

**An historical and psychoanalytic investigation  
with reference to the bride-in-white**

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## **Abstract**

Asking how the subjective experience of the bride-in-white, who marries in an Anglican Church, can best be understood led to an historical exploration of the importance of virginity, the efficacy of wearing white and Church authority. From a religious perspective, in contrast to Eve's disobedience and ejection from God's presence, the Virgin Mary points towards a need to appear spotless and obedient.

Although the historical investigation offers evidence to 'when and where', often it does not address 'why', so attention was turned to psychoanalysis and the junction between 'the child' and 'the adult'. Key to psychoanalytic understanding suggests that childhood memories become repressed and emerge in adulthood. This thesis argues that recognised psychoanalytic concepts offer indications for the unconscious motivations of the bride. These include that the infant sets up both their own ideals and also idealises others. In infancy there can be a sense of exhibitionism without shame. That experienced during the Oedipus complex the infant negotiates separation from the mother, allowing the father to become a whole object, and in repudiating their authority finds independence. Later under the influence of envy of the mother's relationship to the father, the infant girl develops femininity.

Interviews indicate that, although the bride has a need to appear spotless like a virgin, submit to Church authority, rather than a civil ceremony, that sometimes repudiating parental authority can be problematic, on occasions 'penis envy' could not be resisted prior to marriage. While the bride by wearing wedding white receives maximum attention, surprisingly the warmth generated from the familial group seems paramount. That is, the bride-in-white who marries in Church, appearing like a virgin, submitting to ecclesiastical and patriarchal authority, receives the familial group's acceptance of her new union. A selection of plates, illustrate the themes under investigation.

## **Acknowledgements**

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During the course of this project I have become indebted to a number of people to whom confidentiality is assured and they fall into two categories. The principle group are the brides who became the participants. I am grateful to them for giving their permission to record an interview thus making an invaluable contribution. The second group are the numerous people who have attended psychotherapy sessions with me from whom I constantly learn and indirectly have been an immense source of inspiration.

A deep sense of gratitude goes to my mother who was a midwife and my father who was a Master Mariner, for their belief in me.

## Authors note

All quotations from Freud, unless otherwise noted, are from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 volumes, compiled by Angela Richards, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, editorial assistant Angela Richards. London: Vintage, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1974, Vintage 2001, (abbreviated as SE). Works that take up less than a whole volume are referred to by page numbers.

All biblical references are taken from *The New English Bible*<sup>1</sup>, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, 1970, unless otherwise stated.

Whenever reference is made to ‘the Church’, it is the Anglican Church and its Services that are being specifically referred to, unless otherwise specified.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Old Testament* part of *The Holy Bible*, compiled from c.1000BC to c.100BC, tells of Hebrew Judaism and is made up of three parts: the *Law* comprising the first five books which describe the origins and the covenant between God and Israel; the *Prophets* which describe the history of the Israelites; and the *Writings* which describe how the Israelites experienced God’s laws and covenants. The *New Testament* part of *The Holy Bible*, written between 70AD and 90AD contains the basis of Christian belief, through the sayings of Jesus, including Jesus birth, life’s work, death and resurrection, and instructions for performing rituals such as baptism, blessings, etc.

Dr Rowen Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury (2002-2012), head of the world-wide Anglican Communion, seventy-million strong, describes *The Bible* as ‘story’, ‘poem’, ‘a sort of conversation’, and ‘part of family history’. Dr Williams argues that *The Bible* is ‘not just about the treasures of musical and memorable language, or even a common culture. The stories told in *The Bible* matter because they can be seen and read as speaking honestly about human experiences... of hope and a power beyond ourselves, failures understood and forgiven, and new beginnings, and it offers a reason why people should be taken seriously and be loved’ (*Metro* Newspaper, Wednesday 27.04.2011, p19).

Diarmaid MacCulloch, author of *A History of Christianity* (2009), points out that while *The Bible* is ‘of universal reference it was produced in very different times and therefore should not be read as a straightforward moral guidebook’ (*Metro* Newspaper, Wednesday 27.04.2011, p18-19).

Sam Harris, atheist, scientist, and author of *The Moral Landscape* (2011) argues that ‘*The Bible* is no more an authority on morality than it is on astronomy. In the best case, religion gives people bad reasons to be good, and in the worse case, it fills the mind with divisive and degrading nonsense’ (*Metro* Newspaper, Wednesday 27.04.2011, p18).

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine, if you would, one Saturday afternoon hearing the Church bells ringing. Curiosity draws you to observe a social spectacle. The 'couple' emerge from the limousine, the veiled bride resting her left hand on her father's right arm and together they approach the Church. As you draw closer, organ music is heard. Father and bride walk inside and together they ceremoniously process down the aisle as the group of friends and family look in awe at her beauty and radiance. When inside, the father and the bride become subject to the minister and Church authority. Through a sacred rite the ceremony and vows are enunciated. You witness the father giving his daughter away to another man, the minister blesses their union and the new couple sign the Church register. After the ceremony the new couple together with their family and friends, with joy on their faces, emerge from the Church, the photographs are taken and the confetti thrown, before the whole group make their way to the reception. What we do not know about are the years it has taken for the bride to reach this moment in her life, the wedding day preparations, and what the bride's expectations are concerning this new alliance.

When I began to seriously research the phenomenon of the bride-in-white I was a professional wedding photographer in London and the Home Counties where my ambition was to capture 'happy memories'. Concurrently I was conducting my Master's research and training as a psychotherapist. I have continued my interest in this topic, investigating in more depth both psychoanalytic theory and the practice of interpreting the subjective experience.

Certain questions, however, always arose. Why did the bride often cry when I thought it was a happy occasion? Why was it so important that the bride's dress remains pristine?

Why did the bride almost ‘glow’ in her wedding dress? Why did fathers give their daughters away? What was significant about a Church ceremony? Thus I combined my photographic eye with my experience as a psychodynamic psychotherapist, by asking: what is it like to be a bride-in-white who marries in an Anglican Church? It is the search for the answers to these questions that comprise the focus of this research.

My own project, represented in this research, continues to be ongoing investigation into what, how and why do bride’s-in-white experience. I have attempted to engage and weave together strands of history and of psychoanalysis, but my views have changed in both historical and psychological terms. During the early part of this investigation I believed that the project involved a close examination of the bride-in-white’s subjective experience and by drawing on psychoanalysis, in some sense the creation of a single individual. But gradually by exploring the historical context, my views have broadened. Now when I think of the bride-in-white, I understand her experience in more holistic and pluralistic terms. This project has opened a web of social, psychological, and cultural relations, dynamics, practices, identities, and beliefs, in which we can locate the phenomenon of the bride-in-white. Psychoanalysis contributes, to this multiplex web of sexual development and identity, concepts like patriarchy, or the law of the father.

This project concerns both theory and practice to which I am professionally committed as a psychoanalytic psychotherapist. It is recognised that psychoanalysis comprises a complex of theories and concepts, and psychotherapy practice is difficult and challenging as each client has a unique life experience and wants to better understand themselves in a way that resonates for them. I will now present a brief overview of how this research has been structured.

Part One gives the opportunity to investigate historical, philosophical and religious literature that illuminates the bride-in-white. I also introduce discrete psychoanalytic concepts that seem relevant to the subjective experience of the bride-in-white. In Part Two I discuss the methodology that frames this research. Part Three considers the dynamic of the infant girl's relationship to primary objects, which when combined, forms the classical Freudian triangular complex of Oedipus. In Part Four psychoanalytic concepts are applied to the bride's statements through an understanding of ritual. Under the task of the analytic work, the aim will be to uncover from the adult statements indications of the unconscious motivations of the bride-in-white. Let us consider more closely how the research themes are integrated into a cohesive study.

Psychoanalytic theory becomes enriched through the study of the biological and social sciences, group behaviour, history, philosophy, art and literature, therefore in Part One topics relevant to the bride-in-white's subjective experience are investigated. I introduce a historical and ethical perspective to the subject of the bride-in-white. In historical terms the Bible records how significant being a pure virgin has been and depicted in the iconographic imagery of the Virgin Mary. In ethical terms Christian teaching advocates that a quality of sexual restraint is desirable, reinforcing it by using the symbolism of white to denote purity, and in ritual during rites of passage.

In psychoanalytic terms there can be anxiety and fear associated with the defloration of a virgin with the potential horror of blood and the women's subsequent resentment towards men, since the woman may harbour narcissistic wounds. In contemporary socio-historical terms, Queen Victoria set precedence in British royal circles, emulating French fashion, by wearing a white wedding dress. Since then marrying in white has become installed in socio-cultural terms, classically indicating that the bride personifies

a virgin and that the bride takes the marriage process seriously. In nineteenth century England if the bride did not wear a white dress it indicated that she was not a virgin. Being, or being seen to be, a virgin was clearly a significant physical state. My research into the history and social concepts of white, virginity and purity leads me to explore these socially constructed themes and the construction of the phenomenon of the bride-in-white.

Psychoanalysis, developed by Freud in the late nineteenth century has become a comprehensive theory of the human mind, motivations, behaviour and development, and also a practical method for understanding dynamic relationships between one person and another, and between body and mind. Psychoanalysis recognises that each individual is unique, there are factors outside ready awareness, i.e., unconscious phantasies and desires, influencing thinking patterns, emotions and actions, and that the past informs the present.

In Part One, therefore, I introduce possible psychoanalytic concepts that may be applicable to the subjective experience of the bride-in-white. I become concerned how Chasseguet-Smirgel explores the unconscious dynamics of the ego-ideal. While Freud's use of the ego-ideal had become absorbed into the super-ego and heir to the Oedipus complex, Chasseguet-Smirgel, in contrast, situates an aspect of the ego-ideal earlier as a formation of narcissism. The ego-ideal, becomes therefore a substitute for primary narcissistic perfection and fusion from which the ego is separated. However the ego continually searches for complete satisfaction and the abolishment of separation, that will never be achieved. I then turned my attention to Rycroft's proposition that exhibitionism emanates from behaviour which is motivated by the pleasure of being looked at. Whereas Freud situates exhibitionism as a normal component of infantile

sexuality, Rycroft points out that exhibitionism in women may be interpreted as the evidence of penis envy. Freudian theory also formulates the concept of a series of repudiations experienced by the infant girl. That is, a severing of familial ties prior to the bride giving her allegiance to her husband. Also relevant to the bride's experience, as Freud suggests, is the girl's transformation of instincts, to renounce 'active aims' in favour of 'passive aims', in order to achieve femininity.

This project concerns the making sense of the human experience through storytelling. Like other documented storytelling contained in Biblical text's, Greek myths, and fairy tales, texts often communicate accumulated knowledge from one generation to another, indicating ways in which human behaviour can be better understood. On one level, as in Part One, we can investigate social and religious issues such as the history of marriage, traditions of the wedding dress across cultures, how the white wedding appears to celebrate heterosexuality, the history of women in Europe, or how Biblical texts frame marriage. On another level, we can ask the bride-in-white to describe her experience as fully as possible. By interpreting the bride's statements through a psychoanalytic lens offers us the opportunity to understand better the bride's conscious and unconscious motivations. Thus this project asks the bride-in-white to tell her story within a methodological frame.

In Part Two I will discuss the quality of a potential outcome to this project, where 'truth' may be measured in several ways. I ask: will an accumulation of knowledge suffice? The method of investigation also asks, whether or not a number of significant and well-used psychoanalytic concepts are sufficiently systemic to answer questions about the bride-in-white's psychological motivation. The methods governing the process of the research are therefore addressed, including the philosophical frame in

relation to the ontological, epistemological and methodological limits. I seek to relate these to the ethical issues concerning the search for ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’, in order to understanding how the subjective experience informs the conduct and purpose of the work. I then describe and discuss the research process in practice, focusing on methods of data collection, the group of participants, the practice of data analysis, and the research limitations.

Although the wedding-day experience can be analysed as a group event, the focus here concerns the participant and how the individual experiences being a bride-in-white. In Part Two I introduce the seventeen brides from two different generations, who have a ready recall of their experience. In choosing two different generations I ask, does the contemporary bride respond differently, to the ‘older’ group? Or can we conclude that the Oedipus complex comprises a phylogenetic endowment on all eras, as British society has moved from the ‘Victorian’ era, towards changed sexual mores and greater female emancipation?

In Part Two I will discuss how I selected each bride at random stressing that although a prepared questionnaire would be used they had the freedom to respond in any appropriate way. I met each participant separately for the interview, except for one interview with a mother and daughter. There was no discussion at the time of the interview with them about their responses and no subsequent discussion about their contribution. Meeting as a group may be a project for further research. I use, as far as possible, in Part Four verbatim quotes. The participants’ reports then become indicators of these brides’ experiences. I am not, however, claiming that this group of brides represent a definitive sample.

In Part Three the focus turns towards an examination of the infant girl's psychological development from infancy to adulthood, using classical Freudian psychoanalytic theory. The object under investigation is not the infant per se, but how adult experience touches on infant experience, which may have less to do with the question of what really happened to the subject in infancy. That is to say, the focus of investigation is the subject's 'inner world' as it concerns relatedness. Part Three also offers the opportunity to introduce the transference relationship between the infant girl and the mother. The dynamic between the infant girl and the father where unconscious incestuous desire can be transferred by both parties which requires tempering by moral restraint, will be explored. From this theoretical base I will examine the bride-in-white's statements, looking for indications of the nature of the bride's unconscious processes. In Part Four the bride's personal experiences will be explored.

In Part Four the participants' statements are interpreted through a psychoanalytic lens. The bride-in-white, who marries in Church, although can be understood as a lone subject of investigation, as already mentioned, becomes better understood in the context of the family in which she grew up and now leaves for another. The context becomes the 'container' in which this process is achieved. Achieving this process comes about through a ritualised rite of passage supported by significant family members, the wider familial friends, and the religious ceremony.

In Part Four the participants' statements are selected and presented to reflect the sequence of events, and the bride's interaction with significant others. This selection process enables comparisons to be made between the different participants' experience, offering a triangulation and revealing indications of similarities and differences. What

may be revealed through interpretation may not be hard scientific irrefutable 'truth', but aims at psychoanalytic coherence and resonance with the participants' statements.

During the interviewing process that forms the data or statements that are interpreted in Part Four, what gradually emerges is the pertinence of how powerful the emotional content of the responses were, particularly concerning the bride's experience with her father. Classically, it is the clinical encounter that becomes the empirical basis for psychoanalytic information, therefore the interviews that will inform this project are not intending to masquerade as a substitute for the psychoanalytic session. Being aware, however, that within the 'free associations' of childhood dreams, later recalled by the adult, and where the present is continuously being interpreted, as useful. Being aware, that stories which are told sometimes indicate that the teller is perhaps resisting revealing part of the full implications, is also pertinent. Drawing upon and applying hermeneutics alongside psychoanalytic theory, offers credibility to the accumulation of knowledge in relation to the magnitude of wish fulfilment and the dynamic movement of unconscious processes.

Following the analysis of the seventeen participants' experiences in Part Four, the conclusion drawn in Part Five suggests that the four overarching psychodynamic themes of ego ideal and idealisation, exhibitionism, repudiation and transformation may be usefully employed to illuminate the bride-in-white's experience, but are not necessarily the only ones.

Appendix D forms part of the methodology research of Part Two, where I take the opportunity to analyse in-depth participants' statements in search of themes.

In Appendix E, I explore five whole interviews in a case-study format offering some interpretation but allowing space for the reader to make their own interpretation, the aim being to guard against researcher bias.

## PART ONE

### **Locating the bride-in-white: in history, through ritual and with reference to psychodynamics**

#### **1.1 Locating the bride-in-white**

In the introduction, I discussed, in general terms, the world in which the bride-in-white may inhabit, its context, existing knowledge and theory. I aimed to set out the parameters of this study and identify the research question.

Brides may wear a white dress and marry in an Anglican Church for a variety of reasons. The bride may identify as Christian and belong to an Anglican Church congregation, a white dress may symbolise an ideal virgin status, or the group may like the bride to appear like a virgin. The bride may wish to stand out visually within the group, white may symbolise death to a previous way of life and represent new life, and the bride may wish to be conveyed safely from one family to another. Victorian ideals may reflect purity and chastity. The Church and the group may offer blessings on the new relationship, that white may be considered 'traditional', or there may be other motivations. Let us consider these issues from a social and religious perspective before examining them through a psychoanalytic lens.

As the focus of this investigation aims to understand the bride-in-white's personal experience and motivations let us now investigate the provenance of the bride-in-white who marries in an Anglican Church by exploring religious and social texts. Empirical evidence suggests that in the Western economy, dominated by Christian thought, brides who marry in Church since circa 1840 predominantly wear a white wedding dress (Monsarrat, 1973) and (Tobin, 2003). We will therefore begin by examining Christian rituals where the wearing of white clothing predominates. The wearing of white apparel implies that the colour may signify some meaning, therefore, I will explore how

Biblical text assumes qualities of virginity and purity. I will then subject these concepts to the scrutiny of social practice, and consider how virginity and purity may be understood psychologically.

As empirical evidence indicates, the crux of the wedding-day experience happens after the family group have gathered in the Church and the bride-in-white is ‘given away’, therefore, I will examine the theory and practice of the ritual. I will then discuss how and when the phenomenon of the bride-in-white emerged. I will then investigate four possible psychoanalytic concepts that seem to relate to the personal experience of the bride-in-white, through a psychodynamic reading of how ideals and idealisation operates; why a psychological interpretation of exhibitionism may be considered apt in order to understand better the psychodynamics of separation by discussing the concept of repudiation; and how psychoanalysis may interpret the transformative process undertaken during the bride-in-white’s experience. I will conclude that a psychoanalytic understanding may go some way to inform us why the bride-in-white seems to have become a religious, social and personal phenomenon.

The aim of this approach is threefold: to assist in establishing objectivity, to offer a rounded view of the phenomenon of the bride-in-white and to allow space for sensitivity to what may have been missed in the literature. As the bride, in this study, wears a white wedding dress let us now consider some early and contemporary Christian rituals where the wearing of white apparel seems to dominate.

## **1.2 Clothed in white, Christian ritual and the significance of purity**

The fabric of white imagery and the concepts of Christian purity and sanctity appear to be linked with rites of human passage that convey the subject from one state to another endowing them with new attributes. Such ceremonial occasions of initiation, or rites of passage include baptism, First Communion especially for Roman Catholic girls, marriage and death. At such events, being clothed in white arguably symbolises the subject's outer ideal state but also may also signify an inner ideal. Let us examine the context behind baptism, as a foundational Christian sacrament.

After Adam and Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit 'of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (Genesis,2v17) they discovered that they were 'naked' (Genesis,2v10). Because of their disobedience 'the Lord God drove them out of the Garden of Eden' (Genesis,3v23,24), a place of idealised symbolic union with 'man's' creator. Having experienced ejection from God's paradise, 'The Fall' from grace, man has attempted to be reconciled with, become acceptable to, and regain that once favoured intimate relationship with God. Under renewed circumstances man believed that he could receive God's blessing again (Genesis,1v28). Significant psychodynamic affects in this scene include: desire, separation, fear, and the shame of sexuality. These issues arguably comprise some of the driving forces in 'man's' effort to regain his position in that once paradisiacal relationship with his maker.

The Old Testament records<sup>2</sup> that ritual cleanliness, purification and atonement were understood as being regular parts of everyday life. Aaron the High Priest, for example, would bathe before he put on his 'sacred linen tunic', prior to taking 'from the community...two he-goats for a sin-offering...and make expiation for himself and his

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<sup>2</sup> The Old Testament records ancient sacred Hebrew texts, prior to Christianity.

household'. One of the goats 'on which the lot...has fallen shall be made to stand...for expiation to be made over it before it is driven away into the wilderness to the Precipice' (Leviticus,16v4-10). Aaron performs the ritual cleansing of himself, arguably to appear acceptable to God, before performing the sacred duty on behalf of the group in order that the group too may become acceptable. Aaron symbolically projects the sin of the community onto the chosen he-goat which then becomes the expiation, a virtual reality, a stand-in, or scapegoat, who was then chased over a precipice, never to be seen again, carrying away the sins of the community. Later, Jesus was to become 'the expiation for our sins' (Romans,3v25), or 'the propitiation for our sins' (Book of Common Prayer 1662:272).

The Old Testament Psalmist implores God:

wash away all my guilt and cleanse me from my sin; wash me, that I may become whiter than snow...blot out all my guilt...create a pure heart in me...do not drive me from thy presence. (Psalms,51v2-11)

God later replies:

Though your sins are scarlet,  
they may become white as snow;  
though they are dyed crimson,  
they may yet be like wool. (Isaiah,1v18)

It can be argued therefore that some ritual may be understood as being the symbolic warding off of bad spirits<sup>3</sup>, and that inner purity becomes necessary for performing an act of worship. Similarly, the bride-in-white submits to Christian ritual, as we will discuss later, whose critical enunciation of the words and efficacy of rite is paramount.

Whereas Aaron performs cleansing on behalf of the group, baptism can be understood as a freely chosen personal act of cleansing. Baptism being a pivotal sacrament, initiates the Christian into the Church community prior to partaking Holy Communion. The Church ordains within the Public Baptism of Infants to 'sanctify this Water to the

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<sup>3</sup> 'Bad spirits' or the 'evil eye', may be considered synonymous.

mystical washing away of sin' in order 'to release him of his sins [and] to sanctify him' (Book of Common Prayer 1662:282-90). The water now becomes the purifying agent or sign, in place of the he-goat of the Old Testament.

A Jesuit priest, whose interest lies in seeking common ground between Catholic and Anglican doctrine, Edward Yarnold examines the act of purification through baptism through the eyes of the fourth-century Church Fathers: Cyril, Ambrose, Chrysostom and Theodore. The process of baptism becomes worthwhile examining closely, as this is the subject's first rite of passage where they are adorned in white, exemplifying a degree of purity signalled by the colour. In investigating adult baptism, Yarnold claims that during a three-year period of instruction the 'catechumen' is interrogated by the bishop while undergoing daily exorcism, self-searching and repentance. Then during Lent, the six-week period leading to Easter becomes a time for purification, spiritual enlightenment and a normal time for baptism.

Yarnold cites Zeno of Verona who lists some physical and emotional symptoms which candidates might exhibit at exorcism, such as 'turning pale, gnashing teeth, foaming at the mouth, shaking, and weeping' (Yarnold, 1971:11). Yarnold suggests that 'the bishop scrutinises the candidate to ascertain that none of these phenomena are present, as they would indicate a continuing diabolic influence' (Yarnold, 1971:12). This examination arguably implies that some are chosen while others are not. Yarnold explains that having renounced sin and the devil the next stage in the baptism preparation is that of washing. So one might argue that both inner and outer, physical, spiritual and mental cleanliness were considered of equal importance as the whole person is addressed. After old clothes are removed the candidate becomes anointed at 'three different points' with the 'oil of exorcism' (Yarnold, 1971:22).

Yarnold adds that as the neophyte comes out of the water the godparents are urged to bring the ‘unstained’ ‘baptismal garment of white’ and assist putting it on the newly baptised person, symbolising having ‘put on’ Christ (Galatians,3v27) (Yarnold, 1971:31). Yarnold asserts that all four Church Fathers referred to ‘these white robes [as] a symbol of the life of the resurrection to which the new Christians had now passed, and of the innocence that should now distinguish them’ (Yarnold, 1971:31). Yarnold cites Cyril who asserts that this symbolism is grounded in the Old Testament:

He has robed me in salvation as a garment  
and clothed me in integrity as a cloak,  
like a bridegroom with his priestly garland,  
or a bride decked in her jewels.  
(Isaiah,61v10)<sup>4</sup>

In other words, through a ceremonial purification of mind and body the new member of the church community becomes transformed.

Yarnold suggests that the white garment reminds Ambrose of the ‘shining garments of the transfigured Christ’ (Matthew,17v2) (Yarnold, 1971:32), John the Deacon connects the white garment with the ‘wedding-garment’ (Yarnold, 1971:32), while it reminds Chrysostom of the ‘wedding-robe which is worn for a marriage-feast’ (Yarnold, 1971:33), and it reminds Zeno of the ‘fleece of Christ the Lamb’ (Yarnold, 1971:32). Yarnold points out that when the Emperor Constantine (I) marked his conversion from Sun-worship to Christianity by being baptised, in 337AD, ‘in addition to his white garments, he had his throne draped in white’ (Yarnold, 1971:33).

Yarnold claims that ‘in some places a white linen cloth was also spread over the candidate’s head’, and adds that Theodore understood that the white linen cloth was considered to be ‘a mark of freedom’, as slaves ‘have to uncover their heads’ (Yarnold,

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<sup>4</sup> Other verses are also used: Psalms,51v2, Isaiah,1v18, Ecclesiastes,9v8, Matthew,5v16, Matthew,13v43.

1971:33). John the Deacon believed that the white veil symbolised ‘the ‘priesthood’ and ‘for the priests of that time always wore on their heads a mystic veil’, while Saint Augustine took the opposite view to Theodore: ‘it is unveiling that symbolises freedom’ (Yarnold, 1971:33). That is to ask: is the wearing of a veil a sign of freedom, a sign of being set aside, or does it signal submissiveness, and is the unveiling liberating?

It could be argued therefore, that the initiation rite of baptism of adults, based on fourth-century Church Fathers’ homilies, currently practised today with many of the same visual and metaphorical symbols<sup>5</sup>, illustrates the stark contrast between being sinful and sinless, that which is either displeasing or acceptable to God. Through the act of penance, part of the purification process which involves the physical discomfort of the body by wearing significant clothing: by standing on, or wearing ‘sack-cloth’, the candidate is marked out. Marked out not only by the invisible sign of the cross on the forehead, an internalised attachment of the soul, but later by being robed in fine white linen and exhibiting himself before the rest of the church who acknowledge the candidate’s new status. The robe becomes the external concretised evidence of their new attachment to Christ’s promised legacy for those who are ‘pure’. So through the process of renunciation of sins and baptismal washing the candidate is made innocent and pure, which is signified by the outer white garment.

Yarnold insists that these awe-inspiring experiences are ‘calculated to sink into the depths of the candidate’s psyche and to produce a lasting transformation’ (Yarnold, 1971:x). Yarnold concludes that ‘people were not content with a promise of such salvation, they felt the need of a ‘sacrament’ that would guarantee it’ (Yarnold, 1971:66). Arguably this visual enactment of being clothed in white at subsequent rites

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<sup>5</sup> Underlying these symbolic acts ‘is the Platonic assumption that the symbol is less real than the thing it symbolises, but shares in its reality’, i.e., the symbolic act of washing of hands represents the reality, freedom from sins (Yarnold, 1971:96).

of passage, like the girl's *First Holy Communion*, [Figure 3], and later at her wedding, is an allegory of this pivotal baptismal initiation where the symbol of purity and acceptability becomes reinforced during a process of sanctification.

Having discussed how white clothes in the ritual of baptism originate, let us now consider other areas where being adorned in white appears significant. In the Book of Exodus, we read how Aaron receives God's instructions on Mount Sinai to make a sanctuary in which he promises 'I will dwell' (Exodus,25v8). The sanctuary<sup>6</sup>, a womb-like place, arguably, is the space in which both man and God may dwell together in harmony. This seems to be an offer by God of partial re-merging, re-uniting in a Paradisiacal realm. The Byzantine church, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna, built under the sponsorship of Emperor Constantine I, may be such a Paradisiacal sanctuary in which may be seen the mosaic of *The Holy Virgins*<sup>7</sup>, in nuptial attire. The Byzantine art historian Otta von Simson claims that these virgin martyrs could well be likened to the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom (Matthew,25v1-13) and in the words of the Psalmist the heavenly king 'desires your beauty' (Psalms,45v11) (von Simson, 1948:83). The images of the Holy Virgins adorning the walls of this sanctuary may be seen as representing brides of Christ dressed in white and bejewelled in their bridal robes ready for the heavenly wedding.

In examining the parable of the wedding-feast (Matthew,22v1-14) it will be noticed that 'though many are invited, few are chosen' is based on their wearing the correct 'wedding clothes' (Matthew,22v14). Saint John's apocalyptic vision of heaven depicts 'His bride has made herself ready, and for her dress she has been given fine linen, clean

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<sup>6</sup> The 'sanctuary' or church may also be a metaphor for the human soul.

<sup>7</sup> See *The Holy Virgins*, after 526AD. Mosaic in the Nave, Sant' Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna. in. Grabar, Andre (1953) *Byzantine Painting: Historical and Critical Study*, Geneva, Skira, p54.

and shining' (Revelation,19v8). These two images point towards the kingdom of Heaven, a promise of what is to come, as long as one presents oneself correctly. Von Simson argues that the Roman church 'conceived the Eucharistic sacrifice under the image of that heavenly feast to which only those are admitted who wear a wedding garment, who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb' (von Simson, 1948:83), and that the sanctuary is the 'beauteous bride-chamber He has fitted on earth for a type of that which is above' (von Simson, 1948:102).

The art historian A. M. Cetto argues that the Christian mosaics at Ravenna, executed between 402 and 675, at the dawn of the Middle Ages, may be said to 'rival or surpass those of Rome' (Cetto, 1961:3+9). *Apostle Peter*<sup>8</sup>, depicts the martyred Apostle robed in white, which arguably represents a sign of heavenly purity. Cetto explains: 'the apostles are clothed in white robes—the tunic with dark stripes (clavi)'—refer to the biblical verses that this image echoes, in the words of Saint John the Divine:

Men that are robed in white...have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They stand before the throne of God and minister to him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will dwell with them. (Revelation,7v14-15) (Cetto, 1961:12-13)

In other words, being robed in white can symbolise purity and God's acceptance, thus resulting in a reunion and dwelling together in harmony.

Evidence indicates that Popes have continued this symbolism by wearing a full-length white cassock. This may be seen in images, for example, Raphael's painting of Pope Julius II in 1511, Titian's rendition of *Pope Paul III* c1545, and Velazquez's picture of Pope Innocent X in 1650. More recent images Thomas Lawrence's painting of *Pope Pius VII* (1742-1823), considered to be the 'most famous Pope of the nineteenth

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<sup>8</sup> See *The Apostle Peter* in. Cetto, A. M. (1961) *The Ravenna Mosaics*. Berne: Hallwag, pp12/13.

century' (Lloyd, 1991:184-5), is depicted wearing a red cape over white robes that cover him from neckline to ankle. Yousuf Karsh's world famous photograph of *Pope John Paul II* [Figure 1] captures him wearing all white, cape, cap and cassock (Karsh, 1983:26). The outer adornment of white (similar to the robe worn in Roman times) arguably reflects the reassurance of an inner purity, as in the promise of sins forgiven and in the hope of reunion with God and one's maker.

It could be argued, therefore, that the phenomenon of white imagery, predominantly carried through the life-cycle by babies, girls and women during specific religious rites of passage, originates in the purification of the body and soul at baptism. On subsequent occasions when the subject is dressed in white it may reflect this process of purification, encapsulated in an ideal. When the congregation vocalises the Nicene Creed<sup>9</sup> during the Holy Communion service, they affirm their belief in 'one Baptism for the remission of sins' (Book of Common Prayer, 1662:260), thus affirming their belief that through the act of baptism purity will be bestowed. Let us now explore in biblical, philosophical and cultural terms how purity becomes understood in terms of an ideal and significantly through virginity.

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<sup>9</sup> This was the result of the first Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325AD and expanded at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople in 381AD. Geographically Byzantium, or Constantinople, was the capital of the Christian state between 330 and 1453 (Grabar, 1953:11).

### **1.3 Ideals: virginity and purity in philosophical, religious and physical terms**

We saw in the previous section how for the ancient Hebrews, and the Church Fathers, purity, through the ritual of baptism and wearing white, signalled acceptability to God and the group. Before we consider another way of understanding purity, through the idea of virginity let us explore how these concepts have been moulded by philosophical argument and Christian interpretation. We will also consider how these concepts have been influenced by iconography and ecclesiastical authority into a human state that desires an ideal, even though that ideal may seem unattainable.

Empirical evidence indicates that the concepts of virginity and purity concerned the Old Testament Hebrews as they have become inscribed in law. Among ‘The law of holiness’ in the Pentateuch, given to the priestly sons of Aaron, are instructions to remain ‘holy to God’ (Leviticus,21v7) so that ‘dishonour’ (Leviticus,21v15) should not fall on the family group. Instructions that focus on the woman’s sexual status include: ‘He shall marry a woman who is still a virgin. He shall not marry a widow, a divorced woman, a woman who has lost her virginity, or a prostitute, but only a virgin from his father’s kin’ (Leviticus,21v13-14). Arguably, any identity crisis between the Hebrews and the Gentiles was resolved by preserving purity amid paganism by maintaining a very strict obedience to detailed religious laws. Before considering further how New Testament Christians linked virginity and purity, let us consider philosophical influences on Christian thinking.

In chronological sequence, Old Testament text already existed prior to Plato’s philosophical dialogues, but the New Testament had not come into existence. Diarmaid MacCulloch, contemporary historian and Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford, follows the ancient Greek tradition of understanding the world by studying the past, suggests

that Plato's philosophy influenced Christianity profoundly. Plato's view of reality and authenticity propelled one basic impulse in Christianity, to look beyond the immediate and everyday to the universal or ultimate. Plato offers an impressive allegory, in the *Republic* that contrasts the perceptible world and the world of Forms. It is as if human life is imprisoned in a cave and that we perceive our lives as shadows of an ideal 'Form'. These shadows represent truer and higher versions of reality than the ones which we can readily know. It is as if Plato entreats us not to be content with the shadows, but search for ideal 'Forms' of [arête] excellence or virtue in the Forms of a Supreme Soul or God (MacCulloch, 2009:31).

MacCulloch suggests that another of Plato's major contributions to Christian discussion was his conception that God's nature encompasses oneness and goodness. This view of divinity and virtue seems in direct opposition to the Greek gods behaviour of the 'pantheon'. In Hesiod's (c.735BC) *Theogony* the Olympian gods are depicted as lacking moral responsibility, pity or compassion (MacCulloch, 2009:31). The ancient Greeks believed that out of Chaos (the night) are spawned Gaia, the Earth, Ouranos (the sky) incestuously mates with his mother and together they have twelve children who he forces back into Gaia's womb. Gaia's son Kronos castrates his father, Ouranos, before committing incest with his sister and attempting to murder all their children. Plato in *Timaeus* paints a different picture where the Supreme Soul of God and the Christian Trinity, are envisaged as good, and God was not fickle, jealous or quarrelsome, but was distanced from human emotion, while representing the nature of perfection that cannot change. The difficulty with Plato's God is the correlation with the changeable, imperfect world in which we live (MacCulloch, 2009:32).

Christopher Stead, Ely Professor of Divinity Emeritus in the University of Cambridge, claims that Christians have often been influenced by contemporary philosophical debate. The Old Testament Hebrews picture God as having a body and mind, though transcending humanity in the splendour of his appearance, power and wisdom. But Philo of Alexandria (25BC-AD45), a Greek speaking Jew, adds a metaphysical dimension, now God becomes depicted without bodily form or human passions; one who is unchangeable, unfathomable, 'He who Is' (Exodus,3v14), in the present tense. Later 'God' becomes subject to the doctrine of the Trinity: three coequal Persons united in a single Godhead. Even Plato's Forms, conceived as ideal standards, pure Being and pure Goodness, Plato recognises that these Forms contained difficulties, by on occasions eliminating the most awkward cases such as sickness or arranging them in order of increasing generality (Stead, 1994:120). Let us consider these issues further.

Stead clarifies that 'Christian theology begins with the New Testament' and suggests that Plato, probably the greatest of the Greek philosophers, without question made a worthwhile contribution to Christian theology (Stead, 1994:14). Stead argues that Plato did not set out to expound a doctrine, rather Plato's genius lay in raising profound questions, particularly in regard to the difficulty of attaining the whole truth, and a dislike of premature solutions. Christians quoted Plato solely, where he appeared to confirm established doctrines of the church; the reality of God, his creation and providence, the heavenly powers, the human soul, all could be upheld by appropriate choice of Platonic texts. Although Plato left a large corpus of writings, Plato preferred the exchange of ideas viva voce, in conversation or 'dialectic', following his master Socrates (Stead, 1994:14-15).

Plato's theory of Forms, in the *Phaedo*, attributed to Socrates' belief in the survival and immortality of the soul, greatly interests Christians. Socrates, however, seems to deprecate the body, with its perceptions and feelings, but rather advocates 'the survival of a fully conscious and active personality' (Stead, 1994:17). Plato's distinctive theory of Forms or 'Ideas', not 'thoughts', but eternal objective realities, make up an intelligible system or world. Whereas Socrates asks, for example, 'what is' piety, courage, beauty or justice and how can they be defined, Plato takes the question further by wanting you to know 'what *x* is, does or its function'. For example, Plato thinks of the Form of justice, although applying to a single word, with multiple actions, as being always just and perfectly just, i.e. conceiving of an ideal standard (Stead, 1994:18-19).

Plato appreciated the dimensions of beauty, but physical beauty is insignificant unless it is accompanied by beauty of character. And in *Gorgias* Plato suggests that moral beauty can be understood—that it is preferable to suffer wrong than to do wrong, since the man who does wrong injures his most precious possession, his own soul (Stead, 1994:22). In *Timaeus* Plato describes a beauty which our souls enjoyed in the forgotten ages before we were born, and to which we may hope to return (Stead, 1994:28). Plato during his middle period suggests that 'the soul became acquainted with the Forms in the previous existence which we have forgotten; the discovery of such truths is in fact a recollection (*anamnêsis*), as if we recollect a previous *ideal* existence (Stead, 1994:23) or ideal self or in Christian terms a guardian angel, or in terms of a Form the individual soul (Stead, 1994:28). Plato's *Symposium* indicates a continuity between erotic impulses and devotion to eternal beauty (Stead, 1994:145).

Plato's doctrine of the ideal Good, The supreme principle of pure Unity, pure Goodness, on which every other reality depends, the world order is fixed and eternal (Stead, 1994:75). Stead argues that Aristotle broke away from Plato's influence, founding the Lyceum, criticising Platonic arguments because they prove too much; they entail consequences, which are known to be false, and fail because they lead to an infinite regress. Hence Aristotle can say 'The Forms do not exist', by introducing the subject of change (Stead, 1994:33-34).

Returning to Plato: 'God, being generous, desires that all things should be good' (*Timaeus*: 29c-30a) (Stead, 1994:69). It seems that Plato draws on the Old Testament: 'God saw that all he had made...was good' (Genesis,1v31). In Plato's *Laws* (10.899-903) we see that God cares for small things as well as great. This can be seen in Jesus' teaching regarding the hairs on my head, and for the sparrows (Matthew,10v29-31, Luke,12v6-7). The obverse side of God's care is the disorder in the world, natural catastrophes and the prosperity of the wicked, illustrated in the Book of Job, to which Stead confesses that there seems no convincing answers, except that evil becomes understood as 'the absence of good', or as Stead prefers, evil 'can be seen as the corruption of what is potentially good' (Stead, 1994:147). Thus adhering to Plato's principle that God represents an ideal Form of Good.

Continuing to explore how God is described, while Christians excepted Jesus teaching concerning the apprehension of God as a loving Father, drawn from Plato's *Republic*:382e, whose attributes include goodness, (*Republic* 379c), generosity, (*Timaeus*:29c), and creative wisdom (*Sophist*:265d). There remains, however, the problem that the Old Testament depicts a passionate God, one who can be jealous,

cruel, and vengeful. This different side of God's personality can be interpreted in terms of allegories conveying good and moral spiritual teaching (Stead, 1994:143).

In the *Phaedo* Plato contrasts body as destructible and soul as indestructible (Stead, 1994:21). Stead suggests that Christians accepted Plato's opposition of body and soul, and his insistence that the soul is principally responsible for our intellectual and moral life. Christians welcomed Plato's belief that the soul retains powers of consciousness after the death of the body, but Plato did not accept the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Christians, however, did accept Plato's adumbrations of a divine judgment assigning rewards and punishments after death (Stead, 1994:29).

Plato, in the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus* understands the mind or soul as being composed of three aspects: appetitive, emotional, and rational. In the *Phaedrus* myth Plato represents these three aspects of the human soul as a chariot driven by a charioteer (its reason), and drawn by two horses, one of which (representing 'desire') is ill tempered and hard to control. Therefore human desires for excessive food, drink and sexual satisfaction could be regarded as the enemies of reason and virtue *par excellence*, whereas anger and aggression, symbolised by the relatively tractable horse, were not so condemned. Stead suggests that 'this Platonic division of the soul led by a somewhat indirect route to the later Christian division of the human personality into flesh, with his 'carnal' desires, soul (i.e. unreformed soul) and the (God-given) mind or spirit. This prompted many Christians to regard the flesh not as a God given instrument for the soul but as intrinsically a source of temptation (Stead, 1994:22).

Jonathan Barnes, Fellow of Balliol College Oxford, suggests that 'the basis of Plato's tripartition is logically dubious, and it is not clear if the tripartition is meant to be

exhaustive or even inclusive', as in the *Republic* Plato assigns appetites to the rational part. Barnes argues that Plato's principle interest concerning the mind or soul centres on its role as a source of human behaviour and moral action, he clarifies that the 'rational part' being morally superior ought to govern our actions. Plato's tripartition has been compared to Freud's distinction between the id, ego and super-ego (In. Gregory, 1987:628-9). It can also be argued that Freud follows Plato's insistence, drawn at Socrates trial, that 'the unexamined life is not worth living' (MacCulloch, 2009:30).

Plato has therefore been valued by both pagan and Christian alike as a moral and religious teacher (Stead, 1994:22). Neither Plato (427?-8-347?-8BC) nor Aristotle (384-322BC) heard the name of Jesus Christ (MacCulloch, 2009:33-34). Aristotle, unlike Plato, pursued all branches of knowledge attempting to describe every facet. Rather than Plato's ideal tree, Aristotle classified different sorts of tree. However, the Christian church was suspicious of Aristotle's physical world, preferring the otherworldliness of Plato's thought (MacCulloch, 2009:33-34). Stead suggests that although much of Plato's dialogues were widely accepted, the rejection of marriage in the *Republic*, with its proposal that children should be communally brought up, homosexual love tolerated, and the rigid division of society based on intellectual ability, was rejected (Stead, 1994:28). Although Plato does not discuss bodily virginity, arguably Plato refers to the ideal Form of Beauty where virginity would be considered the higher ideal.

Resonating from Plato, for psychoanalytic theory and practice we can see in Plato's 'dialogues', Freud's 'free associations'. Plato's charioteer may be likened to the Freudian ego, Plato's wayward horse likened to the almost uncontrollable id instincts of human appetites, while the tractable horse offers restraint like the superego. Plato's shadows projected onto the homely or prison-like cave walls can be understood as

contrasting the shadows of phantasy and dreams with the search for truth and reality. While Plato's ideal Forms can offer understanding to the psychological formation of the ego ideal, feeling or being beautiful. Knowing instantly when one has found the ideal object or one's ideal other-half resonates from Plato's *Symposium*, where Plato describes the hermaphrodite, having been split in two, subsequently passionately searches for their other half. We may also see Freud's theory of bisexuality here. Plato's philosophy may not get into the detailed analysis of Aristotle, but Plato may be understood as laying down some broad fundamental principles. We can see in Plato's ideal Forms resonance for Christian thought, God's goodness and unity despite living in a chaotic and incestuous world. Plato's God can be seen as the 'ideal Good Father' who links us with past generations and endows the 'ideal virgin bride' with his Blessing.

Let us now consider how New Testament Christians interpreted virginity and purity. Saint Paul couches his entreaty for women's purity in terms of being an uncorrupt 'chaste virgin' as if betrothed to Christ (2Corinthians,11v2). Paul's insistence embraces the duality of body and spirit—'the unmarried or celibate woman cares for the Lord's business; her aim is to be dedicated to him in body as in spirit' (1Corinthians,7v34). The iconographic figure of the New Testament who encapsulates the 'chaste virgin' in a corporeal representation has been the Blessed Virgin Mary. Before we explore Christian iconography, let us examine the figure of the Virgin Mary.

From the outset, as recorded in the gospels of Luke and Matthew, a great deal of effort was made concerning, the virginity of Mary, the Immaculate Conception and miraculous birth of Jesus<sup>10</sup> arguably Platonic ideal Forms. By the fourth century the doctrine of perpetual virginity was well attested by the Church Fathers, Augustine of

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<sup>10</sup> 'The Theme of Mary's Virginity', in *Mary in the New Testament*, Ed. By Raymond Edward Brown (1978), pp267-77.

Hippo<sup>11</sup> and during the seventh century by the Lateran ecumenical Council<sup>12</sup>. The Greek term ‘Ever Virgin’, concerns perpetual virginity, including Mary’s own Immaculate Conception<sup>13</sup>. The Immaculate Conception of Jesus, and Mary’s continuing virginity, can be traced to liturgy used by the fourth century Eastern Orthodox Church, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church<sup>14</sup>.

It is interesting that the Islamic Qur’an declares that Jesus was the result of a virgin conception and virgin birth, and that in Islam Jesus and Mary are the only two children not touched by Satan at the moment of their birth, because God placed a veil between them and Satan<sup>15</sup>.

Keith Ward, Regis Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford, challenges the virgin birth and Mary’s perfection. Ward suggests that although Christian theologians consider that Christianity is rooted in historical facts, this history has been ‘embroidered and symbolically magnified’ (Ward, 1991:14). Ward argues that while there are some historical realities, we can no longer be sure of what they are, because the virgin birth exemplifies a mixture of fact ‘filled with symbolic and literary content, as angels, moving stars, wise men and shepherds, miraculous portents, dreams and wicked kings all play their part’ in the legends of strange births which also exist in many other religions (Ward, 1991:14).

During the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation while Martin Luther endorsed Mary’s perpetual virginity, John Calvin neither accepted nor rejected it, considering the

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<sup>11</sup> *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopaedia* By John C. Cavadini (1999), ISBN 080283843X, p544.

<sup>12</sup> *The Blackwell Companion to Catholicism*, by James Buckley, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, and Trent Pomplum (2010), ISBN 1444337327, p315.

<sup>13</sup> Macula, in Latin means: ‘without any stain of original sin’.

<sup>14</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church by the Vatican, 2002, ISBN 0860123243, p112.

<sup>15</sup> *The Holy Qur’an: Maryam (Mary)*, Sura 19 (Translation by A. Yusuf Ali).

idea as ‘impious speculation’ based on Scripture stating that Jesus was Mary’s ‘first-born’, born of a virgin, but mentioning brothers of Jesus, thus implying that Mary had other children<sup>16</sup>. Some Anglican reformers supported perpetual virginity as it was an earlier doctrine, but John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was emphatic ‘...born of the blessed Virgin Mary, who, as well after as before she brought Him forth, continued a pure and unspotted virgin’<sup>17</sup>. Contemporary Protestants learn of the virgin birth of Jesus, without the emphasis being on Mary remaining a virgin for the rest of her life<sup>18</sup>. Let us now examine the scriptural Mary.

The Virgin Mary appears to speak little except at the Annunciation<sup>19</sup>. The English scholar, Catherine Driscoll, argues that the Annunciation brings into focus the passion of virginity, and raises the issue of ‘action and will’ (Driscoll, 2002:143). Driscoll understands Mary as simultaneously facilitating the Annunciation and a feminine sexual discourse (Driscoll, 2002:143). Mary’s reply to the angel Gabriel as reported: ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word’ (*Authorised Version*, Luke 1v38) (Driscoll, 2002:143). This seems to pose the question of Mary having a choice either to accept or reject divine intervention, yet it is believed that Mary was pre-destined to accept.

Let us now leave Christian Biblical entreaties and consider how virginity and purity were interpreted in iconography<sup>20</sup>. From an art historian’s perspective, André Grabar suggests that the feminine aspect of God becomes epitomised in the Christian images of

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Harmony of Matthew, Mark & Luke’, in *Calvin’s Commentaries*, tr. William Pringle, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, (1949).

<sup>17</sup> *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, Volume 15, by John Wesley, Joseph Benson, Published by Thomas Cordeux, London (1812), page 110.

<sup>18</sup> *What Every Catholic Should Know about Mary*, by Terrence J. McNally (2009), ISBN 1441510516, page 170.

<sup>19</sup> In Mary’s response to Gabriel: Mary said ‘How can this be?’, ‘I am still a virgin.’ (Luke,1v34). And later, Mary said ‘Here am I’, ‘I am the Lord’s servant; as you have spoken, so be it.’ (Luke,1v38).

<sup>20</sup> Iconography, a two-dimensional image, as opposed to a three-dimensional ‘graven image’ which was prohibited (Leviticus,26v1).

Christ's mother<sup>21</sup>, who is depicted as a 'shy youthful Virgin' (Grabar, 1953:77). Grabar explains that the significance of Byzantine art owes its eminence to Emperor Constantine I, who, as already mentioned, in the fourth century converted to Christianity and became a patron to iconographical interpretation of Gospel themes. Grabar suggests that religious imagery was conceived as 'microcosms, small-scale reproductions of the Cosmos—the Ideal Universe' (Grabar, 1953:26). Worthy of note, is the Virgin Mary, wrapped in a blue<sup>22</sup> mantle, apparently silent, protectively offering the Christ child for adoration by the Magi.

The Blessed Virgin Mary's facial expression has been the subject of much speculation. Driscoll argues that the tableaux representing the Annunciation<sup>23</sup> is 'dominated by both knowledge and reticence' as the Virgin is depicted as one 'who looks or draws away' (Driscoll, 2002:143). The British psychoanalyst and art critic Tessa Adams suggests that a striking feature of Bellini's Madonnas are 'the Virgin's gaze is paradoxically distracted in a melancholic distant glance', juxtaposing the 'absent gaze' with 'tactile intimacy' (Adams, 2003:63). The British film analyst and cultural critic Richard Dyer claims that Mary's face is evidence enough to indicate her purity and wholeness, while classically Mary's face is virtually never shown partially, nor 'in profile, in shadow or cut across by objects', or 'blemished by wrinkles or even streaked with tears' (Dyer, 1997:77).

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<sup>21</sup> God gives instructions in the Book of Exodus for the colours used in the sanctuary in which He will dwell, to include gold, silver, copper, violet, purple and scarlet (Exodus,25:4).

<sup>22</sup> Blue, the colour worn by the Virgin, the Queen of Heaven. Florentine artists would have appreciated that the robe is painted with lapis lazuli, one of the most expensive pigments available. In other words, only the best is good enough for the Virgin Mary. (*see* Pesellino, Francesco (Francesco di Stefano) *The Annunciation Diptych*), ([http://www.artandarchitecture.org.uk/stories/cumming\\_pesellino/cumming\\_pesellino0...](http://www.artandarchitecture.org.uk/stories/cumming_pesellino/cumming_pesellino0...) 20/03/05).

<sup>23</sup> The day of Annunciation, 'the holiday, which celebrates Mary's learning from the angel Gabriel that she will give birth to the Messiah, always falls on March 25, precisely nine months before Christmas.

The Virgin appears to be shown as divinely immaculate, apparently forbidden to be a speaking social being but one who bears sorrows and sheds tears in silence. Arguably, the exemplary image of the Virgin Mary, following her encounter with the angel Gabriel (Luke, 1v26-38), presents a serious knowing look, the container of a secret, the pregnant virgin, an ambivalent relation encompassing pollution and sanctity. Alternatively, Mary seems to reflect the quiet joy of the Magnificat (Luke, 1v46-55) in which she uses personal pronouns such as 'humble' and 'blesséd', implying compliance. Or further, does Mary have premonitions of foreboding for her only Son? In considering facial expressions, the American psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel suggests that the 'facial expression signifies an involuntary equivalent of affects which, by means of empathy, inform spectators of the nature of the subject's feelings' which, arguably, may be learnt as pre-verbal communications of inexpressible emotion (Fenichel, 1945:319).

In examining Figure 2, from the perspective of the Virgin Mary's function, we can understand this in terms of her being an intermediary, one who bridges the void between Christ and the 'other', and one who intercedes. Driscoll suggests that the Virgin Mary 'symbolises relations between man and God, self and other, which is why she can be mother, bride, queen, and daughter of Christ all at once' (Driscoll, 2002:144). It may be argued therefore that the iconographic image of the Virgin Mary has not only the potential to bridge the split, a gap between God and man, but also between earth and heaven that came about during the 'Fall from Grace'.

In Christian understanding, the New Testament Virgin Mary symbolises the Old Testament Eve. The Old Testament imagery of the Garden of Eden may once have been paradise but was also a place where expulsion was enacted. The Italian Renaissance art

critic John Hale claims that 'if Eve is shown being expelled from the Garden of Eden while the angel of the Annunciation appears to Mary, it seems to illustrate that Mary's grace redeems whom Eve's sin had damned' (Hale, 1977:18). It may also be argued that the Garden of Eden represents the location where the 'Tree of Knowledge' and the 'River of Life' may be found, thus juxtaposing images of rejection from God with hope of reconciliation with God, which the Virgin Mary as intermediary offers.

The New Testament Virgin Mary may not have spoken more than in compliance (Luke 1v38) but through her body she becomes a vehicle for divine communication. Arguably, the significance of the Virgin is one of being submissive, an empty vessel, a container that is of no value to herself, except in relation to the other. Dyer suggests that Mary does nothing and indeed has no carnal knowledge, her purity (of which virginity is only one aspect) is given of her nature, not something achieved, but Mary 'is filled with God' (Dyer, 1997:16-17). The contemporary philosopher Kelly Oliver argues that the Virgin represents a woman whose entire body is an 'emptiness through which the paternal word is conveyed' (Oliver, 1997:172).

The cultural historian Marina Warner suggests that 'virginity was important to the Church Fathers not only because it signified absence of knowledge of sex but because it meant that the body was pristine and whole, as God had made it. Warner suggests that metaphors for a virgin's body include, 'seamless, unbroken, a literal epiphany of integrity', and the Virgin Mary as a 'closed gate', a 'spring shut up', 'a fountain sealed' (Warner, 1976:73-74).

The medievalist Kathleen Kelly suggests that the Church Fathers, such as Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine propounded the necessity of both bodily and spiritual

integrity. Kelly, drawing on John Chrysostom's statements in *De Virginitate* (c.380-90AD), argues that they embrace both the political and theological spheres which bring about ecclesiastical regulation of virginity, purity, and the woman's state of being unsullied, in order for her to reap rewards in heaven. Arguably, this implies that delayed gratification will be rewarded.

Chrysostom warns that:

Even if [a virgin's] body should remain inviolate the better part of soul has been ruined: her thoughts". "It is not enough to be unmarried to be a virgin. There must be spiritual chastity, the absence of wicked and shameful desire, the absence of ornaments, and unsoiled by life's cares. (Kelly, 2000:3-4)

Kelly suggests that Chrysostom's formative document in an emerging policy, makes the Christian church the only institution with the power to define and reward virginity (Kelly, 2000:4). Kelly suggests that Chrysostom's authority was only one voice in the struggle to consolidate the definitions of these concepts<sup>24</sup>. Key to the issue of virginity, in Kelly's terms, 'the conflict is not over the nature of virginity (which has no existence as a pre-cultural condition), but over the issue of who gets to speak it', and adds 'the early church aimed to create a monopoly on virginity' that is, bodily and spiritual integrity (Kelly, 2000:3). It can be argued, therefore, that the Virgin Mary embodies a feminine ideal integrated in Christian teaching.

The image of the Virgin Mary, although predominantly an icon venerated by Roman Catholics, nevertheless becomes significant for other Christian denominations. The cultural historian, Geoffrey Ashe, claims that Catholic Christianity has endowed the Virgin Mary<sup>25</sup> with many epithets over the centuries, such as 'Queen of Heaven; Our

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<sup>24</sup> Chrysostom considered that 'the Jews disdained the beauty of virginity, the Greeks admired it in amazement, but only the church of God praises it', thus contrasting Christian culture with its antecedents (Kelly, 2000:146).

<sup>25</sup> The Council of Ephesus in 431AD affirmed the Virgin Mary to be the *Theotokos*, or Mother of God. Warner asserts that 'the Roman Catholic dogma of the Bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven was promulgated by the Pope in 1950. This dogma made official a popular tradition, which

Lady of Lourdes, Walsingham, Guadalupe, Czestochowa; Flower of Carmel; House of God; Ark of the Covenant' (Ashe, 1976:1)<sup>26</sup>.

The social historian, Kenneth Clark, claims that from the twelfth-century the cult of the Virgin had a civilising influence in Western Europe. From the time that Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bald presented the actual tunic worn by the Virgin Mary to Chartres cathedral around 876AD, the vestment appears to have been associated with miracles. Following a fire which destroyed the cathedral in 1194 when this relic was found to have survived, it appealed to popular imagination. Clark also suggests that the Virgin Mary's 'womanly virtues of gentleness and compassion' were juxtaposed in the crusading warrior's own 'masculine, courageous, physical' psyche (Clark, 1969:58).

Kelly claims that the Middle Ages were dominated by a period of faith. Roman Catholic monasteries were considered to be storehouses of learning until the rise of the universities in the thirteenth-century, and the image of the Virgin Mary seems to have been endowed with supernatural powers being used as a talisman. Kelly cites from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (c.1400) that 'Gawain comes under the special grace and protection of the Virgin, whose image he has had painted on the inside of his shield (lines 647-49) (Kelly, 2000:115).

The theologian, Frank Bottomley, argues that whereas the medieval cult of the Virgin Mary projects her as an intermediary [Figure 2], there was a shift during the Renaissance to the 'concept of woman as a thing to be possessed' and consequently, the

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dates from the third or fourth century and was elaborated in Medieval times', Warner, Marina (1976) *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary*, Weidenfeld+Nicolson: London.

<sup>26</sup> Other epithets include: 'Madonna, patroness of countless Churches, spiritual mother of all the faithful, co-redeemer with her Son, entwined in an article of faith' (Ashe, 1976:1), 'Mother of Christ', 'Mother of God', 'the Great Mother', 'Queen', 'and Virgin Mother' (Kristeva, 1987:239-50).

Virgin's image becomes portrayed 'with the inertia and passive qualities of an object' (Bottomley, 1979:154).

The contemporary German historian of Medieval literature, Anke Bernau, suggests that Martin Luther (1483-1546) and John Calvin (1509-64), amongst other German and Swiss reformers, recognised that practically the 'vow of celibacy' was not working and therefore made a 'mockery both of virginity *and* marriage' (Bernau, 2007:46, original emphasis), as sexual urges were satisfied outside of marriage. Bernau suggests that Luther in *The Estate of Marriage* (1522) advocates that 'marriage is the universal condition that men and women have to conform to and if resisted fornication, adultery and secret sins' result (Bernau, 2007:46).

Bernau emphasises that whereas for the pre-Reformation Catholics 'virginity itself, was elevated to the highest state', for the post-Reformation Protestants there was a clear shift away from the manner in which the Virgin Mary was worshipped. Christ's purity replaced the emphasis that had been on the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth (Bernau, 2007:46). Thus the Middle Ages' cult of the Virgin Mary with her virginal innocence made way for the emphasis on Christ's redemption and Luther's principle of 'salvation by faith, not works' (Churchill, 1956:4). In other words the emphasis on celibacy, virginity and chastity gave way to marriage as a natural God-willed state, but Bernau argues that despite a change of emphasis 'virginity *per se* did not lose its exalted status' (Bernau, 2007:49).

By 1532, during the English Reformation, arguably there was a matrimonial crisis, involving both King Henry VIII<sup>27</sup> and Thomas Cranmer. The politician<sup>28</sup> and historian, Winston Churchill, tells us that Henry, eighteen, had married Catherine of Aragon, twenty-three, in 1509 ‘under a dispensation from the Pope due to degrees of affinity<sup>29</sup> prohibited by the Church’<sup>30</sup> (Churchill, 1956:26). By 1532 Catherine had experienced five stillbirths before Mary was born. Because Catherine had only produced a daughter, Henry’s affections turned towards Anne Boleyn, who in the eyes of the Pope was considered ‘a concubine’, consequently Henry was threatened with ‘excommunication’ (Churchill, 1956:46).

Churchill tells us that, when Archbishop Warham the principle opponent of Henry’s divorce died, Henry recalled Cranmer from Germany. ‘Cranmer had been married twice, in the new German fashion for priests’, but as ‘marriage of priests was still illegal in England...Cranmer’s wife was always hidden...and is said to have travelled with the luggage’ (Churchill, 1956:48). As the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Cranmer did not stand in the way of Henry marrying Anne Boleyn, but in the eyes of the Pope, Henry had committed bigamy as his marriage to Catherine had not yet been publically annulled.

Churchill continues: in 1533, by Henry describing himself as “King and Sovereign recognising no superior in earth but only God, and not subject to the laws of any earthly creature”, the breach between England and Rome was complete (Churchill, 1956:49) and so Henry became the supreme head of the Catholic Church of England. This

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<sup>27</sup> King Henry VIII’s six wives: Catherine of Aragon, married 1509-1533, divorced; Anne Boleyn, married 1533-1536, executed; Jane Seymour, married 1536-1537, died; Anne of Cleaves, married 1540, divorced; Kathryn Howard, married 1540-1542, executed; Katherine Parr, married 1543-1547, widowed.

<sup>28</sup> British Prime Minister (1940-5, 1951-5).

<sup>29</sup> The ‘Marriage (Prohibited Degrees) Relationship Act’ (1931) finally allowed marriage with nieces and nephews.

<sup>30</sup> Catherine of Aragon, Spanish and Catholic, married Arthur, Henry’s brother, on 14 Nov 1501. Arthur died six months later.

position, Henry reinforced with brutality and many hundreds were hanged, disembowelled, and quartered if they did not swear their allegiance to the King (Churchill, 1956:51). In the same year Elizabeth was born to Anne Boleyn, but Henry's second daughter frustrated him, as he desired a son and heir. In 1536, accused of adultery, Anne was beheaded (Churchill, 1956:55). In other words the Anglican Church of England was born out of King Henry's desire for a son and heir and reinforced with cruelty by 'a tyrant and heretic' (Churchill, 1956:51).

Having considered how the image of the Virgin Mary had impacted on the pre-English Reformation, let us now examine how post-English Reformation ideals were formed. Driscoll suggests that the Virgin has been and continues to be a 'crucial component in Western philosophy, theology and iconography', where the Enlightenment image of the Virgin is 'both sexualised and distanced from sex', but continues to be relevant to 'feminine adolescence in Modernity' (Driscoll, 2002:142). Driscoll argues that 'the Blessed Virgin should not be confused with any repression of feminine sexuality', claiming that 'the Blessed Virgin is an icon and an ideal that has been utilized to contextualize and evaluate images of and ideas about girls', including the 'daughter-virgin-bride nexus' (Driscoll, 2002:142). Thus the Virgin Mary may be seen to signify purity in a way that is unattainable to human kind, and as Driscoll suggests, 'if virginity works as a statement of self-denial this, is not opposed to its image of integrity but part of its attraction' (Driscoll, 2002:142).

Dyer argues in a similar vein that 'Mary...provides a model of behaviour to which humans may aspire'. These attributes include 'passivity, expectancy, receptivity, [and] a kind of sacred readiness' and are the 'constituents of purity and a state of grace (but where these are absent, the memory of the other, pre-Christian female archetype, Eve)'

exists (Dyer, 1997:17). Dyer claims that ‘Mary...is an ambiguous model, both exemplary and exceptional...one to aspire to’, yet ‘what one can never be’, setting up a dynamic of aspiration, in the face of impossibility (Dyer, 1997:17). ‘Such striving (which in women must also be passive) is registered in suffering, self-denial, and self-control’ (Dyer, 1997:17). Let us now turn from considering a biblical, Christian and historical analysis of the Virgin Mary, to consider some unconscious processes that this iconographic image may evoke.

As already discussed, the image of the Virgin Mary can seem to be both exemplary and exceptional yet out of reach, thus setting up a tension, which may also be understood as signifying an unconscious communication that resonates with an idea, image or desire, which has been repressed. The French psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, proposes that the Virgin Mary encapsulates the phantasy of ‘consecrated motherhood’, and ‘the phantasy of a lost territory’, that is the ‘relationship that binds us to her...an idealisation of primary narcissism’ (Kristeva, 1987:234). Arguably this ‘lost territory’, which the infant once occupied, the pure, unblemished, idealised maternal realm, that has been repressed, may re-emerge in a phantasised form as being attainable. The image of the Virgin Mary may be idealised by the woman but does the image of the Virgin Mary reinforce the woman’s place in the patriarchal system of exchange?

Kristeva argues that within the phantasy of the lost territory of motherhood, nurtured by the adult, the phantasy is less ‘the idealised archaic mother’, but rather ‘the idealisation of the relationship that binds us to her—an idealisation of primary narcissism’ (Kristeva, 1987:234). In other words, the image of the traditional representations of motherhood that the Virgin Mary and child conjures may be rejected or embraced. Kristeva suggests that ‘the humanity of the Virgin mother is not always obvious...in her

being cleared of sin, which is elevated by her most intense revelation with God' (Kristeva, 1987:235). As an infant girl, the idealised mother may appear to be beyond humanity, sinless and sacred. Kristeva in echoing Chrysostom, suggests that the Virgin has the transitional function of 'bond', 'medium', or 'interval', which might be presumptuous and tantamount to 'heretical identifications with the Holy Ghost' (Kristeva, 1987:236).

Drawing on Kristeva, the iconographic image of the Virgin Mary represents on the one hand an inaccessible goal<sup>31</sup>, while on the other symbolises the return of symbiosis—a merging with the mother's body: where the psychological relationship is as if both are part of each other and are one. This feminine ideal may facilitate access, without becoming a nun or martyr, to the promised 'jouissance', a sensual, sexual pleasure of total joy, (Kristeva, 1977:16) or a symbiotic union of ecstatic communication. Kristeva contrasts the feminine ideal with:

The woman who proves not to be a virgin with an unruly clientele. Rather than avoid the sexual act, they assume it but only as an impossible relationship, whose participants are condemned to a perpetual banishment that confines them with auto-eroticism, an insane, incestuous plunge. (Kristeva, 1977:151)

Arguably the ideals which the Virgin Mary epitomises may be considered to be out of human reach, but equally energetically striven for, but in a modified form. The image of the Virgin Mary communicates on several unconscious levels, through paradox, metaphor and desire, but is never rejecting. A question that arises from the above discussion: is femininity to be disciplined and subdued to God's command, or does Christian theology reflect woman's psychological nature, a matter of passive acceptance as represented in the portrayed images of the Virgin Mary?

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<sup>31</sup> See Bernini's sculpture, *Ecstasy of St Teresa*.

Having considered the impact of the Virgin Mary during Christian pre-Reformation times and its continuance post-Reformation, let us now consider how this has had practical implications.

#### 1.4 Between life and death: white, virginity and purity in practice

Having explored some biblical imagery relating to virginity and purity let us now investigate how for Christian and non-Christian alike the woman's state of virginity appears to have been and seems to continue to be paramount.

The philosopher in comparative religion and symbolism Jean Cooper suggests that:

A white robe indicates purity, chastity or the triumph of the spirit over the flesh; it is worn in mourning in the Orient, in ancient Greece and Rome. White is associated with both life and love, death and burial. In marriage it symbolises death to the old life and birth into the new beyond. A woman robed in white also carries the love-life-death connotations, as with the Delphic Aphrodite of the Tombs, the Scandinavian Freyja or Frigg and the Teutonic Hel/Freya, 'the Beloved', goddess of death. White with black and red depicts the three stages of initiation. White with red is death. In alchemical terms, the *femina alba*, the White Lily, is woman, the feminine principle, the purity of undivided light and the second stage of the Great Work. In Christian terms white symbolises the purified soul; joy; purity; virginity; innocence; the holy life; light; integrity, as white is worn at all sacraments; baptism, confirmation, first communion [Figure 3], marriage, and, [as already mentioned] death. (Cooper, 1978:42, original emphasis)

In other words, we may understand that white apparel, used on significant occasions throughout the life-cycle, may symbolise being 'morally or spiritually pure, stainless, spotless' and be 'highly prized and precious' (OED, 1989:262). White apparel may be contrasted with other 'traditional' colours such as red<sup>32</sup> that many non-Christian brides throughout the world adorn. Cooper suggests that the colour red for the Hindu symbolises 'activity, creativity and energy of life' (Cooper, 1978:41).

Let us consider how virginity and purity have concerned both the ancient and contemporary culture, spiritual and secular groups alike, by examining how these concepts have been addressed within a socio-historical context. In Leo Sherley-Price's translation from the Latin, The Venerable Bede (673-735AD) extols the virtue of

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<sup>32</sup> Pictorial evidence illustrates that 'traditional' bridal wear is dominated by the colour red in large areas of the world such as in India, China, and Japan.

Abbess Ethelburga<sup>33</sup>'s 'strict self-discipline' that led to the epithet of 'the glory of the perpetual virginity beloved by God' (Bede, 1955:157). Bede asserts that the extent of Ethelburga holiness became apparent when her bones were being transferred to another church: 'they found the body untouched by decay as if it had been immune from corruption of sinful desires' (Bede, 1955:157). Arguably, Ethelburga's holiness connects sexual self-restraint with spiritual purity. Bede records that before King Oswy defeated Penda in Mercia 'he vowed, that if he were victorious, he would offer his daughter to God as a consecrated virgin and give twelve estates to build monasteries' and dedicate his daughter Aelfled, 'who was scarcely a year old', to God's service 'in perpetual virginity' (Bede, 1955:183-4). Arguably, King Oswy may have been influenced by the example of Ethelburga and the Virgin Mary.

By 705AD, Bede tells us that Abbot Aldhelm wrote in *De virginitate*<sup>34</sup>, a 'treatise against...things contrary to the orthodoxy and unity of the Church' (Bede, 1955:298-99). The medieval English scholar, who brings to life the virtually absent English Anglo-Saxon woman, Clare Lees argues that *De virginitate* is an 'explicitly Christian work from the 'golden age' of Anglo-Saxon women' (Lees, 2001:114). Lees asserts that the crucial question concerning the state of virginity can be seen in the contrast between the Barking nuns and rich aristocratic women's relation to church authority. Crucially, in response to an audience of 'divorced' women', who now 'prefer the religious life', Aldhelm attempts to find a flexible and inclusive category to encompass 'those who have been formerly married' (Lees, 2001:115). Lees points out however, that Aldhelm, in discussing nuns, asserts: 'by giving currency to the view that women embody the temptations of the flesh, he effectively adds weight to orthodox pressures for the establishment of monastic separation' (Lees, 2001:113). In other words Aldhelm argues

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<sup>33</sup> Abbess Ethelburga of Barking, circa 647AD, may have been of royal decent and was associated with many miracles.

<sup>34</sup> *On Virginitate*.

for the status quo, that physical virginity and spiritual purity are inseparable. Lees also notes that whereas Abbot Ælfric, in *Lives of Saints* (c998) focuses on ‘sanctity’, Aldhelm focuses on ‘virginity’ (Lees, 2001:127). Arguably, the inner spiritual saintly body and outer physical purity of Anglo-Saxon women are being equally emphasised within Christian ideology.

Kelly draws attention to one example of virginity being physically verified, that at the fifteenth-century trial of Jeanne d’Arc<sup>35</sup>. Jeanne, who having been brought before King Charles VII of France<sup>36</sup> and the Catholic church, underwent extensive physical examination. It was reported that ‘The said Maid was seen, visited and privately looked at and examined in the secret parts of her body...found no corruption nor mark of violence’, later Jeanne was declared ‘*virgo intacta*’ (Kelly, 2000:17, original emphasis). It was important to verify that the brave nineteen-year-old Jeanne was a virgin as this prevented her from being accused of witchcraft and provided the basis for sainthood.

We might ask, why was virginity so highly regarded during the first millennia? The forgoing exploration concerning the importance of virginity arguably reveals that the Virgin Mary’s virginity elevated her above normal human experience, and this attribute may also be seen in Jeanne d’Arc’s case. On a practical note the social historian Lawrence Stone offers some non-elevated human practical reasons for the practice of virginity. Stone argues that as for the church in pre-Reformation England, ‘the ideal of virginity...provided the theological and moral justification for nunneries’ and these were populated by ‘upper-middle class girls’ whose fathers ‘avoid[ed] costly marriages’ (Stone, 1977:38). Stone claims that the church’s attitude was based on, for example, the teachings of Saint Jerome who considered ‘all sex was unclean’ (Stone, 1977:313).

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<sup>35</sup> Jeanne d’Arc, or ‘The Maid of Orléans’, 1412-1430, became a French and Roman Catholic saint.

<sup>36</sup> King Charles VII of France, 1403-1461.

Stone argues that during the Reformation attitudes towards sexuality were ‘tempered by the rejection of the ideal of virginity’ which gave way to ‘the substitution of holy matrimony’ (Stone, 1977:313), as already mentioned. Before considering more closely a Christian and biblical perspective of a driving force for purity let us consider a secular view of how purity has been enacted.

Stone, in examining the marriage process in post-Reformation England between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries asserts that:

Pre-marital female chastity in the marriage market of a hierarchal and propertied society was important [to] small property owners as virginity was linked to obviating legal doubts about legitimacy of heirs to property and title. In genteel circles, secular honour depended on the reliability of a man’s spoken word and a woman’s reputation for chastity. The consequences of accusing a man of being a liar could result in a duel, and accusing a woman of being unchaste, might result in a lawsuit for slander in an ecclesiastical court. (Stone, 1977:316)

In other words, Stone suggests that ‘women have for millennia been regarded as the sexual property of men and the woman’s value diminished if it had been used by anyone other than the legal owner’ (Stone, 1977:316). Thus, ‘pre-marital chastity became a bargaining chip in the marriage game,’ counterbalancing ‘male property and status rights’ (Stone, 1977:401), whereas for the ‘landless rural labourer...virginity was not important’ (Stone, 1977:402).

Juxtaposing Stone’s view, the sociologist Stephanie Coontz suggests that the significance of the ideals of purity and virginity are that they may have been ‘more common among the lower and middle-classes, anxious to improve their status, than among the elites’ (Coontz, 1986:145). Coontz adds that ‘in European history, insistence on female virginity and chastity was closely connected to a rising middle-class which also stressed conjugal love and co-operation’ (Coontz, 1986:145). Arguably, the ideals of virginity and chastity aimed at obviating public shame and potential humiliation for

both genteel and urban folk but were also connected with inheritance, property rights and status. Let us now consider other contexts where the wearing of white predominates.

Mark Allen's front cover illustration of *First Holy Communion* (2005) depicts Roman Catholic girls dressed like young brides [Figure 3]. Cardinal John Wright clarifies that at the first Eucharist there is the first Penance. Pope Pius X, in defining the 'age of discretion', in 1910, asserts that 'to receive first Holy Communion requires a nearly complete knowledge of the Articles of Faith, therefore, extraordinary preparation is required. In effect, this means deferring First Communion for the riper age of twelve, or older', but concludes that 'the most suitable age seems to be seven to eight years'<sup>37</sup>. The age suggested for first communion implies puberty, an age before sexual relations commence, and therefore the candidate likely comes in a state of virginity and purity.

As Cooper stated above, 'white in death represents birth into the new life beyond' (Cooper, 1978:41). Arguably therefore, funerary rites are rites of passage from one life into death and on to another form of life, but also life-giving rites. The enactment of the sacred drama of baptism, and the Eucharist, the initiate dies to self in order to be reborn, with the reward of eternal bliss. The first and significant Christian rite of initiation the catechumen emerges from being buried in the waters of the baptismal font and receives a white robe, symbolising purity both temporal and eternal. 'White in death', a mortuary symbol ultimately focuses on the reward of eternal salvation and future resurrection from the dead, illustrated by *The Resurrection*<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> From the Vatican: 31 March 1977. Above was sourced from:  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc\\_con\\_clergy\\_doc\\_19770331\\_penance-communion\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccclergy/documents/rc_con_clergy_doc_19770331_penance-communion_en.html).

<sup>38</sup> see *The Resurrection*, c. 1324-5 (*detail*), painting by Ugolino di Nerio (active 1317-27, died 1339?) in. Bomford, David, Dunkerton, Jill, Gordon, Dillian, Roy, Ashok (1989) *Art in the Making: Italian Painting*

The anthropologist Mary Douglas adds that the church juxtaposes ‘the idea of woman as the Old Eve, together with fears of sex pollution’ with ‘the Second Eve, a virgin source of redemption crushing evil underfoot’, thus the ‘Second Eve’ becomes a potent new symbol (Douglas, 1966:195). Douglas asserts that purity may be equated with the sacred, where ‘things and places are to be protected from defilement’ and where ‘holiness and impurity’, consecration and desecration, are opposed (Douglas, 1966:9). Douglas claims that ‘uncleanness’ concerns separation ‘a spiritual state of unworthiness’ (Douglas, 1966:14), and, arguably within Christian theology that of separation from God has been agonised over since Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden. Douglas suggests that ‘rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience’ and adds that such rituals are ‘positive contributions to atonement’ as their ‘symbolic patterns are worked out and publicly displayed’, which is where disparate experience is given meaning (Douglas, 1966:3). As already mentioned, the ‘Old Eve’ seems equated with impurity and ejection, while the ‘Second Eve’ symbolises holiness and redemption, and public rituals that address issues of purity and impurity create unity and positive experience.

Let us now return to the ideal of virginity from a physical and secular perspective. One expectation projected onto the virgin may be the purity of her progeny. In historical terms the preferred progeny, the male heir, continues the family surname and inherits wealth and property; however this is not always so.

Douglas, drawing on Edward Evans-Pritchard’s anthropological work with a Nilo-Saharan tribe, offers an example of impure progeny by asserting that:

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*Before 1400*, London: National Gallery Publications, Distributed by Yale University Press. Santa Croce Altarpiece, Florence, Plate 102, p118.

when a monstrous birth occurs, the defining lines between humans and animals may be threatened. If a monstrous birth can be labelled an event of a peculiar kind, the categories can be restored. So the Nuer treat monstrous births as baby hippopotamuses, accidentally born to humans and, with this labelling, the appropriate action is clear. They gently lay them in the river where they belong. (Douglas, 1966:49)

Douglas suggests that ‘anomalous events [such as these] may be experienced as dangerous’ and feelings of anxiety are allayed by ‘attributing danger [so] putting the subject above dispute’ (Douglas, 1966:49), thus bringing order to anomaly and uncleanness. On a practical note, Douglas suggests that ancient rites concerning purity may have sound hygienic origins, simply reflecting the avoidance of contagious disease (Douglas, 1966:36).

In attempting to define female physical purity the American sociologist Adrienne Rich argues that the virgin may be defined in ancient terms as ‘she-who-is-unto-herself’, the one who is ‘undeflorated’ and whose hymen is intact (Rich, 1976:249). The medievalist Kelly on the other hand argues that the concept or condition of virginity often ‘resists definition and verification’ and may be contingent upon cultural, rather than physiological criteria (Kelly, 2000:ix). Driscoll suggests that ‘virginity names a body prior to the construction of sexuality proper and gives a place to the misfit of feminine puberty’ (Driscoll, 2002:143) and that virginity epitomises ‘the (as yet) unfinished process of feminine adolescence’ (Driscoll, 2002:144). It seems, for Driscoll, that virginity is surrounded by ‘the ambiguity of the girl’s position as agent/object of sexual desire,’ setting up ‘visibly fraught...contradictory significations as the dissemination of feminine adolescence deferred resolution of that ambiguity in womanhood’ (Driscoll, 2002:144). In other words, in modernity female adolescent generic images appear in advertisements, film or television, so whether explicitly referencing virginity or not, these images embody ‘an object of contemplation, disciplined observation, and desiring interpretation’, thus resisting complete knowledge (Driscoll, 2002:145).

As we have seen, virginity and purity appear in both the Christian and non-Christian spheres where ecclesiastical injunctions attempt to define and control, while on occasions ambiguity reigns. Virginity and purity are arguably less consciously valued in an increasingly secular British society, as are spirituality and salvation. In the Easter issue of *The Sunday Times* (27 March 2005:1-2), the journalist Bryan Appleyard's article *Beyond Belief* not only argues that Britain is becoming more secular, but contrasts Britain with other parts of the world which are becoming strikingly spiritual. Appleyard asserts that 'fewer than eight per cent of us go to church' and defines secularity as 'the destruction of conventional religion'. Secularly, Dyer suggests that 'whiteness, really white whiteness, is unattainable. Its ideal forms are impossible' (Dyer, 1997:78). Conversely, spiritually, Christ at his resurrection exemplifies the unattainable pureness as he enters God's presence. Having discussed the notions of white, virginity and purity within both a spiritual and secular context, and their iconographical and physical impact, let us now consider this physical aspect further in its relationship to the virgin prior to wedlock.

Contemporary research within the Western economy indicates that the ancient concept of virginity continues to be highly valued by some groups where virginity may be recaptured through modern methods. Kelly, in considering the significance of the hymen asserts that:

the hymen and its analogues [has] come to be used as a sign of woman's difference and as an instrument of control. Because it is 'there' it must be safeguarded. In the case of the hymen, anatomy does indeed dictate destiny, however tautological. Though this thin ridge of venous tissue may be the one thing a woman has got that a man has not, the possession of it does not confer any status on a woman beyond that which the Law of the Father bestows. (Kelly, 2000:118)

Kelly, although aware that some may claim for an unbroken chain of theories and practices from the Middle Ages to the present, suggests that 'the idea of virginity and its

proofs transcends historical bounds: (and that) virginity may not be constructed as the same over time and according to place, but it is continually constructed all the same' (Kelly, 2000:121). In other words, however constructed, virginity remains a constant force in Western culture and perhaps worldwide.

The general practitioner and ethnographer Kristin Hendrickx discusses the attitudes of Islamic girls living in Belgium, by addressing 'the importance of virginity at marriage' (Hendrickx, 2001:1). Hendrickx suggests that 'confronted with the virginity standard: sex before marriage is forbidden; the worth of a girl and the honour of her family is coupled with her virginity' (Hendrickx, 2001:3). Hendrickx argues that for the Moroccan girl 'virginity until marriage is a very significant issue [and] this preoccupation can lead to anxiety about loss of the hymen' (Hendrickx, 2001:5). Hendrickx' research reveals that 'older Moroccans explain that the virginity standard is proof there has been no incest' (Hendrickx, 2001:5) and that although the virginity standard may not be at the forefront of the younger generation's mind, yet this standard creates 'immense emotional tension' (Hendrickx, 2001:5). Myths influence men who 'are expected to succeed in deflowering and showing the evidence', and 'the misconception that the hymen is something strong that has to be torn away' causes anxiety in girls (Hendrickx, 2001:5). Hendrickx reports that for the girl who has had pre-marital coitus 'doctors are engaged to perform hymen reconstruction surgery'<sup>39</sup> and claims that there appears to be a 'double morality' involving premarital intercourse, leaving the girl denigrated (Hendrickx, 2001:5). Hendrickx found that doctors are under

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<sup>39</sup> 'thelondonnews', 15 November 2007, reports that Department of Health figures show that twenty-four women had surgical intervention for virginity repair funded by the NHS in 2005-6. 'The operation mends a tear in the hymen'. Hymenoplasty is the surgical reconstruction of the thin, ring-like delicate skin membrane partially covering the opening of the vagina, known as the 'hymen'. Figures released by the NHS, by courtesy of the Metro newspaper, state that there were 'about one hundred and sixteen operations carried out between 2005 and 2009', and 'thirty NHS operations in 2009'. Doctors say 'patients are under pressure from future husbands or relatives who insist that they should be virgins on their wedding night'. 'The woman fears that the husband will walk out, divorce or humiliate her all her life. There have been honour killings in extreme cases.'

pressure ‘with requests for certificates for virginity and hymen reconstruction’ causing an ethical dilemma, as issues of STD<sup>40</sup> and health behaviour influence the attitudes of girls to the virginity standard’ (Hendrickx, 2001:6).

Taking a sociological perspective Sawitri Saharso in investigating the multicultural society of the Netherlands also discusses the request for surgical reconstruction of the hymen, which is based on a ‘cultural norm that young women, but not young men, stay a virgin until marriage’ (Saharso, 2003:199). Saharso argues that ‘it is not desirable to ban hymen repair’ as this maintains the capacity for autonomy which is ‘good feminism’ (Saharso, 2003:199).

Let us now consider the idea of abstinence from sexual intercourse prior to marriage in America. The paediatrician Peter Loewenson discusses ‘reasons for choosing not to have sexual intercourse’, among two groups of American adolescents; the ‘virgins and already sexually experienced’ (Loewenson, 2004:209). Loewenson discovers that the reasons for abstinence include ‘fears about adverse consequences, such as STD’s, pregnancy, and parental disapproval’ (Loewenson, 2004:213). Other reasons include the ‘values and beliefs’ of ‘wanting to wait until marriage’ influenced by religious beliefs (Loewenson, 2004:214). Loewenson, cites Barbara Duerst (1997) an American adolescent psychologist who suggests that adolescents recognise abstinence as having ‘positive consequences’ through the negatives of ‘feelings of insecurity and potential for dissolution of a relationship’ (Loewenson, 2004:214). Kelly suggests that ‘the end of the twentieth century, disillusionment with the 60’s sexual revolution as well as the 80’s response to the AIDS crisis, have made abstinence (or, at least, selective abstinence) more attractive’ (Kelly, 2000:120).

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<sup>40</sup> Sexually Transmitted Disease, (STD’s).

We have seen a key shift during the Reformation from a life-long ideal for chastity which gave way to the ideal of sexual fidelity within marriage. We have also seen both in Belgium and America that there are not only physical pressures that may influence sexual abstinence and therefore virginity and purity, but also group implications such as denigration, honour and religious beliefs. Let us now give virginity and purity a different examination, by applying a psychological lens.

## 1.5 Virginity and purity from a psychological perspective

The psychodynamics of virginity and purity arguably apply equally to both non-Christian and Christian alike. Freud addresses these issues in *The Taboo of Virginity* where ‘taboos’ are regarded as originating in the ‘fear of some danger’ (SE11:198).

Freud suggests that:

The high value which the suitor places on a woman’s virginity seems firmly rooted. The demand that a girl shall not bring to her marriage...any memory of sexual relations with another man<sup>41</sup> is a logical continuation of the right to exclusive possession of a woman, forming the essence of monogamy. Whoever is the first to satisfy a virgin’s desire for love, long and laboriously held in check...is the man she will take into a lasting relationship...creating a state of bondage which guarantees...holding at bay the polygamous tendencies which threaten monogamy. (SE11:193-4)

Freud suggests that psychological fears surrounding virginity and the first act of intercourse resonate in both men and women, and argues that among the woman’s fears are ‘the pain which defloration causes a virgin’ (SE11:202), and ‘the horror of blood’ being spilt (SE11:196). There is also her ‘opposition to her womanly role and function’ (SE11:204), arguably a psychological change from the independence of adolescence to the responsibilities of married life and of potential motherhood. Freud argues that virginity and its loss for the woman, may include ‘hostility towards the man’ (SE11:207-8) claiming that these feelings of revenge may concern the woman’s ‘narcissistic injury which proceeds from the destruction’ of the hymen which in turn leads to her feeling ‘a diminution of sexual value’ (SE11:202). Freud also considers that defloration may activate the woman’s penis envy by her ‘wish to castrate her husband and to keep his penis for herself’ (SE11:205). Freud argues that associated with her penis envy may be ‘the woman’s hostile bitterness against the man, which never completely disappears’, as she is no longer ‘emancipated’ (SE11:205).

