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Spontaneous Images in the Mind: A Thematic Analysis of Psychoanalytic Literature on Psychotherapists' Unbidden Visualizations

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgments), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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Abstract

When psychoanalysts and psychotherapists are in a particular mental state, it may happen that visual images come up spontaneously in their minds. When they appear, these unbidden visualizations seem to be unrelated to what is going on in the therapy at the time. This dissertation is a review and analysis of texts published by psychoanalytic practitioners about these events. My research has three related foci: 1) psychotherapists' clinical descriptions of their inner experience of unbidden visualizations and their reflections on what it is like; 2) the effect and function of unbidden visualizations in the therapeutic process; and 3) psychotherapists' use of spontaneous images in the therapeutic relationship with their patient. My method of analysis is a critically applied thematic analysis, developed within a hermeneutic-interpretive methodological framework. In this approach themes (patterns of meaning across the data) are conceptualized as integrated networks of subthemes, and the final analysis of interrelationships among major themes is essential. The results are nine major themes, (*Personal, inner experience*; *Disturbance by the unknown*; *Dream-like perceiving*; *Sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexitie*s; *Revealing by giving shape*; *Care and scrutiny*; *Togetherness*; *Intimacy*; *Generative aliveness*) and two dynamic major themes (*Tensions of time and temporality*; *Movement through tension and paradox*), eleven in total. These themes reveal that unbidden visualizations are creations of the psychotherapist's unconscious but intersubjectively activated and motivated by complex unconscious processes in the therapeutic relationship—they are relational events. Unbidden visualizations crystallize central issues and dynamics in psychoanalytic practice and evocatively express visually what is momentarily obscure and unsayable. Furthermore, unbidden visualizations open a triangular mental space between psychotherapist and patient, by functioning as a third object which is created within the psychotherapist-patient dyad but simultaneously experienced as external to it—as an intrusive, sensory mental object and experience. This dissertation ends with a discussion of findings in the context of current psychoanalytic thinking, of clinical implications of findings, and of further research implications.

If we are at sea in our unconscious, where are we?
We are in a certain position or place, one that facilitates articulations of the unconscious through the process of free association. The self becomes the medium for other forms of thinking, those that exist outside consciousness.

———Christopher Bollas *The Wisdom of the Dream* (2011)

Where relations are perceived as immanent in things and persons, people work to make them known through the analogues they reveal. Persons and things are thus decomposed to reveal the relations which constitute them.

———Marilyn Strathern *Partial Connections* (1991)

theme, n.

1.a. *The subject of discourse, discussion, conversation, meditation, or composition; a topic.*

thematize, v.

Draft additions 1993

b. *To render thematic; to present or select as a theme.*

(. . .)

1979 P. DE MAN in H. BLOOM Deconstruction & Crit. *57 Shelley's imagery...is...extraordinarily systematic whenever light is being thematized.*

1984 D. LEAVITT Family Dancing *193 What's thematized here is the endless battle between nature and art.*

1986 Paragraph *Oct. 112 Explicitly thematizing her own reading experience and relating it to the personal context in which it occurred.*

———*Oxford English Dictionary*,
Online Edition (2013)

Chapter 1
Introduction

This dissertation is about a particular kind of event in the inner experience that may happen to psychotherapists and psychoanalysts when they are in session with patients or thinking about patients. It is the experience of an unbidden visual image which spontaneously comes up in the mind. Crucially, the image's content seems to be unrelated to what is going on in the therapy, neither to what the patient has been saying nor to what seems to be happening in the therapeutic relationship at that moment.

Because this kind of spontaneous visual image does not overtly relate to the context in which it appears, it is different from other kinds of mental images people have. For example, when they listen to someone and picture in their mind what is being said, when they picture a metaphor, or see a pictures unfolding in their mind like a story that matches the narrative they are listening to. Rather, the topic of this dissertation is unbidden images, visualizations that occur spontaneously and take the psychotherapist by surprise. They can appear suddenly and abruptly or take shape slowly and vaguely, and they may be a single, well defined image or an assemblage of more dream-like visualizations. But when these images occur, they appear to be meaningless, idiosyncratic and out of context.

And yet, as the literature analysed in this study demonstrates, over time and as a result of psychotherapeutic skill and work, these unbidden images prove to be evocative, meaningful, and therapeutically useful. In fact, my analysis will show that they crystallize issues at the heart of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic therapy that are related to unconscious processes, unconscious communication between patient and psychotherapist, and the psychotherapist's creative unconscious capacity to contain them and to let them emerge to consciousness. Crucially, they activate difficult but effective paradoxes and time-related features of psychotherapeutic work.

Approach. This dissertation is a review, by means of a thematic analysis, of a purposefully and systematically selected set of published psychoanalytic texts. As a subject of enquiry, the therapeutic use of psychotherapists' subjective inner experience, which includes unbidden visualizations, has been predominantly addressed by psychoanalysts and psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapists. My study focuses on the clinical vignettes and extended clinical material contained in these texts, where authors provide detailed descriptions of their unbidden visual image experience while in

sessions or reflecting on sessions. Texts which include such clinical material usually also contain some discussions about the therapeutic relationship, the patient's process, explorations of the spontaneous image as a representation, its effect, how the psychotherapist made use of it, and his/her understanding of the visualization in the whole therapy context.

The precise object of my research is, then, a thematic analysis of these experiences and explorations of what unbidden visualizations mean. The research data are texts written by psychoanalysts and psychotherapists practicing at different times, with diverse approaches and different understanding of their experience. By analysing what these practitioners report across a whole set of different texts and by focusing on their experience and the therapeutic process, this dissertation provides an integrative understanding of spontaneous visual images in clinical practice.

Consequently, a threefold research question frames this dissertation. It covers three areas affected by psychotherapists' unbidden visualizations that constitute them as experiences and events. They are the psychotherapist's experience of the spontaneous image, the image or visualization itself, and the therapeutic relationship in which it occurred. The research question is formulated as specific queries as follows:

- How do psychotherapists describe their experience of spontaneously occurring visual images? What is this experience like? How do they understand this experience?
- How do psychotherapists understand and reflect on these images and their function in the therapeutic process?
- How have psychotherapists made clinical use of these images, in the therapeutic relationship with their patient?

The themes I identified as a result of the thematic analysis provide a detailed picture of meanings and meaning patterns associated with these three areas and, more importantly, of meanings and themes across these areas. In fact, the interrelationships among themes across these areas support the most significant findings, as I discuss in Chapter 6.

Method. This dissertation is also an engagement with thematic analysis as a method. A thematic analysis identifies explicit and implicit themes in data, i.e., recognizable patterns and relationships of meaning (similarities, commonalities, contrasts, differentiations, tensions etc.). My research approach involves a critical application of thematic analysis. I critically considered different sources on thematic

analysis (research papers on thematic analysis as a method, studies in which thematic analysis was applied, and relevant approaches in psychotherapy research) and designed an approach to thematic analysis that integrates various features suitable for the particularities of my research project.

This dissertation therefore also intends to make a small contribution to the development of thematic analysis specifically for research in psychotherapy and on published academic texts. This is in contradistinction to most applications of thematic analysis which analyse data generated by interviews and which are methodologically underpinned by conventions of the behavioural and social sciences. Thematic analysis has not been developed in relation to a specific theory, and as a method it is still under-theorized (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012; McLeod, 2011). While this gives it a useful flexibility, a sound thematic analysis must be designed thoughtfully and reflectively in relation to the particularities of a project, the questions examined in it, the nature of the data to be analysed and the academic discipline to which it makes a contribution. In order to be trustworthy, the processes of research, analysis and the rationale for decisions and procedures need to be made transparent. Therefore, Chapter 2 is a discussion of methodology and Chapter 3 provides a self-reflective account of the method and the research process. Throughout this dissertation I have embedded critical discussions of the method and methodological self-reflection where relevant. Findings regarding the method are also discussed along with all research results in Chapter 6 .

Why This Topic?

Imagination and mental images have personal, professional and intellectual relevance for me. From time to time in my clinical training I noticed different kinds of images happening in my mind while I was session with people. For example I listened to a patient's account of an experience and, while the account was detailed, my patient also interrupted it continually with self-critical and second guessing remarks. Suddenly I realised that I saw a still image in my mind of a large, poised cat about to pounce. This particular image and others like it seemed at first to be symbolizations of what I heard my patients say or how they expressed themselves (in my example, the cat can be seen to symbolize a self attack). Other spontaneous images seemed more farfetched and unrelated. I rarely disclosed them; most times I thought these moments showed that I was not paying proper attention. However, in some relationships these experiences seemed helpful by providing an image to discuss with the patient which may have symbolic meaning. While my teachers rightly recommended caution, I remained curious

about such mental imagery, about its potential meaning and therapeutic significance. I wanted to learn more about it. The roots of my interest are longer, though.

As a child my experience was mostly that my imagination was something others found difficult to manage. In my family I learnt that I needed to compare my ideas to objective reality if wanted them to matter other than as idiosyncratic notions or crazy ideas. Largely this meant that I learnt to keep my fantasies and daydreams private and that I could not always manage them so well either. I increasingly confined these imaginings stories, novels, and films. But even later, when studying analytical philosophy, logic and theories of truth at university, I found that my ability to understand theory and abstract ideas was intimately linked to my ability to think not only in terms of concepts but also images, narratives and sensory mental impressions. Later still I trained in social anthropology where the ability to imagine different meanings and conceptual worlds, realities based on different existential premises, imagine is crucial.

In my twenties I saw a psychodynamic therapist who practiced a guided imagery approach in which induced, contained daydreaming in sessions is used to symbolize the patient's inner world and relational configurations (see also literature review below). My therapist died tragically and prematurely which cut this therapy painfully short, but among other things my experience with her was a validation of what my mother used to disparage as wild fantasies. It contributed to the way I worked as a social anthropologist where I focused on metaphors, images, ritual images and other social forms as a creative social aesthetic by which people know themselves. Creative mental and practical imagery is an important part of understanding how a different way of life works and comes about. I also happened to do my research with a people in Papua New Guinea who explicitly value as ways of knowing their imagination, non-verbal communication and a felt emotional sense. In becoming a psychotherapist, then I saw an opportunity to work with people about their emotional lives and to learn about intuitive ways of being in which such unconscious processes and unconscious creativity are more integrated into awareness.

