



Learning from psychotherapy for postgraduate supervision

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Abstract

'The supervisory frame is a felt presence that affords the supervisee a sense of security that his efforts at being honest in the presence of the supervisor will be treated humanely, respectfully and confidentially.' (Ogden 2005:1269)

This paper explores some of the ways in which our insights into the pedagogy of postgraduate supervision may benefit from understanding some of the attributes of psychotherapy. It proposes that psychotherapy involves teaching and learning processes that can be fruitfully compared with the idealised pedagogical model of the dialectic. It develops insights into postgraduate supervision as pedagogy by interrogating the intersection of teaching and learning with some aspects of psychotherapy. In doing so, it shows how those pedagogical aspects of psychotherapy can enable a deeper understanding and richer practising of postgraduate supervision. This paper works within a model postulated by Gregory Ulmer. In his development of an idea that there is in academic writing the self and the researched, the conscious intellectual semiotic and that arising from storytelling, Gregory Ulmer surveys the idea of 'mystories'. This word encompasses the self, the story and the mystery of this. I propose my own version of this as the 'subjective academic narrative'.

Introduction and Critical Framework

The purpose of this paper is to develop insights into postgraduate supervision as pedagogy by interrogating the intersection of teaching and learning with some aspects of psychotherapy. In doing so, it shows how those pedagogical aspects of psychotherapy can enable a deeper understanding and richer practising of postgraduate supervision. Thomas Ogden says of the analyst-supervisor that '*...he recognizes the supervisee as a unique individual for whom the supervisory relationship is being freshly invented*' (2005:1269).

As a teacher for over 45 years, and a writer published in many genres with over 50 major books and many articles, I bring to the academic world multiple stories of self in relationship to teaching and learning. Through this lived experience, I see all textuality and discourse as a created story, a narrative of some kind. In my academic thinking, I have attempted to bridge the gap I've found still exists between 'real' methodology and 'other' by working towards and within the articulation of a practice of academic writing that I am calling 'the subjective academic narrative' (see also Green, 2005). In this process, I don't attempt to solve the old 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' debate/dilemma. Rather, I utilise the stress of its paradoxical being to energise new ways of thinking. The aim is to enable tired research paradigms and debates to be short-circuited by accepting difference. This means the production of new discourse models as well as new content (Arnold, 2005).

My work on this 'subjective academic narrative' form of discourse arose initially from my own interest in postmodernist textuality and discourse in my own PhD Thesis (Arnold, 1994) and the work that entailed of entering into the academic debate through reading germinal academic works and commentaries (e.g. Barthes, Derrida, Cixous, Irigary, Eagleton, Norris, Milner). The 'subjective' refers to acknowledgement of the inevitability of the personal being an integral part of research; the 'academic' refers to the analytical and the intellectual ambience in which university research takes place; and the 'narrative' refers to the story that is the way in which we re-tell all of our research.

This approach was further developed by my interest in the work of Gregory Ulmer, particularly his early work on the 'mystory'. Ulmer (1989) identifies a 'mystorical' approach to thinking and research. A 'mystory' puts under erasure all claims to fact/authenticity in writing. It shows all writing to be both personal and mysterious (my story and mystery) whatever its claims to authenticity and depersonalisation. It reveals the academic text to be sewn together as a compilation of the scholarly, the anecdotal or popular, and the autobiographical. It questions the dominant analytico-referential model of knowledge. At the same time it accords with much late 20th and early 21st century thinking about the self, the culture and even the world as a text to be constructed and read.

Gregory Ulmer's mystorical approach opens up the text to many possible readings: there is no 'one way'. Thus even the act of writing, much less the lived experience of being, displays itself as non-authoritative in the conventional sense. The implications of this are manifold. For me, perhaps the most important (and the most galvanising) is that the academic life and academic writing and language are now able to be seen as open, explorative and aware of their own evanescent nature in the same way as any other form of written or lived

discourse. That is, academic writing can be understood as related to and made up of multiple ways of respecting various personal experiences.

Utilising one of Ulmer's techniques shown in 'Derrida at the Little Bighorn' (1985), in this paper, the mystorical approach of the subjective academic narrative will be flagged by a different typeface, although it will not be limited to such identified interpolations.

This paper utilises postmodernist theories about textuality and discourse to advance the thinking about (and practice of) linear analytico-referential knowledge-model being overtaken by lateral postmodernist discourse. The conceptual framework involves Ulmer's 'mystory' and the pastiche of the dispersal of certainties in considering the practice of writing a discursive piece on 'Learning from psychotherapy for postgraduate supervision'.

Ulmer's 'mystory' enjoys many of the elements of 'narrative non-fiction' or the 'literature of fact', a new and enticing genre that challenges and even eliminates paradigmatic expectations of factual writing (see 'Bruce Dobler's creative nonfiction compendium': <http://www.pitt.edu/~bdobler/readingnf.html>). A model such as Ulmer's gives me room within the academy to speak in multiple 'voices' from multiple personal and professional experiences and areas of knowledge. It confronts the expectations of the establishment/academy, and in doing so brings forward a richer mix after the diminution of the 'qualitative/quantitative' binary and the 'academic corset' model. When 'reality' and 'knowledge' are revealed, constructions not unlike fiction, new possibilities of/for multilinearity may emerge (Arnold, 1994).

This is a mystory that I am making because I have been in psychotherapy for over seven years. This has given me another insight into the pedagogy that I've been engaged in for over 45 years. Although I have published widely in curriculum materials, electronic materials and learned journals, I could not have had quite these insights into aspects of the pedagogical relationship between PhD candidate and supervisor without bringing my own life experiences into focus in a therapeutic interaction. PhD supervision involves me as supervisor in understanding my role as a teacher in a learning situation, as well as one whose whole aim is to finally step right away and allow the candidate to become the expert. Being called a 'supervisor' rather than a 'teacher' is a confusing element that seems to deny the pedagogical foundation of PhD candidature.