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<sup>41</sup> At the time of Freud’s writing this in 1918, it had already been reported that the young Queen Victoria had insisted, prior to her marriage in 1840, that she did not wish to marry a man who had had previously sexual relations with another woman, as will be discussed at section 1.8.

Freud's penetrating analysis, considers one reason that man may fear virginity which may be connected with the 'universal taboo of menstruation' where the monthly flow of blood is associated with sadistic ideas or a mystical 'bite of some spirit-animal' (SE11:197). Freud suggests that primitive people consider that while the girl is menstruating 'she is the property of [an] ancestral spirit' (SE11:197); therefore this spiritual dimension is arguably another reason that man fears or creates taboos concerning women. Freud postulates that other reasons may concern that he will be 'weakened by the woman' (SE11:198), 'she will paralyse his strength (SE11:198)...causing flaccidity' (SE11:199); her influence 'over him through sexual intercourse' (SE11:198); and the belief that women are 'strange and hostile' (SE11:198). Freud claims that through the fear of being weakened the woman appears to have some control or influence over the man through the fact that she 'infects him with her femininity' (SE11:198) and as a result he 'shows himself incapable' (SE11:199). Freud also links the man's fear of a loss of potency and impotency with castration and 'castrating' (SE11:199).

While Freud situates virginity biologically and psychologically in terms of fear, Freud also sees that the taboo may be purified through ritual. Freud locates the fear and taboo, prohibitions and restrictions associated with virginity within the polarities of 'sacred' or 'unclean' (SE13:18)<sup>42</sup>. Freud postulates that a 'taboo' has two opposing meanings. On the one hand 'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean', and the opposite of 'taboo' meaning 'common' or 'generally accessible' (SE13:18). Freud explains that among the objects of taboo there appears to be two distinct categories, those aimed at 'the protection of people' and those 'imposed in order to secure property' (SE13:20). Freud goes further by suggesting that 'the

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<sup>42</sup> Freud's duality of 'sacred' or 'unclean' (1913), seems to resonate with Arnold van Gennep (1908), and Émile Durkheim (1912) duality of 'sacred and profane', which Mary Douglas (1966) refers.

violation of a taboo makes the offender taboo', this facilitates the opportunity of averting the violation through 'acts of atonement and purification' (SE13:20) and offers the explanation that often 'the source of taboo is attributed to a peculiar magical power' which results in 'the attempts to throw it off by suitable purificatory ceremonies' (SE13:20). Freud claims that what is of concern here is that people 'submit to prohibitions as though they were a matter of course and feel convinced that any violation of them will be automatically met with direct punishment' (SE13:20).

Drawing on the psychologist Wilhelm Wundt, Freud suggests that taboos directed towards women include, as already mentioned, her time 'during menstruation and immediately after giving birth' and that if a taboo is violated, the person would be subjected to the 'fear of demonic powers whose 'vengeance must be averted' (SE13:23-4). This leads Freud to consider the relation between the concept of taboo to 'purification and sacrifice' concluding that unconsciously taboos essentially concern 'touching', not merely physical contact but also the metaphorical dimension of coming 'in contact with' (SE13:25-7), including thoughts. Drawing from his own observations Freud claims that obsessional taboos 'can be lifted if certain actions are performed' including 'acts of washing in water ('washing mania')' (SE13:28). In other words, it appears that the unconscious dynamics associated with a moral violation appears to require neutralising by the enactment of ritual cleansing<sup>43</sup>. Let us now consider how first an anthropologist views the creation of purity and then how a psychoanalyst views the potential traumatic experience of loss of virginity.

Douglas expounds this theme of taboo, by interpreting the biblical 'The Laws of Holiness' as exemplifying 'completeness' and 'conformity' as opposed to 'confusion'

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<sup>43</sup> Ritual cleansing resonates with the ritual of Christian baptism.

(Douglas, 1966:67). Douglas asserts that ‘holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation’, and protecting order (Douglas, 1966:67). For Douglas, ‘holiness brings about separating the moral from the immoral’ including the sexual morality of incest and adultery (Douglas, 1966:67). Douglas, drawing on the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1912), separates the sacred from the profane by asserting that ‘the sacred is the object of community worship’ which can ‘express its essentially contagious character’, while the profane is characterised as being secular behaviour (Douglas, 1966:26). The sociologist, William Robertson Smith (1889) suggests that there is ‘no separation between the spheres of religion and ordinary life’ (Douglas, 1966:26). But for Durkheim the oppositions of sacred and profane are necessary couplets for social integration, between the individual and society. Douglas concludes that ‘rules of separation are the distinguishing marks of the sacred, the polar opposite of the profane’ (Douglas, 1966:26). Remaining with the focus on physical virginity, let us now consider some psychological indications.

Freud suggests that woman’s fear of virginity may be just as acute as man’s but for different reasons. In a case study of eighteen-year-old Katharina, Freud makes a connection between ‘virginal anxiety’ and hysteria (SE2:127). In other words, Katharina had experienced her father’s sexual desire and unwanted incestuous advances which she had physically rebuffed, but had emotionally retained. Freud, in connecting the psychological mechanism of hysteria, claims that the penetrative ‘erotic experience’, when Katharina was fourteen was potentially a ‘traumatic moment’ (SE2:133). Freud illustrates this kind of trauma when over twenty-five years later he reveals that the ‘sexual attempt’ on Katharina had been made ‘on the part of her own father’, after which ‘the girl fell ill’, a somatised conversion or splitting-off between the moral and

physical disgust into producing the hysterical or psychical phenomenon (SE2:131+134n2).

Freud cites further evidence for the trauma of vaginal anxiety in a case-study of eighteen-year-old Dora (SE7:16) and interprets two of her dreams as reflecting her wishes and fears about defloration. The unconscious meaning of the first dream is ‘I must fly from this house, for I see that my virginity is threatened; I shall go away with my father...’ (SE7:85). Freud claims that Dora’s unconscious association with her father ‘presented the wish that her father should save her from danger’, even though ‘her father had brought her into the danger’ (SE7:89). Freud suggests that ‘the hostile feeling against her father [is] her desire for revenge, which was suppressed’ (SE7:85). However the combination of associations ‘attributed to the motive forces of the second dream’ seem ambiguous (SE7:89). In the second of Dora’s dreams, Freud deduces a phantasy of defloration; that ‘of a man seeking to force an entrance into the female genitals’ (SE7:100).

Research into the dynamic unconscious associated with these taboos seems to indicate that as they are accorded such high values that potentially there are multiple fears. Fear of shame and humiliation if not attained; fears of loosing the status they award; fears that may transcend the physical and enter a spiritual world, and fears that concern the most intimate parts of human sexuality. From this evidence what appears to be argued here is that the concepts of virginity and purity have both biological dimensions, such as being untouched, and spiritual dimensions, that of intention, both encompass a tension between physicality and the psychological, the outer and inner worlds of the conscious and the unconscious, desire and restraint. Before leaving the topic of physical or

imagery relating to virginity and purity, let us investigate how women undergo a rite of passage and why brides are exchanged by men.

## 1.6 The exchange of women

Having, earlier, explored how the wearing of white apparel may have initially been influenced by the Christian ritual of baptism, and how virginity and purity may have become significant due to the imagery of the Virgin Mary, let us now consider how for the non-Christian and Christian alike the exchange of women is described by drawing on an ancient philosopher, records from the first historian, a British and a French anthropologist and an American cultural historian.

Plato records the speech of Aristophanes who argues that humans were originally ‘hermaphrodite’ (Plato, Symposium:62), that is the ‘body having been cut in two, each half [now] yearns for the half from which it had been severed’ (Plato, Symposium:61). Aristophanes substantiates his argument by observing that when two people meet and they throw their arms round one another their embrace indicates their longing to grow together again and that this innate love welds the two human beings into one, thus restoring and healing the wounds which humanity suffers (Plato, Symposium:61-2). Aristophanes concludes that ‘it is people like these who form lifelong partnerships’ (Plato, Symposium:63). Thus it is intimated that humans have a propensity to search for one another, and this search can, as we will discuss, take several forms. Having considered how, from a philosophical perspective, two people may be united, let us consider, from the same period, how, in a different way, one person finds another.

In discussing ‘The Price of Beauty’ Miranda Harrison, draws on Edwin Long’s painting entitled *Babylonian Marriage Market*, first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1875, which represents ‘the union of archaeology with art’ (*Illustrated London News* 1875). The painting illustrates what the Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus (c.480-425BC) describes as something that occurs ‘in every village once a year’ (Harrison, 2004:5), and became a central attraction throughout ancient Babylonia. Herodotus

records that ‘girls of marriageable age are gathered together and auctioned in the market place according to their beauty. Marriage was the object of the transaction’ (Harrison, 2004:5). Herodotus continues: ‘the money raised by the girls who fetched the highest price<sup>44</sup>, provided dowries for the less attractive, as some men prefer a plain wife with money, rather than a pretty one without’ (Book One, Chap 196). The main figure illustrated in the painting is of a woman whose head is veiled, and of a ‘male who stands guard over his meekly acquiescent spouse’ (Harrison, 2004:5-17). Thus we learn of an ancient custom and ritual of exchanging women through historical records and the interpretation of a Victorian artist.

The significance of wearing the veil is discussed by the anthropologist Edwin James. James suggests that in primitive agricultural society ‘during ceremonies, or rites of passage facilitating the transaction from the single to the married state, which is surrounded by supernatural dangers, evil spirits and dangerous contagions, and surrounded with taboos, the bride is elevated to a ‘holy estate’. These mysterious forces are counteracted and thwarted by veiling the bride with bark-cloth and magic amulets (James, 1952:50).

James suggests that marriage in pastoral society although women like ‘Sarah, the mother of nations’ (Genesis,17v16) or Huldah (2Kings,22v14) could attain considerable status, they were debarred from inheriting property, excluded from social intercourse, and in public were veiled (Genesis,24v65, Genesis,38v14) (James, 1952:62). Famed for his Bible concordance, Alexander Cruden, in contrast to James, suggests that:

The use of the veil (or vail) in the East was not so general in ancient as in modern times, as much of the present custom dates from the time of Mohammed only. The veil was worn only as an article of ornamental dress,

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<sup>44</sup> James suggests that ‘the bride-price, (mohar or mahr), represents compensation to the bride’s parents for the loss of a member of their family. In Islamic law it became a dowry given to the bride herself’ (James, 1952:72).

by betrothed maidens in the presence of their future husbands and at the wedding. (Cruden, 1930:718)

James, drawing on the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, suggests that in primitive society as ‘the head was regarded as the seat of the soul’ and therefore the ‘most vulnerable part of the body’, veiling ‘defended a sacred person or object from evil or profane influences’ (James, 1952:67-8) (van Gennep, 1908:240). Thus James argues that when the woman becomes veiled, this ‘symbolises female integrity and modesty’ (James, 1952:67-8).

James argues that the ‘crowning of the bride and groom with crowns of gold and silver, or olive and myrtle,<sup>45</sup> are common elements in both marriage and royal coronation ceremonies’ (James, 1952:53). In both rites these elements symbolise victory over the forces of evil and death at a critical transition in society. Because of the prominence of crowning in pagan cults crowning was initially disallowed by the church.<sup>46</sup> The prohibition, however, was soon removed and in the oriental rite the ceremony, which followed the betrothal and the presentation, of two rings became known as the Euchologion, or ‘the crowning’.<sup>47</sup> The parties repeat their consents and at the conclusion of the ceremony the priest places a crown on the head of each with the words, ‘the servant (or handmaid) of the Lord is crowned in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost’. While their hands are joined the Deacon prays ‘crown them with Thy grace, unite them in temperance and dignity, bless them with old age, and with unshaken faith’.<sup>48</sup>

James argues that in the West ‘the veiling’ took the place of ‘the Crowning’, and it’s earlier associations with protection against the evil eye and other malign influences

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<sup>45</sup> Tertullian, *De Coronax* iii.

<sup>46</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.* I, 42.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Martène, *De Antiquis Ecclesiae Ritibus* (Venice, 1783), p609.

<sup>48</sup> Goar, *Euchologion* (Paris, 1647), p396 ff.

became a symbol of constancy, just as veils were worn also by widows who made profession of continency (*flammens virginalis*) (James, 1952:109). Later veils became part of the habit of nuns as the ‘brides of Christ’, consecrated to the service of their heavenly Spouse, as in pagan Rome the Vestal Virgins (as mentioned earlier) as sacred people had their heads covered with a hood (*suffibulum*) during the performance of their sacrificial functions, while a red veil distinguished a newly married woman. The veil, therefore, was associated with sacredness, originally being a means whereby sacrosanct people or objects were separated from the profane. Since of bride was in the process of passing into a new status in society, she required a supernatural aid and was herself a source of spiritual contagion. This widespread belief survived into the Christian era so that at the time of Tertullian the betrothal veil was worn by the bride from her espousal until the day of her wedding<sup>49</sup> to symbolise the inviolable fidelity, typified by the relationship between Christ and his Church, to which the wife is bound by virtue of the nuptial contract. The veil became, therefore, a sign of consecration to the holy estate of matrimony comparable to the solemn clothing of nuns. As ‘taking the veil’ was virtually a sacramental sign of Religious Life and its obligations, so too Christian marriage was the dedication of man and woman in an indissoluble union representing all that the Pauline analogy<sup>50</sup> implies (James, 1952:109-10).

In other words, during the enactment of a critical ‘transaction’ in society, such as the exchange of women, women are veiled to protect them from the ‘forces of evil’ which may influence childbirth, child deformity, the woman’s barrenness or even death in childbirth. Therefore, veiling symbolises the elevation to a sacred status, and ‘rites’ are performed to signify victory over the forces of evil. Moving away from what the bride

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<sup>49</sup> *de Virg. Velandis*, xi.

<sup>50</sup> Genesis records: ‘A man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and the two become one flesh’ Genesis,2v24. This sentiment continues in Saint Paul’s teaching: ‘they are no longer two individuals: they are one flesh’ Matthew,19v5-6, Mark,10v8, 1Corinthians,6v16. These sentiments appear reflected in Aristophanes’ speech, cited earlier.

may wear let us explore the act of exchanging women through the eyes of the French positivist, sociologist and anthropologist Arnold van Gennep whose work investigated primitive rites of passage, worldwide.

Solon Kimbali in his introduction to van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* (1908) warns that 'one dimension of mental illness may arise because of an increasing number of individuals are forced to accomplish their transitions alone, with private symbols' (van Gennep, 1908:xviii). In other words this implies that incorporative rites of human passage effect not only the individual but also the whole group, therefore the wider the involvement of the social group the less traumatic it is on the individual and group, but equally separation rites, such as divorce, may also impact on the social group.

Van Gennep emphasises that 'rites of passage' critically address problems of passing into a new status within the family. Instead of the individual being forced to accomplish the transition alone. These rites of passage become devices which society offers the individual to assist them achieve this adjustment because this transition of the individual concerns the group. Van Gennep distinguishes annual ceremonies associated with nature's seasons, from 'life crises' ceremonies which happen once in a person's life (van Gennep, 1908:ix).

These ceremonial patterns of transition which van Gennep associates with an individuals' 'life crisis' may be described as dynamic processes which can be distinguished by three major phases: 'separation rites', 'transition rites', and 'incorporation rites' (van Gennep, 1908:vii). Although rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, they also occur from the beginning of life, including the period from adolescence prior to betrothal, and 'transition rites' during betrothal.

‘Incorporation rites’ apply to the marriage ceremony where there is a change of social position (van Gennep, 1908:10-11).

Kimball emphasises that ‘the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane is a central concept for understanding the transitional stage in which an individual or group may find themselves. The individual who enters a status at variance with the one previously held becomes ‘sacred’, while the others remain ‘profane’ (as referred to earlier by Durkheim). It is this new condition which calls for rites eventually incorporating the individual into the group. Van Gennep argues that these changes may be dangerous, and, at the least, they are upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. The transitional period is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance (van Gennep, 1908:ix).

Kimball points out that Chapple and Coon (1942) *Principles of Anthropology*, designate group ceremonies as ‘rites of intensification’ or ‘crisis’ which produce a disturbance within individuals or groups. The ‘group crisis’ being based on a change in human activities. In this vein van Gennep sees marriage as an ‘incorporation’ rite of the individual into a new status in the group (van Gennep, 1908:xiii). Van Gennep claims that:

The goal of rites of passage is to insure a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another, as such changes of condition disturb the life of society, thus dramatising rites of passage help to reduce their harmful effect, [that is why] marriage ceremonies include fertility rites. (van Gennep, 1908:11)

Van Gennep suggests that ‘separation rites’ help to relinquish ties with the former household, or familial ties, for the sake of the new association. Particular incorporation rites performed relating to the new group, include exchanges of tying, veiling and sitting together, sprinkling with rice and giving a ceremonial meal (van Gennep, 1908:40). Van

Genep emphasises that ‘naming forms important parts of adoption, baptism and renaming in marriage, because an individual’s name indicates their place with reference to the various marriage or group hierarchies’ (van Genep, 1908:39). And that the ceremonial meal at the wedding reception can symbolise that the two groups are at peace with each other and cements bonds of friendship (van Genep, 1908:40). Thus the boundaries to separation and incorporation rites blur.

Van Genep, in discussing rites of exchange, thus ‘incorporation rites’, draws on the anthropologist Stanislaus Ciszewski who suggests that people of the Balkans and Russia recognise four major incorporation rights or uniting acts: ‘the symbol of *naturae imitatio*’ (van Genep, 1908:29). ‘Eating and drinking together’ at the wedding reception, may be likened to ‘Christian communion’ (van Genep, 1908:29). The ‘act of tying one to the other’, may arguably be witnessed during the marriage ceremony when the couple’s hands are joined by the minister who then wraps his stole of office around their hands tying a symbolic knot, before proclaiming ‘The Blessing’ [Fig. 9]. The couple are as if joined by an umbilical cord. ‘Kissing one another’ may be likened to the Minister saying to the groom ‘You may now kiss the bride’ (van Genep, 1908:29-30). These ‘social fraternal bonds’, Ciszewski claims, ‘create a stronger relationship than natural consanguinity (van Genep, 1908:32n2).

Van Genep suggests that one of the purposes of exchanging women is ‘to obtain more gifted and powerful children because of the *mana* inherent in all strangers’ (van Genep, 1908:34). As it seems customary in England that the brides’ parents host the wedding reception, arguably we can understand the ‘stranger’ in the marriage being the bridegroom. In this context, we may understand better when Biblical text suggests that

‘the man leaves his family and cleaves unto his wife’ (Genesis,2v24, Matthew,19v5, Mark,10v7).

Van Gennep suggests that ‘among the Bontok Igorot of the Philippines, and elsewhere, a girl cannot marry until she has borne a child and has thus proved that she is capable of reproduction. Among peoples who do not consider a marriage valid until after a child is born, the rites of pregnancy and childbirth constitute the last acts of the marriage ceremony, and the woman’s transitional period stretches from the beginning of her betrothal to the birth of her first child. Becoming a mother raises her moral and social position, instead of being just a woman she is now a matron, and legitimate wife’ (van Gennep, 1908:48).

Van Gennep suggests that ‘amongst the Thompson Indians of British Columbia, girls were often betrothed while mere infants to men sometimes twenty years their senior. They were considered marriageable only after they had finished their seventeenth, eighteenth or twenty-third year’ (van Gennep, 1908:68). Van Gennep notes also that ‘the Todas, who are polyandrous, are betrothed from the age of three (van Gennep, 1908:70). From photographs published by the *New York Times Magazine* in 2006 this evidence suggest that girls aged eleven in Afghanistan are often betrothed to men of forty-years-old and marrying before their fifteenth birthday.

Kimball, writing in 1960 recognises that ‘psychoanalysis is the only discipline other than anthropology which concerns itself with life-crisis ceremonies’ in the centrality of the Oedipus complex, where libidinal desire causes a conflict between father and son over the possession of women (van Gennep, 1908:xv). From Kimball’s perspective it seems as though ‘Freudian theorists have an intense desire to establish the legitimacy of

their position through proof from primal behaviour, and if it can be established that an act has become imbedded in the 'racial memory', not much opportunity for dissent is left. There is a double primacy if the act has been related to need and at the same time has left its ineradicable impress on future behaviour. Kimbali argues that Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (SE13) attempts to establish this double primacy by positing that the original patricide arose from the son's jealousy of their father because of his monopolization of the female's. Subsequently, the act was commemorated by totemic rites which include taboos to prevent its recurrence (van Gennep, 1908:xv).

Kimbali suggests that the psychological interpretation of the marriage ceremony supports the daughter's sense of castration, resulting in penis envy and the unconscious incestuous desire for the father. Thus the marriage ceremony can be interpreted as a reinforcement of the incest taboo (van Gennep, 1908:xv). Van Gennep argues that, for instance, purification ceremonies may lift a taboo and by removing the contaminating quality, impart the quality of purity (van Gennep, 1908:12).

Kimbali argues that although Bruno Bettelheim's *Symbolic Wounds* (1955) accepts the primal castration anxiety and the envy of the opposite sex, and a desire to acquire its sexual attributes, Bettelheim believes that 'ceremonies minimize sexual envy and a sense of castration' (van Gennep, 1908:xv). In other words, rites may be efforts to free the individual of anxieties.

Writing in 1908, Van Gennep makes an important observation which arguably seems to have been far-sighted. Van Gennep argues that:

In an industrial-urban civilisation where extensive changes in the social system include increased secularisation and the decline in the importance of sacred ceremonialism, there is no evidence that a secularised urban world

has less need for ritualised expression of an individual's transition from one status to another. (van Gennep, 1908:xvii)

Arguably, this may be illustrated by the number of television programmes shown in Britain featuring a bride-in-white and the continued popularity of civil partnerships and Church wedding where the bride is veiled and dresses in white<sup>51</sup>. As we begin to appreciate, since the exchange of women during Babylonian times, rites of passage are enacted to ensure a safe passage from one state to another, and also happen in specific places, using an authorised form of words, vows and actions.

The American anthropologist and ethnographer Catherine Bell throws light onto the significance of ritual being conducted within the confines of the Anglican Church. In considering these dynamics Bell suggests that as opposed to a 'dispersed population' the Church 'centres' the community, as people congregate together, come from different directions and situations to assemble at a specific place and time (Bell, 1992:101-2). These dynamics, Bell suggests, become 'overlaid with a higher versus lower opposition' with the 'raised altar, lifting and lowering voices and eyes, as well as sequences of standing and kneeling, all generate a contrast between the higher spiritual reality and a lower mundane reality'. The dynamics are also overlaid by an 'inner versus outer', an internalised reality (Bell, 1992:102).

Bell emphasises that, since Durkheim's (1912) study, ritual demarcates the 'sacred' from the 'profane'. This dichotomy is explored elsewhere when raised by Freud, Douglas and van Gennep. Douglas clarifies that Durkheim separates the sacred from the profane by asserting that 'the sacred is the object of community worship' which can

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<sup>51</sup> Bridezilla, Rich Bride, Poor Bride, My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding, "The Runaway Bride", The most beautiful bride in the UK, Don't Tell the Bride, Bridal Red Carpet, Bride of Frankenstein, Father of the Bride, Bulging Brides, Four Weddings, (in 2011).

‘express its essentially contagious character’, while ‘the profane is characterised as being secular behaviour’ (Douglas, 1966:26). Bell suggests that ‘binary oppositions almost always involve asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination which generate hierarchically organised relationships’ (Bell, 1992:102).

At the heart of the marriage ceremony, at the precise moment of exchange, are audible words. During the bride-in-white’s euphoric hour in Church, as she entertains sexual, spiritual and physical hopes, the bride-in-white articulates desire of total joy and ecstasy, in Kristeva’s terms ‘jouissance’ (Kristeva, 1977:16), as the bride voices ‘I do’, and the Minister proclaims ‘The Blessing’. Both vow and blessing are endowed with gravity, ambivalence and mis-understanding, or Plato’s ‘mysterious’ and ‘incomprehensible’. Lacan links language to the dual planes on which language operates, that is the possibility ‘of using it in order to signify *something quite other* than what it says’ (Lacan, 1966:155 original emphasis). In other words it seems possible that both the vows and The Blessing have more than one meaning. That is, the intended meaning of the speaking subject, and how the hearer interprets what is heard. Kristeva reminds us that the ‘speaking subject’ is ‘a split subject—divided between unconscious and conscious motivations, that is between psychological processes and social constraints’ (Kristeva, 1977:6).

Ritualisation makes ample use of speech. Bell points out that in the French sociologist Bourdieu’s analysis of ritual as communication he eschews all use of metaphor, metonymy and analogy in describing the operations of ritual practice, because ritual is discourse (Bell, 1992:112). Bell cites social and cultural anthropologist Roy Rappaport who notes that for the thirteenth-century French theorist William of Auxerre, it is the words themselves in the ritual of the Christian mass that turn physical matter into the

Sacrament of the body of Christ. The spoken word and certain actions are reflected in the doctrine of transubstantiation. Bell argues that we can therefore draw a parallel with the form of words used during the enunciation of the vows, the authority placed in the Minister to proclaim The Blessing and to tie the marriage knot, during the marriage ceremony as creating a significant transformation through words and actions (Bell, 1992:112).

Thus Bell challenges Bloch (1975) or Moore and Myerhoff (1977) who seem to advocate standardising ritualisation as a process of 'traditionalisation'. Although ritualisation may construct a type of tradition, Bell suggests that ritual need not be understood as a 'fixed structure, a closed grammar, or embalmed historical model' (Bell, 1992:124). In other words, Bell defends the richness of ritual, as opposed to any reductionism, or that the wedding ceremony may be understood solely as 'traditional'.

As discussed above, the human search for companionship and the perpetuation of the social group takes several forms. What seems to have emerged from this exploration, is that the woman who is exchanged is elevated to a sacred position by being veiled and wearing white. This elevation in ancient terms can be understood as her protection from the 'evil eye'. This elevation also involves the group's protection and continuance of the group itself as if 'to reflect the supremacy of the group over the individual' (Bion, 1961:110). Let us now move from considering an historical and anthropological position to discuss a more modern view of exchanging women.

### **1.7 The institution of marriage: monogamy versus polygamy**

In considering the three faces of marriage: legal, solace, and misery the American social historian Nancy Cott likens marriage to the Sphinx, which has both a ‘conspicuous, awesome, even marvellous side, while simultaneously hiding terrors’ (Cott, 2000:1). Cott suggests that recognisably, as an institution, marriage ‘creates families and kinship networks’, determining circles of intimacy’, ‘influencing individual identity, and becomes ‘a legal framework for handing down property’, thus bringing ‘solace’ but also potential ‘misery’ (Cott, 2000:1). In other words, marriage as an institution, may instil public common values, affirmation and public order together with relationships of private commitment, enshrined in legal doctrine.

In considering marriage as a legal institution Cott emphasises that conspicuously, ‘marriage requires legal sanction’ and reminds us that the person officiating at a civil ceremony declares: ‘By the authority vested in me by the... I now pronounce you husband and wife’ (Cott, 2000:3). In other words during the marriage ceremony, friends and family are both public and private witnesses to the couple’s reciprocal bond, and to some extent the witness group guarantees that the commitment, made according to prescribed requirements by both Church and state, will be honoured as something valuable, not only to the pair but to the community at large. Their bond will be honoured even by public force. The witness group sees itself and its own interest reflected in the couple’s action. Cott argues that ‘assumptions about the importance of marriage have been deeply implanted in public policy and political authorities expect monogamy on a Christian model to prevail’ (Cott, 2000:3).

Cott, taking an American perspective, which arguably applies equally in England and other Western economies, suggests that ‘the Christian faith, adopted by political and

legal authorities aims to perpetuate nationally a particular marriage model and ideals' (Cott, 2000:3). Arguably this implies stereotypically lifelong, faithful monogamy, formed by the mutual consent of a man and a woman, bearing the impress of the Christian religion and English common law in its expectations for the husband to be the family head and economic provider, and his wife being the dependent partner. Cott suggests that 'complying with this model, brings with it public roles, turning men and women into husbands and wives and exert gender order, thus designating the ways in which both sexes act and their reciprocal relations' (Cott, 2000:3). In other words, these roles seem to reinforce heterosexuality, heteronormativity and perpetuate male dominance and female dependency.

The American sociologist and material feminist Chrys Ingraham suggests that while romantic and sacred notions of heterosexuality may maintain the illusion of tranquillity, then heterosexuality becomes taken for granted, remains unquestioned, and as an institution seems timeless (Ingraham, 1999:16). By drawing on the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's concept of the Imaginary, heterosexual 'imaginary' can be understood as a way of closing off, or denying, any critical analysis of heterosexuality as an organising institution which structures gender. Ingraham challenges 'white weddings which permeate popular culture, a highly structured arrangement of institutionalised heterosexuality' (Ingraham, 1999:2), by arguing that underpinning and normalising the white wedding is the presumption of heteronormativity which 'constructs the standard for legitimate and expected social and sexual relations' (Ingraham, 1999:17). Ingraham suggests that 'if everyone, the 'single', 'married', 'divorced', 'separated', 'widow', 'never married', is expected to situate themselves in relation to the status of marriage, those not participating in these

arrangements may think of themselves' in Lacanian terms as 'the unimaginable' (Ingraham, 1999:17).

Cott, in discussing marriage as a 'cohesive institution' suggests that 'the approval or disapproval a couple may feel most intensely comes from the immediate community of kin, friends and neighbours' (Cott, 2000:5). Arguably, this resonates with the Greek myth Oedipus whose final fate of exile was sealed by the group (Harvey, 1937:292), where the group represents the 'super-ego' (SE23:205). Cott argues that monogamy is in the public interest because it promotes 'public order', is a 'unifying moral standard', and 'prescribes essential activities harnessing the vagaries of sexual desire'<sup>52</sup> by offering support for their consequences, dependent children also labour and property' (Cott, 2000:5-6).

Cott asserts that:

the marriage contract, although freely and consensually entered into, society sets the terms of the marriage, thus bringing predictable rewards and duties. In other words, husband and wife assume new legal status both in their relationship together, and within the community. Reciprocally with the new public status, if either party break the agreement it may offend the larger community, with implications for the law and the state, as much as offending the partner. (Cott, 2000:11)

Cott suggests that 'Christian doctrine advocates that in marriage 'the twain shall be one flesh'<sup>53</sup> thus having exclusive rights to each other's bodies. Thus Christian doctrine promotes heterosexual desire to be satisfied exclusively within marriage and so demands sexual fidelity of both partners. The Bible also makes the husband the 'head' of his wife, his wife's superior, as 'Christ is the head of the church'<sup>54</sup>. During the marriage ceremony, frequently the new wife gives up her maiden surname, symbolising

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<sup>52</sup> And, 'ordained for the procreation of children' and 'for a remedy to avoid fornication' (Book of Common Prayer 1662:320).

<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Plato envisions the splitting and amalgamation of two people, (*Symposium* p61).

<sup>54</sup> Saint Paul teaches: 'wives, be subject to your husbands...for the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ also is the head of the Church' (Ephesians 5v22).

a relinquishing of identity, and a new authority over her<sup>55</sup>, thus endowing the husband with responsibility for his wife. Cott suggests that ‘in legal terms, marital unity may be described as coverture, and the wife may be called a *femme covert*’. Cott clarifies that ‘coverture in its strictest sense means that a wife can not use legal avenues such as suits or contracts, own assets, or execute legal documents without her husband’s collaboration’ (Cott, 2000:11). Let us now consider the tension between monogamy and polygamy.

In contrasting monogamy and polygamy, as previously mentioned, the redactors of the Old Testament record that the Hebrews were tempted to follow the Canaanite customs of Sodom and Gomorrah where the ideal of monogamy was tested against polygamy. In other words, we can see that tensions between two differing life-styles and moral values become evident. Cott points to Christianity advocating the ‘Holy estate of matrimony’. Thus Cott argues that a ‘moral superiority of monogamy with mutual consent’ becomes advocated over the polygamist or marriage by capture. Thus Cott suggests that whereas ‘fornication, cohabitation, and polygamy may offer intrigue, jealousy and distrust and the potential abasement of women and the neglect of children’, in contrast ‘monogamy offers happiness and social benefits’ (Cott, 2000:23).

Cott draws on the French social commentator Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron Montesquieu’s novel *Persian Letters* (1728), in which he draws attention to the relationship between eunuchs and wives in a Persian harem. Montesquieu notes that if the wives in the harem were left, the wives could become riven with jealousies and intrigues so intense as to cause the tragic suicide of one of the wives. It seemed to Montesquieu that the harem was ‘motivated by fear and maintained by coercion, thus

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<sup>55</sup> This refers to Freud’s concept of the ‘repudiation of parental authority’, which is discussed later in Part One.

embodying a spirit of despotism'. It seemed to Montesquieu that 'the harem stood for tyrannical rule, corruption, elevation of passions over reason, selfishness, and hypocrisy – all the evils that virtuous thinkers wanted to avoid'. In contrast, thought Montesquieu, there could be a 'liberal treatment of women', where monogamous love could stand for consent and moderation (Cott, 2000:22).

Cott suggests that 'the stark contrast between the principles of monogamy and polygamy may be illustrated in the superiority of the minority position of Christian morality in the USA in the 1780's' (Cott, 2000:22). Cott suggests however that from the 1790's, inspired by the Welsh advocate for a utopian socialism Robert Owen in Britain and the social and moral philosopher Charles Fourier in France, 'counter-culture communities, formed in America, shunned legal monogamy on the basis of slavery and exclusive pairing of couples', in favour of liberal 'free love', eugenic reproduction called 'stirpiculture' and 'complex marriage' (Cott, 2000:71).

Cott suggests that 'Anglo-American Protestant religious revivals after 1800 highlighted the contrast between the benefits of Christian 'lifelong monogamy and spousal obligation in Christian legal marriage', in contrast to 'the personal indulgence, the lack of manhood, and the sexual degradation of women' in other models such as the American Indians who practiced 'plural marriages' (Debo, 1970:287). Cott argues that Americans in political and religious life espoused monogamous marriage, it's 'male headship of a family', 'gender expectations' and 'conventional sexual division of labour, property, and inheritance': a 'civilized life' (Cott, 2000:26). Cott suggests that the early nineteenth century American political theorist, John Adams thought that monogamous marriage was the prime metaphor for 'consensual union', 'voluntarily allegiance', and 'monogamous fidelity' (Cott, 2000:21).

Cott suggests that ‘a systematic alternative to Christian monogamy was being practiced, on the basis of the guarantee of religious freedom’ in another part of America. By 1843 the overtly polygamist community of Mormons under the leadership of Joseph Smith advocated ‘plural marriage’. Cott suggests that by 1852 ‘polygamy in Utah quickly evolved from a local scourge to a national embarrassment’, being equated with ‘political tyranny, moral infamy, lawlessness, and men’s abuse of women’. Christian monogamy, in contrast, represents ‘national morality and lawful authority where women enjoy respect from men, monogamous domesticity, and credited with immortal souls’. Whereas in non-Christian cultures: ‘seraglio, concubinage, polygamy, child marriage, female infanticide, bride sale, foot binding, and suttee could be found’. In other words, the non-Christian activities signal female degradation, whereas Christianity was portrayed as emancipatory (Cott, 2000:72-73+116).

In discussing the changing face of monogamy Cott suggests that in the 1960’s Nelson Rockefeller’s publically known divorce became an impediment to his presidential nomination. A person was cast outside the pale of ordinary respectability by living coupled but unmarried or by having children outside of marriage. By the 1990’s, Cott suggests that, American President Bill Clinton’s sexual infidelity although became a matter of public record did not topple his political credibility ‘because of the way the majority of the people understood marriage at the end of the twentieth century’ (Cott, 2000:200-202). Thus indicating a changing face of monogamy and national morality.

A Channel Four documentary (30.03.2011) revealed that although it is suggested that voters were ‘pretty relaxed’ as to whether their politicians are married, arguably, Ed Miliband and his long-term partner and barrister Justine Thornton may have felt subject

to both legal and public pressure to marry despite their overt denial. After having lived together and having two children together but remaining unmarried ‘Ms Thornton found that she was ‘unable to add both parents’ names when she registered the birth’ and that Ed Miliband ‘was not listed as the father on his first son’s birth certificate’. Their wedding photograph, courtesy of *The Guardian* 27 May 2011, shows the bride wearing a cream coloured dress without a veil.

Serial monogamy, that is the practice of having a succession of monogamous relationships, also implies multiple separations. For the third time Paul McCartney, sixty-nine, used a civil ceremony to marry, but this time to Nancy Shevell, fifty-one, on Sunday 9 October 2011. One wedding photograph shows the bride wearing a white dress and a white flower in her hair, while white confetti was thrown<sup>56</sup>.

Cott concludes that:

Despite sweeping reform reformulations in intimate relationships the position of legal marriage above comparable relationships resists toppling. Contestation over same-sex marriage has, ironically, clothed the formal institution with renewed honour with its promise of stable mutual commitment as a benefit to the couple as well as to society. (Cott, 2000:224)

In other words, despite challenges by other forms of union, because the exchange of women involves the social group, the ideal of a life-long monogamous relationship seems to have stood the test of time despite erosion by other forms of union.

Let us now consider some emotional dynamics during the exchange of women. The bride-in-white may become emotionally overwhelmed by the act of exchange and become subject to forms of defensive narcissism, dissociation or denial. When the bride publically says her vows ‘til death do us part’ this may also seem to reinforce the

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.popsugar.com/Paul-McCartney-Nancy-Shevells-Wedding-Pictures-19657363?more=true>

gravity of the idealised intension of the vows, and the group's idealisation of marriage. One may ask, is this idealisation on the part of the bride a defence against ideas of divorce?

Arguably, the purpose of being or appearing to be a virgin, as discussed above, may be understood as synonymous with wearing a white dress. That is, to have been set apart from the group or elevated to a 'sacred' level, hedged round from the 'evil eye', and to appear to be the most desirable person one can possibly be. In Freudian terms appearing to be a virgin may assuage narcissistic wounds and the need to be loved. Arguably, since Babylonian times, women have been exchanged according to their beauty and value. The idealisation of the 'bride-in-white' could also be understood as a projection from the group onto the bride and the new couple to have an idealised relationship thus perpetuating the group and its values. Having considered monogamy as being taken for granted by some, and cohesive or leading to potential misery by others, let us now discuss how the phenomenon of the bride-in-white became socially installed.

## 1.8 Victorian values: the phenomenon of the bride-in-white

I will argue, in this section, that the bride-in-white who marries in an Anglican Church represents a phenomenon. We may speculate on the aetiology of a phenomenon, i.e., a remarkable event or person that strikingly ‘affects our consciousness and senses, as distinguished from what it is in itself’ (Macdonald, 1972:1001). But arguably, a phenomenon comes into existence, in part, because it has been ‘waiting’ to appear. Let us therefore turn to gather evidence from Victorian Britain and around the world, which investigates Victorian mores, before we examine the first bride-in-white.

Sociologically, in focusing on British nineteenth-century attitudes, Taeko Sakai argues that ‘virginity and purity were essential characteristics in the middle-class Victorian marriage market’, where the woman was supposed to provide a ‘haven of peace in the home’ (Sakai, 1995:109). The woman’s attitude towards her role was to be ‘pure both in mind and conduct’ with ‘a remnant of the innocence of Paradise’ (Sakai, 1995:109). Sakai cites Sewell who asserts that ‘paradisiacal innocence of the knowledge of good and evil disposed young women to preserve their chastity’ (Sakai, 1995:157) and ‘girls were assumed to be not only innocent of sensuality but ignorant of it. Genteel women were supposed to desire affection, not sensuality’ (Sakai, 1995:109).

Sakai points to George Elgar Hicks’ painting *Woman’s Mission: Companion of Manhood*, exhibited in 1863 at the Royal Academy<sup>57</sup>, as epitomising a mid-Victorian idealised sense of feminine purity. Sakai argues that pure and innocent women were considered to be ‘gentle, submissive and devoted’; it is this ‘moral supremacy’ that qualifies her to ‘console her grieving husband’ (Sakai, 1995:110). In contrast, Sakai

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<sup>57</sup> see *Woman’s Mission: Companion of Manhood*, painting by George Elgar Hicks, exhibited at the Royal Academy, 1863. in. Macleod, Dianne (1996) *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp216-7.

claims that, no impure whore, whose infidelity and adulterous behaviour led to the production of an illegitimate child, could do anything but 'throw herself down at her husband's feet in repentance' as depicted in the painting by Augustus Egg 'Past and Present No. 3' (Sakai, 1995:110).

Sakai became convinced that the 'Victorian preoccupation with purity mercilessly associated impure women with miserable lives and morbid appearances, while it presented pure women peacefully established in cozy drawing rooms since they were gentle and submissive but implicitly asexual' (Sakai, 1995:112). Sakai argues that the colour white was considered by the Victorians to be both 'distinctive' and of 'genuine beauty', and was regarded as a metaphor for 'innocence' and 'moral supremacy' embracing the 'pure bride and a white dress' (Sakai, 1995:112).

Helen Foster and Donald Johnson, folklorist and textileist, claim that:

symbolism of colour in the bride's wedding dress seems almost universal. In Europe and North America, white, symbolising 'purity', remains the preferred colour, a reflection of the pervasive power of English Victorian society to impose its value system throughout many parts of the world. (Foster, 2003:2)

It was nearly eighty years since Victoria's paternal grand-mother, then seventeen-year-old Princess Charlotte wore in 1761 a dress of 'silver tissue...with a train of violet velvet laced with gold' (Tobin, 2003:14). Tobin claims that during the eighteenth century although most dresses were of silver and white, 'pink was suitable for young gentlewomen' and blue was considered appropriate to youth and represented 'purity and innocence' (Tobin, 2003:18).

This parallels the Victorian image of the ‘virginal maid submissively yield[ing] to her husband on their wedding night’ (Sakai, 1995:112). Arguably, therefore, purity for the Victorian bride came at the cost of being compliant, submissive and the embodiment of heavenly innocence. Victoria, as Queen, encompassed the roles of Head of the Anglican Church, Head of State and submissive wife (Hibbert, 1984:62), and aesthetically morally pure by swearing ‘that she could never marry a man who loved another woman’ (Longford, 1964:139)<sup>58</sup>.

Queen Victoria, head of the Church of England, broke with royal tradition by being the first British monarch to wear a white wedding dress. On Monday 10 February 1840, twenty years after her father died, the twenty-year-old Queen Victoria married wearing ‘a pure white satin’ dress (*The Times*, 1840): and arguably the phenomenon of the ‘bride-in-white’ was born [Figure 4]. Dress historians, Shelly Tobin and Margaret Willes, suggest that Victoria had departed from wearing ‘state robes’ similar to previous monarchs at their weddings and chose a gown reflecting ‘contemporary fashionable taste’ (Tobin, 2003:32). The white wedding dress Queen Victoria chose seems, in the minds of many, to embrace notions of youthfulness, purity and virginity. Tobin asserts that during the nineteenth century following Victoria’s marriage ‘royal weddings led the fashion’ for a marriage in high life (Tobin, 2003:38).

Art historian, Christopher Lloyd, asserts that ‘at a time when photography was being perfected’ the eighteen-year-old Queen Victoria, seen at her first Council, described this painting ‘with characteristic forthrightness as “one of the worst pictures I have ever seen, both as to painting and likeness”’ (Lloyd, 1991:11). Whether this was a true likeness or not, the young queen is depicted dressed in innocent pure virginal white

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<sup>58</sup> This sentiment was echoed by Freud about seventy-eight years later when he asserts: ‘The demand that a girl shall not bring to her marriage with a particular man any memory of sexual relations with another’ (SE11:193).

contrasting with her male courtiers who appear dressed in black. Consciously or unconsciously this pure white virginal theme dominated Queen Victoria's wedding attire. Arguably, the youthful Queen Victoria, using Freud's words, 'arouses envy on account of her privileges' - 'every [bride], perhaps, would like to be a queen' (SE13:33): thus establishing the phenomenon of the 'bride-in-white'.

Arguably Queen Victoria, marrying in white not only symbolised royal perfection, but also an ideal that every bride desired to replicate. This ideal, arguably had been 'waiting' to emerge as a contemporary concept since medieval times, when it was encapsulated in the unattainable idealised image of the Virgin Mary. Now the image that Queen Victoria brought into being came within reach of every bride's dream.

Above, we have investigated some philosophical, anthropological and ethnographical literature focusing on the exchange of women by drawing on ancient Babylonian, tribal, European ritual, the challenge to monogamy, and discussing how the phenomenon of the bride-in-white emerged. As psychoanalysis embraces the historical, religious and social context as well as the individual's history let us now explore psychoanalytic theory and practice before tentatively suggesting some psychoanalytic concepts that might illuminate the bride-in-white's subjective experience.

## 1.9 Freud and psychoanalytic theory

Freudian psychoanalytic theory, suggests that ‘unconscious thoughts can be extracted from raw material’ of the subject’s free ‘associations’ of articulated experience and unconscious processes may be detected by the application of theoretical concepts (SE7:112). Indications for unconscious processes can therefore be deduced from an amalgamation of the topographical relation between the conscious, pre-conscious and unconscious, and the id, ego and superego<sup>59</sup>. On another level, indications for unconscious processes come through an understanding of psychological development, attachments and separation. Relating to significant others such as mother, father and siblings, during the pre-Oedipal, the Oedipal and the later periods of latency, puberty, adolescence, and adulthood, become the platform for psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams and desires.

In exploring the relationship between the subjective experience and psychoanalytic theory Sigmund Freud suggests that one of the aims of psychoanalysis is ‘to strengthen the subject’s ego’ (SE23:220). Freud suggests that ‘by addressing resistances and defence mechanisms ‘the therapeutic effect depends on making conscious what is repressed, in the widest sense of the word, in the id’ (SE23:238). The child and adult psychoanalyst Melanie Klein suggests that ‘analysis only promotes sublimation’ (Klein, 1975b:91).

Other post-Freudians, such as the American lecturer in psychoanalysis Otto Fenichel, suggests that ‘the aim of psychoanalysis is to demonstrate to the person disturbing residues of the past in the present feelings and reactions, and to connect the present with the past...confronting the subject’s reasonable ego with irrational emotions within

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<sup>59</sup> Lacan (1966) proposes his own variants of psychological apparatus, as examined during the discussion on exhibitionism.

them' (Fenichel, 1945:28). The British psychiatrist Charles Rycroft suggests that the aim of psychoanalytic interpretation is not primarily to make the unconscious conscious or to widen or strengthen the ego but to 're-establish the connection between the dissociated psychological functions' (Rycroft, 1962:393). The British child psychotherapist Donald Winnicott suggests that psychoanalytic interpretation focuses on the interplay of conscious and unconscious forces of the containing environment of the good-enough mother which assists in 're-establishing continuity with whatever constituted the subject's 'personal beginning' (Phillips, 1988:22). This suggests that psychoanalytic interpretations assist in helping the subject to think and speak differently, as opposed to 'acting out' destructively. Let us consider Freud's personal background.

It may be argued that Freud's own life vividly coloured the concepts he later propounded. As the Israelites of the Old Testament, during the days of Joseph found themselves in exile, and outcast as Oedipus finally did, and as Odysseus searched on his voyages, the 'Jews during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries fled to Cologne on the Rhine, and later migrated to Galicia, Austria' (SE20:8), Freud's father, Jacob, found himself, not so much houseless, but 'homeless' which may carry deep implications as to a person without social roots. The Freud family found themselves uprooted and may have felt in need of the 'Secure Base' (Bowlby, 1988), and after fleeing earlier homelands settled in Vienna, before settling in London in 1938.

After first meeting Martha Bernays in 1882, his father Jakob now seventy-one and mother Amalié fifty, in 1886 Sigmund aged thirty settled in Vienna and married Martha, twenty-five. Sigmund recalled that Martha had been waiting for him for more than four years, while he continued studying at University (SE20:14). Falling in love and marrying someone from a different family suggests a desire to be with someone

else other than one's parents, this arguably requires a level of maturity, social conformity and the ability to repudiate parental authority. Sigmund and Martha chose to undergo the transformation from being betrothed to being a married couple and by marrying arguably conformed to internalised collective heterosexual expectations and an identification with their parents. Jones suggests that 'sixty-five years later Martha could still vividly recall how the official at the civil ceremony had commented on her signing her new name in the marriage register without the least hesitation' (Jones, 1953:100). Their libidinal desire for each other led Sigmund and Martha to have three sons and three daughters. What appears striking on reading Jones' record of Freud's six children, is that although all six dates of birth are included, only the boy's names are mentioned, while the girl's names remain omitted. This suggests that Freud was prepared to explore personal experiences often previously unbearable to discuss. In a similar manner to the brief glimpse of Freud's origins, we may therefore relate this research to those women who chose to be brides-in-white and marry in Church.

What appears to be Freud's strength may also be considered a weakness. Freud, as we have seen, was born the eldest son of a Jewish immigrant family living during the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries mainly in Vienna, a period in Europe's history covering two World Wars and during the Jewish holocaust. As we have seen, Freud keenly studied the Bible and classical literature. Thus many of the concepts that he wove into his understanding of human behaviour and the inner or unconscious workings of the mind, would have readily been familiar to him. The psychodynamic concept of the Oedipus complex, familiar in Greek mythology, and arguably experienced by Freud in his own familial group, become 'a major axis' for Freud's psychopathology, a 'phylogenetic' (SE23:99) and 'universal' concept (Laplanche, 1973:283). Another example, this time taken from the Bible, is the story of the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah (SE12:31n1) resulting from orgiastic fertility rites conducted by Canaanite

cults and prohibited degrees for marriage (Genesis, 13v10), arguably resulting in Freud's emphasis throughout his writing on sexuality including the idea of conscious or unconscious 'incestuous desire' (SE23:155). Freud's weakness<sup>60</sup> may appear that ideas he used were not original<sup>61</sup> but drawn upon because it suited his purposes, but the strength was in his ability to weave these themes into a new understanding of the motivations of human thought and behaviour. Let us now consider the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and the bride's experience.

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<sup>60</sup> It may be argued that Freud, a man of his time, presumed that heterosexuality was desired and 'normal', as elaborated in his papers, *Female Sexuality* (1931) and *Femininity* (1933).

<sup>61</sup> Freud clearly draws on the Greek myth Oedipus making it a crucial working model for his theories. Equally, are Plato's philosophy of Ideal Forms and Aristotle's investigations of the mind.

## **1.10 Psychoanalytic practice and the brides' experiences**

Freud attributes the origins of psychoanalytic theory and technique at least in part to five women. Dr Breuer's work with Anna O refers to the process of talking about her moods as a 'talking cure' or 'chimney sweeping' (SE2:30)(SE11:13). Emmy von N, who suffered from psychosomatic 'conversion' (SE2:86), complained about Freud's interrupting the flow of associations, and Elisabeth von R's inability to respond to hypnosis (SE2:174) brought about a method of 'free association' (SE2:56). Miss Lucy R's olfactory hallucinations such as an initial aversion to 'burnt pudding' (SE2:107), was then replaced by one concerning 'cigar smoke' (SE2:119). Freud did not immediately link this to his own habit. In retrospect this can be understood as a negative counter-transference. Freud's work with Lucy assisted to conceptualise the trauma theory of individual symptom formation. Frau M Cäcilie shows Breuer and Freud how symbolic word associations can be transformed from a figurative 'slap-in-the-face' (SE2:181), indicating not only a literal physical facial neuralgia, but also an emotional expression. Freud detects a positive eroticised transference in Anna O's experience of Breuer and also Breuer's response or counter-transference to Anna O (SE2:40n).

The approach adopted to facilitate this research has been based on psychoanalytic methodology. That is, having asked the participant a focused question, to allow the participant to 'free associate' in whatever way they wished, allowing them to convey their individual experience. The recorded statements then become the material that can be compared and contrasted with social, religious and psychoanalytic literature and between the participants. The participants' statements also become the basis upon which unconscious processes can be interpreted.

Freud suggests that psychoanalysis emphasises that the statements given during the participants' 'free associations', including the interpretation of the transference and counter-transference, that is the interpretation of unconscious processes, offers greater understanding of the participants' experience. Having collected the participants' statements, this research scrutinises them by subjecting them to the full range of psychoanalytic concepts, the aim being to offer greater understanding of the bride-in-white's subjective experiences. Hence, unlike the psychoanalytic 'talking cure', as mentioned above, for neurosis the participants to this study while not actively being in analysis, nevertheless divulge their life experiences to be analysed.

Part of the participants' life experiences will be contextualised in Part Three, when exploring the psychological development of the infant girl where pre-Oedipal, Oedipal attachments and separations will be discussed during infancy, puberty, adolescence into adulthood. Although Freud's theory of the neurosis features the female, Freud being male, seems to have focused his attention, to a large extent, on the male, i.e. Oedipus' development, thus leaving female development short of in-depth analysis<sup>62</sup>.

As has been noted above, Freud being born of Jewish parents was expected to feel 'inferior' at University due to his ethnic and religious origins, chose to be married by civil ceremony. Thus it may be argued that Freud had deeply internalised what it was to have Jewish ancestry with its religious overtones. The French psychoanalytic researcher Luiz Oliveriera suggests that 'it is easy to conceive that Freud could wish for an *Agnoszierung* of the notion of unconscious, in order to rid it of any religious connotation' (in Perelberg, 2005:110). In this research however we may find that some

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<sup>62</sup> Freud explores female development principally in just two papers: *Female Sexuality* (1931), SE21:225-43, and *Femininity* (1933), SE22:112-35.

participants carry either complex or cursory religious conscious or unconscious connections.

Let us move from considering Freud's background to focus on the wedding day experience. Similar to the psychoanalytic encounter, during the research interviewing process, 'cathartic' responses may be expressed. Catharsis being the 'intense expression of emotion' or the 'discharge of previously strangulated affects' (SE7:249). The divulging of 'truth' is not considered to be the primary objective in this research, because what is being investigated is how each participant, through their 'free association' within the frame of a questionnaire, individually articulates their personal experiences. The methodology will be explored more fully in Part Two and in Appendix D. Having discussed psychoanalytic theory and practice let us now investigate the psychodynamics of what it is to aspire to an ideal.

### 1.11 To aspire to an ideal: the psychology of the ego ideal and idealisation

The structure of this discussion follows having considered Plato's ideal Forms, and the idealisation of virginity and is based on Freudian concepts that are established in Appendix D: that of aspiring to an ideal. Let us therefore investigate Freud's concepts of the ego-ideal and idealisation.

Freud asserts that 'idealisation is possible in the sphere of ego-libido as well as in that of object-libido' (SE14:94). In other words, idealisation concerns the subject's and the other's perceived qualities. Freud claims that 'idealisation is a process that concerns the *object*; by it that object, without any alteration in its nature, is aggrandised and exalted in the subject's mind' (SE14:94, original emphasis), 'or else what possesses the excellences which (s)he<sup>63</sup> never had' (SE14:101). The concept of idealisation may be considered under five headings. First, concerning the narcissistic self; second, as a defensive process; third, the projection of idealised attributes onto parents; fourth, the identification with an idealised independent other; and fifth, loss of the ideal. Let us now examine these five areas.

Freud, in considering narcissism illuminates the megalomania, or 'an over estimation of the power of their wishes' or an 'omnipotence of thoughts' (SE14:75), of the infantile ideal ego as being a world possessed of every 'narcissistic perfection' (SE14:94). The primary ideal is arguably one of absolute satisfaction, pleasure without limits, an orgiastic ecstasy, without obstacle. Freud speaks of 'a sensation of eternity, a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded...oceanic' (SE21:64), 'a feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole' (SE21:65). Freud declares that similar to the 'primary ego-feeling' (SE21:68) which does not distinguish self from the

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<sup>63</sup> Because of Freud's preponderant use of the masculine pronoun, if 'he' is selectively replaced by (s)he or 'girl', this may be more effective in shedding light on the girl's development.

mother or breast, 'at the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away', "'I" and "You" are one' (SE21:66), in other words 'the wish to return to the mother's womb' (Ferenczi, 1938:50). Arguably, maternal fusion and an undifferentiated world may be experienced as ideal, perfect, paradise. The French psychoanalyst, Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel continues the Freudian premise of the infant's undifferentiated world of 'complete satisfaction' (SE11:188-9), and 'happiness' (SE21:76) by recognising that 'when the infant took herself as her own ideal there was no dissatisfaction, no desire, no loss, and this time remains with us as an example of perfect, unending contentment and whilst the subject may chase endlessly after this lost perfection, she can never actually achieve it' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1975:5).

Freud argues that because the primitive narcissistic state of the ideal ego is prone to disruption by the advent of the 'not-me', 'parental criticism, and...of society' (SE14:96), the destruction of the ideal ego world constructs a compensation by the formation of the ego-ideal. For Freud, idealisation concerns 'the substitute for the lost narcissism of her childhood in which (s)he was her own ideal' (SE14:94) and 'will love what (s)he once was and no longer is' (SE14:101). Freud understands that as the girl grows up the ideal infantile 'narcissistic perfection', as mentioned above, 'is disturbed by the admonitions of others and the awakening of her own critical judgement, so she can no longer retain that perfection' therefore 'she seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego-ideal' (SE14:94). Freud maintains that:

the development of the ego consists in a departure from primary narcissism and gives rise to a vigorous attempt to recover that state. This departure is brought about by means of the displacement of libido on to an ego-ideal imposed from without; and satisfaction is brought about from fulfilling this ideal. (SE14:100)

Freud emphasises that 'what (s)he projects before her as her ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of her childhood in which (s)he was her own ideal' (SE14:94). Offering a post-Freudian understanding of idealisation the British psychoanalyst,

Neville Symington, adds that ‘the ego-ideal holds an ideal in front of the ego for the ego to strive after’ (Symington, 1986:150). Chasseguet-Smirgel warns, however, that the early efflorescence of infantile sexual life is doomed to extinction because its wishes are incompatible with reality’ (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1975:46). In other words, the infant initially experiences themselves as ideal, then due to critical voices substitutes themselves for a projected ego-ideal which becomes something to be aimed for but may never quite be accomplished. It is this process with these mechanisms that the infant adopts in an attempt to retain a sense of the ideal which will now be examined.

A second aspect of idealisation may be understood as a mechanism of defence. In postulating unconscious phantasies relating to the very early phases of mental life Melanie Klein, uses ‘splitting’ as a metaphor for idealisation: splitting not just of good and bad, but between the bad and the idealised internal object. Klein argues that ‘idealisation of the good breast’ becomes a defence against ‘the infant’s persecutory fear and therefore goes to increase the power of an all-gratifying object’ (Klein et al., 1952:202). This is to suggest that in over idealising the object, the subject’s power becomes diminished. That is, in exaggerating the good aspects, persecutory fear may be allayed by exaggerating good aspects of the ‘inexhaustible and always bountiful breast—an ideal breast (Klein, 1946:7).

Arguably, as a defence, idealisation of the object may be considered as tempering or modifying the subject’s anxiety. Synthesising psychoanalytic theories postulated by Freud, Klein and Winnicott, Donald Meltzer suggests that idealisation ‘implies a persecutory demand for perfection’ (Meltzer, 1973:129). Meltzer claims that idealisation becomes ‘the metamorphosis of the super-ego-ideal, through the abandoning of defences, splitting processes...the acceptance of integration and the

assimilation into the super-ego-ideal by introjection' (Meltzer, 1973:78). The introjection and projection process will now be considered.

Let us now turn from emphasising the subject's inner representations and consider external representations. Focusing on a third aspect of idealisation, that of the 'idealisation of the parents' which according to Jean Laplanche have 'a vital part in the setting up of the ideal agencies within the subject', but are 'not synonymous with the formation of the subject's ideals' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:203). Laplanche claims that the ego-ideal represents 'the coming together of narcissism (idealisation of the ego)', with an internalised 'identification with the parents, 'their substitutes', and 'collective ideals', which combine the functions of prohibition and ideal' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973: 144). The psychoanalyst Herman Nunberg (1932) offers a different perspective by arguing that 'whereas the ego submits to the super-ego out of fear of punishment, it submits to the ego-ideal out of love' (in Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:145).

The mother and father representations arguably have significant influence upon the subject. Freud argues that within 'the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex' there are the 'normal positive' and the 'inverted negative'<sup>64</sup> components of 'a father-identification and a mother-identification' resulting in 'four trends' (SE19:34), leading away from ambivalent bisexuality (SE19:33). Freud suggests that these two identifications 'in some way united with each other', go towards 'the forming of a precipitate in the ego' modifying the ego by 'confront[ing] the other contents of the ego as an ego-ideal or super-ego' (SE19:34). Freud, in privileging the paternal prerogative claims that 'the super-ego retains the character (especially) of the father' (SE19:34)

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<sup>64</sup> See the overarching theme of Transformation and SE21:226.

which may be conceptualised in terms of the subject who ‘sets up an *ideal* in themselves by which they measure their actual ego’ (SE14:93, original emphasis). Kristeva, also tells us that ‘the young child of a Mother-Father in personal prehistory...guarantees [her] ability to idealise’ (Kristeva, 1995:122). Thus, Kristeva emphasises that the relationships with the mother and father are significant in influencing the quality of idealisation.

Let us consider the father idealisation further. Freud argues that identifications may be found in the phallic images of ‘the primal father’, or ‘God’ (SE21:42), or with the projection ‘the little girl likes to regard herself as what her father loves above all else’, as opposed to her castrated reality and ‘the experience of painful disappointments’ (SE19:173). Kristeva speaks of the ego-ideal as emanating from ‘the archaic mirage of the paternal function’ and draws on Freud’s notions of ‘primary identification’ with the ‘Father in personal prehistory’<sup>65</sup> (Kristeva, 1995:121). Kristeva points not only towards the father, and his father, but arguably also to the already mentioned ‘Church Fathers’. Kristeva claims that the ‘father of individual prehistory’ provides the ‘seed of the ego-ideal’ (Kristeva, 1987:374).

Let us now examine a fourth aspect, that of idealising an independent other. Arguably, the parental internal representations may have initially been ideal, but later they are experienced as frustrating and disappointing. The subject therefore continues her quest for the lost narcissistic world of perfection, but now in another. Freud, alluding to ‘the aim of avoiding incest’ (SE11:183) postulates, ‘something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavourable to the realisation of complete satisfaction’, that is, of the first love-object, attributing this to ‘the barrier against incest’ (SE11:181). Freud

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<sup>65</sup> This refers to Freud’s phylogenetic model endowed by ‘the father of prehistoric times’ (SE21:131).

concludes that as a result, ‘the final object of the sexual instinct is never any longer the original object but only a surrogate for it’ (SE11:188-9). Arguably, the subject compromises their ego ideal to accommodate a surrogate.

Freud suggests that ‘with the object type (or attachment type)’ (SE14:100), which is strictly ‘characteristic of the male’ (SE14: 88), the idealisation of an ‘independent loved object’, ‘an object...treated in the same way as our own ego, so that when we are in love a considerable amount of narcissistic libido overflows onto the object’ (SE18:112). This psychological mechanism ‘exalts the sexual object into a sexual ideal’ (SE14:100) thus fulfilling the ‘infantile conditions for loving...is idealised’ (SE14:101). Freud proposes a formula: ‘what possesses the excellence which the ego lacks for making it an ideal, is loved’ (SE14:101). Arguably, at the point of the bride-in-white’s ritual enactment, it may be considered that the bride-in-white has a need to believe in the new, idealised ‘inexhaustible bountiful breast’ of the non-incestuous other, in order to assuage her feelings of separation from familial ties. Freud emphasises that ‘in addition to its individual side, this ideal has a social side; it is also the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation’ (SE14:101). Meltzer adds that post puberty and early adolescent ‘idealistic’ ego-ideal aspirations include ‘the hero’, ‘the creative impulse’, ‘a wish to serve her child’, ‘broodiness and nest building’, and ‘long-range planning’ (Meltzer, 1973:160). Arguably, these attributes go towards fulfilling the bride-in-white’s ideal with a non-incestuous other.

Let us now consider a fifth aspect of idealisation, that is, the loss of the ideal. Freud asserts that ‘mourning is the reaction to the loss of...an ideal’ (SE14:243), arguably a paradise lost. On discussing the issue of mourning, child and adolescent psychotherapist Margot Waddell, in attempting to understand the growth of the personality, asserts that:

The process of mourning is one which is to do with managing to experience oneself as separate from the loved and, even if only temporarily, lost other. To let go of the phantasies and projections of what is, by turn, longed for, or feared, in the other person, and to appreciate whatever he and she actually is, as distinct from what they may have been needed to be. This may painfully involve giving up quite complex idealisations. (Waddell, 1998 :69)

Waddell argues that ‘the capacity to mourn what is felt to be lost or is having to be relinquished and to take responsibility for whatever part the self is felt to have played’ is ‘central to any possibility of successfully negotiating complex triangularity’ (Waddell, 1998 :68-9). The new triangularity for the bride arguably includes a repudiation of parental authority in favour of a new allegiance.

Arguably, identifying with parental, substitutes, collective or personal ideals, has the potential to be open to disappointment and frustration. Focusing on the psychoanalytic understanding of feminism Juliet Mitchell argues that a feminine ego-ideal comprises the woman’s secondary narcissistic ‘wish to be loved’ (Mitchell, 1974:34). Mitchell reminds us that ‘ideals periodically fail and the predicament of Narcissus takes over’ (Mitchell, 1974:35). Mitchell cautions that ‘narcissus became stuck in his desire for the supra-real object (his reflection) and he could not accept it was imaginary, consequently he sank into fits of alternate melancholia and mania till he died, a virtual act of suicide’ (Mitchell, 1974:40). Mitchell suggests that the melancholic may be self accusatory with a sense of ‘utmost unworthiness’, where ‘the greatest sense of failure in enacting their ego-ideal, (s)he displays (her)self as a person beneath contempt’ (Mitchell, 1974:36). Let us now turn to a different aspect of idealisation, that of exhibitionism.

### **1.12 Clothing the body: a psychological interpretation of exhibitionism**

It is the experience of the bride wearing, and being seen in, a white wedding dress that is the focus of this section. A white dress is not only conspicuous, as white 'absorbs the minimum amount of light' (Macdonald, 1972:1555), but also the wearer arguably attracts the maximum amount of attention. Let us therefore examine Freud's concept of 'normal' female exhibitionism, distinct from the pathological exhibitionism of males who publically exhibit their genitals (Kahr, 2001). The component parts of which may be considered under three headings: independent of erotogenic impulse, during infancy; as a defence against the unconscious phantasy of castration; and, as a defence against the unconscious fear of loss of identity.

Freud claims that 'the sexual instinct', struggles against the prominent resistances of 'shame and disgust' which offer degrees of restraint, and being 'composite', are at 'the convergence of several motive forces' (SE7:162). Of these 'component instincts', which enhance the sexual aims, is exhibitionism (SE7:166). Exhibitionism may therefore be seen as a defence against the woman's sense of being 'permanently narcissistically injured' (SE21:239). This is to suggest that, the woman may compensate for being narcissistically wounded by displacing her 'lack' onto her whole body, turning to attraction through clothing.

Freud locates exhibitionism without shame in infantile sexuality by suggesting that 'we can observe how undressing has an almost intoxicating effect on many children...instead of making them feel ashamed...children frequently manifest a desire to exhibit' (SE4:244). Freud recognises that the desire to be an exhibitionist of his genitals and for 'exposure to children of the opposite sex' becomes predominately a male characteristic (SE4:244). Freud acknowledges, however, that 'this unashamed

period of childhood seems like Paradise' where mankind (Biblically, in the form of Adam and Eve) was naked and 'without shame in one another's presence...until a moment arrived when shame and anxiety awoke, expulsion followed, and sexual life and the tasks of cultural activity began' (SE4:245).

Freud suggests that within infantile sexual life 'in spite of the preponderating dominance of erotogenic zones' the instinct of exhibitionism becomes 'in a sense, independent' of them (SE7:191-2). Freud recognises however, that exhibitionism does 'involve other people as sexual objects', but this does 'not enter into intimate relations with genital life until later' (SE7:192). Freud, in considering the sadistic and masochistic impulses of looking and being looked at posits that the 'erotogenic zones in the body...operate independently of one another in a search for pleasure and find their object for the most part in the subject's own body', in other words, forming a narcissistic relationship with the self (SE20:35).

Freud suggests that the woman's narcissistic relationship with exhibitionism may take a masochistic stance where the 'exhibitionist shares in the enjoyment of [the sight of] (her) exposure', as in the passive aim 'to be looked at' (SE14:127). Freud postulates that one of the components of this instinct, being 'the eye, corresponds to an erotogenic zone', which 'assigns sexual significance', attached to which are sensations, excitations, and changes in innervation (SE7:169, SE14:132). Reasons for this may be considered in terms of the sexual instinct. As already mentioned, Freud argues that the woman has a sense of being 'permanently narcissistically injured' (SE21:239). That is to say, in phantasy, the woman feels 'castrated', due to her 'lack' of the penis. Freud suggests that due to the narcissistic wound, the woman compensates by displacing her 'lack' onto her whole body, turning to attraction 'in relation to clothes' (SE8:98, SE14:127). Freud

argues that invoking attraction can be understood in terms of the scopophilic instinct, in that the woman gives up the object and turns the instinct towards her own body—a transformation to passivity setting up a new aim—‘of being looked at’ (SE14:127).

Let us now consider how some post-Freudian psychoanalysts develop the understanding of exhibitionism. Elizabeth Wright understands that the active and passive positions of the scopophilic instinct become coded as the ‘activity with masculinity and the phallic, passivity with femininity and castration’ (Wright, 1992:448). Wright, drawing on the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, claims that ‘as a drive, the gaze is always an excess over mere seeing...fundamentally orientated towards a lack’ (Wright, 1992:449). In other words, Wright seems to link feminine passivity with the woman’s drive to be gazed upon due to the woman’s phantasy of ‘castration’. The woman’s phantasy of castration may be reflected in the feminist cultural view of how Noreen Connell describes women who may feel ‘psychologically isolated from the larger society and its main avenues of power by an inbred sense of worthlessness’ (Connell, 1974:7).

Exhibitionism may invoke both desired and undesired feelings, as mentioned above, in the desire to be looked at, with pleasure, through coercion, or teasing. John Steiner suggests that ‘being looked at...may result in feelings of pride, pleasure and gratification at being admired’, but can also ‘lead to the extremely uncomfortable feelings of embarrassment, shame and humiliation’ (Steiner, 2006:939). Robert Stoller recognises that the exhibitionist needs the ‘other’, by suggesting that the ‘exhibitionist coerces the other into becoming an accomplice...the willing seduced co-operation of an external object’ (Stoller, 1975a:134). The American object-relations theorist Otto Kernberg understands exhibitionism in terms of ‘sexual teasing’, where the promise of ‘erotic desire’ is stimulated yet withheld. A seduction counterbalanced by frustration

linked with sadism, 'the wish to excite and frustrate the significant other' (Kernberg, 1995:27).

Fenichel suggests that 'in women, the exhibitionism, displaced from the genitals, attempts to bring reassurance against a feeling of inferiority because of the lack of a penis' (Fenichel, 1945:316). Fenichel claims that 'in exhibitionism a denial of castration is attempted by a simple overcathexis of a partial instinct. The exhibitionist act is performed as a kind of magical gesture, meaning: 'I show you what I wish you could show me' (Fenichel, 1945:345). Ismond Rosen suggests that 'exhibitionism is mainly linked with the phallic stage of experience', that being the 'absence of the penis in the woman being felt as a narcissistic injury' (Rosen, 1964:308). Rosen also concurs with Freud by suggesting that in adulthood 'exhibitionism is displaced onto the whole of the rest of the body, especially the breasts, and onto a show of attractiveness' which goes towards supplanting the sexual aim (Rosen, 1964:294). Lothair Rubinstein however takes exhibitionism further by claiming that 'the female clothing surrounding [the] whole body can represent the vagina' (Rubinstein in Rosen, 1964:182). Chasseguet-Smirgel argues that as a result of its origin, 'exhibitionism remains more narcissistic than all the other component instincts. It's erogenous pleasure is always linked to an increase in self-esteem' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1975:152).

Peter Gay moves the argument regarding libidinal excitation by suggesting that exhibitionism 'encourages the development of beauty in the sexual object' (Gay, 1989:251). Gay postulates that 'the progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilisation keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts' (Gay, 1989:251). Gay argues that a degree of sublimation takes place when the 'interest can be shifted away from the

genitals onto the shape of the body as a whole' (Gay, 1989:251). Gay counterbalances this argument by claiming that 'this is related to the fact, we never regard the genitals themselves, which produce the strongest sexual excitation, as really 'beautiful' (Gay, 1989:251+n6).

Facing the phantasy of castration, arguably, the girl continues to search for a sense of potency and positive affirmation of her identity, through exhibitionism. Charles Rycroft suggests that the unconscious process of exhibitionism compensates for 'the need to prove one has something despite not having a penis', becoming influenced by the 'manic defence against the fear of loss of identity' (Rycroft, 1968:47). In other words, during the process of transformation the girl may fear a loss of self and seeks to reinforce her identity, sexual difference, and femaleness. Robert Stoller argues that the sense of femaleness concerns the genitals which 'are the only way anatomy communicates the crucial differences of childhood sex assignment', apart from the length of hair, the cutting of which may be 'seen as a castration threat', and for the adult woman are the breasts (Stoller, 1975a:100). The French psychoanalyst Gérard Mendal considers that a search for identity confirmation may be found in the other by asserting that:

The activity accompanying such a sublimated act, [as exhibitionism], causes the whole to be genetically related to a phantasy acted out in front of parents, whereas integration, as an internalised phantasy activity, requires an identification with the observer. To show oneself, to see the reaction of the other, [is], to thereby gain a feeling of existing [and] to ensure the regulation of one's self-esteem. (Mendal 1964 in Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1975:156-7)

Exhibitionism may, therefore, take the form of relating to the internal representations, of mother, father or self, in the search for identity. On the one hand, Joyce McDougall is concerned with the subject's own identity claiming that 'one aim of exhibitionism in women is that she is waiting for the mother-figure to take notice of her daughter, [and]

to recognise her biological sex' (McDougall, 1995:45). On the other hand, Otto Kernberg claims that as 'the little girl undertakes in shifting her object choice from mother to father: exhibitionism can be a plea for sexual affirmation at a distance. Father's love and acceptance of his little girl and her vaginal genitality reconfirms her feminine identity and self-acceptance' (Kernberg, 1995:27). While, Kristeva considers that depression 'affects *subjective identity*' which in turn calls into question *sexual identity* through the perversion of exhibitionism (Kristeva, 1989:48, original emphasis). In other words, exhibitionism appears to operate on three levels. Through the need to be noticed as a daughter by the mother; through the infant girl's need for sexual affirmation by the father; and, as an overcompensation through perversion.

What is under scrutiny here is: does exhibitionism compensate for the woman's phantasy of castration, as suggested by Freud? If we consider the woman who unconsciously feels castrated, unattractive or does not feel beautiful, exhibitionism may not work for her. The 'unattractive' woman may have internalised low self-esteem, self-critical voices and deep feelings of shame and inferiority by emphasising her helplessness, weakness and misfortune.

One way of understanding the degree of attention the bride-in-white draws towards herself is from the study of phallogentrism, an organising principle of Western patriarchy. Klein places between the pre-Oedipal and the Oedipal stages of the infant's relationship with the mother, a 'femininity phase' in which the infant identifies with the all-powerful mother, whose body also incorporates the desired father's phallus within it (Klein, 1975b:189-90). During this feminine, or differentiation phase, the infant distinguishes between the self and the object world (the me/not me distinction). In offering a feminist approach, Lorraine Gamman suggests that phallogentrism concerns

the simultaneous acceptance and denial of the castrated maternal phallus (Gamman, 1994:95).

The Lacanian model of psychoanalysis, returns to Freud using a structuralist and post-structuralist concept of signification in language, but does not embody the father within the mother, like Klein (Mitchell & Rose, 1982:23). Initially the infant exists in the Imaginary, conceiving itself and the mother as one, 'not a divided self' (Mitchell & Rose, 1982:5), where there is no difference, no absence, only identity and presence (Gamman, 1994:100). The infant then enters the Mirror Stage, thus identifying with the image of itself in the mirror from the mother and others, where the primordial 'I' comes into being (Lacan, 1966:2). The Oedipal entry of the Father ruptures the infant-mother unity, thus the Imaginary becomes the unconscious through repression. For Lacan, it is the phallus that ruptures the infant's dyadic relationship of plentitude, and wounds its precarious narcissistic image of self. As such, the phallus exists as a symbol of what the mother desires, rather than the actual penis (Gamman, 1994:100). For Lacan, the signifier of desire is the phallus and as the woman 'lacks', she becomes the phallus (Gamman, 1994:101), hystericising the phallus on her whole body, as the core of femininity (Gamman, 1994:103).

Viewed in this manner the bride-in-white becomes the phallus, the object of desire for the Other. By wearing high heeled shoes, hidden under a full-length dress the bride's femininity becomes accentuated, and the bride-in-white appears like a flower, attracting the maximum attention onto her whole body. This picture of the bride-in-white seems to make a composite image of being simultaneously castrated and phallic, which in turn may be understood as a defence against the enactment of separation or repudiation.

### **1.13 In search of a satisfactory object: a psychological understanding of repudiation**

Let us now explore the processes of repudiation, starting with infancy. Repudiation, pivotal to Freud's thesis of the development of femininity concerns a 'turning away' (SE21:231+4), however, the degree of 'turning' may be problematic. The infant girl, now faced with Freud's 'second task' of psychic development, searches for 'her final choice of an object' (SE22:118-9). For Freud, this development becomes achievable by a series of repudiations. Let us examine six hurdles over which the infant girl may have to traverse.

First, Freud maintains that from the outset the infant girl's first object 'must be her mother' (SE21:228) who satisfies all her needs (SE21:236), with an 'intense and passionate attachment' (SE21:225). Freud claims that 'with the discovery that her mother is castrated it becomes possible to drop her as an object' (SE22:126), this becomes the 'motive for turning away' (SE21:231), thus the girl 'repudiates her love for her mother' (SE22:126). Freud argues that 'the turning away from her mother is an extremely important step in the little girl's development. It becomes more than a mere change of object' (SE21:239).

Freud suggests that, following the pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother, the infant girl accepts her own passivity and favours 'the transition to the father-object' (SE21:239). However the incest prohibition frustrates her search, 'the libido abandons its unsatisfying position to find a new one' (SE21:231). Freud cautions, the girl's repudiation of the mother, results from 'disappointments' (SE21:231), likewise 'her inevitable disappointments from her father drive her to regress into her early masculinity complex' (SE22:130). In other words, the infant girl repudiates the mother,

then the father, due to both prohibition and disappointment, thus the infant girl oscillates between masculine and feminine aims.

Second, Freud claims that the infant girl's Oedipus complex plays a masochistic role, 'she acknowledges her castration...the superiority of the male and her own inferiority [and] rebels' (SE21:229). In repudiating, both the mother- and father-representation, because they are unable to give her satisfaction, the infant girl repudiates their authority (SE7:227), thus overcoming an unconscious incestuous desire, and opening a path to find satisfaction from a non-incestuous phallic other.

Freud, in discussing one of the transforming tasks of late puberty, asserts that:

As incestuous phantasies are overcome and repudiated, one of the most significant, but also painful, psychical achievements of the pubertal period is completed: detachment from parental authority, a process that alone makes possible the opposition, which is so important for the progress of civilisation, between the new generation and the old. (SE7:227)

In other words, Freud couches, 'detachment from parental authority', in terms of 'overcoming and repudiating' incestuous phantasies, particularly 'the daughter towards her father', as 'the child's sexual impulses towards her parents are as a rule already differentiated owing to the attraction of the opposite sex' (SE7:227). As suggested above, this process makes possible non-incestuous pro-creation.

Third, the infant girl may undergo a period of 'repudiation of femininity' (SE23:252) in a rejection of passivity by defensively regressing and re-entering the masculinity complex. Freud suggests that on the infant girl's discovery of the anatomical difference between the sexes, a defence mechanism of 'disavowal' may become evoked (SE19:253). Freud claims that 'in the female an envy for the penis—a positive striving to possess a male genital—[concerns] an attitude towards the castration complex...a

protest...[a] ‘repudiation of femininity’ (SE23:250) which concerns ‘the passive attitude [and] acceptance of castration’ (SE23:251). In other words, if the infant girl does not accept ‘passivity’ and protests against the phantasy of castration, then the masculinity complex may beckon. Freud suggests that there may be a number of psychological libidinal ‘forces’ at work in the girl to sabotage her transformation towards a ‘normal’ object-choice (SE18:167). Let us explore these ‘forces’.

The first ‘force’, concerns the masculinity complex. Freud claims that from her childhood the girl may bring with her ‘a strongly marked ‘masculinity complex’ (SE18:169), which Freud characterises as her being ‘spirited, always ready for romping and fighting and not prepared to be second to her slightly older brother [the sight of whose genitals] developed a pronounced envy for the penis’ (SE18:169); Freud describes this character as being ‘feminist’. Freud maintains that the attitude of ‘girls should enjoy the same freedom as boys’ may lead her to ‘rebel against the lot of women in general’ (SE18:169).

The second ‘force’ concerns the mother/daughter relationship. Freud suggests that daughters of nearly marriageable age, in identifying with their mothers, may be accompanied by a mixture of feelings of ‘compassion, contempt and envy’ (SE18:157). Freud suggests that ‘the mother, still youthful herself, sees in her rapidly developing daughter an inconvenient competitor, favours her sons, limits the girl’s independence, keeps a strict watch against any close relation between the girl and her father’ (SE18:157). This may impact on the daughter who ‘turns her back upon the faithless female sex and becomes a woman-hater’ (SE18:157).

The third ‘force’, and fifth repudiation, concerns the father/daughter relationship. Freud argues that the girl’s ‘repudiation of men’ (SE18:164) may follow ‘the disappointment she had suffered from her father’ which results in a ‘bitterness against men’ (SE18:164) and ‘the longing for love that springs from the Oedipus attitude at puberty’ (SE18:168). Unafraid to offer a psychoanalytic understanding of the girl’s predicament the French psychoanalyst André Green argues that there is ‘the widespread fear of penetration in women’ (Green, 1986:109). Green suggests that the ‘refusal to incorporate the penis is related to a double fear: fear *for* the penis and fear *of* the penis; fear of damaging or castrating the penis, but also a fear that the penis might injure and destroy the internal genitals and inside of the abdomen’ (Green, 1986:109, original emphasis). Green suggests, therefore, that ‘women have to find a compromise between the fear of object loss, which could lead to mourning of a depressive type, and dangerous incorporation which generates persecutory anxiety’ (Green, 1986:110).

The fourth ‘force’ concerns the fear of loss of beauty. Freud argues that the girlish narcissism of the post-pubertal period with its ‘homosexual enthusiasms, and exaggeratedly strong friendships tinged with sensuality’ and ‘strong exhibitionist and scopophilic tendencies’ (SE18:168) together ‘with her pride in her good looks’ (SE18:169) may become a defence against the fear of ‘bodily disfigurement connected with the idea of pregnancy and child birth’ (SE18:169). This, in turn, may lead the girl to ‘repudiate her wish for a child, her love of men and the feminine role in general’ (SE18:158). Freud claims that ‘the renunciation of all narcissistic satisfaction and the preference for being the lover rather than the beloved’, by assuming the masculine attitude and taking a feminine love-object’ (SE18:154), whether out of ‘rivalry’ or ‘retirement’ (SE18:159-60), disappointment or bitterness, may lead to a late-acquired

inversion to homosexuality, or a regression to the earliest narcissistic object-choice or taking the mother, her original homosexual object.

Let us return to the series of repudiations. Fourth, as discussed above, Freud claims that ‘in the female a positive striving to possess a male genital—[concerns] a protest...[a] ‘repudiation of femininity’ (SE23:250) which concerns ‘the passive attitude [and] acceptance of castration’ (SE23:251). Freud argues, however, that what might sabotage this repudiation may be ‘an unconscious repudiation of sexuality’ (SE7:227) which may lead towards ‘sexual inhibition’ (SE22:126). Freud asserts that:

girls with an exaggerated need for affection and horror of the real demands made by sexual life have an irresistible temptation to realise the ideal of asexual love in their lives and conceal their libido behind an affection which they can express without self-reproaches, by holding fast throughout their lives to their infantile fondness, revived at puberty, for their parents or brothers and sisters. (SE7:227-8)

In other words, the girl may unconsciously ‘turn back her libido on to those whom she preferred in her infancy’ (SE7:228). For example, turning her libidinal strivings towards the parents or siblings as an ‘incestuous object-choice’, or project feelings of hate onto them.

Fifth, the infant girl’s unconscious repudiation of sexuality may lead to her ‘repudiation of men’ (SE18:164) out of fear, as explored above, in ‘the third force’.

Sixth, there may be the ‘repudiation of the external world’ (SE14:139), because of hate. Freud argues that in the sadistic-anal phase which is characterised by ‘an urge for mastery, injury or annihilation of the object is a matter of indifference’ as a form of hate (SE14:139). Freud claims that it is ‘not until the genital (phase) is established [that] love becomes the opposite of hate’ (SE14:139). Freud argues that hate, a ‘repudiation by the

ego-instincts...in the interests of the ego' [which] derives from 'the narcissistic ego's primordial repudiation of the external world', comes as a result of 'its outpouring of stimuli' (SE14:139). Freud cautions that 'sexual and ego-instincts can readily develop an antithesis which repeats that of love and hate' (SE14:139). Arguably, the degree of unpleasure and hate may go towards sabotaging pleasurable feelings and subsequent satisfaction. The active urge for emancipation comes to the fore, as we have seen above, already in early phases of the separation-individuation process. Let us now explore the concept of transformation from a Freudian perspective.

### **1.14 To aspire to become...a psychological interpretation of transformation**

The structure of this discussion is based on Freudian concepts which are established in Appendix D. The bride-in-white may become visually transformed by adorning 'wedding white', socially transformed from daughter to wife through the rite of passage of patriarchal exchange, however, what concerns us here are the pressures under which the bride becomes subject to a group of psychological transformations. Arguably, having found a degree of independence from parental authority, the question here is: what may constitute driving factors for a woman in early adulthood to give up relative independence in favour of becoming married?

Psychodynamically, the bride's wish to become a wife and mother may indicate an unconscious desire to replace an 'active' for a more homely lifestyle. In terms of libidinal desire Freud argues that the quantitative concept of the libido serves 'as a measure of processes and transformations occurring in the field of sexual excitation' (SE7:217) and in the 'development and transformation' of instinct (SE17:128), which concerns a bodily stimulus that directs the organism towards 'its pressure, its aim, its object and its source' (SE14:122). In other words, the libidinal instinct dynamically submits to an internal pressure to transform, governed by the influence of ideas or phantasies of desire, tempered by psychical conflict.