The research for this dissertation is for me, therefore, a small step in trying to understand mental imagery and imagination as expressions of a creative unconscious and of unconscious relatedness. It is an exploration of unbidden images as useful elements in therapeutic work, and as carriers of truth beyond conscious observation and logical reasoning.

Literature Review: Images in Psychoanalysis

Imagination, images, and thinking in images have been important topics of inquiry in psychoanalysis from its inception. With his first major publication in1899, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud introduced his theory of the unconscious and dream images as representations of complex unconscious processes. In these early years of psychoanalysis, hypnosis was still a treatment method but soon replaced by free association: the patient produces free flowing verbalization of whatever occurs in his/her mind, including imagery, and the analyst interprets with regard to what these verbalizations reveal as conscious representations of unconscious processes. Mental images of various kinds and how they relate to consciousness and unconsciousness have been of interest to psychoanalysts from the beginning.

The particular mental images that are the topic of my study take, broadly categorized, two forms:

a) They are quasi-hallucinations or apparitions, for example, when psychotherapists see the shimmer of a different kind of face overlay their patient's face, or when they meet a patient and for a moment this patient appears to them as a different kind of person, but while they see this double they remain cognizant of the real patient they are looking at (e.g., Althofer, 1983; Appel, 2000; Ferro, 2007; Marcus, 1997). They are experiences of the mind but appear and are seen outside the mind.

b) They are images of the imagination and quasi-daydreams, i.e., experiences of the mind in which the psychotherapist is aware that the images are imaginary and seen in the mind. The majority of examples found in the literature and analysed in this study are imagination images.

Both types of image experiences can be very vivid, but hallucination images touch more acutely one's sense of reality, although the examples discussed in this study show that psychoanalysts are mentally equipped to see such visualizations while remaining aware of external reality.

These two kinds of vivid image experiences were already discussed by Freud (1919) in his essay on the uncanny. In the main this is a discussion of the uncanny in stories and literature—in imagination—and Freud was particularly concerned with its relation to repression. But in a footnote he added his own experience of a hallucination-like apparition, precisely an apparition in his own image, a double or doppelgänger. He linked this experience to startling experiences of the unfamiliar in the familiar—the uncanny—which causes fright exactly because of this misplacement of which we cannot

make sense. While travelling on a train he saw an elderly man, whose appearance he "thoroughly disliked", enter his private compartment (Freud 1919, p. 247). But as he got up to stop him, he realized that the man was his own reflection in the mirror of the washing-cabinet door which had swung open when the train gave a violent jolt. While Freud was not frightened by his double, he mused that his failing to recognise it as such and his negative affect were a vestigial trace of the uncanny. Be this as it may, Freud's distinction between the imagined uncanny of fiction and uncanny, hallucination-like "real life" experiences, such as the one he had on the train, is relevant to my study.

Various kinds of enigmatic visual experiences have accompanied the history of psychoanalysis as a recurrent but neglected interest in the occult and the possibility of telepathy (e.g., Devereux, 1953; Rosenberg, 2005). These are not questions this study tries to address, but two of the texts I analyse contain detailed descriptions of experiences with unbidden visualizations in the context of phantasy, the occult and telepathic communication (Appel, 2000; Simon, 1981).

Dream-thinking. In the early decades of the last century Freud developed his theory of unconscious perception and symbolic processing, and how they function in the psychoanalytic treatment relationship. According to Freud, imagination and mental images are phenomena produced by the relation of the unconscious and consciousness, and his ideas on the subject are still relevant today. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud conceived of the unconscious as a dynamic, visual site of memory, because dreams produce memories which the dreamer has forgotten, but produce them in highly symbolized visual forms. Furthermore, he formulated influential ideas about the psychoanalyst's unconscious as an instrument in treatment, precisely as "a receptive organ" which the analyst must turn "towards the transmitting unconscious of the patient" (Freud, 1912, p. 115). The analyst's unconscious is able, then, "from the derivatives of the unconscious which are communicated to him, to reconstruct" the unconscious processes that also inform the patient's verbal associations (p. 115). In effect Freud conceived of the unconscious as a multiple processing, receiving and communicative faculty. Later Freud (1923, p. 239) advised: "Experience soon showed that the attitude which the analytic physician could most advantageously adopt was to surrender himself to his own unconscious mental state."

In the 1930s in New York, Isakower refined Freud's idea of the unconscious as an instrument attuned to the patient's free association as the "analyzing instrument". He argued that visual images which spontaneously come to the analyst's mind in a dream-

like state during sessions are evidence of acute insight in the service of understanding the patient (Brown, 2011; Spencer, Balter, & Lothane, 1992). Freud's position on direct unconscious to unconscious communication between analyst and patient as well as later developments, such as Isakower's, are a more or less acknowledged foundation of much of the contemporary psychoanalytic theory of intersubjectivity (Brown, 2011; Mitchell, 1997; Mitchell & Aron, 1999; Ogden, 2001). As Brown vividly put it, unconscious communication via the analysing instrument involves a multitude of mental states and experiences of mental images and sensations:

> This unconscious communication between analysand and analyst travels along many pathways including linguistic, pictographic, "extraneous" experiences (random thoughts, unbidden tunes), bodily sensations, and other yet to be understood channels that, from a mystical point of view may be called telepathic. (2011, p. 7)

A psychoanalyst functions in a particular way when he/she is open to such unconscious communication. Some have called this dreaming while awake or dream-thinking or reverie. Mental imagery and visual mental experience are prominent features of this function, as Brown outlined. Following Bion, Ogden defined reverie as "waking dreams" which take various forms, "ruminations, daydreams, sexual fantasies, snippets of films" among others (2001, p. 5). Reverie or dream-thinking is related to Bion's concept of maternal reverie—a calm, receptive state that enables a person to contain, elaborate and transform a child's sensations and affects by imagining them, thinking about them, giving them meaning, and communicating his/her understanding back to the child (Bion, 1962b). Therefore, reverie in the analytic situation is the kind of mental processing of troubling emotional experience in the presence of another which leads to psychological growth. It is a way of mental functioning for both psychoanalyst and patient when they are engaged in deep analytic work in which both make use of visual images and other mental experiences that arise in their minds (Bion, 1962b; Bollas, 2011; Grotstein, 2007a, 2009; Ogden, 2009, 2010).

Similarly, Bollas (1992) described the psychoanalyst's functioning as dream-processing in terms "inner free-experiencing" and a "creative response" (p. 110). The analyst contains the patient's material and "works it" by reflecting on it objectively, using reasoning, and subjectively by letting his/her own unconscious work. And Bollas concluded, "each analyst is prolific, with his own inner associations moving in a complex psychic symphony of feelings, image gazing, word deciphering, recollecting, interpersonal assessments, story hearing, and meditative intermissions" (p. 109).

Daydreaming and fantasy. Isakower and others argued that visual images and other sensory experiences belong to a preconscious state in which the ego is regressed so that representations of unconscious processes are emerging into consciousness. Following a preoccupation with verbal expression in psychoanalysis, there was renewed interest in visual images and phantasy in the 1940s and 50s (Tauber & Green, 1959). Arlow (1969b) theorized that unconscious daydreaming is a constant feature of mental life and conscious experience. He coined the felicitous phrase "we dream along with our patients" (1969a, p. 49). He linked daydreaming to unconscious phantasy which is an ongoing process that colours the perception of external events and internal experience. This idea ties in with earlier work by Melanie Klein on conscious daydreams and unconscious phantasy, "concrete images. . . woven together to represent and express anxieties and needs" (Segal, 2000, p. 9). However, they may be less concrete as well:

> Our heads are full of phantasies. Not just *fantasies*—by which I meant stories we make up to amuse ourselves—but 'stories' we are deeply involved in and convinced by and which go on independently of our conscious awareness or intention. *Phantasies* make up the background to everything we do, think or feel: they determine our perceptions and in a sense *are* our perceptions. (Julia Segal as quoted in Appel, 2000, p. 32)

Here, then, is the conceptual link of reverie and daydreaming as expressions of the analyst's unconscious perception of what is going on for the patient. Segal's "stories" often take the form of imagination and imagined visual ideas. One of the most radical statements in this regard was made by Heimann (1950). She integrated unconscious phantasy with the concept of projective identification in her argument that countertransference, including the psychoanalyst's emotional response to a patient in the analytic situation, represents "an instrument of research into the patient's unconscious" (p. 81). As my study shows, contemporary psychoanalysts who make therapeutic use of their spontaneous visual images often do so by framing their experiences theoretically as the creative use of countertransference (see Chapter 6).

Waking dream as treatment technique. Daydreaming and other mental imagery have been developed as treatment techniques in various approaches in the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic traditions as well as cognitive psychotherapy. The latter, together with cognitive psychological research, has produced a vast literature on mental images as elements of cognitive functioning. Suler (1989) provides an overview of the use of imagery techniques in psychoanalytic psychotherapy treatment (see also Waddell, 1982). Suler traced these techniques to Freud's early work with hypnotic trance and the retrieval of childhood memories through tactile stimulation of visual

images. But Freud abandoned these techniques before 1900 and focused on the patient's verbal processes in free association. As a consequence, mental imagery was not used as a treatment technique until the renewed interest in mid-century continental Europe, mainly in broader, psychoanalytically informed, psychodynamic approaches.