There is a growing interest in how teaching and learning occurs in the supervision of PhD candidates. The very existence of pedagogy in PhD supervision remains subject to debate. As pedagogy describes how one teaches and another learns, what is supervision in this scenario? Is it something distinctly different from any other learning and teaching situation? Is it a learning and teaching situation at all? (Institute for teaching and learning, University of Sydney, <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/research/postgrad.htm>).

Certainly, recent research on supervision (Denholm & Evans, 2007) as a pedagogical act indicates that PhD supervision as described by Lee Johnson et al (2000:136) that parades itself as 'magisterial disdain' seems increasingly indefensible. If this was maintained in a psychotherapy session then there would inevitably be a failure to connect with the analysand, who is already in the position of seeking help and who needs an empathic response.

I do not myself believe that there can exist what Mark Sinclair (2004:27) calls a 'hands off pedagogy'. The term has such a deep internal contradiction: pedagogy involves being hands on. Where some supervision is in name only, it certainly does not act in keeping with either the therapeutic alliance or the dialectic that I am proposing. Indeed, it does not acknowledge any pedagogical elements or commitments: the candidate sinks or swims alone. According to Sinclair's study, this leads to a high drop out rate, and those few who do succeed are clearly, from the commencement of candidacy, autonomous researchers who are quite independent.

This is in keeping with my own experiences as teacher: candidates need to know that I am involved, an active listener, in a dialectic to which I contribute and readily available via monthly meetings that I initiate and offer access as they need to contact me. It's also in keeping with my colleagues' experiences and the insights of those who have published in Denholm & Evans (2007). An analysand left to sink or swim alone would inevitably sink.

There is much debate in the psychotherapy area itself of what pedagogy occurs in supervision/training of incoming therapists. This differs significantly when the supervisor is a practitioner from when the supervisor is an academic. Supervised psychotherapists who found academics 'interpersonally distant' saw this as a negative to their training, particularly in the science model. Anne O'Donovan et al provide an in-depth table for positive and negative characteristics of supervisors as mentor/teachers to show the imbalance between practice and research (2001:153). In essence: '*Academics and clinical trainees also differ in what they want from the teaching-learning process... the trainees want faculty to be helpful, available, interesting, and able to facilitate their motivation to learn. Faculty... focused on setting high standards, encouraging self-initiation, and being intellectually challenging, things that are characteristic of researchers*' (O'Donovan et al, 2001:149).

My entering into psychotherapy in 2000 means that, as well as many more complex interactions that are not relevant here, I became interested in some aspects of myself as a learner in what also had some aspects of a teaching and learning situation.

The selection process

The analysand is far more self-selecting than the supervised professional psychotherapist or psychologist or the PhD student who is selected by University processes. These last rely upon an expression of interest to a supervisor or research centre. The supervisor then is selected on the basis of interest and experience, and differs greatly between the Natural Sciences (often having industry links) and the Social Sciences. Indeed, supervisory appointment does not seem to be seen as having a direct pedagogical thrust in either (Sinclair, 2004:24). This ad hoc selection process is curious, as timely completions are closely related to 'hands on' rather than 'hands off' pedagogies (Sinclair, 2004: 25). Too often, the University selection process for PhD supervisors concentrates upon their field of academic expertise, not their capacities for pedagogical expertise. Bill Green sees addressing the primacy of pedagogy in PhD supervision as 'unfinished business' that we all have 'an obligation to think about' (Green, 2005:152).

There is much debate about such supervision as pedagogy, and increasing academic publication about it (Denholm & Evans, 2007), yet it is not fully resolved in University practices and regulations. The University must have some formal means of supervisor-training for its own Quality assessments and someone's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), but its quality is often questionable and its impact fleeting. For example, all of the supervisors interviewed by Mark Sinclair for his in-depth Australian study '*...learned their supervisory knowledge and skills informally, on-the-job...*' (Sinclair, 2004:23). This is also true of course of the pedagogical training for the majority of University lectures and tutors who were, traditionally, rarely if ever required to have any teacher training. This trend is being challenged in Australia in the 21st century in response to new KPIs Quality indicators and Federal funding regimes.

In 1990, when I left secondary teaching for academia, I was astounded on how the emphasis was on what the lecturers offered, not the students' journeys. I have not seen too much to convince me that there is a change for the better except that it's more a case of advertising client satisfaction for monetary gain by increased numbers of student-clients.

Rather than defining and announcing itself as a teaching and learning event, Sinclair says that '*The PhD candidature appears to be a rite of passage into distinct research cultures that manifests in discipline-specific completions and times to submission*' (2004:iv). Yet the candidacy occurs in real-life, real-time and has very particular goals and outcomes: it changes candidates' lives (Green, 2005). We may learn from psychotherapy where: '*...the desired outcome across orientations is lasting and meaningful change in a patient's life*' (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001:132). The importance of empathy, warmth, congruence, complex verbal skills, approval, supportiveness, optimism and respect (Lambert & Hawkins, 2001:131-2) is significant and central to any learning and teaching engagement: it's not less in supervising a PhD candidate. Indeed, it may be more acute as the interaction becomes an intense one on one of teacher, mentor, guide, colleague, critical friend and, particularly in the final stages, quasi-examiner who must ultimately recognise the superior knowledge of the candidate within the chosen thetic area.

Most therapeutic approaches agree that the therapeutic relationship is important, and research leads to the emphatic assertion that there must always be a working alliance based on trust for the therapy to be effective. Janet Dickson says: '*...in the therapeutic/ counselling relationship, it is the relationship quality that is most predictive of good therapy outcome*'. This is true of the pedagogy of PhD supervision within the one-on-one or group dialectic model. Also, Michael Lambert and Eric Hawkins assert of training psychotherapists through supervision, that '*...studies generally suggest that interpersonal skill training is superior to no training, and training that is more focused on the learning of particular skills is more effective than a less systematic style*' (2001:131).

