



Birth-story and the *Unbearable age*.

This dissertation is submitted by Elen Bowman (2205832) to the University of Wales Trinity St David's partial fulfilment of the requirement for a Master's in Psychotherapeutic practice: Humanistic, under the supervision of Doctor Beverly Cole.

Submitted July 2025

Abstract

Currently there is a wealth of information about birth stories by mothers charting the experience of birth, but a marked lack of research of the birth-story's influence on the recipient. A birth-story has potency when told by a significant adult, intensifying our identification with it and can often be a forerunner of latent psychology within the family. Such a story for instance, can highlight themes rooted in the parent's unconscious as well as contribute to the recipient's lived experience. A heuristic exploration affords an opportunity for an in-depth personal study of the phenomenon. This detailed and explicit work explores how a birth-story, told by my mother during adolescence, contributed to my perception of self and to my relationship with my father with far reaching consequences. The main conclusion of this research considers the role a birth-story takes in forming identity, the power and mythic resonance of its telling on an adolescent mind and, its potential as an aid to explore and illuminate its influences on presenting issues in the therapy hour. Therefore, recommendations for practice suggests that the birth-story can provide a map from which to navigate impressions and questions to relevant areas of therapeutic exploration.

Keywords: Heuristic study, Birth-story, Avoidant attachment, Adolescence, Ancestral trauma, Cults, Narrative identity, Workaholism.

This is a redacted copy. To read the whole document please contact the author at elen.bowman@gmail.com

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed: Elen Bowman (signed)

Date: 27/06/2025

Statement 1

This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Psychotherapeutic Practice: Humanistic.

Signed: Elen Bowman (signed)

Date: 27/06/2025

Statement 2

This dissertation is the result of my own independent work / investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A reference list is appended.

Signed: Elen Bowman (signed)

Date: 27/06/2025

AI Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the use of SCISPACE on 26/09/24 to research this dissertation. I used the single prompt:

1. How do birth stories affect child development.

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Acknowledgment

I wish to acknowledge the wonderful help and support of my supervisor Bev Cole, who has been such a grounding and positive influence on the process. Thanks also to my partner and son, who not only generously supported me but have been pivotal to this heuristic dissertation and given their permission for this work to be submitted. A special thank you to my father, for all of what he was, and the learning that he inspired.

“The child is not a blank slate that can be written on. The child is the slate, the chalk and the person”

(Belsky et al., 2020, p.42)

“I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family, which is passed on from parents to children. It has always seemed to me that I had to ...complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished”

(Jung, 1964, p. 233-234.)

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction	7
Chapter 2	Literature Review	9
Chapter 3	Methodology	22
	Ethical considerations	25
Chapter 4	Findings	
	Immersion	27
	Illumination	33
	Explication	34
	Creative synthesis	35
Chapter 5	Analysis and Discussion	36
	Future Practice	37
Chapter 6	Conclusion	40
List of Figures		
<i>Fig 1 Chapter 34, p.46</i>		
References		42
Appendix 1 Ethical statement		55
Appendix 2 Question for birth-story processing		55
Appendix 3 Poems inspired by themes		56

Chapter 1 - Introduction

According to Ogden and Syder (2022) quantitative research shows how the impactful events of childbirth can affect health and experiences, and stories about the experience of giving birth are well documented. However, few academics have researched this narrative field from the perspective of the child, and evidence is needed about the effects of hearing and processing a birth-story, from infant to adulthood (Ogden and Syder, 2022; Andrews et al., 2015). The fact that birth stories contain such significant personal information but cannot be recalled by the person puts them at the acute junction of autobiography and biography. Andrews et al. (2015), describe it as a means of anchoring the person's life story which has shown repeatedly to unearth important elements of identity (Baerger and McAdams, 1999, McAdams, 1985, McAdams, 2001). McAdams (2019) states that, although "Life stories" usually stem from facts, people will naturally construe and appropriate them in a way that make sense subjectively, striving to make life more meaningful, which becomes especially so during adolescence when our life narrative and who we hope to become, begins its formation (McAdams and McLean, 2013). As a baby is introduced to the world, a birth-story is created and given meaning by the teller, reflecting their values, culture, and assumptions (Reese and Neha, 2015). It can signal to the child the constraints of their identity, who they are to become according to the care givers beliefs and attachment style, creating significant implications for the individuals subsequent relations in life (Dobrich, 2022). Ogden and Syder (2022) make a call for research that can attempt to convey the effects of more regular day-to-day birth stories. To this end, the birth-story was conveyed during adolescence as a joke by my mother and its

sentiments would always provoke laughter. The story provided evidence of my relationship with my father at that time, the echoes of which transpired to affect my identity and life decisions in profound ways such as an extreme cult training, a challenging career, the decision to adopt followed by the challenge of being a mother on a road less travelled. The central aim of this heuristic qualitative work will be to examine the potential of the birth-story as a piece of evidence as well as a source of mythic resonance to assist the client to recognise or understand underlying themes and forces still active in past and present chapters of their lives. Elevated as a significant area of questioning, this work proposes that the birth-story can provide a rich seam of information, which the client and therapist can draw from, to help guide the change process.

Research Question

How can a birth-story, and the era in which it was told, as well as the meaning ascribed to it, affect a person's individuation?

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

According to Ogden and Syder (2022) there is a dearth of evidence about how individuals process birth stories told to them. Their research presents a qualitative review involving ten participants yielding three main themes about how the story formed their feeling of self, how it changed their perception of their relationship with family and how it prompted a prospect of parenting in the future. Also, importantly, it was found how humour can soften the story's impact. Ogden and Syder state -

“This can mostly negate any negative content of the story and ensure that even the most frightening events can become positive influences...if they are told about in a positive way” (2022.n.d).

Research shows that stories can model how we create an understanding of the world and how we hear a story depends on the storyteller and their role in a person's life (Haven, 2007; Hoeken et al., 2016). Even difficult events can be framed in a more encouraging way when related supportively (Ogden and Syder, 2022). Dobrich (2022) states that children often can oblige subconscious constructs communicated by the parent whether it be fantasy or real experiences. Therefore, the information a client will have absorbed about their birth-story could supply an impression of the parent's subconscious thinking about the birth, possibly assisting the unfolding therapeutic journey in understanding life patterns and themes in the person's life (Bromberg, 1996;

Dobrich, 2021; Stern, 2010). The child's birth marks a new beginning which calls upon the parent's dynamic participation and can also highlight if this has been more absent. In this way, the birth-story can be used as a 'trailer for relational expectancies yet to be lived' (Dobrich, 2022). Upon reflection on Ogden and Syder's findings, this literature review, explores research areas based on my journal entries, inspired by the research question of how a birth-story told to me during adolescent may have affected my individuation process.

Avoidant Attachment – I first learnt of my birth-story when my relationship with my father had begun to deteriorate during adolescence. In consideration of this time of conflict, the birth-story therefore was perceived as evidence that I was a disappointment to him in not being born a boy. This is termed as gender disappointment (Hendl and Browne, 2020). Through diary entries, thematic analysis revealed that my father's avoidant attachment style exacerbated my negative sense of self. Cundy (2019) describes this attachment style as a need to avoid intimacy as well as repressing any needs, feelings and memories that can arise for the person and signals a deep wound within. An avoidant person will be used to containing their true feelings from others, which in the long-term will also result in hiding emotions from themselves (Cundy, 2019). Schwartz (2021) explores how absence created by an avoidant father, can be a painful and unrequited love story between father and daughter, which becomes associated with sadness, yearning, frustration, and rage affecting body and mind. Schwartz states that,

“The father is supposed to foster emotional life and value but does not.

What the daughter gets instead of love is emptiness which she can neither securely attach to nor separate from. This is often accompanied by masochistic and unloving attitudes, mostly turned onto herself. The result is confusion and denial of autonomy. She is, in effect, imprisoned with the absent father and in this place remains unconscious.” (Schwartz, 2021, p.2).