Therapists such as Leuner in Germany or Desoille in France theorised mental imagery as a language of the unconscious in which emotions and unconscious conflicts find expression. They developed detailed, manualized guided affected imagery or waking daydream treatment methods (Desoille, 1965; H. Leuner, 1969a, 1969b, 1994). In Germany and Switzerland treatment approaches based on Leuner's method, called catathymic-imaginative psychotherapy, are well established and continue to be developed in relation to contemporary psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theory (Bahrke & Nohr, 2013; Hanscarl Leuner & Wilke, 2005). Central to this work with mental imagery is the induced daydream for which the patient is helped to a waking relaxed, dream-like state during which s/he verbalises daydream images while they are happening as a vividly experienced, unfolding visual narrative. In the first stages of treatment standard the psychotherapist suggests cues as a focus for the patient's imagining or dreaming; these are usually symbols or scenes that represent specific psychic conflicts and tasks (e.g., a mountain, a meadow, a stream, a volcano etc.). While listening to the patient's description of his/her imagery and its emotional content, the psychotherapist may respond with brief interventions as necessary, for example by suggesting the exploration of a particular image element or the avoidance of another. Psychotherapist and patient together discuss and interpret the whole image sequence in subsequent sessions, sometimes with the help of drawings or paintings the patient made.

Similar guided imagery techniques have been used also in the USA and Britain where other treatment techniques that make use of the patient's spontaneous imagery or free imagery associations have also been developed (Horowitz, 1970, 1972; Panagiotou & Sheik, 1977; Reyher, 1977; Singer, 2006; Singer & Pope, 1978; Suler, 1996). Work with visual imagery may be used specifically as an aid to address defences and resistance (Warren, 1961) or as symbolic representations of traumatic experience. But as Suler stated such aspects are not intrinsic to mental imagery: "whether [the patient's] spontaneous images are a form of resistance or a special language of the unconscious depends on how (or if) the therapist works with them" (1989, p. 352).

Whitaker developed a distinctly interactive way of working, his "forced fantasy" technique. He found this technique especially useful with non-psychologically

minded patients who present as stark realists and are afraid of “unreality” (1982b). Whitaker advised to take a word of the patient’s discourse which “seems to imply visual imagery” or “affect load” and ask the patient to visualize the thing to which the word refers (p. 71). Whitaker described that he “pushed” a male patient to visualize details of an image, then “demanded” that he put himself, his wife and Whitaker into the fantasy image, and “insisted” on activities in the visualization, so that the patient experience a “break with reality” (pp. 71-73). While Whitaker used confrontational language (and possibly interaction) he stated a stance which may resonate, I imagine, with many authors whose texts I analysed:

> If we assume that psychotherapy is aimed toward promoting the dream aspect of life, the “as-if” quality, then the therapist may use his own dream or his fantasy to help the patient to face the fact that his dream is an integral part of his life. The dream life and the waking life are one. (1982b, p. 73)

Whitaker described several examples of “joint fantasy” in which he expanded on a patient’s metaphorical expression or shared his own brief association to what the patient had said. He thus actively joined the patient in his/her fantasy, and they developed a fantasy together (Whitaker, 1982a).

Mark (2009) provides a contemporary, intersubjectively oriented account of working with patients’ imagery in a comparably way which involves joining but less confrontation. Alas, Mark did not include details of his own unbidden visualizations or mental imagery experience.

As far as I could ascertain, detailed clinical accounts of analyst’s and patient’s mental imagery activity are extremely rare in the literature and accounts that fully describe analyst’s and client’s material are absent (but see Lothane, 2006, 2007, 2010).

Material images. Certainly since Winnicott’s innovative approach to child psychiatry and adult psychoanalysis in the 1950s, psychotherapeutic work with various forms of material images, such as paintings or drawings, has developed into various branches of art psychotherapy. With roots in the Jungian tradition, sandplay therapy also uses materialized imagery (see Kalff, 1980). Moreover, Winnicott conceived of psychotherapy as a form of playing together and invented the Squiggle game (1989) as a “transitional object” in “the interplay between separateness and union” (1971, p. 117). This is a game without rules. He initiated it by drawing a rudimentary doodle on a piece of paper which he invited the child to complete. This simple play interaction is in fact a complex psychic connection—a way in which a psychically inner moment becomes

manifest and symbolized as an external object: "By responding to the demand and turning the squiggle into something recognizable and shareable, the child offers a sample of his internal world" (Phillips, 1988, p. 15). In this way Winnicott also used the squiggle game diagnostically, in "one session work which I call 'the therapeutic (diagnostic) consultation'" (1989, p. 316). As the drawing is shared, the interaction is a kind reciprocal free association and the drawing becomes an expression of two internal worlds coming together in a moment.

In psychotherapy with children and adolescents the Italian psychoanalyst Ferro, who authored a text included in my study, combined working with his patient's free imagery and drawings, and his own unbidden or associative visualizations which may include whole visual narratives, hallucination-like experiences and abruptly occurring spontaneous images (Ferro, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2007).

Doodling, drawing, painting—the creation of material images—occurs in a space that links inner and outer experience, the subjective and objective reality, which includes the reality of the other person in whose presence and in relation to whom they are created. In psychoanalysis this understanding of material images as mediating between inner experience and outer reality, and as a form of communication between analyst and patient, was developed by Marion Milner, a student of Winnicott's. She wrote about her clinical work with clients and her own coming into being as a person through painting. In this context she coined the concept "wide focus" as a way of perceiving reality which has inspired psychoanalysts. It describes a stance, a mode of attending to the patient's communication without paying too much attention to details until they present themselves into focus through an unconscious process. "Wide focus" compares to Bollas' concept "free experiencing", for example (1992, 1999).

Psychoanalyst's spontaneous mental images. This study, however, is focused on mental images, particularly on unbidden and spontaneous images in the psychoanalyst's mind, and therefore an internal experience. Such unbidden images are both a phenomenon and an experience. There has been no systematic review or statement about them in the literature, and they have not been developed theoretically as a concept or a clinical technique in psychoanalysis. However, one author (Reiser, 1999) whose text I analysed in this research suggested that unbidden visualizations should be developed into a clinical technique because of their foundation in physical, neurological processes. This means, he argued, that they are an experiential technique applicable across the current proliferation of clinical approaches and theoretical diversity. The

neurological argument notwithstanding, the results of this study certainly support his premise. In the absence of a corpus of literature, this study brings together for the first time a substantial number of written works on the topic.

In this sense, then, this dissertation constitutes a literature review of psychotherapists' spontaneous mental images in its own right and by means of a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis provides an understanding of meanings across a set of data, i.e., different relevant book chapters and journal articles written by psychoanalysts and psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapists. These texts represent a diverse range of psychoanalytic approaches, and the authors framed their discussions through a variety of conceptual and theoretical contexts.

The articles and book chapters I analysed—the dataset—was selected through a rigorous search process which is described and discussed in Chapter 3. The dataset totals 39 items, 16 of which were analysed in full, the rest in passages. All texts are authored by psychotherapists and psychoanalysts of diverse theoretical orientation and were published between 1969 to 2012. Nine texts are explicitly and mainly focused on unbidden visualizations (Althofer, 1983; Appel, 2000; Gardner, 1983; Kern, 1978; Laquercia, 1998; Lothane, 2007; Marcus, 1997; Reiser, 1999; Schust-Briat, 1996). All texts embed the clinical material on the psychotherapist's experience of unbidden visualization, which provides the data for my study, in discussions of a wide range of clinical and conceptual topics. They are: therapeutic uses of countertransference in relation to enactment and self-disclosure; the psychoanalyst's free association or free experiencing or reverie; the interplay of unconscious fantasy; the concept of the analysing instrument, the concept of the analytic third; theoretical discussions of subjectivity and intersubjectivity; the idea of the enigmatic in psychoanalysis; and the aforementioned discussion of neurological processes connected to unconscious experience.

From a general perspective two conceptual contexts can be distinguished in the majority of texts from which I gathered the data: a) discussions and conceptualizations of unverbalized communication and the nature of unconscious communication; and b) the therapeutic use of countertransference experience, broadly conceived and including receptive mental states, to further the understanding of the patient and the intersubjective dynamic of the relationship with the patient. Appendix A provides a full list of all texts analysed in this study.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organised into chapters which are internally divided into sections. Following this chapter, Chapter 2 deals with the methodological frame for my thematic analysis. I present arguments and reasoning that justify the hermeneutic-interpretive framework and the particular approach to thematic analysis that I take. Chapter 3 is a detailed account of the method, of the procedures and processes involved in how I carried out the thematic analysis. I not only provide a clear description of what I did, but also why I did it and embed in this account some theorising of the method. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the presentation of results. Chapter 4 is a detailed description and discussion of nine major themes which I established through the analytic process. This includes tables for each theme and its subthemes as well as data extracts to illustrate them. Chapter 5 is an extended description of two additional major themes, relating to the experience of time and paradox, which have dynamic qualities and which were therefore best put into a separate chapter lest the results presentation becomes too unwieldy. Chapter 6 is a discussion of these findings in relation to psychoanalytic concepts and with particular emphasis on the interrelationships among themes. This chapter ends with sections on some clinical implications of findings and on limitations of the research and ideas for further research. Chapter 7 ends the dissertation with a short concluding statement.

Terms Used and Style Format

Patient, analysand, client. I use the term *patient* as the generic term for people who see psychotherapists and psychoanalysts for treatment. In the texts that I analysed the terms used mostly are *analysand* or *patient*. At present *client* is widely used in the allied health sector in New Zealand, but I reject this term's emphasis on a transactional business rather than a professional care relationship and see its use as symptomatic of the prevalent ideology which obscures the personal and emotional in our society (Jameson, 1990).

Psychoanalyst, psychotherapist, therapist, analyst. I use the terms *psychoanalyst*, *psychotherapist,* and in context also simply *therapist* or *analyst,* interchangeably. The same applies to *psychoanalysis* or *analysis* (unless I refer to thematic analysis) and *psychotherapy* or *therapy*. When making reference to the psychotherapists who are the authors of the texts in the dataset I also use *author/authors*. This dissertations deals exclusively with psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. The differences between these two treatment

approaches are difficult to delineate in present practice and beyond the scope of this study. Suffice to say that psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy share an intellectual tradition founded by Sigmund Freud and developed in parallel.

Spontaneous visual image. I use the terms spontaneous visual image, spontaneous image, unbidden image, unbidden visual image and unbidden visualization interchangeably and depending on context.