As in psychotherapy (Groth-Marnet et al, 2001:119), the 'matching' of the supervisor and candidate is a fundamental element of PhD supervision. Struggling with the relationship can be clarified somewhat by looking at what happens in the therapeutic alliance which is usually a form of dialectic. In supervising as in psychotherapy, we must keep in mind when to confront our students to bring them forward rather than to confound or distress them. The role of the supervisor is to enable the student to become an independent and expert member of the academy of international scholars.

This move towards autonomy is enhanced if we reveal ourselves as supervisor-scholars. This is comparable to the aim of therapy to ‘...*help patients become their own therapists and carry on therapeutic work alone, in between sessions, and after therapy is terminated*’ (Farber, 2006:68). Always, we must keep the students’ best interests in mind as paramount in this learning-teaching relationship whilst playing an active role in enabling, for example, the articulation of the research question, the development of the direction and appropriateness of the literature read and the scholarly literature-review that situates this scholar within the relevant area of study/knowledge, and the editorial processes after ‘writing-up’.

Bill Green says that ‘doctoral research education involves a particular relationship between the practice of supervision and the production of subjectivity’ (Green, 2005:161). It is to this scholarly discourse that I address this paper.

The need to know

All learning and teaching involves the identification of a need: the learner has to *want to know*. This is an end-point need-to-know that involves a learning journey that can best be met in an environment in which the teacher enables the learning process. In postgraduate supervision, this learner-need is acute. Postgraduate candidates are attempting a learning journey that will lead to their becoming expert in a new area, aspect or even field of knowledge. The journey is long and strenuous. It may take considerable time for the candidates even to clearly understand and define for themselves the starting-point of the journey, much less its dimensions. This is as true of traditional models as of those I supervise in artefact and exegesis (Arnold, 2005).

The need that drives an analysand into psychotherapy is quite different in itself: yet there is the striking similarity of an intense and even overwhelming desire to know. Larner calls this the ‘...*unique narratives of consumers of a psychological service*’ (2001:40). In psychotherapy it is most often in answer to psychic pain. In postgraduate candidature it is a far more intellectual need for completion of an original and substantial academic work. Yet recognising their differences does not act to separate the intensity of desire that the learner and analysand appear to share with one another.

As in therapy, so in the sophisticated pedagogical relationship of supervisor and PhD candidate, as Green says: ‘...*pedagogy - including PhD pedagogy - is very much amenable to rich and generative analysis from the point of view of fields like poststructuralism and psychoanalyses*’ (Green, 2005:161). In both, narrative structures can lead to valuable insights when fresh meanings are discovered in verbal discourse (Farber, 2006:77). In both, at the same time, there is also importance in maintaining a self-affirming and positive view of the student self as in the analysand’s self. What role...interventive or teacherly...do we play as supervisors of PhD candidates? Surely we can learn much from Farber’s statement that ‘...*therapists who are empathic, affirming, and non-judgemental make patient’s disclosures easier*’ (2006:84). Just as today psychotherapy accepts its inter-relational aspect (Farber, 2006:109), so candidates expect something other than a distanced, professional, impersonal stance from their supervisor. At the same time, the regular scheduled meetings with an agreed topic area/agenda, writing on submissions and reporting back, correlate with the therapeutic provision of clear and firm boundaries within a ‘...*nurturing holding environment*’ (Farber, 2006:124).

This is particularly apposite for the commencing candidate in all PhD programs, but it does not preclude the ideal ‘...that ‘hands on’ supervisors deal with candidates on a case-by-case basis rather than assuming that all candidates will require extensive intervention, or almost no intervention as is the case with ‘hands off’ pedagogy’ (Sinclair, 2004:28). Indeed, the PhD candidates’ journeys are demonstrably different by definition as they must contribute something new and substantial to knowledge.

My experience of psychotherapy shows it to rely upon the development of a strong and trusting therapeutic alliance. This involves the interaction of therapist and analysand in a one-on-one relationship that enables the analysand to go through psychic pain and reach resolution while held in safety by the therapist. Therapy arises from the analysand’s need to know and acts to enable thinking that emphasises inwardness at the same time as it encourages holding on to ideas, utterances and snatches of insight whilst waiting for them to develop. Thinking on this, I propose that the need to know for the candidate is enabled by supportive interactions, disclosures and interpretations by the supervisor in what I would call a learning and teaching environment, albeit at a quite sophisticated level of interaction.

The Socratic dialectic

The dialectic that occurs in psychotherapy is not, of course, the same as in teaching and learning in PhD candidature and supervision, although it may be fruitfully compared with supervision training of therapists. Nor am I attempting to conflate them. However, there are rich insights to be obtained from psychotherapists who spend much of their professional lives in practising, discussing, reading the literature of/from, and reflecting upon this model. Elements of the Socratic dialectic of one-on-one model of teaching and learning has been the Holy Grail of pedagogy because the roles of teacher and learner are not discrete but contribute to one another in a model that might today be seen as ‘co-constructivist’ (Schmid, 2007).

Socrates came to see the ‘question and answer’ method of discussion as the ultimate theory of knowledge and hence as the only responsible method of education. He distinguished between disputation and the dialectic. In the dialectic all opinions are aired as valid, but as they are aired, one opinion becomes recognised as the best, and is adopted over others. There are two processes that can be identified in the course of the dialectic. There is the ‘destructive process’, in which the lesser opinion is eradicated, and the ‘constructive process’, through which the more valid opinion became apparent (<http://www.socraticmethod.net/searchsocratic.htm>).