The ‘dead father effect’ (Kohon, 1999, p. 54) coined by the French psychoanalyst, Andrey Green, can be so difficult that the daughter’s solution is to forget in order to survive. However, a chronic feeling of anxiety often accompanies her during her life journey. By being absent the father compromises the daughter’s ease, expression, and confidence in the world. His unconscious taking of her energy and focus results on a daughter who may not have enough space for interpretation and objectivity. This relationship of yearning keeps the daughter psychologically chained so that she is unable to discover her passion in life, and feels unrequited, frustrated and alone and Schwartz emphasises the importance of grieving this loss of connection with a father (2021). Studies by Gillath et al. (2019) utilising experimental and interactional methods, revealed that adults who felt unwanted/unplanned scored highly with anxiety and unwanted individuals also experienced increased avoidant attachment scores than unplanned participants. The results propose that the avoidantly attached will attempt to cope with anxiety and threat by repressing it to cope with distress (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2002) and this can lead to a lack of value for relationships. When someone has a feeling of

being unwanted, it can follow that they do not feel the need for closeness with others, growing more avoidant and shrinking from contact with family. The review encourages therapists therefore to consider the client's birth situation as a valid line of exploration, providing a probable indicator of the person's attachment status.

The Adolescent individuation process - Erik Erikson's findings defined adolescence as a crisis between needing to sort out the dilemma of identity and role confusion (Erikson, 1968). When I learnt the details of my birth-story my individuation process had already been influenced by a strong urge to rebel against education, due to the fear of being perceived as a failure in my father's eyes. Hearing the story therefore provided the evidence I needed to feel vindicated to defend my self-worth. Frankel (2023) argues that adolescence can be one of turbulence and suffering. Freud et al., (1958) stated that it is the adolescent's need for defence to cope with the strong urges of psychological forces that can blight the psyche at this stage. The disturbance and crisis can be understood as methods for the adolescent to defend oneself. However, Winnicott offers a different angle (1965), and interprets the adolescent's urge to hide away to create a protective shield, enabling a safer place for their individuation exploration. Jung (C.W. 1953) clearly was of the belief that a child is not born a blank slate, but rather a 'sharply defined individual entity' (C.W. 1953, p. 9, para.151). However, he also writes about how the unconscious mind of the parent can impress upon the child; 'the more sensitive and impressionable the child; the deeper the impression'(C.W. 1953,p.2, para 1007). Child therapist Frances Wickes (1927) describes how the family status

quo shifts when a child becomes an adolescent. Puberty can stir up the order of things marking a big change in the parental role, and the child's experience of this can be highly dependent on the parent's response. This is also fuelled by what Jung claims to be an outburst of sexual development (C.W. 1953, p.8, para. 756). This era, titled by Jung as the 'Unbearable age', can create resentment in the child's unconscious, and once provoked, the exasperated pubescent will rail against the parent's wishes. Jung's distinctive rationale about adolescence is that individuation is, at the root, a 'process of differentiation' (C.W. 1953, p.6, para.757) focused on the need to develop the personality. Part of this differentiation process is the adolescent's ability to doubt and challenge the 'collective ideals' of their times and explore the shadow aspect of society's sacred cows (Frankel, 2023). In this period of change from childhood to adulthood, Guggenbühl-Craig (1971) asserts that although the adolescent may follow destructive paths, her fate is determined by her guardians as her tools or weapons are largely supplied by them, as they were once adolescents themselves. To aid healthy psychological development, the adolescent needs to journey through an era of disapproval and disruption so she can prepare and fertilize the inherited values of her parents or form her own. In so doing the adolescent metaphorically is required to dance with the devil to experience destructiveness, to battle through to freedom. Guggenbühl-Craig states that this process is entirely unique to the adolescent and does not feature in the child phase, as the frustrated toddler cannot have the freedom to act out their urges. The teenager 'must have contact with the devil but they must on no account identify with him' (p.118). Accepting, if not honouring, the adolescent's need for an imaginal meeting with the devil, can offer a solution to reduce the attraction

of living the need (Frankel, 2023). A transversal study by Mendo-Lázaro et al. (2019) show how the effects of rejection or acceptance by parents can affect stability during early to mid-adolescence and they report a connection between family dynamics and the adolescent's ability to adjust emotionally (Estévez, Musitu and Herrero, 2005). They find a definite association between emotional and social adjustment and paternal criticism regarding the child's upbringing. The conclusions corroborate research that bear a connection between authoritarian or neglectful parenting and emotional instability in the child, bearing the hallmark of a lack of affection and communication as well as a pattern of internalizing issues (Muris et al., 2004). Therefore, there is a need for acceptance by parents as the adolescent is experiencing personality development, and they will seek out those with whom they can feel an emotional attachment (Rohner and Khaleque, 2012). The research also points to how changing dynamics in adolescence can result in an increase in rejection by the father and more specifically in the later stages of adolescence. Mendo-Lázaro et al. make recommendations regarding the importance of training for parents to illuminate that perhaps *their* behaviour could be the cause of the adolescents' challenges. Parenting should provide welfare and security to help guide and promote emotional balance for adolescents who can be prone to pressures of failure and difficulty. Authors of this transversal study demand that causal associations should not be made. They warn advisedly that the use of self-reports and perceptions made by children/adolescents in this research paper, as the only source of information, could heighten respondent bias (Mendo-Lázaro et al., 2019).

Ancestral Trauma - The quote by Jung at the opening of this dissertation (p.5) refers to his perception that his life was actively affected by the karma of his ancestors (Jung, 1964, p.233-234). Likewise, I perceived how ancestral events subtly featured in the birth-story, distilled within my father's proposed male name planned for me. Expert on inherited family trauma, Mark Wolynn (2017), directs us to look beyond the present psychology of an individual to consider any traumatic happenings in their family and social history. Although Wolynn's background is not scientific, he cites that research within cellular biology and epigenetics as well as developmental behaviourism demonstrates that it is necessary to investigate three generations of a person's past to enable a better understanding of any reoccurring issues. Wolynn illustrates this with his client Gretchen suffering with chronic anxiety and suicidal ideation, expressing a need to 'vaporise' and 'incinerate' herself (2017, p.20). Having worked with descendants of Holocaust survivors he enquired if her ancestors were Jewish. Gretchen remembered that her grandmother's family had suffered and died in Auschwitz, but she never spoke of it. When Wolynn talked her through this connection, the client experienced a startling physiological shift, enabling her to begin a healing process. The ground-breaking work of biologist Bruce Lipton (2000) was seminal in discovering the phenomenon of how a person's DNA can be influenced by positive or negative beliefs, emotions, and thoughts (Gustafson, 2017). Lipton proved that signals from the exterior world could reach through the membrane of a cell within a human body and had the power to switch a gene on or off, as well as effect behaviour and emotions, and that the cell's fate is controlled by the quality and condition of its environment. Discoveries about the chromosomal DNA, which supplies us with our family's

physical aspects such as hair, eye and skin colour actually only forms a mere 2 percent of the total DNA (Park, 2012) and the remaining 98% is made up of noncoding DNA which is responsible for inherited behaviour, emotion and characteristics (Vendramini, 2005). This DNA is understood to be impaired by stressors in the environment, namely low-grade nutrition, stress, and toxins (Skinner and Guerrero-Bosagna, 2014). This affected DNA helps supply important information to the foetus to prepare it for life and survive traumas that its parents has suffered. However, this can be detrimental if a baby, for instance, is reared in the middle of a war, as it may trigger a hyper-alert state and react negatively to any sounds reminiscent of such a conflict, leading to stress and disease (Rodriguez, 2015). Such adaptive shifts are activated by chemical signals in the cells which connect with the DNA and alert the cells to turn off or activate a particular gene. The sequence of the DNA is not affected but the way it communicates is impaired, due to what is termed as epigenetic tags which are enzymes that transform gene expression (Wright, 2013). An important discovery here is that these tags can show differences in how people handle stress as they develop inconsistencies in the DNA 's methylation process (Gustafson, 2017), which blocks off any proteins attaching and affecting its expression, as well as a propensity for health problems which can affect successive generations (Wolynn, 2017). Yael Danieli (Danieli and Maidan, 2023) of the International Organization for Victim Assistance at the United Nations produced a report on multigenerational legacies of trauma which identifies three behavioural coping mechanisms that can form an essential part of a survivor's character. These are *Victim style*, *Numb style*, and *Fighter style*. These mechanisms also influenced the survivor's parenting

approach, shaping the child's identity and beliefs. Yael states "thus are the child's biopsychosocial milieu that ultimately influences the severity of the child's reparative adaptational impacts". Preliminary studies by Greenblatt-Kimron et al. (2023) show that second and third generation descendants of survivors of the Holocaust involved in the current Russo-Ukraine war, revealed intergenerational transference of trauma, with an increased vulnerability and sensitivity to stress (2023). However, in consideration of the role of epigenetics in this phenomenon, a review by Banushi, Collova and Milroy (2025) argues that although there has been compelling progress in understanding the challenging influence of trauma, their application to epigenetic inheritance in people requires further evidence and is currently primarily based on how trauma is activated via social and cultural causes. They propose that new frontiers in therapy such as psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy may offer new and dynamic approaches to help address trauma's imprint on the psyche. To further understanding in this field, they make a call for interdisciplinary participation and culturally considered research practices to strengthen resilience and foundations for intergenerational recovery (Banushi, Collova and Milroy, 2025).

