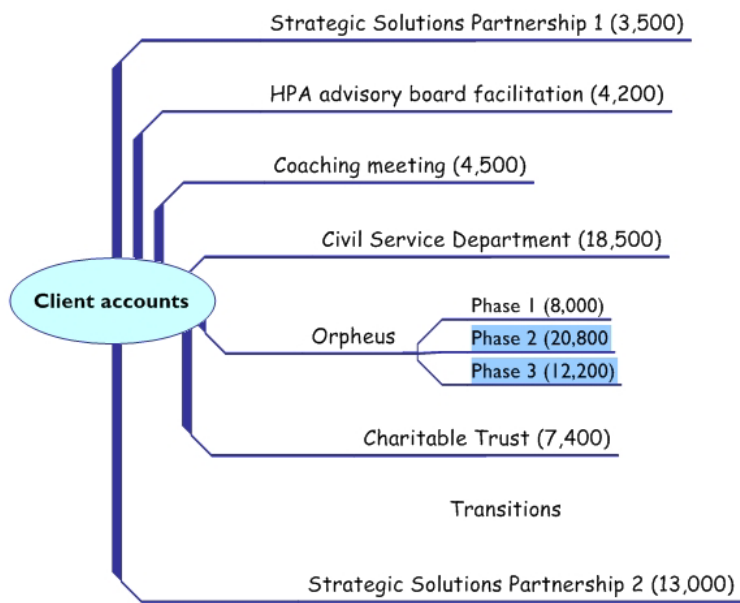
come crashing down

around me

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I am on my way

on my bike

this is blue sky stuff
deep waters &
shifty sands matter

Just now
I've gone swimming

Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

HPA advisory board facilitation (4,200)

Coaching meeting (4,500)

Civil Service Department (18,500)

Client accounts

Orpheus

Phase 1 (8,000)

Phase 2 (20,800

Phase 3 (12,200)

Charitable Trust (7,400)

Transitions

Strategic Solutions Partnership 2 (13,000)

5.1.8 Orpheus (Phases 2 and 3)

The accounts are an inquiry into the second and third phases of engagement with senior managers of Orpheus. The first phase in this chapter concerns the work with board members. I did not write and account of the first phase of our work with senior managers.

I bring them together here for a number of reasons:

- The nature of the work was very similar, with only minor changes to the workshops in phase 3
- They followed each other closely in time
- My inquiry processes in phase 3 are a continuation from phase 2
- The main focus of my inquiry "emotional labour" (Hochschild 1983) and "emotion work" (Mumby and Putnam 1992) is developed over the period of writing both accounts

In the next chapter I return to both accounts and show extracts. For that reason I will concentrate in this section on my inquiry processes and only show a few extracts. But first I will give you a brief story line:

Following our work with the board of directors, described in Phase 1, we worked with the senior team. The first part of the programme remained the same as for the directors: an assessment process consisting of 360º feedback, MBTI and Firo B, followed by an individual coaching meeting to make sense of the data and identify areas for development. The second part consisted of a two day event at Ashridge. At the event participants were offered of parallel workshops, around themes identified in focus groups with the participants, and some large group work. During the last afternoon the CEO and some board members joined us for a dialogue in the large group.

Because we had experienced the organisation as fragmented we endeavoured to have a good representation from various departments on every event.

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In both accounts I tell the story of some of my coaching meetings, of the event at Ashridge and of our experience of working with this client. I elaborate on the latter. Every one on the consulting team found the organisation challenging to work with, for various reasons:

- There was a lot of semi-open conflict, talked about but not addressed, and rivalry between individuals and departments. One department in particular, which I called 'Finance', was experienced as oppressive and dominant by others in the organisation. Senior managers of the finance department all signed up for the last event. This generated a difficult to manage dynamic at the previous events where 'Finance' was perpetually talked about and blamed for the ills of the organisation by the participants. In the absence of representatives from the finance department it was difficult to work with this constructively.

- Orpheus was the result of a merger between two organisations with a different life-span and very different cultures. Employees who had previously worked for the oldest of the two, which I will call Ariadne, were generally constructed as old-fashioned, not very hard working and not very competent, by members of the other partner (Hermes for the purpose of this account). Kets de Vries (1991) points out that mergers disrupt individual and organisational equilibrium as psychological contracts are broken, loyalties and informal networks are undermined, and a sense of purpose and direction may be lost. The effects of the disruption were palpable in the organisation but denied by the CEO and many of the board members which made it harder to address them for the consulting team.