Laplanche and Pontalis, suggest that the aim of an instinct (or drive) 'is to eliminate a state of tension...at the instinctual source; and it is in the object that the instinct may achieve its aim' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:214). Freud illustrates cases where the transformation of instinct occurs, however, suggests that 'it is only a baby that makes the transition from narcissistic self-love to object-love' (SE17:129). Other instincts that may be transformed include, an 'idea' into 'affects...especially anxiety' (SE14:153);

‘scopophilia into exhibitionism’ (SE14:127); ‘sadism into masochism’ (SE14:132); ‘love into hate’ (SE14:127); ‘loving into being loved’ (SE14:139); and a group of instincts that are transformed at ‘puberty’ including feeling beautiful, attractive and sensual (SE7:207-30). Freud suggests that transformations may be considered in terms of the ‘reversal of an instinct into its opposite’ revolving around ‘two different processes: a change from activity to passivity, and a reversal of its content’ (SE14:127).

Freud argues that following the infant girl’s innate libidinal ‘bisexuality’ (SE22:114) and the infant girl’s libidinal ‘masculinity’ (SE22:115), illustrated by her ‘aggressiveness in the sadistic-anal phase’ (SE22:118). The little girl’s task, early in the phallic phase, concerns the ‘leading erotogenic zone’, found in the clitoris, and ‘with the change to femininity...should wholly or in part’ be transferred to the vagina (SE22:118).

Freud suggests that the girl’s Oedipal task, involves the change of attachment from mother to father (SE22:118). Freud asserts that the ‘castration complex’ comes into being on the infant girl’s ‘discovery of female castration [and] develops a powerful masculinity complex’ (SE22:129) which becomes a means by which the girl avoids ‘the wave of passivity’ (SE22:130). Freud claims that the infant girl then ‘should take her father as an object for some time and enter the Oedipus situation...[but] as a result of her inevitable disappointment from her father, she is driven to regress into her early masculinity complex’ (SE22:130). Freud asserts that ‘striving to be masculine (the struggle against passivity)...then succumbs to the momentous process of repression whose outcome...determines...a woman’s femininity’ (SE23:251). Freud argues that during this transformation towards ‘the construction of her femininity...the appeased wish for a penis is destined to be converted into a wish for a baby and for a husband,

who possesses a penis' (SE23:251). Freud claims that in phantasy, the infant girl through 'an identification with her mother...substitutes activity for passivity' (SE22:128) and that the girl 'is driven out of her attachment to her mother through the influence of her envy for the penis...in the absence of fear of castration...demolishes [the Oedipus complex] late [or] incompletely' (SE22:129). Freud argues that as 'spontaneous ideas, phantasies and symptoms' are 'products of the unconscious [they] are ill-distinguished from one another and are easily interchangeable' (SE17:128). Freud applies this theory to the concepts '*faeces* (money, gift), *baby* and *penis* which are often treated as if they were equivalent and could replace one another freely' (SE17:128, original emphasis).

Let us consider Freud's theory through which the girl goes towards achieving femininity in terms of her unconscious transformation of instinct from an 'active' to a passive attitude. Freud suggests that 'in women...the sexual life is regularly divided into two phases': 'a masculine character', followed by one 'specifically feminine' (SE21:228) where 'the young woman's narcissistic masculinity [becomes] changed into femininity' (SE17:130). Let us consider this transformation in terms of unconscious processes transforming active aims into passive ones.

One way of understanding the infant girl's libidinal transformation to passivity may be through envy, as explored above. That is, to desire, with emulation or rivalry, that which another is perceived as having due to a sense of deprivation. Freud asserts that if 'the infantile wish, 'envy for a penis', becomes repressed it may result in a 'masculine disposition', while in other women 'the wish for a penis is replaced by a wish for a baby' (SE17:129). Freud concludes that 'the ultimate outcome of the infantile 'envy for a penis' may 'change into the wish for a *man*, and thus puts up with the man as an

appendage to the penis' (SE17:129, original emphasis). Freud argues that 'this transformation, therefore, turns an impulse which is hostile to the female sexual function into one which is favourable to it. Such women are in this way made capable of an erotic life based on the masculine type of object-love, which can exist alongside the feminine one proper, derived from narcissism' (SE17:129).

Another way of understanding the transformation to passivity may be through the woman's desire to feel attractive. As cited earlier, Freud argues that the 'active aim' of the scopophilic instinct, active looking, 'encourages the development of beauty in the sexual object' and 'remains the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused' (SE7:156). Freud suggests that exhibitionism, the passive aim—to be looked at' has been transformed by 'reversal of content' from 'the active aim—to look at' (SE14:127). Freud claims that 'a woman's identification with her mother' in the pre-Oedipal phase is where 'her affectionate attachment to her mother [precipitates in] taking her as a model' (SE22:134) and 'in this identification...she acquires her attractiveness to a man' (SE22:134).

Mitchell emphasises that 'with the end of the pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother for the girl...the psychological recognition of the sexual differences consists of...being castrated' (Mitchell, 1974:115). Mitchell suggests that 'in order to enter into her Oedipal desire for her father the girl has to salvage what is left of her sexual drive and devote it, most actively, to this passive aim of being loved' (Mitchell, 1974:115). Mitchell asserts that this 'transition from an active mother-attachment to a mother identification and the passive aim of father-attachment is the narcissistic wish to be loved rather than to love' (Mitchell, 1974:116).

A third way of understanding transformation is of ‘love into hate’ (SE14:127) due to the infant girl’s frustration and rivalry with the mother. Freud agrees with Bleuler’s definition that ambivalence may be distinguished emotionally as an ‘oscillation between love and hate’ (SE14:131n2), and that ambivalence may be illustrated by the dynamic process between activity and passivity (SE14:131). Freud claims that ‘not until the genital organisation is established does love become the opposite of hate. Hate, as a relation to objects, is older than love. It derives from the narcissistic ego’s primordial repudiation of the external world with its outpouring of stimuli’ (SE14:139).

Freud argues that love and hate originate from the premise that the mother becomes the girl’s first love-object, and from this intense attachment emerge five reproaches or ‘disappointments’. ‘Her mother did not give her a proper penis’; ‘[she] remained unsated, as though [she] never sucked long enough at her mother’s breast’; she compelled her to share her mother’s love with others’; she never fulfilled all the girl’s expectations of love’; and ‘she first aroused her sexual activity and then forbade it’, resulting in ‘the girl’s final hostility’: ‘a hatred’: the state of loving and hating— affective ‘ambivalence’ (SE21:234-5). British child psychoanalyst Adam Phillips, suggests that ‘the mother can satisfy the child’s need, but she can never fulfil the insatiable demand for love’ (Phillips, 2006:168).

Freud maintains that *erotic* libidinal types are characterised as ‘those whose main interest...is turned towards love...but above all being loved’ (SE21:218, original emphasis). Freud suggests that what dominates, is ‘the fear of loss of love and [their] dependence on others who may withhold their love from them’ (SE21:218), and argues that a factor for this fear may be ‘in proportion to the amount of aggressiveness present’ (SE21:218). Freud claims that the *obsessional* type experiences the ‘predominance of

the super-ego where their conscience seems dominated by fear, [and] instead of fear of losing love, they seem self-reliant' (SE21:218, original emphasis). Freud claims that the *narcissistic* type 'has a large amount of aggressiveness [with] readiness for activity [where] loving is preferred above being loved' (SE21:218, original emphasis). Freud asserts that 'the third antithesis of loving, the transformation of loving into being loved, corresponds to the operation of the polarity of activity and passivity' (SE14:139-40): (the three being 'indifference, 'hating, or 'being loved') (SE14:135n1). Freud claims that one 'psychical peculiarity of mature femininity' concerns the woman's narcissism, and effects her choice of object, is 'that to be loved is a stronger need for them than to love', and posits this to be as a consequence of penis-envy, which is also influential in woman's 'physical vanity' and a compensation for their sense of 'sexual inferiority' and castration (SE22:132).

An audible sign of transformation, at the heart of the wedding ceremony, the bride publically responds, 'I do'. Levine, interpreting Kristeva, suggests that:

Discourse is a complex psychical affair that cannot be reduced to the dimension of grammatical categories, a dimension Kristeva calls *symbolic*. It also comprises the *semiotic*, which is extraneous to language, but in which the psychical representatives of the facts unfold, and with them, the dramaturgy of the desires, fears, and depressions that make sense to the child but that do not manage to enter the coded signification of everyday language. (Kristeva in Levine, 1992:293)

While the bride's experience in Church may be unfamiliar, the gravity of the vow becomes loaded with dramatic signification. Using the first-person personal pronoun 'I' defines the person, and the subject comes into being. 'I do', being in the present and future tense, may indicate that the bride imagines herself in the now and after. At this pivotal stage of transformation, the bride's metamorphosis becomes complete when the Minister proclaims that the couple 'are husband and wife'.

### **1.15 Summary of Part One**

We discover from the literature which has been examined that, in religious terms, the subject seems to have a need to appear acceptable to God and the group, particularly at significant times during the life-cycle.

The Old Testament Hebrew's story of Eve's ejection from God's presence due to disobedience, and the punishment meted down to the Gnostic inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, highlights the human need for reconciliation with God. Whereas Eve may symbolise disobedience and ejection, the Virgin Mary's obedience and acceptance has been hedged round with miraculous signs. Thus physical abstinence and spiritual purity, encapsulated in the New Testament figure of the Virgin Mary has been idealised. The Virgin Mary also becomes a model for the perfect mother figure, passively saying little except in acceptance. Thus it appears that women carry a huge level of responsibility for their own body and mind and the group's survival.

We discover in the literature that the need to be found or appear to be acceptable, and conforming to God's will becomes enacted at significant times, as Jean Cooper suggests during the life-cycle such as at baptism, confirmation, marriage and at death. These events focus the mind and demonstrate acceptable attributes. These events, marked by the subject appearing in an ideal form, i.e., robed in white, can be conceived as 'life-crises', generally happening once in a person's life, where both the human right of passage and the main player(s) are hedged round by public ritual.

After a period of time during which the young woman exercises sexual abstinence, and in Plato's terms searches for her 'other half', the woman may desire to marry. We discover in the literature, that physical restraint, i.e. remaining a virgin, becomes central

to marriage in Church. Kristin Hendrickx cites the importance, to some modern bride's-to-be, to have hymenoplasty to 'prove' that they are virgins. Because of the bride-to-be's virgin status, she can choose to wear a white wedding dress with confidence as white symbolises purity. Like the Babylonian bride, the modern bride may be veiled, and appears as Adrienne Rich suggests 'she-who-is-unto-herself'. While the bride is veiled she can be considered to be, in Winnicottian terms, in a transitional space, and regarded as Émile Durkheim suggests, 'sacred', thus protected from the contaminating gaze of the group regarded as 'profane'. The bride-to-be's head may be crowned with a ring of flowers symbolising, as Edwin James suggests, victory over the forces of evil. Therefore the main player is separated from the group because they symbolise a pure state.

As Mary Douglas suggests, rituals are conducted in sacred places (the Church), by sacred people (the Minister), and involve, as Nancy Cott reminds us, dedicated words and responses, but are conducted in the presence of the group who implicitly give their agreement to the ceremony taking place. The group not only finds the main player(s) acceptable because of the effort they have put into personal restraint and attainment of status, but also accepts the outcome of the ritual, recognising the person's transformed state.

In secular terms we discover from the literature that marriage, a human right of passage may be understood, as Arnold van Gennep suggests, comprises a complex series of processes, of separation, transition, and incorporation. As Cott suggests the bride consensually enters into a marriage contract, where her identity changes, and into a legal institution of monogamy which is seen as being cohesive, promoting public order

and moral standards. The idealised bride not only undergoes this ritual for herself, but legitimises her change of status within the group.

Arguably, women have been given in marriage since time immemorial, but this research asks, why do women marry in an Anglican Church and why in white? In addressing the first part of this question, we might turn to history for an answer. As Edward Yarnold suggests, from the fourth century, when the Church Fathers brought the ancient Hebrew and new Christian teachings together, thus combining the Old and New Testaments, and pronouncing upon the Immaculate state of the Virgin Mary, ecclesiastical authority, as The Venerable Bede suggests, extolled physical virginity and spiritual discipline, thus the church became the authority to pronounce on the status of virginity and monogamous marriage. Since King Henry VIII's matrimonial crisis and the split from Rome in 1533, the Anglican Church has been the state authority to pronounce on marriage.

As we consider why brides wear a white wedding dress I believe that we need to turn to psychoanalysis. As we have discovered from the literature, prior to Queen Victoria's wedding in 1840, brides may have worn a pale blue dress to signify purity, as lapis lazuli was associated with the Virgin Mary. However, since 1840 brides have predominantly worn white arguably signifying their physical state of virginity. Psychoanalysis suggests that this pure, spotless, unblemished state is found embedded in the infant's earliest ideal ego, which becomes an ego ideal and is reinforced by the idealisation of others, and projected onto the figure of the bride-in-white in an idealised form.

Psychoanalysis suggests that during the girl's physical development she is required to experience a transformation of instinct, during the genital phase, from the clitoris which implies masculinity and activity, to the vagina, which implies femininity and passivity, precipitating penis envy. Psychologically the bride desires to be transformed from daughter to wife and onward to mother. The desire to become a mother may originate through an identification with, or idealisation of, the Virgin Mary, her own mother, or other role model, and a transformation of instinct.

Wearing a white wedding dress on a bright summers day may visually attract the maximum amount of attention during this public ritual. As psychoanalysis suggests, the woman lacks (a penis), thus exhibitionism becomes a compensation for narcissistic wounds and a sense of castration. Thus the bride who wears white may feel phallic and powerful in compensation for her 'lack'.

The bride-in-white in receiving the maximum amount of attention from the group facilitates her repudiation from parental authority together with ameliorating separation anxiety. The attention from the group also legitimises the bride-in-white's transformation of social status and her forming a new identity. Arguably, women wear white, and not men, because it is the woman who bears the legitimate progeny who in turn inherits.

The bride-in-white, although consensually leaves home to marry another due to the incest prohibition, this process of separation, and repudiation of parental authority, and incorporation may be both exciting and traumatic. Thus the Church, the group and the ceremony 'contain' her anxiety during this change of status.

As we have seen, Freud's life experiences include being a 'favoured' son of his mother, moving home, identifying with role models, changing his name, marrying and having children. Freud describes, however, through male eyes, reflecting values of his era and cultural bias, his understanding that mature people will enter into a heterosexual relationship and desire to marry (SE22:132-3). Freud believes that due to 'the fact of her castration', the woman acknowledges 'the superiority of the male and her own inferiority' (SE21:229), which can be understood as perpetuating misogyny. Freud also believes that 'paternity is more important than maternity', illustrated by 'the child bears their father's surname and become his heir' (SE23:118).

Although references are made in this text to 'the bride', 'the girl', 'the daughter', 'the mother' or 'the father', I am aware that this rather singular unitary entity appears inflexible. This singularity, often criticised in Freudian writing, as Nancy Chodorow suggests, is not intended to be universalising but represents a plumb-line against which each individual may be appreciated for their complex individuality and multiplicity (Chodorow, 1994:2).

Thus I have argued that psychoanalysis adds a significant dimension to the understanding of the subject's experience. Instead of understanding human experience in terms of ritual and location, psychoanalysis examines the aetiology behind the idealised ritual by asking how these ideals originate in infancy and are enacted in adulthood, thus illuminate what may be embedded in the unconscious. We can suggest, therefore, that theoretically the four key psychoanalytic areas of ego ideal and idealisation, exhibitionism, repudiation, and transformation go towards illuminating the bride's subjective experience.

## PART TWO

### **Methodology and methods: theory and practice**

In Part One literature which was considered relevant to the subjective experience of the bride-in-white was examined. Topics such as: the incest prohibition leading to rules governing exogamy, the ideal of wearing white during Christian ritual, Marionology, hymenology, and moral purity were explored. Also the tension between the individual and the group within a social and religious context and how psychoanalysis offers insight into the bride-in-white's motivations, were critically discussed.

In Part Two, the methodology and methods which facilitate the rigours of data assemblage, authenticity and analysing the participants' feelings are examined, as the aim of this project concerns the investigation of not only an understanding of the conscious world of the participant, but also towards an indication of unconscious processes. In exploring the methodology appropriate to psychoanalytic investigation, philosophical and theoretical frames will be discussed, before exploring how this can be applied in practice. This frame, relevant to macro- and micro- analysis of data and case study methods, will be discussed. The participant group, the production of truth and knowledge, methods of data production and analysis, will also be examined. Seven key questions aid this investigation: What ontological, epistemological and philosophical stance seems appropriate for this project? What methods of analysis can be employed? What truth can be revealed during an interview? What method of data collection seems appropriate? What can this group of participants be expected to further our knowledge? How can a method be applied to data in search of knowledge? And, what are the limitations of this study? Let us first consider an appropriate approach to take.

## **2.1 Methodology**

The methodological approach used for this research into the lived experience is qualitative, as explored in Appendix D. An ontological stance accepts that ‘people exist within multiple horizons of meaning, as they strive to make sense of their experience, as constructed by their cultural, and historical context, as engaged in dialogue’ (McLeod, 2001:28). Let us explore more closely this stance by discussing the positivist and empiricist stance.

If a predominantly positivist stance were adopted it would suggest that it is straightforward to describe the relationship between objects, events and phenomena and our understanding of them. In theory, positivism emphasises that ‘the external world itself determines absolutely the one and only correct view that can be taken of it, independent of the process or circumstances of viewing’ (Kirk, 1986:14). In practice, the positivist’s epistemology claims to produce objective knowledge that is unbiased without the researcher’s personal vested interest being involved. One of the limitations of taking this stance is that observation and description alone are by necessity selective and therefore infer the research’s partiality (Chalmers, 1999: in Willig 2001:3).

Alternatively an empiricist view can be taken. Empiricism, closely allied to positivism, in theory has its foundation in the assumption that knowledge of the world can be drawn from ‘the facts of experience’ (Chalmers, 1999 Ch1: in Willig 2001:3). That is, that sense perception forms the basis for the acquisition of knowledge, through a systematic collection and classification of observations and experiments, giving rise to more complex ideas and theories. In other words, theory is constructed to make sense of the observed and collected data. In practice, however, limitations to taking this stance suggest that sense perceptions cannot provide uncontaminated ‘facts’, as the researcher

is inevitably selective in how they observe, so emphasis is placed on the collection, and the analysis being grounded in the data. In summary, the 'empiricist' claims that all knowledge is grounded in the data. An empiricist position is adopted for this project as the brides' statements form the focus for and analysis in Part Four of this investigation. Having established a methodological stance, let us now explore which method can best suit this research into the narrative of human experience.

## **2.2 Theory of data analysis**

From a range of methods let us consider which method best suits the data analysis. In her research into qualitative epistemologies, Carla Willig suggests that limitations of the inductive processes found in positivism and empiricism can be compared to the theory that the Austro-British philosopher Karl Popper advocates - deductivism. Popper argues that by induction it can be observed when 'a' follows 'b', however this does not obviate the exception. Popper therefore proposes that scientific truth can rely better on the process of deduction and falsification. As well as searching for evidence that confirms existing theory, deductivism also searches for this disconfirmation, or falsification, in an attempt to establish a 'truth'. One of the limitations to deductivism seems that it does not allow for the overturning of existing knowledge and for new theories to emerge (Willig, 2001:4).

An epistemological stance regarding 'how, and what, can we know', rather than taking a predominantly positivist or empiricist view, considers taking a more social constructivist perspective (Burr, 1995). The social constructionist has the advantage of attending to 'human experience, including perception, which is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically' (Willig, 2001:7). The limitations to this perspective, however, are that we can never really know anything; rather, there are 'knowledges' more than 'knowledge' (Willig, 2001:7).

In addition to the above epistemological stance, is a hypothesis-testing deductive approach through experimentation and case study during phenomenological analysis through the application of hermeneutic enquiry, as explored in Appendix D. The limitations to this approach are that this may exclude people who are not familiar with

the full repertoire of theories and systems of interpretation. Let us now consider what data represents, its degree of robustness, its validity and reliability to express a 'truth'.

### 2.3 Theory: in search of truth and knowledge

In considering what kind of truth and knowledge may be revealed from gathered data let us now explore what might be considered as 'truth'. In propounding philosophical ideas, Ludwig Wittgenstein concerns himself with the concepts of 'true and false' and argues that 'what *engages* with the concept of truth (as with a cogwheel), is a proposition' where the schema and construction of an English sentence has a subject and a predicate (Wittgenstein, 1953:52-3, original emphasis). Wittgenstein distinguishes between what we 'see' and a 'likeness' (Wittgenstein, 1953:193) and illustrates this with an image of a triangle which...

can be seen as a triangular hole, as a solid, as a geometrical drawing; as standing on its base, as hanging from its apex; as a mountain, as a wedge, as an arrow or pointer, as an overturned object which is meant to stand on the shorter side of the right angle, as a half parallelogram, and as various other things. (Wittgenstein, 1953:200)

Hence 'truth' may mean different things by being interpreted in different ways. Addressing the status of truth and falsity Chris Hart argues that 'the problem is...that factual statements can look very similar to non-factual statements' (Hart, 1998:140). 'Truth', however, requires a context.

From a sociological perspective, Malcolm Williams suggests that qualitative research is 'often characterised as being concerned with the daily actions of people and the meanings they attach to their environments and relationships' (Williams, 1996:9). Hart argues that as people live within 'institutional frameworks' they tend to think within these frames and 'some things are accepted as true and other things, that are outside that way of thinking, are regarded as false' (Hart, 1998:140). Wendy Hollway, reader in gender relations and Tony Jefferson, criminologist, also suggest that 'people are socially constructed subjects': 'psychosocial' beings (Hollway, 2000:13). The implication being,

that the social researcher is required to pay due regard to what is counted as ‘truth’, who is entitled to voice it and in what context it is expressed.

Acclaimed French social scientist, Michel Foucault, claims that since the Lateran Council in 1215 ‘Western societies have established the confession as one ‘highly valued technique’ we rely on for the production of truth’ (Foucault, 1976:58-9). In other words, ‘truth’ is established by interrogation. Foucault asserts that:

the confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it. (Foucault, 1976:61)

For Foucault truth emerges through struggles and power relations, where ‘power produces knowledge’ and ‘that power and knowledge directly imply one another’ and it is, therefore, ‘these power-knowledge relations [that] are to be analysed’ (Foucault, 1977:27). In English Law ‘truth’ is established through advocacy where the ‘truth’ is presented via prosecution and defence and is ultimately decided by judge and jury. Principally, in England, since King Henry II, and the Assize of Clarendon in 1186, the system of judge and jury has been adopted. On hearing the evidence, the jury deliberates to consider a verdict<sup>66</sup>. Hollway, citing Stanley and Wise (1983), feminist ontologists and epistemologists, argues that the search for truth may exhibit ‘unequal power relations in the interview, whether these are based on gender, race, class and/or something else’ (Hollway, 2000:30-31). This appears to support the sociologist James Scheurich’s claim that ‘it is doubtful that [any] power-free truth-game has ever existed’ (Scheurich, 1997:35). Hence, the oral exploration of personal feelings and desires, that

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<sup>66</sup> W.L. Warren (1973) *Henry II*, University of California Press.

are underpinned by the power relations fabricated by discourse, pervade many aspects of everyday life.

Following the above exploration into what counts as ‘truth’, let us now explore four aspects regarding the ‘truth-game’ of data and knowledge production before considering the implications this has on the production of truth and knowledge and the dynamics between researcher and participant for this project by asking: What kind of power is inherent in psychoanalysis? Does psychoanalysis offer some kind of scientific knowledge? What kind of knowledge is psychoanalytic knowledge given the centrality of the unconscious? And, what kind of knowledge is this thesis contributing?

Let us consider what kind of power is inherent within the psychoanalytic encounter by examining the perceived power invested in the therapist, power invested in the client, power within the therapeutic relationship, the power dynamics between therapist and governing organisation, and the power released during the therapeutic catharsis of loss. First, let us examine a sense of power with which the client may invest the therapist.

From a psychoanalytic perspective Phyllis Greenacre suggests that the therapist may be experienced by the client as having power derived from the therapist’s role and status as someone whose knowledge is being accessed for the client’s benefit (Greenacre, 1953:60). Nancy McWilliams recognises that although power itself may be understood as being morally neutral the therapist’s power can be applied positively or negatively, from ordinary thoughtfulness to a minor lapse or calamity, and can generate love, fear or foster change (McWilliams, 2004:150). McWilliams suggests that ‘both the virtues and the dangers of psychoanalytic therapy lie in the fact that the therapist is in a position of substantial emotional power’ (McWilliams, 2004:150).

McWilliams suggests that the psychotherapist may draw power to themselves by attending repeatedly and selectively to the client's preoccupation. One reason for this, McWilliams suggests, can be that if the therapist is to modify the very powerful unconscious pathogenic voices that haunt the client's inner world, the therapist may accrue a degree of power comparable to the client's internalised objects (McWilliams, 2004:152). McWilliams warns that as the analyst's temperament may be to identify or empathise with the weak and relatively powerless, the analyst may need to guard against their own narcissistic feelings of grandiosity, omnipotence and seductions of power by being a sensitive containing clinician. One who wields appropriate authority within professional boundaries (McWilliams, 2004:155-6).

Taking a different perspective regarding the use or misuse of power, the American psychoanalyst, Otto Kernberg differentiates between authority and authoritarianism. Kernberg argues that the use of authority in a social situation, when invested in leadership is the necessary exercise of power to carry out a task by influencing others in an adequate and legitimate way. Kernberg decries authoritarianism when it can be the illegitimate exercise of power beyond what is required to carry out the task. Kernberg defends legitimate authority, when he asserts that 'all task performance implies the exercise of power and authority. In the social realm, the exercise of authority without adequate power leads to impotence, paralysis, breakdown, or failure of leadership results in chaos' (Kernberg, 2004b:210). Kernberg also raises the issue of the psychoanalyst's interpretation, based on 'facts' in the psychoanalytic situation, becoming an authoritarian imposition of the analyst's view. Arguably, there is not only power invested in the therapist but the client may also have a sense of power.

A client can develop a powerful transference towards the analyst by idealising the analyst and by endowing them with power. Thus, a primary identification with powerful people, when one is an innocent dependant infant, may result in feelings of powerlessness (McWilliams, 2004:155). McWilliams recognises that the power imbalance can be experienced as acute when the client is expected to trust the therapist with the intimate domains of experience while their therapist discloses little except that which the surroundings in which they meet reveal (McWilliams, 2004:151). Kernberg warns that the psychoanalyst, in perpetuating a sense of anonymity, may invoke idealisations in the psychoanalytic relationship, thus transforming the analyst from being a 'person without personality' into an image of perfection thus reinforcing idealisations and the splitting off of the negative transference towards other authority figures (Kernberg, 2004b:206).

From a clinical supervisor's position, Sue Wheeler suggests that the relationship between the therapist and the client may be governed by powerful interpersonal dynamics, but being asymmetrical is unlike a social relationship. The therapeutic relationship is characterised by mutuality, interdependence and by shared goals to meet shared needs through a professional relationship that is characterised by empathic non-possessiveness. The focus always remains, therefore, on the needs of the therapist to meet the needs of the client. Thus, the power dynamic favours enabling the client (Wheeler, 2001:142).

Wheeler points out that some clients may project onto the therapist a sense of the therapist being all good, all wise and all-knowing so that the client overvalues the therapist and is blinded to their shortcomings. It is as if the 'passive' client gives away all their power to the therapist, while at the same time anxiously wishing to feed from the therapist's objective wisdom and experience. This perceived power imbalance

requires the client to experience themselves as responsible for their own development in conjunction with the therapist (Wheeler, 2001:183).

The client in psychotherapy may gain a sense of power through the process of bereavement and grieving. Losses from the beginning of life include: the loss of the symbiotic dyadic relationship with the primal mother due to the intrusion of the father as a whole object. The client, however, may gain a sense of power through, for example, identification with the phallic father. Loss of power may also include the internalisation of critical, punitive voices. Making sense of unbearable loss, the client may gain a sense of power through mourning and reparation, by integrating the traumas of the past, by creating a past with which they can live, and reconciling the irreconcilable. Gaining power over past loss, the client may be able to move into a future and not become arrested by the past. Thus liberation and freedom comes out of loss. Through personal psychotherapy, power comes to the client by means of their own personal discovery and a deeper knowledge of themselves. The psychoanalyst gains knowledge of the client through the transference, this knowledge when shared with the client shares the knowledge equally.

In the collaborative psychoanalytic encounter authority is delegated by the client to the analyst to interpret, while the analyst in turn delegates aspects of authority to the client: the rule of 'free association' (Kernberg, 2004b:210). John Forrester suggests that the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis is 'say it out aloud, whatsoever comes into your head', thus revealing dreams, phantasy, unconscious motivations of desire, guilt, anger, and compulsions. Thus we 'produce a configuration of desire, power and knowledge that exists 'within' us. The rules of the contract are drawn up between the analyst and the client thus conforming to the canons of scientific discursivity implied by the notion

of Reason that Foucault finds in the purified form of confession (Forrester, 1990:306). The psychoanalytic investigator John Forrester argues that words are instruments of power, they shape our relations and are inherent in knowledge thus liberate repression. We may understand psychoanalysis as therefore being the purest embodiment of knowledge-power (Forrester, 1990:308-10).

Wheeler clarifies that the therapeutic relationship is framed by an agreement between analyst and client by time, place and activity. Thus, the client's compliance with the therapist and the therapist's compliance with the client on these issues becomes essential. Powerful dynamics, however, have the capacity to affect people, situations and decisions. Holloway describes five forms of power dynamic: 'reward power', where both people look for reward; 'coercive power', where both people fear punishment; 'legitimate power', where there is trust in the professional delivery of a service; 'expert power', which is attributed by the client to the therapist because of their perceived mastery of knowledge and skills; and 'referent power', derived from the respective interpersonal attraction (Holloway, 1995:32, in Wheeler 2001:62). Thus power is seldom one sided.

Wheeler recognises the oscillating power dynamics between therapist and client in the client's need to demonstrate that they are engaging in the process with the therapist (Wheeler, 2001:82). Wheeler indicates that the therapist can be understood as being invested with a great deal of power as the client responds to their interpretations of what the client can bear and work with in terms of reflecting on what might be happening in the therapeutic relationship. This potentially exacerbates the considerable authority and influence the therapist may appear to have by virtue of their experience or apparent position in the therapeutic relationship (Wheeler, 2001:82). In considering the issue of power in psychoanalysis, one feature may be to help the client to find, embrace, and

expand their own sense of power. By the analysts' surviving the intensity of negative feelings, the analyst demonstrates that the client's power is not necessarily destructive (McWilliams, 2004:156).

The erotic transference, that is, selectively falling in love with one's analyst or client may invoke powerful feelings representing part of the therapeutic relationship. The psychoanalyst Daniel Shaw suggests that 'at the heart of the psychoanalytic endeavour...is a search for love, for the sense of being loveable, for the remobilization of thwarted capacities to give love and to receive love' (Shaw, 2003:275, in McWilliams 2004:158). In contrast Winnicott suggests that many patients need to invoke the therapist's sincere hate before they can tolerate the therapist's love. Feeling hate, as well as love, can be a more realistic combination of both positive and negative qualities in the other (Winnicott, 1947).

Kernberg is aware that in the therapeutic relationship there can be a feminist critique in the enactment of patriarchal power within the male analyst and the female client relationship. This may also have resonance in traditional assumptions of sexual orientation, cultural and political orientations between client and analyst (Kernberg, 2004b:208).

Another area where power may influence the production of 'truth' may be in relation to an organisation. Wheeler is aware that if the therapist feels that excessive pressure is exerted by an organisation to demonstrate that the work is efficient in giving emotional support and creativity to the client, the therapist may become defensive and withdrawn. Thus if anxieties are raised in the therapist, they may feel intimidated which may result in projecting a negative transference as if they are experiencing a 'critical parent'

(Wheeler, 2001:82). In conclusion, power is seldom one-sided. The core conditions advocated by the person-centred approach of Carl Rogers being ‘empathic’, ‘congruent’, and giving ‘unconditional positive regard’, arguably dominate when searching for the various aspects of truth (Rogers, 1980). Implications of the power dynamics during the research interviewing process will be discussed later in Part Two when exploring the issues relating to the transference and counter-transference phenomena between researcher and participant.

Bearing in mind the researcher’s search for knowledge through the interviewing process with the participant let us now consider a second area regarding knowledge production and how psychoanalytic hypotheses and theories can or cannot be understood in terms of being scientific. In examining a variety of human behaviour Freud’s observations and examinations of human reported experience are brought under a scientific system of universal theoretical categories. For example, ten years after *The Interpretation of Dreams* (SE4&5), Freud describes how people choose their love-object, and believes his observations serve to justify ‘extending a strictly scientific treatment to the field of human love’ (SE11:165). Freud hypothesises that, a man may be strongly influenced by ‘the psychical constellation connected with the mother’ and fall in love with a ‘mother-surrogate’ (SE11:169).

Freud, in defending his position on instincts, in 1915, admits that science requires to be built on clear and sharply defined basic concepts. Freud recognises that no science begins with such clear definitions, but the true beginning of scientific activity consists rather in describing phenomena and then proceeding to group, classify and correlate them<sup>67</sup>. Such ideas, which will later become the basic concepts of the science, are still

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<sup>67</sup> The description of phenomena in searching for themes will be adopted in a case study approach to the participants’ interviews, in Appendix D.

more indispensable as the material is further worked over. In other words, the material of observation in the nature of conventions, become the basic scientific concepts upon which progressively increased precision and modification become serviceable to the advancement of knowledge. Freud compares his psychoanalytic investigations and observations to the science of physics' own basic concepts, which were first established and then altered (SE14:117). Let us consider how Freudian hypotheses developed throughout Freud's life-long investigations.

Freud, drawing on Shaw's play *Man and Superman* (1903), and by extrapolating from his psychoanalytic inquiry into unconscious mental processes, hypothesises two principles of mental functioning. The *pleasure principle*, that of avoiding the arousal of unpleasure, and the *reality principle* based on real circumstances in the external world. Both principles, Freud claims, form a basis for understanding human behaviour (SE12:223, n1).

We find that, by 1914, Freud claims the 'right of psychoanalysis to be valued as a science' (SE14:58-9). Freud vigorously defends his psychoanalytic theories against Adler's system, which in Freud's opinion appears to be founded exclusively on the aggressive instinct, by arguing that focusing exclusively on aggression leaves no room in it for love (SE14:51). By 1933, however, Freud describes the destructive instinct or death instinct as being the opposite of Eros which encourages the growth of emotional ties between people (SE22:211). Freud also disagrees with Jung for 'pushing into the background the sexual factor in psychoanalytic theory' (SE14:58). Freud describes these as 'irreconcilable scientific disagreements' (SE14:51).

By 1914, Freud, in discussing his theory of how the ego develops from its initial erotic instincts towards narcissism, claims that observation is the foundation of psychoanalytic

science. Equally, as in physics, basic notions concern, centres of force, attraction etc., which are scarcely less debatable than the corresponding notions in psychoanalysis (SE14:77). Freud again, by 1933, compares psychoanalysis with physics and chemistry. Freud cites scientific advances such as: Kepler's discovery of the three laws of planetary motion in 1609; Newton's analysis of light into the colours of the spectrum in 1675 and the theory of gravitation in 1666; Lavoisier's discovery of the role oxygen plays in combustion in 1774; Darwin's theory of the origin of species in 1859; and Pierre and Marie Curie's discovery of radium in 1898 (SE22:173) all of which Freud argues start by using hypotheses and theories which are subsequently amended.

Freud asserts that his 'first important discovery' in 1917, was to 'understand neurotic disorders' and the significance attached to the sexual instincts. In other words, Freud argues 'that neuroses are the specific disorders of the sexual function', and the quality of the libido, in terms of discharging it through satisfaction, influenced by the fixations the libido has undergone in the course of its development. Although Freud recognises that human beings have other interests besides sexual ones, Freud proposes a 'universal', libidinal theory of the neurosis, which moves from primary narcissism and the illusion of omnipotence and ego-libido to object-love and object-libido, including narcissistic wounding. Freud suggests that if the development develops morbid states, or feels paralysed, then therapeutic measures are in place for relieving them. Freud argues that there appears to be a 'compulsion to repeat' (SE22:106), also hypothesises that through observation 'the experience of anxiety at birth [can] sow the seeds of all later neurotic disturbances' (SE22:143). Thus, psychoanalytic theory sets out to explain, disorders of the mind or mental forces both conscious and unconscious in terms of mental processes and their resistances (SE17:137-43).

Freud suggests in 1933, that psychoanalysis is ‘a specialist science, or psychology of the unconscious’ (SE22:158). Freud continues to maintain that the intellect and the mind are objects for scientific research in exactly the same way as any non-human activities. Freud argues that if the psychoanalytic investigation of the intellectual and emotional functions of human beings are not included in science, then it will be seen that nothing is altered in the attitude of science as a whole, that no new sources of knowledge or methods of research have come into being. Freud argues therefore for a ‘scientific spirit’, by asserting that:

[scientific thought] must not be restricted or excluded by any thought applied to it. Scientific thinking takes an interest in things even if they are of no immediate, tangible use; it is concerned carefully to avoid individual factors and affective influences; it examines more strictly the trustworthiness of the sense-perceptions on which it bases its conclusions; it provides itself with new perceptions which cannot be obtained by everyday means and it isolates the determinants of these new experiences and experiments which are deliberately varied. Its endeavour is to arrive at correspondence with reality—that is to say, with what exists outside us and independently of us and, as experience has taught us, is decisive for the fulfilment or disappointment of our wishes. This correspondence with the real external world we call ‘truth’. It remains the aim of scientific work even if we leave the practical value of that work out of account. (SE22:170)

Freud, forty years after *The Interpretation of Dreams*, describes psychological energies as being comprised of forces, mainly libido, which serves the purpose of the preservation of the species. Freud also advocates the study of instinct, and nervous energy, and the interpretation of unconscious psychological processes. Freud insists that his scientific work in psychology consists in translating unconscious processes into conscious ones, thus filling in the gaps of conscious perception (SE23:282-6). Freud describes ‘the fact of consciousness’ and psychological phenomena of conscious processes the constituents being our perceptions, ideas, memories, feelings, thought-processes and acts of volition, all form part of what is psychological. Freud also points to physical or somatic processes which appear to have ‘psychical sequences’ and therefore also have unconscious implications

(SE23:157-9). Freud asserts that psychoanalysis is a part of the mental science of psychology, a natural science. In other words, the science of psychoanalysis involves a comprehensive range of hypotheses.

Challenging psychoanalysis' right to be considered a science are Popper, Jacobs, Lacan and Forrester. As mentioned earlier, Popper suggests that there are three criteria for scientific credibility. A theory needs to be based on observations which are made under controlled conditions, thus limiting the influence of external variables. A theory must use clearly specified and identifiable concepts and must present hypotheses that are capable of being tested by replication or observation. And, a theory must not only be capable of being shown to be correct, but also of being proved wrong or refutable (Popper, 1959 [1934]). Jacobs suggests that although we may 'observe' the forces of the life or death instinct, it may never be possible to test or refute Freud's 'scientific' hypothesis (Jacobs, 1992:110-11). Lacan, when suggesting that 'if psychoanalysis can become a science (for it is not yet one) and if it is not to degenerate in technique (and perhaps that has already happened), we must reconsider the sense of its experience' (Lacan, 1966:57). Forrester also suggests that in Freud's earliest writings on psychoanalysis, Freud drew the analogy, at a time when he believed that telling the story and putting experiences into words amounted to a discharge of what has been dammed up by repression, that psychoanalysis is more like a religion than a science (Forrester, 1990:300). Thus, Popper challenges the robustness of psychoanalytic hypotheses, Jacobs challenges observations and the inferences that may be drawn from them, Lacan challenges the validity of the psychoanalytic experience, while Forrester suggests that psychoanalysis may be more an indoctrination and a belief.

In summary, what Freudian hypotheses seem to propose are a set of methods by which to study human behaviour. These hypotheses suggest that both conscious deliberate human behaviour and ‘acting out’ due to unconscious forces can be studied by the application of a particular way of understanding the workings of the mind and by the use of a particular range of concepts. The emphasis that human behaviour, however varied, seems to consistently lead back to reconfirming a universality of these hypotheses suggests that these hypotheses and concepts build a basis upon which natural science can be studied. Given the centrality of the unconscious in Freudian theory let us now consider a third area regarding the production of knowledge and the later analysis and interpretation of the participants’ data by asking: what kind of knowledge is psychoanalytic knowledge purporting to be?

For Freud’s neurotic person psychoanalytic knowledge purports to offer ‘insight’. That being, when insightful knowledge is obtained, and ‘the task of filling up the gaps in the memory of childhood are successfully brought to light’ (SE15:201), then the person in the possession of that knowledge can transform their neurotic understanding of themselves. This implies that knowledge is power. Child psychoanalyst, Adam Phillips argues, however, that:

if the neurotic sufferer is suffering from something that totally eludes knowing, and presumes that the person has the capacity for knowledge of this kind, but currently the person’s understanding of themselves lacks a certain understanding, then the analyst enables the person to know, and put into words, what they already know but have only forgotten due to defensive forces. (Phillips, 1995:5)

In other words, the analyst’s task comprises of listening and understanding in a particular way which when put into different words enables insight to emerge.

Child and adult psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein observed the infant's need to know and believes therefore that there is an 'epistemophilic impulse': an instinct to know (Klein, 1975b:190-91). In other words, a person may be obsessed with knowing and remembering, however, 'the person who does not know, or refuses to think, and forgets may feel safer and protected by ignorance' (Phillips, 1995:9). Phillips argues that 'psychoanalysis cannot enable the person to know what they want, the person can only risk finding out and bear forbidden knowledge' (Phillips, 1995:6). Arguably, this could include the Freudian hypothesis of Oedipal unconscious incestuous desire, which will be examined more fully in Parts Three and Four. Phillips suggests that 'with Freud's description of the unconscious, the person is no longer in search of wholeness, rather they are in search of good ways of bearing incompleteness: there is no solution for unconscious desire' (Phillips, 1995:7). This is to suggest that, psychoanalytic insight can only be understood under certain circumstances and recognising its limitations. In contrast with philosophy, psychoanalytic hypotheses attempts to make a coherent argument for certain human behaviours which can be understood and acceptable. Phillips suggests, however, that 'the psychoanalyst becomes an expert on the truths of uncertainty' (Phillips, 1995:8). Let us now consider a fourth area regarding the production of knowledge pertinent to the gathering of participant data, by asking: what kind of knowledge is this thesis contributing?

There are three kinds of knowledge that this thesis contributes to: historical, material, and psychological. Historical knowledge, arguably, refers to the individual's personal childhood history which the analyst through their work gradually reconstructs. The individual's historical knowledge is based on their subjective experience and their own interpretation, which forms a system of beliefs and modes of thinking, which in turn influence the individual's approach to life and to which they respond through affects

and rational process. Material knowledge, on the other hand, refers to objective knowledge. To the individual, this is unknown. Objective knowledge becomes accessible through the discovery of the distortion of historical knowledge.

Psychological knowledge, arguably, may only be reached by the analysis and interpretation of the distortion. The individual is bound to the distortion because we are all born in a state of prematurity, depending on the love and protection of those who watch over us until we can free ourselves from them. Psychological knowledge should therefore give us access to material objective knowledge about the ego. For example how the ego undergoes the influence of forces, passions of love and hate, which go beyond the ego's weak power and compel it to make compromises which always imply an inevitable distortion. The French psychoanalyst, André Green argues that 'it may not be mere chance if the ego's power is at its best when trying to understand and master inanimate objects of reality' (Green, 1986:28). In other words, the ego may be at its best during the process of mastering psychological knowledge.

The physicist, or 'hard' scientist, may argue that only an element, like  $H_2O$ , that can be recognised and proved universally, which counts as being recognised as scientific. The astrophysicist may discover new 'facts' through observation and measurement about the universe, such as the 'big bang' theory, initially based on earlier hypotheses that are now considered as hard scientific truths. In a similar manner, the nuclear scientist may rely on chemical elements to interact with each other in such a manner as to create a consistent reaction, so too psychoanalytic theory suggests that given a certain set of human circumstances a certain outcome may be evoked. The psychoanalyst, or 'soft' scientist, recognises however, that psychoanalytic hypotheses do not guarantee the same level of measurement or certainty that the nuclear scientist requires, as the

psychoanalytic outcome seems more fluid as outcomes are susceptible to a number of variable human factors. Nevertheless, in a Freudian vein, arguably variable outcomes do not need to discredit psychoanalytic hypotheses. Psychoanalytic hypotheses based on an analysis of a phenomenon of human behaviour, ascertained by observation and examination, gathered from a disparate group of participants' reported experience, may therefore be legitimately considered as a contribution to psychoanalytic knowledge.

Let us now return to the issue of investigating 'truth'. In the case of psychoanalysis, the subject's discourse becomes interpreted in order to elucidate defences and unconscious processes. The process of unburdening and liberating enables the individual to make sense of their truth. While the psychoanalyst David Smith claims that 'Freud was sensitive to the disjunction between phantasy and reality' (Smith, 1999:145), for Freud, scientific thinking:

is concerned carefully to avoid individual factors and affective influences; it examines more strictly the trustworthiness of the sense-perceptions on which it bases its conclusions; it provides itself with new perceptions which cannot be obtained by everyday means and it isolates the determinants of these new experiences in experiments which are deliberately varied. Its endeavour is to arrive at correspondence with reality... This correspondence with the real external world we call 'truth'. (SE22:170)<sup>68</sup>

Freud found, however, that when the 'neurotic' was presented with 'reality' they would rather 'flee' from the truth and abandon themselves to their phantasies (SE7:110). In other words, within the complexities of unconscious process and phantasy, on occasions, a barrier or defence may be erected to prevent the full recognition of a 'real truth'.

Psychoanalysis deals with another form of 'truth', the dynamics of emotion. The kind of truth Freud analyses through case studies of human experience consists of a composite:

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<sup>68</sup> See Author's Note.

dream, phantasy, reality and resistances, filtered through the prism of childhood memory. For example ‘when the child was scarcely yet capable of speaking, effects would be produced of a compulsive character without themselves being consciously remembered’ (SE23:130). Freud perceives that a patient would exhibit a ‘delusion’ and ‘contradiction’ of reality. As mentioned earlier, historical knowledge for Freud, ‘consists in liberating the fragment of historical truth from its distortions’ (SE23:268). In other words, the liberation of ‘truth’ comes through interpretation enhanced by using the different voices emanating from: dream, phantasy, reality and resistances, as well as the childhood and adult voice.

As Freudian ‘truth’ may be problematic, as it encompasses distortion through repression, the social researcher is required to look beyond what is purely vocalised. The question that may be raised here, is reality truth and phantasy fiction? Freud argues that:

*The unconscious is the true psychological reality; in its innermost nature it is as much unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is as incompletely presented by the data of consciousness as is the external world by the communications of our sense organs.* (SE5:613, original emphasis)

Freud argues that, however problematic, unconscious material does provide sufficient substance on which to base a hypothesis. Having explored some forms of ‘truth’ let us now consider to what extent ‘truth’ can be objective.

Whereas Hollway suggests that the object of clinical psychoanalysis may be considered to be the individual, couple or group, where ‘truth’ emanates from their lived experiences, detached objectivity is contentious if a positivist epistemology is adopted to secure knowledge and ‘truth’ by direct correspondence with observed events (Hollway, 2000:78). McLeod argues that qualitative enquiry into human experience

assumes that 'reality is constructed and that there are many alternative understandings of reality' (McLeod, 2001:6).

Hollway, however, critiques the reliability of objectivity in psychoanalysis by asserting that:

psychoanalysis has largely conceded that interpretation is an art and not a science and therefore psychoanalysts have been prepared to theorise issues like intuition, use of the analyst's subjectivity, the role of emotion in thinking and the use of unconscious dynamics as a tool for knowledge. This has resulted in a tolerance for paradox and uncertainty. (Hollway, 2000:78)

We can therefore understand that objective truth becomes filtered through individuals' articulated story and through their emotional reactions to circumstances, and in addition in psychoanalytic research Jennifer Hunt suggests 'pay particular attention to...how unconscious processes structure relations between researcher, subject and the data gathered' (Hollway, 2000:78). Thus, objective truth may be modified through multiple personal affects that colour the angle from which their 'truth' is seen, including the researcher's own subjectivity in how the 'truth' may be interpreted, filtered through their transference and counter-transference. That is, filtered through the subject's and researcher's whole unconscious reactions to the material.

Postmodern thinking recognises that 'truth' is flexible, pliable, unstable and forever in a constant process of change. From a social scientist's perspective, David Lyon suggests that a postmodern search for truth concerns the production of 'multiple realities each articulated as discourses' (Lyon, 1999:15). To come to this conclusion Lyon draws on Foucault who suggests that knowledge and truth are not necessarily fixed or replicable, but are 'circulating, pliable discourses' (Lyon, 1999:16). Lyon also paraphrases Derrida's argument: 'cultural life involves texts we produce, intersecting with other

texts that influence ours in ways we cannot ever unravel' (Lyon, 1999:18). Lyon sees Derrida's world of textuality being where:

boundaries between knowledge and world, text and interpretation, no longer exist; the mind is always renewing and redefining the texts it tries to contain. This implies that science can no longer presume on logical coherence or the discoverability of truth...including social science. (Lyon, 1999:19)

Thus, the task of 'deconstruction' is to 'raise persistent questions about our own texts and those of others, to deny that any text is settled or stable' (Lyon, 1999:18).

Lyon, in his search for valid notions of truth, also turns to another social scientist, Mike Featherstone, who argues that 'the cultural sphere is not decentred so much as recentred today' (Lyon, 1999:112). Lyon suggests that from the sociological perspective of Zygmunt Bauman, 'truth' can be found in a world where 'either a new kind of society is coming into being', or from the anthropologist's position of David Harvey, a 'new stage of capitalism is being inaugurated' (Lyon, 1999:10). Lyon concludes that 'once the text is out in the open it becomes extended by others' interpretations, spiralling endlessly beyond all efforts that might be made to tether the text to truth or to fix its meaning' (Lyon, 1999:18). Arguably, postmodernity, with its ever changing power balances and fluid cultural and social texts, appears to have brought about a new dimension to understanding discourse by providing it with an authenticity rather than being constrained to a repeatable, verifiable scientific model.

Having explored some criteria for 'truth' production let us now consider the discovery of original 'truth' in the form of data, the people involved in the data production, its reliability, verification and social context. Similar to psychoanalytic exploration, social research searches for a truth in order to make sense of the world. Unlike the privacy of the psychotherapy session, however, the process of validating social interaction

addresses the public world. From a sociological perspective, Lindsay Prior claims that it might be assumed that the researcher finds themselves in ‘the presence of what we might call a knowing subject’ where the respondent readily divulges raw data at the researcher’s request (Prior, in Silverman, 1997:63). Taking this sociological perspective further David Silverman suggests that participants are not merely ‘passive vessels of answers’ or, ‘repositories of facts and related details of experience’; but they, like the interviewer, are equally practitioners of everyday life situated within an environment (Silverman, 1997:116). Silverman claims that ‘classically’ the interviewing process aims to be ‘non-directional and unbiased’ producing ‘unadulterated facts and details of experience’ by ‘providing an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication’ (Silverman, 1997:116). Silverman argues that between a non-directional, unbiased, neutral researcher and respondent sensitive, accurate experiential, uncontaminated information may be gathered (Silverman, 1997:116). Both the researcher and the respondent are, however, culturally inscribed, perpetuating their individual social bias and their individual transference and counter-transference.

Although this methodology is clearly not quantitative, reliability and validity concerns must be addressed. Researching how psychotherapy can be reliably evaluated and critically assessed, John McLeod draws upon ‘epistemological principles that transcend any single methodological approach’ (McLeod, 2001:183) when he cites the American psychologist George Howard’s, six core epistemic values to assess data:

*predictive accuracy*, ‘although some degree of inaccuracy should be tolerated’; *internal coherence*, where ‘a theory should hang together...having no logical inconsistencies or unexplained coincidences’; *external consistency*, when ‘the theory must be consistent with other theories and with scientific expectation’; *unifying power*, that is ‘the ability to bring together hitherto disparate areas of knowledge’; *fertility*, where ‘theories...make correct, novel predictions and make powerful extensions of our knowledge base’; and *simplicity*. (Howard, 1985:257-8, original emphasis)

McLeod argues that these six epistemological principles, however good a guideline they are, are insufficient in themselves if qualitative research is undertaken using theory grounded in the data together with an interpretive framework, as the triangulation of data validity also needs to be taken into account, in order to incorporate a sense of 'quality control' and establish credibility checks (McLeod, 2001:184). Credibility checks via triangulation can include peer evaluation and critique. However, McLeod draws on Michael Bloor who suggests that this method can be open to the peer group being intimidated 'by the authority' of the presentation and 'inhibited from expressing their doubts and criticisms' (McLeod, 2001:187). Another means of checking validity is to triangulate the researcher's interpretation against a different informant (McLeod, 2001:187), while being open to the 'corroboration' of findings and their 'contradictions' (Bloor, 1997:39), thus suggesting plausibility and trustworthiness of the researcher's interpretations. The researcher can therefore aim to triangulate tentative interpretations between participants' reported statements in order to attempt a validity check.

McLeod recognises that reliability is conceptualised as a procedure to which the researcher rigorously holds and which subsequent researchers may follow. Reliability, however, is not 'defined in terms of the possibility of obtaining the same results on two different occasions with different researchers', nor is 'reliability' reliant on others obtaining the same results within a certain error variance (McLeod, 2001:182). In other words, 'reliability' becomes based on the ability to follow the procedure, and apply a framework for interpreting the data which adheres to the six core epistemic values and is clear and persuasive. McLeod asserts that 'the personal qualities of the researcher's integrity, courage, honesty and commitment to the task of enquiry, actually make a difference' (McLeod, 2001:188). It may therefore be deduced that guarding against unacknowledged power dynamics distorting the process of gathering data becomes

important. On the assumption that distortion can occur, it is important that the researcher engages in self-reflection by consistently returning to the basic principles of the procedure inscribed in the six core epistemic values, as cited above, plus being reliable, plausible, trustworthy, and unbiased (McLeod, 2001:188). Having considered how the application of a procedure offers a reliable framework for interpreting data, let us now consider the context for producing original data.

As already established, the participants in the reproduction of 'truth' are contextualised within social constraints. From a sociologist's perspective, Ken Plummer asserts that 'story telling and story reading are indeed social inventions, fictions, fabrications...' (Plummer, 1995:168). Plummer observes that:

none of this means that people are lying, deceiving, cheating (although they could be)'... (but what is being said is) 'in full conviction that 'the truth' is being told; others are defences, denials, repressions, lies', (while) 'some may be 'false memories' many are 'screen memories'. (Plummer, 1995:168)

Plummer's opinion suggests that the story telling process is a necessary social construct. Plummer suggests that psychoanalytic interpretation concerns 'hearing stories in which some kind of historical truth is dug out', whereas Donald Spence, a psychoanalytic psychologist, sees the value of 'narrative truth' as being 'what people say in the here and now: the work of stories in lives in the present' (Plummer, 1995:171). In other words, Plummer appears to allow for unconscious process to emerge, whereas Spence seems to take the narrative more at face value.

Arguably, the telling of 'truth' has several powerful dynamics. Truth-telling of everyday experience may be constrained by the social construct of what is generally recognised as 'safe' and aligned with the group's consensus. The speaking subject also has a need to vocalise the story, which in turn sets up a power differential between the perceived one

who knows and the judgement of what truth is acceptable by the one who listens. Once the data, or kind of 'truth', has been gathered, some sense of it has to be made. We will consider how 'truth' may be framed within the hermeneutic model later in Appendix D when the practice of phenomenological hermeneutics is explored. Let us now address methods of data collection.

## **2.4 Practice: methods of data collection and interviewing process**

Having discussed the frame for truth and knowledge production through the oscillating dynamics of the interviewing process, let us now consider the methods by which original data may be gathered and the researcher/participant interaction.

In experimental psychology, the standard model for research has been the hypothesis-driven double blind, randomised, control study, measuring the effects and interactions of independent and dependent variables. In contrast, phenomenological psychologists do not begin with a research hypothesis to be tested and proved/disproved (Kvale, 1983, 1994, 1996). Making inferences from the study sample regarding the population for the purposes of prediction and control are not among the aims of this methodology (Giorgi, 1985).

My initial aim was not to give each participant a sole voice as in an individual case study, however, becoming aware that a whole interview could be helpful, some have been included in Appendix E. Here the aim is to produce a first-person descriptive account of a particular experience, such as ‘on being veiled’, so that these descriptions constitute the data which is subjected to phenomenological interpretation aided by a hermeneutic stance of inquiry and meaning making. That is, the bestowing of meaning, or rendering the interpretation more explicit from the subject’s perspective within a cultural, religious, or psychoanalytic frame. Qualitative methodology, emphasises the uncovering of meaning of the ‘other’ by developing a deeper knowledge of a phenomena through, close examination of, and emerging in, the data and reflexivity (McLeod, 2001:3). The process of qualitative methodology being inductive, allows the theory to be grounded in, and emerge from, the participants’ data, following the fourteen steps for phenomenological hermeneutic interpretation suggested by McLeod

(2001:41-2), and modified by Erikson's (1958) search for 'patterns' of thinking and behaviour in the interview as a whole.

The aim of qualitative data production is to gather personal salient narrative of some richness and depth facilitated by the researcher's curiosity. The method of interviewing being open-ended, rather than challenging and interrogative. Within the hermeneutic frame let us consider various forms of data production utilising different interviewing techniques that produce different levels of data. First, if we were attempting to make a nation-wide survey, with general prediction, the quantitative methodology that gives the same answer whenever and wherever the questioning is carried out, known as a 'ticked-box survey' and 'quantified on a Likert scale', would be considered (Kirk and Miller, 1986, in Silverman, 1997:117). Quantitative methods are not considered apt for investigating subjective experience. A second method of data production could be the 'dynamic interview' where 'the focus is on how meaning is constructed, the circumstances of construction, and the meaningful linkages that are made for the occasion' (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995, in Silverman, 1997:113ff). A limitation of the dynamic interview, if mainly focusing on the transference phenomena, would represent only one aspect of this investigation. A third method that would produce original data is by conversation which investigates 'talk-in-interaction' (Emanuel Schegloff), and which Wittgenstein describes as an activity to untangle the 'knots' in our complex thinking and would be subjected to 'conversation analysis' (Silverman, 1997:207-8). A limitation of conversation interviewing can be that data seems not readily comparable across participants.

A fourth method of data production, can be the 'psychoanalytic research interview' which aims 'to understand the psychodynamic meaning of different behaviours,

psychological processes, social actions, and life situations' (Cartwright, 2004:209). Cartwright suggests that the psychoanalytic interviewer aims to facilitate an interview that uncovers unconscious meaning and intrapsychic processes. Duncan Cartwright argues that the psychoanalytically informed interviewer 'can yield useful psychoanalytic insights about a particular research subject within the space of a few interviews'. Cartwright warns, however, that basic hermeneutic principles, often used to understand the research interview, are insufficient to understand unconscious meaning and intra-psychic processes. Cartwright advocates the 'careful attention to feeling states, in the search for core narratives, and the exploration of identifications and object relations' are the key tasks in the interview analysis (Cartwright, 2004:209). It may be concluded that the psychoanalytic interview becomes a rich source of knowledge if the interviewer pays attention to the transference and the counter-transference. Cartwright, however, makes the point that 'psychoanalytic insights' may only develop 'within the space of a few interviews'. This was not possible in the case in this research project, as only one interview was undertaken, so the transference and the counter-transference require careful understanding and could therefore only be experienced in the immediacy during the interviewing process. None of these methods are to be confused with psychoanalytic psychotherapy, in which 'interviews' take place between 'four to six times a week', uses a couch, rather than face-to-face (McWilliams, 2004:64). Let us now consider the aspects of transference and counter-transference in more depth.

In considering the transference Freud refers to it as a 'phenomena' (SE11:51), which he considers to be essential to psychoanalysis. Freud argues that the transference represents a repetition '[which] replaces an old object relationship and for the most part are unconscious' (SE7:116). Freud believes on the ubiquity of the transference, as 'it is everywhere' (SE11:51) and that transference reactions offer an invaluable opportunity

to explore the inaccessible past (SE12:108) and ‘stir up resistances’ (SE12:101). Freud argues that what is being transferred in the form of affect and phantasy offers a link between current and repressed infant feelings and experiences, thus can be understood as a ‘pressure’ or compulsion to repeat (SE2:105n). However the transference and counter-transference are experienced, by the researcher and participant, the aim of the research encounter is to co-operate in the question and answer session, so a working alliance is required.

In ‘salesmanship’ it may be said that ‘it is the first three minutes that count’ in a customer/salesman interaction. In other words, during the first three minutes important impressions may be formed. In contrast, Greenson suggests that in the development of a regular neurotic ‘working alliance’ ‘signs of the working alliance [emerge] at about the third to the sixth month of analysis’ (Greenson, 1967:203). However long it takes to establish a working rapport, developing a ‘working alliance’ is important for containing disturbing affects and phantasies, and because the working alliance becomes the façade for the transference neurosis’ (Greenson, 1967:203).

Melanie Klein concurs with Freud’s view, that the transference is ‘everywhere’ by emphasising the pervasiveness of the transference being ‘from the very beginning and throughout life’ (Klein, 1975a:48). The transference can therefore be understood as a ‘continuing interaction between unconscious phantasy, defences, and experiences with external reality both in the past and in the present’ and that ‘unconscious phantasy underlies all thought, rational as well as irrational’ (Bott-Spillius, 1988:6). Socio-cultural and gender issues, influenced by the feminist movement, may be considered a factor to the transference: such as the researcher is male and the participant female. Following Kleinian tradition, Betty Joseph suggests that the concept of transference can

be used as a 'framework, in which something is always going on, where there is always movement and activity' (Joseph, 1985:156).

In contrast to Freud, Klein and Joseph, the British psychoanalyst Joseph Sandler argues that 'it is a misconception and a simplification to imagine that all the patient's material is transference', thus 'not everything brought by the patient to the analysis should be regarded as transference' (Sandler, 1973:51). While Sandler acknowledges that particular aspects of relationships, especially of past relationships will emerge, Sandler warns, however, that it is important to distinguish between these rather than regard them all as being repetitions of past relationships to important figures (Sandler, 1973:58). The Kleinian psychoanalytic therapist Roy Schafer adds that 'a more balanced view of the transference phenomena is to regard them as multidirectional in meaning rather than as simply regressive or repetitive' (Shafer, 1977:335-62). Greenson emphasises that 'transference reactions' must not only be a repetition of the past but 'always inappropriate to the present' (Greenson, 1967:152). Therefore, we could see repetitions as creating the past in the present, in a special way and under favourable conditions.

In summary, both the participants' and the researcher's experiences are revived and transferred during a live interview and recorded in the participants' narrative and the researcher's notes. Whether the researcher and the participant experience a positive or hostile transference (SE12:97-108) it is the way in which the transference is negotiated between the two parties that enables the 'working alliance' of the research interview to function in whichever way it does.

The German psychoanalyst Peter Wegner suggests that one of the responsibilities and difficulties the interviewer has, particularly during the initial psychoanalytic interview, concerns the interviewer's counter-transference. Wegner points out that 'apart from

‘free floating attention’ and ‘free floating responsiveness’ the diagnostic factor of ‘free floating introspectiveness’ also becomes important particularly at the beginning of a psychoanalytic interview (Wegner, 1992:286). In other words, introspectiveness implies reflexivity on the part of the researcher.

Spence, however observes that what is discovered in the psychoanalytic process is not the historical fact of the actual past but a story or narrative of experience (Spence, 1982). Thus, the interviews and the gathered data are not to be construed as pristine historical reconstructions but as narratives assembled over time to provide meaning to the subject’s experience. Methods of data production can be implemented by the methods discussed above, and some can be augmented by the use of a semi-structured questionnaire.

Having explored, above, four methods which could be suitable to produce original narrative I now consider a fifth, suggested by the social researcher Alan Bryman, the ‘semi-structured’ interview. This method is based around a pre-determined group of questions (Bryman, 2001:321), or ‘focused’ questions (Bryman, 2001:113) which could generate a cynosure for participants’ memories and be a frame and container for unexpected emotions. The researcher’s previous experience concerning lone participation revealed a reluctance to comprehensively complete the questionnaire, while an active conversation approach could produce much unstructured data, and may be more difficult for comparison. Following Merton (1956), cited in (Bryman, 2001:113), the semi-structured focused interview, using open questions, leads towards the topic under investigation, and also gives structure and later comparative qualities to the data.

The use of semi-structured interviewing for the purpose of gathering, recording and examining data is assessed. As the semi-structured questionnaire offers structure and potential ease of comparison let us explore more closely the advantages and disadvantages of using a semi-structured questionnaire. The purpose of an interview is to generate specific qualitative information from a sample of the population to relevant specific issues, i.e., to probe for what is not known, and gain a range of insights. Close-ended questions, as in 'yes/no' or 'tick box', characteristic of quantitative research is considered inappropriate for this project, as opposed to open-ended questions which facilitate the exploration of subjective human experience giving paragraph answers. The disadvantage of interpreting a number of answers to open-ended questions, in which respondents may have used widely divergent terminology, can be technically challenging and time consuming.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining or giving additional clarification and information, careful questionnaire development is essential to ensure that questions will elicit sufficient information, and that the questions are clear and unambiguous. In particular, it becomes essential that the researcher examine closely the researcher's objectives to clarify what specific items of information are required that can be reasonably obtained through a questionnaire approach. Furthermore, development of a quality questionnaire requires knowledge of the area being questioned and of the capability of respondents to provide the information required. It also requires that the researcher has enough understanding of the respondents to word questions so that they will be understood. Important in planning the questionnaire is its length. Ideally, the questionnaire should not be too long in order that the respondent does not lose interest but is able to engage in answering. Semi-structured interviewing may be treated as a guide, matrix or

framework which can be prepared beforehand. Semi structured interviewing may start and end with general questions.

Strauss suggests that by asking the same questions to each participant the researcher has 'the opportunity of making a systematic comparison' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:95), thus the researcher can plan how to analyse the data. Semi-structured interviews offer an open framework which may be experienced by the participant as being less intrusive and may facilitate sensitive issues being discussed. Face-to-face interviewing allows for focused, conversational, two-way communication; i.e., information can be given and received with the minimum of disruption and additional information may be gathered when answers seem to begin to generate new ways of understanding or questions require clarification. Face-to-face interviewing can lead to a more in-depth data generation.

Face-to-face interviewing may be considered as time consuming in securing consenting participants, conducting the interview, and in its transcription. Some participants may misunderstand the questions, which may limit the answers that are given. Some respondents may offer biased answers because they consider that they are not being given the chance to give their opinion, because 'suggested' answers are implied in the focus of each question. Strauss suggests that the researcher could also bring with them biases, beliefs and assumptions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:97). Other participants may not wish to answer the question but answer it for the sake of answering and finishing the questionnaire, which may result in the researcher's inability to determine if the answers are valid or not. If the respondent does not comprehend the question, or the overall theme of the questionnaire, there may be a tendency that the respondent will give up

answering it or they may guess which could lead to misrepresentation or reveal novel material.

The male researcher researching female participants may be perceived as an ‘outsider’, and thus more objective. The researcher recognises that using both individual and group interviews can optimize the strengths of both, however, during this project only individual interviews were conducted. A summary of the collected data has not been compiled or offered to the participants for their feedback. The semi-structured questionnaire in practice will be discussed later in this section. Having argued that the psychoanalytic research interview enhanced by the use of a semi-structured questionnaire is the approach chosen for this project, let us now consider issues concerning the researcher’s reflexive process and remaining objective.

For this project, therefore, qualitative methods have been chosen since they are considered to be compatible with investigating the ethnographic narrative of human experience and its subsequent interpretation. Qualitative methods in empirical research present opportunities for psychoanalytic theorists to understand the data from a different perspective than that allowed by natural science quantitative methods.

The interviews that have been conducted, unlike psychoanalytic psychotherapy sessions where the discourse may be considered in terms of forming a therapeutic alliance, although within a momentary relationship of trust, focus on data production whilst also being aware of the transference and counter-transference, as this phenomenon may be considered as being ubiquitous. The interview objective concerns the participants’ retrospective recollection of their experience, with minimal interaction from the interviewer.

On reflection I have become aware that as a man I bring to these interviews the prospect that I will receive perhaps a different response from my interviewee than if the interview had been conducted by a woman. Being a male researcher, the female participant may be reluctant to speak deeply about certain issues, and therefore may feel more guarded. What I have learned from the project so far is that a wide range of emotions may be overtly expressed during the interviewing process. I found it increasingly evident as the interviews proceeded that a spectrum of emotions exhibited by the informant in response to the penetrating questions caused affects, which I had not anticipated. I should not have been surprised at this as I am explicitly enquiring into each participant's feelings, which may have been suppressed during their experience. Thus it has to be recognised that my personal involvement in the data collection could include an element of counter-transference dynamics.

During the interviewing process aspects of life-stories that result from these encounters appear to be equally informed by unconscious dynamics. Problematic for the researcher is how to remain alert to these dynamics and how such alertness can enrich subsequent understanding, while remaining detached, objective, yet containing. One of the salient concerns the researcher meets is their capacity to tolerate, and reflect upon, the subject's material which ranges from happiness and laughter to sadness and tears within the interview and yet retain objectivity. These concerns require investigation during the analysis of the data which will be safeguarded by combining a three methodology rationale, utilising the principles of phenomenology, with the hermeneutic circle, and psychodynamic interpretation. Speaking from a sociologist's perspective Michael Roper asserts that:

reflexive accounts are also alert to ways in which considerations such as age, ethnicity, race, gender or class shape interactions within an interview

while there are also elements of desire, memory, and primitive conflicts—realms of the psychoanalyst and are a fundamental feature of any such encounter—the unconscious material which, on both sides, is being brought into the relationship. (Roper, 2003:21)

Roper argues that within the oral history interview, as a personal encounter, the researcher needs to be sensitive to the interplay of unconscious dynamics between the two participants as the ‘interview usually involves the recollection of early experiences with primary figures such as parents and siblings, about whom there are often deep and unresolved feelings’ (Roper, 2003:21). Having considered some practical key issues concerning the collection of data and the process of interviewing, let us now examine the group of purposeful agents who supplied their statements.

## **2.5 The group of participants**

Having discussed how subjective experience can be described as having multiple meanings, be potentially biased, partial, and how sense perceptions may contaminate facts, let us now consider the consenting participants who contribute their pertinent subjective experience.

As is customary in setting up an investigation, participants known as ‘purposeful agents’, as opposed to a randomised selection, are carefully selected, with the expectation that they will be able to provide data that is apposite to the research and are presumed to have certain experiences in common (McLeod, 2001:72). Thus, some participants known to me through my business as a wedding photographer were invited, together with some others. A number of other characteristics were common to all, the criteria of which was that the participants were brides, who purposely adorned ‘wedding white’, married in an Anglican Church, and either married within six months of the interview or over ten years previously. The ethnicity of the participants was not crucial, but the subjects who participated can be classified as being ‘White British’.

Following McLeod, ‘a group of people...that exemplify different facets of the phenomenon’ were invited to participate, anticipating that the participants would be capable of producing in-depth material with the minimum of dependence upon the researcher’s interventions (McLeod, 2001:72). Each person had previously been asked in writing if they would be prepared to participate in this investigation and each person was informed that this investigation focused on their personal feelings as the aim was to collect information concerning their personal experiences on their wedding day. A form in duplicate was presented, requesting each participant to nominate a pseudonym, the interviewee signing an agreement to participate and the interviewer confirming the academic project and commitment to confidentiality (*see* Appendix A), the participant

retaining the duplicate. Freud suggests that a ‘pseudonym’, a mechanism of disguising and camouflaging aspects of the story in order to protect identity, seems an appropriate mechanism to safeguard confidentiality (SE7:21). That is, the use of disguise compromises neither participant nor scientific integrity.

Based on McLeod’s suggestion that ‘research may be carried out on data-sets collected from eight to twenty informants’, this study adopts this approach (McLeod, 2001:72). Seventeen participants were interviewed and a phenomenological research strategy was employed to identify both thematic material and a general structure for the experience. It is expected that the participants’ experiences share many of the same features reflected in the literature review. Except for material gathered in the written responses of brides to a questionnaire conducted during my M.A. Psychoanalytic Studies 2001 entitled *The Process of the Bride-in-White Through a Psychoanalytic Lens*, there appears to be an absence of previous surveys and studies from which to draw. The group of participants were chosen, first because they were a group I had previously studied during my M.A. studies and now wished to explore in greater detail. Second, as a group, they were readily available to me, a practicing wedding photographer, and each of the above participants was new to this project.

A summary of the group of participants, using a reference number and pseudonym follows:

### **8 brides interviewed within six months of having been married:**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Wedding Date</b>	<b>Age on wedding day</b>	<b>Wedding location</b>	<b>Year interviewed</b>
01Sue	08.01.2005	19	Sussex	2005
02Louise	17.07.2004	22	Kent	2004
03Lucy	26.06.2004	36	London	2004
04Sis	21.05.2005	38	London	2005
05Liz	14.05.2005	40	Kent	2005
06Debbie	21.08.2004	43	Sussex	2004
07Elizabeth*	19.06.2004	47	London	2004
08Resaria*	24.04.2004	48	Kent	2004

### **9 brides interviewed, over ten years after they were married:**

09Pam	25.03.1978	19	Essex	2004
10Rose*	...1962	21	West Midlands	2004
11Francis	31.10.1960's	21	Hertfordshire	2006
12Ann*	...1969	22	London	2004
13Patricia	...1966	22	London	2004
14Margaret	05.10.1957	25	Surrey	2005
15Freesia	30.03.1959	26	Cheshire	2005
16AnnC	09.07.1994	30	Sussex	2005
17Ros	27.07.1968	33	London	2005

*\* Following the pilot interviews the questionnaire style was amended*

My initial concern was there could be a lack of homogeneity within this sample because although all the participants were women who wore a white dress and married in an Anglican Church in England, there may have been cultural differences that I was unaware of. As the French psychoanalyst Roger Perron in evaluating the effectiveness of treatments argues, 'the illusion of homogeneity in a qualitative study, does not guarantee that the group of participants selected are actually comparable' (Perron, 2006:929). On reflection, the lack of homogeneity could be an advantage. Furthermore, a variety of approaches could add to the richness of the material, for example the use of comparison in order to generate dimensional levels and where a varied representative of people, places and times becomes the source for data (McLeod, 2001:187). From this selection of participants therefore generalisations may be drawn, comparisons made, and themes emerge from which to hypothesise how the bride-in-white feels. Founded

on deep levels of the psyche this may have resonance for other brides-in-white that typify conventional marriage ceremonies within the Western economy.

The participants' average age reflects evidence indicated by The Office for National Statistics (ONS) of those marrying in England and Wales. The participants' average age in the first cohort is 36.6 years and in the second 24.33 years: ONS shows that in 2001 (Marriages Series FM2 no.29:20) the 'mode', that is, the maximum number of instances, age was 27 years old, and in 1991 (Marriages Series FM2 no.19:12) the mode age was 23. ONS indicates that of the total of all brides of all ages marrying in 1991 (Marriages Series FM2 no.29:58) (306,756), 33.5 per cent (102,840 brides) were married in the Anglican Church, compared with 50.7 per cent of all brides being married with a religious ceremony. 1992 was the first year when civil ceremonies (156,967) were greater than religious ceremonies of all kinds (154,597). ONS (Marriages Series FM2 no.29:58) indicates that of the total of all brides of all ages marrying in 2001 (249,227), 24.4 per cent (60,878 brides) were married in the Anglican Church, compared with 35.7 per cent of all brides being married with a religious ceremony, and 64.3 per cent brides choosing a civil ceremony. Having introduced the source of the data let us now examine the interviewing process.

Of the eight brides who married within six months prior to interview, the initial contact was soon after their wedding: no personal characteristics seem to be common. Of the nine brides who married over ten years prior to interview, there was a more random sampling. Some of the participants were the mothers of recent brides, one was a counsellor, one a psychotherapist, three had attended Cambridge University, while others were acquaintances. The manner in which I have characterised these participants may or may not become a matter of relevance during the analysis in Part Four. Thus, a

wide cross section of participants became the source of this data. The reason for having two groupings was to look for a range of age, era and personal understanding of the experience and have the opportunity to develop a longitudinal analysis. This gives the opportunity to make comparison, while remaining open to finding that both groups have similarities, stark or subtle differences in cultural background. A small sample approach was used in order to develop a deep and intimate understanding of the topic. As already mentioned, quantitative statistical methods are not primarily employed as they are not considered appropriate for a small sample size.

The interview opened with the researcher obtaining informed consent from the participant, after which the audio-recorder was turned on and the interviewer opened with the following statement: 'Being a bride dressed in white and marrying in an Anglican Church, on your wedding day, is arguably a very emotional time. It is the memory of these emotions I would like to explore with you'. After setting the scene with the initial statement the interview proceeded using a framework based around the semi-structured open questions which were addressed in sequence to facilitate comparison and analysis, while remaining open to completely novel material should this arise. During the interviewing process the interviewer attempted to remain unobtrusive, asking questions to clarify, deepen or draw the participant back to themes already mentioned and asking for further thoughts, feelings or elaboration. The primary aim of the interviewer was to create an atmosphere of safety and curiosity in order for the participant to explore, in the greatest possible depth, her personal experience. Interviews lasted between forty-five and one-hundred-and-twenty minutes. The open-ended nature of the interviews was decided in advance to allow the participant to exhaust her account of the experience without feeling rushed or prematurely foreclosing the opportunity for

emerging data. The participant terminated interview when they determined that their experience had been sufficiently elaborated.

The researcher made written notes immediately after each interview to record any observable non-verbal communications, and, where appropriate feelings and initial impression as to the value of the interview material. The following illustrates this:

having made my first pilot, the interview felt spontaneous but somewhat unstructured and I wondered how the data could later be analysed. On reviewing the interview I felt sad over the degree of loss, separation and death which interplays in the bride's experience.

In this way a sense of strongly expressed emotion becomes apparent from the outset.

Following the first interview, which was conducted in a conversational style, after reflection a semi-structured questionnaire was chosen in order to offer the chance to compare and contrast responses more readily. As already suggested, as the semi-structured questionnaire offers structure and potential ease of comparison this approach was adopted for the production of original data and twenty-two questions were developed for use (*see* Appendix B).

Following the first interview, a pilot study comprising four interviews, two from each era, allowed the interviewer to become alert to preconceptions or unexpected difficulties with the research questionnaire and interview technique, thus offering the opportunity to make corrections to the procedure. After completion and transcription of the pilot interviews and further reflection it was considered that if the questions were asked in a different sequence, at a slower pace, phrased and grouped differently the interview would produce a more coherent response from the participant, i.e. keeping all the questions associated with the dress together and leaving the question associated with 'white and purity' until afterwards, further research subjects were approached. Data

from the pilot subjects are included in the thematic analysis. Again after the project was briefly explained, informed consent obtained and a pseudonym nominated by the participant, an audiotaped interview was conducted with each participant alone, in a confidential setting, except for one joint interview of a recent bride and her mother. Interviews were undertaken between 2004 and 2006, the former group having married in South-East England and the latter from a wider South of England catchment.

The group of white British women that comprise the participants to this study married in one of 'some 47,000 Churches in Britain, medieval embodiments of local identity and cultural heritage of a once vibrant faith' (Leader, 2011, 16 April:2). Thus the chosen group of participants, marrying mainly in the South-East of England, may be understood as relatively conforming to or complying with local and national, cultural and historical British Anglican values and traditions.

## **2.6 Practice: applying phenomenological hermeneutics**

An examination of how phenomenological hermeneutics can be applied to the collected data in the search for, and establishing dominant, themes, will be explored in Appendix D, where the bride-in-white's subjective experience will be examined. Six case studies will also be considered, as well as a closer reading of Ann's interview. In order to guard against researcher interpretation bias, of fitting psychoanalytic concepts to the statements and making the statements fit psychoanalytic theory, further 'whole interviews' with some psychoanalytic interpretations are explored in Appendix E.

## **2.7 Limitations of the study**

As already discussed in Part Two, limitations of this study include accepting Freud's descriptive, rather than predictive, theory of the unconscious, the id, the ego, the superego, the libido and defence mechanisms, despite not being able to prove them false using 'hard science'. Critiqued, because Freud's theories of female psychological development are limited to case studies and direct observations of mostly Viennese middle-class women during the late nineteenth century, coloured by Victorian values, his observations and interpretations, as we have explored, are open to bias and partiality.

Limitations also include participant sample size and therefore restriction of participants' experience, researcher participant selection bias, and researcher focal question bias. The sample size, however, gives the opportunity to examine more closely the data, as the aim of this project excludes making global prediction. Researcher interpretation has, to some extent, been limited by the use of triangulation, between participants' data in Appendix D., E., and in Part Four, in order to increase confidence, credibility and plausibility. This study has also been limited to interpreting data that has not been subjected to the participant's group reflections and critiques, which may offer increased insight.

Part Two aimed to explore the methodology and methods by which analysis of the data may be made, taking into account issues of validity, reliability and resonance that form the basis of this psychoanalytic research. Part Three will investigate the infant girl's psychological development, using Oedipal theory, to illuminate the structuring of the personality, the orientation of libidinal desire and unconscious dynamic processes which form a basis upon which psychoanalytic concepts can be used to inform interpretation.

## PART THREE

### The infant girl's psychological development

#### 3.1 A Freudian and post-Freudian model with relevance to the bride's experience

I will now investigate the infant girl's psychological development. First, by examining Freud's psychic structure of the mind, as this forms the foundation of Freudian thought. Second, in terms of the Oedipus complex as the essence of the Greek myth Oedipus forms the core of Freudian theory. Third, by exploring the use of clothes, as clothes are significant to both infant and adult. I am aware that by adopting this approach there may be some repetition from Part One, during the exploration of the overarching themes. This 'inevitable repetition' (SE21:227), however, can be understood as reflecting the application of hermeneutic theory and the oscillation that the infant girl experiences during her psychological development, particularly in relationship to her primary objects. Let us now investigate the psychoanalytic assumption of the psychic structure of the mind.

Freud's training disposed him to think of mental life in terms of energy or instinctual drives and their control or modification (vicissitudes), and his discoveries with patients confronted him with evidence concerning the psychic organisation which he describes under three main themes, dynamic, economic and topographical. Freud believes that the '*dynamic* of mental processes concerns the *instincts* which are characterised as possessing an immense (somatic) store of power (i.e., the compulsion to repeat)' which go towards a) Eros 'which strives for an ever closer union' and, b) Thanatos 'which leads towards the dissolution of what is living' (SE20:265, original emphasis). Freud's view of the *economic* concerns 'the mental representatives of the instincts have a charge of definite quantities of energy' which are then hindered by defences and regulated by the '*pleasure-unpleasure principle*', and in turn are modified by the '*reality principle*'

when the subject ‘learns to postpone the pleasure of satisfaction’ and gains the capacity to tolerate unpleasure (SE20:266, original emphasis). Freud’s *topographical* structure of the mental apparatus distinguishes between unconscious, preconscious and conscious, and three agencies: ‘composed of an ‘id’, ‘das Es, ‘the It’, which is the repository of the repressed instinctual impulses; of the personable ‘ego’, which is modified by the influence of the external world; and of a part or subdivision of itself, the ‘super-ego’ which dominates the ego’ (SE20:266, original emphasis). Within this frame, Freud considers that the earliest moments of a child’s life have a lasting impact on the resulting adult (SE16:362). Freud asserts that ‘on the psychical side the process of finding an object...preparations have been made from earliest childhood’ (SE7:222) and the infant girl’s psychosexual journey to what Freud considers the ‘final normal female attitude’ is a complex and ‘circuitous’ one, (SE21:230), which arguably has brought the bride to the altar at this moment of exchange. Let us now examine Freudian libidinal theory.

Freud argues that libidinally the infant is born with an innate ‘bisexual’ (SE7:143) and ‘polymorphously perverse disposition’ (SE7:191)<sup>69</sup> where the infant girl’s sexuality is without object and where she has ‘freedom to range equally over male and female objects’ (SE7:145n). Freud claims that ‘in childhood the sexual instinct is not unified and is at first without an object, (termed auto-erotic)’ (SE7:233). By forming an ‘anaclitic attachment’ (SE14:87), leaning on the ego instincts, loving the one who feeds, cares for, and protects, the infant girl is able to experience, within a contained maternal environment, sadistic-anal impulses which do not destroy the object and where the infant girl is able to pursue erotic loving feelings. This is in contradistinction to a self-centred, ideal ego, narcissistic object-choice (SE14:88).

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<sup>69</sup> Freud suggests that young children are, by nature, ‘polymorphously perverse’, which is to say, they can display inchoate sexual tendencies that adults would regard as perverse. Education however quickly suppresses infantile sexuality but it is retained in the unconscious mind, (source: The Freud Museum).

Freud suggests that sexual instinctual forces which power the libido predominate in three developmental phases, under the primacy of an erogenous zone: oral, anal and genital. Freud asserts that the first developmental phase comprises the oral-erotic organisation led by the mouth, with its ‘cannibalistic’ preoccupation of ‘the incorporation of the object’ which becomes ‘the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification’ later plays a significant psychological role (SE7:198). The oral-sadistic phase is characterised by cannibalistic ‘devouring’ (SE14:250). Freud’s second pre-genital phase is the sadistic-anal organisation (SE7:198) where aggression becomes heightened following weaning, with excreta being the psychic vehicle of projection, and when repressed, leads to a masochistic passive aim characterised by being either expulsive or retentive<sup>70</sup> (SE22:116). Freud suggests that character traits of anal erotism include being ‘orderly, parsimonious and obstinate’ (SE9:169). Freud argues that during the sadistic-anal phase the infant girl’s aggressive impulses display an ‘abundance and violence’ to such a degree it seems as though, ‘the infant girl is a little man’ (SE22:118). Freud indicates that a psychic bisexuality with active and passive aims comes about through the prolonged and intense daughter/mother relationship switching to the ‘woman’s strong dependence on her father’ (SE21:227). Freud’s third libidinal phase is the genital stage, where the sensitivity of the clitoris gives way to the vagina, (SE22:118) and ‘her clitoridal activity takes refuge in an identification with the phallic mother or father’ (SE22:130). This identification is dominated by envy for the father’s penis and jealousy over the mother’s sexual relation and possession of the father. Freud concludes that femininity is characterised as being ‘masochistic’ and ‘giving preference to passive aims’, as opposed to masculine active aims (SE22:115). Let us now

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<sup>70</sup> Karl Abraham (1924) Short study of the development of the libido. In *Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, London 1927, Chap. 26.

investigate the psychoanalytic assumption of the infant girl's Oedipal relation to the mother and the father.