Validation and Workaholism – The birth story signalled a sense of disappointment, in that I was not born of the desired sex. In consequence to this, I experienced a strong desire to prove my validity throughout my working life. Maté (2022) describes the various types of suffering, from the obvious of what he calls the big T traumas, to the more subtle developmental issues titled small T traumas. His classification of trauma is what takes place inside us,

rather than what has happened *to us*. Maté provides examples of how a seemingly 'normal' childhood with conscientious parenting can also be one which has painful, discarded events lying at the core, where experiences of 'profound emotional hurt' (Maté, 2022. p. 228) have been demoted but can appear through addictions such as workaholism. Workaholism, was initially defined as a person with a compulsive, uncontrollable and a constant need to work (Oates, 1971). Coombes (2004) in the handbook of addictive disorders states that a core part of maintaining our mental health is the ability to create and renew relationships as well as investing in a belief system that creates a sense of meaning in life - what Erikson (1963, 1968) termed as psychosocial integration. Failure to achieve this integration triggers a need to cope or mask the suffering which give rise to addictions due to a "dislocation in the psyche causing a need within to attach oneself with a tenacity to something that can temporarily ease the problem" (Alexander, 2000, p.503). Research by Eugenea et al (2021) showed that physical neglect in childhood was the predominant factor affecting workaholic professionals, defined as a deprivation of clothing, food, or adequate care during sickness with safety not being met. A qualitative study has shown (Kenyhercz et al, 2022) that addiction to work can create dysfunction and conflict within family relationships, unhappiness within marriage and mental health issues. High expectations by parents can be transmitted intergenerationally, making children susceptible to the addiction with demanding parenting style frequently associated with the father role (2022). Other positive relations with work addiction (Atroszko, Demetrovics and Griffiths, 2020) were traits of conscientiousness, associated with impulse control, which can relate to social conformity, leading to the need to achieve the

approval and expectations of others in detail and order. Limitations of this study (Kenyhercz et al, 2022) were mitigated due to two researchers independently conducting the data analysis, which diminished bias. However, other limitations were that the data were analysed retrospectively which can affect accuracy and recollection, with a small sample size, and which lacked diversity. Verrastro et al (2024) sought out to explore how perfectionism and neuroticism bear a relationship with workaholism and childhood emotional abuse (CEA) as well as gender differences. Validated self-questionnaires were completed by 1176 younger workers, 50% being women aged 18-25. The evidence showed a positive interplay with workaholism with no differentiation between men and women. The recommendations outlined the importance of trauma informed pathways to help avert or manage possible workaholism. Also, these conclusions point to the need for identifying and processing personality traits such as perfectionism and neuroticism via therapy interventions. I could identify that my tendency for workaholism was derived of feeling a deep-seated sense of worthlessness brought on by the shame of failure at school and paternal judgment. Evidence has shown (Soraci et al., 2022; Kun et al., 2020) that areas of workaholism are derived of issues regarding self-esteem with a characteristic pattern of a hyper vigilance for making mistakes, and at work, such people will focus on their negative states of mind and imperfections and will possess a certain drive for enhancing performance (Kun et al., 2020). Indeed, Schwartz (2021) findings are that daughters can often overcompensate by aiming for exceptional outcomes to finally gain appreciation by the father.

Narrative identity development – Since 1973, the Dunedin research project (Belsky et al., 2020), has observed over a thousand children, identifying their personality continuity as ‘evocative, reactive or proactive’ to their environment (2020, p.41). They use a striking metaphor about how the personality maintains continuity through life: ‘The child is not a blank slate to be written on, the child plays the role of the slate being written on, the chalk doing the writing, and the person holding the chalk’ (2020, p.42). Here they evidence that children are not plasticine that can be moulded by others but have a very active role in presenting and maintaining their personality narrative over a span of time. Research authored by McAdams (2019) states that life narratives become pertinent aspects of selfhood during adolescence and emerging adulthood. It is in this period, that a young person will need to answer existential questions about who they are and, what can provide purpose and a sense of place in their lives. The adolescent will dedicate their time to narrate their lives as a series of developing stories, termed as narrative identity (McAdams, 2013, 2019). A life story, will combine goals, meaning, significant experiences and values to create a somewhat comprehensible person that can support themselves in life (Adler, 2019). Self-directed identity changes can often offer a personal sense of growth and remain a part of the ongoing life narrative which can enhance health and wellbeing (Bauer & McAdams, 2004). Narratives can encourage greater empathy (Koopman 2015; Oatley 2016) and help us process difficult life events from our past. In essence, stories are a powerful modality to create meaning (Akers and Saucier, 2019). Therefore, in relation to the transitions of life and how they are regarded, even a challenging life event can encourage an increased sense of identity (Atchley, 1989). However, adolescents with higher

levels of neuroticism are prone to create narratives about their lives that can show a predominance of negative emotion, and lower rates of development (Lodi-Smith et al., 2009). People with raised levels of neurosis and depression tend to identify what is termed as a contamination sequence, suddenly turning positive events to negative (Adler, Kissel and McAdams, 2006). Additionally, events perceived as loss, fear, failure, or shame, can demand for a reason and explanation, (Pals, 2006) with individuals wanting to find logical explanations and what they might symbolise for them. A study of 627 adolescents (Metts et al., 2021) over a three-year period showed the effects of neuroticism, triggering chronic stress (socialization effects). These findings put forward the importance of managing stress and focusing on prevention strategies for neuroticism in adolescents. Limitations of the study was due to limited perspective of lifespan (Metts et al., 2021). Narrative identity in therapy therefore presents a challenge to such clients as they speak their experience. Furthermore, a research article by Gehrt et al. (2023) argues a lack of a valanced assessment of the effects of active sharing of narrative identity and its efficacy in providing a state of wellbeing. They claim that studies have seldom been successful in proving this. McLean et al. (2020), shows a rigorous analysis based on three samples, offering the most comprehensive published study of the subject. Gehrt et al. (2023) obtained their data for the purpose of reanalysis, and their findings confirm that the connection between life fulfilment and six motivational narrative identity fluctuations, were found to be low (defined as: $r \leq .15$) which supplied a lack of evidence of a relationship between narrative identity and well-being (2023).