The dialectic method identifies false opinion as wisdom pretending to be knowledge. Socrates saw this being as a more entrenched ignorance than consciously being able to admit to not knowing. Through the dialectic, led by the teacher, learners come to see the weaknesses in entrenched opinions and correct themselves as the held opinion is shown, through dissection they themselves participate in, to be inconsistent and hence untenable. The dialectic usually proceeds from a generalisation of the known into the unknown or implied. Where generalisations are accepted without scrutiny or interrogation, unethical activities occur and ignorance persists. Socrates worked towards students reaching a consistency of thought and action. For Socrates, there was clearly virtue in action, not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but of practical wisdom.

Such a Socratic dialogue was and is no simple process, nor are all of the classical elements apposite today. However, today as then, the interrogative form of the dialectic means that the teacher leads the learner step-by-step to a self-realisation. For the dialectic to succeed, the destructive process must be followed by the constructive one: otherwise the learner is simply debased. In this way, both elements of the dialectic come together as positive teaching and learning occurrences in a particular sense and provide a theory or model in a more general sense. We may learn more of this in interrogating the Therapeutic Alliance: '*...there is now a large body of evidence addressing the possibility that the therapeutic alliance is the primary vehicle that creates change*' (Andrews, 2001:107).

As teachers, we may identify the learning and teaching aspects of the Therapeutic Alliance so as to understand and practise our own profession more deeply and richly. It is not the purpose of this paper to develop insights into the therapeutic alliance in the therapy sessions. Rather, I wish to consider aspects of such an alliance as a co-model for the dialectic in the learning and teaching situation of postgraduate supervision. What may we as supervisors of PhD candidates learn of the teaching/learning alliance from such quite commonly offered insights in the literature into therapy as: '*...the interaction between therapist and client is the key determining feature of success. Indeed, the evidence is clear that therapists and counsellors who rate more highly on empathy, genuineness (or self-congruence), unconditional positive regard, and the ability to engage the client in constructive confrontation of their problems, as well as having the ability to define the problems in quite specific terms, do better than therapists who lack these attributes - whatever their theoretical orientation*' (Richards, 2001:101).

In what ways can my own 'voice' come through within a mystorical model that forms the basis for my own proposed 'subjective academic narrative'? In the academic current debate within the relevant literature, it is commonly seen as necessary for there to be multiple references. Indeed the postmodernist text can also be described as a 'tissue of quotations' from life as from other texts. Is a voice that is demonstrably 'personal' as in these bold italic interpolations more 'real' than a voice seen as the sound of one entering and engaging in an academic debate? This question of 'voice' is significantly addressed by writers about their own works and by critics, readers and students about the reception of those works. The authentic voice of the writer is involved in multiplicities in a many-layered text. Indeed, as Roland Barthes has it: 'The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture' (1977:142-3).

There are many books about how writers write as well as about how to write if you want to become a writer. They all deal with 'voice' and they all fail to explain/capture/enrapture a writer (Grenville, 1990; Strunk & White, 2000; Woolfe & Grenville, 1993; Phelan, 2005).

Professional involved detachment and discourse

As in all teaching situations, psychotherapy also demands professional involved detachment that, at the same time, arises from and is practised within a situation that is deeply interactive. Lerner articulates this as addressing: '*...the cultural, spiritual, emotional, subjective, physical and discursive foundations of*

psychological life' (2001:40). The therapist, like the PhD supervisor, offers professional knowledge-based insights that are utilised to enable the analysand rather than merely to categorise. There is no dogma and there are no borders: there is challenging and probing questioning and an unwillingness to accept the obvious or given that the analysand may espouse. For Lerner, this depends upon a tolerance to '*...different ways of knowing the world, encouraging theoretical diversity rather than the dominance of one paradigm over another...*' (2001:40). This is essential for the PhD supervisor who is both bringing forward and giving way to a new expert.

Green introduces his paper (2005:151) with the 'view to illuminating the psycho-social dynamics of struggle, submission, and subjectification, including the role and significance of fantasy, in the practice of postgraduate research pedagogy'. This conflation of psychotherapeutic practices with PhD supervision provides a handy reference for me. It is, however, also more than that: it provides insights into my proposal of a 'subjective academic narrative' that indicates a readiness on the part of the writer to enter into a dialectic with the reader by exposing her or his own experiences, opinions, ideas and attitudes as well as the rich academic knowledge that she or he has through her or his professional experiences.

In a successful alliance with candidates, the PhD supervisor, like any teacher, has to establish the scaffolding for a relationship with candidates that is mutual, deep, intimate, yet detached. The working alliance is quite interactive: there is no sense of Freud's famous (or infamous) 'tabula rasa' of classical analysis in which the supervisor holds back entirely (House, 1928). Rather, the working alliance is cooperative and leads to mutual helpful disclosures, hints, direction-giving, building on academic experiences and insights and even personal and social interactions. Sinclair calls this 'hands-on' and compares it very favourably with its opposite: '*Some supervisors take a 'hands off' approach to supervision that leaves candidates largely to their own devices. Except in a minority of cases where beginning candidates are already self-confident, independent, knowledgeable, skilled, organised and socially adroit, 'hands off' approaches tend to be associated with slow and non-completion*' (Sinclair, 2004:vi).

PhD supervisors, like therapists, are listeners as well as considered yet spontaneous speakers themselves. '*What takes place in therapy is mostly discourse*' (Richards, 2001:99). What takes place in a supervisor/candidate meeting may be more *directed* discourse centred upon work that the candidate brings forward in writing and discussion. Yet it still thrives in an atmosphere of space, thinking, imagination and openness. There is 'the work' in therapy built upon encouraging unpremeditated speech that permits the analysands to listen to themselves. '*This is a matter of opening up psychology and therapy to language, the interpersonal, and the contextual...*' (Lerner, 2001:40).

I propose that the intersection of therapy and supervision, from which we might learn more about both, is the dialectic: the sifting and evaluating process of the discussion that arises from the known and the argued possibilities. Certainly, spontaneity and serendipity arise from both views of discourse, although such attributes may be more significant in the therapeutic situation.