Oedipal theory can be understood in three parts, first, the pre-Oedipal phase, second, the Oedipal conflict and resolution, and third, due to its multi-layering, its effect into adulthood. While the infant girl's pre-Oedipal phase is marked by an intense two-person attachment with the mother, the Oedipus complex is marked by hostility towards the mother and a turning towards the father. Let us now examine the infant girl's relationship with her mother prior to the experience of triangularity.

Freud's *Trieb* instinct/drive theory and developmental stage model will be used to revisit the pre-Oedipal phase of principally a two-person relationship. The pre-Oedipal phase of infant development, which in Freudian terms is the 'absence of the Oedipal triangle' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973:328), covers the oral and anal-sadistic phases of development lasting approximately up to three years of age. This phase, characterised by an interpersonal situation, develops from the biological mother-child interaction where initially the mother's body seems to be experienced as an extension of the infant's own. The infant girl's maternal attachment is first understood as being of a part-object status, i.e. 'the mother's breast' (SE7:52), before experiencing the mother as a whole object. Influencing factors that contribute to this first relationship are the mother's own nature, including her own repressed unconscious, the infant girl's 'hereditary' (SE7:173), instinctual and ego development, the maturation of the affects, early identifications with the mother and the mutual influence of all these factors. The prominent Dutch psychoanalyst and last survivor of Freud's era Jeanne Lample-de Groot emphasises that 'disturbances in the first mother-child relationship can result in

psychical fixation points, ranging from slight neurotic fears to grave inhibitions in instinctual, emotional, and ego development' (Lampl-de Groot, 1952:335).

Freudian theory of female development appears to privilege adult heterosexuality<sup>71</sup>. Freud's use of the adjective 'positive' indicating a heterosexual object-choice, whereas 'negative' indicates a homosexual object-choice. Freud suggests that during the pre-Oedipal phase, or 'negative complex', the infant girl's relationship is an 'exclusive', 'intense and passionate' attachment to her mother, the infant girl's 'first love-object' (SE21:225)<sup>72</sup> and is decisive.

The object-relations theorist Ronald Fairbairn<sup>73</sup> seems to approach internalised object-relations from a different perspective than Freud. Fairbairn maintains that 'Freud adheres to the principle that the libido is primarily pleasure-seeking, i.e. that it is direction-less' (Fairbairn, 1952:126). In contrast, Fairbairn advocates that 'the libido is primarily object-seeking' (Fairbairn, 1952:126). Phillips illustrates this by adding that 'the mother loves the baby before the baby loves the mother. No baby has ever loved the mother, but has wanted her, needed her, and in a certain sense desired her' (Phillips in Bersani, 2008:90). That is, the subject predominantly seeks satisfaction through relationship to his/her objects (Fairbairn, 1952:60). Freud argues that 'following a strong attachment to the mother' through 'the passive impulses of the phallic phase the

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<sup>71</sup> Freud, it appears, uses the phrase 'heterosexual object-choice' only once, then as a stage after the infant girl's homosexual object-choice during the individual's libidinal development (SE12:61).

<sup>72</sup> Freud emphasises that 'the mother, the 'first object', through her influence has a 'profound effect upon the choice of every later object', that is on all subsequent relationships and remains an important inner object throughout her growing infant's life' (SE16:314). Ronald Fairbairn, psychoanalyst, considers the child's relationship with its mother as a 'foundation upon which all future relationships with love objects are based', (Fairbairn, W. Ronald, D. (1952) *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*, Tavistock Routledge: London. (In Chodorow, Nancy J. (1978) *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, University of California Press: Berkeley.). Meltzer suggests that 'the internal mother is the foundation of all stable and healthy psychic structure' (Meltzer, Donald (1973) *Sexual States of Mind*, Clunie Press, 1979: Perthshire.

<sup>73</sup> Object-relations theory places less emphasis on the drives of aggression and sexuality as motivational forces and more emphasis on human relationships as the primary motivational force in life. Klein, Fairbairn, Winnicott, Jacobson, Kernberg, Kohut and Bollas to varying degrees can be included in this group of theorists: i.e. Winnicott develops the idea of 'transitional objects'.

mother may be internalised as the seducer' (SE22:120). Because the pre-verbal infant girl baby-in-arms receives her first intense libidinal impulses or strongest sensations during toilet cleansing, the mother breaks into the infant girl's pre-sexual universe. Freud claims that, later, when the girl turns away from her mother, she projects on to her father a 'wishful phantasy' as 'sexual seducer' (SE21:238).

Paula Heimann, a Kleinian psychiatrist sensitive to the counter-transference, suggests that in object-relation terms, the early infant's subjective experience with the 'feeding mother' begins with the 'world and stimuli of bodily sensations' (Heimann in Klein, 1952:126). Heimann claims that ego-formation transpires 'from experiences with the outer world' (Heimann in Klein, 1952:128), that is to suggest that the mother, initially, serves as a supplementary ego. Edith Jacobson, a German psychoanalyst who considers drive-theory in the development of the child, offers an illustration of pre-Oedipal psychosomatic rituals by arguing that:

when a mother handles the infant, cleans, sits them up in her arms and on her lap, rocks, strokes, kisses, feeds, smiles, talks and sings, she offers not only all kinds of libidinal gratifications but simultaneously stimulates and prepares the child's sitting, standing, crawling, walking and talking. (Jacobson, 1964:37)

Thus, arguably, in Winnicottian terms, the 'environment-mother' influences the infant's ego-growth through internal and external transformations. Christopher Bollas, an American psychoanalyst who bases his object-relations theory on the 'British School', adds that 'the mother is less significant and identifiable as an object than as a process that is identified with cumulative internal and external transformations' and argues that thus the mother becomes 'the transformational object' which 'is experientially identified by the infant with processes that alter self experience' (Bollas, 1987:14). Phillips argues that we might conclude from Bollas' remark that 'the infant's first

intimacy is with a process of becoming', rather than with 'a person' (Phillips in Bersani, 2008:114).

Freud maintains that the infant girl's pre-Oedipal 'powerful attachment to the mother' (SE22:121) gradually takes on an 'ambivalent' nature (SE22:124) and the father becomes a 'troublesome rival' (SE21:226). By phantasising the father as a libidinal object, the infant girl competes with the mother becoming a rival for the father's love. Let us now consider the infant girl's experience of triangularity.

Freud's Oedipus complex encompasses the infant girl's unconscious relations with the two parents. The infant girl gradually realises that she has been born into the triangular psychodynamics of the patriarchal hegemonic 'nuclear family': 'a basic social unit, consisting normally of father, mother and their children' (Simpson, 1989:576), that is, people of more than one generation who live together. These psychodynamics consist of both real, that is external, and unconscious, that is internal. Freudian theory privileges unconscious biological drives of libidinal instincts and the Oedipal conflict encompasses a combination of loving, hostile and envious phantasies concerning the possession of one parent to the exclusion of the other. These dynamics often involve intense erotic and destructive—loving feelings and murderous rage, jealousy and envy, as well as concomitant guilt and fear of reprisal, driven by the subject's need to find satisfaction. In considering psychological processes Freud recognises that no rigid scheme is ever possible, however he developed a thesis of infantile sexuality, which he claims, develops primarily under the influence of a series of maternal, then paternal transformations under the influence of affect. Freud's thesis of female psychosexual development appears to be based on biological determinism as he asserts that 'anatomy is destiny' (SE19:178).

Freud places the Oedipus complex, ‘a short period of sexual efflorescence’, between the ages of two to five years<sup>74</sup> (SE7:232n2). Freud asserts that during the pre-Oedipal phase the infant ‘knows only one kind of genital: the male one’ (SE7:199n2), that is, ‘phallic primacy’ (SE20:37). As already mentioned in Part One, Freud suggests that the infant girl’s response to the puzzlement over the anatomical difference between the sexes (SE19:248ff), the momentous discovery of the male genital, heralds the infant girl’s phantasy of castration, that is, the presence or absence of the penis (SE19:241-58), ‘of possessing a penis’ or ‘castrated’ (SE20:37). The phantasy of castration leaves the infant girl feeling ‘seriously wronged’ (SE22:125). Chasseguet-Smirgel suggests that the girl’s ‘narcissistic wounds’ give rise to narcissistic rage, hate and enmity (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:74). The infant girl then ‘falls a victim to ‘envy for the penis’’ (SE22:125).

During the infant girl’s ‘castration complex’, the infant girl initiates a search for the desired penis, not because of her love for her father, but because of her ‘envy for the penis’. Freud maintains that the ‘castration complex always inhibits and limits masculinity and encourages femininity’ (SE19:256). The absence of a penis is experienced by the infant girl in three ways: ‘as a wrong suffered which she attempts to deny, to compensate for, or to remedy’ (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:56) (See section on Repudiation in Part One which explores the process of ‘disavowal’). Freud suggests that as a consequence of the phantasy of castration the infant girl rebels against passivity, attempting to deny the ‘wrong’ by regressing to a ‘masculinity complex’ and asserts that:

the infant girl clings with defiant self-assertiveness to her threatened masculinity. To an incredibly late age she clings to the hope of getting a

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<sup>74</sup> Kernberg suggests that ‘the height of the Oedipus complex, roughly from the age four to six extends into puberty and adolescence’ (Kernberg 1995:164).

penis [which] becomes her life's aim; and the phantasy of being a man in spite of everything often persists as a formative factor over long periods. This 'masculinity complex' in women can also result in a manifest homosexual choice of object. (SE21:229-30)

Horney (1926) describes this 'masculine protest', as 'the girl's primary penis-envy strengthens the masculine trend fends off her feminine impulses' (SE21:229).

Freud suggests that during the phallic period the infant girl 'expresses a wish to get the mother with child and the corresponding wish to bear her a child' (SE22:120). That is to say, the infant girl initially attempts to obtain what she desires from the phallic mother who the infant girl believes has a penis, this constitutes a point of entry into the Oedipal phase. In feeling castrated, the infant girl holds the mother responsible for her disadvantage and becomes hostile towards the mother, the hostility being fuelled by painful 'disappointments' (SE21:234-5) and (SE22:122), as already established in Part One. Freud suggests that the infant girl, confronted by her imagined deficiency, with reluctance 'accepts castration, male superiority and female inferiority' (SE21:229), and that 'her mother too is castrated' (SE22:126). A mother who 'had introduced...pleasurable activity with the genitals' now 'forbids this pleasure' (SE22:123) leading to the infant girl's 'accumulated hostility' (SE22:124). In other words, those who offer satisfaction may also frustrate. Due to these disappointments and 'accumulated hostility' (SE22:124), the infant girl's powerful attachment to her mother 'ends in hate' where 'a hate of that kind may become very striking and last all through life' (SE22:121). The infant girl turns away from the mother as the infant girl has an 'immoderate demand for love' and realises that it is 'impossible for the mother to fulfil her sexual wishes' (SE22:124).

Freud claims that during this Oedipal phase the infant girl identifies with her mother as a 'model' (SE22:134) with 'passive aims'. Idealisation to the point of perfection, aggrandisement or being exalted may be transformed by identification, being a process that precedes object-choice and is distinct from it (SE14:242). The process of identification operates in three ways: first, 'is the original form of emotional tie with an object', described as the first relationship; second, 'in an aggressive way becomes a substitute for a libidinal object-tie'; and third, when a 'perception of a common quality is shared with some other person the partial identification may represent the beginning of a new tie' (SE18:107-8). In parallel with her attachment to the mother, the infant girl in identification with, and hostility towards, the mother, 'desires to take her mother's place', and under the influence of a sense of guilt for her hostility 'expresses her object-love towards her father' (SE18:106).

Chasseguet-Smirgel points out that 'guilt' can be understood from a 'specifically feminine' perspective, emanating from a frustration and compromise between the fulfilment of a desire and its punishment for the desire of the idealised mother's or father's attributes (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:97). Chasseguet-Smirgel offers three reasons (situated in the Oedipus complex) as to why women may feel guilt. First, for the girl's aggression attached to the anal-sadistic component of sexuality towards the mother and for replacing the mother with an 'idealisation' of the father (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:97). Second, for the girl's aggression towards the penis, attributed to penis envy, and in phantasy her 'desire to incorporate the paternal penis and to keep it permanently' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:102), that is, aggressively 'castrating the idealised father' and 'stealing the father's penis' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:131). Chasseguet-Smirgel draws on Freud who claims that the infant girl's 'envy for the penis', results in 'the woman's repressed wish to possess a penis like a man' and 'an

unmistakable wish in the woman to keep for herself the penis which she had felt [inside her]' (SE17:129-30). This phantasy results in what Chasseguet-Smirgel describes as a masochistic feeling of guilt for 'the genital Oedipal desire to engulf the father's penis (like the mother did)' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:105), an 'incorporation-guilt' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:106). Third, for the girl's 'Oedipal guilt of surpassing the mother', the Oedipal rivalry, which may mean the girl possesses 'the father's penis and has thus dispossessed the mother' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:106). In other words, the infant girl represses her aggressive instincts towards the father in order to allow an idealised projection onto the father, or the penis, following frustration and disappointment with the mother. In order to receive narcissistic satisfaction, the infant girl creates a sense of guilt towards the mother. When guilt is assuaged the subject's desire of Eros allows uniting with the maternal object.

As discussed in Part One, Freud suggests that the girl does not tend to 'resolve' her Oedipus complex, it is not entirely resolved, but she 'remains in it for an indeterminate length of time...demolishes it late and, even so, incompletely' (SE22:129). This is to suggest that the girl does not repress either her pre-Oedipal or Oedipal attachments. Either towards her mother, meaning that the girl can remain in the 'negative' Oedipal position of attachment to the mother for a long time, or to her 'positive' Oedipal attachment to the father. Freud claims that as the girl does not fear castration, she has no reason to renounce the Oedipus complex, nor to establish a strong conscience or super-ego, however, in her desire for love, rather than her fear of punishment, 'intimidation from outside threatens her with a loss of love' (SE19:178).

As a secondary formation the infant girl enters the 'positive' form of the Oedipus complex where the mother becomes the infant girl's rival. Freud proposes that the

paternal function, facilitates the 'positive' outcome of the Oedipus complex due to the infant girl's masculine wishes, and her desire for the penis, which she seeks from her father as its possessor and the father becomes idealised. Thus the infant girl's search for a satisfying object is a reaction to the disappointments with the depriving mother.

Freud suggests that 'with the transference of the wish for a penis-baby on to her father, the girl enters the Oedipus complex' 'as though into a haven of refuge and a position of rest' (SE22:129). In other words, we can see how the infant girl projects her desires for the penis and to bear a baby first onto the mother, and following 'disappointments' the infant girl projects that same desire onto the father. Freud suggests that what precipitates the infant girl's turning towards her father is her unconscious 'envy for the penis' that her mother refused her, which she now expects from the father (SE22:128). For the infant girl, passivity now takes the upper-hand and sensations move to the vagina. Freud suggests that 'the feminine situation is only established, however, if the wish for a penis is replaced by one for a baby, if, that is, a baby takes the place of a penis in accordance with the ancient symbolic equivalence' (SE22:128). Freud suggests that 'the infant girl likes to regard herself as what her father loves above all else: 'desires to receive a baby from her father as a gift—to bear him a child' (SE19:173-9). The time comes, however, when she has to endure a harsh punishment from the father and she is cast out of her fool's paradise' (SE19:173). Gradually the infant girl realises that although the father is desired, he is unattainable as he belongs to the mother.

Freud suggests that the outcome of the Oedipus complex, the Oedipal resolution, may be twofold, both 'positive' and 'negative', an identification with the mother or the father. Ambivalent passive attitudes of being affectionate and feminine contrast with active aggressive attitudes of hostility and jealousy, due to their bisexual origin, as the

infant girl makes her earliest object-choices and identifications. Seen from the infant girl's perspective, the infant girl may behave with an ambivalent attitude towards her mother and an affectionate object choice towards her father. But at the same time the girl also behaves like a boy, displaying a masculine attitude to the mother and a corresponding jealousy and hostility towards her father. Freud suggests that the resultant outcome of this ambivalence, is the relinquishment of both object choices and the establishment of a new psychic institution: 'this modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal' or super-ego (SE19:33-4), as explored in Part One. Freud maintains that 'regressive identifications derived from the dissolution of the Oedipus complex come to form the nucleus of the super-ego' (SE14:242)

Freud is aware that these phases of organisation, these stages of transition towards maturation, tempered by the reality principle and their unconscious roots, are both progressive and regressive. During the infant girl's object relationship stages of ego development the infant girl has made the transition from auto-erotism and narcissism to 'allo-erotism', that is, an 'identification with the person loved' (SE1:280), and the progression from part-objects to whole objects and to love-object. The infant girl has turned from the homosexual object of the mother figure towards the heterosexual paternal realm, accounting problems of ambivalence, of love and hate towards the same object.

The girl's Oedipal resolution involves an ambivalent narcissistic identification with the debased castrated mother. The 'destruction', 'dissolution', or 'collapse' of the infant girl's Oedipus complex succumbs to repression, followed by what Freud terms the latency period (SE19:173). Freud maintains that the infantile part of the 'diphasic'

feature, that is, infant sexual development succumbs to repression ‘at about the fifth year’<sup>75</sup> bringing about an amnesia (SE9:171). During latency there are no new observable organisations of sexuality. Let us now examine the girl’s experience of the influence of the Oedipus complex during the latency period.

Freud argues that ‘libidinal trends belonging to the Oedipus complex are in part desexualised and sublimated (a transformation into an identification)...changing (libidinal trends) into impulses of affection. This process ushers in the latency period’ (SE19:177). In Oedipal terms, on emerging from the mixture of blissful and hostile maternal affects the assimilating, reassuring and transforming process of identification can be re-established. Once the infant girl’s hostility towards the mother has subdued the infant girl can conceive of an emotional tie or maternal identification. That is to say, where the mother becomes emulated the mother may become an ideal.

Freud suggests that ‘the beginning of the latency period is characterised by the creation or consolidation of the super-ego and the erection of ethical and aesthetic barriers in the ego’ (SE20:114). Freud claims that the ‘fear of the super-ego...should normally never cease, since, in the form of moral anxiety, it is indispensable in social relations’ (SE22:88). Drawing on this theory, there seems to be an indication of the bride-in-white’s internalisation of the super-ego in their conforming to the accepted tradition of the time which can be interpreted from the following reports from both ‘recent’ and ‘older’ brides:

*The bridal shop had red, red and white, and gold coloured dresses, but I wanted to stay with tradition. I wouldn’t have married in any other colour than white (04Sis05).*

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<sup>75</sup> ‘From the completion of the fifth’ Freud, Sigmund (1908b) Character and anal eroticism, (in. SE9:169-75), or, ‘sixth or eighth year’ Freud, Sigmund (1917a) The development of the libido and the sexual organisations, (in. SE16:320-38).

*I wore a white dress because it was traditional. Not particularly as a symbol of purity, I know that's what it stands for, but that was secondary to the fact that it was traditional (14Margaret08).*

Freud suggests that another characteristic of the latency period is the acquisition of interpersonal skills. Freud asserts that 'all through the period of latency children learn to feel affection and esteem (social feelings) for other people who help them in their helplessness and satisfy their needs, a love which is on the model of, and a continuation of, their relation as suckling to their mother' (SE7:222-3). During this period desexualisation, owing to repression, undergoes a softening effect, which serves to reinforce the affectionate trend which inevitably contains an 'erotic nature' (SE11:181).

From studying all the bride's reports in connection with their expressions of affection some seem to be aimed towards their father, but seem conditional towards their mother, as illustrated by these statements:

*I felt very warm towards my father, giving me away. It was like being honoured by his right to give me away (11Francis10).*

*I had a huge, amount of affection and gratitude towards my father. For me he was always a remarkable, wonderful man. He was very fond of me and it must have been a big day for him—his daughter getting married (13Patricia10).*

*I am very fond of my mother, but she could be very difficult and embarrassing because she would tell people what she felt and what she thought of them to their face (14Margaret10).*

Freud suggests that a major aspect of the latency period concerns the sublimation of sexual instinct. Freud claims that during the period of partial latency, the energy of sexual instinctual forces are diverted from sexual aims by the 'process of sublimation' (SE7:178). Freud asserts that 'the chief task during the latency period seems to be the fending-off of the temptation to masturbate and the sublimation of anal-erotic

components' (SE20:116). The process of sublimation of sexual forces occurring on two levels, 'sublimation and a sub-species of sublimation—reaction-formation' (SE7:238).

Freud explains that the 'sublimation of sexuality finds an outlet in artistic activity' (SE7:238) also 'ceremonial actions appear extremely often in the latency period' (SE20:147). The earlier infantile free development of sexuality, in latency, succumbs to 'the dams against the sexual instinct' (SE21:60) thus restricting the flow of the sexual instinct. Freud describes how the 'dams' are erected:

sexual impulses arising from erotogenic zones, deriving their activity from instincts, arouse unpleasurable feelings, and consequently evoke opposing mental forces (reacting impulses) which, in order to suppress this unpleasure effectively develop barriers, or build up the mental dams, such as disgust, feelings of shame and claims of aesthetic and moral ideals. This development is organically determined and fixed by heredity. (SE7:177-8)

Let us now consider how these feelings of shame and aesthetics and 'moral ideals' can be illustrated in the bride's responses. The impact on the infant girl's mind, who later becomes a bride-in-white and marries in Church, arguably concerns shame, humiliation and mortification, as suggested by this report of a dream:

*Before the wedding I dreamt that the dress kept falling off when I was at the altar and that it wasn't done up tight enough and I'd wake up, or, that I'd trip on the trail coming down the aisle. I kept getting those thoughts in my head. On the day, I realised it wasn't a dream, I kept looking round to see if the dress was getting dirty. I would say it is really dirty. At first I got upset, but then I thought let it get dirty that's what it's there for, because I can't stand anything getting dirty like that [laughter] (07Elizabeth06).*

The Italian psychoanalyst Antonino Ferro suggests that there are three dimensions to a dream:

it demonstrates an openness to a deeper level of communication; it illustrates how much work has been already done during sleep; and, it constitutes a narrative of the waking dream thought of that particular moment, thus as it were permitting a 'core sample' to be drilled directly from the current emotional field. (Ferro, 2009:155)

07Elizabeth06's spontaneous report, above, of a recent dream, may suggest that a sense of 'falling' and that something was not 'tight enough' both relate to her dress. This may be an indication of something coming undone, found out, or laid bare, issues of shame that would prevent her from achieving a narcissistic goal of being ideally presentable.

Aesthetic ideals stemming from early childhood can be interpreted from the following report:

*When I was dressed with my hair and makeup done I felt really special. Feeling special is a feeling that I know I'll probably never feel again. Well, I know I won't get married again. It's such a special day. It's difficult to describe what 'special' means. When you are a little girl you dream of getting married in a white dress. I am 38 now and a few years ago I thought, "I can't see it ever happening", because I'm an older bride. So getting married in white makes it extra special. It's really hard to describe what I mean by special...just 'special' [laughter] (04Sis04).*

Moral ideals through ceremonial ritual can be suggested by the following statement:

*I couldn't imagine not getting married and taking my vows in Church because I don't think I would have felt properly married. It's a beautiful moving service, and until you're actually going through it you don't realise the huge commitment you are making (13Patricia13).*

The American psychoanalyst Ethel Person, claims that during latency the girl begins to 'separate desire and idealisation from the nuclear family and transfer them to other objects' (Person, 1988:95). That is to say, latency can be a period of development in which the core of the personality has already been formed, but the superstructure is less complicated than in adults and where the environment becomes generally limited to family and school. Oedipal phantasies tend to be linked to problems of masturbation, sexual curiosity, and the infantile phantasies regarding the parents' erotic union. Freud suggests that the period of latency ends 'round about the eleventh year' (SE9:171), with the onset of puberty. Let us now consider the impact of the Oedipus complex during puberty and adolescence.

Freud views puberty, commencing around ten to twelve years of age (SE17:131), as a period which begins to establish ‘the sharp distinction between masculine and feminine characteristics’ (SE7:219). Freud suggests that the arrival of puberty marks the second phase of sexual ‘efflorescence’ and can bring with it the ‘manifest neurosis’ held over by fixations from earlier periods, in a return of the repressed from the latency period (SE23:79-80). Freud suggests that during puberty there is ‘a loosening of the girl’s relation with her mother as love-object’ because of ‘penis-envy’ (SE19:254). Freud argues that the girl also gives up her clitoral masturbation, the reminder of her castrated state and under a ‘wave of repression’ replaces her ‘masculine’ active aims with ‘femininity’, thus the girl adopts passive aims (SE19:255). During puberty the girl also is required to relinquish ‘incestuous phantasies that she may have towards the father which are to be overcome and repudiated’ (SE7:227).

The American psychiatrist Hélene Deutsch notes that during ‘adolescence, women show a definitely stronger tendency to spiritualisation of the sexual instinct’ (Deutsch, 1944:147). Deutsch argues that ‘primitive religion raised sexuality to the status of a divine function’, in contrast to it being considered an instrument of the devil (Deutsch, 1944:147). Deutsch suggests that during puberty ‘the sexual urge is connected with sensory organs such as smell’, during the period before the fulfilment of direct sexual gratification (Deutsch, 1944:147). Chasseguet-Smirgel adds that ‘women’s sexuality is spiritual...as a result of a process of sublimation’ and ‘is a reaction formation based on repression...in other words, in the anal-sadistic component instincts’ (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:99). Arguably, this ‘spiritualising’ process may have great significance for all brides and particularly for those who marry through a religious ceremony<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> See 13Patricia13 statement, cited earlier in the section on The Oedipus complex: features of latency.

Freud considers that after puberty the implicit task is in object-choice, 'that [the girl] should find [her] way to the opposite sex' and this 'is not accomplished without a certain amount of fumbling' (SE7:229). Characteristic of adolescence is the tendency to idealisation. This idealisation may be exemplified by the romantic phantasy of the heroine who finds herself in an unhappy situation but because of her goodness she is rescued, as in the Cinderella fairy tale of meeting 'Prince Charming' in order to secure eternal love. The confused adolescent may experience crushes that conflate the desire for merger and caretaking with sexual desire, as in the case of 'eighteen year old Dora' (SE7:18), whom Freud thought expressed 'affection for her father' (SE7:57). Late adolescence may be a time when social pleasures lead to confusing appropriate from non-appropriate relationships. It may be a period where boundaries may be tested. If boundaries are confused and violated they may result in guiltily falling in love with a close family member, causing 'an intense state of excitation' which conflicts 'with a deeply-rooted idea of moral purity' as Freud describes in Breuer's case-study of 'twenty-one year old Anna O'<sup>77</sup> (SE2:210).

The German psychoanalyst Peter Blos claims that:

Adolescence may be marked by Oedipal conflict during a period of detachment from the parents before a non-incestuous object choice can be made. Conflicts marked by spite and revenge designed to hurt the parent who no longer can satisfy the love needs of the child; these actions signify that childhood status still prevails. Many a girl is convinced that she understands her father better than her mother does...and is usually aware of the negative aspects of her feelings towards the mother. (Blos, 1962:106)

This may suggest that anal-sadistic attacks on the parent enable detachment, however these attacks may be accompanied by feelings of guilt. Person suggests that 'as during

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<sup>77</sup> Frä. Anna O., (pseudonym), initially the patient of Joseph Breuer, physician, whose real name was Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936), who, during her father's illness developed paralysis of her limbs, and anaesthesias, as well as disturbances of vision and speech. Breuer noted that she had two alternating personality states: one more or less normal, the other that of a naughty child. Symptoms seem to disappear after Anna O described her frequent and terrifying hallucinations (SE2:210).

the Oedipal stage, desire is triggered through identification, wanting for ourselves the *same* as that which [is idealised]' (Person, 1988:100, original emphasis). In a similar manner the Oedipal task for the adolescent is to transform the idealisation of 'the wish *to be like* (or to replace) to the wish *to be with*' (Person, 1988:100, original emphasis). In other words, the task for adolescent libidinal desire is to both transform the desire for the partner of one's best friend, into having one's own separate relationship. Let us now consider how the Oedipus complex may influence adulthood.

American 'interpretive', 'humanistic' psychoanalytic sociologist and feminist Nancy Chodorow, who does not rely on object-relations theory, whose interest lies in understanding the dynamics of motherhood, argues that 'girls enter adulthood with a complex layering of affective ties and a rich, ongoing inner object world', where 'the mother remains a primary internal object' and 'heterosexual relationships are based on the model of a non-exclusive, second relationship' (Chodorow, 1989:74). Chodorow also suggests that a heterosexual woman bases her relationship with a man on the 'idealisation, grown out of a girl's relation to her father' (Chodorow, 1989:77). In other words the bride may base her relationship with her husband on a displacement of the idealised father representation, that is, 'an unreal relationship to men' (Chodorow, 1989:77).

Person suggests that romantic love may be characterised by a 'leap out of objectivity and into subjectivity'... 'sharing in each other's subjective realities' thus mitigating the profound, painful isolation of the Oedipal phantasy of oneness with the mother (Person, 1988:14). Person is however aware of the configurations of Oedipal triangulation, which may be acted out in at least three ways. First, attempts at resolving unresolved Oedipal material may be through: 'rivalrous triangulation', where a woman may fall in

love with a married man (a father representation) (Person, 1988:220). Second, ‘split-object triangulation’, where a married woman takes a lover, viewing the dalliance as irrelevant (Person, 1988:227). Third, ‘displaced-incestuous’, where the individual involves themselves emotionally and erotically with more than one member of the same family (Person, 1988:234). The psychoanalyst Kenneth Lewes claims that ‘the mechanisms of the Oedipus complex are a series of psychic traumas (including homosexuality), and all results of it are neurotic compromise formations’ (Lewes, 1988:70). That is to suggest, in Freudian terms, there may be a great deal of ‘fumbling’ and compromise before securing an acceptable object-choice.

Freud maintains that the Oedipus complex represents the peak of infantile sexuality, which, through its after-effects, exercises a decisive influence on the sexuality of adults’ (SE7:226n). If Freud’s premise is accepted, that the infant’s Oedipus complex is never ‘resolved’, it is simply re-worked, and ‘revived’ (SE18:157), at different times and on different planes in life, it is possible to interpret the adult bride’s statements in Oedipal terms. It can be argued, for example, that the journey to the Church, for the bride, can be seen within an Oedipal frame since in the moment arguably three psychological processes come to fruition. First, the bride exclusively possesses the father and the bride’s unconscious incestuous desires are, in phantasy, fulfilled. Second, the bride’s rivalrous feelings towards her mother are repressed and symbolically contained during the journey to the Church and the mother is repudiated. Third, the bride’s libido, sublimated in favour of the creative process of being a bride regulated by submission to the ceremony, later becomes displaced onto the non-incestuous other. I will argue, mainly in Part Four, that my investigations illustrate that some bride’s experiences reveal that it is possible to suggest that a revisiting of their Oedipal ambitions were evident on their wedding day. However, before discussing a social positioning of the

bride, let us explore two primal phantasies which are foundational to the infant's development towards 'normal femininity'.

In the light of Freud's assertion that 'the final outcome of sexuality in childhood' points to the 'definitive form taken by it in the adult' (SE19:141), I propose to focus on two aspects of the girl's phylogenetically transmitted inheritance which become the symbolic structure or schema within which the child frames the Oedipal parental representations. First, I will consider the unconscious phantasy of the primal scene, as preliminary to the infant girl's genital strivings and her introduction into the envious relationship with the father. Second, I will explore the incestuous world into which the infant girl finds herself born and her search for phallic satisfaction. I will explore these primal phantasies by asking: what is their impact on the daughter-father relationship and then consider the impact on the 'bride-in-white'?

### 3.2 Seeing and being seen: the veiled bride and the primal scene

At the Church door, we may observe, the bride peering from behind the blush<sup>78</sup>, as though through a mist, her face being barely seen by others. As her hand rests on her father's arm, her body tensed in anticipation and expectation, her mind alert as she imagines what she will see and how she will react to being seen by family and friends. Her hair<sup>79</sup>, maquillage<sup>80</sup> and dress<sup>81</sup> are immaculate<sup>82</sup>: she is in a state that has rarely been seen before. Preparations for this moment have long been made. This intimate, momentary, exclusive relationship with her father, at the Church door, could be unsettling or reassuring. It could be argued, this scene touches upon the trajectory of infant experience, or a phylogenetic endowment of 'primal phantasies' (SE16:371) when, in infancy, in 'real or imagined observation' she witnessed her parents copulating (SE19:120). Freud suggests that in phantasy the infant girl desires to replace her mother, in what Klein terms as the 'combined parental' imago (Klein, 1932:132).

Meltzer argues that the complex structure of affects, impulses, phantasies and anxieties for the infant girl, are modified by the imago of the 'coital relation of internal parents, which is the foundation of a stable psychic structure' (Meltzer, 1973:68). Meltzer suggests that this dependence is based on 'the mother's capacity to receive the projection of infantile states of mental and physical distress, experienced as persecution by bodily contents' (Meltzer, 1973:68). Meltzer claims that 'the infant depends on the mother's capacity to return to it parts of the self, which have been then divested of all persecutory qualities, by means of the feeding relation to the breast' (Meltzer, 1973:68).

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<sup>78</sup> The 'blush', that part of the veil which covers her face.

<sup>79</sup> Her hair may carry associations connected with castration. Long hair may be considered as a penis symbol or a symbolic substitute for pubic hair, ambiguously leaving open the question whether or not it covers a penis, (Freud, SE7:153; Fenichel, 1945:342).

<sup>80</sup> The art of using cosmetics, make-up.

<sup>81</sup> The dress is required to cover the imperfections in the contours of the body.

<sup>82</sup> On the day of her wedding the bride must appear to be immaculate and perfect in order to avoid criticism (Source of this assertion: The Manageress, Harrods of Knightsbridge bridal gown department, November 2005). Arguably, the bride's appearance resonates with Plato's ideal Form and the epithet given to the Virgin Mary that she was Immaculate in every way, as explored in Part One.

Meltzer emphasises that the mother is not alone in this process and asserts that ‘the functions of the internal mother are dependent upon her relation, in turn, to the internal father who is essential for her survival...and a prerequisite for the mother’s generosity and benevolence’ (Meltzer, 1973:68). In other words, in Meltzer’s terms, the triangular process rests in the effective modification of affects through the relationship of the internalised combined couple. The infant girl is dependent upon the mother’s capacity to modify the infant girl’s anxieties both bodily and psychically and the mother’s dependent relation to the internal father. Freud does not discuss the internalised combined couple, but triangularity, which can be located within the Oedipus complex with issues concerning rivalry, identification and envy.

For Freud, the phantasy of the ‘combined parental imago’ has its roots in the unconscious incestuous ‘wish to be copulated with by [the] father, that is, to be given sexual satisfaction in the same way as [the] mother’ (SE17:46). Whereas Freud proposes that we all carry a resonant understanding of ‘The Primal Scene’, he also emphasises the infant’s awareness and phantasies about actual ‘parental intercourse’ (SE17:97).

The question I am addressing here is, what are the implications of the infant girl’s phantasy of the primal scene on the bride-in-white’s relationship to her father? This question is pertinent because Freud believes that the significance of primal phantasies are that they constitute a ‘phylogenetic endowment’ (SE16:371). This enables ‘the individual [to] reach beyond [her] own experience into primeval experience’, that is, embedded in an ‘archaic heritage’ (SE17:193), a ‘prehistoric truth’ (SE16:371), a kind of ‘inheritance’ (SE17:97) of what was actually carried out and which has now become psychological reality. For Freud, this primeval experience, this ‘primal phantasy’, facilitates

‘fill[ing] the gaps in individual truth’ including ‘seduction’, ‘inflaming sexual excitement’, and ‘castration’ (SE16:371). Freud hypothesises that phantasies are ‘an unconscious combination of things experienced, heard’ and ‘seen’, and are a ‘psychical façade constituted in order to bar the way, and refine memories towards sublimating them’ (SE1:248). Freud goes further by suggesting that the primal scene—‘the phantasy of watching’, ‘overhearing accidental noise’ or ‘of listening to’ sexual intercourse between the parents—is probably part ‘of the unconscious phantasies of all human beings’ (SE14:269). In other words, Freud points to the three layers of psychic apparatus which mark these primal phantasies: first, the deepest and oldest ones which constitute the archaic ‘phylogenetic endowment’; second, the memories and ambitions of the combined parental imago; third, the unconscious repressed memories the subject’s own pre-history; and sometimes these phantasies merge.

Freud’s understanding of the infant girl’s phantasy of the primal scene is that the child interprets the sexual intercourse between the parents as an act of violence on the part of the father. Freud asserts that the impact of the ‘real or imagined observation of her parents copulating’ (SE19:120) if interpreted by the child as the active, attacking, sadistic, giving father and the passive, receptive, masochistic, receiving mother, leaves the infant girl feeling overwhelmed and ‘unable to react adequately’ (SE17:45). In other words, Freud suggests that ‘a surplus of sexuality in the psyche operates as an inhibition of thought’ (SE1:230). For Freud, however, the infant ‘envies her mother’s relation with her father’ (SE17:78) and suggests that the child’s evidence is ‘the expression of enjoyment which she saw on her mother’s face’ (SE17:45). This observation ‘obliges her to recognise that the experience was one of gratification’ and the infant girl is left ‘longing for sexual satisfaction from her father and realises that castration is a necessary condition for it’ (SE17:42). Opposing feelings are also invoked in the infant girl’s

observation of the scene. On the one hand, Freud brings into question the infant girl's feelings of anxiety as the scene becomes interpreted as an 'act of violence' (SE17:45). On the other hand, the infant girl is left 'wishing for sexual satisfaction from her father...the passive wish to be copulated with by her active father, that is, to be given sexual satisfaction in the same way as her mother' (SE17:46).

Further oppositional aspects are the infant girl's identification with the parents. Identifying with the mother drives her to envy and jealousy. The infant girl is 'ready to give her father a baby', as her mother 'has already done so, and would perhaps do so again' (SE17:82), even an 'excrement-baby' (SE17:101). Anna Freud proposes that the infant girl could be 'identifying with the aggressor' as a defence against narcissistic mortification (A. Freud, 1936:113): a defence against the penetrating, sadistic, attacking father (SE19: 120). It seems that the infant girl desires to go further in her narcissistic mortification of passive 'altruistic surrender' ('the rapture of giving' and 'conferring of happiness on others') (A. Freud, 1936:134), in this case, in phantasy, upon the father.

Arguably, the phantasy of the primal scene has powerful lasting affects. Freud asserts that in phantasy the infant girl 'wishes (s)he could be back in the womb, not simply in order that (s)he might then be re-born, but in order that (s)he might be copulated there by her father, might obtain sexual satisfaction from him, and might bear him a child' (SE17:101). Freud appears to suggest that this phantasy may become a fixation, or libidinal excitation concerning the father representation, and in becoming a 'primal repression' will become attached to her libidinal strivings. Freud suggests that as the phantasy of the primal scene audible observations of coitus are universal, 'setting up first sexual excitation', this may 'act as a starting-point for the child's whole sexual development' (SE19:250).

Let us now consider other thinkers in relation to the unconscious phantasy of the primal scene, in order to explore in more detail the impact this may have on the infant girl. In discussing the effect of trauma on the development of the personality, the psychoanalyst Phyllis Greenacre suggests that the ‘excited expectation of a primal scene’ the girl may have feelings of ‘anger at having soft parts instead of a firm penis’ (Greenacre, 1953:129-30). Greenacre claims that the girl may ‘try to resolve and relieve the guilt of forbidden seeing’, thus the effect of ‘repeated exposure’ might be a source of overstimulation of infantile aggression...causing neurotic scopophilia’<sup>83</sup> (Greenacre, 1953:131+173). Greenacre draws on Reich who suggests that this may lead to the characteristic of the isolated psychopath (Greenacre, 1953:173). In Greenacre’s experience, she believes, repeated primal scenes may influence acting out, claiming that:

heightened visual erotization through participation by looking, but not infrequently by its crying excites the anger of the one or the other parent and so [the subject] is drawn into active participation: [thereby] increasing both the scopophilic—exhibitionistic elements of the character. (Greenacre, 1953:214)

The psychiatrist Ralph Greenson suggests that the infant girl’s reaction to the primal scene may leave her in a speechless ‘silence’, feeling ‘excluded’, resulting in ‘unconscious death wishes: jealousy, envy, hostility and resentment’ (Greenson, 1967:62). Greenson argues that (s)he may also be left struggling with incestuous feelings which may develop into guilt, or a denial of feelings leading to ‘depression’ and an attempt to make ‘reparation’ (Greenson, 1967:332). Greenson asserts that incestuous feelings ‘can be motivated by the ‘longing for fusion and closeness as well as by destructive aims’ (Greenson, 1967:407).

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<sup>83</sup> Scopophilia or scopophilia, ‘the act of obtaining sexual pleasure from things seen, e.g. naked bodies (Chambers *Twentieth Century Dictionary* (1972) p1212).

Let us now consider a Kleinian perspective of the primal scene. Klein suggests that prior to the parents being considered as separate individuals, 'it is characteristic of (a) young infant's intense emotions and greed that (s)he should attribute to the parents a constant state of mutual gratification of an oral, anal and genital nature' (Klein, 1952:219). Klein, in discussing the fundamental changes with the advent of the 'depressive position', recognises the infant's libidinal organisation as being characterised by powerful oral desires involving 'the frustration experiences in relations to the mother, [which] are transferred from the mother's breast to the father's penis' (Klein, 1952:218). In this oral context the infant's phantasies involve what is 'inside' the mother and herself (Klein, 1952:219). Klein proposes that during the preceding 'paranoid-schizoid position', 'the infant's urge to enter the mother's body, and take possession of its contents' is active (Klein, 1952:219). When genital desires increase, the urge 'is directed more towards the father's penis (equated to babies and faeces) which, (s)he feels, the mother's body contains' (Klein, 1952:219). Klein asserts that 'these sexual theories are the foundation for combined parent figures such as: the mother containing the father's penis or the whole father; the father containing the mother's breast or the whole mother; the parents fused inseparably in sexual intercourse' (Klein, 1952:219-20).

Heimann recognises that at this pre-genital stage phantasies of 'true genital aims of penetrating or receiving, connected with the wish of creating and possessing children' rouse intense fears (in. Klein 1952:164). Heimann asserts that:

Incorporation further enters into the infant's phantasies about the parents' intimacies, so that (s)he believes they incorporate each other and from each other. It would appear [that] these notions...account for her intolerance towards their union, in that the cannibalistic interpretation of the primal scene leads to the fear of the parents' death, and this would mean her own death. Next to this maximal fear there are many other libidinal and frightening phantasies...the infant's desire for the father's genital. (Heimann in. Klein, 1952:164)

In other words, in this context, the infant girl's aggression can be discharged through identification with the active sadistic agent being oral or anal. This suggests that because of these unconscious phantasies, the infant girl projects intense aggressiveness onto the breast or the penis and become sufficiently anxiety-producing for her to be able to adopt a passive attitude towards the penis. Certain writers suggest that the parents may be able to modify, by their attitude to each other and the infant girl, her sado-masochistic infantile phantasies during this period. The dyadic relation with the mother is the first to change, as the infant girl takes on the active role, penile-anal, simultaneously desiring to have a penis. The infant girl is both active and aggressive towards her first love object, the mother, whom she would like to possess exclusively, but now the father, the separator from maternal rhythm, is experienced as a rival or is at least irritating.

In examining the impact of the unconscious phantasy of the primal scene, where the scopophilic instinct is in operation, we can turn to the ecclesiastical writer Tertullian, who appears to speak in the same register, to the bride-in-white standing at the Church door with her father, in *De virginibus velandis* when Tertullian states that 'seeing and being seen belong to the self-same lust' (in. Kelly, 2000:91). Kelly interprets that Tertullian 'insists that consecrated virgins must be veiled not only for their own protection, but also for the protection of others whose chastity may be imperilled by looking' (Kelly, 2000:91). For Kelly, Tertullian speaks forcefully regarding the female virgin: 'impose a veil externally upon her who has (already) a covering internally,' is making a statement alluding to a 'metaphorical and/or a very material hymen' (Kelly, 2000:91). Kelly suggests that 'thus a woman's sartorial veil is made as integral to

feminine and virginal identity as her hymeneal 'veil' (Kelly, 2000:91)<sup>84</sup>. It could be argued that Kelly, following Tertullian, refers to the infant girl's phantasy of the primal scene and also to the bride-in-white's veiled appearance at the Church. In other words, the infant girl sees, or in unconscious phantasy imagines, the primal scene only from the veiled perspective of orality and anality. The bride also sees partially, while being protected from the penetrating gaze of the other, as they are from her state of innocence.

I wish to draw upon a poignant case of a woman, whom I shall call Sarah, whose vivid childhood recollection may illustrate this part of the discussion. This unmarried woman expresses her longing to be securely married, but having experienced in her childhood, what Freud describes as the classical phantasy of the primal scene, has become cautious of men:

Sarah recalls, 'I often heard my parents argue, in the other room where they slept. Once, after my father had hit my mother with a shoe she had to have stitches at hospital. I was scared for my mother's safety. This incident became a family secret and never talked about. I used to stay awake at night and make sure that my mom was safe. In the morning I used to wait outside her room until she came out. I grew to hate my father'.

Arguably, as opposed to a positive, loving, facilitating daughter-father experience Sarah appears to have introjected a negative dynamic, projecting feelings of mistrust on to men. Consequently Sarah feels afraid, suspicious of men's intentions and anxious about what might take place in the 'other room', between copulating adults. Alternatively, because of her mother's hospitalisation, Sarah may have experienced her mother's absence in terms of feeling abandoned, excluded or insecure, and being left without mother's presence is left with the father. Sarah's erotised experience and phantasy of the phallic father may be interpreted in terms of the father's aggression in a sado-masochistic relationship, and in turn may provide the basis for Sarah's powerlessness.

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<sup>84</sup> Irigaray, Luce (1974) *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, New York. 1985 also uses the metaphor 'the hymen is the veil masking the mystery' p33n16.

Arguably, a positive outcome of the impact of the primal scene on the infant girl's psychosexual development is pivotal. She has either seen or imagined parental sexual intercourse, which has aroused excitement but also disappointment that she was not the object of her father's attention and envy for sexual satisfaction from him. Simultaneously the infant girl identifies with her mother and is envious of the attention she is receiving from the father, but fears the apparent sadistic father's attack. Envy may surmount her fear of the punishing sadistic father in favour of a predominant feeling of fusion with him.

It could be argued, therefore, the primal scene is a stage upon which the father contains the infant girl's anxiety, frustration and anger towards him as the attacking rival. The father is in a position to facilitate and modify the infant girl's envious projections, counterbalancing them with his own feelings of displacement and rivalry towards his daughter. Meltzer, from an object relating perspective, argues that the 'introjective identification with the combined object induces a bond of mutuality and shared responsibility...a character that favours monogamy' (Meltzer, 1973:73). This unconscious phantasy will, arguably, pivotally impact on the girl's interpretation of the role she adopts in relation to men.

What I have been exploring in this section is the significance and impact of the phantasy of the primal scene on the infant girl who later becomes a bride. In the infant girl's imagination of the primal scene, on the mother's face is an expression of joy which becomes transformed by the infant girl into envy and jealousy of the mother's relationship with the father. Because the infant girl is a desiring subject and has been excluded from the presence of the object of desire. This compelling primal scene, with

these powerful affects, has arguably driven the infant girl, who later becomes a bride, to a place of exchange. In phantasy the bride wishes to change places with the mother imago and experience a moment of joy, however the bride's joy cannot be with the father imago due to the incest prohibition, which becomes the focus of the next discussion. Let us now examine the pith of this investigation and consider how unconscious incestuous desires have influenced the girl's (who later becomes the bride) relationship with the father.

### **3.3 A sacred walk with father: Part A - unconscious incestuous desire**

The investigation into the infant girl's and later the bride's relationship with the father has been divided into two parts. Part A, examines the psychodynamics of the infant girl and the father. Part B, in Part Four, explores the adult bride's reported experience of her father on her wedding day. Let us now imagine the scene at the Church on the wedding day.

The bride's left hand rests on her father's right arm and together they ceremoniously process down the relatively restricted, containing, central aisle of the Church. On either side of them, friends and family have gathered; the bride's to their left and the bridegroom's on their right. For a few visually significant minutes, as they process, father and daughter share an intimate momentary relationship together. This brings the childhood phantasy of an incestuous relationship with the father to an end. A relationship which has been subjected to feelings of parricide, 'jealousy' (SE1:265), 'rivalry' (SE22:119) and guilt: a relationship that her father has facilitated with restraint and prohibition throughout their life together. The infant girl's desires for the father have been barred in order that she will remain spotless, the pure ideal gift, resulting in pride for both father and daughter. Throughout their relationship they have negotiated their incestuous desires for one another within ecclesiastical and societal prohibition. In Freudian terms, their relationship has been restrained or regulated by the superego which constructs the 'no' of incestuous desire. Now, as bride, repressed Oedipal desires of infancy may be revived, as the daughter experiences through affect and enactment infant unconscious desire towards her father. Now, they take a sacred walk together in search of the Church's blessing on her union with another man.

In examining the daughter-father relationship more closely, with particular focus on the unconscious incestuous desires that arguably, both have for each other, I propose to address the question: what impact do unconscious incestuous desires have on the bride-in-white? I will explore this question in various ways: first, by observing how culturally and scripturally the incest prohibition is implemented; second, by examining the psychodynamics of unconscious incestuous desire; third, by exploring the daughter's unconscious incestuous desire for the father; fourth, by examining the father's unconscious incestuous desire for the daughter; fifth, by asking whether there are any benefits from experiencing unconscious incestuous desire for the bride-in-white.

Chasseguet-Smirgel, in understanding Freudian thought suggests that the concept of incest focuses on what has been termed 'the separation principle' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1986:136). Chasseguet-Smirgel maintains that the patriarchal dimension, as opposed to matriarchal (SE13:144), is founded on the incest prohibition. Chasseguet-Smirgel asserts that 'matriarchal law, represents a fusion between mother and child, and excludes the father, the mediator' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1986:136). In contrast the Freudian 'father complex' (SE13:143) and its role as the 'core complex' in neurosis, religion, and social institutions appears to insist upon father as mediator. Chasseguet-Smirgel suggests that in *The Book of Leviticus*, God's commandments clarify the prohibition of relationships with the aim of maintaining 'the barriers separating one thing from another and preserving the very essence of each of them' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1986:137). Chasseguet-Smirgel emphasises that these 'Biblical laws are based on a principle of division and separation': a defensive mechanism known as isolation (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1986:137). Let us now examine more closely the origin of these Biblical exhortations.

As already suggested, the bride and her father attend Church so the bride's union will be sanctified and blessed, arguably a reciprocal arrangement, as the bride and her father have complied with scripture's guiding authority regarding their conduct. We find in the earliest records of Biblical text descriptions of incestuous relationships. Genesis 19v36 records, 'Lot's daughters came to be with child by their father', and Genesis 20v2, 'Abraham said his sister Sarah was his wife'. Subsequently, the Old Testament scriptural injunction against such relationships is enumerated in The Law of Holiness in Leviticus. These observances, addressed to men, come with the injunction: 'the man who keeps them shall have life' (Leviticus 18v5). Ecclesiastical and societal prohibitions are as follows:

No man shall approach a blood-relation<sup>85</sup> for intercourse.  
 You shall not bring shame on your father by intercourse with your mother.  
 [mother]<sup>86</sup>  
 You shall not have intercourse with your father's wife: that is to bring shame on your father. [mother]  
 You shall not have intercourse with your sister, your father's daughter, or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home.  
 [sister, or half-sister by either your father or your mother]  
 You shall not have intercourse with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter. [niece]  
 You shall not have intercourse with a daughter of your father's wife, begotten by your father. [sister]  
 You shall not have intercourse with your father's sister: she is a blood-relation of your father. [paternal aunt]  
 You shall not have intercourse with your mother's sister: she is a blood-relation of your mother. [maternal aunt]  
 You shall not bring shame upon your father's brother by approaching his wife: she is your aunt. [aunt by marriage]  
 You shall not have intercourse with your daughter-in-law: she is your son's wife. [daughter-in-law]  
 You shall not have intercourse with your brother's wife: that is to bring shame on him. [sister-in-law]

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<sup>85</sup> Incest statute of Alabama (1977) includes: 'a person known to be legitimately or illegitimately an ancestor or descendant by blood or adoption, brother or sister of the whole or half blood, or stepchild or stepparent, while the marriage exists, aunt, uncle, nephew or niece of the whole or half blood' In Herman, Judith Lewis (1981) *Father-Daughter Incest*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. p221. 'Prohibited degrees of relationship' are inscribed in UK Law 1949, revised 1994, revised 2004. A putative marriage: supposed invalid by Canon Law, but entered into in good faith by at least one of the parties.

<sup>86</sup> The author's interpretation of the relationship within square brackets.

These Biblical injunctions appear exclusively addressed to the man, regarding the degree of female status which is prohibited. What seems to be implied is that the responsibility rests on him. To continue the Levitical injunctions:

You shall not have intercourse with both a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to have intercourse with them: they are her blood-relations, and such conduct is lewdness.

You shall not take a woman who is your wife's sister to make her a rival-wife, and to have intercourse with her during her sister's lifetime.  
(Leviticus 18v6-18)

The result of breaking these injunctions was to 'bring shame upon her, your father, the family or yourself, which would result in being 'cut off from his people' (Leviticus 18v29). Primarily the intention of the injunctions were to separate from earlier abominable unclean habits and adopt clean habits.

The psychiatrist Judith Herman postulates that these Biblical injunctions 'are not offences against the women...but against the men in whom the rights of ownership, use, and exchange are vested' (Herman, 1981:61). Herman understands that 'every man is expressly forbidden to take the daughters of his kinsmen, but only by implication is he forbidden to take his own daughter' (Herman, 1981:61). Herman interprets this as saying that 'the patriarchal God sees fit to pass over father-daughter incest in silence' (Herman, 1981:61) and hypothesises, validated by her study, father-daughter incest is the result of a 'despotic paternal rule' (Herman, 1981:63). In other words, a strong patriarchal system may lead to the daughter-father relationship becoming blurred and incestuous desire being acted out.

Moi's examination of the Bible leads her to understand that women are 'divided from man', they are 'made of that very thing which is lacking in him' and that 'she will rarely

have a name' (Moi, 1986:140). Moi observes that as 'God generally speaks only to men' this precludes the woman's 'direct relation with the law of the community and its political and religious unity' (Moi, 1986:140). Moi argues that 'woman's knowledge is corporal', her function is the propagation of the race and concerns 'the body, sex and procreation, which permit the existence of the community' (Moi, 1986:140). Moi concludes that while the woman 'aspires to pleasure', the man's concern focuses on 'tribal unity' (Moi, 1986:140). Arguably, therefore, despite the inevitable close daughter-father relationship, the father's concern is situating the family within society.

Freud appears to be well aware of 'how intensely the individual struggles with the temptation to incest and how frequently the barrier is transgressed in phantasy and in reality' (SE7:225n3). Freud suggests that it is during the latency period, when sexual maturation is postponed, that time allows the child to develop the restraint and form the barrier against incest. Freud recognises that 'this barrier is essentially a cultural demand made by society' (SE7:225). Arguably, this could be seen as one of the good-enough father's roles to facilitate and maintain this barrier through a process from Eros to Agapé, that is, from Greek erotic love to Christian love. The father's participation transforms erotised love by engendering a sense, as Kristeva interprets, of 'being loved, independently of merits' (Kristeva, 1987:139) and 'isn't stern but familial and enlightening' and 'without initial reciprocity' (Kristeva, 1987:141).

Freud acknowledges that incest is evidenced in history and illustrates this by drawing on anthropological accounts of the Egyptian Ptolemy's 'brother and sister incest' and from Greek mythology where there are 'examples of love-affairs between fathers and daughters' (SE20:214). Freud attempts to explain, through these ethnographical examples, why 'primitive peoples' were so scrupulous in avoiding incest, while

invoking ‘the most painful’ punishment for its violation (SE13:2). Freud came, however, to no real conclusion other than the acknowledgement that the horror of incest is essentially universal as it is ‘an *infantile* feature’ (SE13:17, original emphasis). Freud observes that ‘the violation of this prohibition is... avenged by the whole clan, as though it were a question of averting some danger that threatens the whole community’ (SE13:4). As already explored in Part One in the section on purity, the bride undergoes a ritual which involves the whole familial group. Freud understands this in terms of ‘totemic exogamy, the prohibition of sexual intercourse between members of the same clan, appears to be the appropriate means for preventing group incest’ (SE13:7-8). The institution of exogamy thus supports and legitimises the incest prohibition by restricting both the choice of marriage partner and sexual liberty (SE13:4). An example of the incest prohibition may be found in *The Book of Common Prayer* in ‘A Table of Kindred and Affinity’, where for example, it states that ‘a man may not marry his daughter’ (Cranmer and Ridley, 1662:608).

Freud comments that there is a ‘tendency on the part of civilisation to restrict sexual life...[and] expand the cultural unit’ (SE21:104). Freud suggests that ‘the prohibition against an incestuous choice of object...is perhaps the most dramatic mutilation which man’s erotic life has in all time experienced’ (SE21:104). In other words, Freud understands the incest prohibition as curbing the sexual lusts of adults. This is echoed in the introductory passage to *The Solemnization of Matrimony* which includes the phrase ‘to satisfy men’s carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding’ (Cranmer and Ridley, 1662:320).

It is interesting to follow Freud’s recapitulation of his theory of the ‘horror of incest’ expounded in *Totem and Taboo* (SE13:1-17). Freud postulates that the origin of ‘the

taboo of incest and the injunction to exogamy' (SE23:82) is 'under the domination of a powerful male, the lord and father of the entire group', who enjoys 'unrestricted power which he exercises with violence' (SE23:81). All females, his wives and daughters and some women from other groups, are under his influence. If the sons 'rouse their father's jealousy they are either killed, castrated or driven out' (SE23:81). The sons, therefore, form small groups, steal wives from other groups and attempt to raise themselves to a similar position in their group as their father in his primal group. Freud suggests that 'youngest sons, protected by their mother's love, could take advantage of their father's increasing age and succeed him on his death', while 'elder sons, however, were often subject to castration or expulsion from the group' (SE23:81).

Freud continues: 'the expelled brothers, unite in order to overpower their father, and as was their custom, they devoured him raw' (SE23:81). Through this 'cannibalistic act' the brothers 'ensure their identification with and incorporation of the hated, feared and honoured father' (SE23:82). The brothers, still not having settled who was to be the sole beneficiary of their father's status, realised, through their common emotional tie, of having been expelled, they had best come to an agreement. A social contract was composed comprising three principles: the renunciation of instinct, the recognition of mutual obligations, and the introduction of definite inviolable 'holy' institutions (SE23:82). Morality and justice were born. 'Each individual renounced his ideal of acquiring his father's position for himself and of possessing his mother and sisters' (SE23:82). Freud asserts that 'thus the taboo on incest and the injunction to exogamy came about' (SE23:82). A festival was inaugurated by the brothers in remembrance of the death and devouring of the primal father. 'This great festival was a triumphant celebration of the combined sons' victory over their father' (SE23:83). In other words, the group brought pressure to bear and restricted the primal father's sole possession and

use of all the females by cannibalistically introjecting his power and through identification with him, the brothers instituted a way to share their inheritance and the women. The institution of exogamy was born and the decision not to marry within the family group became law. Having considered the origin of the incestuous prohibition on the large group, Freud turns to how incest was positioned psychodynamically within the Oedipal triangle.

Freud places the context and root for incestuous desire within the Oedipal family group (SE4:261-3). Freud regards that ‘a child’s relations to her parents as being dominated by incestuous longings’ (SE13:17). Freud recognises that the infant girl’s ‘earliest choice of objects for her love is incestuous and those objects are forbidden ones—her father and her brother’ (SE7:225ff) and the first love, the mother. Through his experience of interpreting dreams, Freud understands how ‘the ego, freed from all ethical bonds, also finds itself at one with all the demands of sexual desire’ including forbidden incestuous objects, for example ‘a man’s mother and sister...or his own children’ (SE15:142-3). In summary, Freud was able to ‘emphasise, [that incestuous desire] is essentially an *infantile* feature’...‘which, as (s)he grows up, (s)he liberates herself from’, or it becomes ‘some degree of psychical infantilism’ (SE13:17, original emphasis). Freud concludes that ‘incestuous fixations of libido continue to play (or begin once more to play) the principal part in her unconscious mental life’ (SE13:17). Freud concludes that as ‘a child’s relation to its parents [are] dominated by incestuous longings’ this becomes the ‘nuclear complex of neurosis’ (SE13:17).

Incestuous longings appear to follow closely behind the affects the primal scene experience has had on the infant girl’s incestuous desire; this earlier psychic sexual encounter continues within the innate bisexual and polymorphously perverse

dispositions which have yet to be suppressed or 'repudiated' (SE7:227). Psychodynamically, the infant girl has until now enjoyed an exclusive, omnipotent relationship with her mother. The girl now finds herself affected by the loss of this exclusivity, due to the intrusion of a third person, her father, as she realises she has been born into a family 'group' (SE18: 70). This arguably drives her to wish for another exclusive relationship and so she turns to her father for satisfaction. The father becomes, as the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion describes, her alternative 'pair' (Bion, 1961:151).

Freud reminds us that 'the genitals have already begun playing their part in the process of excitation' (SE17:187-8), with girls 'the wish to have a child by their father is constant; and this in spite of their being completely incapable of forming a clear idea of the means for fulfilling these wishes' (SE17:188). For Freud, when incestuous love becomes repressed and unconscious it may regress to a debased lower level. When previously the infant girl may have said, 'My father loves only me', this is reversed to 'My father is beating me' (SE17:189). Freud interprets this as 'the sense of guilt and sexual love' converging, in that 'it is not only the punishment for the forbidden genital relation, but also the regressive substitute for that relation' (SE17:189). Freud insists that 'libidinal excitation from this time forward attaches itself to this regressive relational substitute...which finds its outlet in masochistic masturbatory acts' (SE17:188-9).

In order to situate in a broader debate Freud's assumption that the infant girl finds herself born into incestuous relationship I will now return to Judith Herman who argues that it is only within a 'father-dominated family, with a rigid sexual division of labour, in which mother's care for children of both sexes and father's do not' that the observation of the incest taboo makes sense (Herman, 1981:54). Herman asserts that 'a

patriarchal family structure secures to fathers immense powers over their wives and children' and 'these powers include an unrestricted right to physical control, unrestricted sexual rights to wives (hence rape has no legal meaning within marriage), and extensive sexual rights over children' (Herman, 1981:54). Herman suggests that 'fathers have the right to limit the sexual activity of their children, and to determine their choice of sexual and marriage partners (hence fathers 'give away' daughters in marriage)' while as 'primary caretakers of children, mothers as well as fathers have ample opportunity to act upon their own incestuous wishes' (Herman, 1981:55). Herman concludes that 'it is the sexual division of labour, with its resultant profound differences in male and female socialisation, which determines in mothers a greater capacity for self-restraint, and in fathers a greater propensity for sexually exploitative behaviour' (Herman, 1981:55).

Herman applies Freudian theory to her analysis of the girl's development, initiation into the social order, and the role the girl adopts in relation to the mother and father. Taking the case of the daughter, Herman's analysis of the Oedipal triangle first concerns mother, where 'a girl learns that her mother, is both an inferior and like herself', and 'reacts to this discovery with a rejection of her mother and an attempt to separate from her' (Herman, 1981:56). The girl, however, 'cannot entirely repudiate her identification with her mother, since they are of the same gender' (Herman, 1981:56). Second, Herman in considering the girl's father claims that 'the girl's eroticised interest in her father is a reaction to the girl's discovery that males are everywhere preferred to females, and that even her mother chooses men above women, her father and brother above herself' (Herman, 1981:57). Herman conjectures that the girl imagines 'her father has the power to confer the emblem of maleness (penis or phallus) upon her' thus 'the girl wishes to seduce or be seduced by him'. So by establishing a 'privileged

relationship with her father, the girl seeks to be elevated into the superior company of men' (Herman, 1981:57).

Third, Herman considers the subject herself. Herman summarises that for the girl:

No threat attends the expression of the girl's incestuous wishes. If she fears her mother's rivalry, it is because she does not want to lose her mother's love, not because her mother has the power to deprive her of manhood. The girl is female; nothing worse can befall her. (Herman, 1981:57)

Herman asserts that there is a reason for the girl's incestuous desires:

It is through the consummation of incest that the girl seeks to gain those privileges which otherwise must forever be denied to her. Thus the girl has infant inducement to overcome her infantile attachment to her father: she can be neither rewarded for submitting to the incest taboo nor punished for failing to do so. If the girl does renounce her hopes of acquiring male status through a special, incestuous relationship, it is only because these hopes are ultimately disappointed. The father's behaviour towards his daughter thus assumes immense importance. If the father chooses to eroticise the relationship with his daughter, he will encounter little or no resistance. (Herman, 1981:57)

Herman postulates that 'even when the girl does give up her erotic attachment to her father, she is encouraged to persist in the fantasy that some other man, like her father, will some day take possession of her, raising her above the common lot of womankind' (Herman, 1981:57). The 'successful attainment of conventional adult heterosexuality therefore requires an incomplete resolution of the female Oedipus complex and a channelling of female sexuality into submissive relationships with older, stronger, richer, more powerful men' (Herman, 1981:57). Herman, citing the American feminist psychotherapist Phyllis Chesler (in. Connell, 1974:76), reiterates that 'women (in this patriarchal society) are encouraged to commit incest as a way of life. As opposed to marrying our fathers, we marry men like our fathers...men who are older than us, have more money than us, more power than us, are taller than us, are stronger than us...our fathers' (Chesler, 1974:76, in. Herman, 1981:58).

In summary, Herman argues that as the girl learns that the mother is inferior she rejects her. The girl, however, also identifies with the mother's capacity to nurture the preferred male species. The girl reasons that it is because males are perceived as preferred that she desires to turn to the father in the hope he will endow her with masculine properties as she envies the superiority of men. Unlike the boy, the girl does not fear her incestuous wishes as she fears no castrating outcome. Problematic for the girl is the relationship with the father-substitute which becomes a displaced incestuous one, as her attachment to the father appears to persist, at least in phantasy. Herman contrasts this with the boy, who comes to believe that women are 'inferior', including his mother and as a consequence 'suppresses his feminine attitudes' (Herman, 1981:55). Problematic for the boy is that he has to renounce his unconscious incestuous desire, for his first love, the mother, as she is the father's possession, due to his fear of castration, in order to become a man' (Herman, 1981:55-6). Herman concludes that thus the 'male's ability to form affectionate relationships is severely impaired because his identification with the person who first cared for him is forever in doubt' (Herman, 1981:56).

Unconscious incestuous desire, rudimentarily, centres upon familial relationships both of peers and parents, involving the infant's phantasy of immediate satisfaction. Relationships revolving around incestuous desire may include professional and therapeutic ones, where authority and trust are crucial ethical factors, in the face of the human need to be loved, where love is frustrated and the subject learns to delay gratification until such time it is appropriate. Let us now consider how others offer different perspectives on the intimate yet appropriate distance which is striven for between infant girl and her father.

Kristeva, going to the crux of infantile libidinal strivings, follows Freud, by suggesting that 'narcissistic primacy sparks and perhaps dominates psychic life' (Kristeva, 1987:21). Kristeva's hypothesis of Narcissus, suggests that the 'first threat to Narcissus' omnipotence is the existence of an 'other' and for the 'self' this becomes problematic. Consequently Narcissus sets up a 'self-deception', a 'perpetual illusion' and which dominates the choice of love object. Loving, therefore, according to Kristeva's interpretation, proves satisfying in one of two ways: first, 'either through personal narcissistic reward'; second, 'or narcissistic delegation' (where narcissus is the other). In this context we may locate the infant girl's erotic relationship with her father. The living, loving father, not the dead father, enters the girl's 'psychic space' exploding the symbiotic reverie she has enjoyed with her mother by introducing the infinite transference of 'lovehate' (Kristeva, 1987:21). In other words, the father-figure penetrates and intrudes upon both the subject's narcissistic self-deception to reality and the infant/mother intimacy, generating ambivalent feelings of loving and hating, and in so doing opens up the infant girl's world to new possibilities. The psychotherapist David Mann illuminates the issue of erotic transference and counter-transference, which arguably embraces the daughter/father relationship by suggesting that both are 'sexual subjects with passion of his or her own' (Mann, 1999:76). Mann adds that when the two subjects encounter each other's unconscious incestuous and murderous desires, this 'can become highly transformational' (Mann, 1999:77), 'leading to greater authenticity, intimacy, expanding the capacity for love and loving' (Mann, 1999:22).

Arguably, the extremes of love and hate require modification, containment or even subjugation. Freud focuses on the adult woman who falls in love with a man who is perceived to be in authority. Far from the loving feeling being a transference cure, it

becomes ‘an expression of resistance’, in order ‘to assure herself of her irresistibility’, ‘to destroy his authority’ and ‘to gain all the other promised advantages that are attributable to him’ (SE12:163). Freud suggests that if in her endeavour to find love she feels ‘humiliation’, ‘she will not fail to take her revenge’ (SE12:164). Freud recognises, however, that there is one class of women who are without satisfaction ‘who tolerate no surrogates’, those ‘who refuse to accept the psychical in place of the material’ (SE12:166-7). Freud asserts that ‘love consists of the repeat of infantile reactions’, in an almost ‘compulsive’ manner ‘verging on the pathological’ (SE12:168), and impaired only by ‘infantile fixations’ (SE12:169). Freud’s conclusion concerning erotic transference, involves the girl, to ‘suppress, renounce or sublimate her instincts’ (SE12:164), while the father’s responsibility is to facilitate her through ‘a decisive stage in her life’ (SE12:170). Freud argues that:

she has to learn from him to overcome the pleasure principle, to give up a satisfaction which lies to hand but is socially not acceptable, in favour of a more distant one, which is perhaps altogether uncertain, but which is both psychologically and socially unimpeachable. (SE12:170)

In other words, Freud argues that the extremes of loving and hating, humiliation and revenge require transforming, suppressing, renouncing and sublimating and that in the girl as these qualities are otherwise, to some degree, socially unacceptable, she is required to become ‘socially unimpeachable’ (SE12:170).

The Jungian analyst Andrew Samuels appears to take up Freud’s theme of the authoritative man’s involvement when, following the psychoanalyst Harold Searles (1959), views the love of the parent of the opposite sex as ‘helping the child acquire enough strength to accept the unrealisability of her Oedipal strivings’ (Samuels, 1985:167). The father may be seen as facilitating a reciprocal transformational process where ‘the loved parent returns love and, above all, does see the child as a potential love

partner but communicates that, regrettably it cannot be' (Samuels, 1985:168). Arguably, the father contains the child's stress by understanding her frustration and re-presents her incestuous phantasies in a socially acceptable form.

The psychoanalyst Anthony Storr suggests that if 'sexual impulses find satisfaction within the family...the parent-child relationship is damaged' (Storr, 1960:96). Storr reasons that because in a sexual situation the parent 'abrogates parenthood' it becomes a 'threat to the child's security' (Storr, 1960:96-7). Additionally in the 'marked discrepancy of power...the child is not treated as a person [but] as a thing' (Storr, 1960:97-8). Storr links, in infant terms, 'sex is apt to be terrifying' and understands that 'love means chiefly tenderness, protection and security' (Storr, 1960:97-8). Storr concludes that 'it is not surprising that adult passion is equated with violence, and incestuous advances of a parent are felt as a threat rather than as a manifestation of affection' (Storr, 1960:98). Similarly, Storr and Mann recognise that from the psychotherapist's position 'falling in love with a patient is incestuous due to an abuse of power' (Mann, 1999:22, Storr, 1960:153).

To summarise, the impact of unconscious incestuous desire and the incest prohibition have on the bride-in-white may be considered under three headings: psychodynamically, anthropologically and therapeutically. Psychodynamically, Freud locates unconscious incestuous desire within the Oedipal constellation and within the backdrop of oral and anal phases for the infant girl and of every child. Libidinally the infant girl finds herself on the cusp of the genital strivings of the phallic phase and in a space between the once all providing but now depriving mother. Arguably, the infant girl longs for immediate satisfaction, so turns away from the mother and looks for phallic satisfaction from the father. The unconscious incestuous desire requires

containing as it has an impact on the whole Oedipal constellation: daughter, father, mother and other.

Anthropologically, not only the bride but the whole of society appears subject to the incest taboo through the implementation of canon and civil law, as society cannot afford incest. As the incest taboo is a social construction, the subject internalises the collective prohibition: a phylogenetic memory trace of our forebears. Arguably, the public sacred walk, father and bride-in-white make in the Church, visually symbolises that neither party has acted out on their unconscious incestuous desire. It could be argued that having resisted incestuous wishes towards the father, the pure virgin bride, untouched by any other and containing no one else's babies, is to the father a highly valued commodity.

Therapeutically, the psychoanalytic perspective cautions, regarding the powerful unconscious incestuous desire in the psychotherapeutic room, that, due to a perceived imbalance of power there may be an oscillation of unconscious incestuous desire and prohibition. This oscillation may be considered a benefit for the therapeutic experience. The oscillation may become a learning process in handling feelings of love and rejection for the analysand, which arguably parallels the role the daughter takes within the Oedipal constellation and in particular within the daughter/father relationship.

As the daughter and father process down the aisle together, he signifies lawful prohibition while she is the locus of desire. Her smooth maternal belly signifies there are no contents, and the white veil and dress symbolise purity. It could be argued, therefore, that the bride-in-white, who found as a infant girl that she was located within incestuous family dynamics, now walking with her father, may be considered highly

desirable. Arguably, this has transpired for two reasons. First, because the father has been the facilitator, negotiator, and mediator as well as prohibiter of conscious and unconscious incestuous desire. Second, in this moment, the bride recaptures the phantasy of possessing the father, whose representation was an ego-ideal: a once unconscious incestuous desire. Now the postponement of this satisfaction, which has long been awaited, is nearing fruition in the bride-in-white's displacement of her desires onto a non-incestuous other. Having considered the infant girl's and later the bride's unconscious incestuous desire for an intimate relationship with the father being met with societal prohibition, let us now investigate how the infant and later the bride psychologically uses clothes.

### **3.4 How the bride psychologically uses clothes to process change**

Having considered an historical position of clothes in Part One, let us explore some psychoanalytical aspects of clothes. Arguably, a central feature for the bride-in-white is her dress. But why are clothes so significant especially to women? For example, some women may use clothes as a fetish, while others experience clothes as containing, and as clothes touch the skin they can unconsciously make a re-connection to the mother, or clothes can become social signs. In Part Four, I will explore how, in Winnicottian terms, the bride's wedding dress can be interpreted as a 'transitional object'. Let us now explore the infant's unconscious relation to clothes by first exploring how clothes may be understood in terms of a fetish by them standing in for something else.

The German hypnotherapist and psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1899:517) argues that 'the fetish object originates from an association with the subject's first sexual excitation' (in Gamman, 1994:41). Freud in 1905 understands that 'the normal sexual object is replaced by another which bears some relation to it, but is entirely unsuited to serve the normal sexual aim' (SE7:153). In other words, an object takes on an 'overvaluation' and is 'connected with an abandonment of the sexual aim' (SE7:153). Freud suggests that the object becomes a symbol for the sexual object and can be an inanimate object like a piece of clothing and 'such substitutes are likened to the fetish' (SE7:153). That is, the process of replacement of a part of the mother's body is made by some inanimate object which becomes erotised.

Freud by 1909 in directing his attention to women asserts that:

half of humanity must be classed among the clothes fetishists. All women are clothes fetishists...It is a question of the repression of the [libidinal] drive, this time however in the passive form of allowing oneself to be seen, which is repressed by the clothes, and on account of which clothes are raised to a fetish. (Freud, 1909: In Gamman, 1994:41)

Thus Freud links fetishism to the repression of the scopophilic instinct 'to look', as already discussed in Part One. That is to suggest that female clothes fetishists not only repress the sight of their mother's 'castration' but also their own. By idealising clothes the subject displaces the other's gaze from the 'castrated' state onto the whole covered desirable body. Freud postulates that there is a 'splitting' process, whereby one aspect of the object becomes suppressed, while the other part is idealised.

Freud, in 1927 suggests that 'the fetish is a substitute for...a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost' (SE21:152). In other words, 'the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy [and arguably the infant girl] once believed in and does not want to give up' (SE21:152-3). That is, in the infantile theory of sexuality, 'the fetish stands for the missing penis of the woman', or 'the fetish achieves...a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it'; 'the fetish being [her] substitute for a genital' (SE21:154). Freud concludes that 'one would expect that the objects chosen as substitutes for the absent female phallus would be such as appear as symbols of the penis in other connections as well' (SE21:155). Freud is careful to distinguish that this process is a 'disavowal' of castration, rather than a repression or denial. That is, the [girl] retains the belief that she once had a penis and now has 'lost' it, hence the need for compensation or penis substitute. Freud claims that this oscillation or splitting of the ego 'saves the fetishist from becoming a homosexual (SE21:154). Freud suggests that the process of the 'splitting of the ego in the process of defence', a 'disavowal' (SE23:275), is a defence against an incomplete attempt at 'turning away from reality' (SE23:277). This is illustrated in the persistent co-existing alternating states between the girl believing that once she possessed a penis and her reluctant acceptance of reality that she 'lacks' one, thus a disavowal of castration.

The first Russian psychoanalyst Moshe Wulff describes an item of clothing ‘which had been worn by the mother’ as being pressed between the hands while the sixteen months old infant sucks the thumb during the process of falling asleep (Wulff, 1946:450). Wulff suggests that ‘the fetish represents a substitute for the mother’s body and in particular her breast’ and that this ‘manifestation is a reaction formation to an inhibited or ungratified instinctual impulse’ (Wulff, 1946:450).

As already established, once the girl accepts castration, psychologically she no longer fears castration. We might ask then, can the bride or the dress or the relationship to her dress be understood in terms of a fetish? Arguably, the visual affect the bride-in-white evokes can be interpreted as a triumph over the reality of her castration. Also, the idealised image the bride-in-white creates, becomes a compensation for the bride’s ‘lost’ penis because by wearing the white dress the whole image becomes powerfully phallic for herself and in the other’s gaze.

The psychic processing of separation and the amelioration of anxiety arguably continues throughout the life cycle. Let us now investigate how the use of apparel, during the subject’s attempt to process anxiety, can be understood in psychodynamic terms.

McDougall, in discussing ‘transitional phenomena’ (Winnicott, 1951a) suggests that:

If a small child dare not play in the mother’s presence, fearing that mother will either withdraw interest from her as she plays or take over the game, then any thrust toward creative independence will be fraught with this double danger. *To create* is to claim one’s right to separate existence and individual identity. (McDougall, 1995:102, original emphasis)

In other words, in the ‘transitional space’ of playing with mother there is the potential for the illusion of her support, but also frustration when the mother expresses her opinion.

McDougall suggests that clothing can become the locus of affect. McDougall asserts that clothes can be 'invested, rather like 'transitional object's', as they can 'play the role of the environmental mother of early infancy, reassuring...bodily integrity and psychic security' (McDougall, 1995:204). The clothes become reassuring, especially if they are forbidden to be washed, as this represents a degree of physical and psychic integrity, in that, the subject 'knows who they are' (McDougall, 1995:204). In other words, on the one hand clothes can be felt as though they 'keep [the subject] together', arguably experienced as containing for both the body and the psyche. Yet on the other hand, if the clothes were 'ripped off' then there would be 'no defence' against the 'devouring' gaze of the (m)other. The hope being to confirm one's existence in the other's eyes as a separate individual, not being 'devoured' or 'seduced' and defensively not needing to devour or seduce but to secure an autonomous, subjective, liberated identity yet while in the (m)other's presence.

Arguably, from McDougall's position, there seems to be a tension between feeling safely contained by the clothes and the risk involved in being seen wearing clothes that attract overt or unwarranted attention by a devouring gaze. That is to say, that on the one hand in the attempt at confirming one's existence there appears to be an unconscious dynamic between feeling 'the fear of nothingness', an 'inner deadness', and 'the foreboding of non-existence' (McDougall, 1995:204). On the other hand there becomes the need to 'give meaning to one's subjectivity' (McDougall, 1995:205) and to exist in the (m)other's eyes and receive 'maternal protection' (McDougall, 1995:207). In conclusion, therefore, wearing clothes may feel physically and psychologically integrating while offering reassurance in the face of a penetrating gaze.

McDougall also discusses how the shape of clothes that touch the physical body and once worn, they and the body ‘melt’ together and how ‘you’re fine inside them’ (McDougall, 1982:235). McDougall links the tactile experience of ‘the clothes which touch our bodies and envelop us’ (McDougall, 1982:235) with ‘being enveloped in [mother’s] arms’ (McDougall, 1982:236), which can resonate with feelings of ‘closeness’, or ‘disgust’ (McDougall, 1982:236). McDougall emphasises that ‘our clothes are a bit like the mothers of our babyhood. Our mothers choose our clothes, put them on us when we’re little; and in a way they remain associated with her’ (McDougall, 1982:236).

In considering this position, we see that McDougall addresses the internalised and external experience of the subject’s relation to clothes both during childhood and into adulthood. Another way in which we can interpret how clothes may be used in connection with bridging the gap between subjective experience and the maternal world is explored by the psychoanalyst Robert Bak (1953) who considers how women’s clothes may be unconsciously equated with the ‘vagina or womb, phallus, or the more primitive dynamic of mother’s skin’ (Bak in Stoller, 1968:124). Bak argues that clothes may ‘recapture the primitive sensuality of having her skin applied against’ the subject’s body (Bak in Stoller, 1968:124). And adds that the psychoanalyst Fredrick Worden suggests that clothes, being tactile and sensual, can ‘restore the blissful lost closeness with the mother’ (Bak in Stoller, 1968:124). Bak (1974) suggests that the term ‘infantile fetish is a misnomer for the ‘transitional object’, although the ‘transitional object’ may acquire different meanings and functions, such as a fetishistic element, in later developmental phase’ (Bak in Hong, 1978:54). Stoller suggests that ‘the infant child [can become the] ‘transitional object’ for its mother’, thus setting up in the child a

struggle for autonomy, and in the mother a struggle to fill her emptiness (Stoller, 1968:124).

Feminist and psychotherapist Susie Orbach discusses how some clothes are perceived as being endowed with status and offer social cohesion. Orbach discusses the affects appertaining to the woman's relation to clothes and how they can become the conscious and unconscious locus of desire, aspiration and value. Orbach asserts that clothes may become 'invested with a power quite beyond their raw material' such as 'human values of status, power, wealth and sexuality...albeit transitory' (Orbach, 1986:13). Clothes may also 'become signposts for how to read people...immediate identity badges which convey (and at times attempt to conceal) information about class, gender, ethnicity (frequently), and style' and 'signal the entry into a social group' (Orbach, 1986:13). While Orbach does not express clothes in terms of being 'transitional', as Bak, McDougall and Winnicott, Orbach demonstrates how some clothes, like other aspects of body language, attract attention by being appealing, can be 'regarded as indulgent' (Orbach, 1986:135) and 'aesthetically pleasing' (Orbach, 1986:136). Orbach suggests that clothes can also convey inner meanings such as:

the way the wearer carries herself gives clues to how she feels, [can] be soothing [or] fraught with tension [where] many women find it extremely hard to spend money on themselves which can be associated with a gargantuan indulgence. [Thus] the subsequent hoarding then becomes justified as a desperate attempt at some kind of security. (Orbach, 1986:135-6)

In the light of these analyses it can be argued that wearing clothes can be experienced as a defence against narcissistic vulnerability, as clothes may be something to hide behind, be covered over with, or used as a means of identification. Arguably, the bride may feel contained in a full-length gown of white, which attracts the maximum amount of attention, and not only requires the gown's protection to cover her narcissistic

vulnerability by diverting the gaze onto her whole body, but also uses the gown to demand confirmation of her existence from the (m)other.

As already explored in Part One, the history of white apparel, if viewed in religious terms, suggests that adorning white garments symbolise outward purity and inward purity of intention in order to establish the illusion of approval from and be reunited with ones creator. In other words wearing the correct clothes relieves anxiety because this potentially avoids any sense of disapproval or the others' rejection. This may be illustrated in terms of the Biblical 'Wedding-Feast', that when one of the guests came 'without their wedding clothes', resulted in their being ejected from the group (Matthew,22v11).

Arguably, approval from the group or ones creator may be considered essential. In spiritual terms, the 'creator', the one with whom one seeks to be reunited can be considered as God, whereas psychodynamically the 'creator' can be interpreted as the mother. In physical terms, Douglas suggests that publicly working out rituals of purity creates social unity and gives meaning to a 'moral code' (Douglas, 1966:9-13). In psychological terms, Freud argues that fear and hostility predominate in the woman's notions of physical purity versus physical violation, such as defloration and suggests these dangers can be averted through 'acts of atonement and purification' (SE13:20). Thus by wearing the correct clothes during ritual ceremony the wearer receives the group's, the (m)other's, and God's approval.

In summary, the use of clothes can be understood in terms of bridging the maternal world and the autonomy of the subject. If it is accepted that the bride's white gown, an inanimate object of clothing, which envelops the bride, can be understood as offering a

connection with the maternal realm, as well as offering warmth and security during a process of uncertainty, and during a time of setting up her own partnership and home, then we could view that the wedding dress has the same qualities as a 'transitional object'. In Part Four I will consider how the bride's statements, referring to the dress, can be interpreted psychologically in terms of being a 'transitional object'. Let us now move from examining psychoanalytic theory to explore how the bride-in-white experiences the wedding ceremony.

## PART FOUR

### **Interpreting the marriage ceremony with reference to the bride-in-white's 'felt' experience**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In Part One my aim was to investigate as wide a range of themes as possible applicable to the subjective experience of the bride-in-white. Themes included, the history and idealisation of female virginity, human rites of passage involving separation and integration, issues concerning being found acceptable or excluded from the group in Biblical or Oedipal terms, why brides are veiled and considered sacred, how Queen Victoria influenced the phenomenon of the bride-in-white, and introducing possible psychoanalytic themes relevant to the bride-in-white's subjective experience.

Building on these possible psychoanalytic themes introduced in Part One, and Part Two, Appendix D re-examined these psychoanalytic themes in the light of the grounded theory methodology chosen for this qualitative research. Appendix D established that emerging from the participants' data, although several themes were considered, four predominant themes emerged. In an attempt to guard against researcher bias, in fitting the data to the theory and the theory to the data, further 'case study' examinations, based on whole interviews, are offered in Appendix E.

Before any close examination of the data could be made in Part Four, key to psychoanalytic investigation is that infant experiences can often be repressed and emerge in adulthood, so the infant girl's psychological development was investigated in Part Three, with particular attention to the bride-in-white. Thus, being looked at, and how clothes are used, was explored along with locating the infant girl in the pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother, and the girl's Oedipal relationship to the father.