- In one of my coaching meetings I had been told about ongoing sexual harassment by a member of staff. Discussions about the effect the revelation had had on me and about whether to take action, opened up a gender divide in the team.

- My role as client director, difficult enough in this complex work, was further complicated by some difficult team dynamics, following and incident with a team member who wanted to attend to another client on the first morning of the last event.

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My first person inquiry processes

The questions underlying both accounts concern my contribution to human flourishing. I quote:

What are the questions I am asking myself?

There are a number of obvious questions. If I set out to co-create a 'space in which people can flourish', then I need ask myself:

- What do I think flourishing means in this context?
- What do I think was needed here in order for people to flourish?
- How do I think I contributed to creating a generative space?

I want to pay attention to those questions in relation to my consulting colleagues on the team and the administrator, my clients and myself; and to whether I can find a balance between my own needs and those of others (Gilligan 1993) – clients and colleagues.

I extended that question to my readers:

I want this writing to be generative for the reader, inspiring curiosity and engagement (Richardson 2000)

In pursuit of my questions I engaged in:

1 Inner arcs of attention (Marshall 2001)

I endeavoured to pay attention to how I conducted myself with colleagues and clients, and the impact that my behaviour appeared to have (what Torbert has called assessing (2001)) and whether it was congruent with my purpose of contributing to flourishing, for myself and others. I paid attention to the frames I held and assumptions I made when deciding how to act. I was particularly interested in my conduct as client director and the power dynamics resulting from that. The prospect of writing accounts helped me to re-focus on my questions in the heat of the moment (Torbert, o.c.). In the process of writing, of necessity retrospective, I then returned to my questions, often exploring them from conceptual frameworks. Both accounts

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draw especially on psychodynamic literature (Hirschhorn and Barnett 1993; Obholzer and Roberts 1994; Hirschhorn 1999) and literature on emotions in organisations (Hochschild 1983; Mumby and Putnam 1992; Fletcher 1998; Fineman 2000). (This literature is further developed in the next chapter, where I also show relevant extracts from accounts.) Writing was also an opportunity to develop strategies for further action (Torbert, o.c.).

In a connected loop, I paid attention to the effect of 'writing as a process of inquiry' itself: how did I look after myself in this process, how was it affecting my assumptions, feelings and meaning making. Was I on track to achieve my purpose of creating an inspiring account? Was the form of my writing congruent with my purpose? I experimented with type faces and layout of pages in an attempt to capture the mood of the account and create a sense of texture. Especially the account of Phase 3 became a veritable quilt. I quote a short extract introducing the topic of meaning making:

From transformational linguistics we know that the surface structure of language involves deletions, distortions and generalisations (Bandler and Grinder 1975). Here I am interested in deletions. How do I select what to include in this account, and what to omit? What are the patterns? Does what is omitted from an account become disappeared from my radar?

Yet another aspect involved paying attention to working with images, guiding my attention, capturing my experience and challenging myself to find and hold re-frames. The extract below is taken from the Phase 3 account

As I start to write this account I have two images in mind: Cerberus and the Chinese dog.

Cerberus (the dog guarding the gate to the underworld, in Greek mythology) seemed a natural choice as some of this work had a 'hellish', scary quality to it. In fact, as I was scanning the image in the office, one

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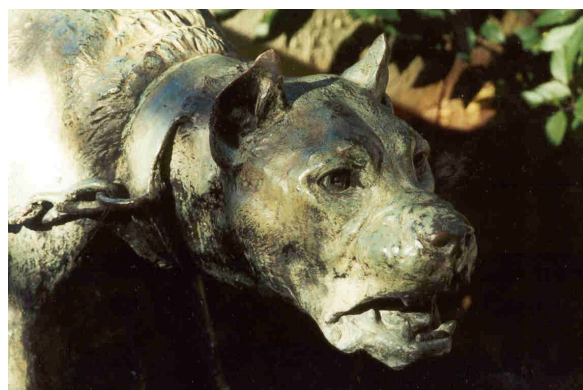
of the Orpheus team members, looking over my shoulder, said: "Mm, that picture reminds me of Orpheus…"

I smiled when I came across this Chinese dog on holiday. It reminded me of myself in my work with Orpheus, grinning, baring it and trying to protect myself and my team, from the falling debris.