Style. For text style and formatting I follow the 6th Edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA 6) as required. But I apply a few minor exceptions which enhance the reader's ease of reading. APA 6 was developed to enable digital scanning of manuscripts and not a real reader's experience. For example, I inserted extra space between paragraphs and before headings, omitted the capitalized running page header, and placed the list of references at the very end of the document.

Chapter 2
Methodology

In this chapter I outline the methodological framework for the approach and method, a thematic analysis, which I take in this dissertation. The chapter is divided into sections in which I discuss the research objective and design, the interpretive hermeneutic framework, what a thematic analysis is and my particular approach to it, why I chose thematic analysis and not another method as well as some implications involved in thematically analysing published academic texts. The detailed description of the actual research process and procedures is the subject of the subsequent Chapter 3.

Research Objective and Design

Objective. The objective of this dissertation is to find out what the experience of unbidden visualizations is for psychotherapists—how they experience unbidden visualizations, understand them and make use of them in the therapeutic relationship. The overall aim is to provide an integrative understanding of psychotherapists' spontaneous mental images in clinical practice across the range of different reported experiences.

I chose to focus on experience and clinical practice, because this is where an analysis has the potential to present new meanings relating to the nature of the experience itself and therefore also the potential to contribute new perspectives on the very psychoanalytic concepts and theory which authors bring to their experience in their discussions (e.g., the analytic third or relationality).

Question. The research question is threefold, covering the experience of unbidden visualizations, the visualization itself, and the therapeutic context in which it occurred.

- How do psychotherapists describe their experience of spontaneously occurring visual images? What is this experience like? How do they understand this experience?
- How do psychotherapists understand and reflect on these images and their function in the therapeutic process?
- How have psychotherapists made clinical use of these images, in the therapeutic relationship with their patient?

Design. The research is designed as an examination of a limited set of texts (published journal articles and book sections) authored by psychoanalytic practitioners.

The method I apply is a thematic analysis, sometimes also called theme-analysis (Meier, Boivin, & Meier, 2006). Thematic analysis has been widely used as a loosely defined research method in the social sciences. There are recent attempts to develop it more systematically and enhance its robustness for psychology, psychotherapy and counselling research. With few exceptions the method is applied to empirical information gained from interviewing research participants transposed to interview transcripts (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Joffe, 2012; McLeod, 2011; Meier et al., 2006; Pollio & Ursiak, 2006; Rennie, 2012; Ward, House, & Hamer, 2009).

For this study I am adapting this method to analyse published material authored by practitioners. Braun & Clarke (2006) provided clear principles and practical steps involved in thematic analysis which I will discuss in a section below. They celebrated the method as “flexible” yet “methodologically sound” if it is applied robustly (2006, p. 78).

The research is designed to find out what themes *link* different psychotherapists’ experience and use of unbidden visualizations. In all the texts included in this study, psychoanalytic therapists wrote more or less extensively about their experience of spontaneous mental images. The texts were selected for the details they provide about the analyst’s experience and reflections. These accounts, the descriptions of unbidden images and their use provide the data for the theme analysis. The interpretation of these findings, the themes, provides a way to capture the story the data tell which goes beyond the story that the practitioners themselves tell or the conclusions they reach. Thematic analysis captures meanings across different practitioners’ experiences, across the variety of approaches in psychoanalysis they represent, and across a variety of therapy cases.

As a thematic analysis of published texts this study falls into the category of a literature review, broadly conceived. In effect, the research design is a process of reviewing a systematically put together set of literature, whereby the review is carried out as a robust thematic analysis. But unlike more conventional literature reviews which aim to condense and critically examine the status and argumentation of published literature on a topic, this study analyses meanings across a set of selected publications in order to discern patterns—themes—for the purposes stated above.

The Hermeneutic-Interpretive Framework

While Braun & Clarke (2006) posit that thematic analysis as a method is not tied to any particular theory and methodology, other writers on thematic analysis and qualitative research in general recognize that it is foremost a method framed by interpretative and therefore hermeneutic principles. In fact, Braun & Clarke's descriptions and guidelines suggest they see thematic analysis as interpretive (Rennie, 2012). The aim of my research is to identify meaning in texts and to analyse recurring themes or patterns of meanings in order to understand the experience of psychotherapists' unbidden visualizations. Thematic analysis is a method to identify meanings which is an interpretive act, and hermeneutics is the study and theorizing of interpretation.

McLeod categorically stated that "qualitative research is always, to greater or lesser extent, a *hermeneutic* enterprise—where interpretation occurs, further competing interpretations are always possible" (2011, p. 45). He points to the incompleteness of qualitative research in terms of claims to absolute truth, because interpretation always involves the subjectivities of the researcher and research subject and how they interact. It is situated in real life encounters and experience. Even when the subjects of research are texts, as in this dissertation, the same hermeneutic principles apply. After all, hermeneutics developed in the field of textual interpretation and at its core is a respectful, self-conscious relationship between reader and text.

Hans-Georg Gadamer was the principal modern philosopher of hermeneutics, and he conceptualized understanding as "genuine conversation", whether between reader and text or between people (Gadamer, 1960, 2004). What stands in the way of such genuine conversation are preconceptions, prejudice and bias, which for Gadamer are primarily formed by what he calls tradition. These are the preconditions for understanding, be they the very terms by which we try to understand or historically and culturally embedded biases, but "conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us" (Gadamer as quoted in Stern, 2013, p. 110). In my mind these ideas bear some resemblance to phantasy but this cannot be explored here.

Gadamer's crucial insight was, however, that prejudice and tradition also constitute understanding, because, as Tom Nagel (1974, 1986) put it, "there is no view from nowhere" (see also Strathern, 1991). Entailed in this position (and explicitly theorized by Gadamer) is a critique of phenomenology and ideas of bracketing which

are also often cited in qualitative research, i.e., the identification and *setting aside* of prejudices and preconceptions as distortions in order to reach essential understanding (Ahern, 1999). Rather than discussing this idea in general here, I have embedded these issues of bracketing in my discussion of the method as I applied it, in Chapter 3.

Although "we are not [merely] led astray by the traditions that do so much to shape our understanding; we are *made* of them", in Stern's (2013, p. 110) astute phrase, hermeneutics does not posit that we are hermetically closed off by our preconceptions or that understanding is mere reproduction. Rather, hermeneutics suggests that through self-awareness, imagination and dialogue, through entering the "hermeneutic circle", new experience, new understanding and knowledge are possible. The hermeneutic circle is an iterative process in relationship with an object (text, person, tradition), a movement in a circular pattern, back and forth between available parts and the imagined whole of its reality. In this imaginative process one's situatedness and subjectivity are ways into this relationship, into recognition of the object or other, which allows for questioning and in which we have our preconceptions questioned by the object or other. Perhaps, with Milner in mind, we might say that this is an iterative process between a wide lensed focus and a narrow, detailed attention focus (Milner, 1936, 1967). Significantly, Stern posits this iterative dialogic process as play:

> The event of understanding is unbidden . . . it comes to be, it happens, it takes place beyond our capacity to control it . . . when we are able to allow history, or tradition, or prejudice, to act freely within us. (2013, p. 111)

In terms of qualitative research strategies based on hermeneutics, Rennie (2012) offered a version of "methodical hermeneutics" for research that specifically involves the interpretation and conceptualization of the meaning of lived experience. He emphasised the integral role imagination has in the hermeneutic circle, as do other methodological researchers who emphasise receptivity, self-reflection and understanding as crucial to the interpretive process (Given, 2008; Schwandt, 2000; Willis, 2007). In practice and applied to my research, the hermeneutic circle is a dialogue between texts as primary data (the parts) and myself as the reader who has already existing ideas and clinical experience—prejudice—by which I imagine the whole of the text-authors' experiences in the course of my interpreting these parts. In turn, the imagined whole, along with my prejudice, will be altered in the course of this circular, dialogical process of understanding different parts.

From a hermeneutic perspective Rennie also argued that the trustworthiness and validity of the research depends, among other factors, on a systematic, transparent approach to interpretation. To be effective, this strategy relies, according to McLeod (2011), "on the reader of a study being provided with sufficient procedural information for them to be confident that the findings are reality-based or 'objective' rather than riven by the personal predilections of the researcher" (p. 45). For these reasons Chapter 3 provides an experience-near account of the way in which I carried out the thematic analysis for this study, including my rationale and reasoning for the decisions and modifications I made. The aim is to provide sufficient information about the procedures and the process to ensure that the trustworthiness of my results is established.

What is Thematic Analysis?

McLeod described thematic analysis concisely as a method seeking "to uncover patterns of meaning in informant [sic] accounts of experience" (2011, pp. 145-147). Here the words "uncover", "pattern" and "meaning" point to the purpose of thematic analysis: it is a method applied to uncover and interpret meaning, particularly meaning patterns. The idea of uncovering meanings leads to existential questions about their status. Were they intended by authors and it is left to readers to uncover them, or are they discovered without having been intended by authors? This depends on whether one tends more towards a realist, or a nominalist or a hermeneutic, dialogic stance, and most researchers will navigate a combination of all three.

In this study I take at face value the "informant accounts", the published accounts of practicing psychoanalysts about their clinical experience. This means I suspend judgment on how accurate they represent what was going on in their minds and the consulting room, because I have no tools or extenuating knowledge to critically examine this question. But taking them at face value means that I ascribe trustworthiness to these academic and peer reviewed publications. However, my thematic analysis combines different accounts and thus constructs a new context for each account. It creates meaning in the hermeneutic sense, especially in the relationships and links between individual accounts. The themes the analysis determines are generated in this new comparative context. The context itself comes about by, a) the texts included in the study providing each a context for each other, and b) by my interpretations of the texts in the hermeneutic dialogue. Hermeneutically speaking, then, new meanings (themes) are not assigned to pre-existing meanings or evidence, rather, they emerge in the process of interpretation (Stern, 2013).