In both therapy and supervision dialectics, there is much that is analytical, yet the tone and the space are at the same time non-definitive. In this way, the working alliance in both supervision and the therapeutic build

within a broader knowledge-scaffold that supports but does not necessarily lead or even enframe. This may be seen as particularly apposite to the Social Sciences model, but should not be confined to it.

In keeping with Green's introduction of 'the role and significance of fantasy' (2005:151) in PhD pedagogical supervision, as supervisors of PhD candidates, we can have our understandings of pedagogy expanded by Thomas Ogden who says of supervising trainee psychiatrists that it enables the supervisee to fill the spaces of '*...dreaming aspects of the analytic relationship that the supervisee has previously been unable to dream*' (2005:1278). Ogden sees the experience of supervising as a form of 'guided dreaming'. In this process, the supervisee moves beyond the known into the imagined or fantasised with the aim that the patients' inabilities to work in the area of dreaming will be filled in. Between them, supervisor and supervisee can create a narrative that is true to the emotional experience of the supervisee interacting with the patient. The supervisor's role in this is to: '*... provide a frame that ensures the supervisee's freedom to think and dream and be alive to what is occurring in the analytic and the supervisory relationship, as well as in the interplay between the two...*'

The concept of imagining/dreaming/fantasising is also relevant to the PhD supervision, as the thetic process develops knowledge beyond what is known to what might become known. Ogden articulates the ways in which the supervisor may enable this as a form of scaffolding that supports but does not lead the process. This scaffolding does not necessitate given knowledge paradigms: quite the opposite. It opens up spaces for new connections, thoughts, ideas and intersections. It is to be found even within the natural sciences and is as applicable there as in the social sciences.

Ogden emphasises that this is facilitated by free time, other interactions or what he calls '*time to waste*' because '*Such a state of mind may provide an opportunity for a type of freely associative thinking that enhances the range and depth of what can be learned from the supervisory experience*' (2005:1265). I think that it is clear that this has application to the model of academic writing that Ulmer espouses and that I am practising in this paper.

Green supports this in his discussion of the essential and existential subjectivity of the PhD candidate and supervisor and their relationship (2005). He sees the discursive practice as a socio-symbolic representation rather than representation: that is, it is actually a lively engagement that is on-going rather than a conclusion reached. In this way it is organic and outside the control of organised academic paradigms. I read Green as coming from a position to which I ascribe, particularly in this article: the candidate/supervisor relationships especially in my area of writing (particularly though not exclusively creative writing) are always a fantasy: sometimes shared, sometimes singular and only sometimes able to be defined and understood by University regulations, expectations and paradigms.

The relationship

Experiential/ humanistic/ client-centred therapists have long sought to develop in the relationship empathy, unconditional positive regard, and the like, with a view to establishing a relationship/alliance with the client in order to assist in the process of developing self-awareness. Whilst a close relationship is the foundation of

both therapy and supervision, there is always the necessity of achieving a balance between keeping the relationship professional and being personally involved with the analysand/candidate. In both situations there is an imbalance of power: the therapist, like the supervisor, has recognised and even formally certificated knowledge; acceptance into a professional body; a certain detached involvement from the work undertaken and an acceptance that this is a working not a friendship relationship. There is always a physical detachment in a precise time-frame. Supervisors classically spend about the hour with their candidate students, as therapists almost always do (Lacanian excepted).

Sinclair's study, while identifying differences in the natural and social sciences, suggests that across the board: '*... frequency of interaction between supervisor and candidate is an important ingredient of PhD supervision that assists timely completion of candidatures*' (Sinclair, 2004:16). Moreover, he identifies that the supervisor is quite involved in supplying aspects of the candidate's financial support, networking the candidate into research and industrial areas, aiding publications and consultancies, identifying the '*...commercial realities of research*', and '*...enhancing the candidate's career prospects, both within and outside the academy*' (2004:18; see also Cheetham et al, 2007:251-260).

Yet therapist/analysand and supervisor/candidate relationships are not merely facilitative: they are dynamic and interactive. They are a working alliance in which a living dialectic occurs that takes all involved forward towards a common goal that evolves organically rather than structurally as the relationship proceeds. That is to say, the final aim is to enable both analysand and candidate to become independent of both therapist and supervisor.

The PhD relationship, especially in its later stages, is that of a 'critical friend'. Such a term as a 'critical friend' might seem to be heavily contradictory. However, what it flags is a willingness to look closely and sympathetically at the candidate's work with a trained eye and mind. The aim is to ensure the best possible outcome for the work so that the empathy is there but does not overcome the evaluative and advisory process.

Teaching therapists through supervision

Therapy arises from the analysand. It enables the analysand to think beyond the givens of self as well as the restrictive mores of religion, society, culture and even gender. It is a very private performativity for the therapist in a pedagogical sense and, similarly, it is far removed from pedagogy as big-bucket small-thimble filling of the ignorant learner by the knowledgeable dominie. '*Instruction in therapeutic procedures using instruction manuals should be done cautiously because it can constrain clinician behaviour and lead to failure to appreciate the idiosyncratic nature of individuals*' (Richards, 2001:102.). Trusting relationships, then, are exemplified in both therapy and supervision.

Dickson says that: '*Lafferty, Beutler & Crago (1989) examined differences between therapists (in training) on a number of therapist characteristics according to the improvement of patient symptomatology over the course of the therapy. The best predictors of effectiveness related to the in-therapy experiences of the patients, with therapist empathy being the best predictor. Therapist orientation was not found to have an effect on therapy*

outcome.' At the same time, a practical engagement with therapy sessions, another 'hands on' approach, is seen as necessary by David Orlinsky et al (2001:147) who find that a significant factor in training psychotherapists is that they themselves participate in therapy. Annalise O'Donovan et al discuss whether '*...dissatisfaction with training in Australia derives from an overemphasis on research and an underemphasis on practice*' (2001:149).