Chapter 3: Methodology

According to Dobrich (2022), birth stories are conveyed with symbolised imagery and 'exist in a liminal space between fantasy and reality'. Therefore, a heuristic qualitative approach seems most fitting as it asks us to step through a metaphorical portal to enter a phase of indwelling, where the researcher can inwardly discover worlds of new inspiration (Sultan, 2018). Qualitative research (Lim, 2024) with its accent on experience, context, meaning and perspective, provides an exclusive focus we can utilise to interpret the intricacies of societal experience. Whereas quantitative research offers a logical viewpoint driven by numerical and statistical data, qualitative work aims to capture nuance and subtlety often hard to track with a numerical perspective. Therefore, employing this approach invites an exploration of depth and follows the subjective journey of the researcher as well as creating a practice that feels contemplative and rigorous (Lim, 2024). The Heuristic form is known as a kind of calling in that it chooses the subject and invites them to enter the process of discovery without knowing where the labyrinth leads. This inquiry gifts a wonderful freedom to start at one's feet with a searching and relevant question (Sultan, 2018), unearthing the incidental and the symbolic, the long forgotten as well as acute present life events, to reveal their effects and influence on the subject's relationality in their present world. Sultan states that the form offers an opportunity for self-reflection and self-transformation guiding us to delve daily into the deep woods of our thoughts and experiences, sourcing meaning and knowledge to help understand the past. Within a finite timeframe, it offers an opportunity to slow down and experience a felt sense of the world to be

explored (Gendlin, 1981; Sultan, 2018), aiming for an embodied response so that we can fully allow experience to surface and inform. This sole heuristic exploration examined my own personal experience of the effects of my birth-story on my life. During the immersion stage, when I reflected on my question during 'waking, sleeping and dream states' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28), I wrote diary entries that spanned seven months which amounted to approximately 27,000 words. From there, I utilised thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2017), which is a systematic process for noting themes and codes from qualitative information. These codes note the smallest units of analysis that help identify key aspects of the data which is most useful and relevant to the overarching research question (Clarke and Braun, 2017). The themes create a helpful framework to sort, distil and interpret the text, paying close attention to the over-arching question as a guidance while also allowing the research question to change in line with the researcher's evolving understanding. I colour coded the themes, for instance, red denoted a need to control during adolescence and grey signified ancestral grief. The titles fluctuated over the months as I efforted to find the clearest containers. For instance, at one time I named 'control' as a key theme which then changed to the need for rebellion as I responded to the visceral expression of the adolescent. With fatigue setting in, there followed an incubation period of around 7 weeks to allow the work to digest. Moustakas describes this as a period which enables an inner tacit knowledge of the work to be processed, clarifying beyond direct awareness (1990), providing a space for seeds of new understanding to grow (Sultan, 2018). The inclusion of Jungian archetypes offered a structure to help probe and identify a way of being, inspired from each theme. Jung described

archetypes as living within the subconscious, emerging when the person feels a threat in life and employed to direct the persona to a different mode of being (Jung, 1959). Archetypes can challenge the ego to allow greater vision and help glean the long-term scope of a situation (Kuang, 2023). They helped reframe my experiences as mythical characters that I could sense were still active in my life, echoing an ancient pattern of storytelling experienced by many before me. This autobiographical approach invigorates by encapsulating the lived experience of a birth-story in a rich form, be that text, songs or poetry and other creative modalities such as podcasts and films as well as conversations with family members to help reflect and process. Taking Sultan's advice (2018), I began the literary review early in the process which prompted useful questions and considerations. I focused on research that investigated the phenomenon of birth stories as well as the psychology of adolescence, the era for when I first heard the story. The search terms developed to include Birth-story, Jungian philosophy on father daughter relationships, Jungian Archetypes, Ancestral trauma, Narrative identity and meaning making, Individuation process, Adolescence, Attachment, Parental rejection. The finished literary review featured: Birth-story, Narrative identity development, Adolescence, Avoidant attachment, Ancestral trauma/transference and Workaholism. Each theme was explored mainly using academic papers published in the last five years as well as classic academic texts. The literary exclusion criteria were selected to avoid research detailing experiences of the mother and the event of giving birth. The inclusion criteria were research articles that focused on the effect of stories from the recipient's perspective and any subsequent effects they experienced through life. The data bases used were: ProQuest, Springer, Sage pub, Taylor

and Francis, Wiley Online Library, Elsevier, Psych Net, Google and Google Scholar.

Ethical considerations

A heuristic research project which explores cultural and social human experiences, primarily utilises the research aspects of applied ethics (Sultan, 2019). The dignity, rights and health of any research participant need to have rigorous consideration. Simultaneously, the researcher's duty is to help benefit society, regulate professional integrity and standards, respect local and international laws, and assert demographic differences (Huws, Dench and Iphofen, 2004). My research began once approval was granted by the University ethics committee. I chose a sole heuristic process and was aware that challenging material could arise. Early on I kept questioning if the theme was the most suitable and reminded myself that I could pull out of the process at any time. However, I realised the importance of the theme as a deep-seated unexplored phenomenon that would ultimately benefit my future role as a psychotherapist and decided to continue. I was vigilant to omit material that could harm others, always maintaining an ethical awareness and I therefore safeguarded the anonymity of places and people. To achieve this, I scanned the whole document to bracket out entries that focused too personally on family members. However, at times this was difficult as the entries touched on a fundamental aspect and helped illustrate the effects of the birth-story on myself as a mother. Therefore, I took the step to consult with my supervisor who advised me to gain the consent of my partner and adult son to include these aspects, of which they were fully supportive. I also decided to mostly bracket

out my relationship with my siblings and my mother with some occasional exceptions, to focus on a father-daughter perspective. During the process, the method helped me reflect deeply on my psychology and my awareness of the themes active in everyday life. To safeguard my health and family, I monitored the length of my computer use and made sure I remained physically active, taking walks with the dog, and taking cold-water therapy. At various stages I received counselling from a Jungian coach, Person- centred, Gestalt, and IFS counsellor. This helped with processing my response to the work, for instance at the incubation, where feelings of guilt emerged about choosing my father as the subject of this work. Positively, the heuristic process brought a helpful awareness when difficult life events took place as I was able to respond to these as a researcher with greater objectivity and purpose.

Chapter 4 – Findings

- Immersion
- Explication
- Creative synthesis

October 24th, 4.25 am: I realise now I was an adolescent when I first heard my birth-story; this at a point when I had already experienced failure at school and my father's judgment. Hearing the birth-story at that time confirmed that, being born a girl, I was a disappointment from the start. No wonder I ran away to the theatre...

Immersion

Theme 1 – Avoidant people isolate others

Birth-story: Being a disappointment. Not what was wanted.

Key words: Avoidant attachment, Inadequacy, Abandonment, Isolation

Phenomenological noticing: Something missing in my heart, a waiting, a crying in the belly, longing, numbness, knot in solar plexus, opportunity lost.

The Orphan Archetype: "On the most literal level, orphans are children who are deprived of parental nurture while too young and unskilled to take care of themselves. Perhaps the parents die, literally abandoning the child, or remain on the scene but neglect, victimize, or abuse the child. Many orphans live in what appear to be intact families, but the children are not cherished, nurtured, or guided". (Pearson, 2013, p.44)

Journal entries and analysis

Text removed. Please contact the author for full access

Reflection: The reflection that attention on me was a rarity suggests that a tendency for my father's absent avoidance was present throughout my life - intensifying during my adolescence. The birth-story therefore crystalised a creeping feeling of absence known to me for some time, the lack of solid defence and protection from my father, an implication that parent's needs are more important than the child, and a numbness about what to do about it.

Please see Appendix 3, Poem 1: **I enter** (p.72)

Theme 2: Humiliated people rebel to survive

Birth-story: The frustration of not being recognised for who I was. 'If I'm not what you really want, I won't care about you or anything else.'

Keywords: Gender, Shame, Rejection of failure, Rebellion

Phenomenological noticing: Striking out, heat in chest, tension in forehead, determination, wilfulness, grabbing, pushing.

The Rebel Archetype: Someone who believes strongly in revolt and finds society's rules and norms a challenge. They value freedom, independence, and being outrageous. The prospect of challenging expectations lies at the root of their personality. They have a reputation for being hot tempered and can overreact and fail to be rigorous in thinking thoughts through. (Singh and Gupta, 2020).

Journal entries and analysis

Text removed. Please contact the author for full access

Theme 3 : Abandoned people seek and give rescue

Birth-Story: Feeling bereft of connection and lack of consideration leading to seeking to be saved by men and saving others from similar fate.

Phenomenological noticing: Feeling of dread, free falling, weakness, ragged.

Key words: Rescuing, Cult thinking, Transference on other males, Catastrophising.

The Altruist Archetype: In relation to other people, the Altruist has an empathic and willing nature and can be generous when needs arise as well as being loving and accepting. In its shadow form the altruist has weakened boundaries, martyring the self (Tepes, 2013) (Pearson, 2013).