I took a picture for my account and to encourage myself to stay humorous in our next engagement.

As I write this account I want to challenge myself to find a third, different kind of image, hold it and notice how it might lead to different reflections.

I muse over a series of photographs, purposefully looking for 'difference'…

One speaks to me. It is a detail of the Golden Gate Bridge. Steel cables with the sea in the background. I like the contrast between the steel and the sea, both strong but in such very different ways. I want to pay attention to the quality of our interactions, in
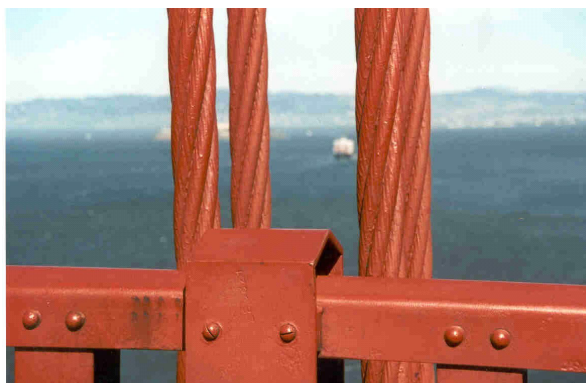
the consulting team and with the client. Will it be steely, or fluid, or of a different nature altogether?

I asked myself questions about the impact of using music, both with my clients and on my writing: how did it affect me in the writing process? How could I use it as a contribution to my clients' flourishing? In the account of Phase 1 I document client

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comments about the music playing upon their arrival and the availability of a selection of records for their perusal. I quote:
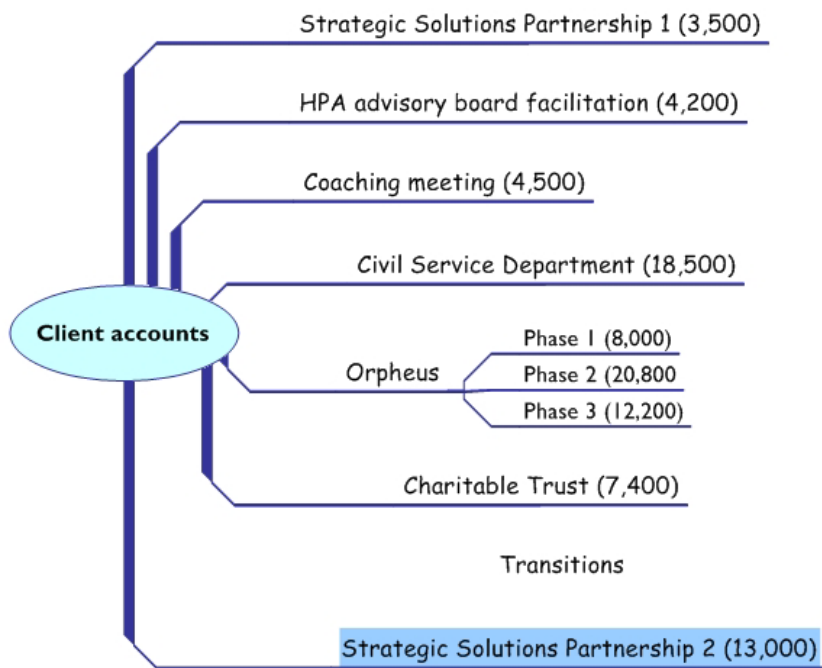
I hoped to add a sensory dimension with the music. The beautiful building, the smell of coffee, the comfortable chairs, the lovely croissants and fruit: something for all senses, only something for the ear was missing. At the same time I was aware of my own aversion for 'piped music everywhere'. So I had taken care in the selection, and fully intended to leave 'quiet moments' too. (…) Knowing my own sensitivity to music, I felt I owed the group an explanation and the explicit option to have no music at all, or to choose their own. Many participants expressed their delight at this 'special touch' (e.g. Goshia on day 2), and in the course of the event the music became a topic of conversations between delegates, and with ACL colleagues. When I asked whether delegates would recommend having music available on future occasions the answer was a resounding 'Yes. It was nice to have the choice'.