## **4.2 Psychoanalytic interpretation**

Participant's statements have not deliberately been selected in order to prove, substantiate or challenge psychoanalytic theory, however by applying a psychodynamic lens offers the opportunity to illuminate the bride's responses in a special way. As mentioned in Part One, Freud suggests that aims of interpretation include: 'filling the gaps in the memory of childhood' (SE15:201), by 'describing the event in the greatest possible detail and putting the affect into words' (SE2:6-10). Hence in Part Four the emphasis focuses on examining the participants' responses as closely as possible with special attention to feelings.

Other ways of understanding the aim of psychoanalytic interpretation include 'reactivating the complete reproduction of the Oedipus complex' (Ferenczi, 1926:267), 'to increase self-awareness by making the person conscious of processes within themselves of which they were previously unconscious' (Rycroft, 1968:77). In other words, aims of psychodynamic interpretation include making links between the past and the present by addressing feelings of sexual desire, rivalry, exclusion from and frustration with the parents thus working through problems of separation and of feeling separate yet 'contained' (Bion, 1962a:90) in the presence of another. The post-Freudian theorist Michael Balint, argues that interpretation gives expression to 'instinctual wishes that demand gratification' by becoming 'directed towards object-relating' offering a 'New Beginning' (Balint, 1952:191-2). Donald Winnicott adds that interpretation includes 'ego-strengthening, corresponding to the ego-support of the mother', the loosening up of defences, towards 'ego-independence' and to 'ego-integration, autonomy and personal omnipotence' (Winnicott, 1962:168).

Problematic with Freud's 'fundamental rule' of therapeutic technique in the talking and listening cure, that of 'apparently unconstrained conversation' (SE2:56), or 'free association', is when to stop. Applicable to both are when the subject stops talking and the listener stops listening, but also at the point of intervention, when the interpretation is enough. As already mentioned in Part Two, while the bride's statements are free associative, they are also contained within a questionnaire. The précised statements that have been selected for closer examination in Part Four, focus on illuminating the progression of the bride's wedding day experience. Thus interpretations however exhaustive, have their limitations and arguably are recognised as not being inexhaustible. As discussed in Part Two, perhaps interpretation can only be part of the truth and never complete or completed. Let us consider how psychoanalytic interpretation can be brought to an end.

Freud, when considering *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* (SE23:211-53) implies these positions. James Strachey, editor of the 'Standard Edition' points to an air of 'pessimism' by stressing Freud's acute awareness of psychoanalytic 'limitations' (SE23:211). Freud, however, following Ferenczi's insistence, asserts that 'a requirement in every successful analysis' is that 'every female patient...must have got rid of her masculinity complex and must emotionally accept without a trace of resentment the implications of her female role' (SE23:251)<sup>87</sup>. Freud maintains that this is in order to stave off 'outbreaks of severe depression', due to 'the repudiation of femininity' (SE23:252). In Freudian terms, this implies that when this position is accomplished then the analysis can stop. Let us now consider how Winnicott conceptualises uninhibited talking.

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<sup>87</sup> Freud's statement may be critiqued for its insistence and heterosexual bias. Feminists and others may prefer to say that the aim of a successful analysis concerns the illumination of defences.

Winnicott's understanding of 'free association' was related to the infant's playing. Winnicott emphasises that 'playing is inherently exciting and precarious' (Winnicott, 1971:52), and likens playing to the 'transitional phenomena' found in 'a human being's capacity for cultural experience' (Winnicott, 1971:40). Winnicott argues that playing 'belongs to health, facilitates growth, leads to group relationships and can be a form of communication' (Winnicott, 1971:41). Winnicott suggests, however, that when 'the physical excitement of instinctual involvement becomes evident, then playing stops' (Winnicott, 1971:39). In other words, if the free association of, what we may call 'talk-play' is interrupted by physical needs that require acting upon, then the 'talk-play' relationship fundamentally changes in character demolishing the potential for free associative communication. Thus, in Winnicottian terms, interpretation stops due to acting out. Let us now consider how Rycroft would accept an interpretation as complete.

Charles Rycroft asserts that 'correct interpretations are those which both explain adequately the 'material' being interpreted and are formulated in such a way and communicated at such a time that they have actuality for, and making sense to, the subject' (Rycroft, 1968:76). In other words, this is to intimate that, when the subject considers that sense is made, the interpretation can stop. Arguably, analysis ends when some sense has been made of the nonsense of personal non-understanding. Thus we are obliged to accept that analysis is never the last word on the matter.

I have aimed to interpret each bride's personal experience separately in order to maintain discrete boundaries and not to conflate more than one bride's individual experience, thus a certain amount of repetition will be inevitable. Let us now turn to the process of interpreting the brides' statements, in connection with their 'felt' experience,

but first let us consider the frame within which the bride is located and discuss how the marriage ritual may offer a sense of order or chaos.

### 4.3 Interpreting the ceremony in Oedipal terms: chaos or order

Framing the bride-in-white's experience is the wedding ceremony, 'The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony', inscribed in *The Book of Common Prayer*<sup>88</sup>, in the Church [Figure 7]. Currently considered as traditional, this ceremony was formed by others prior to it being translated from the thirteenth century Latin Sarum Rite, after the break from Rome, into English during the reign of Edward VI, put into printed form in 1549 and revised in its current form in 1662. The author's motives for this ceremony are enumerated at the outset. The motivations are paraphrased as follows: 'to signify a union between Christ and the Church', and to attain an 'honourable' state among ones peers. The ceremony is not to be undertaken 'lightly...to satisfy carnal lusts', but for the 'procreation of children', be 'a remedy against sin and avoid fornication', for the 'mutual help and comfort in prosperity and adversity' (Cranmer and Ridley, 1662:320). In order to understand this ceremony better, let us first explore an anthropological view of ritual and second a psychoanalytic interpretation of religious ceremony.

Claude Levi-Strauss argues that 'ritual', as discussed in Part One, is not a social game of chance but is the dramatisation 'played' by a defined set of rules' (Levi-Strauss, 1972:30). Levi-Strauss suggests that ritual is 'played' between the fertilising agent and the fertilised object, a system based on reciprocity, the purpose of which is to establish a negotiated alliance' (Levi-Strauss, 1963:240). Levi-Strauss claims that 'ritual *conjoins*, as it brings about a union between two initially separate groups. In the case of games the symmetry is therefore pre-ordained and it is of the structural kind since it follows from the principle that the values are the same for both sides: asymmetry is engendered'

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<sup>88</sup> Cranmer, Thomas and Ridley, Nicholas (1662) *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of The Church of England*, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge: London. 'Its publication followed the Restoration of the monarchy two years after Charles II acceded to the throne. Its aim was to restore English life to the stability known before the Civil War. Its purpose was to be an instrument of social control, re-establishing reasonable religion and a wholesome and balanced pattern both in family and community life'. (The Right Rev Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield, in *The Times* 31.03.2012, p95). Revised by the Council, The Archbishops' (2000) *Marriage: Common Worship*, Church House Publishing: London.

(Levi-Strauss, 1972:32, original emphasis). In other words, as the British psychoanalyst Marion Milner suggests, 'ritual creates order and coherence, instead of chaos and misunderstanding' (Milner, 1987:84).

Mary Douglas suggests, as already established in Part One, that 'rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience' (Douglas, 1966:3). Arguably, the marriage ceremony legitimises within their social group the sexual union of two disparate people by creating a common experience. Douglas argues that a sacred ceremony is marked out by symbolic patterns of public display and private ritual composed of 'words and signs' (Douglas, 1966:29). Douglas claims that 'it is impossible to have social relations without symbolic acts as ritual provides a frame' (Douglas, 1966:78). That is, time and place are marked off, alerting a special kind of expectancy and creating a mood which carries significance. Douglas postulates that:

framing and limiting experience shuts in desired themes or shuts out intruding ones. Thus by framing, the ritual aids in selecting experiences for concentrated attention, and is creative at the level of performance. Ritual is enhanced with external symbols which aid the co-ordination of brain and body as action sharpens the focus of the attention on the wish. (Douglas, 1966:78)

In other words, mnemonic action stimulates memory by bringing it under control with the use of external signs. On the level of performance external actions include the ceremonial processing into and out of the Church, the giving and receiving of the bride, the words of the ceremony and the vows enunciated. Significant signs for the bride include the wedding dress, the wedding ring and the marriage certificate.

Douglas suggests that where restrictions are imposed, they 'offer certainty where otherwise there could be uncertainty, as boundaries and limits are imposed when boundaries are threatened' (Douglas, 1966:118). Douglas suggests that 'the sacred

needs to be continually hedged in with prohibitions' and therefore rituals are bound to be expressions of 'separation and demarcation and by beliefs in the danger of crossing forbidden boundaries' (Douglas, 1966:27). Douglas recognises that ritual demarcates and restricts. Thus by bringing order, disorder is implied and avoided. Douglas suggests that 'ritual draws on powers and truths which cannot be reached by conscious effort' like 'the disorder of the mind, in dreams, faints and frenzies' (Douglas, 1966:117). Arguably, ritual facilitates difficult transformations including guilt associated with repudiations, separation during the task of forming of a new union. Ritual therefore may transform the infant's desire for unending, self-replenishing enjoyment and a refusal to face loss and separation. Douglas concludes that the 'neglect of ritual may lead to madness, as ritual conserves sanity and life while separating death from life, and sanity is assured if ritual is performed' (Douglas, 1966:217). Let us now move from an anthropological understanding of ritual to consider a psychoanalytic positioning of the marriage ceremony.

Freud suggests that 'the formation of religion seems to be based on the suppression, and renunciation of certain instinctual impulses, that are self-seeking, and socially harmful but are not without a sexual component' (SE9:125). Freud claims that religious ceremony, like obsessive actions, defends against 'an unconscious sense of guilt associated with prohibitions linked to the idea of punishment, with the internal perception of the temptation' and suggests that 'what remains unconscious, is the connection between the occasion on which this expectant anxiety and the danger which it conjures up' (SE9:123). Freud emphasises that 'ceremonial actions arise partly as a defence against the temptation and partly as a protection against the ill which is expected' (SE9:124). Let us now explore what may be unconsciously defended against in the ritual.

Freud argues that ‘the libido follows the paths of narcissistic needs and attaches itself to the objects which ensure the satisfaction of those needs’ (SE21:24). Freud recognises that first the mother satisfies the infant’s hunger and offers protection against anxiety, but later the father replaces the mother because he offers stronger protection. Freud suggests that ‘from the helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection through love which was provided by the father and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout life, makes it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one’ (SE21:30). Thus a displacement onto an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent father figure offers ‘order rather than chaos’ (SE21:34), alleviating anxiety and providing security.

Freud argues that civilisation is built on the coercive ‘renunciation of instinct’ (SE21:7) through prohibition because of the infant’s polymorphous disposition. Thus when exhibiting control over instinctual passions, such as incestuous desire, the subject can then be held in high regard. This control, in Freudian terms, is attained through the internalisation of a paternal superego, including the command ‘thou shall not kill’, thus inculcating narcissistic satisfactions derived from moral values and ideals<sup>89</sup>. The consolation for the ‘renunciation of instinct’ is that the wedding ceremony provides the group with the occasion for sharing in the highly valued emotional experiences of the bride-in-white’s achievement and ideals of the, until now, ‘renunciation of sexual instinct’: all are enriched with narcissistic satisfaction because the bride-in-white symbolises being physically unblemished. From this position, in Freudian terms, the bride-in-white signifies the perfecting of control of instinct and becomes an object of elevation and exaltation. In other words, the wedding ceremony constructs a frame

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<sup>89</sup> As discussed in Part One, the Virgin Mary, Abbess Ethelburga and Jeanne d’Arc were all extolled for their virtue and self-restraint.

within which the subject submits to the suppression of guilt-laden unconscious instinctual desires, (once given expression during infancy), but now within the frame of adulthood, finds acceptability. Having explored some views of the structure and purpose of ritualised ceremony, let us now apply Freud's Oedipal theory to the Church ceremony, to which the bride-in-white submits.

Arguably, we cannot directly interpret the bride's statements in Oedipal terms as the ceremony, referred to above, is pre-ordained and therefore the bride responds to the ceremony. Let us therefore consider the wedding ceremony in Oedipal terms. The bride-in-white, like others attending the ceremony, submits to a pre-ordained established order, a custom that happens, and what other people like to do. This offers all who are present at the ceremony a sense of security and structure. As all who attend, take up a pre-determined role, let us consider a psychodynamic overview of the principal characters' role.

The mother, classically, privately clothes and undresses the infant, provides nourishment, and a safe environment. The mother, as already established in Part Three, also facilitates a symbiotic relationship with the infant where each are dependent upon the other and both are part of each other as if they are one. The ceremony casts the mother in the role of the prime nurturer. As will be explored in greater depth later in Part Four, the mother and daughter may shop together for the dress, and the mother may assist her daughter to adorn her white wedding gown and help its later removal after the ceremony. The ritual dictates that in the Church the mother passively sits at the front, like a bystander, only able to look on without active participation. It could be suggested that the mother is eclipsed by the bride-in-white who, as already established in Part One, 'attracts the maximum amount of attention'.

In a dramatised manner the father takes an active role by accompanying the bride-to-be on her journey away from the familial home to the Church and gives the bride away into the safe keeping of another man. The father's role, in the ceremony, from a Freudian perspective can be seen to illustrate the Oedipus complex. The father, as already established in Part Three, interrupts the pre-Oedipal exclusive infant-mother attachment and the couple's symbiotic reverie. Like the father of infancy, the father in the ceremony becomes the one who separates the daughter from the mother. So when the father gives his daughter away on her wedding day, as directed by the marriage ceremony, this can be interpreted as containing the Oedipal resonance of intrusion by continuing infant experience into adulthood. While the father takes an active, but silent role during the ceremony, at the reception the father classically becomes the interlocutor by making a speech (Llewelyn, 1993:231), while the bride and the mother remain silent, compatible with Freudian theory, that the male plays an active role while the female becomes relatively passive.

What is interesting is that Jacques Lacan suggests that the 'Name-of-the-Father' takes the place of the 'Other', the signifier of the symbolic triad' who constitutes the law (Lacan, 1966:217). Lacan makes it clear that he is not referring necessarily to the real father, or the paternal imago, but to the symbolic father. Lacan argues that, unlike Freud who 'links the Oedipal father to the Oedipus complex in every personal history to the Oedipal father's murder, thus the subject becomes indebted by binding themselves for life to the Law' (Lacan, 1966:199). Lacan maintains that 'the symbolic father, in so far as he signifies this Law, is certainly the dead father' (Lacan, 1966:199).

Arguably, the Church, on the wedding day could be understood in Winnicottian terms as providing a socially acceptable, safe, environment within which to transform unmanageable separation anxieties and within which to experience an unfamiliar solemn ceremony with dignity and gravity. As already discussed in Part One, prohibited degrees of affiliation are inscribed in the Biblical injunctions of the Book of Leviticus thus exerting the boundaries around who is permitted to marry whom, and subsequently establishing who must be 'given away' and who can be received. Thus, as concluded in Part One, the established Church controls sexual union. The minister performs the ceremony, by enunciating each word in the correct sequence, in order to validate the ritual of joining two people. The minister pronounces: 'that they be man and wife together, in the 'Name-of-the-Father' and then announces the blessing on behalf of 'God-the-Father'. Thus through the authority of the minister, the Church declares to the group that this new union is acceptable.

The principal role in the ceremony is taken by the bride, (the object of desire). The bride submits to the authority of Ecclesiastical Law, and by doing so becomes transformed by the ceremony, both of which promote her to relinquish familial ties and adopt the passive role of being 'given away'. The infant girl may have had an exclusive relationship with the mother, or had unconscious incestuous desires towards the father, but the bride-in-white in the ceremony visually demonstrates that she is a prized possession. With this psychodynamic understanding of the mother's, the father's, the Church's and the bride's role during the ceremony, the bride's statements can be interpreted in terms of the ceremony and the bride's response to these principal roles.

As each participant to this study considers the significance of the Church ceremony, the manner in which the bride's statements indicate the effect that the ceremony had on

them seems to fall into five themes: First, that of experiencing a sense of God's presence; Second, offering a sense of continuity; Third, suggesting the gravity of the ceremony; Fourth, experiencing the affect of the mood; Fifth that the ceremony is influenced by parents. Let us examine, through selective reports, each of these themes more closely. It will be noticed that some of the bride's statements contain overlapping themes however the main theme under discussion will predominate during the interpretation. I will now consider précised statements given during the interview.

First, the majority of brides who were interviewed report on the experience of sensing God's presence during the ceremony as the following reports illustrate:

*We found our beautiful local Church service formal and rather nice. The minister was nice and that was important. He was pleased that we agreed to be married in Church in front of God. That was important because my dad had passed away and I felt that he was there for me, just like my granddad who had passed away too. Somehow it felt as though they are going to be there more. I don't know if that sounds silly but that's how I felt (01Sue13).*

*Being married in a Medieval Church means that you've got God's blessing and because it makes a connection with my sister who committed suicide and my mum who had died (08Resaria).*

Arguably, sensing the presence of the other, even though the other is not visible, could be interpreted in Winnicottian terms, that the ceremony in Church, like the infant's 'transitional object', stands in for (m)other, and in this case God seems to bridge the void<sup>90</sup> between the living and the deceased. Arguably, in Freudian terms, emotional reassurance can be introjected when the infant girl senses the (m)other's presence, or that the (m)other's eyes on her, as the infant girl gradually builds confidence during the process of incorporation. Arguably, if the subject 'knows' that they are doing something, with someone watching, (i.e. 'in the sight of God'), then God-the-Father, or in Lacanian terms, the 'Name-of-the-Father' who constitutes the law, who sets

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<sup>90</sup> In Part One the Virgin Mary is described as bridging the void between God and man.

boundaries and punishes if boundaries are broken, implies approval and therefore any sense of guilt is reduced.

By way of illustration, Sue makes the connection between sensing 'God's presence' and receiving 'God's blessing', with internalised relationships of the deceased father and grandfather. Resaria also draws the connection between sensing 'God's presence' and her sister and mother both of whom had died. Arguably, by displacement, the subject's internalised relationships can be interpreted as 'watching over them from a heavenly place'.

Literally, at this juncture in the ceremony, the bride's father, having completed his role of giving the bride away, removes himself from the bride's side by taking his place with the mother. The bride who now stands in front of her parents is literally in the sight of her earthly god-like figures of infancy, and unconsciously by displacement 'in the sight of God-the-Father'. Let us now turn to consider the brides' reported experience in the ceremony.

Second, several brides seem to be aware that the marriage ceremony offers a sense of life's continuity, marking time between infancy and death:

*Getting married in Church was the norm, it was the thing that you did. I was christened in Church then I was married. It's a rite of passage, the logical sequence, and when you die you're taken into Church. The significance was of going through these steps* (14Margaret13).

As discussed earlier, Douglas suggests that rituals are significant life events offering a sense of certainty, continuity, unity of experience offering sanity and life-giving experience. Arguably, Margaret, indicates that for her the marriage ceremony, marks a transitory, 'logical', containing stage in life's development, a moment which offers the

opportunity to look back to one's childhood and forward to one's future, but not yet contemplating one's death.

Third, many of the bride's statements indicate that they were aware of the gravity of the ceremony:

*It's a major, and perhaps the most important step in one's life. I viewed it as life-long as I was making vows before God and I was receiving His blessing. It's important to receive God's blessing because I look on Him as my heavenly Father. It's important to receive the Church's blessing because the Church is God's representative on earth (17Ros13).*

Being aware of the gravity of making a promise in the presence of witnesses, echo's the ceremony's plea that this step is not undertaken 'unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly...but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, and soberly' (Cranmer, 1662:320). Taking a vow in ear-shot of the mother and the father can also be sobering. For Francis, however, the gravity of the ceremony seems onerous. Earlier during the interview Francis states:

*I felt very warm towards my father and honoured by his right to give me away to my husband. I associated this with the fact that he'd looked after us, since my mother had a very difficult time emotionally and as she'd left home at one point (11Francis10).*

So when it came to Francis reflecting on the significance of the Church ceremony, Francis states:

*I had a kind of paradox relationship with the Church. I was singing in the choir, but my own beliefs at the time were mixed. On one hand, I was very spiritual and on the other I felt flexible as to how I saw my spirituality. I was unsure about the relationship between God and marriage. I could see the sense of a blessing. I saw marriage as a kind of social event of acknowledgement in law. I had seen lots of people get married so it wasn't like a transcendent experience of meeting God and being blessed by God. I knew it contained a solemn oath, which I thought I might not be able to keep all my life. So there was this duality. Although I'm saying it now, in the marriage service, I asked myself, will I live up to the promise as I sensed that I might not be able to. I wasn't in a romantic state, rather I was questioning: what was this about and what am I doing? (11Francis13).*

Francis, states that although she felt caught in a paradox and unsure in regard to her spirituality, Francis, did consider the marriage ceremony to be a legally binding 'social

*event* during which she would be *'blessed by God'*. It seems as though, for Francis, this ceremony did not offer a sense of order but confusion as it raised questions about her relationships. The gravity of the *'solemn oath'*, vow or promise, not to be undertaken *'lightly or wantonly'*, seems to have weighed heavily.

If we take a Freudian view and interpret that God and the Church are displaced representatives of the father and the mother, then we can interpret Francis statement in terms of her insecurity regarding her (spirituality) experience in relation to the ceremony. Francis' experience of a consistent father, but inconsistent mother, may have put doubt in her mind as to whether she could keep a promise all her life. Francis wished to receive God's blessing, as she literally did from her *'warm'* relationship with the father whom she felt *'honoured'* by. The paradox can be interpreted as: does Francis identify with the consistent father, or identify with the inconsistent mother figure?

Fourth, several brides seemed to report experiencing the mood created by the ceremony:

*The whole service was lovely. The minister involved us and kept on referring to us as bottles of wine. I felt very comfortable and not at all awkward. The minister helped us pick the hymns. They were not too religious. It was as if he brought everybody into the service. The minister is just the same when you go to see him regarding funerals, he makes you feel comfortable (07Elizabeth13).*

The Church ambience, the minister's character, the bride submitting to a patriarchal process, the ceremony as a whole with words spoken, hymns sung and with the some familiar and some unfamiliar friends and family attending makes for creating the mood for symbiotic communication. As in infancy, the mother or holding environment creates the mood. If mother is depressed or angry, or if mother is delighted with her new infant or with the infant's behaviour then the infant learns to *'read'* mother's expressions and interpret her mood as alarming or reassuring.

Fifth, some brides indicate that their parents influenced their decision to marry:

*The Church has always played a part in our family's life from children all the way through. I knew that if I had not married in Church it would have upset my parents. There is something about Churches that brings out something that is very deep. They are very powerful places. So for me to be married in Church felt as though my marriage was properly blessed (09Pam13).*

Pam's statement appears to indicate the significant influence that the father and the mother have over the daughter's decision to marry. Like the parent's of infancy, who impose boundaries and punish infringements, the infant learns to survive by avoiding the parent's displeasure and actively pleasing the parents. In psychodynamic terms, the infant internalises the pre-Oedipal parental demands, thus imposing a super-ego on the subject's conscience. Pam, avoids feelings of guilt, and in order to please the parents, Pam, passively complies with the parents' wishes. We can also interpret that by displacement, Pam unconsciously understands her parental figures as being 'deeply powerful' in a similar way to 'Churches'.

Having explored themes relating to the wedding ceremony, in Oedipal terms, that is, by way of interpreting the role played by the mother, the father, the Church and the bride, and the bride's response to the ceremony regarding feeling compliant and ordered or confused and chaotic, let us, in the next section, discuss in detail the mother's relation to the bride and the bride's experience of the mother.

#### **4.4 The mother's relation to the bride and the bride's response to the mother**

There are, arguably, various psychodynamic views on the earliest daughter-mother relationship and its immediate and long-term effect on the combined relationship and on each individual separately relating to her external and internal mother. The pre-Oedipal mother actively attempts to satisfy the infant's oral, anal, urethral, sado-masochistic tendencies, through the regular acts of nursing, dressing, undressing and handling the infant. As already established, Freud emphasises that the infant girl's pre-Oedipal 'affectionate attachment to her mother' is 'the decisive one for the woman's future' (SE22:134). Freud postulates that regressions to the pre-Oedipal phase may indicate bisexuality (SE22:131), underlining the importance of the pre-Oedipal phase, that, as discussed in Part One during the girl's transformation of instinct, 'women (can) remain arrested in their original attachment to their mother and never achieve a true change-over towards men' (SE21:226). While Freud focuses on the earliest daughter-mother relationship Wilfred Bion uses metaphors for this intimate, powerfully intense mother-infant dyad, by exemplifying the 'container-contained' pattern (Bion, 1970:107), thus implying how the mother may influence and moderate the infant's affect. In contrast, from the daughter's perspective, Nancy Chodorow suggests that the mother's mothering of her daughter, both being of the same gender and having been the daughter of a mother, will eventually effect the nature of her motherliness and quality of mothering (Chodorow, 1978:98), and subsequently how the daughter responds to the mother.

Winnicott adds to these views by describing the subtle changes in reliable 'maternal care' (Winnicott, 1960:39) as facilitating the infant's development 'from absolute dependence, through relative dependence, to independence' (Winnicott, 1960:42). Winnicott claims that during this early phase the mother-infant relationship 'forms a unit' (Winnicott, 1960:39), and a 'state of being merged with the mother' (Winnicott,

1960:44). This early 'holding' stage offers the infant, who is 'not talking or using word symbols' (Winnicott, 1960:40), a 'continuity of being' (Winnicott, 1960:46), where the id-forces are modified in the service of the ego. If the 'continuity of being' is broken then there is 'reacting' and the 'dread of annihilation' may be experienced (Winnicott, 1960:47). During this early 'holding' stage 'the father's function is unknown' to the infant and the infant is not yet responsible for controlling what is good or bad, which indicates that narcissistic omnipotence dominates (Winnicott, 1960:43).

As suggested by Winnicott, by studying how the adult reports her experience of her mother one can 'reconstruct the dynamics of infancy through the study of adults' (Winnicott, 1960:39). Thus I will explore how the bride describes her experience with her mother during the process of choosing, purchasing, adorning and removing her wedding dress. These activities in adulthood can arguably reactivate the daughter/mother dyad of early infancy. Of the seventeen participants three brides reported not having their mother available on their wedding day. The other brides describe how their mothers were involved to different degrees, as illustrated by the following selective reports.

Some brides who responded to this project recall how their mothers were or were not involved in making, choosing or assisting them to dress prior to or on their wedding day. An intimate or distant daughter/mother interaction may be experienced on the wedding day during the bride's process of adornment—a process where her daughter becomes transformed in socio-cultural terms, to reflect the ideal image of the bride-in-white. Having examined all the participant's reports let us now consider how four brides report on the quality of their experience with their mother. Pam experienced her mother as not being fully available; Freesia reports not having a mother at her wedding; AnnC

reports having a very containing maternal experience; Ros reports feeling marginalised by her mother. Let us now consider these brides statements closely:

Pam reports on her own mother's emotional unavailability on Pam's wedding day and contrasts this with her mother-in-law's perceived strength:

*My mum didn't really play a role. As she was too wrapped up in herself to be involved (09Pam11), I dressed myself (09Pam03). His mum always had a strong hold over her son, and I remember after my wedding going upstairs to the toilet in his mum's house and the confetti falling out from my dress. And instead of picking it up, thinking 'I'll leave that there because she'll know that I've been and made my mark, and I've got her son' (09Pam07).*

When taking off her dress Pam reports a 'strong' reaction towards her dominant mother-in-law (09Pam07). This can be interpreted as being a displaced reaction towards her own controlling but not currently sensitively responsive mother. It seems that Pam's mother was not experienced by Pam on her wedding day as having empathy, or exhibiting maternal 'attunement', that is, 'our way of being there with one another' (Heidegger, 1995:66, in. Young-Eisendrath, 2000:66). Pam's response to her experience of her mother's unsupportive role can be interpreted as feeling ambivalent towards her own mother and aggressive towards her mother-in-law.

Although Pam reports that she experienced her own mother as vulnerable and unsupportive on her wedding day, when it came to Pam's turn to mother her daughter, Pam indicates that she identifies with the idealised mother of her childhood:

*When my daughter married we did everything together. There was lots of talking, excitement and I made the thing a lot bigger as it was my daughter's special day. I wanted my daughter to feel really, really special. I suppose through my daughter getting married I was probably playing a part that I would have liked my mum to have played for me as I wanted it to be perfect for her (09Pam11). I couldn't wait to go and be 'Mrs. (09Pam09).*

Pam's statement can be interpreted as indicating that Pam identified with her mother as she '*couldn't wait to be Mrs*' and become a mother herself (09Pam09). Interpreted, in Oedipal terms, because Pam's mother was experienced as not taking an active, supporting role, Pam's 'disappointment' indicates that her mother was unconsciously experienced as passive and castrated, and not nurturing. This disappointment appears to have made a lasting impression on Pam who chose to take on an active supporting and perhaps controlling role towards her daughter. Arguably a role Pam may have wished her own mother to have played for her. Pam's statement regarding her daughter, can be interpreted in idealised terms, since Pam, who seems to have become frustrated with her 'castrated' mother, now overcompensates by '*making the thing a lot bigger*' by idealising her daughter's experience (09Pam11). Thus Pam's report indicates that she looked after her daughter in the manner she wished her mother had looked after her (09Pam11).

Freesia speaks of the effect of her mother's absence:

*As my mother couldn't be at my wedding (15Freesia21), my friends helped me to put my wedding dress on (15Freesia03). When the time came to take off my dress it felt a bit of a let down because it's only a day and the events leading up to it effect your views of the day (15Freesia 07).*

Freesia's statements, interpreted in Winnicottian terms, suggest that Freesia did not feel sufficiently 'held' as she felt that the day was '*a bit of a let down*', as Freesia states '*It's only a day*' (15Freesia07). In Winnicottian terms, Freesia experienced the absence of a 'holding' maternal environment and feeling '*let down*' suggests a dropping, or break in the 'continuity of being'. Interpreted in Freudian terms Freesia's idealised expectations of adulthood have given way to the reality. This is to suggest that Freesia, as a bride and daughter, can have felt disappointed that she was denied the pleasure of being attended and dressed by a supportive mother.

As AnnC relinquishes her bridal status she experiences her mother as attentive:

*My mum helped me undress. As she looked after my wedding dress for me, it wasn't such a heart-wrenching moment. I didn't want to get out of it because I wanted my day to last forever, as we were having such a laugh with our friends, family and everyone you love (16AnnC07).*

AnnC's statement, interpreted in pre-Oedipal terms, indicates that her mother exhibited the capacity to be empathic towards her daughter's state of anxiety and responded by being attentive, 'holding' and 'containing' of her daughter's potentially '*heart-wrenching moment*' as she took off her dress. This seems to reflect an adult phase where daughter and mother are no longer rivals, or where the daughter is threatened with a loss of her mother's love or where AnnC feels guilt for repudiating her mother for another, thus affection towards the mother can re-emerge. This indicates that AnnC's mother identified with her daughter, as Chodorow suggests, 'having been a daughter of a mother' (Chodorow, 1978:98), and had the emotional capacity to relinquish her daughter AnnC. In Winnicottian terms, this report indicates that AnnC received a reliable continuity of maternal care from a mother who responded to her daughter's needs during this transitional phase.

Ros seems to report having experienced her mother as relatively uncontainable:

*My mother helped me choose the pattern and the material of my dress, but apart from that I didn't have any assistance (17Ros04). I was glad my mother approved of my marriage, however, I was slightly disconcerted because she said she wasn't going to buy a new outfit and that left me feeling marginalised. As my mother had emotional problems I was fairly used to that sort of behaviour (17Ros11).*

Ros's statements suggest that she experienced her mother's affection as limited, unpredictable and reserved. In Oedipal terms while Ros's mother was experienced as '*approving*', it can be interpreted that Ros felt disappointed or hostile towards her mother for not putting her fully at the centre of her attention. Thus, in Freudian terms,

indicating that Ros can have phantasised her mother as castrated and consequently wished to repudiate her because she did not receive enough love. In Winnicottian terms, as Ros experienced her mother as emotionally pre-occupied it can be interpreted that Ros did not feel exclusively special to, nor fully 'held' by, her mother but felt as though she was left on the '*margin*' of her mother's attention and therefore somewhat rejected. Let us now consider how the bride's relationship with the mother transforms from idealisation to one of identification.

We have seen earlier that Pam experienced her mother as uncontainable and in reaction became a containing mother for her daughter. Pam describes how she identified with her 'passive', unsupportive, 'castrated' mother, the mother who had 'refused her...'; refused to give her daughter support, attention, or 'the penis'. Pam now substitutes activity for passivity, by being actively supportive towards her daughter, thus projecting onto her daughter a relatively passive position, as already discussed. Let us now consider the quality of three other bride's experience of their mother by considering each of the bride's statements separately:

Rose describes how she seems to identify with her mother's anxiety:

*I was an only daughter so mum was a bit flappy. I was trying to stay calm because every bride's a bit butterfly'i aren't they? I had a feeling of anxiety, not only was I anxious but everybody else was anxious for me (10Rose03). I was conscious I was going to lose part of my identity because I'd not be one, but now half of something else. I'd no longer be 'Miss'...I would be somebody's wife and hopefully eventually somebody's mother (10Rose07).*

Rose seems to link her mother's sense of being '*flappy*' with her own sense of '*anxiety*' (10Rose03). It is as if anxiety has been unconsciously assimilated or introjected and pervades all the relationships. Rose also seems to contrast her identification of herself as '*Miss*' with '*wife and hopefully mother*', thus indicating Rose's identification with her

mother (10Rose07). This can be interpreted as illustrating the daughters' desire of becoming a mother with parenting capacities. Rose also contrasts the tension of being a bride with her conscious awareness of '*loosing part of her identity*', relinquishing her maiden status, repudiating her mother's love, in favour of becoming a '*wife*' (10Rose07). Rose's narcissism becomes enhanced when her mother gives her the opportunity to feel special and proud of her, thus taking the mother's place, and displacing '*penis envy*' onto another by becoming '*somebody's mother*', thus completing the '*ancient symbolic equation*' (SE22:128).

Ann's positive identification with her mother can be illustrated by the following statements:

*My parents had a very good marriage, so I'd a wonderful role model to follow (12Ann18). My mother married when she was twenty-three and they remained together, and I married at twenty-two. When my daughter married I looked at her wedding photos and thought she looked so like I did at the same age. My daughter married at twenty-two as well. There was quite a repeat, I suppose there was a contrast, but also similarities (12Ann22).*

Ann discusses how there seems to have emerged a strong family tradition, in that three generations of women from the same family married between '*twenty-two*' and '*twenty-three*' years old (12Ann22). Ann seems to link this phenomenon with and to an enduring '*good marriage*' (12Ann18). Ann also associates the positive adjective '*wonderful*' with her mother's role (12Ann18). In Oedipal terms this can be interpreted that there were successive idealised identifications with the mother over three generations, thus establishing the phantasy of an '*ideal*' for an enduring relationship: that is, identification through an ego-ideal. In other words, as established, Chodorow emphasises, '*women, as mothers, produce daughters with mothering capacities and the desire to mother*' (Chodorow, 1978:7).

Ann reflects on an experience as a passive onlooker of something enacted by two other people:

*My saddest memory was my bridesmaids had their dresses made by two different people - my mother and the bridesmaid's mother. They didn't match because the bridesmaid's mother cut hers off to ankle length, so we had to shorten the other one. I don't know what that was about but it was very important to me (12Ann21).*

Although in sociological terms the fact that the two bridesmaids dress lengths were different, can be seen psychologically as distressing and visually unacceptable, Ann indicates that there was more to her distress than purely conscious. In Ann's case this 'mismatch' in dress length, the latent content of which, can be interpreted as sabotage by a castrating (m)other, and one who frustrates Ann's search for the penis. Ann reports that her 'saddest memory' seems to resonate with something almost too unbearable to think as she states, '*I don't know what that was about*', i.e. an attempt to deny, and therefore Ann distances herself from it. This can indicate that Ann was distancing herself from feeling inferior, or acknowledging that she too is castrated like her mother. This statement, carrying disappointment towards the (m)other can also be interpreted that Ann's mother may have been unconsciously experienced as castrated and unable to fulfil Ann's desire. Alternatively it can be interpreted that there was a Oedipal struggle with the mother, where the mother is cut down to size, in importance, thus leaving Ann, in identification with the mother, able to take the mother's place with the father. Interestingly, Ann intuitively sensed this was '*important*', yet she experienced difficulty at a level of linguistic articulation, which again can resonate with Ann's Oedipal rivalry and hostility towards her mother being suppressed. The fact that the two bridesmaids dresses did not initially match perfectly but one needed to be '*shortened*' can also be interpreted in terms of a loss of the ego ideal. This is where the ego ideal is an imperative and where everything needs to be perfect, otherwise the situation becomes distressing.

For some brides there may have been an irrevocably positive mother figure to emulate, but when the mother is experienced as an inadequate container it may prove to be more problematic, as was the case for Francis, as reported:

*I did something very strange. I had long hair and as I was playing sport had it cut really short about a month before I married. It was a terrible struggle sticking the head-gear on to this very short sort of boyish hair [laughter] (11Francis04). I remember my mother had a very difficult time emotionally and mentally and she'd left home at one point (11Francis10).*

As established, Freud suggests that identification follows on from the effects of the Oedipal conflict, that is in this case with the mother, who is both a love-object and an object of rivalry upon whom hostility can be projected. In examining these statements we can see that Francis04 had a '*terrible struggle*' and that her mother '*had a very difficult time*' (11Francis10), thus indicating that Francis identifies with her mother's '*struggle*' (11Francis04). The impact on Francis when her mother '*left home at one point*', arguably can have left Francis feeling abandoned and not nurtured or held, unlike the Oedipal infant girl who '*turns away*' from the mother in favour of the father. Thus, in reaction to the mother's abandonment Francis had a '*terrible struggle*' to identify with the passive mother-figure and cling onto her feminine '*head-gear*' but would rather actively '*play sport*' (11Francis04). Another way of interpreting the '*terrible struggle*', Francis reported having, could be with her '*boyish*' active instincts, as opposed to adopting '*passive aims*', and an emotional '*struggle*' with her, at times, '*difficult*' not fully containing mother (11Francis10).

Arguably, it can be interpreted that in reaction to identifying with the inadequately supportive mother who '*had a very difficult time emotionally*', Francis '*substituted activity for passivity*' (11Francis10). Rather than identifying with the castrated abandoning mother, Francis repressed her hostility and Francis' reaction was a denial of

castration, a 'flight from womanhood' (Horney, 1967:54), and a clinging onto something familiar from the past, which suggests that there could have been a regression to the pre-Oedipal masculine part of herself. This regression to a masculine style indicates a level of bisexuality which seems to be confirmed when Francis reports that her '*long hair*' was '*cut really short*' to a '*boyish*' length, indicating a masochistic castration (11Francis04). This seems to illustrate Freud's claim that 'in the course of some women's lives there is a repeated alternation between periods in which masculinity or femininity gains the upper hand' (SE22:131). Let us now consider a third way in which the infant girl who becomes a bride-in-white identifies with her mother, through the provision of food.

Freud links the oral incorporation and ingestion of food, with the phantasy of an object penetrating the body and keeping it 'inside'. Freud sets up the opposition between the 'sexual instinct' (SE7:135), the 'instinct of nutrition' (SE7:135) and 'self-preservation' (SE18:10), the counterparts being 'libido' and 'hunger' (SE7:135). Freud also understands the opposition between the life and the death instincts, that is, that self-preservation and the instinct to create and maintain an ever-greater unity is in contrast and opposed to death and the tendency towards self and others' destruction. Freud claims that during the oral-sadistic stage there is an 'erotic mastery over the object which coincides with that object's destruction' (SE18:54). In other words, during the need to sustain life both libidinally and physically there is set up a phantasy of penetration and a dialogue concerning the 'inside'. The infant girl's dialogue, if not modified or transformed by the mother's capacity to 'play' (Winnicott, 1971:54), for 'reverie' (Bion, 1967:116) 'containment' (Bion, 1967:141) and to nurture, can cause anxiety and arguably symbolic indigestion.

Winnicott suggests that ‘anxiety about objects psychically incorporated or physically eaten, involves the phantasy about inside’, that is, where the ‘psyche and soma are in perpetual dialogue’ concerning ‘what is acceptable and what is not acceptable’ (Winnicott, 1936:33). Therefore eating can only be explained with reference to the conscious and unconscious phantasies about the inside of the body. Winnicott maintains that in the case of anorexia nervosa or bulimia, there can be a hurried letting go as in vomiting, or a holding onto as in constipation. There is also greediness, or stealing food, all these can be associated with anxiety. The manner in which Winnicott describes the subject’s reaction to anxiety is that ‘at one end there is feeding difficulties, at the other end are melancholia, drug addiction, hypochondria, and suicide, as appetite becomes involved in defence against anxiety and depression’ (Winnicott, 1936:34). Therefore, an internal dialogue can be set up, saying that ‘when very hungry I think of robbing and even destroying the source of supply and I then feel bad about what I have inside me and I think of means of getting it out of me, as quickly as possible and as completely as possible’ (Winnicott, 1936:34). Winnicott suggests that ‘this sort of oral phantasy can be deduced from observations on the infant’s manner in which they play with an object’ (Winnicott, 1936:34), such as with a ‘spatula and bowl’ (Winnicott, 1936:50). Let us now consider the quality of three bride’s experience of their mother in relation to food.

Elizabeth reports on being ‘shocked’ but wished the experience with food to be ‘relaxed’:

*As I entered my wedding reception I felt shocked. I don’t know what I was expecting but it was lovely. When I walked in I saw that everybody was happy and they had already started tucking in to all the food and was pleased. I wanted it relaxed where everybody mixed in together (07Elizabeth20).*

Elizabeth’s initial ‘*shock*’ (07Elizabeth20) can be interpreted as her feeling that her digestive system had tensed by the sight of the large gathering of guests and the large

amount of food. This ‘*shock*’ can also be interpreted as a learnt reaction to the mother who we have already learnt would have ‘*taken over*’, made a ‘*fuss*’ and would have ‘*got on her nerves*’ (07Elizabeth15). This ‘*shock*’ therefore might have added to a sense of ‘*indigestion*’ and could have felt to be invasive, rather than ‘*containing*’, which could have transformed her indigestible emotions. Elizabeth’s initial ‘*shock*’ seems however to have been transformed into ‘*pleasure*’ when she saw that her guests were ‘*happily eating*’. Elizabeth’s statement seems to suggest that she needed to put others needs before her own, which can be interpreted as indicating that Elizabeth had learnt to delay her own gratification. This can be interpreted in Freudian terms as Elizabeth adopting ‘*passive aims*’, and in Winnicottian terms indicating that she had the capacity to ‘*be*’. What seems important in Elizabeth’s report was that she wanted a ‘*relaxed*’ occasion (07Elizabeth20), which indicates in Winnicott’s terms, that the incorporation of food can only take place in the absence of anxiety. That is, the initial feeling of ‘*shock*’ becomes converted into feeling ‘*relaxed*’.

Francis reports on the tension experienced around her mother’s food provision:

*My mother did the catering on my wedding day, or at least the catering was got from somewhere but she rushed about and catered. My mother was always a good caterer. So my concerns were that the catering would be good enough for her. I was very concerned that if the caterers hadn’t provided the right things, my mother would have been upset and could get tense, so I was hoping that at least she could feel supported by the caterers (11Francis11).*

Francis statement indicates that her mother understood her role to be the prime nurturer, as Francis now wished her to be and as she had been during Francis’ infancy, as she ‘*catered*’ (11Francis11). Francis seems, however, to empathise with her mother’s anxiety, if the food had not been ‘*good enough*’, and so to compensate, Francis seems to have taken on a supportive role by being ‘*concerned*’ for her mother being ‘*upset*’ and getting ‘*tense*’ (11Francis11). From this report it is as if Francis’ mother was unable to

contain or transform, in her metaphorical pots, pans or kitchen, Francis' internal ingredients of feelings and phantasies and enrich them into manageable thoughts and images for her, via speech. In pre-Oedipal terms it can be interpreted that Francis may have experienced her mother's nurturing capacities as affectionate but inconsistent, thus invoking a sense of insecurity for Francis as an infant. Now Francis, as an adult, continues to express concern for her mother's nurturing capacities, as if Francis is attempting to be a container for her mother's anxieties. Francis' indication that she was 'concerned' about her mother, indicates that Francis wished to preserve the 'good-enough' nurturing part of the mother for her own needs, as opposed to destroying the mother due to hostility.

Ann reports on how her feelings changed from being relaxed to being disappointed:

*I was pleased with the place we had chosen for our reception and with my college friends around it felt more spontaneous, so I became more relaxed. When I looked at the food I was slightly disappointed because we had spent ages with the hotel discussing what food we were going to have, and when I saw it I thought 'no', my mum could have done that [laughter] (12Ann20).*

Ann's statement indicates that she was 'relaxed' and anticipating the enjoyment of sharing with her friends and family the food that had been so meticulously chosen (12Ann20). However, imagining the pleasure of her guests turned into 'disappointment with the food' when Ann compared it with the memory of her mother's provision (12Ann20). Thus Ann preserves an identification with the idealised mother, by expressing or displacing her feelings of hostility or disappointment towards the hotel.

Having examined all the participant's reports, what seems striking, equally from both the 'recent' and the 'older' brides, is the number of mother's who were experienced as not being fully containing, or as someone who could be experienced as 'dead', depressed or 'absent' (Kohon, 1999:86+152). In Freudian terms, as we have seen, the

mother can be an idealised central figure as the infant girl's first love-object. The mother then is experienced as a rival for the father's love and is blamed and hated for several grievous, principally narcissistic, disappointments. The mother is consequently then repudiated or eclipsed, and in Oedipal terms is symbolically killed in favour of the now idealised father figure. Now, the mother may experience feelings of rejection, deferring to her infant daughter's envy of the father. Arguably, due to the bride being preoccupied with her search for the penis, which the bride desires from the non-incestuous other, the bride can overlook the significant contribution made by the mother.

As discussed earlier, (09Pam11) appears to have experienced an unsupportive mother due to her mother's vulnerability. Other brides report on the quality of their experience of the relationship with their mother in various ways. Debbie reflects on her experience of a distant but attentive mother:

*My mum didn't play a very important role [laughter]. She just turned up, as a guest really. She didn't have anything to do with the organisation or the wedding at all. She helped out financially, but she didn't want to be involved because she lives too far away. I think she was very happy to see me get married. She likes [my fiancée]. She was very emotional. She enjoyed herself [chuckle]. I'm quite emotional [sad, tearful] thinking about it all (06Debbie11).*

Debbie initially indicates that her mother's role was minimal and distantly supportive, suggesting that this resonates with Oedipal ambivalence (06Debbie11). Debbie appears to link her mother's 'very emotional' state with her own emotional condition, in Oedipal terms this can be interpreted as identification with the mother, now recognising that both are castrated. In stating that her mother was 'happy to see me get married' (06Debbie11), can be interpreted, that Debbie had repudiated her mother and that her mother had the capacity to relinquish her authority over her daughter. In 'laughing' after Debbie suggested that her mother 'didn't play a very important role' (06Debbie11),

suggests that the laughter may be interpreted as defensive and that perhaps Debbie has wished that her mother had played a more important role. This is in the light of Debbie's father's death and can be linked to Debbie's sad and tearful emotional expressions.

Francis reports on how she experienced closeness with others, as opposed to sharing a closeness with her mother:

*As for my mother in the Church I didn't have feelings about her in the Church at all, because I was so engaged in the process, of being a bride, going up the aisle, being given to my husband and what I should do next. My mother never went to Church, so the people of the Church were closer to me, at that time because I sang in the choir (11Francis11).*

Francis' not being aware of her mother's presence in the Church, can be interpreted in Oedipal terms as her mother was eclipsed thus enabling Francis to repudiate her mother. Francis reflects upon the other Church members being '*closer*' and therefore experienced as more containing than her mother, thus Francis unconsciously suppresses her hostility towards the uncontainable mother (11Francis11). It will also be noted that Francis found '*closeness*' in her association with and belonging to the Church choir, and as already mentioned, Hélène Deutsch argues that during the latency period, women's sexuality can be sublimated through a '*spiritualising*' process (Deutsch, 1944:147).

Ann reports being consciously aware that her mother might be eclipsed:

*I remember wanting my mother to be included because I asked the photographer to take a picture of her and myself, as she'd made my dress. So I was very conscious I wanted her to be very much part of it all (12Ann11).*

Ann's reaction towards her mother appears to suggest that Ann was compensating for her mother's passivity and Ann's active response wished to acknowledge her mother's significant role in her life (12Ann11). In pre-Oedipal terms, Ann appears to offer

evidence for an affectionate attachment towards her mother suggesting that in Oedipal terms hostility had now subdued enabling affection to re-emerge. Ann's realisation that her mother may be eclipsed may reflect a sense of guilt for the earlier hostility towards the mother. The sense of hostility enables repudiation to take place, and in identification, 'take her mother's place' (SE22:134).

Patricia seems to have admired her mother as practical and containing:

*I can remember my mum looked marvellous but I can't remember her particularly on the day other than being there and being hospitable (13Patricia11).*

Patricia appears to emphasise that her experience of her mother was idealised. However, in Oedipal terms Patricia, in 'not remembering her mother particularly on the day' (13Patricia11), can be interpreted that her mother had been repudiated or eclipsed.

Margaret reports of her awareness that her mother supported her father:

*My mother's role was being supportive of my father. My mother may have done something I just can't remember that in detail (14Margaret11).*

Margaret seems to be aware that her mother's attention no longer focuses on her but that her mother's priority lies with her father (14Margaret11). In Oedipal terms, in Margaret acknowledging that her parents belong to each other, brings about the demolition of the Oedipus complex, which in turn leads towards Margaret's repudiation of her parents and opens the way to seek satisfaction from a non-incestuous other.

Arguably, although we can imagine that the bride felt disappointed that their mother, at this point, did not play a more significant role, there is however no evidence from the bride's statements that they felt overtly 'hostile' towards their mother (SE22:121). This

could indicate that the bride's relationship towards the mother was ambivalent containing both disappointment and affection.

We have now touched on the infant girl's experience of the mother through the mother's handling and dressing of the infant. We have also considered the infant girl's identification with her mother and through the infant girl's experience of the mother's provision of food by investigating how these infant experiences colour the adult's understanding of their own experience. Let us now consider the bride's relationship with her father.

#### **4.5 A sacred walk with father – Part B: turning to the father the bride's intermediate locus of desire**

As already established in Part Three, Freud claims that in phantasy the infant girl 'seeks to get rid of her mother and take her place with her father' (SE22:134). Freud postulates that during this triangular structure the infant girl turns away from her mother and 'turns to her father with the wish for the penis which she now expects from her father' (SE22:128). Juxtaposed with the perceived 'painful disappointments' with the mother, the infant girl 'regards herself as what her father loves above all else' (SE19:173). That is to say, not only the father, with his own repressed unconscious, but also the infant girl, with her unconscious incestuous desires, abide by the incest prohibition. Thus the infant girl becomes transformed through a series of disappointments emanating from both the mother and father.

Other post-Freudians offer their view on the quality of the girl's relationship to the father. Chodorow suggests that whereas 'the mother represents to her daughter regression, passivity, dependence, and lack of orientation to reality, the father represents progression, activity, independence and reality' (Chodorow, 1989:64). While Winnicott asserts: 'a father actually on the spot, friendly, strong, understanding, and taking responsibility' and not neglecting, is a requirement for the child (Winnicott, 1958:113), The child and adolescent psychotherapist Bidy Youell, who studies the results of father negative affect, claims that 'abusive fathers seriously impair the ability to internalise a benign father' (in.Trowell, 2002:147). In other words the characteristics of the father can make a positive or negative, thus decisive, impact on the child's experience.

Having summarised how Freud and others think about the significance of the father let us now explore the quality of some participant's experience of their relationship with

their father during their time at home, the public journey [Figure 6] to and processing in the Church. Of note, many of the brides report that their most vivid memory of their wedding day concerns their experience with their father, therefore an in-depth exploration is warranted in order to ascertain the decisive impact the father may have on the bride's experience.

As already established, in early Oedipal terms the father can be experienced as a 'troublesome rival', while in later Oedipal terms the father may be idealised, yet evoking prohibition. Pam's interview reveals the 'very powerful emotions' she attributes to '*being left at home with her father*' (09Pam09). Let us now explore another of Pam's experience of her father.

*It was very important to me to be married in Church in a very traditional style and in white. There was a lot of pressure on me not to do anything wrong, otherwise my dad would never forgive me. If I had had a child out of wedlock, like my sister, my dad wouldn't have been able to give one of his two daughters away in a traditional style. So to give my dad that pleasure of giving me away as a bride from all the things that a little girl grows up to see this is what happens on your wedding day (09Pam05).*

Pam indicates that dressing in white was significant to her and her father by describing this in terms of the importance of conforming to 'tradition' (09Pam05), as discussed in Part One. This conforming may emanate from a collective ideal, which in turn her parent's adopt, and through identification with her parents Pam incorporates into her ego-ideal. Pam's statement indicates that she had internalised the paternal prohibition and thus feared her father's displeasure. That is, through self-observation and the formation of an ideal, 'dominated by a sense of guilt' (SE9:123). Arguably, Pam wished to reduce the conflict set up in the Oedipal struggle between herself and her father leaving in its wake limits on familial closeness.

Freud claims that the infant girl's 'super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as it is in men' (SE19:257), whereas Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel suggests that a woman's super-ego 'constantly changes', develops new aspects and relinquishes old ones 'according to their sexual partners' (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1964:132). In other words the women's super-ego seems readily influenced, adaptable and not rigid because the girl does not fear castration. Pam states '*that as a little girl*' (09Pam05), indicating that Pam had been aware since childhood of the need to please her father, or feared her father's displeasure. Pam's childhood dream can be understood as resonating with the Oedipal phantasy, that of adopting a feminine attitude, wishing to take her mother's place and 'to marry daddy' (SE7:57). In exercising her individual autonomy Pam indicates her ambition to be regarded by her father differently from her sister, indicates sibling rivalry. Pam's desire '*not to do anything wrong*' (09Pam05), can be an indication of the internalised paternal super-ego, or strength of her ego-ideal, both of which arguably not only aim to please her father but also aim to comply with his and the group's ideals. Let us now consider the quality of experience of being with their father that other brides report:

Louise states how her father's admiration of her felt that it brought them '*close*':

*That morning my dad said he was so proud of me. Although he never says it usually, he said "you look so stunning today", at which moment he cried which made me feel, really close to him (02Louise10).*

Sis states that her father was '*proud*' of her, which felt '*reassuring*':

*I think my dad was very proud of me. He always said he was glad to see the back of me, in a nice sort of way. My dad's a quite thoughtful person. While we were travelling to the Church, he said a couple of times "Are you ok?", "You look lovely", which was really very nice. When we were sitting at the table in the reception he kept squeezing my hand saying "you've done well", which was very reassuring. As my dad's not a big talker, for him to say things like that was really nice (04Sis10).*

Liz reports feeling '*relaxed*' during the journey to the Church with her father:

*As I travelled to the Church, it was a lovely time with my dad giving us the opportunity to relax. I don't think we talked about anything momentous, we were both happy, it was just a really nice peaceful tranquil moment (05Liz09).*

Of the 'older' group of brides Pam recalls feeling 'upset' during the journey to the Church:

*I remember my dad saying to me, 'It isn't too late, you don't have to get married'. I think I felt that my dad didn't want to let me go (09Pam09).*

Rose reports feeling 'relaxed' during the journey to the Church with her father:

*My father seemed to be taking it all in his stride: he was more interested in whether I was sure was I doing the right thing, like all father's probably. He said that I still had time to change my mind [laughter] (10Rose03).*

Rose's report reflects her experience of her father as steady (10Rose03). In Oedipal terms, Rose's statement resonates with Rose being under the influence of envy of the penis, where the father is experienced as offering a 'refuge' as he 'takes it all in his stride' (10Rose03). In Rose's father being 'interested in whether I was doing the right thing' (10Rose03) resonates with the mutual unconscious incestuous desires that transfer between daughter and father.

Francis reports on the experience of feeling close to her father:

*My most vivid memory was being in the car with my father on my own. I hadn't been to any important occasions with my father on my own before, as I had always been with my sister or my mother. I didn't know what to say to him because I felt self-conscious (11Francis01). I felt very warm towards my father. It was like being honoured by his right to give me away. I felt my father was a significant figure. The whole thing was very powerful, with a lot of gravitas (11Francis10).*

Patricia describes feeling affection towards her father:

*My father master-minded my wedding. I had a huge amount of affection and gratitude for him. He was a remarkable, wonderful man. I know he was very fond of me and it must have been a big day for him—his daughter getting married. He wasn't sentimental, he was quite a reserved man (13Patricia09+10).*

Freesia appears to have experienced her father as anxious about her leaving him:

*At first my father had been very much opposed to the marriage but finally he agreed to give me away and to me that was everything (15Freesia10). As I was travelling to the Church I don't remember any feelings at all. My father would be in the car. I can't remember anything else at all (15Freesia09).*

When, after adorning wedding white, 16AnnC and her father met, 16AnnC recalls:

*My most vivid memory was when my father saw me, for the first time, wearing my dress. I felt overwhelmed when he said, "you look lovely". It's eleven years ago and I'm going to cry, just thinking about it [tears] (16AnnC01). I cannot explain what took place between me and my father, it was just one of those very emotional things (16AnnC09).*

From the above statements we can see how highly significant and memorable the father's presence and words are to the bride-in-white. What appears pre-eminent in the quality of the bride's reported experience of their father is the extent of the 'powerful' feelings invoked. Pam illuminates this when she states: *'the emotions involved being with my dad on my own were very, very powerful'* (09Pam09). This can be interpreted in Freudian terms, when he suggests that the primal 'horde [was] ruled over despotically by a powerful male' who had few libidinal ties and was 'masterful, self-confident and independent' (SE18:122-4) and was a 'jealous father who keeps all the females for himself' (SE13:141).

Arguably, one sense of a 'powerful' (09Pam09) feeling that the bride may have experienced is the overwhelming power of the 'primal' father. This degree of seemingly un-associated powerful emotion is also expressed by Rose when her father asked, *'whether I was sure, was I doing the right thing'* and *'that I still had time to change my mind'* (10Rose03); by Francis in her use of the word '*gravitas*' (11Francis10); or by Freesia when she states that her father *'had been very much opposed to the marriage'* and that her father's involvement meant *'everything'* to her (15Freesia10); or by AnnC when some 'unexplainable' experience took place between her and her father

(16AnnC09). The degree of this experienced powerful emotion can also be interpreted in Oedipal terms as indicating an unconscious ‘wish for a baby from the father’ which, as mentioned, Freud argues is ‘the most powerful feminine wish’ (SE22:128).

The most frequently remembered phrase, recalled by three participants was that their father said: ‘*You look lovely*’ (02Louise10), (04Sis10), and (16AnnC01). Although we can recognise this phrase as one which many fathers would naturally say to their daughter, we can interpret this as the bride’s amorous captivation of ‘narcissistic’ satisfaction from the father (SE18:257). The father’s statement ‘*You look lovely*’, confirms the bride’s own thinking when she first saw herself in the mirror fully dressed in white. This now becomes both an inter-subjective relationship and the internalisation of a relationship. Freud has already pointed out that ‘a natural predilection usually sees to it that a man tends to spoil his daughter’ (SE4:258). This complimentary phrase uttered by the father can also be interpreted in Freudian terms as the woman has a ‘stronger need to be loved than for them to love’ (SE22:132). A third way of interpreting this phrase can be understood, in Freudian terms, as the infant girl’s not fearing castration but is susceptible to feeling intimidated and threatened with a ‘loss of love’ (SE19:178). Thus hearing this phrase at this moment of separation, the bride becomes reassured that she is loved. As the father’s attention is directed exclusively towards her his love offers her narcissistic gratification.

In summary; associated with the woman’s narcissism is the pride that the father endows upon his daughter as a bride-in-white. (02Lousie10) and (04Sis10) both use the phrase ‘*my dad was so proud of me*’ and (13Patricia09+10) states that her father was ‘*very fond of me*’. These statements can be interpreted as having resonance with how the ‘infant girl likes to regard herself as what her father loves above all else’ (SE19:173).

02Louise10 adds that both when the father said *'You look stunning'* and that he was *'proud'* of her, it seemed to her that that brought them *'close'*. Arguably, close but restrained by prohibition because the father belongs to the mother.

The above statements indicate that the bride's expressed reassurance from and affection towards her father is important to her. 04Sis10 states that she felt *'reassured'* by her father's physical contact; 11Francis10 states that *'I felt very warm towards my father'*; and 13Patricia09+10 says that *'I had a huge amount of affection and gratitude for him'*. These statements can be interpreted as indicating that the bride is not overly *'hostile'* or *'disappointed'* with the father, rather, in Oedipal terms, she has transformed her sadistic or active sexual trends *'into aim-inhibited trends of an affectionate kind'* (SE19:179). Arguably, this can be interpreted as indicating that the bride *'accepts castration'* and takes a passive position in relation to the father (SE22:128). The bride's statements also seem to coincide with an indication of the infant girl's attachment to the father in Oedipal terms. In other words the father's approval and his love seem paramount to the bride.

Freud claims that the infant girl's *'attachment to her father is built upon her affectionate object attachments and relation to her mother'* (SE21:231), therefore can we identify the same quality of relationship between both parents? Louise states that *'my dad was proud of me...which made me feel close to him'* (02Louise10). Arguably, the same closeness to her dad can also be reflected in her experience of her *'supportive, reassuring'* mother (02Louise03). Liz in reporting: *'I had a lovely time with my dad, it gave us the opportunity to relax'* (05Liz09), suggests that Liz's experience was not filled with anxiety, but neither does it convey any passion. Liz also reports that *'if mum had lived closer then I'd probably have asked her to help choose the dress'* (05Liz11),

which although refers to a geographical distance can also indicate some emotional distance between daughter and mother, which can be understood between Liz and her father. In contrast to Pam's experience of her emotionally unavailable mother, Pam reports on a *'very powerful'* emotional experience with a father who *'didn't want to let me go'* (09Pam09). Francis states: *'I felt very warm towards my father...he was a significant figure. The whole thing was very powerful'* (11Francis10) and this powerful experience with her father can be contrasted with the emotionally less present mother figure. Patricia records: *'my father master-minded my wedding'* (13Patricia09). This can be interpreted as being similar to Patricia's experience of her mother as *'practical and marvellous at doing things'* (13Patricia06). AnnC reports feeling *'overwhelmed'* and supported by his complementary sentiments when she and her father met. This can be seen to be similar to AnnC's experience of her mother who she felt contained her anxiety when *'my mother helped me get undressed... it wasn't a heart-wrenching moment'* (16AnnC07).

To summarise; of the above brides who spoke of their experience with their fathers in comparison with their mothers Louise, Liz, Patricia, and AnnC seem to express that the relationship built up with the mother parallels that built with the father, thus confirming Freud's hypothesis that the infant girl's attachment to her father is built upon her affectionate attachment to her mother (SE21:231). It is noteworthy that of the brides with unsupportive mothers, Pam, Francis, and Freesia, their experience of their fathers seems to be expressed not just as supportive but in particularly powerful terms. This can be understood as being an indication of a compensation due to a less supportive or unavailable mother. Although for some participants their father or their mother had died, I am not aware that any of the participants' parents had divorced.

Freud's Oedipus complex, for the bride, arguably concerns the tension and maintenance of appropriate relationship boundaries during the developmental period and the oscillation between rivalry and instinctual desire. Both the mother and the father are required to maintain a close enough relationship with their daughter as to be good-enough role models, which in turn the bride is proud enough to emulate, but not overly close to precipitate dependency or to cross incestuous boundaries.

Chodorow, in discussing the girl's orientation towards 'normal' or 'natural' heterosexuality interprets it as a compromise:

The girl turns to her father not out of libidinal desire but out of narcissistic mortification and a wish to possess his penis as her own organ. When she finds out that she cannot have it, she still does not want him: rather, she wants a baby that will substitute for the penis she cannot have. (Chodorow, 1994:42)

The evidence offered by the brides' statements appears to confirm Chodorow's argument. Evidence suggests that some brides feel '*close*' (02Louise10); '*warm*' (11Francis10); '*affection*' (13Patricia09), towards their father. Despite Chodorow's suggestion that these kinds of sentiments of affection towards the father are not attached to libidinal desire, these statements can be interpreted in terms of the libidinal desire that the infant girl may have had towards the father. By the time she is the bride-in-white these elements of sexual desire have been transformed and displaced onto a non-incestuous other. Having examined the infant girl's and the bride's relationship with the mother and then with the father, let us now consider a series of personal transformations that the bride undergoes inside the Church.

#### 4.6 Transformation inside the Church

Let us now consider how the bride is transformed by the Church ceremony, as mentioned earlier. Classically, the bride-in-white enters the Church wearing a veil which covers her face, and where her expression of feelings are bound by decorum. Arguably, the bride is not 'reluctant', yet she is constrained from a spontaneous 'release of pleasure' (*lustentbindung*), 'release of anxiety' (*angstentbindung*), or the release of 'sexual excitation' (*sexualentbindung*), which indicates the capacity for sublimation. Thus the bride comes to the Church in a state of opposing tensions. As Freud emphasises, 'the main purpose of Eros—that of uniting and binding—helps towards establishing unity, which is particularly characteristic of the ego' (SE19:45). In other words, the bride's purpose in privileging heterosexuality is to procure a 'uniting'. And like the Church which privileges obedience and passivity the bride presents as if 'bound' like a gift. As Rose states:

*I thought the words 'given away' odd. It's like being thought of as a gift. Is this why they dress you up in all this finery as if you are a present, as though you're a piece of property, rather than flesh and blood? (10Rose15).*

Freud suggests that the infantile past of the individual remains forever with us, stating that 'the primitive stages can always be re-established; the primitive mind is, in the fullest meaning of the word, imperishable' (SE14:286). This is to suggest that at times of anxiety regression to earlier behavioural patterns can be observed as a defence, and the re-emergence of the past in the present can be presented in the unconscious 'compulsion to repeat', as a response to being in a relatively distressing situation. Laplanche and Pontalis amplify Freud's position: 'the repetition compulsion is never to be encountered in a pure state, but is invariably reinforced by factors which are under the sway of the pleasure principle' (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973:79). In other words, the bride when experiencing anxiety can repeat what is relatively unpleasurable or even

painful, in order to attempt to master excessive tensions during this process of separation and transformation.

What appears dramatised during the wedding ceremony is the bride being 'given away' [Figure 8]. From the bride's perspective, however, she may be a willing participant because she believes that by relinquishing forbidden desires for the parents, that this 'compromise' will compensate (Chodorow, 1994:33-69). As established earlier, at puberty the Oedipus complex is revived and resolved when the girl accepts that her mother and father belong to each other and the girl is required to make her own object-choice. Let us consider the process of transition from object identification to the internalisation of the incest prohibition.

The American theoretician and psychiatrist Hans Loewald suggests that an important task for a workable resolution of the Oedipus complex, involves the relinquishment of the external object relationships. Loewald emphasises that object relationships, constituted on the level of the Oedipus complex, contain libidinal-aggressive as well as identification elements and the process of relinquishment involves the process of identification, that is 'of identification of oneself with' (Laplanche, 1973:205) becoming internalised. Loewald defines identification as 'erasing the difference between subject and object' and that identification is a step towards internalisation which facilitates 'an emancipation from the object' (Loewald, 1980:83).

Loewald argues that the process of internalisation transforms object-relations 'into an internal, intrapsychic, depersonified relationship' (Loewald, 1980:83). Loewald adds that this process acts in two ways, it 'increases and enriches psychic structure' and 'the identity with the object is renounced' (Loewald, 1980:83). Loewald emphasises that 'as

a completed process [internalisation] implies an emancipation from the object' that is 'freeing the individual for non-incestuous object-relations' (Loewald, 1980:83). In other words through the process of internalisation both the subject's and object's identity become redefined.

Having studied the brides' responses, discrete representative voices have been chosen to convey the dominant themes of transformation which fall under five principle headings: being veiled; being 'given away'; speaking the vows; signing the register and change of surname, as these represent significant events in the bride's experience. Due to the bride's sense of disorientation and increased anxiety, arguably, the bride may indicate signs of regression. That is, 'a psychical process which regresses to an earlier state, such as past phases of libidinal development, ways of object relating or types of identification' (Laplanche, 1973:386). During the bride's process of the loosening of familial ties, there are examples of: the loss of time; disconnection with reality; loss and change of identity; speaking difficulties; issues of obeying; the fear of making a mistake when writing; concern for the sequence in the alphabet; and the need to feel secure. These will now be explored in turn more closely.

For both the bride and her father a moment of truth has come. In Freudian terms, even though the daughter may have had unconscious incestuous desires towards the father, and the father towards the daughter, both she and he display their restraint by walking between the assembled group in the Church with pride. The bride-in-white, her face covered with a veil enters the Church with her father, as though they were a couple, yet she keeps herself separate<sup>91</sup> from her father and the group by her use of the veil.

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. 'she-who-is-unto-herself', as discussed in Part One.

Arguably, the bride-in-white on the arm of her father symbolically demonstrate to the group that they have remained subject to the law of incest prohibition.

Classically, the veiled bride conspicuously presents herself fully adorned in radiant white [Figure 5]. As previously established, in Chasseguet-Smirgel's terms, on being veiled, thus totally covered in white, the bride represents the phantasy of the return to an original state of perfection, the 'ideal ego', and which Loewald describes as 'a recapturing of the original primary-narcissistic, omnipotent perfection of the child by a primitive identification with the omnipotent parental figures...an hallucinatory wish fulfilment' (Loewald, 1980:46). Before investigating how the bride experiences the above series of transformations, let us consider how the bride's statements report their experience of being veiled.

Rose's experience of being veiled appears to have been felt as disorientating, including a timelessness element:

*While veiled it felt as though I was peering through a fog. I felt relieved when I reached the end of the aisle and the vicar put the veil back from over my face. It was like coming out of a fog (10Rose14).*

The experience of being veiled can be interpreted in pre-Oedipal terms, indicating dependency, with nearly non-existent or indistinct boundaries. Loewald asserts that:

pre-Oedipal reality is pre-objective. Boundaries between subject and object...on pre-Oedipal levels are either non-existent, fluid, blurred, so no clear or constant distinction between self and object world, between inside and outside, is maintained. (Loewald, 1980:81)

While the veil covers the bride's face, arguably the experience can be interpreted in pre-Oedipal terms where boundaries appear blurred. As the veil is lifted the bride's state becomes differentiated, with distinct Oedipal parental figures around her. Let us now consider other bride's statements. which seem to fall into four categories:

First, Francis expresses how she felt, that by wearing a veil there was a separation:

*I really enjoyed being veiled as there's something very containing about it. It gave me privacy and I felt that I couldn't belong to anybody while I was veiled (11Francis14).*

Second, Margaret considered that the veil was 'traditional':

*The tradition in my day was that the bride came in with the veil over her face and went out with it back (14Margaret14).*

In stating that wearing a veil was 'traditional' (14Margaret14), can be interpreted in terms of her ego being censored by the function of the superego, while her behaviour conforms to the near family and wider social group expectations. Thus by wearing a veil Margaret represents an ideal for both herself and the group, defending against any fear of 'loss of love'.

Third, Ann felt trapped behind her veil:

*I didn't like being veiled or having that barrier between me and the outside world. It was put over to walk down the aisle. It felt trapping. I didn't want to be hidden. I wanted everybody to see how radiant I was. Having my face covered was quite uncomfortable. I was quite glad to get to the end of the aisle [laughter] when the veil could be taken back (12Ann14).*

It appears from Ann's statement that she felt some tension. First, in feeling 'trapped' can be interpreted as being associated with the bride's 'self-blinding', an 'anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind' which Freud links to 'the punishment of castration' (SE17:231). Arguably, on wearing a veil Ann experiences that her feelings were constrained, restricted or bound. Ann seems to be expressing how she felt constrained in a castrated body, and how she wished to compensate for an unconscious 'lack' through her active exhibitionism, as she declares that 'I wanted everybody to see how radiant I was' (12Ann14). It is as if Ann wished to become the phallic object that 'everybody' would admire. Second, it seems that Ann acquiesced to wearing a veil, even though she

*'didn't like being veiled', 'I didn't want to be hidden'* (12Ann14). This suggests that for Ann there was a tension between 'passivity' and 'activity', an unconscious struggle against relinquishing her masculinity and her independence.

Another aspect of this moment of truth comes when the bride's face is laid bare in the presence of the larger group, and in the intimacy of the smaller group which comprises of herself, the minister and her fiancée, as AnnC states that:

*Walking down the aisle with the veil over my face was a bit of a security, because I could hide behind my veil [laughter]. When I lifted the veil up, it was like presenting myself to my fiancée [laughter]* (16AnnC14).

Fourth, two brides from the 'recent' group did not wear a veil, but this was not elaborated upon:

*No, I didn't wear a veil* (07Elizabeth14).

Let us now consider another facet of the bride's transformation, that of being 'given away'. However deliberately or willing a subject, being 'given away', psychodynamically, involves the processes of separation from, and the loss of, love-objects, that is the gradual relinquishment of Oedipal triangular relationships. Freud asserts that:

people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them. This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a change to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis. (SE14:244)

This is to suggest that even in the face of reality there can be a tendency for denial and a clinging to the love-object. The bride, at this juncture, may not only be mourning for the loss of herself as a daughter, the loss of familial home, the security but also the insecurity it may represent. These feelings of sadness for her loss could also lead to

anger towards those who are giving her away, and guilt for leaving the love-objects for another.

Loewald suggests that as a defence against these types of losses, transforming processes of internalisation are involved, as discussed above. Loewald argues that:

[If] external love-objects remain present during the resolution of the Oedipus complex [they] actively promote the process of internalisation. [If] the parents remain present during this period but change their attitude; they promote a partial detachment, a decathexis of libidinal-aggressive drives from themselves as external objects so that an amount of such drive energy is freed for narcissistic recathexis. [Then], some drive energy becomes available for eventual recathexis in non-incestuous external relationships; parents promote emancipation. (Loewald, 1980:226-7)

Reporting on the experience of being ‘given away’ the bride’s statements appear to address six main themes, as follows:

First, some brides experienced being ‘given away’ as supportive and protective:

*It was lovely being ‘given away’ because it brought our two families together. There was a joining, we weren’t just a couple we had our families supporting us. When the respective parents and the minister joined our hands together, that was very nice (01Sue15).*

*In being ‘given away’ I felt I was being passed from one protective male to another as though it was an act of love (17Ros15).*

Second, some brides connected feelings of loss with the father:

*Being ‘given away’ was special to me because dad was there (05Liz15).*

*I think I might have felt emotional because my father was giving me away (14Margaret15).*

Third, some brides reported feeling ambivalent about being ‘given away’:

*I felt happy being ‘given away’ but mixed with sadness because at the end of the day he was my dad (02Louise15).*

*Being 'given away' I felt very upset, happy and upset, because I didn't have my dad there (03Lucy15).*

Fourth, some brides expressed a sense of denial of the separation between father and daughter.

*I felt I had already left home when I went away to college. I don't think I felt particularly 'given away' or that my father was giving up his prize possession, even though I was his only daughter (14Margaret15).*

*I didn't feel as though my father was getting rid of me because I thought we'd still be father and daughter (10Rose15).*

Fifth, one bride experienced feeling frightened about the finality of separation:

*Being 'given away' felt frightening because then I didn't have my parental home. It seemed strange to be going away from what was my home for twenty-one years where I knew who people were and was going to be with this person who was virtually a stranger, in one sense. It was as if I wanted to stay at home a bit longer. It felt as though, perhaps even feeling pushed away [laughter], but I wasn't allowed back in that full way again (11Francis15).*

Sixth, one bride appears to have been impatient to separate:

*I couldn't wait to be given to my husband. I knew that I was going to someone who really loved me and that he had something special. I was leaving [pause] a happy background, but I was going to where I wanted to be – with my husband. We were going to be one complete unit. I couldn't wait! (09Pam15).*

We can see from the above statements the different quality of responses to the process of deliberate and intentional separation. From being experienced as supportive, acknowledging the loss, expressing ambivalence, denial, to being anxious, or being overly willing to separate.

The first theme can be interpreted, that the loss of one relationship can be compensated by another of equal value. Sue states that the '*joining*' seems to apply to both families and also the act of being 'given away' makes a new couple (01Sue15). Ros reports experiencing '*being passed from one protective male to another*' (17Ros15), indicating

that both men were on an equal par. The second theme seems to carry poignancy regarding the daughter's relation to her father. Liz reports that being '*given away*' felt '*special*' because of her father's presence (05Liz15). Margaret states that it was 'emotional' (14Margaret15) because her father was present. These statements can be interpreted as being part of the process of relinquishment of incestuous object relations indicating the significance of the father's role. The third theme can be interpreted as the bride possessing both the capacity for sadness, loss and looking back, but also the capacity to look to the future. Again it will be noticed that both (02Louise15) and (03Lucy15) link the emotions with their father. These statements can be interpreted as indicating the close relationship between daughter and father. The fourth theme, considering a sense of denial, can be interpreted as being characteristic of a defence against anxiety and depression. Denial of reality can be a way of dealing with the reality of pain or emotion and can reinforce feelings of isolation, alienation and stigmatisation. That is, in denial, the subject defends against being different. The bride can also be in denial of castration or passivity—a 'repudiation of femininity', as explored in Part One. The fifth theme considers how Francis seems acutely aware of feeling '*frightened*' (11Francis15). This degree of acuteness can be interpreted in terms of reluctance, of one who 'clings' to the past and fears the future with its uncertainty. The sixth theme addresses the bride who is impatient as if she is driven fearlessly by some powerful force, as reported by (09Pam15).

The triangular Oedipal structure of daughter, mother and father, transposes into father daughter and minister as the father gives the bride 'away', and then becomes the triangular relationship of bride, fiancée and minister, in the construction of a new two-person relationship. Let us now explore another aspect of the bride's transformation, that of making the vows.

The bride, still unmarried, now turns to her right and in so doing turns her back on her parents, thus unconsciously ‘repudiating parental authority’, as investigated in Part One. The bride, no longer separated or protected by the veil, now becomes aware of the group watching her, addresses the bridegroom towards whom she faces. The bride, no longer resting her left hand on her father’s arm, now rests her left hand in the bridegrooms right hand, consents to ‘have this man...to live together...and forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live’, the bride speaks: ‘I will’. As already established in Part One, the bride echoes phrases enunciated by the minister, in a legally prescribed sequence, which ends: ‘I give thee my troth’.

Of the few participants who referred to their experience relating to the vows, as a direct question concerning the vows was not included in the questionnaire, the statements appear to address two main themes.

First, some brides reported on the gravity of making a promise:

*I knew that once I had taken my vows I didn't want to ever break them and knew I was now going to be committed to one man, wholly and entirely and for it to last for a lifetime. A 'vow' is a very big word, it means to me that what I said I were going to do; it's an awful commitment (10Rose09).*

*When my fiancée was saying his vows, I found that emotional, because you don't often hear people talk like that 'With my body I honour you...'. When you're there and it's right in front of you and you're saying it, it takes on a different depth of meaning (16AnnC15).*

Arguably, within the audible enunciation of vows, there is an element of omnipotent control. Within the ritualised potency and power of the spoken word, the vows, like pronouncing a spell, exclude all other people (*'forsaking all other'*, including the father), and exclusively include another person (*'keep thee only unto him'*, the

bridegroom), as already mentioned, where the minutest error in the incantation requires the whole to be repeated.

Freud suggests that there can be an 'attributing of magical powers to words' which are used by religion (SE22:165). Freud states that there is also 'the overvaluation of the magic of words and the belief that the real events in the world take the course which our thinking seeks to impose on them' (SE22:166). This is to suggest that a grave value can be attributed to the words spoken during the vows in the subject's hope that the intention invokes action.

Second, some brides reported that enunciating the vows was a vivid emotional experience:

*I was shaking and embarrassed saying my vows out loud in front of a lot of people because I was nervous that I was going to get it wrong (01Sue18).*

*I got very emotional saying my vows. I might loose it completely here...but I managed to hang on [laughter]. I didn't want to be a blubbering wreck as it's such a big thing! Making the biggest vows of your life seems frightening (06Debbie11).*

The above statements indicate that speaking the vows became a very emotional experience: Sue's statement seems to be in two parts, first, an extraordinarily intense affect laden experience: '*I was shaking*' (01Sue18), and second, that she feared '*getting it wrong*' (01Sue18), indicating an unconscious fear of a loss of perfection, thus a loss of the ego ideal. Debbie's report '*I might loose it completely*', '*I didn't want to be a blubbering wreck*' (06Debbie11) seems to suggest that she had an extraordinarily intense tormenting experience, near to the point when something bad might happen and loose adult ego control by becoming like a baby.

Both in Sue's and Debbie's statements we meet an example of the tension within which the bride is 'bound'. That due to decorum the bride continues to be restrained from a spontaneous release of affect. Freud asserts that 'from the outset in anxiety-hysteria the mind is constantly at work in the direction of once more psychically binding the anxiety which has become liberated' (SE10:117). This is to suggest that the speaking of vows within earshot of the group is a pivotal process in the bride's transformation because it is so laden with affect.

Freud, 'deeply' conversant with the Bible from childhood, acknowledges its 'enduring effect' on him (SE20:8) may well have suggested, at this point in the ceremony, that becoming a wife carries with it a two-fold responsibility. First, to facilitate her husband's separation from his father and mother, in the husband's 'cleaving unto' her (Genesis 2v24), inferring her capacity to transform separation anxiety. Second, for her to 'be subject to her husband', (Colossians 3v18), implying the woman's passivity. Let us now examine another moment of personal transformation for the bride that of signing the register and changing her surname.

The bride, now married and a wife, concretises her visual and spoken intentions by signing her maiden name [Figure 10]. Writing, that is, the bride signing the Church register in the presence of witnesses, records her signature for posterity, i.e. 'a communication with the absent' (Green, 1986:321). The bride signing her familial surname, and for some brides for the last time, is the final stage in the vectorisation process through a series of transformations, from visualisation, verbalisation, now culminating in written textual language. The activities are transformed, connected and locked into the paper. Green, drawing on Bion, suggests that the 'locked in' and 'connected' elements of the written word can be associated with 'a process of

imprisonment, of containment' (Green, 1986:320). Green proposes that 'the work of writing presupposes a wound and a loss, a work of mourning, of which the text is the transformation into a fictitious positivity' (Green, 1986:322). Freud notes that 'in cases of hysterical mutism writing [can] operate vicariously in the place of speech...writing more fluently, quicker...than previously' (SE7:39).

Pam seems to report that she felt irritated and impatient with the process of having to sign the register:

*As I was signing the register [laughter] I wished the minister would hurry up [giggle]. I wished we could get to the reception as all the paper-work was becoming boring (09Pam16).*

Pam's report can be interpreted as indicating that Pam is projecting some hostility that she may have felt towards her controlling parents onto the controlling minister. Let us now consider how other brides recall their experience of signing the register. The participant's statements appear to address three themes, as follows:

First, some brides felt overwhelmed while writing:

*I was shaking and I couldn't see properly because of the contact lenses. I felt very proud to be signing the register and to have my mother-in-law and father-in-law there (07Elizabeth16).*

*During the signing of the register I remember feeling anxious because I didn't want to make a blot with the pen [laughter] on the register; I wanted to get it right (12Ann16).*

It can be interpreted that within this form of non-verbal communication there are elements of emotional restraint and somatisation; for Elizabeth she 'couldn't see properly' (07Elizabeth16). For Ann she wished to control her hand sufficiently that she 'didn't want to make a blot' (12Ann16) which indicates the desire for perfection constrained by the demands emanating from the ego ideal.

Second, some of the brides from the ‘older group’ stated that they could not recall any feelings associated while writing:

*I don't remember having any feelings as I signed the register. It was just something that had to be done legally. I suppose it was the last time I would be signing this name. But it was new and exciting and nothing upsetting about it (13Patricia16).*

*I signed on the dotted line, it was as matter of fact. I don't think it bothered me that that was the last time I signed my maiden name (14Margaret16).*

It can be interpreted that during the process of signing their name there could be a sense of denial of emotional content; for Patricia ‘*I don't remember any feelings*’ (13Patricia16); and for Margaret ‘*it didn't bother me*’ (14Margaret16).

Third, some brides conveyed the experience of being transformed by writing:

*Signing the register is like saying "yes", I've done it now! [laughter] and the piece of paper to prove that I am married now and that I'm 'Mrs.' It felt good that I was 'Mrs' and not 'Miss' (02Louise16).*

*I felt, in signing the register, that I'd lost a little bit of my identity. I was no longer going to be 'Miss', I was now going to be 'Mrs.', half of a couple, like having a new identity (10Rose16).*

It can be interpreted that for some brides, signing the Church register was significant as it seems that it marked a moment of transformation, that for both (02Louise16) and (10Rose16) becoming ‘Mrs’ *felt good*, thus indicating an identification with the mother. When 10Rose16 speaks of feeling ‘half of a couple’, this can be interpreted in terms of Plato’s argument, as discussed in Part One, that individuals search for their other half in order to feel complete.

Having examined how the bride reports her experience of signing the Church register, another way in which we can understand the manner in which the bride unconsciously ‘repudiates her parent’s authority’, as examined in Part One, can be illustrated by how the bride reports on her experience of surname change. Part of the transformation

process during the wedding ceremony, in the privacy of the Church vestry, or in view of the group, the bride often changes her surname. Arguably, this change symbolises a displacement of authority and allegiance from one paternal name to another, because this change will bring her satisfaction, and in Freudian terms the desired penis. The bride, relinquishing her familial surname, arguably can be interpreted under six psychodynamic themes.

First, as a sign of the strength of patriarchy, indicated by the ‘turning from the mother to the father’ (SE23:114). Second, a sign of ‘identification with her mother’ which has ‘the intention of substituting activity for passivity’ (SE22:128). Third, a sign of the woman’s super-ego conforming to parental and society’s traditional values through identification with them and the ‘internalisation of parental prohibitions and demands’ (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973:436). Fourth, if in wishing to retain the father’s surname this could be a sign of penis envy and ‘the wish to get the longed-for penis’ (SE22:125). Fifth, a sign of striving for trust and autonomy (Erikson, 1950:272). Sixth, repudiating the parent’s authority (SE7:227). Freud in referring to ‘legitimacy and monogamy’, and the ‘solitary, indissoluble bond between one man and one woman’, discusses the compensation sought by the weaker from the stronger as a means of ‘obtaining of some measure of security’ (SE21:105).

Let us now discuss the bride’s statements by considering each of the six themes that emerged from the statements. First, the majority of brides stated that they changed their surname because they wanted to:

*Changing your surname was the absolutely accepted system. It was totally accepted that you took your husband’s name (15Freesia17).*

Freesia's statement can be interpreted in terms of conforming to patriarchal tradition, thus indicating that Freesia felt subject to the super-ego and passivity.