Braun & Clarke (2006) provide a step-by-step guide in which they characterized six phases of the thematic analysis process (see also Rennie, 2012, p. 394). Although I modified parts of their approach, as I will outline below and describe in detail in Chapter 3, these phases structured the research. They are logical phases of the research process, but they are not a linear sequence of tasks carried out. As Willis stated, thematic analysis is a “nonlinear, recursive (iterative) process in which data collection, data analysis, and interpretation occur and influence each other” (2007, p. 202).

1. **Familiarization with the data by reading and re-reading texts, noting down initial ideas**. For this study this meant searching and reading literature on the topic and defining the precise research questions. At the end of this phase, the set of texts included in the analysis (the dataset) was defined through a systematic search in which I applied inclusion and exclusion criteria. I describe this phase in the first three sections of Chapter 3.

2. **Attending to interesting features of the data**. This involves identifying text segments relevant to the research question, identifying meanings in these text segments and recording them as codes. This phase, and the mechanics and rationale for coding, are described in two sections in Chapter 3.

3. **Searching for themes**. Here codes are collated into a first level of themes, and I describe this phase in the section “Identifying First-Order Themes” in Chapter 3.

4. **Reviewing themes**. This involves the iterative process of relating the parts of the analysis to the whole of the dataset. It entails checking and rechecking themes of every level against the initial codes and at some point also against the original text segments. I describe this phase, which needed to be carried out at several moments in the thematizing process, in the last two sections of Chapter 3.

5. **Defining and naming themes**. In this phase first-order themes are further collated into higher order themes which are clearly defined. In Braun & Clarke (2006) this process is vague and not well described. As a process it can be conceptualized differently. I decided to use a process of clustering which creates theme networks that define the highest order themes. This approach was inspired by Attride-Sterling (2001). Chapter 3, section “Identifying Second- and Third-Order Themes” is a detailed discussion of this phase and process.

6. **Producing the report**. This is conceived as a further step in the analysis, because the themes are described and compelling data extracts are used to explain each theme. I do this in Chapters 4 and 5 where I describe each major theme of my analysis in detail.

What is a Theme?

Braun & Clarke stated that "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question . . [that] represents some level of *patterned* response or meaning within the dataset" (2006, p. 82). They also emphasise that a pattern is not to be determined by a quantifiable measure (frequency, number of mentions across the data segments) but through "researcher judgment" which determines "keyness" of a theme because "it captures something important in relation to the overall research question" (p. 82). They locate this judgment mainly in the interpretation of themes in the reviewing phase.

Citing Boyatzis (1998) they stress that especially a thematic analysis that aims at the latent or implied level of what has been expressed, such as underlying ideas and conceptualizations, involves interpretative work at the level of theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Other researchers pointed out that a thematic analysis is particularly suited for discovering latent, tacit or implicit meanings (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2012; Pollio & Ursiak, 2006). This applies especially when it is an inductive or data-driven thematic analysis, which this dissertation is, in which themes are developed bottom up, from the individual instances of meanings in a text.

McLeod (2011) makes an analogy to *theme* in music:

> The concept of "theme" is used in music to refer to a segment of melody, or emotional resonance, that occurs throughout the piece of music. A musical theme is a configuration of musical cues that has particular meaning for the listener. (p. 145)

In the analogy applied to my research the segments of melody would be the segments of text in which I discerned initial themes (codes, McLeod's "musical clues"). His idea of configuration ties in with my analysis of themes across a diverse body of texts and my emphasis in the course of analysis on interrelationships among themes (see Chapter 6).

McLeod also speaks of "emotional resonance" which may sound like a weak idea for academic research. But in my view it is vital, especially for a study in the field of psychoanalytic psychotherapy and on a topic in the area of unconscious processes and communications. For me "emotional resonance" means that this kind of thematic

analysis needs and makes use of the subjectivity of the researcher—of a resonating subjectivity capable of making judgments about what is important, connecting, significant or simply note worthy. It speaks against a mechanistic kind of analysis that could be done by a computer counting the occurrence of words, say. And because themes are configurations that "have particular meaning for the listener"—here researcher—the rigour of the analysis will need to show, rather than merely assert, how the generation of meaning happened and by what rationales. Researchers of thematic analysis as a method stress that it is important to disclose the techniques researchers use and to make explicit the assumptions, rationales and judgments entailed in the analysis, and I do this is Chapter 3 (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012).

The non-mechanistic nature of a sound thematic analysis becomes even clearer when one takes into account McLeod's (2011) careful discussion of a theme:

> the precise meaning of [a] theme is hard to put into words . . . the actual sense of what is being conveyed is implicit—there is a feeling that there is more to be understood if the listener [or reader] were to allow himself or herself a few moments of reflection . . . [a theme] is more than the content of what a person is saying . . . more than the person's answer to a specific question . . . a recurring pattern which conveys something significant about what the world . . . *means* to a person. (p. 145, *orig. emph.*)

He thus points to an associative, sensing mode as a kind of reading and understanding involved in identifying themes and their interrelationships. The reflection necessary to express a theme in words, to ascertain it and to grasp its significance, is time consuming. For me, the immersion into the texts and themes was an essential part of this process, indeed somewhat akin to immersion into a piece of music or into the interpretation of a dream.

My Approach to Thematic Analysis

While an inductive thematic analysis is a method suited to my research objective, in the course of the research I realised that I could not just follow Braun & Clarke's (2006) guidelines, but I needed to modify procedures to fit my topic, my sources and to the way my mind works. As Joffe points out, "work becomes scientific by adopting methods of study *appropriate* to its subject matter" while going about finding answers to research questions in a systematic way (2012, p. 219).

The four most important issues I had to address were:

a) How to reduce the complexity of meaning without compromising neither important meaning differences nor expressive, rich and differentiated metaphors and

phrases authors used. Preserving such details and tensions of meanings led to important findings in the way I analysed themes, as the results in Chapter 5 and my discussion in Chapter 6 show.

b) To conceptualize the process of theme identification other than as a hierarchical funnelling process which is used in most thematic analyses and in which higher order themes subsume lower order themes under a commonality. Here I adapted Attride-Stirling's (2001) model of thematic networks which proceeds as a clustering process whereby lower order themes cluster into a network which constitutes a higher order theme.

c) How to integrate my subjectivity into the thematizing process so that certain sensibilities that I bring to the interpretation of meaning, e.g., in relation to time and temporal processes, can be made useful in the hermeneutic sense. Here recent work by Loewenthal (Cayne & Loewenthal, 2007; Loewenthal, 2007a, 2007b) on integrating ideas of relationality into a psychotherapy research methodology were helpful.

d) To analyse the interrelationships among final themes and integrate these as findings, an element implied in Attride-Sterling's model but discussed in Pollio & Ursiak (2006).

I describe these crossroads and issues in detail in Chapter 3, embedded in the description of the actual research, and I discuss their effect on findings in Chapter 6. Here I want to elaborate briefly on point a).

When the authors whose texts I analysed were reflecting on their experience of unbidden visualizations they often used metaphorical language to grasp their inner experience—what it is like—and convey their thoughts on visualizations (e.g., Laquercia, 1998; Marcus, 1997). These experience-near descriptions and reflections seemed to me to have the greatest potential to produce rich data and, through the analysis, findings on what is implied between the lines of explicit statements, i.e., on parts of their experience that may have been registered unconsciously. This idea comes from my previous profession, social anthropology, where an analysis of "the metaphors we live by" is a standard approach to exploring tacit understandings and implicit meaning, including meaning that is taken for granted and not articulated (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). Metaphors and analogies are also listed by Ryan & Bernard (2003) among the top three of the seven "scrutiny techniques" for interpretations of communication or observations.

Also, my authors' reflections on their visualization experiences involve technical terms and theoretical concepts. The other two of the top three scrutiny techniques identified by Ryan & Bernard (2003) are "repetition" and "indigenous categories or typologies"— as opposed to "[data]-analyst-constructed typologies". In relation to my dataset I read for this *author's constructs and concepts* and *author's idioms of expressions and use of concepts*. Consistent with my general approach, I approached discussions of concepts by focusing on how authors draw on concepts to explain their experience and to a much lesser degree on how they develop their argument in relation to the concept.

For example, an author may write about an experience he understands as a reverie and comment on his particular view of reverie as he illustrates his experience. Such passages, including parts of his discussion of reverie, provided me with valuable material on how the author makes meaning of his experience. Once the author engages in the construction of a more abstract argument towards theory building—of *reverie* as a concept in a wider theoretical debate—I no longer analysed for meanings. Bollas (1992, 1995, 1999) and Ogden (1997b, 2001) are pertinent examples of this.

Finally, I want to justify the length of Chapter 3 which describes the research process in some detail including the mechanics of recording the thematizing process step by step. This description is important not only because of questions of validity in general, but for specific reasons to do with the research design. They are: a) the analytical process is inductive and data-driven; b) it is a single researcher/author study which both enables important features—e.g., coherence— and disables others—such as the inherent critical control of working in a team; and c) the thematic analysis was carried out without using a software package but by using manual, paper-based procedures. Therefore it is important to enable the reader to understand the research process so that they are able to evaluate the validity and soundness of results. The deficit in point b) was addressed by working with a supervisor and by consulting in a small supervision group.

Why Thematic Analysis and Not Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis?

Thematic analysis is closely related to interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Both focus on lived experience and aim to give voice to research participant's perceptions and meanings (Cayne & Loewenthal, 2006; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Joffe, 2012; Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Indeed, a form of thematic analysis is part of IPA, but not all thematic analyses contribute to an IPA. IPA

and thematic analysis differ in the details of the analytical process and particular techniques, but they are not easily differentiated. In both it is essential that findings be grounded in first-hand accounts collected by researchers and “go beyond observable material to more implicit, tacit theme and thematic structures”(Joffe, 2012)

One important difference between the methods is, I suggest, that in IPA there is more stress on “giving voice” to research participants and in thematic analysis on analysing these voices. A thematic analysis re-contexualizes and inter-relates the different voices to discern patterns of meaning germane to all (the themes). The analysis differentiates interrelationships among themes as a critical element, and I applied the method in this way throughout.