2 Outer arcs of attention (Marshall 2001)

I had shared my inquiry questions "How can I contribute to people's flourishing" with my team members. They readily volunteered feedback, with an admirable thoughtfulness and candour. I avoided the 'flourishing' term when inviting feedback from participants, framing my question instead in a language more congruent with the organisational discourse in Orpheus: "Was that helpful?" "Did you get what you were looking for from that workshop?" On occasions I strayed at the periphery of Orpheus' discourse, e.g.: "How did you feel about the comment I made in the group?" "Did I trespass by asking you to say more?"
Most (verbal) feedback from participants was rather guarded when delivered to the person it concerned, in line with the organisational culture where, as a participant said: "Feedback is a nono". Critical comments were usually reserved for the written feedback after the events and hardly ever of a personal nature.

In my accounts I reflected on the feedback I did receive, mainly from colleagues, and whether and how to act on it. On occasions this led to experimenting with different behaviour, other times it helped me to stay firmly on a chosen course of action, as in my dealings with Guido, a team member. I aimed to notice the outcome of my

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Strategic Solutions Partnership 1 (3,500)

HPA advisory board facilitation (4,200)

Coaching meeting (4,500)

Civil Service Department (18,500)

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Orpheus

Phase 1 (8,000)

Phase 2 (20,800

Phase 3 (12,200)

Charitable Trust (7,400)

Transitions

Strategic Solutions Partnership 2 (13,000)

actions and engage in further reflections (Rowan 2001).

Second person inquiry processes (Torbert 2001)

As we were working with Orpheus, conversations in Ashridge Consulting were taking place about emotion work involved in the process of joining, belonging to ACL as a community of practice and in consulting.

The emotionally demanding nature of the work generated many opportunities for the consulting team to relate the questions we were asking ourselves in ACL to our work with Orpheus (e.g. What is the nature of emotion work? When do we experience it as "emotional labour" (Hochschild 1983)? Do we have to 'act' (o.c.) in our work with this client? What effect does this have on our well-being?) and became connected to questions about our own flourishing and that of our clients (e.g. How can we look after ourselves? How can we protect ourselves? What do we need in order to cope, let alone flourish? How can we look after each other? Are we doing that well enough? How do we look after our clients?)

We created regular opportunities, in between coaching meetings and at the events to return to our questions and take stock. I elaborate on our strategies and findings in the next chapter.

The account of Phase 3 was developed in parallel with the second account about Strategic Solutions Partnership, to which I turn my attention next.

5.1.9 Strategic Solutions Partnership (2)

The account is a reflection on a two day engagement with the Edinburgh office of Strategic Solutions Partnership (SSP) (an abbreviated version is attached in appendix one). I will start by telling you about the nature of the work, followed by a discussion of the qualities of my inquiry in the account, illustrated by some extracts.

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The story

The managing partner of SSP had asked me to work with staff in the new Edinburgh office in February 2002. Growing very rapidly, the office had the usual teething problems and there was some conflict between the two office managers, with a divisive impact on the rest of the team. In the week before I travelled to Edinburgh, one of them resigned, creating both anxiety (Bion 1959)and opportunities for change. I spent two days in individual conversations with senior lawyers and administrators, and in group conversations with junior staff. On the second afternoon senior staff and were joined by the managing partner and the partner responsible (but not located at) the Edinburgh office in conversation about the way forward.

The account took the shape of 'inner arcs of attention' in a first person inquiry (Marshall 2001): I reflected on how I conducted myself in those various conversations, the choices I made and the reasons for them, and the assumptions I was holding in my work with the clients. I purposefully worked with the same questions that had informed my inquiry into the Orpheus work. The nature of the work and the client dynamics were very different and I had enjoyed it greatly. Considering my tendency to reflect on 'trouble', I was curious to find out what I would learn from reflecting on work that had gone well, according to the client and to myself.

Comments on the account

The account is a refreshing read, according to my CARPP members. It is crafted over 3 months and incorporates 3 cycles. The pleasure of working with this client is present in the text, which captures my mood, thoughts and feelings in the moment: the surprises in individual conversations (Li's steely quality; the pleasure of engaging with Lea; the changing nature of my conversation with Paul, the frustration when someone turns up late and I'm left standing on the door step), the rowdy engagement of the junior lawyers, the wonderful way in which the senior lawyers took up the baton and ran with it after I offer my perspective on the situation.