Second, some brides felt sad losing their father's surname:

*I felt sad that I was losing my name [laughter], because I was no longer a... and because it was my father's name and my father's not here any more. I was quite proud to carry his name, so I felt quite sad about that (06Debbie16).*

Feeling 'sad' (06Debbie16) can be interpreted in terms of mourning the loss of the paternal tie, while there continues to be a sense of reluctance to leave paternal security.

Third, some brides reported that by changing their surname they felt they now belonged.

*Changing my surname felt good because I felt, now I belong to someone else (02Louise17).*

In feeling that 'I belong to someone else' (02Louise17), indicates a repudiation of parental authority and a new measure of trust and security.

Fourth, some brides felt ambivalent about changing their surname:

*I didn't mind changing my surname, but in a way I am sorry that one has to do that, because I feel more affinity to my maiden name than my married name because that was the family I belonged to (17Ros17).*

On being ambivalent to changing her surname, the bride indicates the tension between leaving and not leaving the parental family surname. Arguably, there could also be an unconscious sense of guilt for wishing to repudiate parental authority and the struggle to accept passivity.

Fifth, some brides thought in spelling and alphabet terms.

*I was very delighted to change my surname, because it was now [laughter] further up the alphabet and that seemed wonderful [laughter] (11Francis17).*

This statement can be interpreted in terms of narcissistic delight that the bride had a new and more manageable surname.

Sixth, Liz stated that she did not change her surname:

*I haven't actually changed my name! It's not that I am making a big statement because when our child was born, it was a 'no-brainer' to me that he was going to have his father's surname. I've got no problem being called 'Mrs...'. But it seems an odd convention that you change your name. I can't see the point of it, given that it's a great deal of hassle, I wouldn't bother doing it (05Liz16).*

Liz's statement can be interpreted as indicating a strength of patriarchy, as Liz states that her son will 'have his father's surname' (05Liz16) and that Liz had 'no problem being called Mrs...' (05Liz16). While at the same time perhaps, the feminist part of Liz wishes to cling onto her father's surname, which in Oedipal terms can be interpreted as indicating 'penis envy' (SE22:128). Let us now consider how the bride describes her relationship with the non-incestuous other.

#### **4.7 On relating to the non-incestuous other**

Although the topic of the bride's relationship to their husband was not directly addressed during the interview, several participants expressed their views. As the bride processes up the aisle on the arm of her husband the bride has visually enacted separation from the Oedipal love-objects and repudiated their authority, and the bride now carries only internalised representations of them as they are left behind. The bride has risked the parent's disapproval, or a sense of guilt, as suggested earlier by Chasseguet-Smirgel, of replacing their love with a love from the 'non-incestuous other'. The bride may now feel ecstatically happy as she projects a sense of love onto her husband. Feeling special in an exclusive relationship may contain resonance with the pre-Oedipal maternal relationship. The bride may feel a sense of insecurity at turning her back on her parents, but may be looking to replace the security she had with her parents with security provided by her husband. The bride may see her new relationship as a means by which she finds liberation from parental ties.

Let us consider three aspects of this moment of separation and union. Freud suggests that 'Eros desires contact because it strives to make the ego and the loved object one, to abolish all spatial barriers between them' (SE20:122). In other words, affects such as hostility and disappointment towards the parents are put in the service of Eros, which facilitates separation from incestuous desire and brings about close contact with a non-incestuous object. Freud claims that 'when [the infant girl] turned from her mother to her father, the hostility of her ambivalent relation remained with her mother' (SE22:132-3), however, as the infant girl does not fear castration, but can feel intimidated and 'threatened with a loss of love' (SE19:178). Loewald asserts that:

Whether separation from a love object is experienced as deprivation and loss or as emancipation and mastery will depend, in part, on the achievement of the work of internalisation. In terms of affect, the road leads from depression through mourning to elation. (Loewald, 1980:263)

That is to say, there seems to be required of the bride the capacity to split her feelings in two. To leave any ambivalence and ‘hostility with her mother’, and by displacement and in the service of Eros, project loving affects onto her husband.

Let us now examine the quality of the bride’s responses. As we have already seen, Pam seemed to need to prize her husband away from his mother’s influence, that is, Pam’s mother-in-law. Let us examine this report, made twenty-six years after the event expressing the feelings of a nineteen-year-old bride, more closely:

*On the way back from the reception, my husband and I called into his mum’s house to take my wedding dress off. His mum always had a very strong hold over her son. I remember going to the toilet and the confetti falling out from my dress. Instead of picking it up, I thought ‘I’ll leave it there because then she’ll know that I’ve been, made my mark and I’ve got her son’. Isn’t that wicked? That’s nasty! (09Pam07).*

Psychodynamically, we can see from this report that Pam seems to have felt that she experienced a pressure exerted by ‘his mum’, which seemed to precipitate Pam to exert a contrary force (09Pam07). Thus we see, as Freud explains, a ‘conflict of opposing mental forces...as the outcome of an active struggling on the part of the two psychical groupings against each other’ (SE11:26). Karen Horney links the opposition of letting go or keeping, with the process undertaken at marriage and suggests that ‘the demand for monogamy is closely bound up with anal-sadistic instinctual elements and converts the claim of love into an anal-sadistic demand for possession’ (Horney, 1967:93). These opposing forces if understood as a struggle can be seen in terms of ‘letting go, or keeping’. Once president of the International Psycho-Analytical Association Karl Abraham suggests that the anal-sadistic stage of infantile sexual development can be interpreted in two parts. The first, is ‘linked to evacuation and the sadistic instinct to the destruction of the object’. The second, is connected to ‘retention and the sadistic instinct to possessive control’ (Abraham 1924, in. Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973:35). 09Pam07’s statement can therefore be interpreted on four psychodynamic levels.

The first aspect can be interpreted in anal sadistic terms and seems to be Pam's sense of an overwhelming intrusion and invasion therefore her apparent need for the 'expulsion' of the mother's influence, therefore separation has become imperative from this apparently intrusive force. Pam seems to 'identify with the aggressor' and sadistically reciprocates. We learn that Pam desired to '*make her mark*' and this appears to be linked with going '*to the toilet*' and something '*falling out*' which seems to be associated with '*his mum*'. The whole report seems to be framed in an intense sadistic manner, as Pam states: '*Isn't that wicked?*', and '*That's nasty!*' (09Pam07).

In Pam's report, the confetti that Pam does not pick up arguably can be equated with the faeces which appears in Freud's 'symbolic equation: faeces = gift' (SE17:127-33). On this basis, therefore, the confetti/faeces that Pam leaves behind, that are considered '*nasty*' and represent a '*mark*', can be interpreted as a '*wicked*' sadistic attack by Pam on the '*strong hold*' that her mother-in-law appeared to exert over Pam's husband (09Pam07). Pam's sadistic attack can also be interpreted in terms of a displacement onto her own father who earlier was experienced as having '*always had that hold over me*' (09Pam09). This reaction, can be understood as an expression of Pam's desire to become liberated or emancipated from his '*hold*'. Pam seems to reinforce this need for liberation when she states: '*I couldn't wait to be Mrs*' (09Pam09) which can be interpreted as a sign of mastery over a love-hate object. This sense of liberation from the parental '*hold*' also implies a liberation from Pam's own mother who '*was too wrapped up in herself to be involved*' (09Pam11). By implication, therefore, the experience of the 'absent mother' infers that Pam may have felt unheld because her mother did not have the capacity to 'play' (Winnicott, 1971:54), or was unable to offer maternal 'reverie and containment' (Bion, 1967:116) or was not fully available to

support her and enter into Pam's celebration. Pam's attack on those who are experienced as having a '*strong hold*' over her, thus restricting Pam's unbridled desires, can be interpreted as 'rebellion', which Loewald suggests 'maintains the external relationship' rather than facilitates separation from external objects (Loewald, 1980:263).

The second aspect of Pam's report seems to suggest that Pam expresses a greedy need for possession of her husband. This 'greedy need' can be located in the infant's pre-Oedipal oral phase, when the need takes the form of an unconscious desire to incorporate the mother and the breast in order to have sole possession. As already established, the pre-Oedipal infant experiences an exclusive attachment with the mother, before desiring to possess the father, both of which end in disappointment. Arguably, as a reaction to these disappointments Pam secures exclusive possession over her husband as a compensation or compromise for these earlier disappointments.

The third aspect of Pam's report can be interpreted that Pam's anxieties could be linked to Pam's introjection of her fear of losing control and her projection of this fear onto another. From this statement it can be interpreted that Pam introjects the feeling that her mother-in-law, or her own father, has a '*strong hold*' over him or her (09Pam07). Freud suggests that this introjected feeling can be linked to a 'paranoid fear of being killed or devoured by the mother' which in turn Freud links to the infant girl's attachment and dependence on the mother (SE21: 227).

The fourth aspect of this report concerns Pam feeling 'threatened with a loss of love', thus rivalry with her mother-in-law. Pam states that '*his mother always had a very strong hold over her son*', can be interpreted as indicating that Pam felt rivalrous

towards her mother-in-law for her son's love (09Pam07). This can suggest that as an infant girl Pam experienced intense Oedipal rivalry with her own mother for possession of the father.

Having closely examined the other participant's statements regarding their relationship with their husband four themes appear to emerge, as follows:

First, the bride having suffered disappointments from her parents now looks to her husband for happiness:

*My most vivid memory was on entering the Church and my husband-to-be, looking at me coming down the aisle. The music was 'Here Comes The Bride' and we processed out to 'Oh Perfect Love'. I think that was the most magical moment because it said what my dreams and hopes were, that this was going to be perfect and would last forever (10Rose01).*

Rose's sense of elation seems to be idealised on the level of a 'magical' phantasy where the ego ideal dominates and 'dreams and hopes' come true and 'last forever' (10Rose01). As already established, idealistic 'magical' thinking can be interpreted as a denial of reality or a way of dealing with the pain of separation. Let us now see how Ros expresses her feelings towards her husband:

*My happiest memory was marrying my husband, making the vows and exchanging rings because we were very much in love (17Ros22).*

Ros's elation seems to have had its roots in Ros's projection of love onto her reciprocating husband. In both 10Rose01's and 17Ros22's case it can be interpreted that the projection of love onto another can be seen to be a defence against the loss of love of primary objects.

Second, some brides feel threatened with a loss of love, so snare their husband:

*It meant a lot to me that dad gave me away, particularly because I know he's old fashioned and probably didn't think that having the baby first then getting married was the right way round. My dad seemed genuinely happy when we married (05Liz10). My happiest memory is about the ceremony which was like 'electric', so intense, as I was nervous, actually shaking, when I went up the aisle, and my husband-to-be held my hand all through the service (05Liz22).*

Liz's statement suggests that she had already secured the love of her partner by 'having a baby first', but seems to express a sense of relief that her 'dad seemed genuinely happy', thus indicating that Liz could have felt threatened with a loss of her father's love and approval if she had not married (05Liz10). Liz's use of the word 'electric' to describe her heightened state of emotional voltage tension, can be interpreted in terms of the warmth that electric power generates, or the 'accumulations of high-voltage electricity that seeks discharge and can lead to the loss of consciousness and convulsion' (Ferro, 2009: 76), which appear to be transformed and were earthed when her 'husband-to-be held my hand' (05Liz22). Let us consider how another bride reports on 'capturing' her husband-to-be:

*I tried to stay a virgin, but two weeks before we married we had a wopping great row. The way we made up was that my husband-to-be insisted we had sex, which I wasn't really keen to do as I was a virgin. So I really had the sex to get married, to make sure that he didn't run away (11Francis05).*

Francis' report indicates that Francis imagined that her husband-to-be might 'run away' and leave her alone, thus indicating that Francis could have felt intimidated and threatened with a loss of his love (11Francis05).

Third, the bride having repudiated her parent's authority projects a need for security onto her husband:

*I think getting married cements relationships, offering security for having a family. We'd been together for twelve years and we didn't know we could have a family but we both wanted children, and knew that we wanted to be married before that. Getting married made me feel more secure that my husband had made the commitment that he*

*wanted to be with me for the rest of our life. I knew I wanted to be with him [laughter]* (16AnnC22).

AnnC seems, from her report, to have given the issue of providing security for herself and the children through marriage a great deal of thought. Behind this test of time it can be interpreted that AnnC felt ‘threatened with a loss of love’, thus testing the partnership well before ‘*cementing*’ the relationship (16AnnC22).

Fourth, some brides seem to struggle for liberation from parents as the following report illustrates:

*I had been in something of a struggle because my father had opposed my marriage, not because he had anything against my husband-to-be, but because my father felt I ought to, in a Victorian way, devote my life to looking after my disabled brother: I said no. He felt somehow this was wrong, but he came round to it* (15Freesia10).

This report states that Freesia ‘*struggled*’ against her father’s wishes. This can be interpreted as indicating that Freesia struggled to liberate herself from the all powerful primal father’s desire for control of all the women. In Freesia’s negation ‘*my father had opposed my marriage, not because he had anything against my husband-to-be*’ (15Freesia10), suggests that Freesia suppressed a hostile wish towards the father. This hostility can be interpreted that Freesia unconsciously experienced her father as a rival, with her husband-to-be, over his daughter’s love.

Arguably, the predominant theme which seems to have emerged from the participant’s reports, even though (10Rose01) expresses some idealisation, which can be interpreted as a defence against loss and separation, is the brides struggle to separate from the parents and the brides struggle to secure a new trusting relationship. The principle frame within which this analysis has taken place is the Oedipal complex. It has aimed at creating a capacity to generate thought through symbolisation and the ability to

transform images through a new narration. Let us now consider how the bride processes change with reference to Winnicott with particular emphasis on the bride's use of her wedding dress.

#### **4.8 Processing change: separation anxiety and the use of a ‘transitional object’**

Let us now explore the development of psychoanalytic understanding of the infant’s first ‘not me’ possession and the adult’s uses of other ‘not me’ possessions, in the psychological use of an object to allay anxiety. First, let us examine the way in which Winnicott’s theory of the ‘transitional object’, that is, an object not dissimilar to the infant’s ‘comfort blanket’, assists the subject through the transformation from one state to another and facilitates the process of separation from the mother. Second, let us apply this psychodynamic understanding to the social setting in which the bride finds herself, separating from familial ties and particularly from the maternal realm. Arguably the bride displaces separation anxiety onto the wedding dress, a vestment of clothing that assists change and is worn to help the bride move from one state to another, that is, from relative dependency to relative autonomy.

Winnicott recognises Wulff’s description, discussed in Part Three, of an inanimate item of mother’s clothing being a ‘soothing’ mechanism in the infant’s aid towards sleeping. Wulff seems to describe the item of clothing in terms of a sexual fetish. Winnicott, however, desexualises the *delusional* object, the fetish which stands in for the ‘maternal phallus’, and suggests that ‘the *illusion* of a maternal phallus’ can be understood as ‘universal and not pathological’ (Winnicott, 1951a:241, original emphasis). In Winnicottian terms the relationship with the mother’s ‘lost’ penis seems to be displaced onto the fetish, whereas the illusion with which the infant endows the ‘transitional object’ represents the lost maternal environment.

The pre-neonate may experience the mother’s endless nourishment, a sense of safety and protection in the womb. The neonate, however, becomes dependent upon the mother or substitute, due to the infant’s helplessness or anxiety related to feeling

insecurely held. Winnicott draws on Freud who asserts: ‘anxiety is about something’, that is the experience encapsulated in the body, mind and externally (Winnicott, 1958:59). Freud suggests, for the infant, once the hallucinatory image of the longed for object diminishes ‘the longing turns into anxiety’ (SE20:137). Anxiety resulting from separation may take different forms, such as challenging the infant’s sense of survival or the ability to build basic trust.

In Winnicottian terms, the infant uses the maternal environment and the breast, to continue the illusion of remaining ‘merged’ with the mother (Winnicott, 1971:107). In order to alleviate the separation anxiety of birth the infant incorporates and identifies with as many parts of the temporarily ‘lost’ object. In other words, while the unborn foetus may experience feeling ‘merged’, the new born infant, in phantasy, continues the illusion of being merged, because separation from the mother threatens the infant’s sense of existence.

Winnicott conceptualises three areas of infant experience: a) ‘inner world’, b) ‘external life’, and c) ‘an intermediate area that is not challenged [but] exists as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human ‘strain’ of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated’ (Winnicott, 1971:2+13). This ‘intermediate area’ operates during the infant’s ‘inability and growing ability to recognise and accept reality’ (Winnicott, 1971:3), where the mother, through her adaptation enables the infant to allow for her failure and become tolerant of frustration (Winnicott, 1971:10).

Winnicott describes the hypothetical yet shared corporal experience between infant and mother, taking place within the ‘potential space’, where the infant imagines being merged with the object (Winnicott, 1971:107). Winnicott suggests that ‘strain’ is

experienced if the mother is not immediately available to be 'created', this results in a 'defence against depressive anxiety' (Winnicott, 1971:4). In Winnicottian terms, separation anxiety may be processed with the co-operation of the mother whose characteristics include being 'good-enough' (Winnicott, 1965:145), 'adaptive' (Winnicott, 1971:11), 'devoted' (Winnicott, 1965:148), and 'preoccupied' with her infant's requirements (Winnicott, 1965:33). The mother also offers the infant the 'illusory experience' of what the infant imagines, and is already in existence, appears to be 'omnipotently created' or chosen (Winnicott, 1971:12).

Gradually separation and 'objectivity' ensue. The infant's imperative no longer demands that the mother is under his/her 'magical omnipotent control' (Winnicott, 1971:9). From this position, the infant displaces ambivalent anxiety, due to a loss of control over the mother, onto an inanimate object which appears to offer some of the same qualities the mother had previously offered. This inanimate object, Winnicott understands as 'transitional' since it unconsciously offers the illusion of bridging the gap between the infant and mother during the infant's experience of separation. That is to say, the process of investment by the infant onto an inanimate object 'is a defence against depressive anxiety' because the object has been 'chosen' and is under the infant's control (Winnicott, 1971:4).

Winnicott's thesis of the infant's first external 'not-me' possession was based on his observation, that between the ages of approximately four to twelve months, when starting to explore the world, the infant often carries an inanimate object. The object may be a piece of material or a toy, which seems to have been endowed with special qualities by the infant during the mother's absence which, as already mentioned, Winnicott describes this as 'transitional' (Winnicott, 1971:2). Interestingly, Winnicott

emphasises that generally it is not the mother nor the breast which become the infant's 'first not-me possession', instead Winnicott identifies the infant's independent choice of an external object as the agency of autonomy (Winnicott, 1971:6). In Winnicottian terms, the object accompanies the child during developing towards 'integration, personalisation and object-relating' (Winnicott, 1965:223), and helps the infant manage the 'journey from subjectivity to objectivity' (Winnicott, 1971:6). In facilitating the infant's environment, the mother and the inanimate object, accept the child's 'repeated destroying or damaging' during the infant's states of separation and 'unthinkable anxiety' (Winnicott, 1965:57). Finally, as the child finds the capacity to tolerate the mother's 'objectivity' (Winnicott, 1971:6) and separateness, the mother 'gradually reasserts herself as an independent person' (Winnicott, 1965:239). In other words, the infant moves from a predominantly subjective to a relatively objective experience.

The Korean psychiatrist Michael Hong, while investigating the process of separation-individuation and establishing a cohesive self, recognises that the 'transitional object' offers the infant 'tactile perception of reality until the distance perceptions become mature' and this facilitates 'the process of illusion-disillusionment and the differentiation of 'me' - 'not-me' in the development of reality testing (Hong, 1978:48).

Hong asserts that the role of the 'transitional object' includes:

being symbolic of a part object or the mother or reunion with the mother, but its actuality and that it stands for the mother are as important as its symbolic value; internalise an idealised component of the mother's soothing and anxiety-regulating functions; the child can substitute the attachment object for the 'good enough' yet not enough mother, by providing 'contact comfort' and 'security'; a defence against anxiety. (Hong, 1978:67-8)

Hong compares mothering behaviour and infant going to sleep patterns in Western Anglo-Saxon culture with Korean children in Korea and Korean children in America.

Hong concludes that:

the development of the blanket attachment is inversely correlated with the quantity and quality of physical contact with the mothering person. Therefore, the blanket attachment appears to be a substitute for, or an equivalent of, certain components of mothering, especially tactile contact, and provides 'contact comfort' to the infants, in addition to its other important roles in ego development. (Hong, 1978:75)

Thus the 'transitional object', which can be experienced as actual with soothing and tactile elements may also be envisioned as symbolic or a substitute for the internalised mother. Let us now consider how Winnicott's theory of the 'transitional object' can be understood in terms of the bride's experience.

Classically, the bride enacts a process of real and symbolic separation, from the secure nurturing environment. In Winnicottian terms, during this process of familial separation the bride inhabits an 'intermediate area of experiencing' which falls between the facilitating maternal environment and 'the object objectively perceived' as 'not-me' (Winnicott, 1971:100). Winnicott suggests that this 'potential space', a hypothetical area between subject and object, can be experienced during the phase of repudiation, and 'at the end of being merged in with the object' (Winnicott, 1971:107). Arguably the bride, being in transition between a familiar and an unfamiliar relationship, occupies this 'potential space', during the process of enacting the severing of familial ties. I will now focus on some unconscious dynamics of the bride's relationship between herself and a social and cultural item of clothing. Arguably, since Queen Victoria's wedding the white wedding dress has been invested in cultural and social terms.

Madeline Davis and David Wallbridge, child psychologists aiming to illuminate Winnicott's principal concepts suggest that 'playing' and the creative use of the 'potential space overlaps the inner and outer world', evoking intense feelings and the struggle to feel 'real' and to establish a personal identity (Davis, 1981:64). Playing

becomes an 'intermediate area of experience' often through interaction with another (Davis, 1981:63). Davis and Wallbridge point to Winnicott's suggestion that the manner in which the infant plays can be carried over into adult life, i.e., the 'sophisticated adult's enjoyment of...', arguably dressing up for a special occasion (Davis, 1981:64). Davis and Wallbridge draw attention to Winnicott's suggestion that in an attempt to feel real 'uniformity can be seen to be important...in such areas as dress' as the solution offers the subject the illusion of not being rejected, but of identifying with and belonging to a group, thus feeling real by binding the psyche and soma together (Davis, 1981:83-4). Arguably, the woman who wears a white dress at her wedding can state not only 'I am a bride', thus feeling that she has established a personal identity, but also can feel that she belongs to a socially identified group of women.

In Winnicottian terms, the bride's use of her dress, during this process of separation, may be interpreted as being an object which accompanies 'the [subject's] transition from a state of being merged with the mother, to a state of being in relation to the mother, as something outside and separate' (Winnicott, 1971:14-5). Arguably, as the bride moves from an experience of merging dependence to emerging relative independence the bride uses the dress in three psychodynamic ways: a) to represent the attachment to the mother who symbolises the nurturing parental home and who shares this reality with her daughter; b) to allay the bride's anxiety during a time of uncertainty and transition; c) becomes a symbol of an affectionate relationship, between herself and her parents, and the potential relationship with her future husband. As has been established, the dress can be interpreted, in Winnicottian terms, as a 'not-me' object which can recall the first 'not me object' of infancy - the 'transitional object' (Winnicott, 1971:1-25).

Prior to the wedding day detailed preparations are made by the bride-to-be including choosing the dress which is often assisted by the mother. The bride's unconscious use of her dress can emerge during the process of the bride-to-be's choosing her dress, which often appears to bring the bride and her mother close together. Joyce McDougall discusses how, separation-individuation theorist Margaret Mahler (1968) notes that after the conflict of adolescence, the changes of physical and associated idealised body image, and finding a degree of separation through autonomous behaviour, it may be observed that the daughter may 'return' home. Mahler suggests that by returning to 'home base' reassurance is generated from the maternal environment, before finally, or setting off again, offering a renewed internalisation of the mother imago (Mahler in. McDougall, 1995:196).

Let us now explore how some bride's statements illuminate how the daughter and her mother 'play' during the process of choosing the wedding dress. Some brides report not having their mother's support to choose their dress, as reported:

*If mum had lived closer then I'd have asked her to come and help choose the dress. The only reason I didn't was that it wasn't practical and as it turned out I didn't feel I particularly needed support. I was happy doing it on my own (05Liz11).*

*My mother didn't play much of a role, [laughter], she just turned up, as a guest. She didn't have anything to do with the organisation at all. She helped out financially (06Debbie11).*

Francis reports on how and why she bought her dress which fitted snugly to her bodily contours:

*I bought the dress in a little bit of a haze, not quite a hurry. My wedding dress was full-length semi-classical, very elegant with long sleeves and tailored to my body, straight down to the ground (11Francis02).*

For Liz, Debbie and Francis their mother's were not available but arguably this does not suggest that these brides may not have wished for their mother's presence and assistance during the choosing of their wedding dress.

Some brides report having their mother's support in organising their dress, as Ann and AnnC report:

*I felt incredibly supported by my mum because she'd made my wedding dress* (12Ann11).

*My mum was there the whole time, the run up to it, the organisation and in the morning helping me get ready. She was there every step of the way. I was like a kid even though I was thirty* (16AnnC11).

One bride reports feeling disconcerted with her mother's response in connection with the clothes her mother was going to wear, which arguably did not leave Ros feeling securely held, as Ros reports:

*I was disconcerted because my mum said she wasn't going to buy a new outfit, which left me feeling marginalised. She had emotional problems, so I was used to that sort of behaviour* (17Ros11).

The bride's mother can offer her daughter the 'illusionary experience' of choosing what is desired and is already in existence, as if it is omnipotently created, as reported by Margaret:

*I went with my mother to buy my dress. We only went into one shop and I think it was the first one I put on and it fitted. My mother paid for it* (14Margaret04).

From the above statements we may draw a parallel, in Winnicottian terms, with the infant's experience of being in relationship with an attentive and 'devoted' mother who shares in her daughter's experience or a 'pre-occupied' mother who seems absent. The choice of dress, however, may not be mutually approved of, as Ann states:

*My mother wished she had not gone along with my design—more of a meringue type dress [laughter]* (12Ann04).

Ann's statement appears to illustrate the struggle for autonomy illustrated by the delicate balance between the mutual involvement in considering the dress and one in which the bride appears to make her own choice. (12Ann04) also seems to indicate an aspect of a sense of guilt in her 'capacity for concern' for her mother's feelings (Winnicott, 1965:73).

It may be expected by all who deal with the bride's dress that it is not selected at random, but the bride-to-be requires it to be just the correct colour and hue, adorned with the right amount of embellishment, and after extensive and careful deliberation is chosen. This deliberation is illustrated by AnnC's report:

*I remember when I found the dress in the shop, I stood in it for a good hour looking at myself from every angle, wondering 'is it the one?' I remember people coming in and out of the shop and saying 'are you still stood there?' I thought 'it's got to be right' (16AnnC03).*

AnnC's response reflects a sense of uncertainty, yet also reverie; revelling in the other's gaze and attention, while searching for a sense of reassurance and certainty. In Winnicottian terms this can be interpreted as being at the crucial juncture between the external object's capacity to survive (critical judgement), and the gradual internalisation of the experience, as AnnC moves in phantasy from object relating to object usage. In contrast there are those brides who report their experience as if the dress was waiting for them, as for example Elizabeth reports:

*I knew straight away, just by feeling the dress, as soon as it touched my skin, I had to have it. I had the same feeling on the wedding day; it felt so right. I don't know if that sounded silly [laughter]. It was like it was waiting for me [laughter] (07Elizabeth05).*

In Winnicottian terms, 07Elizabeth05's statement can be interpreted in terms of an all-powerful illusion of 'the experience of omnipotence' (Winnicott, 1965:180). Part of Winnicott's thesis is that he asks us to accept, without question, the paradox which is

the illusion that the healthy infant ‘creates’ the object which ‘is in fact lying around waiting to be found’ (Winnicott, 1965:181). Winnicott emphasises that:

a good object is no good (to the subject) unless created by the (subject)...out of need, yet the object must be found in order to be created (Winnicott, 1965:181), and to become cathected. (Winnicott, 1971:89)

Winnicott emphasises that this paradox depends upon the mother’s capacity to create, through adaptation, a facilitating environment in which the object may be ‘found’, and is waiting to be omnipotently ‘created’ and used.

The above interviewees’ reports regarding choosing their wedding dress can be interpreted as paralleling the Winnicottian infant’s illusory experience of ‘creating’ a ‘transitional object’, since it is usually an inanimate object belonging in the world that becomes magically invested. At the stage of dependence upon the maternal environment and the mother, the process of choosing for oneself may be interpreted as a significant move towards independence. I have attempted to illustrate how both the Winnicottian infant’s mother, and the bride’s mother, through her ‘devotion’, facilitate their child’s illusory experience of independent choice.

Winnicott suggests that one of the developmental processes, for the infant, which needs to be accomplished is the maturing interplay between different states of feeling, for example, being merged in, in union with, and finally being separate from, the mother. This maturing process, facilitated by the ‘transitional object’ also relies on the mother being experienced as ‘alive, real and not too persecutory’ (Winnicott, 1971:9). As established, through the use of a ‘transitional object’ the infant first maintains the illusion of remaining in a merged union with the mother and secondly uses the ‘transitional object’ to symbolise the union of two separate beings (Winnicott, 1971:96).

As Winnicott claims, 'the 'transitional object' is a symbol *at the point in time and space of the initiation of their state of separateness*' (Winnicott, 1971:97, original emphasis).

If it is accepted that for the infant the 'transitional object' 'stands' for the mother, the 'possession' can be described as mitigating anxiety. However, when the 'illusion' of the mother appears to be unavailable, the 'transitional object' can be interpreted as not being totally sufficient to allay all depressive anxiety. One bride reports how significant the mother's real presence was for her and in the mother's absence there appears to be a sense of feeling uncontained. Lucy reports:

*My saddest memory was although my mum came to the Church she couldn't get to the reception. That was the upsetting part, I missed her all the time [near to tears]*  
(03Lucy21).

In this statement Lucy appears to be experiencing a sense of anxiety and disappointment which seems to be dependent upon the literal proximity of her mother. In Winnicottian terms, Lucy seems to be undergoing the maturing interplay between being in union with and separateness from the mother during the process of transition. Lucy's distress can be interpreted in terms of the quality of the internalised mother who may have been insufficiently 'alive' to allay Lucy's degree of being 'upset' (03Lucy21).

As mentioned above, for many brides their mother is an important figure on this significant occasion. During the mother's absence, however, the bride's feelings could be intensified if the feelings touch on early infant anxiety when the mother was unavailable. The quality of the internalised mother becomes dependent on the infant's ability to adapt, but also on the good-enough mothers' ability to be a source of confidence and not failure. Gradually, the bride displaces separation anxiety onto the dress used as a 'transitional object' and now the bride may be in a position to recognise the mother and all that she represents as separate. The bride's use of her dress can be

interpreted as pivotal. The experience of separating from the mother may be counterbalanced with a longing to retain the feeling of union with the nurturing environment.

In Winnicottian terms, the moment the bride disrobes, she relinquishes the comfort that the 'transitional object' affords which, until now, has kept her reassured. Disrobing becomes a visual enactment of separating from the transitional experience and from the maternal realm. One bride reports how she wished to remain in the 'intermediate area of experiencing', which can be interpreted as a defence against facing the reality of separation, as Elizabeth reports:

*As I stepped out of my wedding dress I didn't want to take it off at all, I wanted this feeling to last forever, because I felt really good in it (07Elizabeth07).*

After the bride has disrobed she ceases to be endowed with bridal status. The bride seems to experience the strain of leaving behind the dress which has acted as an intermediary, modifying, containing object and all that it may symbolise. In instigating a separation from the family home the bride leaves behind the safety of the maternal environment in order to create an environment of her own with her partner.

07Elizabeth07's statement that she wished these '*feelings to last forever*' can be interpreted in Winnicottian terms as three interrelated dynamics. First, as the appreciation and struggle towards emotional maturity of the properties of time (Winnicott, 1945b:149). Second, the 'illusion of omnipotence' resulting from the mother's capacity for cumulative adaptation, where the infant enjoys the illusion of having 'created the object' through need, resulting in feeling all-powerful (Winnicott, 1971:11-12). Third, in the interpsychic/intrapsychic dynamics of the subject's journey

towards the capacity to symbolise and to distinguish the 'me' from the 'not-me' (Winnicott, 1971:3-4).

Let us now consider the enduring value of the dress as a 'transitional object'. Winnicott suggests that the infant's 'transitional object' is never 'forgotten, nor mourned, but loses its meaning...its fate is to be gradually decathected' (Winnicott, 1971:5). On the one hand this argument seems to suggest a denial of separation. On the other hand Winnicott states: 'the 'transitional object' does not 'go inside' nor 'does the feeling about it necessarily undergo repression' (Winnicott, 1971:5). Again, we return to the expression of an eternal feeling. In expressing the wish for a feeling to last forever suggests that there may be a need to acquire a perpetual insurance against both lack of affection and the dangers of helplessness or from losing the maternal facilitator.

My research reveals that many brides retain their wedding dress, that is, they seem unable to relinquish their 'transitional object'. Let us now examine potential unconscious motivations as to why the bride's attachment to her dress can be so significant. In Winnicottian terms, if the infant's aggression is directed towards the mother, it is imperative that the mother does not retaliate but survives. During times of aggression the infant attempts to destroy the object and place it 'out in the world' (Winnicott, 1971:91). Alternatively, the infant learns to displace strong ambivalent emotions onto a 'transitional object'. The infant seems to intuit that the 'transitional object' will forever offer 'love', never abandon nor retaliate. Winnicott emphasises that for the infant 'the object goes on being important' (Winnicott, 1971:4), and 'must never change, unless changed' by the subject (Winnicott, 1971:5). In other words, not only is the mother required not to retaliate, but also the 'transitional object', endowed with special qualities, is required to 'continue' being important. Winnicott suggests that the

‘transitional object’ ‘goes on being important even when it gets dirty and smelly and that by washing it may break the continuity in the infant’s experience and destroy its meaning and value’ (Winnicott, 1971:4). Winnicott suggests that despite a sense of having ‘destroyed’ (by aggression), the ‘object survives destruction by the subject’ (Winnicott, 1971:90) and the loved object goes on being. In the light of Winnicott’s thesis I will now interpret the bride’s experience of her wedding dress, after it has been worn.

The bride’s dress may not appear to be overtly ‘hated’, however as the dress has been worn, torn or stained it can be interpreted as having been ‘destroyed’. Interestingly these qualities seem to have been expressed by Pam concerning her dress becoming dirty, as Pam states:

*It’s twenty-six years since I wore my wedding dress and I’ve still got it wrapped up with bits of cake stuck on it (09Pam06).*

Pam’s statement suggests that although the dress has been ‘used’ by being soiled and its radiant, pristine, perfect state is spoilt, the dress in this condition remains valued. It seems that in keeping the dress in a ‘destroyed’ state, the dress will never lose its endowed meaning. The bride, having now separated from being once merged in with the object, by the use of some ‘aggression’, but not having destroyed the object entirely, the object can continue to have value<sup>92</sup>.

In the light of Winnicott’s theory concerning the actively adaptive good-enough mother’s continuing involvement in her daughter’s psychical processing of separation anxiety, one participant appears to express feelings of anxiety incurred during the final

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<sup>92</sup> This sentence is deliberately ambiguous, as the ‘object’ can refer equally to the dress or the mother.

process of separation from the symbol that represents the facilitating environment, as AnnC reports:

*My mum helped me get undressed, she boxed it up and put it away, so it wasn't a heart-wrenching moment (16AnnC07).*

AnnC's statement can be interpreted that if an attentive mother assists her daughter in taking off her wedding dress, the anxiety of separation from both the mother and the 'transitional object' may be reduced because of the mother's presence. Within this statement, AnnC also seems to express a desire to secure for posterity a symbol of the rite of passage, the process of separation and the 'good-enough mother', to have control over, and thus to be able to keep the object-relating as an inner reality forever. In AnnC's statement not only does the mother appear to continue to be actively adaptive towards her daughter's stress, but also there seems to be a primary identification in the merging of both objects, that is, the real mother and the symbol of maternal experience.

One 'recent' bride, however, states that on taking off her dress her immediate wish was to return it to its pristine, unaltered, idealised state and expresses the dress's value in terms of continuity and being retained in perpetuity, as Sis states:

*It's only a few weeks ago since I took it off. The dress has done its job and now its going to be dry-cleaned and put into storage. It's always going to be there and I'll never get rid of it (04Sis07).*

Sis's statement that she wished her dress to be returned to its original phantasised unused state can be interpreted as a denial of separation. Sis reports, however, that the dress will not lose its meaning, nor be 'forgotten', but will continue to carry significance for its original wearer (04Sis07). Even though Winnicott suggests, the 'transitional object' does not 'go inside', there appears to be expressed in Sis's statement an unconscious attempt to restore, maintain, and keep safe a real external

symbol of the internalised ‘good-enough’ nurturing object both at the moment of separation but also as an enduring legacy.

Interestingly some participants to this study indicate that their dress signifies an intergenerational ‘transitional object’ witnessed by and offered to the next generation, as the following selective statement by Freesia suggests:

*Its forty-six years since my wedding and I still have my dress, if my daughter had wanted to wear it she could have (15Freesia06).*

One interpretation can be that this statement was made out of frugality, but the question raised is what unconscious desires are present in this statement? The dress appears in this case not to have become ‘meaningless’ but has retained all of its original values. In Winnicottian terms, in the case of the bride who retains her dress, the dress may represent a sense of proof, a perpetual reality-testing, and mastery over the object and the environment. Another possible unconscious desire that 15Freesia06 may have had for thinking of offering her dress to her daughter, is that the dress stands for a symbolic (re)union with the mother. What seems significant is that Freesia’s saddest memory was of her absent mother:

*My saddest memory was that my mother couldn’t be there (15Freesia21).*

It can be seen from Freesia’s earlier statement that her dress could have been offered to her daughter (15Freesia06). This mother/daughter imago may equally refer to her own mother and herself as the daughter. Arguably the result of a degree of maternal failure, as reported by Freesia, can be one interpretation for the retention of the dress as a ‘transitional object’ (15Freesia21). Freesia’s report that ‘*It’s forty-six years since my wedding and I still have my dress*’ (15Freesia06) can be interpreted that Freesia’s wedding dress continues to remain significant to her. Another interpretation can be

related to the psychic management of separation, the loss of the maternal environment and the reassuring qualities that a 'transitional object' can offer, as, for example AnnC reports:

*My dress symbolises my wedding day and everything that it stood for (16AnnC22).*

Arguably, in retaining the wedding dress in perpetuity there is also a sense of triumph. Triumph over the anxiety of separation and being dependent upon the parental environment, can be interpreted as a triumphant step towards relative independence. There may be, however, triumphant elation over separation but there is also loss and mourning.

The dress, seen as a 'transitional object', has been used by the bride during her transformation from daughter status, through a spiritual, mysterious ritual, to the status of wife. As Debbie stepped out of her wedding dress she reports:

*I felt sad when I took my dress off because it reminds me of what a lovely day it was and how happy we are and the commitment we made to each other (06Debbie07).*

Debbie's statement can be interpreted in terms of the ambivalent feelings that run concurrently. Debbie's language moves from the past tense to the present, then alludes to the future. Debbie first speaks of the 'I', then of the 'we' (06Debbie07). During this process of transition arguably there are many ambitions mixed with uncertainties. It seems that the bride's use of her dress has enabled her to facilitate a variety of transforming objectives. The bride moves from unmarried to married status; tolerating feelings of disappointment and the ability and maturity to achieve her desire. The bride can now conceive of the possibility of becoming a mother and have the capacity to face an uncertain future with the demands of conjugal life. Other brides' statements allude to an acknowledgement of sadness, mourning for the loss of daughter status, having

experienced pleasurable self-gratifying, narcissistic feelings of being the centre of attention, of feeling beautiful and facing reality. Immediate happiness of the certainty of ritual can give way to a fear of uncertainty in the future commitment to a new affectionate object-relationship. As the bride disrobes, repudiation of dependency on the facilitating environment becomes symbolically complete, and in Winnicott's terms the bride mourns 'the end of being merged in with the object' (Winnicott, 1971:107). Mourning is part of the brides' experience, however, there can also be a sense of triumph.

McDougall suggests that there is a need to 'triumph over internal persecutions: terror of the phallic mother, or a belief that there was no right to separate from her; fear of becoming confused with the mother and thus losing a sense of identity' (McDougall, 1995:211). Pam triumphantly stakes her claim, over her powerful mother-in-law's claim to her son, as Pam asserts her new position as wife:

*I've been and got her son (09Pam07).*

Pam's sense of triumph, if interpreted in Freudian terms, can be understood as displaced Oedipal rivalry, with her own mother over her own father. Pam's triumph can also be understood as a defence against the experience of mourning, and perhaps mourning for the loss of her own mother, as experiencing sadness facilitates separation. Interpreted in Winnicottian terms, Pam can be seen as moving from object relating, that being the internalisation of the experience of the object having psychically survived, to object usage.

In returning to the main theme, let us now consider how the process of separation has been managed in relation to the 'transitional object'. Evidence from the theory and the

bride's statements appears to indicate that there is no final resolution to the process of mourning and feelings associated with separation anxiety. Arguably, therefore, the way in which separation anxiety can be managed can be interpreted in three ways: first, by denial; second, by displacement; third, the use of a new animate object. Let us consider these three aspects in closer detail.

First, could the retaining of the bride's dress be a denial of separation? During the impossibility of separation, it can be argued that the bride's retention of her wedding dress, in Winnicottian terms, offers a gradual 'separating-out of the world of objects from the self [which] is achieved only through the absence of a space between' (Winnicott, 1971:108). In other words, the dress fills the space between the mother and the self, during the movement of 'separating-out the not-me from the me' (Winnicott, 1971:109). Winnicott claims that 'separation is avoided with the use of symbols' (Winnicott, 1971:109). That is to say, the dress signifies a valuable living cultural experience which links past, present and future which becomes located in time and space. Winnicott suggests that 'there can be no separation, only a threat of separation' and this threat is 'maximally or minimally traumatic according to the experience of the first separatings' (Winnicott, 1971:108). Second, if separation anxiety is displaced onto a significant socially and culturally pre-invested external inanimate object, such as the wedding dress, ring or photograph album, then the object, if seen as a 'transitional object', may be understood as a benign mechanism in the subject's attempt to retrieve or maintain a psychic connection with the lost object, while also maintaining a level of autonomy. Third, if separation anxiety is displaced onto an external inanimate object, the object may be a forerunner in facilitating further displacement onto a whole loved object. As Freud claims, the distress experienced during the process of separation may be alleviated by a 'displacement onto a new object' (SE14:252-3). In Winnicott's terms

the subject moves from predominantly a subjective position to a more objective experience and from 'relative dependence' to relative autonomy (Winnicott, 1971:139).

It is therefore possible to conclude that, in the Western economy, during sacred rites of human passage, predominant occasions when white apparel can be considered as being used as a 'transitional object', that is having attributes of the maternal environment, white clothes can be interpreted as contributing to allaying separation anxiety. As established in Part One, other significant transformational apparel are the infant's christening robe, the girl's confirmation or first communion dress, the bride's dress, and at death when the body becomes wrapped in white in readiness for returning to 'mother earth'. As we have heard, the bride's dress can be kept for the next generation to be worn in the same manner as originally envisaged, or transformed into a christening gown or funeral shroud. On each significant occasion, although the apparel is only worn once, generally the item of clothing cannot be given away. The wearer may keep the clothes after the ceremony, however, paradoxically the apparel, if seen as a 'not-me' object, does not belong to them rather it belongs to the ceremony.

Other occasions when clothes can be considered as being endowed with transitional qualities may include the graduation gown and the wearing of uniforms, which visually signify validity and the attainment of status and offer social cohesion. On each transitional occasion the wearing of significant apparel facilitates separation from the former status and alleviates anxieties associated with moving into the new status.

#### **4.9 Summary of Part Four**

In investigating the literature Freud suggests that religious ceremony is based on obsessive actions which defend against unconscious guilt, prohibitions and danger. In Part One we discovered that the bride becomes symbolically sacred for the group. In Part Three we discover that Freud argues that the daughter may have unconscious incestuous desires for the father, thus setting up the tension between desire and prohibition. Therefore it can be argued the words and actions of the marriage ceremony defend against the bride's guilt associated with the danger of unconscious incestuous desires which are prohibited.

In Part Four we investigate a range of brides' individual experience of the marriage ceremony in Oedipal terms. We see how if the mother is attentive then AnnC's experience is not 'heart-wrenching', if the mother is 'flappy' so is Rose, if the mother is absent Freesia felt let down and not held, or for Ann the mother can become a wonderful role model. However containing the mother's nurturing environment may be experienced, the mother can be experienced as relatively passive, and the bride may feel that the mother is at risk of being eclipsed leaving Ann feeling guilty for leaving her mother for another. Whereas the mother may represent regression, in contrast the father may represent independence if the father is not abusive.

In Part Three we learn that the Oedipal father dominates the group (Freud). In Part Four we discover by investigating the bride's experience that often the most vivid memory of the wedding day is associated with the father. Pam experienced pressure to please her father thus avoiding feelings of guilt. Patricia's father was experienced as affectionate, Freesia's father initially opposed her marriage. AnnC experienced a very close connection with the father indicating unconscious incestuous desires. Ultimately, as

Margaret recognises the mother belongs to the father, thus the daughter mourns the loss of the primary carers, and by way of compensation seeks the love of another.

Thus the bride submits to being dressed up, gift-wrapped (Rose) and 'given-away'. On one hand the bride may desire to be 'given-away', but unconscious incestuous desire and separation anxiety exert their forces. While being 'given-away' may assist in the bride relinquishing desires for the parents, psychoanalysis indicates that identification with the parents needs to be transformed as internalisation leads to an emancipation from old objects, freeing the subject for new relations.

As the bride draws close to the Church a state of heightened anxiety may lead to signs of regression. The bride appears immaculately dressed in white, appearing like a virgin as explored in Part One. The bride presents herself veiled, as explored in Part One where pre-Oedipal boundaries blur (Rose), feel containing (Francis), or which feel trapped between masculine and feminine, active and passive aims (Ann). The bride on being 'given-away' requires the maturity to mourn the loss of familial ties. Whereas some brides felt this process as supportive (Sue), for others there was a sense of denial (Rose), that it was rather final (Francis), or that it was experienced as both a happy and sad occasion (Louise).

Pivotal to the marriage ceremony are two acts, enunciating the vows and signing the register. Being unused to public speaking and more significantly to swearing a vow, saying their vows many brides found it a vivid (Debbie) and memorable experience, one full of gravity (Rose). Whereas some brides experienced signing the register in a rather matter of fact way (Patricia), some found it overwhelming (Elizabeth), and others understood it as a transforming process from daughter to Mrs. (Louise). Thus, as

explored in Part One, the process of repudiating parental authority and the transformation of instinct to become a mother are complete, or are they? Some brides expressed their wish to change their surname (Freesia), but Debbie felt sad at losing her father's surname, while Louise felt that she now belonged to another, but Liz didn't change her surname, indicating an unconsciously strong attachment to the father. Thus the triangular Oedipal structure undergoes a metamorphosis, there is now the bridal couple, in relation to the bride's mother and father and the groom's mother and father.

Although the bride may enter the ceremony voluntarily, driven by ego ideals and idealisation as explored in Part One, and repudiating familial authority in an endeavour to find liberation and emancipation, monogamous heterosexual union can be experienced as a compromise as Chodorow suggests. While Pam seemed to prize her husband away from his mother, in Pam's anal-sadistic greedy demand for possession and emancipation from her own father's the strong hold over her. Rose in experiencing disappointment with her parents, seeks compensation through idealising happiness with her husband. Threatened with the loss of love, Liz and Francis secure their husbands. In conclusion, this process, composed of separation from parents and securing a new relationship can be understood as a compulsion to repeat the Oedipal struggles of infancy.

Another way of understanding the brides experience is through the use of the dress. As already explored in Part One, the bride may use the dress in exhibitionist terms to attract attention as a compensation for castration. The dress, worn at the time when the bride is in transition, being made of tactile material may evoke memories of the infants comfort blanket, a desexualised tactile item which Winnicott argues facilitates infant separation and survival from the threatened loss of the physical mother and the nurturing

environment. Thus it is argued in Part Four that the bride's dress represents a transitional object operating in an intermediate area of experiencing, between an attachment to the mother and the detachment from the mother. Thus the dress allays the bride's separation anxiety during this process of uncertainty.

We discover that some mothers did not help to choose the dress nor cloth the bride (Debbie), some mothers helped organise the dress (Ann), while some mothers seemed preoccupied (Ros). Thus mothers could be experienced as either devoted, and 'good-enough', or preoccupied in a similar manner to the infant's experience.

After the ceremony, exciting to discover, is the bride's retention of the wedding dress. Elizabeth steps out of her dress reluctantly because she wants the experience to last forever. Pam reports that she still has her wedding dress with its wedding-day marks. AnnC felt that her mother's presence helped her not to feel that stepping out of her dress was heart-wrenching. Sis wished to retain a spotless dress in perpetuity which can indicate an unconscious denial of separation. Freesia thought that her dress may become intergenerational. Thus whether the dress became a triumphant symbol over separation, retaining the dress can be seen as a perpetual defence against mourning. In conclusion, although the 'transitional object' allays separation anxiety from the maternal environment, the dress cannot be given away because it belongs to the ceremony and represents the mother in perpetuity.

## PART FIVE

### Conclusion

#### 5.1 Introduction

In this section I draw on Parts One to Four seeking conclusions to the dominant themes that emerged during this research, which illuminate the bride-in-white's subjective experience of marrying in an Anglican Church. Let us reflect for a moment on two participants' recollections, as key to psychoanalytic interpretation is the link between childhood memory and adult experience.

As Sis reflected on the moment that she was fully dressed in white on her wedding day she linked this with feeling 'really special'. Sis acknowledged that to describe this feeling precisely was difficult, but suggested that it was encapsulated in something that she 'as a little girl had dreamt of', that of 'getting married in white', yet fearing 'it might never happen'. Thus there appears in Sis's statement doubt that her childhood desire would ever come to fruition. In contrast, there seems assurance for Ros when she stated that 'there's something romantic about wearing a white dress. It was what I dreamt of as little girl'. Ros added, 'I remember as a child playing at weddings then playing mothers and fathers'.

These adult recollections of childhood experience demonstrate that from an early age the girl's memory appears to contain dreams, some of which required enactment. It also appears that the child grows to understand that both she and her objects are important in a special manner. It is not easy to interpret accurately how a young girl perceives the significance of her dream or the enactment in her mind, and in relationship with others while dreaming or playing 'mothers and fathers'. It could be suggested, however, that these dreams and enactments, drawn from fairy-tales or images from actual experience,

form a mental sequence of events. But why do they become part of a girl's childhood experience? The psychoanalyst might conclude that as a child they are attempting to 'make sense' of their lives.

Similarly, this project has asked, how can we make sense of the subjective experience of the bride-in-white? To answer this question I approached this study by taking an historical, religious and psychoanalytical stance. The psychoanalytic aspect being based on Freudian and post-Freudian theory. That is, being conversant with the development from infancy to adulthood, including relationships with the mother and the father, with particular emphasis on examining the reported personal experience, by utilising a number of significant psychoanalytic concepts. I am aware that this Freudian position will have influenced the outcome and particularly the mode of language. It can be concluded that if a different group of psychoanalytic texts, such as expounded by Jung or Lacan, then there is a possibility that the findings may have been framed differently.

In Part One, the literature relevant to the bride-in-white's experience points towards the historic and contemporary importance of female virginity. It can be concluded that as for the Virgin Mary of Biblical origin, King Henry VIII's search for a son, and for the contemporary bride, the bride's virginity ensures that the progeny becomes the heir to the father's title. It can be concluded that as in historical times, the bride-in-white being, or appearing to be a virgin, satisfies the group's need for a legitimate heir.

In Part One I explored how the phenomenon of the bride-in-white emerged by investigating a range of historical, religious and social themes concerning the wearing of white clothes throughout the life cycle, the ethical nature of purity and the physical status of virginity, within a Christian context. Historically, religiously, and socially the

wedding ceremony concerns the bride who attends Church in order to receive God's blessing on her union, and where the group share in her joy. It can be concluded that the Church offers an ideal environment in which to perform a privately experienced rite of passage linked to a public ritual where the wearing of white clothes, and the quality of female purity, internalised since Biblical times, indicates that these dynamics are both conscious and unconscious.

In Part One, Mary Douglas argued that abiding by the Biblical 'Laws of Holiness', where the sacred is separated from the profane, the moral from the immoral, the subject can feel 'complete' as they conform. Douglas also suggested that in a ritualised sacred form of community worship, conformity acts by bringing about social integration and can be marked by a sense of 'completeness'. Evident in one bride's response is 'being the centre of attention, getting married and having a wonderful day all centred around us, makes us complete'. It could be concluded that conforming to these requirements psychodynamically brought both a sense of completeness not only to herself, but also to the Church, the group and her husband. It may also be concluded, if the opposite were true, that if there were less pressure to conform to Christian, social or familial, ethical laws, then there may be less desire to wear a white wedding dress or be married in Church.

Part Two offered the opportunity to study the methodology that I would apply, the form my research might take and what may constitute a satisfactory result. My research established that qualitative research into personal feelings and experience builds hypotheses on an accumulation of supporting interpretations. After examining the interviews I concluded that there could be some common psychodynamic themes, but that these need not be the only ones which aid later interpretation. I concluded that the

limitations of this study include sample size, participant selection bias, questionnaire formulation, the personal experience of only seventeen European white British brides who married during the second half of the twentieth century, and the academic limits set on this project. As this study was grounded in the participants' statements I also concluded that their views are not necessarily representative of all brides-in-white who marry in Church. Investigating brides of other ethnic origins and class may be explored during further research.

In Part Two, having investigated different research approaches that would facilitate 'truth' and knowledge production, including discussing ontology, epistemology, methodology and method, it was concluded that grounded theory would best suit the investigation of human experience from a limited group of participants. Previously I had attempted a pilot conversation interview and reflected on how this could be analysed. Having addressed ethical issues of anonymity by using pseudonyms and gaining signed consent, the recorded interviews transcribed provided the data. Despite my initial fear of data overload but reassurance that the semi-structured questionnaire would facilitate data comparison, I gradually began to trust the process.

Having immersed myself in the data and allowed the data to speak for itself, gradually I began to conclude that grounded theory methodology could be trusted to produce themes. The collected data was examined from different angles and at different times during the research process with the aid of the hermeneutic circle of enquiry. In Appendix D a detailed analysis using six interviews, three from each group of 'recent' and 'older' brides enabled a variety of themes to emerge. Gradually, trying not to be influenced by earlier speculation in Part One as to possible themes, from the data

predominant themes emerged, which both confirmed earlier speculation but was now rooted in how the participants spoke.

In Part Three, central to Freudian theory, Oedipal conflicts with the mother and the father were explored. This offered the opportunity to examine the psychoanalytic model of the infant girl's development towards the attainment of female genitality. My research established that the infant girl's pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother becomes the decisive factor upon which all other relationships are built. The infant girl, after a period of idealisation of the mother, later identifies with the mother, the possessor of the father. It could be concluded that if the mother is unavailable to provide either infant idealisation or identification, then the daughter could be deprived of a role model and may therefore not become a bride-in-white.

Part One established that Freud considered marriage between a man and a woman to be the basic building block upon which civilisation is founded, and as the Church promotes, for the procreation of children within a stable family unit in which to have legitimate sexual relations. As explored in Part Three, the infant experiences both pre-Oedipal female symbiotic attachment and Oedipal male desire, and through processes of identification and idealisation becomes gendered and heterosexual. It can be concluded that, although children may be brought up in a homosexual or single-parent unit, there may be an imbalance in psychological development.

Having explored in Part One the wearing of white clothes during a rite of passage, in Part Three I also investigated psychoanalytically how it can be understood that women use clothes to allay castration anxiety. This was linked in Part Four to the bride's statements and the prospect that the wedding dress can be interpreted, in Winnicottian

terms, as a 'transitional object', allaying separation anxiety from the maternal environment. It can be concluded that the 'classical' white wedding dress can represent something timeless, and fixed by the occasion.

In the light of Freud's argument in Part Three, that humans are born innately bisexual, polymorphously perverse, and the daughter has unconscious incestuous desire towards the father, we can conclude, with Chodorow, that a monogamous heterosexual union is a 'compromise formation' reflecting society's values and psychological taboos. We can conclude that if the innate dispositions, and sexuality remain unrestrained, then boundaries of human sexuality would be undefined, therefore the 'compromise' leads to social cohesion but becomes the tension. That original innateness is brought under restraint by religious, societal and familial laws of exogamy and consanguinity.

From the research in Part Four, it can be concluded that if the father becomes absent during the infant girl's psychological development, or there is no father figure upon whom to project her unconscious incestuous desire, then there may be no reciprocal paternal prohibition experienced by the infant girl. The daughter's unconscious incestuous desire may therefore never be fully displaced. This conclusion draws into sharp focus the importance of the father's role in the infant girl's, and later the bride's unconscious dynamic between desire and restraint. As explored in Part Three, developmentally, the daughter's unconscious incestuous desire towards the father becomes restrained by the mother who possesses the father, and upon the father by the incest prohibition. The quality of the infant girl's desire and relationship with the father when restrained becomes transformed into a socially acceptable desire displaced onto a non-incestuous other. It can be concluded that the father's responsibility appears to be to restrain the infant girl's desire for instant gratification.

Following the investigation in Part One, the literature linked the value of virginity and sexual purity with the wearing of white. This led me in Part Four to consider, through the bride's own experience, the continued restraints that are involved in maintaining a state of purity until the daughter becomes a bride-in-white. Further, that on the bride's arrival at Church as she 'peers' through her veil and reciprocally observed by the group, this psychodynamically sets up a tension between desire and restraint. To favour delayed gratification and to be socially unimpeachable is illustrated, in Part One, by the sixteen-year old Queen Victoria's insistence that 'she could never marry a man who had loved another woman'. It can be concluded that brides since Queen Victoria's wedding, consciously or unconsciously, have identified with her, wishing to become 'a princess for a day', thus the phenomenon of the bride-in-white has become socially installed.

In Part Four, this research established, through the examination of the bride's responses, that within her conscious desire to marry, there are a number of both conscious and unconscious tensions. I conclude that there appears to be no such thing as a 'normal' pattern of behaviour, as there are many equally valid experiences. I will now discuss how the overarching psychoanalytic themes that were tentatively introduced in Part One, established in Appendix D, and used during this project can now be understood differently.

## **5.2 The ego ideal: purity, perfection and faultlessness in practice**

Research in Part One indicated that the bride-in-white epitomises the physical virgin, where the hymen remains intact, that is the unconscious phantasy of the ideal state. Although a question was not asked, as to the bride's physical state, some participants nevertheless referred to it. Research into the participant's statements revealed that virtually equal numbers in both the 'recent' and 'older' group of brides fell into the categories of being virgins and not virgins on their wedding day. Of the brides who stated that they were virgins one bride said that it was because of 'parental pressure', while another reported that it was because of 'strongly held Christian beliefs', thus indicating the internalisation of Oedipal parental prohibition. Of the brides who stated that they were not virgins, one bride recognised that ideally she should have been a 'virgin bride' in order to wear white and be married in Church, while another bride seemed unconcerned that she was not a 'virginal pure bride'. There was a second category; one bride revealed that she was not a virgin but had 'tried to stay a virgin' and so felt that because of her intention, she considered herself to be one. While another bride was 'urged by her husband to wear white because he felt that she was pure'. From the statements of those brides who were not virgins, it could be concluded that there seems to be a need to appear pure, like a virgin, even if this was not a physical reality. While some participants indicated that wearing a white dress was a sign of purity, they did not suggest necessarily that it was a sign of a physical purity. It could be concluded, therefore, there is an indication that many brides see their wedding in idealised terms, that is, in terms of a narcissistic ego-ideal.

In Part One and Four, evidence indicated that the bride-in-white, in appearing perfect or sacred at Church, desires, from both the group and God, to be found to be acceptable. Some brides considered it was important to be married in Church because they felt that

‘Churches are powerful places’, where the bride ‘receives God’s blessing’, as ‘the eyes of God’ are upon them, and it ‘felt that you were properly married’, thus ideal to God. Some brides stated that they were particularly concerned that their husband-to-be found them beautiful. It could be concluded, therefore, that the bride-in-white, if not found perfectly acceptable, may fear feelings of shame, loss of love and rejection from the group.

### **5.3 Wearing wedding white as an ideal**

The desire for narcissistic perfection is illustrated by the fact that all the brides in this study chose to wear a white dress [Figure 5]. Some brides felt that they were subject to the ideal of restraint from having children before they married, indicating that they had the capacity to postpone sexual gratification, which could have been due to a fear of the loss of parental love and the collective ideal. Other brides considered that they could wear a white dress after having had children. Both of these positions were evidenced in both ‘recent’ and ‘older’ brides’ statements. A conclusion may therefore be drawn, from this group of participants, that an imperative becomes the striving for perfection even though it can never be achieved, therefore, to wear a white dress serves the ego-ideal. Wearing a white dress also, psychodynamically, symbolises the bride’s desire to appear to the group as faultless.

In Part Two, I established that in over two decades twenty-nine per cent of all brides married in Church. This research does not address the other brides who did not wear a white dress, as this would entail a separate project. It is possible to conclude that for many brides marrying in Church the outward sign of wearing a white wedding dress becomes important, as it has become socially inscribed. In Part Four the reasons that the participants to this project gave for wearing wedding white seem to fall into four

sections. First, the wearing of wedding white seems to be for 'traditional' reasons. This seems to emanate from a social pressure, thus indicating an internalised social and collective ideal influenced by the super-ego. Second, the wearing of wedding white seems to be associated with exhibitionist needs, thus psychodynamically indicating the development of genitality with the intersubjective interplay with the other. Third, the wearing of wedding white could be understood as a symbol of purity and virginity, thus indicating that the bride may be driven by the desire of a primary ideal. Fourth, even though sexual intercourse had been admitted, there still seemed to be a need to appear pure. Thus for some brides there seemed to be no fear of castration associated with the super-ego. It could be concluded, therefore, that the bride who wears wedding white is subject to her ego ideal and that psychodynamically as the white wedding dress is socially inscribed, this indicates a social dynamic emanating from parents, relatives, friends and Church.

#### **5.4 On being the centre of attention: exhibitionism**

Whilst it was tentatively suggested in Part One, and established in Part Two, that the woman has a level of exhibitionism, that is, to enjoy being the 'centre of attention', there was little evidence in the bride's statements to suggest that the participants had an overwhelming narcissistic need to feel real by being looked at. When the bride, fully adorned in white, is seen at Church by the group it can be concluded that the bride evokes a strong reaction from the onlooker as a defence against her unconscious phantasy of lack, or a 'defence against the fear of loss of identity', and that by wearing wedding white satisfies narcissistic needs.

In Part Three by discussing the girl's psychological development, the girl's need to be seen, the girl's special relationship with the father, and the girl's relationship to clothes,

it can be concluded that collectively they point towards Freud's theory of female castration. The infant girl may identify with the passive mother, and may envy the mother's relationship with the father in the primal scene. The infant girl may envy the father's phallic active power, and may, because of unconscious incestuous desire or wish to give the father a baby. The girl may use clothes as a narcissistic defence, drawing the gaze onto her whole body, thus avoiding feelings of castration. The bride may use her white wedding dress to attract the maximum pleasure and attention from being looked at by the whole group, thus evoking the gaze as a compensation for a sense of castration. We may conclude that legitimate female exhibitionism, as Rycroft suggests, compensates for female penis envy and castration.

### **5.5 Striking out to form a new union: repudiation**

In Part Three, it was established that during psychological development the infant girl undertakes a series of repudiations, including detaching from the pre-Oedipal mother due to a series of disappointments, and her emotional tie with the father due to the incest prohibition. Thus the girl oscillates between identifying with the mother, then with the father, returning again to the mother, in the girl's struggle to find a sense of femininity. This developmental process culminates in the repudiation of parental authority in the course of emancipation, which in turn facilitates separation, thus freeing the girl to make a non-incestuous object-choice.

Poignant throughout the interviewing process was the quality of emotional expression in connection with the severing of familial ties. Strikingly, many brides shed tears as they recalled either their recent or distant wedding-day experiences in relation to 'leaving' their parents. The sadness which they expressed, concerned both fathers and mothers. In Part Four I established that for a number of brides it was important for them

to know that they received their father's blessing before moving to the next stage in their lives. There were a number of brides who reported deep disappointment concerning their mothers who seemed to them to be pre-occupied. In conclusion, repudiation could be understood psychodynamically as a two-way process. On the one hand there is the bride's desire to repudiate parental ties in order to achieve a new union, while on the other, the parents are required to facilitate her repudiation by relinquishing their ties over their daughter. It could also be concluded that during the bride's process of repudiation, if the parent is not available to be repudiated, this process could remain unfinished. The brides who did not have their mother at their wedding seem to have expressed a sense of numbness.

#### **5.6 The transformation into 'passive aims'**

The fourth theme introduced in Part One and established in Part Two was that of the transformation of instinct. Research in Part Three indicates that the attainment of female genitality is partly accomplished when the instincts are transformed by libidinal desire. In Freudian terms, when the girl acquiesces to specifically feminine 'passive aims', can be an indication of the attainment of femininity.

Part Four, drawing on the work in Part Three, indicated that visually, the process of transformation of instinct into 'passive aims' can be illustrated by the veiled bride being escorted into Church, being 'given away', by being the 'centre of attention' and also the recipient of the group's gaze. In conclusion, therefore, transformation into 'passive aims' needs to be of benefit to the bride, in order for her to desire to achieve this change. In psychoanalytic terms the main benefit would be to transform her 'envy for the penis' into a wish to become a mother to a baby, and dependence upon 'being loved'.

### **5.7 The ‘transitional object’: an aide-mémoire and the use of illusion**

In my research into Winnicottian theory, in Part Four, I concluded that there is an indication for the need to use illusion. I have argued that the bride’s dress can function as an equivalent to the ‘transitional object’ of infancy. In Part Four I established that after being carefully chosen, majestically worn and observed by the group, the bride’s wedding dress, as evidenced by some participants’ reports, after having been taken off, is often preserved in its used state. The dress, while being worn, becomes a sign both to the wearer and the group that this woman is a bride. The dress offers both subjective and objective proof of the reality that the wearer appears to be psychologically transformed from daughter, through a sacred rite of passage, and endowed with the new status of wife. The dress, like other ‘transitional objects’ such as the wedding rings [Figure 11], photograph album and marriage certificate, becomes a constant means of reality-testing and reality-acceptance of the woman’s new status. In conclusion, physical proof seems to be required in the face of disbelief and as the memory recedes, thus drawing reassurance from the ‘transitional object’ that the transforming event was not an illusion. So although the dress may never be worn again, just knowing that it exists seems to allay uncertainty and anxiety during the extended period of gradual transition from illusion towards reality. Let us now summarise these four overarching themes differently.

In summary, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the bride-in-white’s experience appears to involve four elements. First, being driven by the ego ideal in search of narcissistic perfection and a return to the ideal state. That is, in topographical terms, being ‘dominated by the super-ego’, and in economic terms having the capacity to ‘postpone immediate libidinal satisfaction’. Second, being driven by the desire for a degree of exhibitionism and a need to be seen to be acceptable. That is, in economic terms

‘regulated by the pleasure-unpleasure principle’, and in topographical terms being ‘modified by the influence of the external world’. Third, having the desire and capacity to repudiate parental authority in order to form a new union. That is, in dynamic terms, coming under the influence of Eros, ‘which strives for an ever closer union’. And fourth, desiring the transformation of aggressive instinct into ‘passive aims’. That is, in dynamic terms, the capacity to modify aggression, and in economic terms transforming unconscious free energy into preconscious bound energy, and in topographical terms the modification of ‘id’ instincts.

These four overarching concepts can be understood in libidinal developmental terms. Under the influence of the ego ideal the bride regresses to the earliest wish for an ideal state, through narcissism to exhibitionism, and towards autonomy through the repudiation of parental authority, and the wish to be transformed into a wife with a non-incestuous object-love. The bride-in-white appears to have been compelled, consciously or unconsciously, to take into account the social structure which prohibits incest and regulates libidinal investment in an non-incestuous object choice.

In Part Four, having established that key to psychoanalytic investigation into how we develop, experience emotions, others, and gender through the reconstruction of the felt past in the present, selected statements were examined. Themes under scrutiny included interpreting the ceremony in Oedipal terms, that is of repudiating the mother’s love, acknowledging unconscious incestuous desire held under restraint, taking a sacred walk with father, and the bride’s desire to leave familial authority and become a wife with a non-incestuous other and a mother. Having explored these themes we can conclude that psychoanalysis and the four overarching themes of ego ideal and idealisation,

exhibitionism, repudiation and transformation, illuminate the bride-in-white's subjective experience.

Although it can be concluded that the above four overarching themes dominate the illumination of the bride-in-white's experience, Appendix E offers a space to explore in an unstructured way psychoanalytic interpretations on five bride's whole interviews, and offers a creative space for the reader to reflect and make their own interpretation. While Sue's experience was mixed with deep sadness over the recent death of her father, Rose seemed to idealise the whole experience perhaps as a defence against the reality of leaving home. Francis on the other hand seemed to look for a warmth that had not been found at home, while Freesia 'struggled' to leave the familial home. We can conclude that Liz, who was already in a relationship and had a baby son needed to appear a virgin and marry in white and in Church in order to legitimise her union and her heir within the familial group. We can conclude that the familial group's presence becomes paramount to the bride-in-white's experience [Figure 12]. We can see the importance of the familial group's support in [Figure 4] depicting Queen Victoria's wedding and the frontispiece 'throwing confetti' image. Thus I have set out to discover a link between the phenomenon of the bride-in-white and hitherto conceptually unconnected psychoanalytic concepts and themes.

## List of Illustrations

**Frontispiece** - The group blesses the new union.

**Figure 1** - Pope John Paul II ( 1921-2005)

Photograph by Karsh of Ottawa.

Reproduced from: Karsh, Yousuf and Karsh, Estrelita (1983) *Karsh: A Fifty-Year Retrospective*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p26.

**Figure 2** - *The Virgin in Prayer*. (1640-50).

Painted by Giovanni Battista Salvi, called Sassoferrato, b1609 d1685

National Gallery Ref. NG200, London.

No written consent needed from The National Gallery to include this image in PhD.

**Figure 3** - *First Holy Communion* (detail)

Allen, Mark (2002) *First Holy Communion*, London: Burns and Oates. (*Front cover*)

**Figure 4** - The Marriage of Queen Victoria, 10 February 1840,

painting by Sir George Hayter (1792-1871), (Royal Collection).

Reproduced from: Staniland, Kay (1997) In *Royal Fashion: The Clothes of Princess Charlotte of Wales and Queen Victoria 1796-1901*, London: Museum of London, p122.

The following images were taken by the author, and where copyright was assigned to the author. None of the images relate to the participants.

**Figure 5** - The bride-in-white.

**Figure 6** - Bride travels in the car with father.

**Figure 7** - Bride and groom, father, best man and minister: Church ceremony.

**Figure 8** - Bride being 'given away'.

**Figure 9** - Minister blesses the union.

**Figure 10** - Couple sign the register.

**Figure 11** - Wedding rings.

**Figure 12** - The group blesses the new union.

**APPENDIX A  
THE BRIDE'S VOICE**

**An investigation into the feelings of the bride-in-white**

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

I understand, Gavin Williams's research into 'The Bride's Voice: an investigation into the feelings of the bride-in-white' will be submitted to the Goldsmiths College, London University, as part of his PhD thesis. This work may also be published in specialist journals and used in conference presentations. In all reports, the identities of the brides interviewed will remain confidential and anonymous: brides will be allowed to choose a pseudonym (a false name which I can use to refer to you in my reports) for themselves for use in research reports.

I agree to take part in an interview for this study and consent to a tape recorder being used. I understand, I may be asked to take part in further interviews in the future, but that I have the right to refuse. In addition, I am free to withdraw as a participant of this research project at any time.

I am aware, I will be given the transcripts and analysis of any interviews I take part in, and I will be free to make changes if I wish to do so. I agree to allow quotes from transcripts to be used in Gavin Williams's PhD thesis, journal articles, other publications and conference presentations.

Chosen Pseudonym .....

Signed ..... (participant)      Date.....

Signed ..... (researcher)      Date.....

## APPENDIX B

### **The Bride's Voice: investigation into the feelings of the Bride-In-White**

Research by Gavin Williams, as part of his PhD thesis.

<b>Bridal Questionnaire</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b> .....
<b>Date Int'viewd</b> .....	<b>Wedding Date</b> .....
<b>Bride's age on her wedding day</b> .....	<b>Wedding location</b> .....

Being a Bride dressed in white, and marrying in an Anglican Church, on your wedding day, is arguably a very emotional time. It is the memory of these emotions I would like to explore with you.

1. What was the most vivid memory of your wedding day?
2. What are the feelings you can recall: When you were putting on your white wedding dress?
3. What are the feelings you can recall: Towards the people assisting you dress?
4. What are the feelings you can recall: When you saw yourself fully dressed in white?
5. What are the feelings you can recall: About why you chose to wear a white dress?
6. What are the feelings you can recall: About your white dress becoming dirty?
7. What are the feelings you can recall: As you stepped out of your wedding dress?
8. What ideas and feelings do you associate with white and purity?
9. What are the feelings you can recall: While travelling to the church?
10. What are the feelings you can recall: About the role your father played?
11. What are the feelings you can recall: About the role your mother played?
12. There is a sense in which brides are beautiful. I wonder what is it, for a bride to feel beautiful?

What are the feelings you can recall: in the Church

13. What are the feelings you can recall: What was the significance to you of the Anglican Church service?

14. What are the feelings you can recall: Of what it was like to be veiled?

15. What are the feelings you can recall: About being given away?

16. What are the feelings you can recall: As you signed the register?

17. What are the feelings you can recall: About changing your surname?

18. What are the feelings you can recall: As you processed down the aisle on leaving the church?

What are the feelings you can recall: outside the Church

19. What are the feelings you can recall: About being photographed?

20. What are the feelings you can recall: About entering your wedding reception?

Reflecting on the day you were the bride-in-white:

21. What was your saddest memory?

22. What was your happiest memory, about being a bride-in-white?

## APPENDIX C — Sample original data taken from 12Ann's interview

Being a Bride dressed in White, on your wedding day, is arguably a very emotional time. It is the memory of these emotions I would like to explore with you.

### **What was the most vivid memory of your wedding day?**

In terms of an event opening of the front door of my parent's house and seeing a horse standing in front of the gateway and realising my father and mother had hired a horse and carriage to take me to the church. And I was erm, just amazed, that, quite amazed and very overwhelmed, that well, because it had come about some years before, just as an off the cuff remark really when I said 'Oh when I get married I'd love to go to Church in a horse and carriage. And they had actually done hired this for me. I was quite overwhelmed by it. (12Ann01)

### **What were the feelings you can recall: About why you chose to wear a white dress?**

Whether they're the feelings or not I don't know: the thinking was, I was still a virgin and that I'd never had sex with anybody. And I'd never had sex with my husband-to-be and erm. And very strongly held Christian beliefs at that stage so to have worn a different colour which again I think is probably cultural as well, because if you'd worn an off-white dress, or whatever, you were making a statement that actually you were not a virgin. In contrast to my daughter up there, who wore an off-white dress but as far as I am aware had not had sex with her partner-to-be as far as I was aware. But I think there was a strong cultural... Certainly within my church there was, you know that virgins wore white and that's what you did. So I don't know whether that's the feelings. It's not the feelings. I think that there was also a very strong element in me to yeah to... I might have wanted to do something different but wouldn't have done something different, I was very compliant in that respect. So that's not the feelings, I know it's not the feelings but... I was probably quite happy to just to go along with 'this is what you did and that's what you going to do'. So I think that I was quite accepting. (12Ann05)

### **What were the feelings you can recall: While you were travelling in the HORSE AND CARRIAGE on the way to the Church?**

Delight. A slight embarrassment that I was on view to everybody, although enjoying that as well.

I certainly wasn't the blushing bride that didn't want to be seen. And so probably by the time we were 200 yards down the road and past the garage, I was probably [*a great deal of laughter*] relaxed into this thing, this horse and carriage and we were going very slowly and so everybody could see us and I enjoyed the occasion. Erm, I must certainly, I'm sure I was anxious about it, but it wasn't a sort of apprehensiveness, it was the kind of height of anxiety and excitement about it all, was my overwhelming feeling about the day the wasn't that I was kind of terrified about it all, I was just waiting to get on with it and really enjoying it.

I think that I was concerned with my father as he wasn't particularly well. And he was the one who was rather strung up with his nerves as to whether it was all going to work. I was probably just revelling in the day. (12Ann09)

## APPENDIX D

### Searching for themes and establishing themes

#### 2.6 Theory and practice of theme analysis

Having discussed mainly theory relating to the methodology, methods of data collection, choice of participants and data validity in Part Two, let us now examine how the collected data can be analysed in practice by using interpretative methods in the search for an understanding of the phenomenon. We will explore three complimentary methods of understanding data: first, psychoanalytic interpretation, second, the hermeneutic circle of enquiry, and third, phenomenological analysis.

##### 2.6.1 The science of psychoanalytic interpretation

Before proceeding with any data analysis, let us consider the researcher /psychoanalyst's task when listening to the participant/client's narrative to better understand how themes can emerge through psychoanalytic interpretation. The American training psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, whose focus was on human development, describes the psychoanalyst's task as 'listening to the patient's complaint, eliciting its history, and making, testing, and delivering interpretations of the patient's data' (Erikson, 1958:74). Arguably, the researcher's task is similar in relation to interviewing the participant and the narrative produced. Problematic for both the psychoanalyst and researcher, concerns the reliability of the interpretation. In other words, how can the psychoanalyst/researcher make their own perceptions and thoughts reliable, given the participant's semi-(un)structured free associations.

For Erikson, the interpretation is not a matter of objective knowledge but 'disciplined subjectivity' (Erikson, 1958:75). The interpretation derives from a reciprocal obligation, where the patient/participant is asked to 'free associate' within a semi-structured area of

thought. While the analyst/researcher, in order to discover the patient's/participant's unconscious processes, refrains from imposing their own unconscious assumptions, listens in a special way. The analyst/researcher listens attentively to the manifest narrative and for the gradual emergence of latent patterns and themes, which signal the patient/participant's message. The patient/participant's story can be understood as uniquely individual, as 'a universe of one' (Erikson, 1958:74), and who has unique life experiences. Therefore, the analyst is required to set aside all preconceptions, listening afresh and testing the explanations as they arise.

As interpretations emerge, they are first tested for their plausibility and then for their utility in intervention. Erikson argues that the psychoanalyst:

has no right to test their reconstructions until their trial formulations have combined into a comprehensive interpretation which feels right to them, and which promises, when appropriately verbalised, to feel right to the patient. (Erikson, 1958:83)

Then, and only then:

the psychoanalyst, usually finds themselves compelled to speak, in order to help the patient in verbalising their affects and images in a more communicative manner, and to communicate their own impressions. (Erikson, 1958:87)

The correctness of an interpretation does not always lie in the patient's 'immediate assent', but rather:

in the way in which communication between the patient and psychoanalyst 'keeps moving', leading to new and surprising insights and to the patient's greater assumption of responsibility for themselves. (Erikson, 1958:79)

Erikson gives a special place in the testing of interpretations to the phenomenon of transference. What seems important about the transference is, that through the phenomenon of it, the patient/participant brings meanings, unconscious motivations, and strategies of behaviour, which can be surfaced and examined in an endeavour to discover patterns of behaviour of repeating the past in the present (Erikson, 1958:80).

This can also be understood by Freud's concept of the 'compulsion to repeat' (SE18:62).

The American social scientist, industrial consultant and urban planner, Donald Schön seems faced with a crisis of confidence in the kinds of professional knowledge that indicate academic competence, due to a particular epistemology which appears to foster selective inattention, intuition and self-knowledge, as opposed to hard knowledge and practical competence. Schön draws on Erikson who provides a new guide to analytic techniques for unique and non-standard problems that 'are not in the book', but where objective knowledge may be gained through 'disciplined subjectivity' (Schön, 1983:138). While we can see that 'reflective thinking' connects Schön and Erikson, the difference between these two writers are that Schön is used to solving problems by relying on practical competence, but accepts that some problems appear unsolvable because he has no previous experience on which to rely. In contrast Erikson believes in his ability to see through the surface problem of scattered bits of information, to discover indications to a solution of the dilemma, not by relying on intuition but by understanding the process undertaken during 'reflection in action' (Schön, 1983:138). Erikson emphasises the importance of the practitioners' 'repertoire'. The researcher/psychoanalyst's repertoire includes patients seen, case studies read, types of symptoms examined, psychodynamic patterns associated with them, interventions used, tried, and patients' responses to them. The repertoire includes the whole of their experience insofar as it is accessible to them for understanding and action (Schön, 1983:138).

Schön suggests that when the practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he *sees it as* something already present in his repertoire. Schön, drawing on

Wittgenstein's use of 'seeing as' with reference to examples such as 'seeing the figure as a box', as discussed in Part Two, thus 'seeing-as' is at once and ambiguously, a process of seeing and thinking (Schön, 1983:138). Schön argues that to see *this* as *that* one does not need to subsume the first under a familiar category. Rather, one may see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without first being able to say similar or different with respect to what (Schön, 1983:138).

Schön, drawing on Erikson, believes that the researcher/psychoanalyst's investigation moves gradually through a chain of inferences, grounding each partial interpretation in a piece of evidence drawn from the patient/participant's story/data. The gradual construction of an interpretation proceeds, perhaps with two alternatives. Both of these explanations going together may offer a new synthesis. In order to decide between these alternatives the process needs to be repeated, looking for signs of one or the other developing in the patient/participant's story. So rather than colluding with the storyline the researcher/psychoanalyst maintains objectivity by testing and retesting the interpretive inference loosely but always grounded in the story/data of the patient/participant's experience until the hypothesis becomes compelling, and even then the researcher/therapist maintains an open mind (Schön, 1983:121-122). Schön argues that this process demonstrates 'reflective' thinking (Schön, 1983:124), or 'reflection-in-action' (Schön, 1983:126), by being guided by the repertoire of case studies, interpretive explanations and psychodynamic patterns.

By selective acts of attention by the researcher/psychoanalyst the experienced situation of the patient/participant will be subjected to interpretive inquiry. The interview as a whole will hold some features constant, while transient events, widely separated in time,

will be held steady and juxtaposed with one another to permit exploration of such phenomena. Some stories can be ignored, or reduced to outlines, while others are expanded and elaborated. By attending to a few features which can be considered central, the main thread of the story can be isolated from the surrounding features which can be considered as noise. By giving particular attention to some story/data the researcher/psychoanalyst experiments with interpretation. Trying now one interpretation, now another, and allowing experimental moves to be reversible, thus designing learning sequences. One advantage the researcher has over the psychoanalyst in the session, is that the researcher has the opportunity of slowing down phenomena which may otherwise be lost to reflection during the therapy session (Schön, 1983:160).

Schön suggests that the researcher/psychoanalyst constructs, through their immersion in the story/data, a virtual world which represents the reported experience of the patient/participant, as storytelling represents and substitutes for first-hand experience (Schön, 1983:160). The reliability of constructing this virtual world, however, has its limits. The researcher/psychoanalyst can only guess, but cannot know, cannot be sure of all the patient/participant's total world, outside the interview. The researcher/psychoanalyst can only test such inferences against material/repertoire already known and be open to new ways of thinking and behaving that may be peculiar to this particular patient/participant (Schön, 1983:161). Schön suggests that these virtual worlds are contexts for experiment. The researcher/therapist can suspend or control some of the everyday impediments to rigorous 'reflection-in-action'. These are representative worlds in practice, in the construction, maintenance, and use of virtual worlds. The researcher/psychoanalyst can develop the capacity for 'reflection-in-action' which Schön describes as 'artistry' (Schön, 1983:162).

Having begun to consider how the data can be handled using techniques of psychoanalytic interpretation advocated by Erikson, and reflection-in-action promoted by Schön, let us now discuss how the participants' narrative may be enhanced by the application of hermeneutics.

## 2.6.2 The hermeneutic circle of enquiry

The etymological roots of hermeneutics can be traced to the Greek god Hermes who is depicted wearing winged sandals, a travelling hat, and holding a magic septa or caduceus (Pinsent, 1969:61). Hermes' role being 'messenger of the god's', mediator between the gods, between the gods and humanity, and to escort or 'conduct the souls to the underworld' (Pinsent, 1969:39). Attributed to Hermes is the invention of language, speech and interpretation, together with characteristics of the liar, thief and trickster. He would 'plan with sheer guile in his heart, to deceive with false inferences', but was also 'concerned with literal truth' (Pinsent, 1969:39-40). In other words, language can reveal or conceal, indicate truth, falsehood or ambiguity, and invoke an uneasiness in the recipient. Biblical characters who interpreted others' message, include Joseph's interpretation of the chief butler's dream (Genesis,40v12), and Jesus when he 'opened their minds to understand the Scriptures' (Luke,24v46).

During the twentieth century, the three philosophers, Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, developed their own concepts of understanding human behaviour. In developing a concept which includes the whole but detailed experience of everyday existence by the individual, the German existential philosopher, Martin Heidegger, while investigating what do we mean by 'Being', developed the concept of the 'Hermeneutic Circle' (Heidegger, 1927). The 'hermeneutic circle of inquiry' involves:

building up an interpretation, through moving back and forth between the part and the whole. This involves: gaining a sense of the meaning of the whole text, and then using that as a framework for understanding fragments of the text; carrying out micro-analysis of the possible meanings of small sections of text, and using these to challenge or re-interpret the overall sense of the total text'. (McLeod, 2001:27)

In other words, central to the principle of the application of the 'hermeneutic circle' is that, the meaning of an individual action, experience or statement is accessed only by

relating it to the whole discourse, world-view or originating context. The 'hermeneutic circle' relates the whole to the part and the part to the whole by moving back and forth between the two positions.

From a sociologist perspective, McLeod claims that the 'circle' embraces both ontological and epistemological principles, in that the 'circle' aims towards 'understanding the basic nature of the persons' core being', and epistemologically, by 'the way in which people gain knowledge about the(ir) world' (McLeod, 2001:28). Limitations to the hermeneutic circle, Spence cautions, are that the interpretations and 'discoveries' may be 'little more than [the researcher/psychoanalyst's] projections' (Spence, 1993:7). Caution is consequently required to ensure that the interpretation becomes firmly grounded in the data. In that the data and the researcher's interpretation are open for public scrutiny. And that the method is sufficiently flexible to allow for novel material to emerge.

McLeod clarifies two positions relating to case study material and the rigours of research. McLeod suggests that 'the psychoanalytic clinical case study, based on the psychoanalyst's selective recall of sessions, would not be viewed as research'. On the other hand, 'where the original sources are open to re-analysis by others, may be viewed as research' (McLeod, 2001:137). Hence, as much data as possible is included in the following case studies.