What we actually do is most often different from what we say we do: that is why reflective and insightful interrogation of supervision as pedagogy is useful for both PhD candidates and their supervisors. This has long been the practice in psychotherapeutic literature about training psychotherapists through supervision. In enabling therapist-students, a close 'hands on' relationship is advisable: '*Since research has indicated discrepancies between what practitioners say they do and what they actually do, students need their work closely monitored.*' Hence: '*[T]eaching should emphasise, and supervision should enhance, the crucial importance of the therapeutic relationship*' (Groth-Marnet, 2001: 118;119). In this way, we are able to see what we do as well as what we say.

Relationships between 'teachers' and 'students' who will become therapy-colleagues at the end of the relationship and supervisors who are developing a peer who excels in a specific new area of knowledge, open up for us a new pedagogical space to consider. Sinclair (2004: vii) identifies the powerful effect on the successful PhD candidature and completion of 'hands on' supervisors who '*...get to know their candidates well enough for a personal dimension of trust to exist within an otherwise professional relationship...*' and who are able to acknowledge that the unequal power relationship can be used '*...to mentor candidates' professional development with a view to the candidate establishing him or herself as a peer*'. Perhaps this is why there has been a reluctance to see PhD supervision as pedagogical: the student will at completion outpace the supervisor in a quite directly identifiable fashion.

Does the analysand dream to please the therapist or to gain more self-insight through bringing dreams into the room and the room into the dreams? Does the candidate read to please the supervisor? In what ways does the relationship enter into a symbiotic and pleasing one?

The therapeutic alliance as illuminating the PhD supervision

The therapeutic relationship has been much considered and developed since Freud's 'tabula rasa'. Today it is able to be seen as a function of the interaction between analysand and therapist in which the therapist develops a position of influential power by enhancing such therapist characteristics as trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertness. Thus the therapist becomes an important resource to the analysand and this enables the therapist to use his/her interpersonal influence to assist the analysand in any therapeutic changes that may occur. The therapeutic relationship is best considered as a working alliance to include, for example, the emotional bond between the analysand and the therapist; the quality of the analysand and therapist involvement in the work of the therapy; and the degree of concordance between them on the goals of the therapy.

A positive therapeutic outcome arises from many of the same attributes being shared with the work in the counselling room and the PhD supervision meeting. In therapy, there are always complex and intense feelings within the room: the same can be said of supervising as a dialectic situation. It too is attempting to create meaning for the incoming scholar who is to become the expert and outdo the mentor and guide. The comfort zone of the student is essentially under attack as she or he takes the knowledge of an area beyond what is known to what is new. This is an essential aspect of the PhD: that it adds something new to knowledge in the given area. It is the candidate who must be mentored and brought forward: it is her or his sensibilities that must be considered and understood by the supervisor in the pedagogical relationship that leads to the supervisor becoming not only extraneous but also outdone.

This pedagogical situation can be illuminated by the therapeutic one. In therapy Farber's dictum is that '*...the focus of the therapy is on the patient*' (2006:37). The focus of the PhD supervision is on enabling the candidate to do a successful, sustained, major piece of research that adds something new and worthwhile to knowledge itself. So it is essential that the supervisor is able to encourage independence in the candidate. This means abdicating any sense of knowing better while at the same time steering the student and providing scaffolding and insights for her or his own consideration.

Therapists speak of '*correct attunement*' (Farber, 2006:128) to their patients' needs. This is a very useful term for us to consider as teachers who are always learning about how and why we teach. From the very first meeting with our PhD candidates, we form opinions and attitudes even before a word has been spoken. This non-verbal communication is powerful and can be fruitfully recognised, interrogated and as necessary adapted by supervisors as teachers. Freud says of non-verbal communications that: '*He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep as secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore*' (in Farber, 2006:25).

Whilst therapists speak of 'disclosure', I think that we can as teachers fruitfully talk of the field of 'personal insights and discussion' that most facilitate our teaching and our PhD candidates' learning journey. For Yale Professor of Psychology, Barry Farber, '*[O]ur self is constituted through interactions with others, and we move towards greater self-knowledge by understanding the nature of self in relationship to others*' (2006:4). As supervisors, we are aware of the necessity for feeling positively towards our candidates. At the same time, we know that as we facilitate them they move far beyond us to become world leaders in the very focussed area of knowledge that their PhD contributes to the academy. Farber's observations of therapy coincide with and also deepen this intuited teacherly relationship: '*The therapist... is no longer seen as the sole expert in the room... rather, he or she is part of a system, a two person field, in which both participants concrete meaning and both observe the nature of what is being created*' (2006:7).

Clearly, academic supervision is in many ways quite different from therapy. At the same time, because therapists are bringing together theory and practice, they have much to offer us from their insights into the therapeutic relationship as a dyad in which the therapeutic alliance is paramount and '*...disclosure is facilitated by reciprocity*' (Farber, 2006:11). Farber discusses how such a sense of sharing can lead, amongst others, to the following attributes of a healthy relationship that are relevant also in an academic alliance:

intimacy, validation and affirmation, identity formation, insights into self, growth of self-esteem, and acts of courageously putting oneself out there.