Journal entries and analysis

Text removed. Please contact the author for full access.

Please see Appendix 3, Poem 4: **Mission: Rescue!** (p.75)

Poem 5: **The important one** (p.77)

Theme 4 : Worthless/Shamed people seek validation

Birth-Story: Father did not repair the story.

Key words: Seeking approval. Burnout and sensitivity to absorbing conflict. Anxiety. Shame, Lack of self-esteem, Workaholism. Hyper-vigilance around perceived failure.

Phenomenological noticing: weakness, drooping, quivering solar plexus, paleness, forcing, pushing, nausea/intolerances.

Archetype - The Warrior The warriors family values are to gain 'achievement, competition and justice. Strengths foster achievement, individual expression. Weaknesses foster workaholism, stoicism and perfectionism' (Pearson, 2013, p.241)

Journal entries and analysis

Text removed. Please contact the author for full access.

Please see Appendix 3, Poem 2: Dream Taker (p.73)

Theme 5: Parent myths burden the child

Birth-Story: Gwyn and Buddug. Two names I didn't want.

Key words: Parental myth making, Ancestral Trauma.

Phenomenological noticing: Burdened, heavy, stuck in the middle, compressed in the chest area, wanting freedom, heat in the cheeks, nervous solar plexus

Archetype: The Christ Hero (**Father's archetype**) and the Moral Rebel Hero (**Mother's archetype**). **Christ hero (Gwyn)** - "transforms the entire humanity through spiritual awareness since it is the root cause of polluted humanism...the hero undergoes all sorts of physical and psychological temptations and returns as a legendary figure though he loses his physical existence in this world as Jesus Christ. The beautiful world can be realized when we return to God acknowledging true sense of spiritual love and care" (Gautam and Chhetry, 2021). **Moral rebel hero** – "willing to take a stand for what they believe in, even when doing so may lead to potentially negative social consequences such as disapproval, ostracism, and career setbacks (Monin, Sawyer and Marquez, 2008). They are willing to defy orders from an authority to engage in behaviour that violates their principles, refusing to simply go along with the group, when doing so would require them to compromise their values" (Sanderson, 2024).

Journal entries and analysis

Text removed. Please contact the author for full access.

See Appendix 3, Poem 6: **The girl not boy** (p.78)

Illumination

Text removed. For full access please contact the author.

Explication

“The mid-life transition is aided by the archetypes of the Destroyer and the Creator. Together they help us to let go of the identities we spent half our lives creating...in, and to open up to a deeper, more authentic sense of Self. In the process, we find we must let go of much of what we thought we were and recreate our lives. This transformation or rebirth...which leads to the virtue of authenticity, requires finding and expressing one’s true Self at a deeper level” (Pearson, 2016, p.114).

Text removed. Please contact the author for access.

Creative synthesis

Text removed. Please contact the author for access.

Fig 1: Ceramic bowl with candle.



Chapter 5 - Analysis and Discussion

Theme	Academic Citation	Substantiating Quote
Avoidant Attachment & Rejection	“What the daughter gets instead of love is emptiness which she can neither securely attach to nor separate from” (Schwartz, 2021, p.2)	“I was left to wonder how anyone actually felt about me being a girl and this at an acute time of sexual development”
Humour as a means to ease the birth-story impact.	“Even the most frightening events can become positive influences...if they are told about in a positive way” (Ogden and Syder, 2021)	“It would be appropriate to approach the task with awareness of the recipients long term happiness rather than just easing the moment of its telling”
Objectivity in birth-story interpretation by client	‘The child is not a blank slate to be written on, the child plays the role of the slate being written on, the chalk doing the writing, and the person holding the chalk’ (Belsky et al., 2020, p.42)	“I inevitably met the story with my own lived experiences which included experience of abuse at primary school”
Story as transference of trauma	“thus are the child’s biopsychosocial milieu that ultimately influences the severity of the child’s reparative adaptational impacts” (Danieli and Maidan, 2023)	“My father and grandmother’s experience of profound loss...could be transferred to the next generation”

The following discussion will present the findings and reflections of how a birth-story may provide evidence of the nature of my individuation process and offer a contribution to knowledge of the phenomenon. This heuristic process was

undertaken as a sole investigation, therefore limitations due to subjectivity should be kept in consideration.

Text removed. Please contact the author for access.

Future practice

Focusing deeply on the birth-story supplied many avenues of discovery, from the absent father attachment and its specific effect on daughters, to family trauma triggering beliefs around birth and death. Testing out how the birth-story influenced not only adolescence but also other key areas such as mid-life was fascinating. Experiencing a frozen sense of purpose at mid-life, identifying a need to find my father once more by moving back to the village where we lived, as well as sensing the rejection still living in my body is potent proof of how impactful moments during the adolescent phase can still be found to be working and driving later life narratives. Searching possible effects of the story upon different eras of a client's life could provide evidence for understanding its legacy.

With research by Gehrt et al. (2023) questioning the validity of narrative identity therapy it would be advisable to explore traumatic birth-stories with a right brain approach, for instance Gestalt, Art therapy, IFS, Jung's shadow work and archetypes. Being a first story told by a family member, traumatic birth stories

can bare a heavy burden on the client. Working with trauma informed therapy and Roger's core conditions (1957), to create an attachment bond between client and therapist can help repair the effects of an abusive or absent caregiver to support the client in therapy. Based on my findings and for the therapist's consideration, I offer questions and process ideas for birth-story processing which can be explored and interpreted via right brain modalities.

- **At what age did you learn about your story - What was happening for you at that time?**
- **How was the story conveyed to you?**
- **Why do you think it was told in this way?**
- **How did you feel when you heard the story?**
- **Can you identify any beliefs triggered by this story?**
- **Does this feeling still play out in your life now with this parent / guardian? If so how?**
- **Did you hear any other stories about your family or parents at the time of pregnancy? What was your parent's situation etc.**
- **Does this birth-story echo any impressions of past stories regarding your parent, grandparents, or ancestors?**
- **Adolescence is a phase focused on forming identity and goals for life. How would your birth-story have affected you at that time?**
- **Does the birth-story play a role in your current life phase?**

- **Are there any positive aspects to how you processed this story?**
- **Had a repair been offered, what would you have wanted your parent/guardian to say?**
- **With hindsight, how would you reframe your own birth-story to promote your well-being?**

Chapter 6 - Conclusion.

In his essay titled 'Healing Fiction' (1983), James Hillman states that therapy offers a chance to "tell a more advanced story about your life" (p26), which I take to mean the ability to reflect with greater objectivity. Examining the birth-story has certainly helped me objectify its influences and illuminate its effects. Questioning triggered a constellation of thoughts, which surprisingly addressed my lack of purpose during mid-life and encouraged a better knowingness of who I was. The research highlighted the importance of how it was told which challenged previous research with a caution for appropriation. The findings advocate that as the birth-story is processed with significance by the recipient, compassionate consideration around its telling is necessary. To this aim I compared the deeply considered life-story work of the adopted child, how the story needs to be imparted for the good of the child's well-being and highlighted the need for a repair where necessary. It also highlighted the benefit of analysing the role of other characters in the story and focus deeply on the etymology of names and their tacit impressions. The process revealed its potential as a therapeutic modality, offering a focused discussion to key eras of individuation and pin-pointing psychology from the vastness of a client's life experience. Using it as a magnified moment in time provided an opportunity to understand how ideas and myths about life were put in place by the teller and absorbed by the recipient. Deepening reflection on a birth-story can illuminate clients of a by-gone era and its people, realising their unconscious presence. The project took me full circle back to examine the missed potential in my

youth; as I wrote the dissertation, I felt the poignancy of how I suffered educationally as an adolescent, in dynamic contrast years later, with the writing of this MA dissertation. As a result of my research question, I can concede that the birth-story clearly contributed to the underlying themes of my individuation and were found to be still active in my daily life. Crucially however, the story itself was the handle to open the door on my family's psychology, attachment styles, transference of past ancestral traumas, parent's relationship status and the illumination of their personal beliefs, fears, and dreams about life which my birth initiated. By journeying the birth-story labyrinth, I emerged from a place of unconscious captivity to a new sense of aliveness and freedom.