My research aim is to understand the subjective experience of practitioners. This would rather suggest an IPA approach. In my case, however, the analysis is applied to written accounts that are part of highly crafted texts published in academic journals. Access to the subjective experience of practitioners is therefore constrained. It is limited to what they were willing to convey in the context of the theoretical argument which frames the clinical case material they present and in the context of an academic publication. As Ogden (2005) reminded us:

> When we read an analyst’s written account of an experience with a patient, what we are reading is not the experience itself, but he writer’s creation of new (literary) experience while (seemingly) writing the experience he had with the analysand . . . At the same time, the “fiction” that is created in words must reflect the reality that occurred. (p. 110)

Of course, during an interview a therapist would also provide an account of an experience and the interviewer is not a direct witness to the experience. But the interviewer would share directly in the experience of creating the account. This context of the conversation allows the interviewer to pick up non-verbal clues and a sense what is not explicitly said. This is information which supports the subsequent analysis of transcripts and which, for example, enables an IPA aimed at a rich discussion of subjective experience. This does not apply to the analysis published texts, as Ogden so eloquently stated, because they are crafted, written in a genre, and the clinical material is used purposefully in the context of the publication (see also Antilla-Thomas, 2012, p. 116). However, as Ogden concluded, writers and readers of psychoanalytic texts are asked to trust that clinical accounts do reflect the reality of the analyst’s/author’s experience. Therefore, I take accounts at face value but interpret them not only with the

author’s purpose in mind, but also by considering their experience as I, as reader, imagine it to have happened.

My thematic analysis, then, is not an analysis of texts in search of the authors’ intended meaning alone. Although understanding the meanings of unbidden visualizations which authors are trying to convey is a crucial part of any analytical reading and good interpretation, the analysis goes beyond these meanings. As Joffe argues, “TA is best suited to elucidating the specific nature of a given group’s conceptualization of the phenomenon under study”, and its strength is to “capture latent meaning” (Joffe, 2012, p. 212).

It seems to me that this is a particularly salient point when analysing literary texts in the sense Ogden describes above. I believe the creative edge of such research lies in the stories clinicians write about their experience—in the narrative itself, the metaphors, and the less theorised, descriptive parts of their publications. In this sense, I carried out a thematic analysis of the data—published texts— which I conceptualized in closest possible analogy to a thematic analysis of transcripts of spoken conversations and for which the method was originally designed. I aim to capture the reality of psychoanalytic psychotherapists’ inner experience both as they recognise and describe it, and as I recognize and interpret it in their accounts.

Chapter 3
Method

This chapter is a description of the procedures and processes involved in carrying out the thematic analysis. These include search and data collection procedures and the reiterative process of analysis and theme determination. My aim is to be as open as possible about the research process and why I applied the method the way I did. This is a crucial element in establishing the trustworthiness of the research. Also, subjective judgements during the analytic process are inevitable in qualitative research. Rather than something to be avoided, subjectivity needs to be explained and used productively (Loewenthal, 2007a). Therefore, being explicit about decisions that shaped the research and about my rationale enables a reader to evaluate critically the research process and its findings. As Joffe (2012) stated, the crucial elements for evaluating any research are also elements of a high quality thematic analysis: an account of how the knowledge was produced, of precisely what method was used and how, and the creation of “a transparent trail” of the process of data selection and analysis (p. 219).

This chapter is structured into sections following the sequence of steps in the research process.

1. Text search: the search procedures of identifying and selecting publications which together make up the dataset which provides the data.
2. Identifying data: the identification in the selected publications of chunks of text as data, called text segments or meaning units.
3. Establishing data (meanings) to be analysed: the identification and interpretation of meanings in these text segments, called coding.
4. Process of analysis: a process involving several phases and levels of identifying themes.

The early stages of collecting and preparing data overlapped temporally: I ventured into identifying text segments and initial coding while still reading widely through my search results. This was useful because I could revise my search strategies and sharpen my focus on what data I was looking for in texts. The stages of theme analysis, however, followed a clear sequence, as described below.

Searching for Texts

What is the recruitment of research participants in empirical research is in this study the search for suitable and topical material in the published literature. This section describes the search procedures I used to ensure that I could select a representative set of texts. This step entailed some unforeseen difficulties which I had to address and which I also explain.

As mentioned earlier, my search was determined by my research question which had three parts:

- How do psychotherapists describe their experience of spontaneously occurring visual images? What is this experience like? How do they understand this experience?
- How do psychotherapists understand and reflect on these images and their function in the therapeutic process?
- How have psychotherapists made clinical use of these images, in the therapeutic relationship with their patient?

As a preliminary step I familiarized myself with the literature by reading through a large number of topical psychoanalytic publications which I found through searches in databases such as OVID and PEP (Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing) and the AUT and University of Auckland library catalogues. From this I learnt what I needed to take into account in the systematic search for topical material. Most importantly, I learnt that there is no established concept for the phenomenon I am investigating nor a corpus of literature. Rather, the topic has been written about in a variety of contexts and often in relation to clinical material which authors included to support arguments which were, in the main, not strictly about my topic.

Search Procedures

The systematic search in databases was hampered by several issues. First, my research topic is not an established concept. Second, this lead to difficulties in carrying out systematic searches in the two suitable databases (PEP and OVID). Third, there are peculiarities to psychoanalytic publishing that hamper search database search strategies. In this subsection I address these issues in turn and describe how I proceeded.

Search terms. “Image” is a generic term and even when paired with “psychoanalysis” in a keyword search, the number of results is too large to manage. The terms “mental image” and “mental imagery” are used in cognitive psychology and

yields equally high numbers of results. In these results I occasionally found articles in which unbidden visualizations were mentioned, but rarely did I find detailed description and reflection of the experience and only very few with a focus on my topic.

Additionally, different authors use different terms and concepts to refer to what I call unbidden visualizations. Here are some examples of terms and phrases authors in the dataset used to refer unbidden visualizations:

- visual image
- visualization
- reverie image
- reverie
- visual association
- image association
- spontaneous image
- fantasy image
- symbolic imagery
- inner experience
- countertransference image
- I saw with the mind's eye (and similar purely descriptive phrases)

Contemporary object relations oriented psychoanalysts, for example Bollas (1992, 2002) and Lothane (2006, 2010), tend to write in terms of *association* and *analyst's free association*, while more intersubjectively oriented psychoanalysts tend to use *reverie* (e.g., Ogden, 1997b, 2001); but both free association and reverie involve a wider range of sensory experiences than unbidden images or visual images. Yet others conceptualize their work in terms of *fantasy* (Marcus, 1997), or *inner experience* or *countertransference* (Jacobs, 1991, 1993).

Table 1 illustrates my initial database searches, showing the search terms, the search field in which terms were entered, and the number of results. The column "On Topic" lists items that contained material on the topic but did not fulfil the selection criteria (which I explain below). The column "Selected" list the number of publications selected for inclusion in the dataset, a step completed much later in the searching process, however, and which I explain below also.

Table 1

Database Searches

Search Term	Search Field	Database	Hits	On Topic	Selected
visual image	paragraph	PEP	902	n/a	n/a
image	title	PEP	215	n/a	n/a
imagery + psychoanalysis	keywords	OVID	148	33	4
imagery	title	PEP	60	3	1
visual association	paragraph	PEP	24	3	2
reverie image	paragraph	PEP	76	6	2
spontaneous image	paragraph	PEP	132	3	2

Database search peculiarities. There are distinct problems with both databases (OVID and PEP) for these kinds of search. PEP is an designed as an archive, and its search facilities are not as reliable as mainstream databases. For example, a title search is not fully accurate and fails to list a complete set. This became apparent when I knew of an article that did not show in a search. Its main disadvantage is, though, that there is no keyword search function and that the "paragraph search" is an in-text search. The OVID database has much more reliable and flexible search facilities. However, it does not cover all the psychoanalytic literature archived in PEP, and as the main database for psychology it covers mostly non-psychoanalytic literature. Consequently it lists a large number of search results (unless one can search using psychoanalytic terminology).

For these reasons I did not systematically assess the first two searches listed in the Table 1 above. The keywords search in OVID resulted in four titles, of which three were suitable for analysis in full (Althofer, 1983; Kern, 1978; Schust-Briat, 1996), and one in passages (Shaddock, 2010). The results of the PEP searches listed in Table 1 were significant to this research. For example the search for "imagery" in the title yielded Laquercia's (1998) article which is the fullest treatment I found of a psychotherapist's unbidden visualization experiences. But as Table 1 shows, these searches were not an efficient way to go about this.

Psychoanalytic publishing peculiarities. I became aware of differences when accessing psychoanalytic literature for research compared to working with research literature in the social sciences and psychology. Many psychoanalytic journals do not define keywords for an article which excludes this important search method. Similarly, psychoanalytic publishers appear to afford authors a lot more freedom in choosing titles so that titles may consist of an apposite turn of phrase rather than precisely capturing the article content. Appendix A lists all 39 articles and books that comprise the dataset of this dissertation. A brief look at the titles reveals that only a few contain terms that would facilitate a database search for my topic. For example, Marcus (1997) *On Knowing What One Knows*, Reiser (1999) *Memory, Empathy, and Interactive Dimensions of Psychoanalytic Process*, Jacobs (1997) *In Search of the Mind of the Analyst: A Progress Report*, or the book by Gardner (1983), simply called *Self Inquiry,* in which he addresses the research topic throughout.

In addition, I was aware of articles on my topic which are not available through any database (e.g., Appel, 2000) but ought to be considered for the dataset as well as other publications by authors who theorized in the area of my research, e.g. Bollas, who predominantly published books rather than journal articles.

Extending the search strategy. At this stage I made the required presentation of my project to teachers and peers. I discussed these issues and difficulties of data collection and received valuable feedback. As a result, I combined several search techniques which loosened up the systematic search method, but paired that with clearly defined selection and exclusion criteria to determine a dataset. The next section describes this part of the process and how I completed the search.