Let us consider further ways of understanding hermeneutics. From a meta-scientist's perspective, Gerard Radnitzky claims that hermeneutic objectives focus on 'the practice of life', 'norms of being-in-the-world', and what is 'the communication of the living with past generations through the transmission and mediation of traditions' (Radnitzky,

1970:22, in McLeod 2001:22). In taking a philosophical approach, Charles Taylor suggests that hermeneutic interpretation endeavours to make meaning which is otherwise ‘confused, incomplete, seemingly contradictory...or unclear’ (Taylor, 1971 in McLeod 2001:22). From an existential philosophical position, Hans-Georg Gadamer claims that hermeneutic interpretation emanates ‘from a perspective, takes place from a position within history, [and] requires sensitivity to the use of language’. Gadamer also suggests that there may be ‘moments of insight and transformation for the interpreter’, but for the interpreter it is the ‘act of continuing and deepening, or enriching, the cultural-historical tradition’ that is significant (Gadamer, 1975:290, in McLeod 2001:22). From a psychoanalytic psychologist’s perspective, Jean Laplanche describes the ‘hermeneutics of the message’ as the process ‘from a message to its understanding. This is a translation that is not necessarily between languages (interlingual) but between sign systems (intersemiotic—Jakobson)’ (Laplanche, 2002-3:28).

In other words, hermeneutics, a science of interpretation, facilitates deciphering and interpreting the story through language about signs (Laplanche, 2002-3:28), and ‘bring(s) to light an underlying coherence or sense within the actions, behaviour or utterances of a person or group’ (McLeod, 2001:22). A hermeneutic understanding also leads towards a ‘cultural-historical’ context which embraces the ‘tradition of the researcher’, and, where a ‘tradition-informed’ interpretation is made. Hermeneutics is therefore a form of cultural inquiry which is not linear but circular. Having first discussed the technique of psychoanalytic interpretation which suspends all pre-conceptions before drawing on a ‘repertoire’ of experience, and second by using the hermeneutic circle of enquiry to contextualise and move within the data, let us now consider a third method of understanding data where again the suspension of all previous suppositions is emphasised.

### 2.6.3 Theory and practice of phenomenological analysis

The etymological roots of phenomenology stem from the ideas promoted by three philosophers. In the study of essences, the Austrian empiricist philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) believes that experience is the source of all knowledge, and by applying ‘phenomenological reduction’, that, being free of presuppositions in our approach to the world, the essence becomes revealed when we turn ‘to the things themselves’ and describe our experiences of them (Husserl, 1936). The German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1927), emphasises that ‘being in the world’ requires a socio-historical or cultural context. And the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962), who argues that perception plays a significant part in our understanding of the world as well as our engaging with the world. Significantly, phenomenology does not set out to test theory, rather working from ‘bottom up’, initially the researcher generates themes from the data in order to develop new insight.

McLeod asserts that by following the Duquesne school of empirical phenomenology<sup>93</sup>, whose ultimate goal is to elucidate the sense of the phenomenon as it exists in the participants’ concrete experience, researchers are required to follow six steps and apply eight principles. The six steps are as follows:

- Step 1. Collect the verbal data describing the experience.
- Step 2. Read the data thoroughly, getting a sense of the whole.
- Step 3. Extract significant statements.
- Step 4. Eliminate irrelevant repetition, by discarding irrelevant statements.
- Step 5. Identify central themes or implicit meanings.
- Step 6. Integrate meanings into a single exhaustive description.

In applying this phenomenological approach, McLeod emphasises that the researcher is also required to apply eight principles:

1. Develop an open attitude of wonderment.
2. Strive to bracket off assumptions: known as phenomenological reduction.

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3. Adhere to the principle of horizontality, where no one meaning is considered more important than any other.
4. Engage in imaginative variation, i.e. ask: What would need to change to make this phenomenon different? Ask: What are the limits of this phenomenon?  
Thus, distinguishing essential from inessential features of the phenomenon.
5. Develop an empathic presence to the described situation. The researcher uses the description to enter and immerse themselves in the situation just as it was lived by the participant.
6. Slow down and patiently dwell on the topic. The researcher spends time lingering 'in' the described situation.
7. Magnify, amplify and pay special attention to detail, by allowing each detail of the situation to be fully contacted, to loom large for their consideration.
8. Turn from objects to immanent meanings, by attunement to the meaning of objects and events as they are lived by the participant.  
(McLeod, 2001:41-42, see Colaizzi 1978:59, Wertz 1984)

The psychological researcher, J.W. Osborne (1994), argues that in human science, phenomenology is one of the basic tools of qualitative research identified by Husserl whose philosophical agenda was to 'find a method of arriving at ultimate truth', and a 'search for radical certitude' (Natanson, 1973:5 in McLeod 2001:36). The phenomenological approach emphasises six steps and eight principles, as cited above, in an 'almost meditative withdrawal from the world' (McLeod, 2001:50). The social scientists Bogdan and Taylor emphasise that the phenomenologically inclined researcher needs to 'see things from [a participant's] point of view (Bogdan, 1975:14, in Silverman 1997:64). Of particular interest to this project is that McLeod suggests that this 'circle' also involves the use of empathy towards 'the person(s) who generated the text', and 'encompasses all aspects of the text' including the researcher who 'is a member of that community or tradition' who will 'expand and enrich' that tradition by making 'a genuine act of discovery' by 'extending its meaning', and where 'both text and researcher are changed' (McLeod, 2001:28). Having considered some core phenomenological principles let us explore some advantages and disadvantages to this approach.

Of the usefulness of the phenomenological approach, McLeod argues that it enables the ‘discovery of how personal and social worlds are constructed’ (McLeod, 2001:52). In other words, characteristic of the phenomenological approach, distinct from other approaches, are its combination of psychological, interpretive and ideographic or case study components. The main aim being to illuminate and make sense of the human experience, in a given context, such as a major life event. Thus balancing phenomenological description of the participants’ lived experience, with the researcher’s insightful interpretation who acknowledges their personal beliefs and standpoint, and anchored in the participants’ data.

Of the drawbacks to the phenomenological approach McLeod argues that ‘there is an absence of cumulative knowledge within the philosophical phenomenological literature’, due to the existence of ‘one-off studies’ and the approach being ‘marginalized in North American social science’ (McLeod, 2001:51). A second disadvantage McLeod argues, is that the analysis of phenomenology ‘makes it hard for future researchers to know the extent to which they agree or disagree’ with the findings (McLeod, 2001:51). A third disadvantage to this approach, de Rivera argues, is that it relies ‘on the personal qualities of the researcher’ (de Rivera, 1981:13, in McLeod 2001:50).

While appreciating the advantages and disadvantages of the phenomenological approach, an Australian social researcher, Michael Crotty, argues that there are two phenomenologies. The ‘mainstream’ approach advocated by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, and a ‘new’ empirical approach which has lost the radical Husserlian tradition. Crotty argues that the ‘new’ approach falls short of ‘problematizing’ the phenomenon and critically ‘calling into question ‘what might be’ the structure of the phenomenon,

and not merely describing ‘what is’ (Crotty, 1996:7, in McLeod 2001:52). In other words, Crotty challenges the researcher not only to describe the phenomenon but also to critically ‘problematise’ it. Empirical phenomenology, as discussed above and in Part Two, is now applied using the Duquesne protocol. Let us now consider how, step one of the protocol: ‘collecting the verbal data describing the experience’, can be implemented in practice.

After the interviewing process and consulting the researcher’s notes, as discussed in Part Two, with the help of both the transference and counter-transference the researcher/psychoanalyst gains insight from revealed thoughts and feelings, thus creating the virtual world of the participant/patient and a method of enquiry and a strategy of intervention (Schön, 1983:161).

Inevitably, certain expectations are brought to the study. First, that the questions formulated would be appropriate. Second, that the selected questions were sufficiently open to allow the participant to explore that aspect. Third, that the chosen participants would have at least some clear understanding of their own feelings and would be able to articulate them. Most striking, therefore, was the degree of difficulty experienced by the participants in finding words that were sufficiently adequate to describe their feelings, as feelings and emotions are vital to human survival. Having discussed the interviewing process of data collection let us now consider the character of the data and how data may be understood.

Using a social scientist perspective, Elliot Mishler suggests that ‘transcribing tape-recorded interviews is complex, tedious, and time-consuming work that demands careful listening and relistening’ (Mishler, 1986:47). Mishler cautions that:

[a transcript] is only a partial representation of speech. Each representation is also a transformation (in that it) rearranges the flow of speech into lines of text within the limits of a page. Some features of speech, such as rapid changes in pitch, stress, volume, and rate seem almost impossible to represent adequately... (Other complexities include) non-linguistic features...such as gestures, facial expressions (and) body movements. (Mishler, 1986:48)

Appendix C comprises a sample of transcribed original data in terms of ‘speech into lines of text’, with indications of some non-verbal communication. After the transcribing process, step two and the first principle of the phenomenological protocol is applied to begin the search for themes. This requires the data to be read through thoroughly several times and ‘carefully in order to get a sense of the whole’ experience of all the participants, as well as each separate focus question, while the researcher ‘adopts an openness and wonderment in relation to the phenomenon’ (McLeod, 2001:41). The third and fourth steps take the search for themes further by ‘extracting significant statements’ and ‘eliminating irrelevant repetition’. The second principle involves the researcher reflecting on and ‘bracketing off’ their personal assumptions, a process known as phenomenological ‘reduction’ (McLeod, 2001:41). At the same time the researcher applies the third principle of horizontality, that is, to consider that ‘no one meaning is more important than any other’, while adopting the fourth principle of ‘engaging in imaginative variation’ (McLeod, 2001:41). Having précised interviews as a-typical, the fifth step is to submit the data to grouping into concepts and ‘identify central themes or implicit meanings’ (McLeod, 2001:41). Each theme leading to the participants’ narrative, and linking to the question. This process involves the separating and amalgamating of some data groupings, and the occasional alteration of conceptual labels, until each category is satisfactory, reflecting only the data. The sixth step is to examine the relationship between these themes and ‘integrate them into a single exhaustive description of the phenomenon’ (McLeod, 2001:41), and then sort the

themes into overarching themes, under the core category of the subject's 'felt' experience.

The results of a phenomenological study are multifaceted and are dependent on the analytic and interpretive stance of the researcher. Although the researcher's approach, during this project, principally takes a Freudian psychoanalytic perspective, the researcher also leaves space for other approaches to have a voice. The themes and overarching domains are designed to stay close to the narrative language of the subjects. These broad categorisations serving to provide a coherent structure for the experience of each participant, allowing for their experiences within each category to be deeply personal, and where variants of the theme can be identified. As speech events, narrative accounts provide temporal sequences, have a social dimension, and communicate meaning through story telling.

Drawing on grounded theory principles, McLeod asserts that 'checking categories and emerging themes against any and all available sources is essential' (McLeod, 2001:188). Michael Bloor states that 'validation techniques are not tests, but opportunities for reflection' (Bloor, 1997:49), and Glaser calls for 'constant comparison' as part of the actual process of the research (Glaser, 1967 in McLeod 2001:188). The themes which emerge, with their sub-themes, provide a useful start for developing a non-hierarchical taxonomy for the participant experience. Thus themes may not necessarily be entirely discrete but may overlap each other, combining related themes. As was anticipated, new questions arose, such as 'why didn't you ask about my husband'?

Before proceeding further, let us consider the researcher's own cultural and historical context. The researcher can be described as, a white British middle-class Christian male, growing up in England during the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The researcher's parents held Christian beliefs and values, living in harmony until they died. A keen interest led to becoming a wedding photographer. Reflecting on this project, the researcher believes that these studies continue to deeply inform on-going psychotherapeutic practice, which in turn enriches the client/therapist encounter.

Emerging from a keen interest in family history, handed down from previous generations, I became deeply interested in my ancestral roots. This interest took me to the Isles of Scilly to discover that some of my ancestors had sailed around the world looking for treasure during the Gold rush. This interest also took me to Australia during which time I honed my photographic skills. I enlarged my photographic interest into classical portraiture and the wedding event. Gradually my academic interests grew into investigating why I am the way I am and why other people behave the way they do. An early curiosity about my family roots had grown into an academic investigation into the main protagonist at a wedding - the bride-in-white.

As an NHS GP practice psychotherapist, in a multicultural, deprived area of South London, I see a wide variety of neurotic behaviour. Although all patients have been referred to the counselling service by their GP, some patients do not attend, most are able to engage to some degree, and others engage and benefit greatly.

I believe that short-term psychodynamic therapy, conducted in the GP practice, requires selective attention to the patient's immediate distress, while there seems little time for 'working through'. As such, I consider my academic task is to apply both

phenomenology and hermeneutics, quickly identifying themes within family dynamics, both current and from infancy, at work, and in the social context, looking for common themes; i.e., indications for unconscious defences or where 'acting out' has become problematic. The therapeutic task consists of an empathically drawing the patient's attention to their defences in order that they can be unpacked, looked at differently, and made sense of, so that the patient better understands themselves and can make new choices. That is, in practice, I am both a researcher and a therapist. For example:

My sadness turns towards a man who does not know the name of his father. Can he possibly live with not knowing, or is his distress going to persist into a lifetime of longing, searching and feeling rejected? Thus impacting on his self-esteem.

I feel the sadness of the lady who was given away at birth, and now as an adult struggles with suicidal ideation, as she feels that life is not worth living. Empathising with her struggle to live, I work with a hope for her continued survival. Thus there seems to be a struggle between the so-called life and death instincts.

Confronted by the man who grew up with parents who constantly verbally fought with each another and with their children. Now as an adult this patient has learnt to defend himself from the real, or symbolic, attack of the father by becoming addicted to training in self-defence. He struggles, however, to regulate his anger towards his partner.

#### **2.6.4 Applying phenomenological analysis: early searches for general themes**

Taking a stance of ‘open wonderment’, the researcher proposes to work from the general to the particular, ‘to get a sense of the whole’ (McLeod, 2001:41). Having ‘extracted significant statements’ (step three), and ‘eliminated irrelevant repetition’ (step four), the phenomenological protocol requires the ‘identification of central themes or implicit meanings’ from the whole of the data (step five). Drawing on the above discussion and applying the fifth step of the phenomenological protocol, as discussed above, some general themes that emerge from studying the whole data include:

Historical themes: the country and era in which the ceremony takes place, traditions, Victorian values.

Cultural themes: social and cultural traditions or cultural convention of wearing white, processing to the Church, being seen by family and friends, significance of mother’s and father’s role, pleasing father, public pride in wearing white, given away, patriarchal exchange, uniting two families, identifying as Miss, Mrs, wife or mother, finding a husband, leaving home, pride, promising, love and marriage, being a woman, love, my destiny, ambition of a nuclear family, implied hetero-normativity.

Aesthetic themes: feeling beautiful, perfection, being seen as a rewarding experience, purity.

Religious themes: Book of Common Prayer, role model of Virgin Mary, Church building and location, God’s presence, God’s blessing, Minister’s role, father’s role, bride’s role, husband’s role, ritualised ceremony, importance of wearing white in Church, speaking vows, signing the register, complying with religious tradition, monogamy, consanguinity, hymns, processing, Christian belief, not being an Anglican.

Personal themes: physical virginity, wearing a white dress, rites of passage, being seen.

Psychodynamic themes: childhood dreams and desires, the subject's experience of themselves, identification with mother, bride's subjective experience of mother and father, father's active role, mother's non-visual role, bride's passive role, change of status from Miss to Mrs and potentially of becoming a mother, separation from the familial unit, being seen, father/daughter special relationship, super-ego, incestuous ideation, the object of desire, libidinal desire, memories, being seen. Feeling honoured, reassured, anxious, awkward, close, beautiful, emotional, proud, sad, not forgiven, happy, frightened, worried, embarrassed, eager, willing, compliant, tearful, doubt, disbelief, dependent, belonging, in love, passive.

Thus a great number of general themes could be said to have emerged through adopting an attitude of 'openness and wonderment' from the researcher's emersion in the whole data. In order to implement step six of the protocol, by 'integrating central themes and implicit meanings into a single exhaustive description of the phenomenon' the researcher, with 'openness and wonderment', 'bracketing off' personal assumptions, and 'giving weight to each statement equally', again becomes immersed in all the collected data. Macro reading the data the researcher forms a detailed description of the subjective experience in the present first person, as if the researcher is the participant recording their live experience. This process assists composing a 'general condensation' of the subjective experience. This process also aids the clarification and identification of 'essential meanings' (Fischer, 1979:31, in McLeod 2001:43). Let us now consider a 'general condensation' of the lived experience of the bride-in-white by drawing directly from the whole data:

A once in a lifetime experience that I had so longed and waited for, was getting married in Church in God's eyes, in a traditional style white wedding. I felt a sense of disbelief about actually getting married. During my childhood, I dreamt of marrying in Church, dressed in white, just as my parents had. Consequently, my mother and father have been like a role model for me. I knew that my parents had kept their vows.

Earlier, I had been shopping with my mother to choose and buy the dress. I thought it was going to be a difficult process but I fell in love with the first dress I put on. On the wedding day itself, after my mother and the bridesmaids had helped me with my hair, makeup and dress, they left for the Church. When I saw myself in the mirror, I thought ‘the white dress looks beautiful’, and I felt special, beautiful, happy and blessed.

I then came downstairs and when my father saw me, he said, with a tear in his eye, ‘You look stunning’, and at that moment, I felt really close to him, because he was proud of me. My father always put me on a pedestal. He was a remarkable, wonderful man. I was very close to my father when I was a small child. During my journey to the Church, I loved showing myself off to the neighbours, but in the car there was a kind of awkwardness between my father and me. I suppose I was not used to being so exclusively with him, and perhaps he too felt anxious about his forthcoming role of giving his daughter away. It seemed as though he wanted me to reassure him that I was doing the right thing.

When we arrived at the Church that was when it hit me, I felt a sense of disbelief that I was going to be married. I heard the organ music playing. As my face was covered with the veil, I couldn’t see very clearly, so being on the arm of my father felt as though I was dependent on him as we processed down the aisle. I was very proud to be on his arm. Peering through the veil I saw a sea of faces filling the Church belonging to my family and friends.

I remember, the moment we arrived in front of the Minister, my husband-to-be whispered to me: ‘You look lovely’, which felt reassuring. After my father had helped me lift my veil, he continued standing by my side. The Church ceremony was very significant to me. I felt that wearing white symbolises respecting being in Church and able to receive God’s blessing. If I had not married in white and in Church, my father would never have forgiven me, but that was not the case he was very proud of me. During the ceremony itself, we had chosen some beautiful hymns, such as ‘O Perfect Love’ and ‘Love Divine’.

I felt really emotional when I was being given away by my father. I felt honoured, frightened, and happy mixed with sadness. In one way, I couldn’t wait to get away. While I felt good about it, it was nice to be handed over, as I knew I was going doing the right thing. It was like an act of love and I felt that it brought our families together. I couldn’t see my mother because she was sitting behind me.

What was particularly worrying at that moment was not making a mess of my vows. Promises are so important to me, I don’t promise many things, and especially I don’t want to make a mistake. I find it embarrassing talking in front of a large group of people. As was the custom at the time, I vowed to ‘honour and obey’, because I was pleased to. I was promising to be with someone for the rest of my life. I thought, this is going to be perfect and last forever because the vows are life-long and before God.

When it came to exchanging our rings I couldn’t wait to put it on and become ‘Mrs’. It felt as though it was my destiny since my childhood. It was as if I had left half of myself behind with my parents and found the other half with my husband. I felt that being married in Church, in front of God, and in God’s eyes, we received God’s blessing.

When it came to signing the register, I complied with the tradition of the day quite willingly. It was then, when I signed my maiden name for the last time, that I realised I was no longer 'Miss' but 'Mrs', with the potential of becoming a mother.

As part of this new couple, we processed out between a Church full of smiling faces, and I feel very proud to be on the arm of my husband. During the time when the photographs were being taken, I didn't feel at all embarrassed, rather it was a very rewarding experience, and I felt I was beautiful and the centre of everyone's attention. I haven't felt like that before.

Again, I loved showing myself off to the passers-by as we processed to the reception. People everywhere saw me, it was hugely supporting. In my white dress everyone knew I was the bride. People saw me all day, so happy in my dress. The funny thing is, I can't explain it, but, after all this time I still have my wedding dress with all of its memorable marks on it, in just the same state as it was on my wedding day.

By adopting an attitude of 'openness and wonderment', (first principle), on reflection, the above synopsis of the subjective experience can be read in a number of ways, such as, aesthetic, cultural, religious and psychodynamic. As seen above, each reading generating a different group of themes. If either of these areas of investigation are exclusively adopted then the subjective 'felt' experience of the bride (the phenomenon of the bride-in-white) could be seen differently, (fourth principle). Whereas marriage may be considered central to many cultures world-wide, the 'limits' (fourth principle), to the phenomenon of 'the bride-in-white' seem to be restricted to the Christian tradition. The 'essential features', (fourth principle), of this phenomenon are that the phenomenon under investigation are experienced by women, and usually transacted during adulthood.

It seems that several methods produce themes of equal validity. As this project principally uses a psychoanalytic lens, rather than a cultural or religious interpretation, the researcher chooses to focus on aspects of unconscious processes over others, for the purpose of this study. This is not to suggest that any of the other categories are less valid or will be discarded, but less emphasis will be placed on them. This begins the

process of narrowing down potential themes. Let us now consider another method of establishing phenomenological themes, by case study.

### **2.6.5 Case Studies**

By adopting an attitude of openness and curiosity, the researcher selects six representative interviews for analysis by listening carefully and responding differently according to how the interview leads, in the search for similarities and differences. In other words the researcher attempts to become objective by detaching from pre-conceptions as to what the analysis will reveal. McLeod draws attention to one of the ethical limitations to this approach which stems potentially from the researcher's guilt. During psychoanalytic practice, the analyst offers the client an interpretation knowing that they can respond. In formulating these case studies, however, each participant's opportunity of responding has not been available. Thus, the researcher can feel that they have gone publically behind each participant's back without any course for responding. In other words, the researcher can feel like an intruder or betrayer of each participant's secrets, however well their identities have been concealed with the use of a pseudonym for others, yet the participant as reader, may feel exposed (McLeod, 2001:198).

Having earlier presented a 'general condensation' or composite reading from all the participants' narrative, let us now consider six general readings of individual brides' experience, three taken from the 'recent' cohort of brides, and three from the 'older' cohort. Let us first consider Sue's narrative using a hybrid process of inductive and deductive analysis to interpret the data, thus integrating data with theory based on the tenets of phenomenological analysis which provides both a philosophical framework and a method which is descriptive and interpretive of subjective experience.

### **A general reading of the data supplied by Sue**

On listening to Sue's interview as a whole what seemed to emerge was what a deeply emotional time Sue had recalling her wedding day. What seems most prominent was that Sue's father couldn't be there to see her marry, as Sue states that: 'My father recently died' (Sue10). Sue states that: 'When I looked in the mirror and saw myself fully dressed in white I thought: I wish my dad could see me, he would have been proud of me [*tears*]. Sorry. [*tears*]... I just closed my eyes and thought of my dad standing next to me [*tears*]...' (Sue04). 'He would have been proud of me' [by being married in white], can be interpreted as Sue complying, with her father's expectations of marrying, and cultural expectations of heteronormativity, thus indicating Sue's unconscious ego ideal and the group's unconscious collective idealisation of heterosexual marriage.

What seems also striking is the apparent importance to Sue of marrying in Church. Although Sue married in an Anglican Church, this was not significant, 'because I'm a Catholic' (Sue13). Arguably, 'marrying in Church' could seem to offer Sue an unconscious sense of drawing closer to her recently deceased father, and that being married 'in front of God' (Sue13), her heavenly father, could also symbolise being married in the presence of her deceased earthly father.

Due to Sue's dad having recently died, Sue appears to break with tradition, that although she could have 'asked her brother' to give her away, she chose her mum because 'My mum's next in line for me, from my dad (Sue11). Arguably, these statements imply that for Sue her mum represented the parent closest to her dad, thus indicating that dad's authority was invoked and symbolically he gave her away. Sue's statements seem to indicate Sue's conscious and unconscious need to feel close to her

father but also imply a mourning process for the loss of her dad and thus an unconscious loss of the ego ideal.

Sue states: 'My saddest memory was my dad not being there to share the day, in person, was the hardest thing' (Sue21). This statement can be interpreted that Sue may have idealised her father. In other words, Sue could have said, 'Ideally I would have wished my dad could have been around to share in my day, but now I have to bear this loss and find a substitute'.

Sue states that: 'Speaking in front of everybody and saying our vows, it means that were are going to be together. Because you're making a promise to each other, and I don't ever promise anything. I try my best but I'm not going to promise. But this is a promise that you're going to try and keep. I think that when you're married you've got to try and work at the relationship instead of saying, I'll give up if anything goes wrong' (Sue01). These statements can be interpreted in terms of an expression of an unconscious ego ideal. In other words, Sue could have said, 'Promises, like vows, are ideals. I am going to try my hardest to keep them because we've made them to each other in front of everybody'.

Sue suggests that there is 'not a lot of connection between white and purity' (Sue08). 'White does not relate to purity any more' rather it relates to the 'person inside being either good or not good' (Sue08). This statement can be interpreted in Kleinian terms, as indicating an unconscious splitting, where issues may be starkly experienced. Sue states: 'One of my friends recently married in white, and now they are no longer together. Society has changed quite a lot' (Sue08). While referring to one of her 'friends', Sue reveals her assumption that by the bride wearing a white dress carries

weight both externally and internally. This can also be interpreted in terms of an expression of both an unconscious ego ideal and a loss of an ego ideal. In other words, Sue could have said, 'Ideally there could be a connection between wearing a white dress and being pure, but in reality it's the person's intension that ideally counts'.

Sue states that: 'Choosing to wear a white dress I thought it's traditional and you feel more special in a dress that's white. It feels like you're the centre of attention. It's you're day, everyone's thinking about you and caring for you. When everyone is looking at you and saying 'Oh you look really nice', it's lovely. It's quite nice actually [*laughter*], but I was a bit embarrassed because everyone's looking at me' (Sue05). 'I didn't like being veiled because I felt shielded from everyone' (Sue14). 'I'm only going to wear the dress once, so you want to show it off' (Sue06). 'My happiest memory was walking down the aisle processing and just enjoying being the bride' (Sue22). Now it's all over when you take the dress off but you've got the memories' (Sue07). Sue's statements can be interpreted in terms of an expression of exhibitionism. We can hear in Sue's statements that her sense for exhibitionism falls predominantly between the joy of feeling 'special', being visible and being the centre of attention, but also feeling a little 'embarrassed'. Feeling 'embarrassed' can be interpreted in terms of feeling unconsciously castrated. Thus, Sue's sense of feeling the 'centre of attention' can be interpreted as a compensation for her embarrassment. In other words, unconscious exhibitionism compensates for unconscious castration.

In separating from my twin sister (Sue17), and being given away by my mum (Sue10), contrasts with how my husband and I are now 'together forever' (Sue07) with the same surname (Sue17). 'We knew from the start that we were meant to be together, and I think that we will always be together' (Sue07). These statements relating to her husband

can be interpreted, that Sue seems to have found her Platonic ‘other half’. It seems that Sue expresses that the unconscious process of repudiation has taken place not only from her twin but also from her parents’ authority by giving her allegiance to her husband. And when Sue states: ‘When we entered the reception and everybody clapped, I felt as though we were being welcomed into our family’ (Sue20). This can be interpreted that Sue has chosen to symbolically turn her back on her old familial ties and enter into a new family system.

Sue states that: ‘Now I am married and I’m Mrs... (Sue07), we’ve come together, we are now only there for one another and we showed everyone that we’re there to be together, together forever’ (Sue07). In this public expression of transformation from Miss to Mrs, we can also hear how significant it seems to Sue to ‘belong’. This can be interpreted as indicating Sue’s strong need for attachment, in reaction to the loss of her father and twin, and perhaps also Sue’s ability to imagine remaining attached. This indicates an identification with, or idealisation of, her parent’s relationship and the type of relationship Sue has with her twin.

Sue states that: ‘When you’re getting prepared and you’ve got your make-up on, and your hair done, it doesn’t seem real ‘til you put on the dress’ and the veil, and that’s when it hit me that I was actually going to get married (Sue03). This form of external transformation can be interpreted as indicating a sense of exhibitionism but also splitting between illusion and reality. For Sue, the reality of being a bride-in-white only becomes ‘concrete’ when the full external transformation is complete. It seems as if there are two different realities, one familiar, while the unfamiliar reality is of being a bride. ‘Now as twins our two families are not together, it’s quite strange’ (Sue17). But ‘at the reception we felt welcomed into the larger combined family (Sue20). These

statements can be interpreted, that Sue seems to have found a new ‘containing’, ‘secure base’, in the form of the larger family group.

If we argue, as in Part Two, that the transference is ubiquitous and is in everything that is articulated, then for Sue what may be considered to have been unconsciously transferred from past experience may be encompassed by considering two issues: the significance of the vows, and ‘being together’, both being interpreted in terms of ‘rites of incorporation’, or in psychodynamic terms ‘separation anxiety’.

Sue states that ‘I found it quite embarrassing saying my vows out loud in front of everybody, as saying our vows means that we are going to be together’ (Sue01). Usually, ‘I don’t ever promise anything, I try my best but I’m not going to promise’ (Sue01). ‘I think that when you’re married you’ve got to try and work out a relationship instead of giving up when anything goes wrong’ (Sue01). It seems as though Sue endows the vows with the significance of ‘we’re going to be together’ (Sue01).

Belonging and ‘being together’ seem to be an enduring theme throughout Sue’s interview. In contrast, Sue seems sad and disappointed that her friend’s marriage has broken down. Sue states that ‘My friend married five months ago and she wore a white dress, they were together for three months and now they are not together. He wasn’t that committed when they married, but they still went ahead with the marriage. Society has changed quite a lot’ (Sue08). This statement can be interpreted in psychodynamic terms as an expression of an unconscious loss of the ego ideal. This statement can also be interpreted as alluding to a woman’s need to marry, and to conform to society’s implicit expectation, thus implying a social conscience or collective unconscious super-ego. In other words, Sue could have said, ‘I would have believed that getting married in white

would have counted for something significant, but it's sad that in some cases these days it doesn't seem to count for anything'.

Finally, on reflection the researcher suggests that, Sue may unconsciously need to feel 'together' predominantly for two reasons. First, that Sue was one of twins. Second, as Sue's dad had recently died and her friend's marriage had broken down Sue was all too consciously aware of loss and that significant people can leave. Let us now consider another 'recent' bride's experience, by exploring the interview with Sis.

### **A general reading of the interview with Sis**

What seems to emerge from this interview is Sis's relationship with her wedding dress. Sis states that: 'I chose to wear a white dress because I wanted to stay with tradition. I wouldn't have married in any other colour than white. That's always been the colour that brides wear in a Church wedding' (Sis05). In choosing to wear a white wedding dress, Sis appears to have been influenced by both cultural tradition and respect for Church tradition, both representing safe, conforming choices, thus avoiding cultural or religious criticism, stigma or loss of reputation.

Sis states that: 'Feeling special is difficult to describe. When you're a little girl you dream of getting married in a white dress. I am 38 now, and I thought, a few years ago, "I can't see it ever happening". I think because I'm an older bride, wearing a white dress makes it extra special (*laughter*)' (Sis04). When Sis states that: 'It was an expensive dress' (Sis06) Sis appears to link it to how it had transformed her into feeling 'special' and 'beautiful like a bride', in a way that she'd 'never felt before and she will never feel again, like a princess, very lovely' (Sis12). This sense of feeling 'special' can be interpreted as a narcissistic ego ideal. Even though the dress became dirty and 'each mark on it tells its own story' (Sis06), thus Sis bears the loss of the ego ideal. By adorning her expensive wedding dress Sis experiences a new way of feeling. 'I've never felt like this before and never will again', arguably Sis by adorning exhibitionist clothing becomes transformed from feeling castrated.

As Sis stepped out of her wedding dress Sis becomes conscious that she will 'only wear her dress once' (Sis06), and 'never wear it again, because it's done its job of making her feel special' (Sis07). And now the dress with all of its marks will be put into storage' and 'it's always going to be there, I'm never going to get rid of it' (Sis07). In 'never

going to get rid of it' indicates the bride's long term relationship to her wedding dress thus it can be interpreted that the dress represents a transitional object.

Another item of clothing that seems significant for Sis was her veil. Sis states that: 'The veil, although it was not right over my face felt like a protective shield around me' (Sis14). The veil became a 'barrier and protection' between me and the rest of the Church congregation (Sis14). I felt the veil was reassuring when it was just 'the bride, the groom and the vicar, just the three of us' (Sis14 and Sis22). I felt that the Anglican Church 'felt peaceful and reassuring', while the service and words were 'nice', and the minister 'had a calming voice' (Sis13). By wearing a veil which 'felt like a protective shield', and experiencing the Church as 'peaceful and reassuring', and the minister's 'calming voice', arguably these three facets can be interpreted as symbols or metaphors for 'containing' Sis's anxieties.

Referring to her father Sis states that: 'I think my dad was very proud of me, he was glad to see the back of me in a funny, nice way, he always said that. My dad's not a big talker, a quite, thoughtful person, but while we were travelling to the church he said a couple of times "are you ok?", "You look lovely", which was really very nice. When we were sitting at the table in the reception my dad kept squeezing my hand and saying "you've done well", which was really nice, and reassuring' (Sis10). In Sis stating that she experienced her dad as 'a very thoughtful person', who was 'proud' of her and 'reassuring' and who said: "You look lovely" (Sis10), the closeness between the father and the daughter can be interpreted in Oedipal terms. The daughter's close relationship to the father, indicating unconscious incestuous desire. Sis, however, seems to emphasise her father's 'peaceful and reassuring' qualities, which can be understood in contrast with her mother's 'energy'.

Sis states that: 'My mum's good at 'organising everything and everybody'. 'I don't know where she got her energy from' (Sis11). This remark indicates that Sis's mum's 'energy' can be understood as being transferred into other aspects of this interview (Sis11). This may be illustrated by 04Sis' most vivid memory being: 'Everybody being happy, smiling and the feeling that everybody was enjoying themselves' (Sis01).

Sis states that: 'We were living together before we got married' (Sis08), and therefore there seems to be no immediate or traumatic severing of parental ties on the marriage day. Thus Sis' interview does not appear to illustrate a strong repudiation of parental authority.

One way of eliciting themes is to 'compare and contrast' one participant's experience with another, that is to find similar or different variations of the experience. Strauss and Corbin refer to 'making theoretical comparisons', for raising questions and discovering properties that may be in the data, especially when doing analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:67). Let us now consider an overall view of the interview with Liz, holding in mind other participants' experience, in order to compare this interview with others.

### **A general reading of Liz's narrative**

Not all 'recent' brides conformed to traditional expectations. Liz, aged 40, recalls her experience of being a 'bride-in-white' in the presence of her mother, one month after her wedding day in 2005.

On confirming the research parameters, that the participant wore a 'white' dress and married in an Anglican Church, on reflection, it seems that the researcher may have started the interview with Liz poorly. The researcher was under the misnomer that describing the colour of the wedding dress as 'white' could include 'off white', 'ivory' or 'cream'. Liz insisted: 'I'd call it cream', while the researcher responds 'for all intents and purposes I'd still call it white essentially'.

On considering why Liz chose to wear a 'white' dress, it seems as though staying with 'tradition' plays an important part in Liz's decision-making. Liz uses phrases such as: 'it felt like a traditional location, and so it seemed appropriate to wear 'white', but it wasn't white, it was 'cream' (Liz05). In choosing to wear a 'cream' dress, as her mother did, indicates a conscious or unconscious identification with the mother, and in traditional terms an unconscious identification with past generations (Liz05).

Liz suggests that the important issue concerning her wedding dress was that 'you buy the dress, the one you really want, and it's so special and you've chosen it, you've thought about it, you really want it to look good all day', and 'I remember being a bit bothered when it got slightly dirty' (Liz06).

In choosing the item of clothing that will transform Liz into a bride, and transport her through the day, it seems as though Liz endows the dress with the 'special' quality of

making her 'look good all day'. This can be interpreted as indicating an unconscious ego ideal, in that 'it had to look good', thus the dress endows the wearer with qualities of 'looking good'. Also 'looking good' can be an indication of unconscious exhibitionism. But when the dress 'got slightly dirty', Liz only became 'a bit bothered', or unconsciously able to tolerate some loss of the ego ideal.

When the time came for Liz to step out of her dress Liz felt 'freezing cold, I've never been so cold in all my life', indicating that the 'adrenaline rush' no longer kept Liz from feeling cold. Liz linked this feeling cold to a lack of 'a mixture of anticipation and excitement' that Liz's mother had felt on her wedding night. Liz's reason for this was 'because we had a little boy and he was asleep in his cot in the room we were in', 'but again, you do have this sense of the wedding night being special. Perhaps I was more thoughtful about the day, it felt quite strange (Liz07). Having 'had a little boy', can be interpreted as unconscious penis envy having been acted out. Liz also felt 'at the time, almost disappointed actually, because you have such high expectations of your wedding day but nothing can possibly live up to them, a bit of a let down', thus indicating an unconscious loss of the ego ideal.

It can be argued that Liz's choice of a cream dress unconsciously symbolises that Liz had had sexual intercourse before marriage and that the 'coldness' Liz felt indicates a lack of delayed gratification, thus saving 'a mixture of anticipation and excitement' for her wedding night. So when Liz's wedding night was not so 'special', it seems that Liz replaces instinctual libidinal desire with 'thoughtfulness', which 'felt strange' and arguably unexpected. The ideal 'special' wedding night feeling did not happen, thus indicating an unconscious loss of the ego ideal.

Prior to the wedding day Liz states that: 'If Mum had lived closer then I'd probably have asked her to help me choose the dress, the flowers and things like that. The only reason I didn't was that it wasn't practical and as it turned out I didn't feel I particularly needed support. In fact, I was happy doing it on my own (Liz11).

Again, on the wedding day itself, Liz states that: 'After you had dropped dad off, I was on my own briefly. I was expecting you, mum, to come in and say hello and when you didn't, I understood you had gone to the Church. I would have been very happy if you had wanted to have a chat before you had gone' (Liz11). In response to her mother's gesture, Liz states that: 'it didn't matter, I didn't mind, you could have if you'd wanted to...no I wasn't offended' (Liz11).

It seems that Liz rationalises her mother's absence and expresses a desire for a closer relationship with her mother. Arguably, Liz seems to be unconsciously defending against the loss of the mother. It may be noted that Liz's mother's mother was not at her mother's wedding, thus Liz's mother had no first-hand experience to follow, no maternal role model, and thus arguably Liz's mother unconsciously transferred her own wedding day experience onto her daughter, Liz.

Liz states that: 'whether or not it was an Anglican Church wasn't an issue. Mum and dad had brought me up as an Anglican, so if I was going to have a religious ceremony then it would have to be in an Anglican Church. The significance was getting married in Church because I'm a Christian. I see being a Christian as a commitment. The whole point of getting married is through religious ceremony, and a civil ceremony would have seemed pointless. Marriage is about committing to a partner in front of all your

friends and family, a public commitment' (Liz13). My most vivid memory was 'making the vow' (Liz01). 'It's also about evolving relationships (Liz13).

It can be interpreted that Liz consciously or unconsciously identifies with her parents in choosing to marry in an Anglican Church, unconsciously passively complying with her parent's and cultural tradition, of making a 'public commitment', 'through religious ceremony'. On a personal and cultural level Liz 'evolves', or is transformed, publicly from daughter to wife. Arguably Liz is also aware of 'evolving relationships'. That 'through religious ceremony' the family group becomes enlarged by officially accommodating Liz's husband's family, and unconsciously Liz feels safe to make these changes with the assistance of a containing Anglican ceremony, presided over by a Minister. In contrast, arguably the civil ceremony would not have carried the same gravitas, and thus 'would have seemed pointless'.

In describing what it is to feel beautiful Liz states that: 'I didn't think I had a sense of how I looked. In fact, at times it felt quite strange because people were taking photographs of me all the day' (Liz12). It can be interpreted that Liz may have unconsciously felt detached or disembodied, and consequently did not need to be an exhibitionist.

Liz suggests that in contrast to her mother, who wore a veil because it was traditional in 1959, 'I thought the veil was optional. I chose to wear one because I felt a bit shy. In a Church full of people it felt quite overwhelming, so I could hide behind it a little bit. I also wanted to focus on the ceremony and didn't want to be too distracted' (Liz14).

On leaving the Church, after the ceremony, Liz's veil no longer hid her face, Liz states that: 'everywhere I looked there was a sea of faces of people who I knew and cared about, that was smashing, lovely, just this huge support was everywhere' (Liz18). During the time when we were being photographed, Liz states that: 'I found it got a bit intrusive, it seemed to take over, I just wanted it to finish (Liz19).

Linking Liz's statement describing how she felt 'beautiful' (Liz12) and 'supported' (Liz18) with how Liz describes wearing a veil because Liz felt 'shy' (Liz14), we begin to get a sense of how Liz does not seem to be an overt exhibitionist. Perhaps Liz felt confident in her own skin, or did Liz have a sense of feeling detached, but when Liz becomes the main player in the large group Liz feels 'shy, overwhelmed', wants to 'hide' (Liz14) and wants the photography to 'finish' (Liz19). Wanting to 'hide' can be interpreted as unconsciously feeling castrated.

While describing the significance of the Church ceremony, Liz, links this with 'evolving relationships' (Liz13). So, what seems interesting is when Liz describes what she can recall about signing the register, Liz's first reaction is: 'I don't remember'. This directly mimics her mother's response. Liz then states that: 'It won't be the last time I sign my maiden name, I haven't changed my surname, I can't see the point of it' (Liz16).

It can be interpreted, that although Liz was aware of 'evolving relationships', some relationships however Liz seems to resist change and wants some things to remain unchanged. Psychodynamically, this can be interpreted that in retaining her father's surname Liz maintains an identification with the father, thus unconsciously defending against the repudiation of his authority, or publicly signifying by symbolically

submitting to her husband's authority by taking his surname. Wishing to retain her maiden name, or her father's surname, can be interpreted as the daughter's unconscious incestuous desire towards the father. If Liz resists changing her surname it can be interpreted as not only an identification with the father, but also as unconscious castration finding compensation through identification with the phallic father. Having considered three interviews from the 'recent' cohort, let us now consider three interviews from the 'older' cohort.

### **The use of metaphor in an overview reading of Rose's interview**

Becoming aware of metaphors in discourse can convey 'naturally occurring talk' (Madill, 1997), or rhetorical analogies that convey a 'primitive response syndrome' (Brown, 1999:31, in McLeod 2001:102). An American psychological anthropologist, in analysing personality and culture, and focusing on marriage, Naomi Quinn, (1997) suggests that cultural metaphors become indicators of 'widely shared understanding' and claims that these fall under the principal themes of 'gaining motivational force', 'durability', and a constellation that coalesce around 'powerful hopes and expectations about marriage' (Strauss and Quinn, 1997:138). From the hundreds of metaphors for marriage Quinn suggests there are eight overarching themes which represent 'lastingness', 'sharedness', 'mutual benefit', 'compatibility', 'difficulty', 'effort', 'success or failure', and 'risk' (Strauss and Quinn, 1997:142). Let us consider metaphors in Rose's interview.

Rose states that: 'The most vivid memory of my wedding day, over 40 years ago, was on entering the Church and processing down the aisle to the music of 'O Perfect Love', it felt magical, as though everything would be perfect and that the marriage would last forever' (Rose01). Rose states that: 'I was very proud to be on my father's arm that day and to know that my parents were still together and had not divorced' (Rose10). Rose's sense of perfection can be interpreted in terms of her unconscious ego ideal, an idea that she held in front of her, or an expectation that she held for herself following identification with her parents. Rose's ideal of her 'marriage lasting forever', may also be interpreted in a cultural or religious expectation at the time of her wedding and that divorce was socially frowned upon. By Rose using the word 'proud', indicates that pride is an important feeling, thus implying the avoidance of shame. Feeling 'proud to be on my father's arm' indicates that culturally Rose felt she was being seen, by all who

had gathered in the Church, to be doing the right thing, thus this can be interpreted in terms of Rose complying with the collective unconscious.

Rose states that: 'When I had put my wedding dress on, I started worrying, what would my fiancée think about how I looked, and what would other people think about how I looked? (Rose02), and when I looked at myself in the mirror I thought, I looked really good, the bees knees, like I'd never looked before and I'm never going to look like this ever again. All my dreams have come true' (Rose04). Rose also states that: 'My happiest moment was after I had processed into the Church, and my husband-to-be whispered, 'You look lovely, you look beautiful' (Rose22). Afterwards, when we had the photographs, 'I loved having my photograph taken, I was never camera shy, I'd always been told that I was photogenic' (Rose19).

'Bees knees' can be associated with rhyming nonsense, perhaps indicating, in the transference, that Rose readily uses phrases that her parents, siblings, or social group may have used, such as 'the cat's whiskers', to mean excellence and of the highest-quality. In Rose worrying how she looked and how other's would think of how she looked, indicates an unconscious process of the scopophilic instinct associated with exhibitionism. This worrying, may be associated with a lack of self-confidence, or of earlier critical voices. Rose, however, reassures herself by believing she looked 'the bees knees' or perfect, thus indicating an unconscious compensation for feeling worried or castrated. In Rose being able to reassure herself, also indicates an internalised ego strength and therefore Rose does not feel totally castrated.

Rose states that: 'I wanted to be given away, but at the same time it was a struggle to leave my father's protection. I thought I was always going to be his daughter and he was

always going to be my father, so to me “being given away” seemed a funny expression’ (Rose15). The word ‘funny’ seems to imply that Rose felt uncomfortable, thus Rose seems to be expressing a close bond with her father which she wished to retain, thus this can be interpreted in Oedipal terms as unconscious incestuous desire. Rose appears to suggest that she experienced a tension, where, on the one hand, wishing to be ‘given away’, while on the other hand, not wanting to leave her father’s protection, but eternally maintaining a submissive relationship towards her father. This can be interpreted as the ‘special’ father/daughter relationship which becomes acted out in the unconscious tension associated with the repudiation of parental authority.

Rose states that: ‘I was very conscious of that I’d no longer be Miss, I was going to be somebody’s wife and eventually hopefully somebody’s mother’ (Rose07). Rose’s wish indicates an unconscious process of transformation of instinct from an active to a passive position. If we link this with the previous statement in relation to her father, Rose reinforces and maintains a passive position and an unconscious identification with her mother.

Rose states that: ‘My mom was a bit flappy’ (Rose03). ‘As I was putting on my wedding dress I had butterflies in my stomach’ (Rose02). ‘While I was putting on my dress, my father seemed to be taking it all in his stride’, whereas ‘not only was I anxious but everyone else was anxious for me’ (Rose03). These statements can be interpreted that anxiety can become infectious and be transferred into others, indicating that mother’s ‘flappy’ anxiety was converted into Rose’s stomach butterflies. Notably, in contrast, Rose expresses her wish that her relationship with her father continues, father being the phallic, steady person who ‘takes it all in his stride’ (Rose03).

We can see not only metaphor in use in Rose's interview where Rose wishes for perfection and dreams coming true, and the marriage to last forever, but also themes of pride and shame, worry and separation anxiety, identification with mother and a close relationship with father. Let us now consider another method of exploring the data, by looking for what may have been implied.

### **Investigating data by asking ‘what was not said’: an overview of Francis’ interview**

Another way of being sensitive to the narrative is to wonder what could have been said differently, what was not said, and what may be missing from the conversation. Ethnographer, James Spradley notes that people can assume, when telling their story, that the listener ‘already knows’ (Spradley, 1979:314). While generally expecting, in Western culture, that love precedes marriage, contrary to a forced marriage, shotgun marriage, arranged marriage, or marriage of convenience, Francis’ interview seems to offer a discrepant story, as it may imply that she married someone who she did not love.

After reviewing Francis’ interview as a whole, one theme that seemed to emerge was a sense of negative exhibitionism. Francis states that: ‘I wasn’t keen to wear a lavish dress, rather, it was classical and tailored’ (Francis02). This statement may be interpreted as implying that Francis may have felt a sense of guilt, modesty or disempowerment. In Freudian terms, this statement can be interpreted as indicating a sense of castration. Expressed in other words, Francis could have said, ‘I was keen to wear an elegant classic dress which was not over embellished’, which may have implied feeling more empowered.

On the other hand, Francis seems to experience a sense of positive exhibitionism. As Francis states that: ‘When I had put on my wedding dress I realised that I looked pretty good in it, as I’d never worn anything as elegant as that before’ (Francis02). ‘In the Church, I realised that I hadn’t had that kind of attention on my own, I’d never been in the centre of attention like that before. I was now the central player. Previously, I’d always been with my sister, now all these people were smiling at me, and it felt enormously gratifying and very rewarding. Now I was having this for myself’ (Francis18). By Francis stating that she enjoyed being ‘the centre of attention’ can be

interpreted as indicating that at this point Francis enjoyed a sense of legitimate exhibitionism, which implies the opposite of feeling disempowered or castrated. Hence it can be argued that unconscious exhibitionism compensates for castration.

Francis also states that: 'After the ceremony, I like being photographed outside the Church' (Francis19). Although this statement can be interpreted as indicating a sense of exhibitionism, 'being photographed' can also be interpreted, in the transference, as taking Francis back to a childhood memory and reminding Francis of her 'uncle who was an artist and took photographs of her when she was a child' (Francis21).

Another theme that seems to emerge from Francis' interview is that of ambivalence. It may be conjectured that Francis' ambivalence may have its roots in an earlier traumatic experience, as Francis states that: 'My mother had a very difficult time emotionally and had left home at one point' (Francis10). Thus during the Church service when Francis states that: 'I wasn't in a romantic state, and although I took a solemn oath, I thought that I might not manage to keep it all my life' (Francis13), can be interpreted as indicating ambivalence or uncertainty and without any sense of conviction, as if, love for the husband-to-be had not preceded marriage.

Francis states that: 'I had tried to stay a virgin, and this is what I had intended' (Francis05). This statement can be interpreted as indicating that Francis projected an unconscious ego ideal. On the one hand, this statement does not seem to indicate a very strongly held ideal, especially in the light that Francis states: 'technically ... I thought, I felt that I'd lost my virginity, not quite willingly' (Francis05). And further, Francis states that: 'I had sex with my husband-to-be just prior to being 'married to make sure he didn't run away' (Francis05). These statements can now be interpreted, in the

transference, as indicating, that Francis feared that her husband-to-be may run away, like her mother had 'left home at one point' (Francis10). It could be interpreted that Francis compromised her ego ideal of remaining a virgin until after marriage, in favour of a more dominant fear, that of fearing being abandoned.

Francis states that: 'As I processed out of the Church all my family and friends were smiling at me' (Francis18). This statement can be interpreted in terms of Francis feeling idealised by the group. The group of family and friends, representing Francis' social group, showed a collective approval of what Francis had achieved in being married.

Francis states that: 'As I processed out, up the aisle, my veil was up and I felt as though I was the centre of attention, it felt enormously gratifying' (Francis18). 'Feeling beautiful on my wedding day was empowering. There is nowhere in your life that you have waited for so much, especially when I felt as though I have got no power' (Francis12). It seems from these statements that ordinarily Francis felt disempowered, however being given the opportunity to feel beautiful and the centre of so many people's attention became hugely empowering. These statements can be interpreted as indicating that Francis ordinarily unconsciously identified with her castrated mother and felt castrated or disempowered herself. Whereas Francis' exhibitionist instincts seem to have transformed her from feeling castrated, to feeling phallic and empowered on her wedding day. Again, we are arguing that unconscious exhibitionism becomes a compensation for feeling castrated.

Francis states that: 'I didn't want to keep my maiden name. It seemed right to me that I should take my husband's name. I felt pragmatic about it' (Francis17). Francis seems confident and assured when she states: 'I didn't want to keep my maiden name'

(Francis17). In not wishing to keep her maiden name, Francis' statement can be interpreted as indicating the unconscious process of repudiation of parental authority. It is as though Francis felt compliant, with the cultural tradition of the day, as she states that: 'I should take my husband's name'. Francis in stating that she felt 'pragmatic', can suggest that she felt neutral about this matter. Francis may also have felt distant and unconnected when she says 'I felt pragmatic' (Francis17). This statement can be interpreted as indicating that Francis felt compliant, passive and castrated and not driven by the 'romantic state' of falling madly in love.

Francis states that: 'I had been running around with people since I was 16, now I realised that I was 21 and it was time I settled down and get married' (Francis21). Francis' statement, if interpreted in terms of the transformation of instinct, illustrates Francis' desire to make a meaningful contact with somebody since her late adolescence, and now as an adult to make a meaningful contract. However, in stating 'now I realised that I was 21 and it was time I settled down and get married' (Francis21), seems to suggest some uncertainty or ambivalence. This statement could therefore be interpreted that Francis married, in part, to follow the cultural tradition of 'getting married' and in order to safely sever familial ties within a containing publically approved ritual. Having considered two of the three interviews from the 'older' cohort, let us now consider a third general reading before we explore a closer reading of the same interview in order to compare outcomes.

### **Patterns of behaviour during a general reading of Ann's interview**

The overall feeling that emerged during Ann's interview seems to be one of her needing to be in control. During Ann's youth and adult development (Ann13) the Church through its teaching, and also culturally, Ann received strong messages that sex before marriage was wrong (Ann05). Ann's mother also, through her teaching, created an atmosphere at home that sex before marriage was disapproved of (Ann08). Thus through Ann's conscious or unconscious internalisation of what may be considered as good or bad practice, or what may be considered as her avoiding personal or social shame, Ann seems to have passively complied with the social norms of her day.

Being in control of her libidinal desire seems to have been important to Ann. Ann, since becoming engaged did wait, 'I was still a virgin' (Ann05), while at the same time Ann states that: 'I couldn't wait to be married to my husband' (Ann23). As we have already seen above, Ann's physical state of being a virgin seems to be reflected in her conscious or unconscious internalisation of a super-ego, or idealisation of her mother's, society's and the Church's teachings on sexual conduct.

Other aspects of Ann's need to be in control are illustrated as follows: Ann could not control the food at the reception, she said she was rather 'disappointed' (Ann20) because 'my mother could have done that' (Ann20). Ann couldn't control the bridesmaids' dress length as two different people made each of the bridesmaids dresses and Ann remarks 'my mother would have done them as I wanted' (Ann21). These statements seem to suggest that Ann believed that her mother would have controlled these matters better. Thus we can interpret that Ann thinks highly of, or idealises her mother.

Another aspect of Ann's need to be in control is illustrated when Ann wished to control the photographer, when she 'asked him to take a photograph of herself and her mother together' (Ann11). Ann also had a sense of control when she consciously 'did not wait for her father to give her away, but took her husband-to-be's hand as soon as she had processed down the aisle' (Ann23). This dominant need to feel in control suggests that Ann's anxiety, if she did not feel as if she were in control, may be overwhelming. If interpreted in the transference, Ann as an adult, seems to exhibit an infant-like need of omnipotence in the same way as Ann had internalised her mother's omnipotence.

Other aspects of Ann's interview can be interpreted in a similar manner to previously, that: Ann's statement 'I remained a virgin' (Ann05) as 'there was a lot of teaching from the Church and from my mother, not to have sex before marriage' (Ann08) can be interpreted as indicating Ann's conscious or unconscious internalisation of an ego ideal. That, the Church, mother and culturally all idealised virginity in 1969 (Ann08), can be interpreted as indicating the process of personal and collective idealisation. Also when Ann states that: 'My mother could have done that....' Referring to the making the food (Ann20), and making the bridesmaid's dresses the way Ann had wanted (Ann21), can be interpreted as indicating that Ann seems to have idealised her mother and perhaps in an unconscious way expected to be idealised by others.

When Ann states that: 'I think I did look really beautiful, and I felt as though I blossomed being the centre of attention', while that the same time 'there's something slightly illegitimate about being the centre of attention' (Ann12). Also Ann states that: 'I didn't like being veiled because it felt as though I was trapped', 'I wanted everyone to see how radiant I was' (Ann14). Ann's statement seems to contain a paradox. On the one hand Ann seems proud to be the centre of attention, thus this could be interpreted as

a sense of exhibitionism – the need to be seen. On the other hand, however, Ann senses an illegitimacy about demanding attention. It could be argued, therefore, that being the centre of attention although enjoyed was an unfamiliar state, thus in psychoanalytic terms, inferring an enduring sense of castration was more familiar. It can be appreciated that being a bride-in-white on her wedding day is an unfamiliar state, but not necessarily evoking feeling ‘illegitimate’.

When Ann states that: ‘With my strong feminist tendencies’ (Ann15), ‘I didn’t wait to that part of the Church service ‘Who gives this woman...’ I actually let go of my father’s arm as soon as I got to the front of the Church and took my husband-to-be’s hand. I wasn’t waiting to be given away I was choosing to be joined to someone else’ (Ann23). This process, if interpreted as the unconscious repudiation of parental authority, does not appear to hold much anxiety for Ann. As it would be described by Plato, Ann seems to have ‘found her other half’ and was eager to join him. Ann seems to have more than willingly and symbolically turned her back on her parental ties.

Ann states that: ‘I might have wanted to wear a different wedding dress, but I was compliant, quite happy to go along with ‘this is what you did and this is what you’re going to do. I was quite excepting’ (Ann05). It is interesting to consider in the light of the immediate forgoing interpretations that while Ann’s unconscious inferences seem to suggest a need for control, here in this statement Ann uses words such as ‘compliant’ and ‘excepting’ in connection with the colour of her wedding dress. This statement can be interpreted as Ann being ‘passive’ due to social, Church and parental prohibitions and demands, thus again indicating a super-ego censoring in the formation and transformation of Ann’s ideals.

What seems to have been transferred from an earlier period, to Ann's current reported behaviour, thus via unconscious process, seems to have been her mother's need to control. Ann's mother's need to control may be illustrated when Ann states that: 'My mother was very supportive, and very involved and being very much a part of everything that happened' (Ann11). 'My mother had made my dress, made her own outfit, and one of the bridesmaids dresses. My mother had also done a lot of the arranging, and done the Church flowers' (Ann11). As we have already seen, Ann seems to repeat her mother's need to control in that, Ann 'remained a virgin (Ann05), 'did not wait for her father to give her away' (Ann23), and 'I chose to be joined to someone else' (Ann23). Let us pause for a moment in the search for phenomenological themes to consider what has emerged.

### 2.6.6 Analysis, so far...

In adopting the phenomenological method of analysis in Part Two, and implementing this method in the case studies above, what seems to have emerged are that each bride has a unique set of experiences even though all may have been assumed to be a homogenous group, as already discussed in Part Two. In considering emerging themes from the above general readings of the bride-in-white's described experience, it can be argued that twelve themes together with their associated sub-themes are emerging, such as:

One: the importance of the father's role in 'giving the bride-in-white away'.  
Culturally, the father's role can be interpreted anthropologically in terms of the 'patriarchal system of exchange', where the father pays the bride-price or dowry. In religious terms, the father may be endowed with the right and responsibility to ensure that his daughter is in the safe hands of another man.  
Psychodynamically, the adult bride voluntarily chooses to repudiate parental authority, in a similar manner to her experience of severing ties during infancy.

Two: the bride-in-white's pride in 'doing the right thing', as opposed to bringing shame upon herself and the family.  
Culturally, 'doing the right thing' the bride-in-white conforms to cultural traditional ideals.  
Psychodynamically 'doing the right thing' can be interpreted as a personal ego-ideal formed under the pressure of the super-ego and parental and cultural prohibition.

Three: the bride-in-white's contract, saying vows, in the presence of others.  
Culturally, a public legal and binding contract witnessed by family and friends who imply their agreement to the couple's exclusive union.  
In religious terms, vows can be interpreted as a public rite of passage, conducted in a special dedicated place.  
Psychodynamically, the adult contract enunciated by the vows implies offering a sense of security, and enduringness to the relationship: an ego ideal. This may be likened to the implied binding contract the infant projects onto the mother during the infant's dependency.

Four: the importance to the bride-in-white to appear perfect and acceptable.  
Aesthetically, the bride appears youthful, beautiful and perfect.  
Culturally, appearing perfect can be interpreted as being seen as acceptable within one's social group.  
In religious terms, appearing perfect gives respect to the Church and God.  
Psychodynamically, appearing perfectly acceptable can be interpreted as a personal ego-ideal and collective idealisation.

Five: the bride-in-white's central role in the presence of others.

Culturally, the bride may be recognised as a means by which the social group is maintained.

In religious terms, the Church ceremony conveys the bride safely through a rite of passage in the midst of supporting family and friends.

Psychodynamically, being the central player can be interpreted in terms of exhibitionism. In infancy, being the central player, in phantasy, may reflect the interaction of the mother-infant dyad.

Six: the bride-in-white's desire to become Mrs., wife or a mother.

Culturally, and biologically this can be interpreted as a young women's expectation.

In religious terms, the Church ceremony endows the bride with the new status of wife.

Psychodynamically, this change of status can be interpreted in terms of the transformation of instinct from active to passive, through identification with the mother.

Seven: the mother's active role in preparation before and after, but not during the ceremony.

Culturally, mother defers to the father's patriarchal active dominant role.

In religious terms, the woman may be idealised, as the Virgin Mary, but does not take an active part.

Psychodynamically, the castrated mother defers to the phallic father.

Eight: the significance to the bride-in-white of wearing a white wedding dress: it's choice, it's hue, it's wearing, it's getting dirty, and it's later retention.

Culturally, the white dress symbolises conformity to tradition, purity of body, and pureness of intention.

In religious terms, wearing a white dress in Church offers respect to the Church.

Psychodynamically, the white dress symbolises both an individual ego ideal and idealisation in the form of a collective ideal. In the dress's retention by the bride, the dress becomes a transitional object.

Nine: the bride-in-white's physical state of being a virgin.

Culturally, an ideal as in previous generations being a virgin bride ensured legitimacy and rights of inheritance, but less important post-modernity.

In religious terms, being a virgin, represented by Virgin Mary iconography indicates a collective idealisation.

Psychodynamically, being a virgin bride can be interpreted both as a personal ego ideal and collective idealisation, and subject to the internalisation of super-ego prohibitions.

Ten: the bride-in-white's 'special relationship' with the father.

Psychodynamically, this 'special relationship' can be interpreted in Oedipal terms as the adult's regression to the infant's projection of unconscious incestuous desire onto the phallic father.

Eleven: the importance to the bride-in-white of being married in Church and in God's eyes.

Culturally, the bride submits to collective approval, where the group overtly and implicitly give their blessing on the new union, thus reinforcing heteronormativity.

In religious terms, a rite of passage, endows the bride with God's blessing.

Psychodynamically, the bride unconsciously acknowledges an omnipotent other, an adult regression to the infant's projection onto the omnipotent father.

Twelve: the bride-in-white's need to secure a lasting relationship.

Culturally, the couple require a secure lasting relationship in order to offer security to their children and avoid the social stigma of divorce.

In religious terms, the bride's need for a lasting relationship reinforces monogamy. Psychodynamically, the bride's need to secure a lasting relationship can be interpreted as a personal ego ideal, collective idealisation, and as a defence against separation anxiety. In infancy, the need to secure a lasting relationship may be understood as the phantasy of the idealised mother-infant relationship prior to separation, now being reflected in adulthood.

From the above analysis, the principle psychodynamic themes which seem to have emerged, include, from 'one' repudiation; from 'two' ego-ideal and idealisation; from 'three' ego-ideal; from 'four' ego-ideal and idealisation; from 'five' exhibitionism; from 'six' transformation; from 'seven' castration, and the phallic father; from 'eight' ego-ideal and idealisation, and the transitional object; from 'nine' ego-ideal and idealisation, and internalisation of super-ego; from 'ten' the projection of unconscious incestuous desire; from 'eleven' the projection onto the omnipotent other; from 'twelve' the ego ideal and idealisation, and separation anxiety. From this analysis it can be established that the psychodynamic concept of the 'ego-ideal and idealisation' dominate the themes in 'two', 'three', 'four', 'eight', 'nine', and 'twelve'. A second theme, illustrated in 'five', which all brides-in-white will be subject to, during the process of marriage, included in the above is, by wearing a white dress the bride-in-white becomes the 'central player', thus will be an exhibitionist to a certain extent. A third theme, illustrated in 'one', which all brides-in-white enact, during the process of marriage, is 'being given away', thus the concept of repudiation of parental authority is evoked. A fourth theme, illustrated in 'six', which all brides-in-white desire, during the process of marriage, is 'to become a wife', thus the psychodynamic concept of transformation of instinct encompasses this process.

From the above six general overview readings several different and individualised themes seem to emerge:

For Sue, the vows and being together, seem to have been significant themes.

For Sis, the importance of the wedding dress, and the severing of parental ties seem dominant themes.

For Liz, not wearing white, not being a virgin, not changing her surname, were important themes.

For Rose, there was a sense of perfection, where the marriage was to last forever, and her desire to become a mother was significant.

For Francis, being the centre of attention, but with modesty, and wishing to be a virgin, but not quite in reality, emerged as significant themes.

For Ann, there seemed a need to be in control versus the letting go of familial ties, were important themes.

Drawing on the above work and the themes that have begun to emerge, and before concluding which themes dominate, let us review some themes in a quantitative manner by subjecting the whole data to a process of indexing.

## 2.6.7 Data analysis generated by indexing the whole data

Emerging from the above general overview readings there appears to be words, concepts and phrases repeatedly used by different brides. These words may be used implying a common meaning, or may infer different meanings. Strauss and Corbin suggest that word, phrase, sentence or key-words-in-contexts analysis 'can bring into awareness assumptions about what is being said or observed and demonstrate other possible meanings and interpretations' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:92). Let us therefore compare how keywords and phrases used by the participants to describe their experience may have both diffuse and common themes, extracted from the whole data by using an indexing method:

acceptable to each family, 12Ann, 74

beautiful, 'as I put my dress on I felt special and beautiful' 16AnnC02, 104  
beautiful, 'knowing I was special, genuinely loved, I felt as though I glowed' 09Pam12, 49  
beautiful, 'comes from outside qualities as well as inner qualities of feeling special' 02Louise12, 9  
beautiful, 'feeling beautiful is exhilarating, I was the centre of attention' 17Ros12, 115  
beautiful, 'I bought a very beautiful elegant dress and I looked pretty good in it' 11Francis02, 62  
beautiful, 'I don't know about how I looked, I was just happy' 05Liz12, 24  
beautiful, 'I ensured I had a nice dress, but more important was that I felt happy' 15Freesia12, 100  
beautiful, 'I felt a sense of empowerment and feeling special wearing my beautiful dress' 11Francis12, 65  
beautiful, 'I felt like a princess, special' 04Sis12, 17  
beautiful, 'I felt pretty and special' 01Sue12, 5  
beautiful, 'I felt radiant, happy, I felt beautiful from within, happy within, 10Rose12, 58  
beautiful, 'I felt special as someone had asked me to marry them, I'd lost weight, and bought a beautiful dress, I felt special' 16AnnC12, 108  
beautiful, 'I hadn't felt so beautiful in my life' 02Lousie02, 8  
beautiful, 'I looked a beautiful bride when I was dressed in white, I felt proud' 07Elizabeth04, 33  
beautiful, 'I looked good and was proud of myself, I was a different person' 03Lucy12, 12  
beautiful, 'I looked quite good' 01Sue12, 4  
beautiful, 'I never knew that I could look so beautiful' 02Louise03, 8  
beautiful, 'I never thought I could be so beautiful, but I was delighted' 07Elizabeth12, 35  
beautiful, 'I no longer looked so beautiful after I had taken off my dress, that was sad' 12Ann07, 76  
beautiful, 'I think I did look beautiful, radiant, sparkling' 12Ann12, 73  
beautiful, 'It was a beautiful magical day with the spotlight on me' 12Ann19, 75  
beautiful, 'it was beautiful having the photos done with my friends, I felt proud' 03Lucy19, 13  
beautiful, 'it was beautiful to have my M there because I didn't have my dad' 03Lucy11, 12  
beautiful, 'like I'd never done before in my whole life' 02Louise22, 10  
beautiful, 'my friends cried when they saw I looked so beautiful' 06Debbie03, 28  
beautiful, 'my husband thought I was beautiful and everybody looked beautiful and happy' 06Debbie12, 30  
beautiful, 'my mother never knew I could look so beautiful' 02Louise11, 9  
beautiful, 'the crowning moment was when my husband said 'You look beautiful' 10Rose22, 61  
beautiful, 'the white dress is beautiful' 02Louise05, 8  
beautiful, 'we had a beautiful day, I felt happy and blessed' 14Margaret19, 94  
beautiful, 'we had a beautiful day' 14Margaret06, 87  
beautiful, 'wearing the white dress and walking down the aisle, felt beautiful' 03Lucy20, 13  
beautiful, 'wearing the white dress I felt special and beautiful' 04Sis21, 19  
beautiful, 'when my dad said 'You look stunning' I felt close to him' 02Louise10, 9  
beautiful, 'when my F saw me and said how beautiful I looked, I felt grown up' 16AnnC09, 107  
beautiful, 'women look beautiful while men look smart, and people tell you, you look lovely and you feel special' 14Margaret12, 91  
beautiful, 'you probably take more trouble looking your best than on any other occasion' 13Patricia12, 83

beautiful, when I saw myself fully dressed in white, I knew I was beautiful' 02Louise04, 8

being given away brought our two families together, 01Sue15, 6  
being given away by F was as if I was a present, 10Rose15, 59  
being given away by my F felt important, 11Francis, 64  
being given away by my F would have been more emotional, 06Debbie15, 31  
being given away felt frightening, 11Francis, 66  
being given away felt supportive, one family to another, 12Ann, 74  
being given away is nice as you're handed over, 04Sis, 18  
being given away was an act of love, 17Ros, 116  
being given away was emotional, 07Elizabeth, 35  
being given away was sad as F had died, 06Debbie, 30  
being given away was special because F was there, 05Liz, 24  
being given away was upsetting because my F wasn't there, 03Lucy, 12  
being given away, happy mixed with sadness, 02Louise, 10  
being given away, I chose to be given, 12Ann, 78  
being given away, I couldn't wait, 09Pam, 49  
being given away, I felt that I'd already left home, 14Margaret, 92  
being given away, I knew I was doing the right thing, 13Patricia15, 84  
being given away, I'd given myself away before that, 05Liz, 25  
being given away, I'd left home some time before, 16AnnC, 109

centre of attention, 01Sue19, 7  
centre of attention, 06Debbie, 32  
centre of attention, 11Francis, 63  
centre of attention, 09Pam, 46  
centre of attention, 10Rose, 56  
centre of attention, 05Liz18, 25  
centre of attention, 12Ann10, 72  
centre of attention, 12Ann12, 73  
centre of attention, 13Patricia12, 83  
centre of attention, 12Ann, 73  
centre of attention, 16AnnC, 110  
centre of attention, 11Francis, 67  
centre of attention, 02Louise, 10  
centre of attention, 14Margaret, 94  
centre of attention, 17Ros, 115  
centre of attention, 04Sis, 16  
centre of attention, 01Sue, 2

change of surname, 01Sue, 6  
change of surname, 04Sis, 18  
changed surname, 13Patricia16, 84  
changed surname, 12Ann, 75  
changed surname, 16AnnC, 109  
changed surname, 06Debbie, 31  
changed surname, 11Francis, 67  
changed surname, 02Louise, 10  
changed surname, 14Margaret, 93  
changed surname, NOT, 05Liz, 25  
changed surname, 09Pam, 50  
changed surname, 17Ros, 116  
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daughter, no longer, 09Pam20, 50  
defensive concerning sad memories, 13Patricia21, 85

father and daughter, 10Rose15, 59  
father and daughter, 17Ros10, 115

God, married in front of, 01Sue, 5  
God's blessing, 11Francis13, 66  
God's blessing, 08Resaria, 39  
God's blessing, 17Ros, 115  
God's bride, 10Rose, 56

God's eyes, 12Ann, 73  
God's eyes, 06Debbie, 31  
God's eyes, 17Ros, 115  
God's eyes, 10Rose, 56, 58

ideal world, 17Ros01, 112

journey, as exhibitionism, 11Francis, 69

mother and daughter are probably, or more usually closer (than father and daughter).17Ros10, 114  
mother didn't get married in white in the 1920's no 1930's.17Ros22, 118  
mother had a very difficult time emotionally and mentally and, she'd left home at one point, 11Francis, 64  
mother had helped me choose the pattern and the material. 17Ros04, 113  
mother had managed to get the piece of mud out of my dress 13Patricia06, 82  
mother had psychological problems which left me feeling a very insecure person.17Ros10, 115  
mother looked marvellous on the day, and being hospitable 13Patricia11, 83  
mother may have done something, I just cant remember 14Margaret11, 91  
mother never went to church, 11Francis, 65  
mother was born in the 1890s and I am sure women were regarded as inferior to men but my mother was a very strong character she was a much stronger character than my father. 14Margaret16, 93  
mother was only 23 when she got married 12Ann, 79  
mother was practical. Marvellous in doing practical things. If the dress hadn't been right she'd been able to sort that out straight away.13Patricia11, 83  
mother would have done them as I wanted them. 12Ann21, 77  
mother, Because my mother was a very strong character and my father less so and probably I am more like my father than my mother, 14Margaret10, 90  
mother, become somebody's 10Rose07, 57  
mother, did the catering, or at least the catering was got from somewhere but she rushed about and catered. And she was always a good caterer, 11Francis, 65  
mother, didn't play much of a role at all really, [laughter]. She just turned up, 06Debbie11, 30  
mother, had collared my husband-to-be and had said 'Now you will look after her won't you?' 12Ann15, 74  
mother, I had always been with my sister or my mother and it suddenly felt very surprising to be in the car with my father. 11Francis01, 62  
mother, I wanted mum there because I didn't have my dad. 03Lucy11, 12  
mother, I was glad that my mother hadn't cried or been unhappy as any mother would in any formal situation.17Ros20, 117  
mother, I was glad that she approved of my marriage.17Ros11, 115  
mother, I went with my mother to buy my dress 14Margaret04, 86  
mother, I'm glad that my mother said that she would give me away 01Sue11, 4  
mother, If mum had lived closer to me then I'd probably have asked her to come and help me choose the dress, help me choose the flowers 05Liz11, 23  
mother, married in white 16AnnC05, 105  
mother, my mother did have a hard time really because we didn't have a lot of money and she had to make ends meet, so she worked hard. 14Margaret10, 89  
mother, my mother had died before I married. 07Elizabeth11, 34  
mother, my mother helped me to get dressed, 02Louise03, 8  
mother, my mother must have said something because my mother always had to say what she felt, she was lovely, but she'd always have to say what she felt, the sort of person who would stand up and just say, she was very forthright 14Margaret10, 89  
mother, my mother was really pleased, that I was getting married,01Sue03, 2  
mother, my mother wasn't married in white, but in a beige dress with a beige hat 14Margaret05, 86  
mother, my mother would have said that I'd never been camera-shy. 10Rose19, 60  
mother, my mum didn't really play a role, neither of my parents actually... although they paid for the wedding and it became their day, they were never really involved. 09Pam11, 48  
mother, my mum was absolutely fantastic. 04Sis11, 17  
mother, my Saddest memory was that my mother couldn't be there. 15Freesia21, 26  
mother, my saddest memory was that my mother couldn't be there.15Freesia21, 103  
mother, she'd been very supportive, very involved with my dress and one of the bridesmaids dresses. She'd done a lot of arranging 12Ann11, 73  
mother, there was a lot of teaching from my mother who was particular about not having sex before marriage 12Ann08, 72  
mother, was there the whole time. The run up to it, the organisation, in the morning, helping me get ready, even to picking us up in the morning to take us to the airport again. She was there every step of the way.16AnnC11, 108  
mother, was very amusing. A very complex character my mother. 14Margaret10, 90  
mother, was worried. Emotional as well 02Louise11, 9  
mother, when I was younger, and my mother was in hospital suffering from cancer, my youngest sister committed suicide before my mum died. 08Resaria, 40  
mother's role was being supportive of my father14Margaret11, 91

my father and I drove to the church, 13Patricia01, 81

my father and I had a strong bond, 14Margaret10, 90  
my father and I were close, 14Margaret10, 90  
my father and I were more attached, 14Margaret10, 90  
my father and I were on our own, 11Francis01, 62  
my father and I were very close when I was a small child, 14Margaret10, 89  
my father and I were very close, 13Patricia09, 83  
my father and mother hired a horse & carriage, 12Ann01, 71  
my father cried because he was proud of me, 02Louise10, 9  
my father cried, 14Margaret09, 88  
my father did not think of me as his prized possession, 14Margaret15, 92  
my father did what was expected of him, 14Margaret09, 88  
my father gave me away, 10Rose15, 59  
my father gave me away, 14Margaret01, 85  
my father gave me away, 14Margaret09, 88  
my father gave me away, I was emotional, 14Margaret15, 92  
my father gave me away, it meant a lot to me, 05Liz10, 23  
my father had died, 06Debbie10, 30  
my father has always put me on a pedestal, 09Pam10, 48  
my father helped to unveil me, 11Francis14, 66  
my father is really nice and reassuring, 04Sis10, 17  
my father kept his vows, 10Rose10, 58  
my father knew someone, 11Francis20, 68  
my father literally clung to me and wept, 14Margaret21, 95  
my father master-minded the wedding, 13Patricia09, 83  
my father not sitting at the top table was my saddest memory, 06Debbie21, 32  
my father recently died, 01Sue10, 4  
my father rolled up the train, 12Ann19, 76  
my father said you look stunning, I felt really close to him, 02Louise10, 9  
my father spoke to me on the way to the church, 13Patricia09, 82  
my father thought more of me, than I meant to him, 14Margaret09, 89  
my father wanted to know if I was sure I was doing the right thing, 10Rose03, 55  
my father was a bit soft, 14Margaret10, 90  
my father was a remarkable, wonderful man, 13Patricia10, 83  
my father was dying of cancer, 14Margaret01, 85  
my father was in business, 14Margaret10, 89  
my father was in the car, but I can't remember anything else, 15Freesia09, 22  
my father was pleased how I looked, 13Patricia04, 81  
my father was proud to give his only daughter away, 14Margaret09, 89  
my father was supported by my mother, 14Margaret11, 91  
my father was very fond of me, 13Patricia10, 83  
my father was very proud of me, 04Sis10, 17  
my father wasn't awkward, 11Francis09, 64  
my father wasn't well, 12Ann10, 72  
my father would have been proud to give me away, 06Debbie10, 30  
my father wouldn't forgive me if I'd had a child out of wedlock, 09Pam05, 47  
my father, 11Francis01, 62  
my father, at first, was opposed to my marriage, 15Freezia10, 23  
my father, being self conscious with, 11Francis09, 64  
my father, I felt very warm towards him, 11Francis10, 64  
my father, I had a huge amount of affection for, 13Patricia10, 83  
my father, I hoped was proud of me, 10Rose10, 57  
my father, I was very proud to be on his arm, 10Rose10, 58  
my father, if he couldn't give me away, my brother, 14Margaret09, 88  
my father, was a significant figure 11Francis10, 64  
my father's arm I let go as soon as possible, 12Ann, 78  
my father's blessing is bestowed by him giving me away, 08Resaria, 40  
my father's name I was proud to carry, 06Debbie16, 31

my parents exchanged words, 14Margaret10, 89  
my parents were faithful to each other, 14Margaret10, 90  
my parents were very good parents, 13Patricia15, 84

patriarchal, being given from one man to another man, 12Ann, 74  
patriarchal, 11Francis, 66  
patriarchal, given from one man to another, 17Ros, 116

people could see us, 12Ann11, 72  
people everywhere saw me, it was hugely supporting, 05Liz18, 25  
people saw me all day in my dress, 03Lucy20, 14  
people saw me so happy, 07Elizabeth, 38

people saw me, 10Rose16, 60  
people saw me, a sea of faces, 16AnnC18, 109  
people saw me, so many people, 07Elizabeth01, 33  
people saw that I was the bride, 04Sis05, 16

retained/considered retaining maiden name, 11Freesia, 101  
retained/considered retaining maiden name, 09Pam, 49  
retained maiden name, 05Liz, 25

surname changed, 15Freezia, 102

tears as my F had died and couldn't see me dressed in white, 01Sue, 2  
tears as my mum wasn't well, 03Lucy21, 14  
tears associated with F giving me away 10yrs before, 16AnnC, 107  
tears associated with family members who had died, 07Elizabeth, 35  
tears from my sister when she saw me dressed in white, 07Elizabeth, 33  
tears of friends when they saw me dressed in white, 06Debbie03, 28  
tears of happiness from husband when he saw me, 04Sis, 19  
tears of joy from F, 08Resaria, 40  
tears of joy seeing smiley happy faces, 07Elizabeth, 33  
tears thinking about my M being there, 06Debbie, 30

the 'father' at Church was nice, 01Sue13, 5

tradition, 4, 16, 29, 53, 86, 105, 108  
tradition, 16AnnC05, 105  
traditional, 21, 24, 29, 52, 53, 88, 98, 101, 108  
traditional, 01Sue, 2  
traditional, 09Pam05, 47  
traditional, 17Ros22, 118  
traditional, 17Ros, 113  
traditionally, 114

transitional object, 09Pam06, 47  
transitional object, 16AnnC, 111  
transitional object, 06Debbie, 29  
transitional object, 15Freesia, 21, 98  
transitional object, 13Patricia, 82  
transitional object, 04Sis, 15

usually, a wedding can be likened to a scene from *Sense and Sensibility*, 12Ann, 77  
usually, the bride hangs onto her father, 12Ann, 78

veil, As soon as I got my dress on and hair done and veil and once you get your dress on I thought, Oh my God! I'm actually going to get married.

Veil, 01Sue03, 2

veil

As soon as I got my dress on and hair done and veil and once you get your dress on I thought, Oh my God! I'm actually going to get married. 01Sue04, 2

I didn't want one at all. And my mum said 'Oh you got to, got to, got to', so I had one. In a way it helped me going up the aisle because I had a bit of a shield, you know, from everybody staring at me, but I didn't really like it too much. 01Sue14, 5

veil, A church wedding, would have assumed that a veil was worn. 13Patricia05, 82

veil, Although I didn't wear the veil right over my face the veil felt like a bit of a protective shield around me, because I was worried about standing at the front and getting very, very nervous and very hot and flustered. 04Sis14, 18

veil, As I'd gone down the aisle veiled, as I said, it was like walking through mist 10Rose16, 60

veil, Because I wasn't veiled and I was facing the people and they could all see me. 12nn17, 75

veil, even though there were over a hundred people behind, because you had your backs to them and because of the veil. It felt like there was a protective shield there, and there were just three of you, and that was nice as well and we knew the vicar. 04Sis22, 19

veil, I associated wearing a veil with purity. 06Debbie14, 31

veil, I didn't wear a veil of course, like I had the first time; I just wore some flowers on my hair. 17Rose02, 113

veil, I didn't wear my veil over my face 09Pam14, 49

veil, I don't think that I liked being veiled. 12Ann14, 74

veil, I had a very simple head sort of veil thing and head dress a circle of flowers and very simple. 11Francis03, 62

veil, I liked being veiled. I really enjoyed being veiled. 11Francis14, 66

veil, I sort of stuck my veil on in the car (*laughter*), hoping it wouldn't fall off and dad said it looked ok. 05Liz12, 24

veil, I thought the veil was optional, I chose to wear one I think because I felt a bit shy, in a church full of people, that was quite overwhelming. 05Liz14, 24

veil, My Cousin had very deft fingers and she got it and the veil on my head and...13Patricia02, 81  
veil, my daughter and I were having this discussion about the significance of veils and I think in her service the vicar referred to the necessity to pull the veil back to ensure *[laughter]* that the true person was behind it *[laughter]*.13Patricia14, 83  
veil, my hair had all been done. My veil had been put on 10Rose04, 56  
veil, My veil was up and I felt such the centre of attention 11Francis18, 67  
veil, No, I didn't have a veil. I had a tiara. 03Lucy14, 12  
veil, No, I didn't wear a veil. 07Elizabeth14, 35  
veil, The first time, I thought it was slightly ludicrous and outdated. But then it was the custom or the fashion so I went along with it. 17Rose14, 116  
veil, the veil was over the front of the face. 10Rose14, 59  
veil, walking down the aisle with the veil on – it was a bit of a security actually, because you can hide behind your veil (*laughter*). I don't know, again it is something that I did because it was tradition 16AnnC14, 108  
veil, wearing a veil was a traditional 15Freesia14, 101  
veil, with the veil and the tiara and... It was amazing, with all my make up on and I just loved it. 06Debbie02, 28  
veil, with, the white dress, the veil and nice shoes. 16AnnC04, 105  
veil, You don't try it on all together really, the veil, the tiara until the morning of the wedding day. 06Debbie04, 28  
veil, You had a veil and a headdress you wore your veil over your face when you arrived in church and it was a full length dress it came very close to the neck line and all the way down to the ground. 14Margaret05, 87  
veil: It felt really nice under the veil. I felt that I was underneath the veil so that no-one could see my face, or my hair. I felt really special. 02Louise20, 9

virgin, I was not, 06Debbie, 29  
virgin, I was not, 17Ros22, 118  
virgin, I was not, 16AnnC, 106  
virgin, I was not, 07Elizabeth, 34  
virgin, I was not, 11Francis, 63  
virgin, I was, 09Pam05, 47  
virgin, I was, 12Ann, 72

vivid memory, being left at home with my dad and leaving his security, 09Pam01, 46  
vivid memory, being overwhelmed that my parents had remembered my wish for a horse and carriage, 12Ann01, 71  
vivid memory, being with my father on my own, 11Francis01, 62  
vivid memory, disbelief about actually getting married, 02Louise01, 7  
vivid memory, driving to the church with my father, 13Patricia01, 81  
vivid memory, everybody looking at me, 06Debbie01, 28  
vivid memory, everybody smiling, 04Sis01, 14  
vivid memory, making the vows, 05Liz01, 20  
vivid memory, my dad seeing me in my wedding dress, 16AnnC01, 104  
vivid memory, my father being able to give me away, 14Margaret01, 85  
vivid memory, seeing everybody, I was happy, 07Elizabeth01, 33  
vivid memory, the car not turning up, 17Ros01, 112  
vivid memory, this was going to be perfect and last forever, 10Rose01, 55  
vivid memory, vows in church, 01Sue01, 1  
vivid memory, when the rings went on, 03Lucy01, 11

vows liked to marrying in church, 13Patricia13, 83  
vows taken seriously, 10Rose07, 57  
vows, are the most important, 08Resaria, 42  
vows, as life-long + before God, 17Ros, 115  
vows, happiest memory, 17Ros22, 117  
vows, happiest memory, 09Pam, 51  
vows, linked to marrying in church, 06Debbie02, 28  
vows, made by husband, 16AnnC, 109  
vows, most vivid memory, 01Sue01, 1  
vows, most vivid memory, 16AnnC, 104  
vows, most vivid memory, 05Liz, 97  
vows, ok without 'obey' 14Margaret, 93

white dress best dress, 17Ros, 113  
white dress feels special, 01Sue, 2  
white dress felt beautiful, 02Louise, 8  
white dress felt beautiful, 03Lucy, 13  
white dress linked with dreams, 17Ros, 114  
white dress linked with purity, 17Ros02, 113  
white dress linked with purity, 12Ann, 72  
white dress linked with purity, 07Elizabeth, 34  
white dress, linked with virginity, 17Ros08, 113  
white dress, I looked good in it and it was traditional, 17Ros05, 113  
white dress, looked lovely, 02Louise01, 7

white dress, brides always wear white in Church, 04Sis05, 16  
 white dress, as a little girl I dreamed, 04Sis04, 15  
 white dress, the colour white doesn't suit me, so I wore cream, 05Liz05, 21  
 white dress, felt lovely, 06Debbie02, 28  
 white dress, I felt special, 02Louise08, 56  
 white dress, I always dreamed, 16AnnC05, 105  
 white dress, I don't remember looking at myself fully dressed in white, 09Pam04, 46  
 white dress, when I saw myself fully dressed in white it was as if all my dreams had come true, it was a magical feeling, 10Rose04, 56  
 white dress, I felt beautiful, 08Resaria, 41  
 white dress, As I was putting on my wedding dress I felt emotional, 03Lucy02, 11  
 white dress, I felt special, 8, 11, 46  
 white dress, I wouldn't have married in cream, because it was important to be married in white and in Church, 09Pam04, 46  
 white dress, I'd never worn a white dress before, 02Louise05, 8  
 white dress, I've always dreamed of being married in white, 03Lucy05, 11  
 white dress, likened to anniversaries, 10Rose02, 55  
 white dress, linked to being a virgin and marrying in Church, 09Pam05, 47  
 white dress, linked to Church, 09Pam05, 47  
 white dress, linked to marrying in Church, 13Patricia05, 82  
 white dress, linked to purity and marrying in Church, 10Rose02, 55  
 white dress, linked with happiness, 17Ros21, 117  
 white dress, linked with purity, 63, 82  
 white dress, linked with purity, 17Ros22, 118  
 white dress, as I put on my white wedding dress I never knew I could look so beautiful, 02Louise02, 8  
 white dress, my mother married in white, 16AnnC05, 105  
 white dress, not worn often, 16AnnC04, 105  
 white dress, pure colour, 10Rose05, 56  
 white dress, seemed to be extravagant, 14Margaret05, 87  
 white dress, traditional 14Margaret09, 88  
 white dress, traditional, 01Sue05, 2  
 white dress, worn in Church, 06Debbie05, 29  
  
 white dress, not represents purity, 01Sue08, 3  
 white, no link between white and purity, 02Louise08, 8  
 white dress, you can't wear if you're pregnant, 03Lucy09, 11  
 white dress, not linked to purity, 16AnnC08, 106  
  
 wife, I became, I liked that, 16AnnC, 111  
 wife, I was going to be somebody's 09Pam02, 46  
 wife, I was going to be somebody's 09Pam17, 50  
 wife, I was going to be somebody's 09Pam20, 50  
 wife, I was going to be somebody's 09Pam22, 51  
 wife, I was going to be somebody's 10Rose07, 57  
 wife, I was going to be somebody's 16AnnC, 111

Words, themes and sub-themes most frequently used in the same or in different contexts

are identified from a word analysis of the whole of the data, the following words or concepts most frequently used in order of usage are, with frequency in brackets:

father (58); white dress (46); mother (44); beautiful (38); veil (30); being given away (19); centre of attention (17); vivid memory (16); surname changed (14); vows (12); tears (10); God (9); saw me (8); tradition (8); wife (7); virgin (7); retaining wedding dress (6); patriarchal (3); parents (3); cream dress (3); retained maiden name (3); father and daughter (2); the Minister (1).