Pleased with the quality of the work I did, I felt I really had made a contribution to human flourishing through:

Contributing to flourishing by a well timed disappearance.

- the careful attention I brought to conversations with individuals and my more relaxed presence (balancing between being present and being detached, thus looking after myself in the process) in the conversations over lunches and dinner
- the extent to which I had been constructed as 'easy going and approachable' (client feedback) and the contribution I made to that (e.g making tea for anyone who wanted it, unusual relational work for a consultant (Fletcher 1998), having informal conversations with people about the nature of their work and their current projects (client feedback)). Clients commented on how my easy going presence had enabled our conversations.
- the care I took in agreeing what to feed back and what to keep confidential
- the impromptu moments (e.g. when I role played 'being the bully' with junior lawyers)
- the shared inquiry. The way I managed to stay out of expert consulting by the lightness with which I offered a draft summary, subsequently disappearing to 'make tea' in order to give people the space for their conversation to develop, to take my analysis apart and make their own.

The quality of the engagements is, I believe, reflected in the writing style: extensive and thoughtful when describing thoughtful one to one conversations, and more racy and humorous in describing the meeting with junior lawyers. On occasions I used a direct 'dialogue format' (e.g. when proposing to do a role-play), adding to the pace of the story. I was reluctant to use that form of presentation as it can easily be construed as a literal rendition of what was said. I was working from notes and memory. It seemed important to find a form that did not distort the constructed nature of my account (Gergen 1999), for which I used an image in the text: (see extract on next page)

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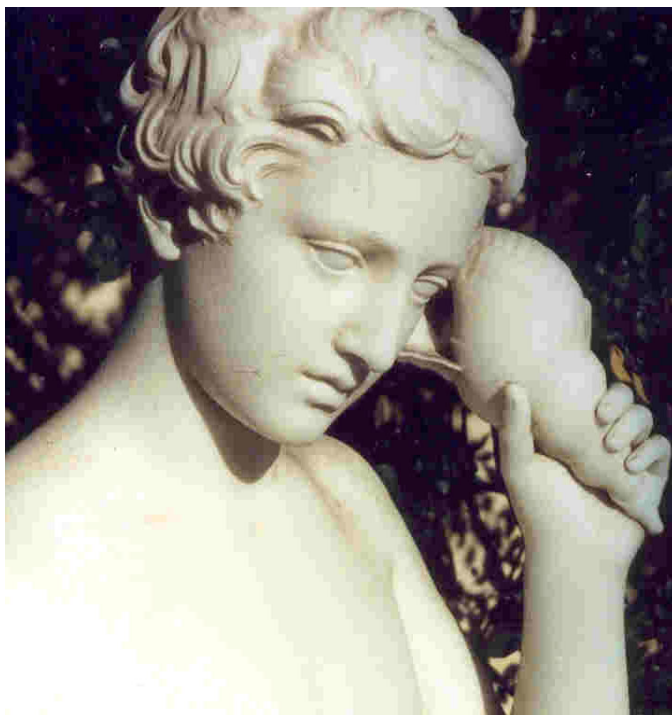
The 'lady with the shell' speaks to me as an image for this account, telling me something about why I chose to write about my Edinburgh experience: it's about women, in a way and about my listening, attentively, to people's stories, it also points to the constructed nature of my sense making: what I perceive is mediated through my senses… the sea in the shell .

I listen to Handel's Oboe Concertos.

I liked the texture and rhythm of the account, the images, the use of space and different fonts, mirroring my experience (Richardson 2000). I used fonts more creatively than before, on occasions inserting sentences in reflective font in the midst of a narrative piece.

Holding the same questions as in the Orpheus accounts, in different circumstances and over a sustained period, created opportunities to for reflections to evolve. In reflections at the end I commented on the absence of the previously prominent theme of emotion work, despite my emotional engagement with this client:
Does that mean if it's not 'hard work' I do not consider it to be work and doesn't get mentioned? I need to think about that.

I contrast the joy of the pleasure of the work with the struggle I experienced writing about it (see extract below).