'Why, what is to live? Not to eat and drink and breathe, but to feel the life in you down all the fibres of being, passionately and joyfully' (Browning and Browning, 1900).

Word count : 15,523

Fig 1:

Ceramic bowl by Elen Bowman 2025

References

- Adler, J.M., (2019) Narrative identity development across the lifespan and psychological well-being. *Handbook of personality development*, pp.433-447.
- Adler, J.M., Kissel, E.C. and McAdams, D.P., (2006) Emerging from the CAVE: Attributional style and the narrative study of identity in midlife adults. *Cognitive therapy and research*, 30, pp.39-51.
- Alexander, B.K., (2000) The globalization of addiction. *Addiction Research*, 8(6), pp.501-526.
- Andersen, F.B., Djugum, M.E.T., Sjøstad, V.S. and Pallesen, S., (2023) The prevalence of workaholism: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, p.1252373.
- Andrews, J., Zaman, W., Merrill, N., Duke, M. and Fivush, R., 2015. Gender differences in adolescent birth narratives. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 4(4), pp.356-362.
- Akers, L, and Saucier, G., (2019). Narrative Identity: A Cautionary Tale. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, 3(1), pp.19-22.
- Atchley, R.C., (1989). A continuity theory of normal aging. *The gerontologist*, 29(2), pp.183-190.
- Atroszko, P.A., Demetrovics, Z. and Griffiths, M.D., (2020). Work addiction, obsessive-compulsive personality disorder, burn-out, and global burden of disease: Implications from the ICD-11. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(2), p.660.

- Banushi, B., Collova, J. and Milroy, H., (2025). Epigenetic Echoes: Bridging Nature, Nurture, and Healing Across Generations. *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, 26(7), p.3075.
- Bates, W.J (1963) *John Keats*, (Cambridge : Harvard University Press) p. 249.
- Bauer, J.J. and McAdams, D.P., (2004). Personal growth in adults' stories of life transitions. *Journal of personality*, 72(3), pp.573-602.
- Belsky, J., Caspi, A., Moffitt, T.E. and Poulton, R., 2020. *The origins of you: How childhood shapes later life*. Harvard University Press. P.41-42.
- Bromberg, P. M. (1996). Standing in the spaces: The multiplicity of self and the psychoanalytic relationship. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32(4), 509–535. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.1996.10746>.
- Browning & Browning, (1900). *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, eds. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>.
- Coombes, R.H. ed., (2004) *Handbook of addictive disorders: A practical guide to diagnosis and treatment*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Cundy, L., (2019) *Attachment and the defence against intimacy: Understanding and working with avoidant attachment, self-hatred, and shame*. Routledge.
- Danieli, Y. and Maidan, I. (2023) “Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma”, *Psychosomatic Medicine and General Practice*, 8(1), p. e0801409. doi: 10.26766/pmgp.v8i1.409.
- Dobrich, J., (2022) *The Creative Use of Birth Stories in Psychoanalytic Treatments*. *Psychoanalytic Social Work*, 29(2), pp.109-122.

- Erikson, E.H., (1968) Identity youth and crisis (No. 7). WW Norton & company.
- Eugenea, P., Soetikno, N, and Roswiyani, R., (2021) December. The Childhood of Workaholic Managers and Professional Workers. In 1st Tarumanagara International Conference on Medicine and Health (TICMIH 2021) (pp. 164-169). Atlantis Press.
- Frankel, R. (2023). The Adolescent Psyche. Taylor & Francis.
- Freud, S., German, D, and Textes, G., (1958) Anna Freud: "Adolescence".
- Gautam, S. and Chhetry, T.B., 2021. Redemption through Martyrdom: Depiction of Christ Hero Archetype in Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral". Nepal Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 4(4), pp.75-80.
- Gendlin, E.T (1981). Focusing. New York, YN: Bantam Dell.
- Gehrt, T.B., Nielsen, N.P., Hoyle, R.H., Rubin, D.C. and Berntsen, D., (2023) Narrative identity does not predict well-being when controlling for emotional valence. Memory, 31(8), pp.1051-1061.
- Gillath, O., Casebier, J., Canterberry, M, and Karantzas, G., (2019) Birth status and adult attachment. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 36(8), pp.2345-2375.
- Guggenbühl-Craig, A. (1971) Power in the helping professions, Dallas: Spring Publications.p.18.
- Gustafson, C., (2017). Bruce Lipton, PhD: The jump from cell culture to consciousness. Integrative Medicine: A Clinician's Journal, 16(6), p.44.
- Greenblatt-Kimron, L., Shrira, A., Ben-Ezra, M, and Palgi, Y., (2023). Echoes of ancestral trauma: Russo-Ukrainian War salience and psychological distress among subsequent generations in Holocaust survivor families. Psychological trauma: theory, research, practice, and policy.

- Hart, C. (2018). Doing a literature review: Releasing the research imagination.
- Haven, K. (2007). Story proof: The science behind the startling power of story. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Hassan, S. (2018). Combating cult mind control : the #1 best-selling guide to protection, rescue, and recovery from destructive cults. Newton, Ma Freedom Of Mind Press.
- Hauke, C., 1996. Hillman, James. Healing Fiction. Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1994. [Originally published: New York: Station Hill Pu. Journal of Analytical Psychology, 41(3), pp.450-452.
- Hendl, T. and Browne, T.K., (2020) Is 'gender disappointment's unique mental illness?. Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy, 23(2), pp.281-294.
- Hendl, T. and Browne, T.K. (2019). Is 'gender disappointment' a unique mental illness?. Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-019-09933-3>.
- Hendry, L.B. and Kloep, M. eds., (2019). Reframing adolescent research. Routledge.
- Hillman, J. (1976) Suicide and the soul. New York: Harper Colophon.
- Hill, J.P., (1973) Some perspectives on adolescence in American society.
- Hoeken, H., Kolthoff, M. and Sanders, J., (2016) Story perspective and character similarity as drivers of identification and narrative persuasion. Human communication research, 42(2), pp.292-311.
- Hu, L. (2018). A review of Workaholism and prospects. Open J. Soc. Sci. 6, 318–334. doi: 10.4236/jss.2018.611024.
- Huws, U, Dench, S & Iphofen, R (2004) An EU Code of Ethics for Socio-Economic Research. Institute for Employment Studies.

- Jeffries, L (1973) Baxter. Available at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0069770/>
- Jung, C.G., (2014) Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar given in 1934-1939 by CG Jung. Routledge.
- Jung, C. (1964) Memories, Dreams, Reflections. Pages 233-234. Psycho-analytic explorations.
- Jung, C.G. and Shamdasani, S., (2013). The undiscovered self. Routledge.
- Jung, C.G., (1953) Collected works (CW) ,by volume and paragraph number, ed. Read, H., Fordham, M., Adler, G and McGuire, W., trans. In the main by Hull, R., Routledge and Kegan Paul, London: Princeton University Press. p.2, para 1007, p.6, para.757, p.8, para. 756, p.9, para.151.
- Jung, C.G., (1959) Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Kenyhercz, V., Frikker, G., Kaló, Z., Demetrovics, Z. and Kun, B., (2022) Dysfunctional family mechanisms, internalized parental values, and work addiction: A qualitative study. Sustainability, 14(16), p.9940.
- Kavalier-Adler, S. The Compulsion to Create. New York: Routledge, (1993) Print.
- Kivnick, H.Q. and Wells, C.K., (2014) Untapped richness in Erik H. Erikson's rootstock. The Gerontologist, 54(1), pp.40-50.
- Konkol Thege, B., Petroll, C., Rivas, C. and Scholtens, S., (2021) The effectiveness of family constellation therapy in improving mental health: a systematic review. Family process, 60(2), pp.409-423.
- Kohon, G. ed., (1999) The dead mother. London & NY: Routledge.
- Kosminsky, P.S. and Jordan, J.R. (2023). Attachment-Informed Grief Therapy. Routledge.