Defining the Dataset

The aim was to define a dataset that provided rich material, contained a manageable number of texts for a thematic analysis to be carried out without computer assisted coding. In addition, I was concerned about reducing variables relating to different psychotherapeutic models (e.g., Junigian, psychosynthesis) or specialised work (e.g., with children, or unbidden visualizations in response to the patient's dreams) but to keep the phenomenon under study (the psychotherapist's unbidden visualizations) tightly defined. This meant that I could interpret the results of my thematic analysis, especially variations of themes and interrelationships among them, as significant in relation to the phenomenon and which otherwise could relate to these variables. In other words, the data needed to be comparable to be suitable for analysis.

I defined the following inclusion (or selection) and exclusion criteria.

Selection criteria. A text needed to fulfil the following:

- Does a text contain an account and discussion of the inner experience of the psychotherapist, who is also the author of the text, while in session with a patient or while reflecting on a session with a patient?
- And does that inner experience involve an event of a spontaneous visualization of the kind variously named or described as: unbidden image, unbidden visualization, spontaneous image, unbidden visual association, fantasy image, mental image, memory image, seeing in the mind's eye or reverie image?

Exclusion criteria. Excluded from selection were:

- Duplicates, book reviews, and texts unavailable through the AUT or University of Auckland libraries or AUT interlibrary loans.
- Texts in the field of child and adolescent psychotherapy.
- Art psychotherapy texts (i.e., work with material images).
- Jungian analytic psychology, treated here as a specialized approach, because it developed with its own terminology, particularly in the area of imagery and imagination, whose incorporation goes beyond the scope of this project.
- Texts focusing on conflations of patient's and analyst's mental imagery, unless the focus is predominantly on the analyst's experience of unbidden visualizations (e.g., Simon, 1981).
- Texts predominantly focused on questions about the possibility of telepathic processes spontaneous mental images.
- Texts focusing on dream interpretation, including unbidden visualizations relating to patients' dreams. Such texts tend to focus on the relationship of the patient's dream and the analyst's image and rarely on the analyst's inner visualization experience; they constitute a special case, e.g. Ross (1962).

With these criteria in mind I worked through the search results listed in Table 1 and made selections by following these steps in strict sequence which selected the 11 journal articles noted in Table 1:

1. Assessing the title or the abstract or first paragraph. If the article seemed promising, I applied the exclusion criteria.
2. Carrying out a digital search in the article for instances of the terms "image" or "visualization". If these terms were found,

3. Assessing whether the use of these terms refers to clinical material, and if so,

4. Applying the selection criterion.

In addition, I used selected articles which fully addressed my topic for further searches by searching their list of references (searching back in time); I then applied the same selection procedure outlined above to any suitable items. I also used the search function "Who cites this?" in PEP which allows a search of all articles in the database which cite the particular item (searching forward in time); I again applied the same selection procedure. Where an article cited a relevant book, I assessed it by applying selection procedure, either by accessing it online or by skim reading. Additionally, I carried out searches of the AUT library book catalogue.

These additional search methods yielded significant books and articles for inclusion in the dataset (e.g., Gardner, 1983; Jacobs, 1993, 1999; McLaughlin, 1975; Ogden, 1997b). Additionally, I included an article rich in insightful discussion of the analyst's inner experience of a unbidden visualization, its effect and function, but relating to the analyst himself rather than a patient (Symington, 2003).

In sum, the dataset was determined by using several search methods which were limited by the rigorous application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The search involved a systematic database search of a few relevant terms. Faced with the rarity of articles focusing on the phenomenon under study together with the lack of an established conceptual term for it, the search was extended by a controlled and analogous version of the snowball or chain-referral sampling method, often used for recruiting research participants in the social sciences, and by the inclusion of a few pertinent texts which were brought to my attention. The limits on the snowball method were set by using citations only of those texts which were fully or almost fully analysable, i.e., that fulfilled the selection criteria to the fullest.

The aim of this search procedure to define the dataset was to find articles that were both "on topic" and to put a dataset together that was manageable for this particular project. Joffe addressed factors that enhance the quality of thematic analyses and argued that the analysis must capture the "bulk of the data" and neither give too much weight to the frequency of recurring meanings, nor select only text segments that support assumptions or already established arguments (2012, p. 219). In my view the bulk of the data could be captured if the dataset provides enough material for analysis and is at the same time of a manageable size, i.e., allowed me to carry out the required

close reading and immersion into the data necessary for a data-driven thematic analysis. Especially a manual thematic analysis requires the researcher to work with and hold in mind a great number of text segments, codes and themes.

The result is a dataset that includes 39 texts from a diverse range of psychoanalytic therapists who provide detailed accounts of their unbidden image experience (see Chapter 1 for a description of that range). Appendix A is for a list of all texts included in the dataset. 16 texts are fully on topic and 23 items provide relevant passages. All contain clinical material, except Symington (2003) who described a self-analysis which fulfils the selection criteria if one accepts that the patient in this case is also the psychoanalyst. The number of unbidden image events contained in the dataset exceeds 80 (the precise number depends on how sequences of images are counted) which are listed in Appendix B.

With this dataset I do not make claims to completeness. I do not know how many more topical texts exist. But given the research parameters, this dataset is an accurate result of a combination of systematic database searches, the use of citation searches and reference searches, and the inclusion of some purposefully considered texts. It represents a trustworthy set of pertinent texts as a result of a rigorously defined and applied set of collection procedures.

Process of Data Analysis

I analysed the texts in the dataset using an inductive or data-driven thematic analysis in a process which involved several reiterative stages. In this section I describe this process. The sequence of stages in this thematic analysis is as follows:

a) Segmenting all texts in the dataset into units of meaning.

b) Coding of meaning in these segments.

c) Generating themes of inclusive orders (*thematizing process*) by analysing and combining codes and identify first-order themes.

d) Clustering first-order themes which results in second and third-order themes (named major themes).

The following subsections deal with each of these stages in the analysis.

Segmenting Texts into Meaning Units

The first was to read all texts carefully to identify relevant passages that deal with my research questions—text segments, also called “extracts” (Braun & Clarke, 2006) or “meaning units” (Meier et al., 2006). Text segments vary in length from

phrases, single sentences, to several sentences or paragraphs. Most identified text segments were in passages presenting clinical cases and discussions of them.

In the course of this careful reading phase I made an important discovery. I recognized that in addition to thinking of my topic as a phenomenon, I needed to think of it as an event, and particularly as an event occurring in the therapeutic process. Most authors describe a clinical situation and their inner state of mind when the unbidden visualization happened. They then proceed to discuss the image and in more or less detail, and continue with a their reflections on what happened in subsequent sessions. Therefore, the psychotherapist's unbidden visualization can be conceptualized as an event that brings about a change to a situation and process. I will take up this insight again in Chapters 5 and 6. Here I want to note it because it influenced the way in which I identified meaningful segments of text—I became sensitive to references to process and time—and how I identified meaning in the coding stage (see below).

As a consequence, I applied the following loose categories to help me in the capture of relevant text segments: situation before the image event; image event; reflection; formulation of intervention; impact as a result of intervention on patient and relationship; assessment and further reflection on intervention; general conclusions about this process. In research using interview transcripts Cayne & Loewenthal (2006) describe a process of discriminating "naturally occurring units of meaning within each transcript" (p. 120). I would not necessarily argue that these units of meaning are "naturally occurring", but I discerned them by paying close attention to the descriptions and views that authors expressed and by noticing my response.

This step of selecting text segments produces the chunks of data in which meaning was going to be interpreted, identified, and codes generated. Already at this stage, then, it was critical to read and discern meanings, to read between the lines and to pick up not only the content of what is said but on how authors expressed it, what metaphors and terms they used.

I recorded text segments by marking them on hard copies of articles and books or by highlighting them in digital copies. If particular metaphors or phrases already stood out, I marked these directly in the text, and I did the same for the unbidden mental images at the centre of my inquiry.

Identifying Meanings—Coding

This step establishes the data for analysis, and the data in a thematic analysis are the meanings identified in text segments. In this subsection I describe the mechanics of this crucial step but I begin with a discussion of some conceptual issues about how to think about coding as a step in a thematic analysis and why I proceeded the way I did.

My focus in this process of determining meanings was on the psychoanalyst's experience of his or her inner experience, the experience of the therapeutic relationship and the description of the unbidden image itself and its effect in the therapy. These are the three areas defined by my research questions. I focused on the psychoanalyst's experience and developed a receptive and responsive way of identifying meaning and jettisoned the categories which helped me to identify text segments. Text segments had to be selected accurately, they had to address the research questions, but understanding meaning has a different aim. I erred rather on the side of recording more than being sparse, i.e., without second guessing when I "heard" the text segment speak to me in a certain way. This is in line with Braun & Clarke's (2006) key advice to code for as many potential themes as possible.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, several researchers of thematic analysis and related phenomenological methods emphasised the importance of bracketing for dealing with bias in this phase (Ahern, 1999; Bazeley, 2009). Cayne & Loewenthal (2006) described some phenomenological research closely related to thematic analysis and developed three "cornerstones" of such research focused on experience: a) *bracketing* preconceptions—or "setting aside judgments, presumptions and theories including personal theories...in order to remain open to [one's] experience as it is given" (p. 119); b) *description* rather than analysis from a particular theoretical position; and c) *horizontalization*, i.e., treating each piece of information with equal regard and rather than quickly ascribing significance to some.

Two of these cornerstones, description and horizontalization are critical to my inductive thematic analysis—to the bottom up approach that ascribes meanings to text segments which are posited as located, explicitly or implicitly, in the data itself. The other, bracketing, is a phenomenological concept which some argue is applicable to any interpretive approach. It is interesting, however, that in a later publication Cayne & Loewenthal (2007) revised their position on bracketing and took a clearer hermeneutic and relational perspective. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the critical issues in dealing with prejudice and potential bias within a hermeneutic approach are self-awareness, self-

reflection and openness to a genuine circular conversation with the other, in which preconceptions are not superimposed nor set aside, but held as part of the circular conversation. Moreover, with additional insights gleaned from relational approaches in psychoanalysis, Cayne & Loewenthal (2007) argued that it is the purposeful use of a researcher's experience in the service of understanding the research subjects which enables creativity and new knowledge to emerge which is valid and objective.