Do I find it more compelling, or easier, to write about work that's been difficult, problematic? John Dewey claims that inquiry is triggered by problematic situations (cited in Schon 1995), as I

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experience(d) in my work with Orpheus: "When in doubt reflect". I have previously called this tendency my 'depreciative inquiry' frame. Schon states that *surprise* triggers reflection (o.c.). I don't really think that was applicable to my work with this client either. Torbert (2001) points out how difficult it is to remain inquiring as we go about our daily lives and work. I think this is relevant here. It's harder to stop and reflect on work that feels much like other work, especially when problematic situations are unfolding at the same time (Orpheus is still ongoing). But I think it is also about the quality of the conversations I had, the joy of engaging together in 'wanting to create a new reality for this office', which I find difficult to portray. I worry I will lose that quality in too many 'content' details. There seems to be a precarious balancing act between presenting the content of conversations versus the spirit of them.

Stacey writes:

"Human experience is story-like. In their relational communication people are constructing intricate narratives and abstract-systematic frameworks. When they reflect on what they have been doing, on what they are doing and on what they hope to do, they select aspects of these dense narratives/abstract frameworks to tell stories or extend their abstract-systematic frameworks of propositions in order to account for what they are doing and make sense of their worlds. In the process their very identities, individually and collectively, emerge" (2001 p 140).

The quote resonates with what I am trying to do here, telling my story, in two ways:

- My flourishing is connected to the extent I contribute to that of others. Developing a different (successful) story about myself and my work is a contribution to my own flourishing (Rosenwald and Ochberg 1992)

- The awareness I brought to the work, of people constructing their story, their meaning and their very identity, and the positive, purposeful intention to support that process in a way that facilitates a generative story to emerge, is what I believe 'contributing to a generative space' is all about. It seems to connect with Bohm's dialogue concept (1996): this being present, together, noticing my assumptions and holding them, without judgement or repression.

The account tells the reader about my inquiry in other spaces: coaching supervision, action learning, conversations with colleagues, CARPP, mentoring:

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" (…) sharing thoughts with colleagues as this account was being constructed, easily, naturally ("I've just written something about that, I'm discovering that…") my writing found it's way in my daily conversations with colleagues.

It is an indication of the extent to which I am connected into other communities and the importance of that connection for me, even when I am working on my own (Wenger 1998). I develop this further in the next chapter.

Engagement with literature doesn't feature prominently. Psychodynamic concepts, prominent in previous accounts, don't feature at all. The main reason for this, I think, is that this account was not written in an attempt to find solutions to problematic situation, but as a means to explore and articulate what I knew in the spontaneous, intuitive actions of my daily consulting practice (Polyani 1958; Schon 1995). If I was inquiring into "How do I contribute to human flourishing", then paying attention to what happened in an engagement where I experienced that flourishing, and observed it in others, was a good place to start. On this occasion I was interested in my own answers.

5.2   Concluding thoughts

In this chapter I have described how I have used writing accounts as a first person inquiry into my consulting practice. In those accounts different strands of inquiry are interwoven:
- They aim to capture my reflections-in-action, which incorporate thinking about the action and the result it achieved, as well as an exploration of my knowing-in-action (Schon 1995), the knowledge I implicitly bring to bear in my consulting practice.
- They *tell* the reader about other first person inquiry practices: inquiring conversations with colleagues (further explored in the next chapter) and with clients, meditation, working with music and images and, to a minor extent, about my second person inquiry processes.
- They are also reflections on reflection-in-action (Schon o.c.), exploring my action

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strategies, models of the world, assumptions and subjecting them to critical review, leading to strategies for further action (Torbert 2001).

- They contain narratives about my writing process itself. Richardson (2000) calls those narratives 'writing stories' "(…) (which) situate the author's writing in other parts of the author's life (…). They offer critical reflexivity about the writing self in different contexts (…) They evoke new questions about the self and the subject" (p 931).

- They *show* my process of writing and working with images as an inquiry practice

- Although they are autobiographical, personal stories, I do not consider them to be auto-ethnographic (Ellis and Bochner 2000) in the strict sense of the word, because their historical and socio-cultural dimension is developed only lightly. However, they have qualities of 'evocative narratives' (Bochner, Ellis et al. 1997):

  - Written in the first person, they make me, the author the subject of inquiry

  - They position the readers (CARPP and, to a minor extent ACL colleagues) as co-participants in dialogue, rather than in the role of passive receiver.

Sources of learning, they have, on occasions been a source of healing (Richardson 2000).

In the next chapter I share first and second person inquiries into my role as a member of the ACL community, as a colleague and as a consultant to clients.