From this analysis, if we compare these themes with the twelve themes cited earlier, we can see that many of the themes emerge again. Arguably, we may conjecture the following themes. First, this seems to reflect the importance of the father's role, first in his relationship to his daughter, and second in giving the bride away. This may encompass the father's patriarchal right and the bride's separation or repudiation of parental authority. Second, the importance of the 'white dress' may reflect the significance of both a personal ego ideal and collective idealisation, and a means by which the daughter/bride becomes transformed into a wife, through an unconscious process of exhibitionism and illustrated by being the 'centre of attention'. Third, the significance of the supportive mother's role, may psychodynamically indicate the bride's identification with the 'castrated' mother. Again, these themes encompass four principle themes of repudiation, ego ideal and idealisation, transformation and exhibitionism.

### **2.6.8 Data, analysis and the emergence of overarching themes**

After general overview reading six interviews, as a-typical profiles, as the interviews appear to expand on the themes under investigation, the next stage was to submit the data to phenomenological thematic concepts. The concepts are subsequently sorted into categories. Each concept leads to the pertinent data, and linking the semi-structured question are the participants who originated the data. This process involves the separating and amalgamating of some data groupings, and the occasional alteration of themes, until each theme is satisfactory, reflecting only the data. The next task was to examine the relationship between these themes and then sort them into overarching themes, under the core category of the subject's dynamic 'felt' experience, within the ritual process of marriage. Marriage per say, however, not being the main focus under investigation, but forms a contextual frame within which the bride's experiences are investigated with the principle aim of elucidating indications of unconscious processes.

Let us examine how overarching themes are established in practice. Having completed the sorting of themes, as suggested by the questions asked during the interview, the next step is to consider each theme in turn and compare the data with psychoanalytic theory. The purpose of this process is to find support for statements made by the participants, and conversely to give additional weight to theoretical points discovered in the literature. Additionally, it is possible that ideas already put forward might be developed, or even that completely novel material may emerge. At this point the data, globally or individually, is not being analysed.

Initially, some themes are anticipated, for instance during the formulation of the open-ended questionnaire that provides the structure of the interview. For example: investigating whether the participant may link the wearing of a white dress with a sense

of purity, or asking the participant to speak about their relationship with their father, or wishing to explore any significance to them of marrying in Church. There were also questions that probed the participant's happiest and saddest memories, as well as views concerning being seen, speaking the vows, and disrobing.

Immediately, after Pam's interview, for example relating to question five, which concerned why Pam chose to wear a white dress, my initial notes were as follows:

There seems to be a strong connection in Pam's mind between getting married in Church and wearing a white dress. And by wearing a white dress Pam gave her father pleasure and pride and gave herself pride while simultaneously avoiding shame and guilt.

Later when I had listened to the interview again, I wrote some notes, as follows:

**Q5. Pam: Why you chose to wear white**

The style of the wedding had to be white  
I think it's supposed to be a virgin to be wearing a [chuckle] white dress in those days  
not true white wedding  
lot of pressure put on me not to do anything wrong, to be a very good girl  
father would never forgive me if the same... if I had had a child out of wedlock  
father wouldn't have been able to give me away in a traditional style  
give my dad that pleasure of giving me away as a bride  
that a little girl grows up to see that this is what happens on your wedding day  
important that I got married in church, more so than what I actually wore

**Researcher's interpretation**

imperative to be white  
white signified a virgin  
being not a virgin, to wear white in church, was lying about your virgin status  
parental pressure to uphold family high moral standard  
unforgiving father, bringing shame to him and the family  
father's pride was at stake, upholding tradition  
empathy towards father's feelings  
pride in herself that she had given pleasure to her father  
childhood dreams becoming fulfilled  
white was a part of making a true wedding

Recognising that much of the investigation may be considered as pre-empting the spontaneity of the research, initially through the composition of original questions, there was also a gradual process of considering how the responses may be later analysed. Having examined Pam's response, to question five, for example, and comparing my notes with psychoanalytic theory, as this project is exploring the possible connections between conscious decisions and unconscious motivations, I chose to make the overarching theme that was most pertinent, but also wide ranging and that seemed to best fit this topic. Pam's responses to this topic include avoiding shame by 'upholding high moral standards', evoking both her father's and her own pride, and the symbolic need to link the wearing of white to a 'true' wedding, and the imperative of being a virgin, all point towards the Freudian concepts of a personal ego ideal and collective idealisation. This psychoanalytic concept can be seen as being both very personal, and also wide ranging, as all the participants, in principal, wore a white dress.

The process of searching for appropriate overarching phenomenological themes continued to proceed in the following manner. The researcher noticed that much of the bride's time, while she wears a white dress, is taken up in moving from one place to another and being overtly seen. Fourteen of the seventeen participants (82%) expressed their feelings concerning being the 'centre of attention', for example 01Sue:

During the interview with Sue I became aware that this bride's father had recently died. However, as we discussed how she felt wearing a white wedding dress her face lit up and she was delighted to talk of the experience.

**Sue05's response to why she chose a white dress**

It's traditional to wear white.

Wearing white makes you feel special, slightly embarrassed.

Everyone is looking at you.

But it's nice and lovely.

### **Researcher's interpretation**

An importance of adhering to tradition.

'Special' feels like you're the centre of attention, grabbing the limelight, demanding attention.

Maybe, there is a need to be seen and adored, despite feeling embarrassed.

Thus, a pertinent psychoanalytic concept that appeared to fit globally for all the participants seemed to be that of exhibitionism. Although this concept was chosen, it may be emphasised that the researcher did not fully understand its psychological implications at the outset.

As already mentioned, feelings of loss were evident from the outset of the interviewing process. Loss, as understood in terms of mourning the death of a significant other, seems not directly to be under current investigation in this project, however it may become an integral part. Some degree of loss, however, was clearly experienced by all seventeen participants, (100%), when they are publically 'given away'. Thus, some psychoanalytic concept was necessary to apply to this subtle process of a 'living loss', which could embrace both the father's loss and the bride's deliberate choice to leave, as for example Francis' response to being given away:

### **Researcher's initial observations:**

This person appears to have experienced a lot of losses during her life

Powerful relationship with father

### **Francis15 response to being given away**

a warm close relationship with her father

bride being honoured by father's right to give his daughter away

frightened due to a change of circumstances

first time leaving parental security

almost felt like being pushed away

finality

### **Researcher's interpretation**

daughter's close relationship with father

afraid, uncertain, insecure,

feelings of rejection, yet not rejection

not returning home as daughter, not the same status

Although ‘repudiation’ is not considered as a classical Freudian psychoanalytic concept by Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) or in this context, the idea of repudiation seems to make a best general fit leaving room for each participant to express their separate view.

While being a bride, arguably there are many changes that are undertaken. One aspect of being a bride may be understood as changing from daughter to wife and potentially into being a mother, as illustrated by Rose07’s response to thoughts associated with stepping out of her wedding dress:

**Researcher’s initial impressions:**

This interview seemed chaotic, as there was so much data.

**Rose07’s response emphasises:**

She would never be seen like this again.

Vows were taken seriously.

I’d no longer be Miss, but now wife and later mother.

Sad at loosing part of my identity, but happy being half of something else.

Wedding dress could be cut down for a Christening.

**Researcher’s initial interpretation:**

Being seen seems to be important.

Taking her vows seriously.

Changing roles from daughter, to wife, to mother.

Change of identity incurring both sadness and happiness.

The capacity to bear loss.

A close connection between weddings and christenings, intergenerational continuity.

Other changes often include a change of surname, a change of status, and a change of family structure. As this project focuses on potential unconscious change, the psychoanalytic concept of ‘transformation’ was considered as being pertinent and global to this investigation as this may throw new light onto the manner in which these changes are experienced and incorporated.

Emerging from the above process of identifying themes, the following four overarching psychoanalytic concepts came to prominence:

*Ego-Ideal and Idealisation*  
*Exhibitionism*

*Repudiation*  
*Transformation*

The structure of this discussion will now proceed based on the four principle overarching themes listed above. In each case I have nominated to explore the respective psychoanalytic theme primarily from a Freudian perspective, adding other relevant or contrasting opinions, followed by a brief summary based on Ann's interview in order to frame the investigation, as all the interviews will be analysed together in Part Four. As psychoanalytic concepts embrace an understanding of human development from infancy to adulthood an emphasis on the Freudian stages of oral, anal and phallic and mental processes described by Freud as dynamic, economic and topographical will be utilised. The psychoanalytic approach is favoured above other approaches as it enables links to be made between the adult's narrative and unconscious processes, that is, feelings that have often been repressed and now appear to put pressure on the instincts to seek satisfaction. The psychodynamic approach also facilitates connections to be made between the subject's inner representations and outer realities of unconscious relationship dynamics. Let us now consider Ann's interview using a closer reading of the data, in the form of a trial analysis, testing the four principle psychoanalytic concepts which have been chosen.

### **Interview with Ann – a closer reading and trial analysis**

Having completed the sorting of themes, the next step is to consider each theme in turn and compare the data with the theory. The purpose of this process is to find support for statements made by the participants, and conversely to give additional weight to theoretical points discovered in the literature. Additionally, it is possible that ideas already put forward might be developed, or even that completely novel material may emerge. At this point the data, globally or individually, is not being analysed.

By free floating attention some cultural themes that may be found in the participant's narrative may include: the importance of being a virgin on the wedding day; the bride's feeling accepted by the husband's family; the bride's feeling that she is acceptable by her husband; the importance of marrying in Church, the significance of wearing a white dress; feeling beautiful. Emanating from psychoanalytic theory, the themes that may emerge include: the mother's role; the father's role; bride's relationship with mother; bride's relationship with father; the bride's sense of being passive and accepting; would penis envy be detected in the data?

Having argued, in Part Two, that the semi-structured questionnaire is apposite to be an interviewing frame, let us now consider how the collected narrative may be usefully understood within this system by doing a micro-reading of Ann's interview which has been subjected to the 'elimination of irrelevant repetition', (step four of the phenomenological protocol), by 'magnifying, amplifying and paying special attention to the detail', (seventh principle of the phenomenological protocol), of the four overarching themes as a 'trial analysis'.

### **Applying concepts in practice**

Having initially explored in Part One, and more closely in this Appendix D the four principle psychoanalytic concepts that may be applied to the bride's experience let us examine how these concepts can be interpreted in Ann's data.

Let us consider the psychoanalytic concepts of ego ideal and idealisation, exhibitionism, repudiation, and transformation, as discussed above and in Part One, with Ann's statements in order to illustrate how the different concepts may be interpreted. The selection of Ann's interview is not intended to be a representative voice, but was selected because of the comprehensive content of the answers. Let us first examine the concept of the ego-ideal and how it may be understood in its five elements. First, Ann's own narcissistic idealisation can be seen when she states. 'certainly [I] had talked about becoming a bride quite a lot. I'm sure it was a phantasy from years before'. I believed, 'it was my destiny' as 'my parents had a very good marriage and so I'd got a wonderful role model to follow'<sup>94</sup>. For Ann, the sense of being an ideal object, in Freud's terms, the idealisation of the ego-libido, appears to last the whole day, as she says: as I stepped out of my wedding dress 'I did think it made me look quite beautiful'<sup>95</sup>. Ann's sense of herself being an ideal object seems to be all pervading as she reflects on her sense of being beautiful, and desiring everything about herself to be perfect without spot or blemish. Being aesthetically and visually beautiful also translates into body image, as Ann says: 'I had lost quite a lot of weight' and my 'height and slimness were accentuated...but looking at myself immediately having dressed' the image I portrayed I thought 'its gorgeous, lovely, I looked good'<sup>96</sup>. As Ann, continuing to reflect upon her own bodily and sexual ideal state speaks about why she chose to wear white: I knew 'I was still a virgin and I'd never had sex with anybody' and I knew 'virgins wore

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<sup>94</sup> Question 18: dreaming about becoming a bride.

<sup>95</sup> Question 21: stepping out of my wedding dress.

<sup>96</sup> Question 4: when I saw myself fully dressed.

white'<sup>97</sup>. Ann now appears to associate appearance with feelings, as she links, it 'wasn't an unknown feeling', with 'stepping out onto the stage with all the lights on, being the centre of attention. I felt it was a blossoming feeling. I enjoyed sparkling, glowing, feeling radiant and beautiful'<sup>98</sup>. Ann also appears 'very concerned' when her father rolled up her train, exclaiming 'it was pristine...when it started off'<sup>99</sup>, alluding to a need to remain in a perfect state. Ann's sense of perfection is reinforced when she says: I remember as I signed the register being 'anxious that I wasn't going to make a blot with the pen and anxious about getting it right'<sup>100</sup>.

Second, Ann's interview illustrates a dichotomy and polarisation of the ideal when she uses words like 'irritation' towards the people assisting her to dress<sup>101</sup> 'disappointed' with herself<sup>102</sup> 'anxious', 'apprehensive', 'terrified' as she described her own feelings<sup>103</sup> 'trapped', 'uncomfortable' as she considered being veiled while walking down the aisle<sup>104</sup>; 'out of control' while being photographed<sup>105</sup> 'concerned' about her state of perfection<sup>106</sup> 'sad', 'spoilt' as she considered her degree of beauty<sup>107</sup>.

Third, Ann's identification with her parents, and in particular her mother's ideal, can be seen as she considers the connection between white and purity. Ann's states that this 'was quite strong within my family...there was a lot of teaching from my mother...about not having sex before marriage'<sup>108</sup>. This also illustrates Ann's identification with the ideals and social norms of the day. Ann's identification with a

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<sup>97</sup> Question 5: why I chose to wear white.

<sup>98</sup> Question 9: feeling beautiful.

<sup>99</sup> Question 19: Dress becoming dirty.

<sup>100</sup> Question 14: as you signed the register.

<sup>101</sup> Question 3: people assisting you to dress.

<sup>102</sup> Question 4: seeing yourself dressed.

<sup>103</sup> Question 7: travelling to the church.

<sup>104</sup> Question 11: being veiled.

<sup>105</sup> Question 17: being photographed.

<sup>106</sup> Question 19: dress becoming dirty.

<sup>107</sup> Question 22: saddest memory.

<sup>108</sup> Question 6: white and purity.

collective ideal is illustrated in her statement: ‘within my Church, which was my spiritual home, there was, a strong culture, virgins wore white and that’s what I did...[I had] very strongly held Christian beliefs, I was still a virgin...I’d never had sex with anybody’<sup>109</sup>. Arguably, the notions of ‘God’, ‘spiritual home’, and ‘Christian beliefs’ represent collective ideals with which Ann identifies.

Idealisation also embraces parental and authority representations whose ‘qualities are elevated towards the point of perfection’, and their introjective identification ‘contributes to the formation and elaboration of the subject’s so-called ideal agencies’ (Laplanche and Pontalis, (1973:202). This appears to be illustrated when Ann says: ‘I was quite overwhelmed’ to ‘realise my father and mother had’ taken notice of my ‘off the cuff remark’ and ‘hired a horse and carriage to take me to the Church’ ‘and they had actually done this for me’<sup>110</sup>. Ann speaks of her parents and the Church in an idealised manner when she, as already cited, states: ‘within my family there was quite a strong teaching from my mother and the Church about not having sex before marriage’<sup>111</sup>. Ann again refers to her parents in an idealised way when she says that ‘my parents had a very good marriage and so I’d got a wonderful role model to follow’<sup>112</sup>. Ann also appears to take her mother as an idealised object when she says that ‘my mother was incredibly supportive, involved with my dress, did a lot of the arranging, made her own outfit, arranged the Church flowers, so I wanted her to be very much part and included in the day’<sup>113</sup>.

Fourth, idealisation, as Freud posits, notably in the sphere of love is ‘the sexual overvaluation of an object’ (SE14:94), and for Klein idealisation aims at ‘unlimited

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<sup>109</sup> Question 5: wearing a white dress.

<sup>110</sup> Question 1: most vivid memory.

<sup>111</sup> Question 6: connection between white and purity.

<sup>112</sup> Question 18: dreaming of becoming a bride.

<sup>113</sup> Question 8: the role your mother played.

gratification' (M. Klein, 1946:7). In this study, the independent non-incestuous object of the husband appears to be idealised, as Ann recalls: 'I was delighted to [walk] down the aisle to join him...and to [actively take] my husband-to-be's hand'. Ann adds that my 'happiest memory of the day was actually in the landau with my husband...[and being] on view to the whole hospital'<sup>114</sup>. 'I was delighted with him, with the day and with everything'.

Fifth, we can hear Ann's sadness when she experiences less than her anticipated ideal, when she remarks that 'we had spent ages with the hotel about the food we were going to have' and I ended up 'slightly disappointed' because 'when I actually saw it I thought no: my mum could have done that'<sup>115</sup>. Ann's own sense of herself, appearing less than the ideal object, appears challenged when she reflects upon being photographed: there was a leaf on my train, 'I wanted to bend down and take it off but the photographer wouldn't take it off', I felt 'out of control', 'very uncomfortable', even though 'it was a beautiful', 'magical', 'blue sky', 'warm', 'wonderful' day<sup>116</sup>. And again, Ann says: I wished 'that my mother had made [both bridesmaids dresses], because my mother would have done them as I wanted them'<sup>117</sup>.

Arguably, the mechanism of idealisation and its overvaluation of the object appears to compensate, bridge the gap, or become a defence for the Freudian lost narcissism and sense of control, for the Kleinian 'bad breast', and for Wollheim's 'anxiety'. In other words, it appears striking that, Ann found it necessary through idealisation, to some degree, to endow or overvalue many facets throughout the whole interview, arguably as a defence against the symbolic enactment of separation in order to transform frustration

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<sup>114</sup> Question 23: happiest memory.

<sup>115</sup> Question 20: wedding reception.

<sup>116</sup> Question 17: being photographed.

<sup>117</sup> Question 22: the saddest memory.

into something tolerable. Let us now consider from a psychodynamic perspective why the woman, and particularly the bride-in-white, may have a need to be seen.

Let us consider how these elements of exhibitionism may be reflected in Ann's responses. We may see in Ann's interview how she understands the effect of exhibitionism when she states: My mother and father...had listened to my 'off the cuff remark...years before' and on 'seeing the horse and carriage...I was amazed and quite overwhelmed'<sup>118</sup>. As Ann embraces the opportunity to be on show, Ann appears not to need to put her anxieties into others, by 'teasing' and arousing excitement in the other, when she says: I 'didn't want to be hidden' I 'wanted everybody to see how radiant I was'<sup>119</sup>. Ann seems to find her sense of identity in the collective other, as she says 'I was delighted...I was on view to everybody...I wanted to be seen'<sup>120</sup>. Ann's sense of her own beauty seems to embrace her whole person as she says, I felt 'illegitimate about being the centre of attention' but realised 'this is my day and this is ok', hence her sense of legitimacy and identity was confirmed by her feeling 'really beautiful' and 'enjoying being the centre of attention'<sup>121</sup>. Let us now examine the infant girl's need to repudiate the mother's love in favour of the father before she repudiates both parents' authority in preparation for a relationship with the non-incestuous other.

Let us now consider how a series of repudiations, can be applied in practice and interpreted, by taking the same sequence as already explored in Part One and applying them to Ann's statements. Ann's interview illustrates how repudiation is used as a mechanism. First, Ann's statement 'I wanted [my mother] to be included in the day'<sup>122</sup>, may appear out of context, until we consider that the infant girl is required to repudiate

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<sup>118</sup> Question 1: Most vivid memory.

<sup>119</sup> Question 11: Being veiled.

<sup>120</sup> Question 7: Travelling to the Church.

<sup>121</sup> Question 9: Feeling beautiful.

<sup>122</sup> Question 8: the role mother played.

her love for her mother as a prior requisite for her psychic turning away from the mother in favour of the father. Arguably, Ann's repressed guilt, and therefore unconscious, in the form of the infant's repudiation of the mother's love, seems to return in an adult form as a compensation. Second, her father facilitates his daughter's repudiation of parental authority when he visually and symbolically 'gives her away'. The bride proclaims her repudiation when she takes her vows; signs the register; and acknowledges her husband. In Ann's interview she did not refer to the significance of taking the vows, but only to the 'huge significance of Christian marriage'<sup>123</sup>. Third, Ann by saying 'I was probably quite happy to just go along with 'this is what you did...' and 'so I think I was quite accepting'<sup>124</sup>, appears to express a 'passive attitude' and therefore not in any way repudiating her femininity. Ann acknowledges that her and her husband are harnessed together as she says to him 'of course you can [have a ride] in the landau'<sup>125</sup>. Arguably, Ann repudiates her parent's authority, through enactment, enunciation, and concretely by signing her maiden name for the last time, and in her acknowledgement of a new authority. Again thirdly, Ann preferred to understand that she was not to be 'treated as the property of one man to be given to another', but to be transferred 'out of the protection of one family to another person [because of] 'my feminist tendencies'<sup>126</sup>. Ann appears to be expressing her 'spirited' independence, separate from men. Fifth, Ann is clearly not repudiating men out of fear. Sixth, Ann, when recalling her feelings of being beautiful Ann stated emphatically, 'Yes, I actually think that I looked really beautiful'<sup>127</sup>, appears to embrace her narcissistic feelings towards her femininity, self-esteem and confidence in the world ahead. Let us now explore the various vicissitudes of transformation that the infant girl has to accomplish in her development on her way to becoming a bride.

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<sup>123</sup> Question 10: significance of the Anglican Church service.

<sup>124</sup> Question 5: feelings about wearing a white dress.

<sup>125</sup> Question 15: processing down the aisle + Question 23: happiest memory.

<sup>126</sup> Question 12: being given away.

<sup>127</sup> Question 9: about feeling beautiful.

Let us return to Ann's statements to see how these states of transformation may be understood. Ann's interview illustrates the transformation of the sexual instinct in the following ways. First, in the transformation of an idea into affect, Ann illustrates this abundantly as she uses the words to describe her feelings of being 'overwhelmed'<sup>128</sup>, 'irritation'<sup>129</sup>, 'disappointment'<sup>130</sup>, 'terrified', 'excitement' and 'embarrassment'<sup>131</sup>, 'uncomfortable'<sup>132</sup>, 'anxious'<sup>133</sup>, 'delighted and thrilled'<sup>134</sup>, 'irritated'<sup>135</sup>, 'disappointed'<sup>136</sup>, 'sad'<sup>137</sup>, 'spoilt'<sup>138</sup>. Second, the transformation of scopophilia into exhibitionism may be illustrated when Ann states: 'I enjoyed being in the limelight...sparkling, blossoming, glowing, radiant, and being the centre of attention'<sup>139</sup>. Third, the tension of the transformation of sadism into masochism or activity into passivity can be understood when Ann describes herself as having 'feminist tendencies'<sup>140</sup> but contrasts this by saying: 'I was very compliant...accepting'<sup>141</sup>, and 'this is what my destiny was'<sup>142</sup>. Fourth, the intense attachment to her mother in the transformation of love into disappointment may be illustrated when Ann says 'my mum could have done that'<sup>143</sup>, and 'my mother would have done them as I wanted'<sup>144</sup>. Fifth, the transformation of loving into being loved is seen when Ann states 'my mother was concerned that he would look after me and love me, this felt supportive'<sup>145</sup>, and 'the

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<sup>128</sup> Question 1 + 2: most vivid, + putting on her dress.

<sup>129</sup> Question 3: assisted to dress.

<sup>130</sup> Question 4: seeing yourself dressed.

<sup>131</sup> Question 7: travelling to the church.

<sup>132</sup> Question 11: being veiled.

<sup>133</sup> Question 14: signing the register.

<sup>134</sup> Question 15: processing down aisle.

<sup>135</sup> Question 17: being photographed.

<sup>136</sup> Question 20: entering reception.

<sup>137</sup> Question 21: stepping out of dress.

<sup>138</sup> Question 22: saddest memory.

<sup>139</sup> Question 9: about feeling beautiful.

<sup>140</sup> Question 12: being given away.

<sup>141</sup> Question 5: choosing a white dress.

<sup>142</sup> Question 18: dreaming about becoming a bride.

<sup>143</sup> Question 20: wedding reception.

<sup>144</sup> Question 22: saddest memory.

<sup>145</sup> Question 12: being given away.

happiest memory was being with my husband and we were on view'<sup>146</sup>. Sixth, transformation at puberty involves feeling both attractive and sensual, this may be illustrated when Ann saw herself fully dressed 'I thought that I looked gorgeous, lovely, good'<sup>147</sup>; 'I felt as though I was blossoming, sparkling, glowing, radiant, yes, I looked really beautiful'<sup>148</sup>; 'I think [the dress] made me look quite beautiful'<sup>149</sup>.

The above closer reading of Ann's interview, conveys how with careful selection of the participant's statements, the overarching themes are convincingly substantiated. This exploration does not attempt to be exhaustive of every different method of analysis, but offers a sufficient number of methods to be persuasive. In summary: emerging from the phenomenological research method the following four overarching psychoanalytic concepts are established: *Ego Ideal and Idealisation*; *Exhibitionism*; *Repudiation*; and *Transformation*.

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<sup>146</sup> Question 23: happiest memory.

<sup>147</sup> Question 4: being fully dressed.

<sup>148</sup> Question 9: feeling beautiful.

<sup>149</sup> Question 21: stepping out of the dress.

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## APPENDIX E

### Whole interview and interpretation

#### 1. Interview and interpretation - Sue

As mentioned in Part Two, in an attempt to guard against the researcher's interpretation bias of fitting the theory to the statements and fitting the statements to the theory, further psychoanalytic 'case study' interpretations are explored in Appendix E. I would like to introduce an interview conducted with Sue, a 'recent' bride.

My most vivid memory was saying our vows in a church. Speaking to all your friends and family that we're going to be together. I find speaking out loud in front of everybody embarrassing. But saying our vows means that we are going to be together, and are significant because you're making a promise to each other. I don't usually promise anything, I try my best. But a vow is a promise that you're going to try and keep. I think that when you're married you've got to try and work at the relationship instead of saying, "I'll give up if anything goes wrong". **01Sue01**

As I was putting on my white wedding dress my mum asked me if she could help. When I looked at myself in the mirror I thought, 'wow' this looks really special. It's a special day and I thought I chose the right dress. When I walked down the stairs, everyone was really impressed with what I chose and what I looked like, which was really nice. For me, I wanted the dress to be plain but special, so I chose one that sparkled gold and silver around the top and the bottom. It wasn't a modern dress but it was the first dress I saw. I tried on lots of other dresses before returning to this one. **01Sue02**

My mother was the person assisting me to dress. She was really pleased and excited, that I was getting married, that I looked nice, that everything was just right and we were both happy. You've done your make-up, your hair and put the veil on and that's when, you think, it doesn't seem real 'til you put on the dress. Initially, I didn't feel nervous, or that anything was different. But as soon as I got my dress on and hair done and veil I thought, Oh my God! I'm actually going to get married. It hits you then. **01Sue03**

When I saw myself fully dressed I thought, I wished my dad, who had passed away, could see me now. He would have been so proud of me. So as I looked at myself in the mirror I shed TEARS... Sorry. *TEARS...*, I just closed my eyes and thought of my dad standing next to me. *TEARS...* **01Sue04**

I chose to wear a white dress because I thought it's traditional and white makes me look brown (*laughter*). When I went into the shop, you see purple and gold dresses, but I thought, it's a wedding, and I think you feel more special in a white dress. That's how it should be really. 'Special', to me, feels like you're the centre of attention. It's your day, everyone's thinking about you and nobody else is wearing a big white dress. The bridesmaids had gold dresses, so they blended in.

It's nice to be the centre of attention (*laughter*). Initially I was embarrassed, well everyone's looking at you. But when you get comments like, 'Oh you look really nice', it's lovely. **01Sue05**

Yes, I was concerned about my dress becoming dirty because someone spilt a whole glass of red wine down the front of my dress (*laughter*). I thought, oh, no, what am I going to do? I've just got here. Help! Luckily the groom's mum poured a whole bottle of white wine down the dress and it vanished. I was so relieved. My heart sank when I saw the stain, and my face was burning, but when it vanished I just didn't care any more. It was gone, now I could carry on with the rest of the day. The dress had quite a big train and I thought that I'm going to leave it out for everyone to see. I wasn't really worried about the dress becoming dirty round the hem as I thought I am going to wear it once, and I'm not going to wear it again, and so if it gets a bit dirty it doesn't really matter. You pay all that money for a nice dress you want to show it off (*laughter*). **01Sue06**

As I stepped out of my wedding dress I thought, it's over. All the planning and organising that you've done just for one day, and you take your dress off and that's over, but obviously you have your memories. This new situation is going to take a bit of getting used to. (*In a whisper*): I shouldn't be saying that really, should I? I'm 'Mrs.' Mm... I'm 'Mrs...', which is really nice, because you feel more together. More... you come together, it's a nice feeling. 'Coming together', for me means that you're always going to be there for one another, which we would have been anyway, even if we weren't married. But I think it's more, showing everybody that you're committing yourselves to one another. We hadn't been going out for very long before we were engaged. And I think quite a lot of people found that quite strange. As the groom said in his speech, we knew from the start that we were meant to be together, which was true, and I think that we will always be together. That was it, that we we're together forever (*laughter*). **01Sue07**

I don't really make a connection between white and purity because for me the white dress doesn't really relate to purity. I don't think it does because you are a person inside, and you might not be good, but you could still wear a white dress. I don't think it matters. My friend got married in August and she wore a white dress and they are not now together. They were together three months after their wedding and it wasn't... well he wasn't really that committed when they married. But they still went ahead with it. So, to me, you could have cheated on your husband to be and still wear a white dress. Society's changed a lot, hasn't it? **01Sue08**

Travelling to the church wasn't a very long distance [*laughter*] but as I thought about it, what really hits you is, I'm really going to get married, and the butterflies started and my heart was pounding, that was quite a nice feeling to get excited about. Because the last few months have been quite sad for me, and the excitement again, it was brilliant, and an uplift to me. It was sad in the same way because my dad wasn't there but, and that you know it was exciting and it was good. **01Sue09**

*This question was not asked because we already knew that Sue's father had died.*  
**01Sue10**

I'm glad my mother gave me away, as she thought I would ask my brother. Oh, not me! I thought, she's next in line from my dad. She brought me up; she'd seen me grow into the person I am; she made me that person, so to me it was very special that she gave me

away. Even though my brother is special to me. My mum helped to organise everything. She said, don't worry I'll sort it. She made sure that I didn't have anything to worry about. She said: "have a good day and enjoy it", which was nice. **01Sue11**

I don't know about feeling 'beautiful', but, I did think I looked quite good [*laughter*]. Because all the planning and for the hair, I wanted everything just so and ... well, I was quite concerned with my own make up. I had someone to come and do my make-up but was not sure I liked it, so I fiddled and fiddled with it. I thought I can do it better myself. And looking at the photos I'm glad I did. I'd prepared myself for weeks, having this beauty plan for my face and spray tan to match..., and my nails done. So you do feel special. And everyone says how nice you look, and you think I do look quite nice. One of my friends said: "it's a fairy tale wedding, you look lovely, everything's perfect", which was a very nice thing to say. Although the friends' comments made you feel pretty and special, my fiancé said: "you look lovely", as long as he thinks you look nice [*laughter*], you don't care about... well I'd like everybody's comments, but that's the main thing... **01Sue12**

There wasn't any significance of the Anglican Church service, to be honest, because I am a Catholic. My fiancé hasn't got a religion, he hasn't been christened either. I don't practice as a Catholic, so we went along to one of the services at our local Anglican church and found it was quite formal but nice. The 'Father' who married us didn't mind that we weren't from the church. He was grateful that we were going to get married in Church in front of God. This was particularly important now that dad has passed away, because I felt that he was there for me and if I'd got married in a register office, or whatever..., I think you think they are going to be there more. I don't know if that sounds silly but.., that's how I felt. **01Sue13**

I didn't like being veiled to be honest [*laughter*]. I didn't want one at all. But mum said 'Oh you got to, got to, got to', so I did. In a way it helped me going up the aisle because I had a bit of a shield from everybody staring at me, but I didn't really like it. I don't think it made me feel special. I did take it off at the reception [*laughter*]. **01Sue14:**

It was nice being given away because it brought his family and my family together. My mum said to my fiancée, 'here she is', and my fiancée's parents did the same for him. I thought that was lovely, there was joining, we weren't just a couple we had our two families supporting us. That was nice. And when the respective parents and the minister joined our hands together, I thought that was very nice. **01Sue15**

As I signed the register I felt that I was no longer a 'P' [*laughter*] my surname had changed, which felt a bit strange. It was as if you were signing yourself to one-another. **01Sue16**

Changing my surname was quite sad really. Now I don't sign my old surname. As a twin we were always known as the 'P' twins, and we are no longer the 'P' twins because, I've got a different surname. So we both have different surnames, which is quite strange. We were always known together, and now we're not together all the time, because we now live in separate houses, it's quite strange. It feels as if we are a long way away emotionally, even though she's five minutes down the road. We've lived together for nineteen years and haven't been apart from one another except for school and we'd always go out together. **01Sue17**

As I processed down the aisle on leaving the church it felt ‘phew’, we’ve done it now. I was embarrassed and shaking when we were saying our vows but once we came down, whuu..., we can go and enjoy the rest of our day together with everybody and celebrate with our families.

It wasn’t that I was embarrassed at making the vows, rather, I was embarrassed about talking loudly in front of a lot of people. We hadn’t practiced what we had to say, out loud. So I was just nervous that I was going to get it wrong, rather than embarrassed.

**01Sue18**

Because it was windy and cold we did the photography inside. At first I couldn’t relax, partly because I felt self-conscious as I don’t like showing my teeth. You hope that you’re smiling looks natural. Although I felt the centre of attention, everybody at that point was joining together in that attention as well. So they felt that they were special as well. **01Sue19**

When everybody had sat down I entered the wedding reception and was clapped in. It felt like both families saying ‘welcome to our family’. That was nice. **01Sue20**

My saddest memory was my dad not being there to share the day in person. That was the hardest thing. **01Sue21**

There’s quite a few happy memories about being a bride-in-white. Coming into the church, processing down the aisle—both coming in and walking out, going to the reception. And having a husband after, that’s a really nice feeling. **01Sue22**

### **A psychodynamic interpretation**

We learn from Sue’s interview that Sue had a twin sister. Yet Sue suggests that she was prepared to be separated from, change her surname, and now live separately from her twin after nineteen years (01Sue17), and be welcomed into a new family (01Sue20). Sue suggests that she now wants to work at the new relationship (01Sue01), at a time after Sue’s dad had died (01Sue04). Because Sue wished to become ‘Mrs.’ (01Sue07), this indicates a transformation of instinct away from a mother attachment to a father idealisation. Because being married felt ‘that you’re always going to be there for one another’ (01Sue07), and because Sue and her husband-to-be ‘knew from the start that they were meant to be together’ (01Sue07), and Sue reinforced her belief that ‘we will always be together forever’ (01Sue07), may indicate that Sue did not have any difficulty in repudiating parental authority.

Although we do not learn the exact chronological sequence of events regarding Sue's father's death, Sue's subsequent engagement and marriage, we may conjecture on Sue's transferring a strong anaclitic leaning from a father attachment to a husband attachment. We learn that Sue's most vivid memory concerns 'saying the vows in Church' (01Sue01), which Sue connects with feeling close to her now deceased father (01Sue13), being 'welcomed into a family' (01Sue20), 'having a husband' (01Sue22), and that they were 'going to be together... try to keep it going... and not give up on the relationship' (01Sue01). These sentiments indicate Sue's ability to envisage an anaclitic attachment, containing compromise.

That although Sue expresses a wish to feel beautiful, and have 'everything perfect' (01Sue12), Sue also speaks in terms of 'looking quite good', and 'looking quite nice' (01Sue12), 'pretty and special' (01Sue12), Sue does not appear to overemphasise her narcissism. This seems to be illustrated when Sue refers to her wearing her white wedding dress; that although Sue felt 'special' and 'the centre of everyone's attention', for Sue 'its nice' and rather 'embarrassing' (01Sue05). It could also be suggested that Sue indicates a rather self-effacing characteristic when she says 'although I felt the centre of attention, everyone everybody was joining together in that attention as well' (01Sue19), indicating that Sue was not overly exhibitionist or narcissistic.

## 2. Interview and interpretation - Rose

Let us now consider an interview conducted with Rose who recalls her wedding day experience from over ten years previously.

The most vivid memory of my wedding day was entering the Church and seeing all the guests and my husband-to-be standing at the bottom, turning round looking at me coming down the aisle. I was aware of the music we had chosen which, instead of going down to the 'Here Comes The Bride', was 'Oh Perfect Love'. That was the most magical moment because it was what my dreams and hopes were, that this was going to be perfect and would last forever. **10Rose01**

As I was putting on my wedding dress it felt as though I had butterflies in my stomach. I was concerned, would my fiancée like the style of dress I'd chosen? Would he think the same as me? In 1961 there wasn't really a choice, other than white. White was chosen as being significant in church, with its association with confirmation, as it represented purity. When I'd put my dress on I thought I looked the 'bees knees', but would everybody else think that? I also realised that symbolically I was going to give up my single identity. By going to church I was going to come out a married woman, which would change my whole life. **10Rose02**

A friend of my husband's made my wedding dress and she was there on the day to help me dress. I hoped that I would do it justice, because of all the hard work she put into it. I was the only daughter and the first to get married, so mum was a bit flappy, and was saying 'calm down', because every bride's a bit butterfly'i aren't they? My father seemed to be taking it all in his stride. He was more interested in whether I was sure: 'was I doing the right thing?' He said I still had time to change my mind [*laughter*]. There was a general feeling of anxiety. I suppose mum thought I was 'right' for him. The two bridesmaids were excited about how they and I looked. Mum offered me a glass of sherry while the dress-maker was concerned I didn't spill it down her lovely [*laughter*] work. There was also a feeling of joy throughout the household. **10Rose03**

When I saw myself fully dressed in white I thought that I looked really good: the 'bees knees'. I wondered, is this really me? My hair had been done and veil was on, and the dress was sticking out like a meringue. I felt like a fairy on the top of a Christmas tree [*laughter*]. I thought, everyone's going to be looking at me and I look and feel really good. I realised that I'd never looked like this before. It was quite magical really. I wasn't trying on an ordinary dress. I thought this is going to be a one-off, a very special day, in a special dress. It was as if all my dreams had come true, now I look like other brides. It's a very magical feeling. **10Rose04**

I chose to wear a white dress because it symbolised everything about getting married in Church. It was the only colour to wear. At Sunday school anniversaries little girls were always dressed in white. White seemed to be the colour chosen by God, a very pure colour. White hadn't been dyed, is a very natural, pure colour, and symbolises purity. You were saying you were pure, in the eyes of God. Other churches use the expression 'Bride's of God' when you commit yourself to church life in Communion. **10Rose05**

I didn't think that my dress got very dirty because we didn't have wet weather. But as the dress dragged on the floor at the back I was very anxious that I should change out of

it as soon as possible, because I wasn't sure whether I was going to keep it in tissue paper as an heir-loom, or if I had a daughter she might wear it, or the material might be used for a Christening robe, or be worn again for somebody else's wedding where again there would be happiness. **10Rose06**

As I stepped out of my white wedding dress I thought that I'd never be wearing another dress again like this. As I took those vows it was a very conscious decision that I'd no longer be 'Miss', I was going into something where I would now be somebody's wife and hopefully somebody's mother. It felt as though I'd lost part of my identity, because I'd united. I was not one any longer, but half of something else. So, quite sad really. **10Rose07**

I associate purity with being unspoilt, unmarred, untouched and saved. **10Rose08**

While I was travelling to the church I felt as if butterflies were in the stomach. It was a big life-changing thing. I knew that once I had taken my vows I didn't want to ever break them. It was an awful lot to take on board. You were now going to be committed to one man, wholly and entirely. It was going to last a life-time. I was hoping that I was going to keep my vows. I took this very seriously, but who knows what life is going to bring. And how was I going to feel if one day I did want to break my vows and perhaps go off, have an affair, get divorced, not look after my husband if he was sick. 'Vow' is a very big word. It means you are going to do what you said and you're not going to let anything stop you. It's a very big commitment in life. Also, would my husband keep his vows? What if he didn't keep them? It's an awful commitment. So I felt very serious on the way to church, thinking it's not a bit of fun. You're not going to be able to change your mind tomorrow. This is a big thing you're going into. **10Rose09**

I hoped my father would feel proud of the way I looked. He would have liked to think that everybody was looking at me, thinking that I was looking good, and I had chosen the right person and was happy with that choice. Perhaps he was looking forward to another generation, as I was his eldest child. I was very proud to have a father who had kept his vows, and been married a very long time. He looked smart in his suit. I felt very proud of being on my father's arm that day. He'd brought me up for twenty-one years and now he was going to give me away to a man that he'd hoped would look after me, the same as he'd looked after me. I hoped I could follow in his footsteps, so that he'd be as proud of me as I was of him. **10Rose10**

I was very conscious that both my parents were together, and hadn't divorced. It was a very nice feeling to have both sets of parents there to see what was probably the biggest day of your life, and for them to witness the changing from being an individual to becoming half of something, and united. I was very proud that my mum looked very smart in her suit and hat. And proud of what my parents had done for me. **10Rose11**

I think a bride feels beautiful and radiant because you're happy within. It's what little girl's dream of from when they are very little, being like a princess [*laughter*]. **10Rose12**

I'd always been a church-goer from very young. I trained as a Sunday-School teacher and been confirmed in the Anglican church. So for me getting married in church was right because I wanted to get married in the eyes of God. Although God is present everywhere the church is God's house. To have been married in a register office without the hymns 'Oh Perfect Love', I don't think I would have felt married. It wasn't for the

confetti throwing or the pomp and glory, it was for the actual church service to feel married, in the eyes of God. To have sung the hymns we wanted; ‘Oh Perfect Love’, ‘Love Divine’, and ‘The Lord’s prayer’, were all very significant to me. My husband had been a church-goer, and an altar boy, so church played a significant part for us both.

**10Rose13**

When the veil was over the front of the face it felt rather funny. So there was a sense of relief when I reached the end of the church aisle and the vicar put the veil back. It was like coming out of a fog, then you could see clearly again. **10Rose14**

I thought ‘being given away’ was an odd, strange choice of words. It’s like being thought of like a gift. It’s as if this is why they dress you up in all this finery as they are giving you away as a present. I was still going to be my father’s daughter, things wouldn’t change, and he would still be my father so why do they use the words ‘Give Away’, as though you’re a piece of property, more so than flesh and blood. I didn’t feel that my father was getting rid of me. I thought we’d still be father and daughter as we’d always been before I got married. **10Rose15**

As I signed the register I felt as though I’d lost a little bit of identity. I was no longer going to be ‘Miss’, but be ‘Mrs’, half of a couple. You know, are you going to be a half and not a whole now? It felt very strange to be writing a different name after twenty-one years and all of a sudden you’ve lost that old surname. I’d got a new identity. How would old friends find me now because I’d got a new surname? **10Rose16**

I found the new surname was a much shorter [*laughter*] than my maiden name. I wouldn’t have to tell people how to spell it any more. During the years of growing up I’d been teased. Now I’d probably get some different ribbing [*laughter*]. **10Rose17**

As I’d processed down the aisle veiled, like walking through mist, on the way back you could actually look and pick out all the people. Oh, there’s Aunty, and there’s my friend. Checking up on the guest list, in a way [*laughter*]. Seeing a sea of faces you hadn’t seen for years. And also people who weren’t guests had turned up to see you get married. As you processed out of the church, I felt I’m a married woman, [*laughter*]. Life’s going to change. I’m going to have somebody else to think about. It won’t be, what do I fancy for tea, rather, what does he fancy for tea? **10Rose18**

My mother would probably say: “she really enjoyed being photographed because, she’d never been camera-shy and if she thought that she looked good, they would get a good photograph. Both my husband and I had belonged to a photographic club, so the wedding photographs were taken by a friend. So I was very comfortable in front of him. I certainly wasn’t camera-shy. So being photographed didn’t bother me at all. The more photographs the better. The photographic club had always said that I was photogenic. I could have been photographed all day; posed, unposed, or natural. **10Rose19**

On entering the wedding reception I thought how nice the hall looked, the tables, laden with food was done by friends of my mother’s. Because I was twenty-one the day before I got married, my mother had provided a birthday cake as a surprise. I thought I was going to have a three-tier wedding cake and wondered why there was an odd tier on the side. The lady’s had put little black outfits with white pinny’s on. They all looked very professional. I was very pleased with the effort that everybody had made. And I hoped that all the guests were going to enjoy it. **10Rose20**

My saddest memory was when it was all over and the group played 'The Last Waltz'. It had all gone very quickly and smoothly. I would like to go back, and do it all over again. It didn't seem to last long enough. Everybody had enjoyed themselves. But saying good-bye to aunts and uncles that you didn't see very often was sad. It's also sad that it takes something like this to get everybody together as we can so easily lose touch. Sad because all this effort, all the tables had been cleared, and the balloons burst. Sad that it was all over, but mixed with happiness as well at how nice everything had been, and happiness that you're going onto a new phase of life, a new life, a different life. A mixture of sadness and happiness really. **10Rose21**

My happiest memory about being a bride-in-white was, as I stood at the front, having processed down the aisle, my husband-to-be whispered out of the corner of his mouth [*whispered*] 'you look beautiful'. That would have to be the crowning moment. **10Rose22**

### **A psychoanalytic interpretation**

From learning that Rose, after putting on her white wedding dress felt like the 'bees knees' (10Rose04), was the 'only daughter', so perhaps felt that she had been treated specially, and had 'never been camera shy', we find an indication of narcissism, exhibitionism and not fearing castration.

Rose's interview indicates that Rose's projects a narcissistic romantic dream onto her new relationship which Rose hopes will be endowed with 'Perfect Love' (01Rose01). However, Rose by being concerned that she will now have to compromise her narcissism by becoming 'half of something else' (10Rose07), indicates that she is prepared to sacrifice part of her narcissism for an anaclitic attachment.

We learn from Rose's interview that Rose's mother was a bit 'flappy' and how there was a heightened sense of anxiety, but also of joy, throughout the house while Rose was putting on her wedding dress (10Rose03). In contrast to Rose's mother's anxiety, Rose's father seemed to be a different character, 'taking it all in his stride' (10Rose03).

We sense that Rose was in a dream-like state influenced by the phantasy of 'Perfect Love', the ideal of wearing a white dress which represents purity, and looking like the 'bees knees'. In contrast to this idealised state we learn of Rose's serious side. For Rose, the 'vow is a very big word, a big commitment' (10Rose09), and that through identification with her parents, Rose wished her new relationship to stay together and not divorce (10Rose11).

We also find in Rose's interview, a sense of a struggle to leave home. It seems as if Rose resists the repudiation of parental authority when Rose indicates that she felt strange being given away because she 'was still going to be her father's daughter and things wouldn't change' (10Rose15). This indicates that Rose seems very attached to her father and wishes his influence over to continue.

From Rose's interview we gain a glimpse of Rose's family situation. Rose being 'the only daughter' and 'the first to get married' (10Rose03) and Rose felt 'anxious' (10Rose03).

Mother was experienced as 'flappy' (10Rose03) but thought Rose 'was doing the right thing', while father was experienced as 'taking it all in his stride' (10Rose03) but father seemed concerned, 'was Rose doing the right thing?' (10Rose03).

We don't learn that Rose's mother helped to choose Rose's dress (10Rose05), help Rose to dress on her wedding day (10Rose03), or to assist Rose taking her dress off (10Rose07). It seems as though Rose at this point in her life was relatively independent from parental dependency. What seemed to concern Rose in these matters was principally her husband-to-be's and others' response. Rose states 'I hoped that my

husband's friend thought I was doing the dress justice '10 Rose03). 'I was concerned, with my fiancé likes the style of dress I've chosen (10Rose02).

Mother was experienced as approving Rose's choice of husband (10Rose03), while Rose's father checked that Rose felt comfortable with her choice of a husband (10Rose03).

### **Idealisation**

Throughout Rose's interview we can detect indications that Rose idealised her wedding day experience. Rose uses phrases such as, 'we chose the music to Oh Perfect Love' (10 Rose01) for me to enter the Church. After dressing Rose thought that she looked 'the bees knees' (10Rose02) and (10Rose04). When Rose chose her white wedding dress because it was a colour chosen by God (10Rose05) and 'associates purity with being unspoiled' (10Rose08), her first reaction to the idea that address could have become dirty was of denial; 'I don't think my dress got very dirty' (10Rose06), and anyway 'I was anxious to change out of it as soon as possible' and perhaps 'keep it as an heirloom' (10Rose06).

### 3. Interview and interpretation – Francis

I would now like to introduce an interview conducted with Francis who recalls her wedding day experience from over ten years previously.

My most vivid memory was being with my father on my own in the car while travelling to the wedding because I realised I hadn't been to any important occasions with my father on my own before. I had always been with my sister or my mother and it suddenly felt very surprising. Also I didn't know what to say to him because I felt self-conscious. **11Francis01**

I bought my wedding dress in a bit of a haze. I didn't want it to be lavish. It was tailored to my body, straight down, a full-length dress to the ground with long sleeves. I thought it was elegant and beautiful, and as I hadn't worn anything as elegant as that before I realised that I looked pretty good in it. It was classical in any era. So when I put my white wedding dress on in the shop, I thought it would do. Until I put it on I couldn't envisage myself in it. **11Francis02**

I didn't have much assistance putting on my dress. My sister helped, but it was a simple dress, being tailored. I had a simple veil, and the head-dress was a circle of flowers, nothing fussy. Once I put it on it just did the thing. **11Francis03**

Once I saw myself fully dressed I was eager for it to happen. I felt transformed into something very special. I did something very strange. I had my long hair cut really short about a month before I got married. It was a terrible struggle sticking the head-gear on to this short, sort of, boyish hair. I knew that my hair shouldn't have been cut [*laughter*]. I realised that my short hair did well because I was playing a lot of sport, but it wasn't the kind of hair that went with the dress, a bit too boyish. **11Francis04**

I chose to wear a white wedding dress because I was a virgin. The question of virginity was a big one, because people in the 1960's would have quite a sensual relationship, but as long as they hadn't had penetration they were a virgin. So I thought the virginal marriage was one where you hadn't touched each other too much or had had penetration. But in some senses the whole thing about who was and who wasn't a virgin was in question.

I hadn't intended to have full sex before marriage. I'd tried to stay a virgin, but was not quite. So there was a paradox. I didn't feel that I wasn't a virgin. About two weeks before we married we had a row. The way we made up was my husband-to-be insisted we had sex, which I wasn't keen to do as I was a virgin. So I really had the sex to get married, and to make sure that he didn't run away. Technically I felt that I'd lost my virginity, but not willingly. As it was a bit of a mistake, I decided that I was a virgin, but I wasn't quite. I felt that the white dress was important because that was what I was intending, but at the same time there was a bit of cheating going on. **11Francis05**

My white dress didn't become dirty in my view. I wore it just for that day and we didn't go out into the garden, so it remained pristine. We came out of the Church and straight indoors because it was cold. **11Francis06**

The difficulty about changing out of my wedding dress was that the whole thing didn't last long enough because I felt so good in my wedding dress, having all the attention the whole day. I hadn't had that kind of attention on my own before as I had always been with my sister and others around me if it was a special occasion. I hadn't been the centre of attention like that before and it was very rewarding. So I felt very sad that I hadn't worn it long enough. **11Francis07**

I had learnt that if you didn't get married in white, in the 1960's, the tendency was there was a question about your virginity. I was also in the church choir so there was a kind of religious question there... robed in white, so white and purity went hand in hand. **11Francis08**

While travelling to the church I felt I was in a very unusual place, a bit estranged, like not sure what was happening. I felt self-conscious being with my father because I didn't know how you talked about your own wedding. I had always talked about other people's weddings. There's no conversation because you're in a transition space. You've left the family home and everybody else has got there, and there you are waiting in a place where you're neither at home..., neither married or unmarried at that [*laughter*] stage, but in your dress. You're half-way. That's why I went silent because I didn't know what... It wasn't that my father was awkward. He was a careful gentle man. He might have said something about something, but I was in a different space. I was about to get married. **11Francis09**

I felt warm towards my father and honoured by his right to give me away. It seemed very important to be going down the aisle and be given to my husband by him. I felt he'd looked after us, particularly as my mother had a very difficult time emotionally and mentally, and had left home at one point. So father was a significant figure and now he was giving the job to somebody else. There seemed a lot of gravitas, very powerful. **11Francis10**

Mother's role was to supervise the catering. Mother bought in the catering from people who catered for weddings at home. My concerns were for her, because if they hadn't provided the right things she would have been upset because she could get tense about catering, and I hoped that she could feel supported by the catering.

I didn't have feelings about mother in the Church at all, because I was engaged in the process, of going up the aisle, being given to my husband, and what I should do next. I knew the vicar and the choir so I was so engaged with the church. My mother never went to church. I had sung in the choir at other people's weddings, now the choir was there for me and that was powerful. **11Francis11**

I think feeling beautiful... it's the dress that made the difference, the solemn aspect of the occasion, and you're the central player. There's no way in your life that you have waited for so much. At that age when you haven't got power the dress makes a sense of empowerment, feeling very special, and feeling very beautiful. **11Francis12**

As far as the Anglican Church service was concerned, although I sang in the church choir, my own beliefs were rather mixed. On one hand I felt very spiritual, while on the other hand feeling quite flexible. So I was unsure about the relationship between God and marriage because men married people. I could see the sense of a blessing, but I saw marriage as a social event acknowledged in law. I think I was quite sophisticated in my view of marriage then because I had seen lots of people get married. So, for me, it

wasn't a transcendent experience of meeting God and being blessed by God. I thought of it in terms of a solemn oath, which I did think I might not be able to keep all my life. I'm saying the vow now but will I live up to the promise? I had a sense I might not be able to live up to the promises I was making. So I wasn't in a romantic state, rather in a questioning state of mind. Like, what am I doing? **11Francis13**

I really appreciated being veiled because it was unusual and it gave me some privacy. I think that was one of the nicest parts. There's something very containing about being veiled. It felt as though while I was veiled I couldn't belong to anybody. **11Francis14**

I felt frightened about being given away because it seemed a huge change of gear. It seemed conventional, leaving my parental home for the first time after twenty-one years, getting married, being given away, then living in my new home. I felt anxious leaving home, where I knew people, and wondered what to do with my husband-to-be who was virtually a stranger, who I hadn't been with for more than a day and hadn't stayed with him overnight. So as I took my dress off I felt reluctant because I wanted to stay at home a bit longer, but realized that I couldn't. I wasn't being pushed [*laughter*] away really, but felt that I wasn't allowed back in that full way again. There was a finality about being given away. **11Francis15**

It seemed quite pleasant signing the register because I knew the vicar, he was a little bit humorous and chatty and made it seem relaxed. I knew everything had gone well, the choir, and my responses. I didn't see the signatures as terribly important. I didn't see it as a signature of law, which it is. I saw the law to be the issue, the actual blessing and the service, that was the law for me. The signature was a bureaucratic necessity. **11Francis16**

I was very delighted to change my surname, because it moved up the alphabet [*laughter*] which seemed wonderful [*laughter*]. I didn't want to keep my maiden name. It seemed that if you married you should change your name and take your husband's. I was conventional in that respect. I didn't wish to hold onto my maiden name as I didn't have a feminist perspective. **11Francis17**

I loved processing down the aisle. It felt wonderful. My veil was up and I felt legitimately the centre of attention. Everybody was smiling. I hadn't had that many people smile at me all at once before. It was enormously gratifying [*laughter*]. I had not had that sort of warmth... acknowledged in a singular way before. **11Francis18**

I was very keen to be photographed because I wanted it to be documented. I remember one photograph being taken with the rather old patriarchal vicar with his arms around both of us giving us a blessing. I liked being photographed. It was a modest wedding so we didn't have an enormous number of photographs. It was done carefully. Not endless photographs. **11Francis19**

The wedding reception was at home in two downstairs rooms, as the house was not that big. It was just very nice, everybody smiling, welcoming and fussing over me. Very warm. I didn't feel terribly on show, I thought I was amongst friends and family, and it was cosy. **11Francis20**

My saddest memories concern my mother's family who were not there to support her. While I was a teenager, there were close relatives who died. I expected my very loved grandmother to die because she'd lived a long life. But my brother, my favourite Uncle

who took photographs of me as a child, and my Aunt who took her own life, had also died. So I felt that my mother was rather marooned. **11Francis21**

The two most enduring memories are: the journey in the car, although it was an unusual and very serious moment, became one of my best memories. And the vicar putting his arms around both of us recorded in the photograph. **11Francis22**

P.S. I married because since I was sixteen I'd been running around with people. I was now twenty-one, my sister married the year before and I thought it was my turn next. My husband and I amicably divorced, however. But while my ex-husband remains alive I feel there continues to be a subliminal emotional attachment, because I still feel married to him.

### **A psychodynamic interpretation**

Francis states that her mother 'left home at one point' (11Francis10), indicating that Francis may have experienced the trauma of feeling 'marooned' (11Francis22), abandoned, insecurely held or uncontained, unloved or unlovable. Thus in Francis' unconscious we may find indications of her reaction through compensation. Compensations for feeling abandoned or insecure, may be seen when Francis states: 'since I was sixteen I'd been running around with people' (11Francis22), as if Francis was looking for something, someone, or maybe, as discussed in Part One in a Platonic way, her 'other half' to offer her a sense of security.

That Francis too was playing a lot of sport (11Francis04) can be understood as controlling the body, an unconscious compensation when Francis couldn't control her mother's leaving. But Francis could control the length of her own hair by having it cut 'really short' (11Francis04). Francis also tried to control her state of virginity, but 'couldn't quite' (11Francis05). Francis gave in to having sex in order to get married and to ensure 'he didn't run away' (11Francis05). In other words this seems to be an indication of an unconscious attempt to control the 'other' (husband, mother or herself).

Control becomes an issue again when Francis states: ‘the difficulty was that the whole thing didn’t last long enough’ (11Francis07). It seems interesting that Francis’ saddest memory (11Francis21), relates to a number of people who had died, as if Francis empathised with her mother’s losses, as if they were her own, relating to people’s lives who had abandoned mother and Francis, people who neither Francis nor her mother could have any control over.

Francis did not feel ‘in control’ while travelling to the Church, as Francis states: ‘I felt a bit estranged, like not sure what’s happening...I didn’t know what to say to my father, so I went silent (11Francis09), as if silence controlled any potential ‘awkwardness’ (11Francis09). For Francis, the journey to the Church with her father (11Francis01), although may have felt ‘awkward’ (11Francis09), and ‘powerful’ (11Francis10), arguably Francis may have felt ‘contained’ by the car and by her father. In contrast, one of the most enduring of Francis’ memories was feeling ‘contained’ by the patriarchal figure of the vicar who ‘put his (‘containing’) arms around us both’ (11Francis22) [Figure 9].

What seems interesting from Francis’ interview is how she seems to have made the Church choir and the vicar into the people who were ‘there for me’ (11Francis11). In contrast Francis states: ‘my mother never went church’ (11Francis11).

As discussed in Part Three, Freud suggests that we may develop an anaclitic attachment based on ‘loving the one who feeds, cares for, and protects, the infant within a contained maternal environment, where sadistic-anal impulses do not destroy the object and the infant is able to pursue erotic loving feelings. This is in contradistinction to a self-centred, ideal ego, narcissistic object-choice (SE14: 88).

That although Francis' mother and father lived together at of time of Francis' wedding, the type of attachment Francis indicates having with her husband can be described as not very anaclitic. Francis states: 'I was not in a romantic state' (11Francis13), 'I bought my dress and a bit of a haze' (11Francis02), as if Francis was preoccupied with other matters. It is as if Francis' 'questioning state of mind' (11Francis13) prevented her from feeling romantic, or wishing to be committed and 'keep her vows all her life' (11Francis13), but rather 'feeling quite flexible' (11Francis13). Nor did Francis 'see the signatures in the Church register as terribly important' (11Francis16). In contrast, Francis knew that she did not want to keep her maiden name but become 'attached' to a husband through the use of his surname (11Francis17).

What seems interesting is that Francis' mode of coping with this anxiety appears more turned towards herself in a masochistic manner, but not enough to prevent her envisaging or achieving a new relationship. As opposed to being sadistically attacking or becoming angry towards the mother or 'other', Francis becomes empathic, towards the mother in 'my concern that my mother's family were not there to support her' (11Francis21) and 'amicably divorces' the husband (11Francis22).

What seems particularly interesting is that in Part Three we discuss 'the Oedipal infant girl who 'turns away' from the mother in favour of the father'. If this turning is juxtaposed with Francis' empathy towards her mother (11Francis21), with a 'boyish' hair cut (11Francis04), we may interpret this as Francis turning towards the mother, more than turning away from the mother. In other words Francis becomes the 'boyish' for the mother, and doesn't make a full 'turn' in favor of the father, as an Oedipal sense

of hostility towards the mother enables the process of repudiation of the mother's love, to be transferred onto another.

Through identification with her parents, sister and others Francis thought that getting married was the right thing to do at that time in her life. We can interpret from a sociological perspective that Francis 'had seen lots of people get married' (11Francis13) and Francis thought: 'I was now twenty-one, my sister married the year before and I thought it was my turn next' (11Francis22), as if Francis felt a degree of social pressure to get married.

If we take a sociological and religious perspective and seek from Francis' statements why Francis became a bride-in-white and married in an Anglican Church, we may learn: 'I chose to wear a white wedding dress because I was a virgin' (11Francis05). And also because it symbolised that I was 'pure' both physically and spiritually (11Francis08). I chose to marry in an Anglican Church, because 'I felt very spiritual' (11Francis13), and because 'I sang in the choir and I knew the vicar, so I was engaged with the Church', and 'now the choir was there for me and that was powerful' (11Francis11).

If we consider some psychoanalytic aspects concerning Francis' statements there seems little indication that Francis strongly held ego ideals as she states: 'I didn't want my wedding dress to be lavish' (11Francis02), it was a simple dress' (11Francis03). 'I thought it would do' (11Francis02) and 'once I put it on it just did the thing' (11Francis03). Yet Francis wished her dress to appear 'classical in any era' (11Francis02), as if Francis was concerned with timeless perfection which could be associated with the ideal ego.

There is little indication of ‘penis envy’ as Francis does not speak about a longing to become a mother.

There seems some indication for exhibitionism, when Francis states that she did feel that her dress was ‘elegant and beautiful and realised that she looked pretty good in it’ (11Francis02), which may go some way to suggest that Francis held narcissistic tendencies, or that Francis was seeking a sense of being ‘warmly’ held in others’ regard, as a compensation for a sense of castration and not feeling fully held by her mother.

There seems to be good indications that Francis desired to become transformed, when she saw herself fully dressed and states: ‘I felt transformed into something very special’ (11Francis04). Arguably, Francis also felt transformed by taking on her husband’s surname (11Francis17). But as for Francis’ transformation of instinct towards passivity, Francis emphasises that she was actively ‘playing a lot of sport’ (11Francis04), indicating a sense that she was narcissistically pre-occupied with herself, and thus too busy to settle down and have a family. Thus arguably Francis obviates a strong anaclitic attachment.

Repudiation of parental authority seems problematic for Francis. As Francis states: ‘my mother left home at one point’, arguably leaving Francis feeling insecure. Juxtaposing this sense of insecurity is Francis’ feeling ‘warm towards my father’ (11Francis10). This indicates that Francis had repudiated her love for her mother and transferred her attachment towards her father, but there seems some ambivalence towards leaving home as Francis wanted to stay in her dress a little longer (11Francis07).

### **Narcissism or exhibitionism**

Francis states that she ‘chose a white wedding dress because she considered herself to be a virgin’ (11Francis05), and considered that her dress ‘remained pristine’ (11Francis06). Although Francis states that she thought her wedding dress ‘was elegant and beautiful’ (11Francis02), that in wearing it she ‘felt transformed into something very special’ (11Francis04), where there was ‘a sense of empowerment and feeling very beautiful’ (11Francis12), Francis also states ‘it was a simple dress’ (11Francis03), that ‘it would do’ (11Francis02), ‘nothing fussy’ (11Francis03).

In wearing a white wedding dress Francis felt ‘good’ because she ‘had all the attention the whole day’, and had ‘been the centre of attention’ which ‘was very rewarding’ (11Francis07). Francis also states that she ‘liked being photographed (11Francis19), but seems to link it with being a ‘modest wedding’ (11Francis 19).

While Francis’ statements indicate that she felt ‘elegant’, ‘beautiful’, and ‘transformed’, which arguably felt narcissistically ‘empowering’, there seems little indication that Francis was overtly exhibitionist or narcissistic. Arguably, Francis felt that ‘everyone was smiling, welcoming and fussing over her and being very warm’ (11Francis20) because the group found what Francis was doing, that of confirming her heteronormativity by getting married, and the manner in which he was doing it, that of wearing wedding white indicating that she was a virgin, was acceptable to them. In a similar manner to the neophyte, as discussed in Part One, who trains for three years and when purged from his sin becomes baptised and emerges dressed in white. Arguably, heteronormativity and marriage may be a ‘compromise’ as discussed by Chodorow in Part One, and a form of religious and social control, but if there was no control, we might have, like Hesiod’s sense of incestuous and moral irresponsibility.

As we have seen in Part One, while exploring the idealisation of the Virgin Mary, as a reaction to this idealisation arguably has resulted and a huge amount of pressure put on some contemporary woman to remain a virgin prior to marriage. We might ask: How might young women react to this conscious or unconscious pressure?

With passive conformity? With 'altruistic surrender' as Anna Freud suggests, being delighted to be a virgin bride and bring happiness upon the earthly and heavenly father, and the group? Is the bride looking for 'acceptance', as opposed to a fear of rejection and loss of love by the father or the group as in Eve's rejection from the Garden of Eden due to her disobedience and her loss of the ideal environment?

In sales terms, we can ask what is the bride's pay-off or benefit for remaining or appearing to be a virgin bride-in-white? From Francis' statements, she received an enormous amount of 'warmth' (11Francis18) from being the 'centre of attention' (11Francis07). Arguably this state of narcissism and exhibitionism can appear to heal narcissistic wounds and any sense of castration. The pay-off for getting married in Church arguably, as van Gennep in Part One argues is that separation anxiety and repudiation is contained by the Church and the group, and the new union is legitimised in a collective rite of passage. And transformation from daughter to wife is legitimised by the father publicly giving his daughter away.

#### **4. Interview and interpretation – Liz and Freesia**

I would now like to present a combined interview with mother (15Freesia), and daughter (05Liz), which may also illustrate some of the differences and similarities between the two groups of brides interviewed, that of a ‘recent’ and one who had been married over ten years previously.

My most vivid experience was making the vow. **05Liz01**

As I was putting on my wedding dress I was concerned ‘do I look alright?’ (*both laugh*). As you dress you feel as though you’re getting your mind ready as well as your appearance. Because I had my friend and my bridesmaid there, there was a social dimension about it, which was very nice. I can recall that it was difficult to put on. (*laughs*). **05Liz02**

Yes, that was true, it was difficult to put on, I had a lots of buttons on my dress to fasten. (*laughs*). **15Freesia02**

Good friends of mine assisted me to dress and get ready on my wedding day which was very nice. **15Freesia03**

Yes, same again. My friend supported me as she had been married a few years before and was sharing some of that experience. Her daughter was my bridesmaid, obviously it was all new for her and as she was getting dressed everything was a really big deal, so it was nice to share that with her. It was one of those moments during the day when we had some time, later on it all got busy and rushed. So that beginning period, where we were getting ready was much more measured - you could chat and spend time together. **05Liz03**

When I saw myself fully dressed I thought, it doesn’t look like me. I think I was a purist. [*laughs*]. I don’t know what it was but it was a nice feeling. **15Freesia04**

Yes. **05Liz04**

I chose to wear a white dress because it was very traditional and I was a bride. As I have fair skin white doesn’t suit me and realised that cream was an option, so I chose cream. **15Freesia05**

I thought about wearing something different than white, but I chose to wear a ‘white’ dress because it felt like a traditional occasion and it seemed appropriate some how and when I tried on dresses and thought about it. I thought practically, because we had a big wedding with lots of guests, any other colour wouldn’t have stood out in quite the same way. I thought, because the church ceremony was traditional and I had traditional

feelings about it, therefore it seemed appropriate to wear, no I didn't wear white either, I wore a cream coloured dress. **05Liz05**

I hoped that my dress wouldn't get dirty, but I knew that that was irrational because I didn't ever think I would ever wear it again, sell it or give it away. I wanted it to look nice all day. I remember being a bit bothered when it did get slightly dirty, but it wasn't a problem. You buy the dress, the one you really want, it's so special, you've chosen it and you've thought about it, you really want it to look good. I just thought I am going to wear this all day, 'til the very end and after that it doesn't matter. **05Liz06**

I still have my dress. I just wanted to look nice. I didn't think about it getting dirty. If Liz had wanted to wear it she could have, if it had fitted. She's a bit taller than me, so it probably wouldn't... **15Freesia06**

Researcher: How did you feel as you were stepping out of your wedding dress? I mustn't tell you that! [*both laugh*]. When I married in 1959, times were different. When 'S' and I changed and I stepped out of my wedding dress it was the first time he had seen me. I felt, ohhhh... [*laughs*], there was a mixture of anticipation, and excitement [*laughs*]. People can't understand that now, because it was a different world. **15Freesia07**

It was obviously a lot different for me in 2005, because we had a little boy and he was asleep in his cot in the room we were in. I was also freezing cold [*both laugh*]. I've never been so cold in all my life. But again, you do have this sense of the whole day and the wedding night being special. Perhaps I was more thoughtful about the day, it felt quite strange. **05Liz07**

'P' said it felt strange, and really weird, too. **15Freesia07**

I didn't feel quite the way he described, I felt almost disappointed actually. **05Liz07**

Oh, that's a shame. **15Freesia07**

Yes, because maybe you have such high expectations of your wedding day that nothing can possibly live up to them, and therefore afterwards. I don't feel that now looking back on that, I felt it at the time. Maybe its just all that emotional tension and build up that at the end of it its like, bluh... **05Liz07**

A bit of a let down? **15Freesia07**

Yes. **05Liz07**

Because it's only a day. **15Freesia07**

Yes, that's right, you've spent months preparing for it, disproportionate almost. **05Liz07**

Yes, and I suppose the events leading up to it, effect your views of the day. 'S' and I, had to be very determined that that was what we wanted to do. 'S' almost gave up at one stage, then he realised that once I had set my hand to the plough... **15Freesia07**

I don't recall anything at all while I was travelling to the church, except my father would be in the car. **15Freesia09**

For me, it was a lovely time with dad. We were driven very slowly to the Church, which gave us the opportunity to be relaxed. We didn't talk about anything momentous it was just a really peaceful time. I was happy and he was happy. It was a lovely tranquil moment. **05Liz09**

At first I had been in something of a struggle because my father had very much opposed the marriage, not because he had anything against my husband-to-be, but because he felt I ought to, the Victorian way, devote my life to looking after my disabled brother, and I said no. My father felt that somehow this was wrong, but he came round to it, agreed to give me away and to me that was everything. **15Freesia10**

I had it cushy didn't I? It meant a lot to me that dad gave me away particularly because I know he's old fashioned. Old fashioned in his views and probably didn't think that the way we did things, having the baby first then getting married was the right way round. But he was very sweet about it and very sweet to me and seemed genuinely very happy when we got married. He gave a lovely speech and seemed to enjoy the day and that was special, that was lovely. I really appreciated that. **05Liz10**

My mother didn't play a role. If Mum had lived closer then I'd probably have asked her to help me choose the dress, flowers and things like that. The reason I didn't was that it wasn't practical and I didn't feel I particularly needed support. I was happy doing it on my own. On the day, it was very special to have my family there because we're a tiny family and it was really nice to have our family together. Them being part of it was very important to me. The only thing was when you mum, dropped dad off, I was briefly on my own in the house, and I expected you to come in and say hello, but when you didn't, I understood you had gone to the church. I would have been very happy if you had wanted to come in and have a chat before you had gone. **05Liz11**

It was just one of those things. **15Freesia11**

It didn't matter, I didn't mind, you could have done so if you'd wanted to. **05Liz11**

I imagined you there with two or three bridesmaids around you. **15Freesia11**

No, I wasn't offended, I didn't mind, nice hat... **05Liz11**

For a bride to feel beautiful they make a very great effort to ensure they've a nice dress. But I think the most important thing is happiness. **15Freesia12**

I don't think I had a sense of how I looked. At times it felt quite strange because people were taking photographs of me all day, and I thought, I don't quite know what I look like. Obviously I looked in the mirror before I left, and stuck my veil on in the car (*laughter*), hoping it wouldn't fall off, dad said it looked ok. There aren't mirrors around are there? But when I look at the photographs, I look quite happy, I agree with what mum says. **05Liz12:**

Until about 18 months before we were married 'S' was very, very definitely an Anglican, but I never became a member of the congregation. **15Freesia13**

Whether or not it was Anglican wasn't an issue because mum and dad brought me up as an Anglican so if I was going to have a religious ceremony then it would have been in an Anglican church. The significance of marrying in church, was because I am Christian and the whole point of getting married is through religious ceremony. A civil ceremony would have seemed pointless because I am a Christian. I see marriage as a commitment. It's partly about making a public commitment to a partner in front of your friends and family, and its also about evolving relationships. **05Liz13**

I considered that being veiled was traditional and part of the traditional service. **15Freesia14**

I thought the veil was optional, but I chose to wear one because I felt a bit shy, in a church full of people, that was quite overwhelming. I wanted to focus on the ceremony, and I didn't want to be distracted, worried or nervous about being surrounded by so many people. It was nice to hide behind a veil. **05Liz14**

I can understand that. **15Freesia14**

It was special that dad was there to give me away, and particularly to have his moral support. It's scary when you are about to walk up the aisle, and it's all just about to happen, so it was nice to have dad there. **05Liz15**

You had to hold each other up. **15Freesia15**

No, we didn't hold each other up at all, as far as being given away goes, we'd been together a long time and had a little boy and it didn't have the same significance it probably had for you mum. **05Liz15**

I can't remember any feelings while I signed the register. **15Freesia16**

We escaped for a minute to sign the register. I thought it was funny because the priest kept saying: 'this is the last time you'll sign your maiden name'. But I haven't bothered to change my surname! It's not that I am making a big statement because when our child was born, it was a 'no brainer' that he was going to have his father's surname. I've no problem being called 'Mrs H'. It seems an odd convention that you change your surname. I can't see the point of it given that it's a great deal of hassle, I wouldn't bother doing it. I don't understand the convention. **05Liz16**

Changing my surname was the absolutely accepted system in the 1950's when I married. It was very unusual indeed not to do so. It was totally accepted that you took your husband's surname, and that was it. The general morés have changed, the general attitude towards women. I was very fortunate, my husband has always felt that we were as good as men. But the vast majority of men felt that we were not as good. I was very lucky, that when I went to work, before I was married, I was treated perfectly, never harassed, or treated as though I was inferior. I think that these days that's a rarity. **15Freesia17**

I think, as I processed down the aisle it was the first time I had seen how many people there were, and everywhere I looked there was a sea of people's faces who I knew and cared about, that was a lovely, lovely feeling, just this huge support was everywhere.

**05Liz18**

When we were married we didn't have the tremendous number of photographs that you have now. **15Freesia19**

My thought of the mementoes was that it would be nice to have this as a keepsake but I found it became intrusive having so many pictures, it seemed to take over for a while. There were times when I wanted the photography to finish so we could get on, but I also wanted to have them. The most important thing was making sure everybody was photographed because I wanted to have memories of everybody who was there.

**05Liz19**

Yes, it was jolly nice to have some photographs. My parents' wedding, in 1929, never had a photograph because they didn't come out. But I have my mum's wedding shoes size 2, to 2-and-a-half and a piece of her floral pattern wedding dress material and that's nice. **15Freesia19**

On entering my wedding reception I was keen to greet and talk to people. **15Freesia20**

My Saddest memory was that my mother couldn't be there. **15Freesia21**

I think my saddest feeling relates to the people that weren't able to come. My closest family were there, but there were a few people who I'd expected to be there because they said they were going to come and they didn't appear and I still don't know why. And my Uncle who sadly died before I married, it would have been lovely if he had been able to be there. **05Liz21**

My happiest memory was being married to my husband (*laughs*) because with all his problems he's a good egg! [*all laugh*]. **15Freesia22**

My happiest memory concerns the ceremony, which was electric. It was intense and I was nervous and shaking when I went up the aisle, then my husband-to-be took hold of my hand and held it all through the service. **05Liz22**

### **A psychodynamic interpretation**

This combined interview is interesting for two reasons. It was conducted with mother and daughter together who married forty-six years apart, but arguably had similar cultural values. And secondly, although mother appears to have conformed to the social mores of her era, perhaps although Liz did not initially meet with her father's approval,

may have reflected the social mores of a different era. But arguably Liz points to significant reasons for becoming a bride-in-white and marrying in Church, including a public commitment and public approval, as on one level Liz did not need to get married at all because she already had an established partnership (05Liz15) and had a baby son (05Liz15+16).

### **Mother / daughter relationship**

During the interaction between mother and daughter, Freesia and Liz, regarding stepping out of their wedding dress, we can see indications of embarrassment when they both laugh and Freesia states that ‘I mustn’t tell you that!’ (15Freesia07), but there seems no indication of guilt. While Liz seems mostly ready to passively agree with her mother, Freesia throughout the conversation indicates attunement and empathy towards her daughter Liz felt in the moment. Liz having had high expectations and made ‘disproportionate preparations’ as Freesia states ‘it’s only a day’ (15Freesia07), Liz felt ‘almost disappointed’, a bit let down, cold and strange (05Liz07). Thus indicating that there was no rivalry between daughter and mother, perhaps because they both were secure in their separate relationships.

### **Wearing the dress: exhibitionism**

We know that Freesia chose to wear a cream coloured dress because she felt that white was too stark against the colour of her skin (15Freesia05). We also know that Liz was emphatic that her dress was not white but cream. But we don’t know overtly why Liz chose cream (05Liz05). We may interpret that it was because Liz unconsciously thought ‘I don’t deserve to wear a pristine white dress as I’ve already had a baby son’. We may

also interpret that Liz may have identified with her mother's own choice thus offering an indication of unconscious mirroring or copying of mother by daughter.

### **Bride's struggle to repudiate familial ties**

We know that Freesia had a 'struggle' to leave father and the familial home because her father wanted her to stay (15Freesia09). We also know that Liz didn't wait to be 'given away' before she co-habited and had a baby son (05Liz10), thus indicating that Liz experienced unconscious 'penis envy'.

It is as if Liz unconsciously carried the 'struggle' that her mother had had leaving home and her father, by unconsciously braking away from familial ties and exerting her independence. We can take into account that Liz lives in a different economic era or in a more sexually liberated society, but we know that both Freesia and Liz were professionally independent women who felt as though they were treated as equals and did not feel demeaned or castrated by men (15Freesia17). However, we also know that both Freesia and Liz really appreciated that their father gave them away (15Freesia10) (05Liz10), thus indicating that both women allowed themselves to be subject to the patriarchal law of exchange.

### **Bride's motivation to marry**

Arguably something drove Liz to marry and make an almost 'disproportionate' amount of preparation (05Liz07). We know that Liz and her partner had been together for some time and they already had a baby son (05Liz07). So why did Liz get married in church? We know that Liz married in Church 'because she was a Christian' and that a register office ceremony would be 'pointless' (05Liz13). So why did Liz marry at all?

To please her father and allow him to give her away in a public ceremony (05Liz15)? Liz states that ‘it meant a lot to me that dad gave me away...he seemed genuinely very happy when we got married’ (05Liz10). This sentiment is also reflected by Freesia when she states: ‘My father agreed to give me away and to me that was everything’ (15Freesia10). This illustrates the ‘special’ relationship that the daughter has with their father, and indicates unconscious incestuous desire.

To make her partnership secure as marriage is a ‘commitment’ (05Liz13)? This argument seems less likely, as Liz states that she ‘wouldn’t bother’ (05Liz16) changing her surname to her husbands. Thus indicating and reinforcing that Liz seems to appear to be an independent agent, an emancipated woman, but it also indicates an unconscious incestuous desire to remain her father’s daughter.

Or to have the relationship recognised as legitimate within the familial group? Liz states that although she thought of choosing a different coloured dress, she chose a cream dress because it stood out, and on processing out of the Church Liz realised ‘there was a sea of people’s faces who I knew and cared about, that was a lovely feeling, just this huge support was everywhere’ (05Liz18). Thus this ‘warmth’ from family and friends seems to indicate a powerful group acceptance. Liz seems to have complied with society’s and parent’s expectations of conforming or compromising to societal pressure, indicating society’s critical voice or super-ego.

Freesia, perhaps may be understood as the passive ‘traditionalist’ (15Freesia05), ‘accepting’ (15Freesia17), ‘purest’ and idealist (15Freesia04), person but also as a determined person despite a ‘struggle’ (15Freesia10) with her father. It seems that Freesia was not afraid to have this struggle with her father thus arguably Freesia was not

castrated, did not fear castration, or fear loss of love although she may have done so and similarly Liz seems not afraid to have gone against what might be considered as traditional mores by her father.

In a 'feminist' manner, Liz indicates that she did not need a mothers support (05Liz11), not be constricted, feel castrated by social 'convention' (05Liz16), or symbolically owned by her husband by changing her surname to his, as it seems as though, like her mother before her (05Liz17), Liz desires parity, equality in her relationship. Liz recognises however that her child will carry their father's surname (05Liz16), therefore symbolically be under his authority. This arguably results in a splitting, or a paradox to be conceptualised by the child. This interpretation raises an important question. Could this interpretation, made by a male researcher, be considered comparable to Freud's view of patriarchy, male superiority and female misogyny. Arguably, if a feminist were to interpret Liz's statement regarding this name change, she may congratulate Liz for making a stand against patriarchy. So how important could it be to the bride, Liz, to retain her maiden identity?

Despite Liz knowing that her father was 'old-fashioned in his views' regarding 'having a baby first then getting married' (05Liz10), indicates that Liz's penis envy was stronger than her superego attached to the father. This also begs the question as to the ultimate authority that Liz is subject to, and that influenced her to get married? Perhaps, God and the Church represented authority, because Liz was 'a Christian' (05Liz13)? Perhaps, Liz's father represented authority, because Liz did marry and attempted to put it 'the right way round' (05Liz10) with her father, thus meeting with his approval as he 'seemed genuinely very happy when we got married (05Liz10). Perhaps, because Liz now had a child and she wanted the sacred 'vow' in Church (05Liz01) to act as a

symbol of security for her and her child, and in an endeavour to ensure that her 'man' would not abandon them, but would be part of the 'commitment' to the 'evolved relationship' (05Liz13).

A broader question may be, that although Liz, in a feminist manner, looks for parity with men, like her mother, if it can be established that Liz has submitted to Church authority, and her father's authority, then arguably Liz lives in a patriarchal world. This in turn indicates that Liz unconsciously may suffer from a sense of penis envy and feelings of castration.

In conclusion, the above précised interviews go some way to illustrate how, by applying a psychoanalytic lens to the participants' statements, a rich, in-depth, understanding of a subjective experience of wearing white can be elucidated.

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