A significant aspect of therapy is what Farber calls 'active listening'. In teaching, this is most often seen as the task of the student, so this is a well-known challenge to teachers who have to battle frequently with a will to be heard. Such a will to be heard is quite foundational in the academic world that relies (in the narrowest sense) upon the expertise of the lecturer, writer, supervisor and pedagogue. In her unfortunately titled book, psychiatrist Rachel Remen expresses this very poetically: *'It is often through the quality of our listening and not the wisdom of our words that we are able to effect the most profound changes in the people around us. When we listen, we offer with our attention an opportunity for wholeness. Our listening creates a sanctuary for the homeless parts within the other person'* (2002:219-20). This 'active listening' confronts this 'big-bucket/empty-thimble' approach and means as teachers that we are involved in the work, we reassure, we challenge, we are flexible in our thinking, actions and reactions, and we bring our knowledge to the student only to take her or him forward. In this way, we are 'critical friends'. We also show ourselves to be humans in a personal interaction: often this includes some social interactions that at the same time exist within a teacher/student ethical behaviours framework. Whilst supervising their colleagues-to-be, therapists are adjured by Farber (2006:182/4) to be human whilst displaying the qualities of a super-human: *'...the need to possess and demonstrate wisdom, empathy, tact, interpersonal sensitivity, strength, patience, flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity, and humour, among other qualities...they must push the supervisee hard enough for him or her to learn new ways of thinking and behaving but not push so hard that resistances and resentment set in!*

My own experiences of teaching interactions are that they produce intense and demanding situations. The classroom is not a space of contestation when you're an English and Social Sciences teacher, as I was in the Victorian Secondary system for many years. It is a space that is magical and enchanting whilst wringing you out as an individual interacting with the needs, desires, abilities, insights etc of thirty students and a seemingly limitless language and supply of fictional truths in literature. In teaching undergraduate students, there is a further layer of empathy for their growing independence and sense of self. It's in postgraduate supervision, however, that the teacher becomes even more of a learner as well. I wonder if the greatest learning hurdle may be to let go and acknowledge the candidate as the expert?

The supervisor acting as a mentor and critical friend

How do we act as critical friend to our students? This collaborative relationship is one that moves us closer together with the aim of distancing us from the expert that we have nurtured. In what ways must we learn to foster the candidate's readiness to submit after a long relationship that also involves critical feedback? Sinclair (2004:vii) advises that *'[T]ext production is imperative from the outset and is vital to the candidature because it is the basis on which supervisors give advice.'*

Demystifying the PhD process is a crucial aspect of supervision that occurs in a more direct way than the organic unfolding that is a central aspect of psychotherapy. Nevertheless, whilst one may be plotted to some extent in advance and the other proceed to its own timeline, they both involve intervention by the supervisor and/or psychotherapist. Moreover, PhD supervision also has trust as the key ingredient (Sinclair, 2004:30) so that the candidate can develop her or his own academic self. For trust to occur, candidates name supervisors' qualities as '*...sincerity, responsibility, availability, approachability, honesty, reliability, consistency, and respect for candidates*' (Sinclair, 2004:30).

According to Irving Yalom, '*...the crucial first step in therapy is the patient's assumption of responsibility for his or her life predicament*' (1991:8). This assumption of responsibility is also significant for the PhD candidate. Yalom speaks of '*...insight, responsibility assumption, and self-actualization*' (1991:9). Like the patient, however, the candidate does not have to do this alone. For Neville Symington, the patient has a great 'responsibility' in developing a new inner reality she or he '*...must declare ownership of it...*' (1996:16). The PhD candidate, too, is faced with a new and frightening realisation that she or he is developing an entirely new aspect of knowledge within a personal focus in response to an original and significant academic question. Like the analysand, they are not alone. Nor, as the analysand, are they faced by the blank face, the tabula rasa, or the mirror. For the PhD supervisor a 'hands on' approach addresses '*...the potentially corrosive affects of the candidate's lack of confidence [by] supervisors negotiating small, achievable tasks and milestones with the candidates at the beginning of candidature*' (Sinclair, 2004:32). Compare this to Yalom's idea of the psychotherapist where: '*...the professional posture of disinterested objectivity, so necessary to the scientific method, is inappropriate*' (1991:14).

Ideally, the critical friend/supervisor acts to enable the PhD candidates and to enrich their work, rather than acting to promote or display the supervisors' own status and intellectual abilities. A critical friend acts pedagogically as a critic for the work while also being able to be positive, insightful and useful in their evaluations. The supervisor acting pedagogically as a critical friend will move beyond mentoring and supporting to also suggesting through critiquing. A central act of critical friendship is for the supervisor to support the candidate in developing an understanding of the importance of siting (that is, situating not citing) their own work within the relevant learned and academic literature. Throughout the candidature, this also involves reading candidates' work with insightful respect while at the same time being prepared to tell clearly and helpfully what the 'hands on' supervisor considers to be its strengths and how they perceive the weaknesses. In this long process, considerable time will be spent on multiple readings while taking notes and making marks on the manuscript as the supervisor brings knowledge and understanding of the academic knowledge-processes to the area in which the candidate is working. They should apply it to show how the candidate might alter the work to address the faults or weaknesses the supervisors have found in it. The supervisor's work should not be confined to details of content, spelling or grammar, although they should address these. It should also encompass the imaginative, creative, individual and personal aspects of the conceptual side of the thinking and writing.

Yet the supervisor is both a real presence and a felt ghost in the candidature. S/he is not the final arbiter, nor is s/he the enactor. The supervisor's role is a sensitive and personal one, differing with each candidate. The supervisor is both in control and continually letting go.

Staging the timeframe

Yalom says that '*...the good therapist fights darkness and seeks illumination*' (1991:15). Yet, at the same time, must '*...tolerate the anxiety of not knowing...*' (1991:36) and be able to explore discrepant views (1991:43) through the therapeutic alliance wherein the therapist makes themselves available to the patient within a given time-frame for a healing dialectic that is both supportive and constructive. Just as we as supervisors fight against being counsellors or quasi-therapists, so Yalom rejects being '*...more like a philosophy or religious teacher than a therapist*' (1991:79). A timely reminder of the genred nature of teaching and therapy. In therapy, '*...it's the relationship that heals*' (Yalom, 1991:91) whereas, in PhD supervision, the relationship provides a foundation for the academic to move forward in her or his own quest to add something original and important to the body of knowledge of the area. The intersection becomes apparent in the finality: both look to move the analysand or candidate away from the interdependent relationship of the therapeutic or learning alliance.