- Koopman, E.M. and Hakemulder, F., (2015) Effects of literature on empathy and self-reflection: A theoretical-empirical framework. *Journal of Literary Theory*, 9(1), pp.79-111.
- Kun, B., Urbán, R., Bóthe, B., Griffiths, M.D., Demetrovics, Z. and Kökönyei, G., (2020) Maladaptive rumination mediates the relationship between self-esteem, perfectionism, and work addiction: A largescale survey study. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(19), p.7332.
- Kuang, M.F., (2023) The Anima as an Archetype of Human Resilience in the Face of Calamity 1. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 68(2), pp.369-375.
- Leahy, R.(2024). *Apa.org*. Available at:
<https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/regret>.
- Levine, P.A., (1997) *Waking the tiger: Healing trauma: The innate capacity to transform overwhelming experiences*. North Atlantic Books.
- Lipton, B.H., (2016) *The biology of belief 10th anniversary edition: Unleashing the power of consciousness, matter & miracles*. Hay House, Inc.
- Lim, W. M. (2024). What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 0(0).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>.
- Lodi-Smith, J., Geise, A.C., Roberts, B.W. and Robins, R.W., (2009) Narrating personality change. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 96(3), p.679.
- Lucariello, J.M., Hudson, J.A., Fivush, R. and Bauer, P.J. eds., (2004) *The development of the mediated mind: Sociocultural context and cognitive development*. Psychology Press.
- Mendo-Lázaro, S., León-del-Barco, B., Polo-del-Río, M.I., Yuste-Tosina, R. and López-Ramos, V.M., (2019) The role of parental acceptance–rejection in

emotional instability during adolescence. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(7), p.1194.

- MacIntyre, Alasdair. (1981) *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London: Duckworth.
- Mann, D., (2021) *Psychotherapy: An erotic relationship: Transference and countertransference passions*. Routledge.
- Maree, J.G., (2022) The psychosocial development theory of Erik Erikson: critical overview. *The Influence of Theorists and Pioneers on Early Childhood Education*, pp.119-133.
- Maté, G., (2022) *The myth of normal: Trauma, illness, and healing in a toxic culture*. Knopf Canada. p.228.
- Metts, A., Yarrington, J., Enders, C., Hammen, C., Mineka, S., Zinbarg, R. and Craske, M.G., (2021) Reciprocal effects of neuroticism and life stress in adolescence. *Journal of affective disorders*, 281, pp.247-255.
- McAdams, D.P., (2013) Narrative identity. *Current directions in psychological science*, 22(3), pp.233-238.
- McAdams, D.P., (2019) “First we invented stories, then they changed us”: The evolution of narrative identity. *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture*, 3(1), pp.1-18.
- McAdams, D.P., (2021) Narrative identity and the life story. *Handbook of personality: Theory and research*, pp.122-141.
- McLean, K.C., Syed, M., Pasupathi, M., Adler, J.M., Dunlop, W.L., Drustup, D., Fivush, R., Graci, M.E., Lilgendahl, J.P., Lodi-Smith, J. and McAdams, D.P., (2020). The empirical structure of narrative identity: The initial Big Three. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 119(4), p.920.

- McCoy, T., (2017) Contextualizing Narrative Identity (Doctoral dissertation, UC Riverside).
- Mendes, T. and Hinshelwood, R.D. eds., (2024) Containment, Organisations, and the Working Task. Taylor & Francis.
- Mendo-Lázaro, S., León-del-Barco, B., Polo-del-Río, M.I., Yuste-Tosina, R. and López-Ramos, V.M., (2020) The role of parental acceptance–rejection in emotional instability during adolescence. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 16(7), p.1194.
- Merrill, N. and Fivush, R., (2016) Intergenerational narratives and identity across development. *Developmental Review*, 40, pp.72-92.
- Mikulincer M., Shaver P. R. (2002). Activation of the attachment system in adulthood: Threat-related primes increase the accessibility of mental representations of attachment figures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83, 881–895.
- Miller, A. (1996) *Prisoners of childhood : the drama of the gifted child and the search for the true self*. New York, N.Y.: Basic Books.
- Moore, T., (2021) *Soul therapy: the art and craft of caring conversations*. HarperCollins.
- Monin, B., Sawyer, P.J. and Marquez, M.J., 2008. The rejection of moral rebels: resenting those who do the right thing. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 95(1), p.76.
- Moustakas, C., (1990) *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*. Sage Publications.p.28.

- Mu, W., Chen, Z. and Duan, W., (2021) An extended evaluation of Academic Encouragement Scale for adolescents. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 39(3), pp.332-345.
- Muris, P., Roelofs, J., Meesters, C. and Boomsma, P., (2004) Rumination and worry in nonclinical adolescents. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 28, pp.539-554.
- Oates, W. E. (1971). *Confessions of a workaholic: The facts about work addiction*. New York: World Publishing Company.
- Oatley, K., 2016. Fiction: Simulation of social worlds. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 20(8), pp.618-628.
- Ogden, J. and Syder, A., (2022) Making sense of the stories we are told about our own conception and birth: a qualitative analysis. *Cogent Psychology*, 9(1), p.2105877.
- Pals, J.L., (2006) Narrative identity processing of difficult life experiences: Pathways of personality development and positive self-transformation in adulthood. *Journal of personality*, 74(4), pp.1079-1110.
- Park, A. (2012). Junk DNA — Not So Useless After All. [online] Time. Available at: <https://healthland.time.com/2012/09/06/junk-dna-not-so-useless-after-all/>.
- Pearson, C.S. (2013). *Hero Within - Rev. & Expanded Ed : Six Archetypes We Live By*. New York: Harper elixir. P.114 (online)
- Pearson, C. (2016). *Awakening the heroes within : twelve archetypes to help us find ourselves and transform our world*. San Francisco: Harperone.
- Pham, S., Porta, G., Biernesser, C., Walker Payne, M., Iyengar, S., Melhem, N. and Brent, D.A. (2018). The Burden of Bereavement: Early-Onset Depression and Impairment in Youths Bereaved by Sudden Parental Death in a 7-Year

Prospective Study. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 175(9), pp.887–896.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2018.17070792>.

- Rattansi, A. and Phoenix, A., (2005) Rethinking youth identities: Modernist and postmodernist frameworks. *Identity*, 5(2), pp.97-123.
- Reese, E. and Neha, T., (2015) Let's kōrero (talk): The practice and functions of reminiscing among mothers and children in Māori families. *Memory*, 23(1), pp.99-110.
- Robinson, B.E., (2001) Workaholism and family functioning: A profile of familial relationships, psychological outcomes, and research considerations. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 23, pp.123-135.
- Rodriguez, T. (2015). Descendants of Holocaust Survivors Have Altered Stress Hormones. *Scientific American Mind*, [online] 26(2), pp.10–10.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamericanmind0315-10a>.
- Rogers, C.R., 1957. The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of consulting psychology*, 21(2), p.95.
- Rouse, A. (2015). Holocaust survivors pass the genetic damage of their trauma onto their children. [online] Mail Online. Available at:
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3206702/Holocaust-survivors-pass-genetic-damage-trauma-children-researchers-find.html> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2025].
- Khaleque, A. and Rohner, R.P., 2012. Pancultural associations between perceived parental acceptance and psychological adjustment of children and adults: A meta-analytic review of worldwide research. *Journal of cross-cultural Psychology*, 43(5), pp.784-800.