In the PhD candidature, the supervisor should play an active role, particularly in the introductory stages. The supervisor should be able to evaluate when this role can become less supportive and more of a critical friendship until it eventually, just before submission, becomes the examiner-role.

Whilst analysands may well fear becoming too dependant (Yalom, 1991:100), candidates often can't see themselves as dependant enough: they may have very unrealistic views of what the supervisor/candidate relationship might be and offer. Having a very precise timetable, at least for the beginning of the candidacy, means that as for the analysand in Yalom's view '*... pre-set termination date often increase the efficiency of therapy*' (1991:113). As the PhD candidature proceeds, the candidate must be able to work backwards from a desired completion and submission date.

The dialectic that also is modelled for pedagogical aspects in the therapeutic alliance offer an answer to other common dilemmas identified by Sinclair (2004:32) in the supervisor/candidate relationship. The first is the establishment of the Literature Review; the second is pursuing what may become 'dead end' lines of enquiry. Both are facilitated by discussion. '*Hands on experience in practice*', especially '*...experiences in one-to-one therapy...*' closely followed by supervision provided the most facilitative influences on psychotherapists in training' (Orlinsky et al,139-140).

In the first it is not so much that relevant references are supplied by supervisors (whilst this may well be true particularly at the beginning of the candidacy) but that on-going discussion can occur about the value and relevance of literature. More importantly, this therapeutic alliance/dialectic model, I suggest, may well lead the candidate to understand how to follow threads and references to establish her or his unique bibliography.

In the second, it is important that the supervisor equips the candidate early with managing the breadth and depth of the research by permitting her or him the knowledge that some material, though interesting and even important 'is not within the scope of this thesis'.

It will not surprise us that the 'warning signs' that a PhD candidate is falling by the wayside (Sinclair, 2004:33) are very comparable with those that an analysand is falling away from the work of therapy. These include

absence from therapy/meetings; consecutive absences; lack of work being generated by the candidate/analysand. So are the ways of dealing with this matter. Sinclair (2004:35) suggests an ‘...*interventionist design for PhD supervision [that] emphasises the importance of assisting commencing candidates to demystify and structure their candidature*’. Amongst other valuable pedagogical assets, this is throughout the candidature best ‘...*supported by a trust relationship between supervisor and candidate that enables supervisors, candidates and relevant others to monitor and celebrate the progress of the candidature*’.

Conclusion

A certain mythology that seems to be established as a truth has arisen with PhD supervision: namely that it has no pedagogical components. Rather, it seems to be presented in quite a mystical light as something very particular and individual undertaken by the candidate as a mission that they must define, plan, execute and so on. In this scenario, the supervisor seems to play a central yet strangely detached role. There are, as in any mythology, some elements of truth in this. The PhD candidate is always on a singular journey whatever the constraints and demands of the academic area.

This *mystic* element should not be mistaken for a *mystifying* one. Too often such mystification leads to candidates feeling that they made it through the PhD journey as much *despite* as *because* of their supervisor. There are, again, elements of truth in this in so far as the journey must finally be the responsibility of the candidate and lead to her or his growth. If such a perspective is too dominant, however, it can lead to arrogating from the supervisor much responsibility for throwing light on the process of the students’ journeys that helps them on their way. After all, it is significant enough for the candidate to bring content and process to writing-up and submission and success without having to spend the preliminary months floundering around trying to discover (like the blind men and the elephants in the adage) just what the *shape* and *form* of the PhD might be as well (Arnold, 2005).

Should the candidate’s journey be enabled by pedagogical insights and signposts as well as structural recommendations? I think, so because this is valuable for both the candidates and the supervisors.

This paper has enacted a ‘mystory’ of how I am exploring myself as a teacher bringing over 40 years experience to the supervision of PhD candidates and over seven years in psychotherapy. In doing so it has surveyed some of the ways in which the pedagogy of postgraduate supervision may benefit from understanding many of the attributes of psychotherapy. It has investigated how psychotherapy involves teaching and learning processes that can be fruitfully compared with the idealised pedagogical model of the dialectic. The paper has proposed that the pedagogical aspects of psychotherapy can enable a deeper understanding and richer practising of postgraduate supervision. Above all, it aims to celebrate postgraduate supervision as teaching and learning. In doing so, it has enacted a subjective academic narrative.

I am trying to bring together the multiple facets of my life so as to reveal them to the reader in Ulmer’s ‘mystory’ model, or my proposed ‘subjective academic narrative’. The reasons for this should be evident on reading this paper. Underlying this narrative is my own discomfort with the academic

normalisation of scientific methodologies being applied to the arts and social sciences. The Cartesian binary is kept alive and well within academic research protocols, and this places limits upon research models and practices within the arts and social sciences. Mary Midgely is particularly engaging in her assertion that ‘science, which has its own magnificent work to do, does not need to rush in and take over extraneous kinds of questions (historical, logical, ethical, linguistic or the like)’ (2004:6). The same assertion could and should be made of the arts and social sciences: the work that we do is magnificent in itself, it does not need verification from qualitative methodologies, although it may choose to utilise them in its own narratives.

Ulmer sees much of our search for knowledge as having a ‘collective blindness’ due to scientific paradigms and norms and asks the provocative question: ‘How do we account for the persistence of error in our lifeworld even after centuries of adopting scientific method as the dominant mode of collective reason?’ (1999-2000:15). As he uses neologisms frequently to express anew, he suggests a form of seeking knowledge that he calls ‘empyirical’ which is empirical lyricism, that must combine aesthetic practices with empirical ones ‘before we are able to grasp holistically the true condition of our problematic world’ (1999-2000:19). This relates well to my own critical framework of a ‘subjective academic narrative’ that I have modelled in this paper.

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