- Sanderson, C.A., (2024) Moral rebels and heroism. In Encyclopedia of heroism studies (pp. 1417-1420). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Schwartz, S.E., (2020) The absent father effect on daughters: Father desire, father wounds. Routledge.
- Schwartz, R., (2021) No bad parts: Healing trauma and restoring wholeness with the internal family systems model. Sounds True.
- Singh, N. and Gupta, G., (2020) Jungian Archetypes in Light of The Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. International Journal of Literary Studies, 10(1-4), pp.9-12.
- Sings, A.P.W., 2016. Chapter ten STING: A POET WHO SINGS, A SINGER WHO READS ANDREA STOJILKOV. Symphony and Song: The Intersection of Words and Music, Demolition Man p.205
- Skinner, M.K. and Guerrero-Bosagna, C., (2014) Role of CpG deserts in the epigenetic transgenerational inheritance of differential DNA methylation regions. BMC Genomics, 15, pp.1-6.
- Soraci, P., Griffiths, M. D., Melchiori, F. M., Bravo, G., Guaitoli, E., Fante, E.D., & Pisanti, R. (2022). Work addiction and its association with personality traits, general distress, and self-esteem among adult Italian workers. Mediterranean Journal of Clinical Psychology, 10(3).<https://doi.org/10.13129/2282-1619/mjcp-3513>
- Soul At Play (2022). Susan E. Schwartz: The Handless Maiden Fairytale. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BDlwnr8Q0o&list=PPSV> [Accessed 9 Feb. 2025].
- Spencer, S (1979) Endless love, New York : Alfred Knopf

- Stern, D. B. (1983). Unformulated experience, —from familiar chaos to creative disorder. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 19(1), 71–99.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00107530.1983.10746593>
- Stern, D.N. (2018). *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*. Routledge.
- Stone, A (2019) *All human beings are natal: reconsidering human existence through birth: Being born: birth and philosophy*, Oxford University Press, p.60.
- Sultan, N., (2018) *Heuristic inquiry: Researching human experience holistically*. Sage Publications.
- Sroufe, L. A., Egeland, B., Carlson, E., & Collins, W. A. (2005). Placing early attachment experiences in developmental context. In K. E. Grossmann, K. Grossmann, & E. Waters (Eds.), *Attachment from Infancy to Adulthood* (pp. 48–70). Guilford Press.
- Tepes, A., (2013) *Measuring Jung's Archetypal Theory Related to Other Personality Theories*. *Journal of Transpersonal Research*, 5(1), pp.65-82.
- Torday, J.S. (2022). *Consciousness, embodied Quantum Entanglement*. *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*.
[doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pbiomolbio.2022.11.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pbiomolbio.2022.11.002).
- Thomsen, D.K., Steiner, K.L. and Pillemer, D.B., (2016) *Life story chapters: Past and future, you, and me*. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 5(2), pp.143-149.
- Van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The body keeps the score: Brain, mind, and body in the healing of trauma*. London: Penguin Books.
- Vendramini, D., (2005) *Noncoding DNA and the teem theory of inheritance, emotions, and innate behaviour*. *Medical hypotheses*, 64(3), pp.512-519.

- Verrastro, V., Cuzzocrea, F., Calaresi, D. and Saladino, V., (2024) Childhood emotional abuse, neuroticism, perfectionism, and workaholism in an Italian sample of young workers. *Behavioral Sciences*, 14(4), p.298.
- Waters, T.E.A., Köber, C., Raby, K.L., Habermas, T. and Fivush, R. (2018). Consistency and stability of narrative coherence: An examination of personal narrative as a domain of adult personality. *Journal of Personality*, 87(2), pp.151–162. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/jopy.12377>.
- Weigert, A.J., Teitge, J.S. and Teitge, D.W., (1986) *Society and identity: Toward a sociological psychology*. (No Title).
- Winnicott, D.W. (1965) "Communicating and not communicating leading to a study of certain opposites," in the maturational processes and the facilitating environment, Madison: International University Press, 1965.
- Wiechert, S., Van Bockstaele, B., Vertregt, M., van Marwijk, L. and Maric, M., (2023) Explicit and implicit self-esteem and their associations with symptoms of anxiety and depression in children and adolescents. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 20(5), pp.823-838.
- Wickes, F. (1927) *The inner World of Childhood*, New York: Signet.
- Wikipedia Contributors (2018). Boudica. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boudica>.
- Wise, C. (2015). *Finding Elen*. CreateSpace
- Wolynn, M. (2017) (2022) *It didn't start with you: How inherited family trauma shapes who we are and how to end the cycle*. Penguin. P.20.
- Wright, J. (2013). Epigenetics: Reversible tags. *Nature*, [online] 498(7455), pp.S10–S11. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1038/498S10a>.
- Yalom, I.D., (2020) *Existential psychotherapy*. Basic books.

Appendix 1: Statement of ethical consent

I hereby state that my partner and my son have both read the content and feel able to support my interpretation of experiences involving my relationship with them. They give their ethical consent, enabling me to write my experiences as part of this heuristic dissertation, for which I am very grateful.

Appendix 2: Birth story processing for therapists and clients.

Right brain modalities for birth-story investigation

- **What does birth symbolize to you? Draw your impression using your non-dominant hand.**
- **Please select and place stones to represent the constellation of the people involved in your birth-story. Client is encouraged to reflect on their choice of stone and its positioning in relation to other stones/subjects.**
- **Select music you would have listened to as an adolescent. Does the music have any emotion or connection with the birth-story? While listening to the music write or draw any thoughts or feelings arising.**
- **Reflecting on your emerging adult phase, take a piece of clay and shape/build something that symbolises your birth-story.**
- **Can you sense if your story affected the masculine and feminine aspects of your identity. What practices or objects can enhance your connection with either.**
- **What piece of art would you like to create as a ceremony of letting go or making peace with this story to help enhance your future life.**

Appendix 3: Poems written by Elen Bowman in response to the diary entries of the immersion process.

Poem 1

I enter

I enter with a bowl.

I place it on your table.

I wait,

You firmly give it back.

I enter with a sword

You parry with regret.

I lunge again,

It clatters to the ground.

I enter with a fever

the heat is unbearable,

You burn, you roar and screech away.

I put the fire out.

I enter with a magic book

I hope the words can heal,

I wait,

You read with sad eyes,

You give it back.

I enter the garden.

You are silent.

Words unsaid,

stay deep.

You read your book,

Half ghost, held captive,

You exit.

I wait for ever more

Poem 2

Dream Taker

Did you bring this misery?

Doubt my worth?

Kill the joy?

Perhaps it was envy?

You were a nice chap and so thinking it feels impolite,

But was it?

Did you suffer the pain of it as I tried to make my way?

I, who looked like you, had your eyes, your face, limbs.

Did I also steal your dreams?

Determined to take what I could to survive.

In your Autumn years I wanted to escape you,

the tragic hero.

It was obvious you didn't see me,

So I left and walked the long road.

With Summer cried out,

And Autumn a sad folly,

Now the drama decomposes

still and cold under foot.

You were my sad distant dad.

You saw life in me you hadn't had.

Poem 3

Giving Grief

Like a boy

You stood there clutching

a small gold ring.

Then, passing it quickly

like stolen loot

you uttered

'Keep it safe'.

Crushed by the giving

you left.

I sat motionless.

Your mother's ring in my hand.

And so later,

without too much effort,

I lost it.

Poem 4

Mission : Rescue!

No wonder I rescued!

No wonder I was driven

to grasp your hand

as it swirled in the water.

The effort, the challenge

To right the injustice, to fight

To have what was yours by rights.

On this odyssey of education,

This passage of treachery,

I fight the machines of mainstream

Armed like Sarah Connor in Terminator.

Warning - you will respect him

He has power beyond words.

Before you can see it and mark it

You must believe!

But don't be fooled.

This maelstrom is a mirror.

For him, see me,

It is I that fight the waters,

a lost daughter

swirling in the brine.

Poem 5

The important one.

Begin again!

I will meet you with

all I know

I will greet you with open arms

I will not wait to be invited,

I will rush and leap and hug you with all my might.

Begin again so you have what is yours

Let not your mother steal you with her tears

Stay out in the garden

Play at the apple tree

Feel the sun on your face

And when the sadness rises then let it be known!

Cry so the world can hear you

Sob so your heart will not break,

Shake and weep and rail against the heavens

Grieve for a father taken too soon.

There is no shame in it.

Begin again with all you know

so you can have what you did not.

I will meet you there,

And you alone will be the important one.

Poem 6

The Girl not Boy

The grief-stricken father

sought himself

in her reflection.

Defiant Mother,

claimed her for her clan.

A mirror of their lives

This boy born girl

Grasped saint to safeguard souls.

Grasped warrior to fight her foes,

And as she grasped and rescued

a weakness in her grew.

For how could she,

This boy not born,

Live as girl with any peace?

In the aftermath,

I see I lived them all –

Saint, Warrior,

Rebel, Rescuer.

Figments of fantasies

A refuge for the lost.

A lost girl in exile,

Waiting to be found.