For example, Bollas', Ogden's or Lothane's theorizing of concepts such as *reverie*, *free association* or *analysing instrument* is established and some authors in the dataset make reference to them. With the two cornerstones in mind, I decided to read carefully for turns of phrases and metaphorical expressions that these authors use when they discuss their experience. Rather than running the risk of doing concept analysis by stealth—of the concepts *analyst's experience association* in Bollas or *analyst's reverie* in Ogden—I focused in their work on those passages where they provide detailed accounts of their inner experience and reflections on the therapeutic process in which the spontaneous image occurred. In this way I also made use of my experience as a social anthropologist of working with metaphors and experience-near data. Another example of using my experience self-consciously and in the service of understanding rather than trying to set it aside is my sensibility for concepts, practices and experiences relating to time and temporality, especially how time and temporality affects people in everyday life (Gross, 1998). This sensibility, which became relevant in the process of analysing the themes and results, I will discuss further below.

The coding process was inductive, or data-driven (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means the identification of meaning was based on the data and not predetermined theory and concepts. However, codes, or data-generated meanings, were not subsequently compiled in a "code-book" where they would be defined and reapplied in a systematic second coding step. This would be the case thematic analyses carried out in a team project with several people are involved in coding, or in a deductive or theory-driven thematic analysis.

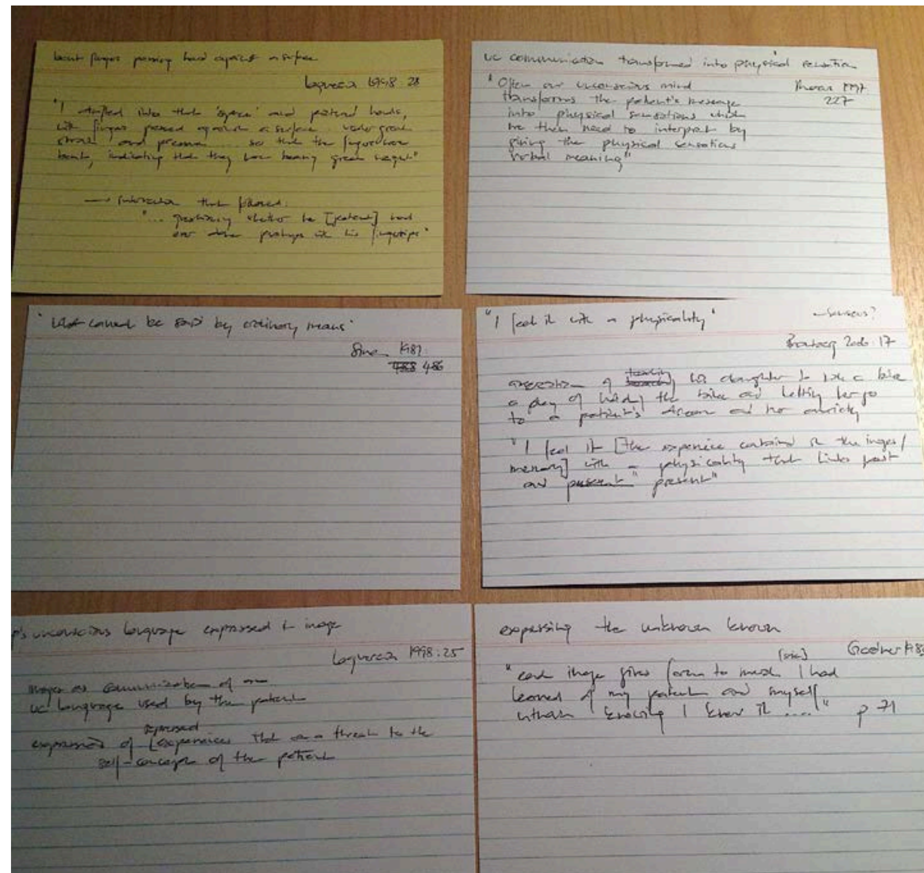
I recorded codes on index cards, accompanied by a reference to the text segment in which I identified the meaning. This involved in many cases a quotation, paraphrase or summary that provides the context of the code or meaning I recorded. In the next stage, the analysis of first-order themes, I found that having this context available on the card was helpful as it clarified the code and gave it a specificity that was still grounded in the original text. Braun & Clarke (2006) warn against losing context for codes and

advise to keep some of the surrounding data of a code. The information I recorded on the code card together with the code maintained a consistency with the original text. This obviated the potential for too quickly grouping similar meanings together as one code and for superimposing meaning. In other words, it supported the aforementioned horizontalization and addressed potential prejudice. As Braun & Clarke (2006) point out, while coding is part of a thematic analysis, codes are not yet the units of analysis (these are the themes); rather, they organise data into meaningful units (p. 88).

I worked my way systematically through all text segments, giving full and equal attention to each, which is a factor stressed by many researchers in this area (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012). While not coding for every possible meaning in a segment, I coded similar to Cayne & Loewenthal (2006). I aimed for the "main element of meaning" and stayed close the language of the original, especially when dealing with "experience-near" expressions and "thick description" of experience (Geertz, 1973).

By way of example, Figure 1 below shows six index cards on which I recorded codes, except for the one in the upper left corner, a yellow index card on which I recorded the content of unbidden visualizations (see Appendix B) .

Figure 1. Code Index Cards



All code cards note the original text segment and the full reference where it can be located in the originating full text. The index card heading is the interpreted, ascribed meaning—the code. Sometimes this is a quotation, e.g., the two cards in the middle, or an excerpt of a full quotation or a paraphrase. In these cases I wrote a note to myself on the card about how I understand the meaning of the code, as on card on the right of the middle row. The top right card shows a full quotation of a text segment which generated several codes which were recorded on different cards. The card on the lower left shows a code and the segment to which it relates is summarized on the card.

This process resulted in 847 code cards. Unlike other researchers who use thematic analysis, I did not code according to a defined and limited set of codes, nor did I make any attempt to compare whether similar codes should be combined into one. Rather, I decided that at this stage of the analysis as much of the original and contextual meaning needed to be preserved and that the comparison and differentiation of codes, relations of similarities and differences among codes, would be addressed at the first level of analysis, when codes are combined into first-order themes. This decision is in keeping with my methodological frame which is an interpretative approach. An advantage of this way of doing things is that all similar codes from the whole dataset are

compared at the same time. I would argue that this allows for a more differentiated development of themes.

Let me describe an example: many authors of my dataset described their experience of an unbidden mental image as “vivid”. A closer reading reveals, however, that even though they use the same word they use it differently because it names experiences that are, on close reading, different. “Vivid” referred to: the “immediate experience” (Singer, 2006), the image’s “immediacy” (Bromberg, 2006, p. 17), the “specificity” of the object seen in the image (Laquercia, 1998, p. 28), the image being “compelling” (Laquercia, 1998, p. 25), the “detailed richness” of the memory that emerged as a “mental picture” (Thomson, 1980, p. 197), or the image being “affectively charged” or “dramatic” (Thomson, 1980, p. 198). With the aim of coding in mind, i.e., the analysis, I want to note here that one of the first-order themes the analysis generated was *vivid* and that all of the above codes were combined there. But, because these precise differentiations—of what the authors meant when using “vivid”—were noted as contexts, the theme also subsumed two codes from a segment authored by someone who did not use the word *vivid*, but described his experience as an “intense feeling” (Ogden, 1999, p. 466) and “emotionally powerful” yet unobtrusive (Ogden, 1997a, p. 585). Yet other instances of *vivid* that were used to connote the intrusiveness or suddenness of the image experience, or its fleeting or disturbing appearance, were combined with other codes and subsumed under different first-order themes.

I believe it is an important intent of a data-driven approach to keep alive the meanings that were identified in texts as codes. Consequently, the codes I chose may be original metaphors, succinct phrases, or catchy expressions. When I generated codes I was careful to choose words that conveyed the sense of the original as I read it. Furthermore, in order to analyse repeated patterns of meaning (themes), the aim was to code the entire content of the relevant text segments and not only particular features. It seemed to me that these themes could only have significance if the meanings that constitute them reflected the original statements and if, as a consequence, they gained their significance as themes through the combination of these meanings.

St. Pierre (2013) provides a powerful critique of coding according to a catalogue of categories, however derived. She argues that the kind of coding I did— which is engaged with the subject matter rather than a sheer labelling and sorting—is a kind of reading, a way of interpreting and thinking about the data that contributes to analysis.

This is especially true when the data are carefully chosen words from carefully constructed texts that are intended to convey experience and complex thought.

Some might object that these meanings extracted from texts which I call *codes* should not be called codes, because an important step is omitted. This is definition of codes in a code book or coding framework after an initial reading of transcripts and before codes are assigned. The coding frame is particularly significant when the thematic analysis is theory-driven (Attride-Stirling, 2001). In data-driven or combined thematic analyses the coding frame also serves as a "conceptual tool" which can be applied consistently and by all researchers of a team (Joffe, 2012). However, Pollio & Ursiak (2006) do not use the term code but "thematic meanings ... mentioned by the participant" for this stage of specifying meaning. They do not develop a coding frame but review higher order themes based on thematic meanings against original scripts. Likewise, Braun & Clarke (2006), who provide guidelines developed particularly for single researcher projects, also omit this stage. In a single researcher project the kind of consistency that needs to be established in a research team by the coding frame only needs to be established in one mind. And, this is in fact an advantage for a data-driven thematic analysis, when the analysis aims to demonstrate what kind of themes and patterns exist across a set of texts describing topical experience. I followed Pollio & Ursiak's approach, and as I will show below, I carried out at back-and-forth process in which I checked codes for a final time against the original texts and assured internal consistency when I analysed first-order themes.

Identifying First-Order Themes

In this subsection I describe the beginning of the thematic analysis which identifies a first level of themes, first-order themes. I describe the mechanics of this process and provide a detailed example of how I identified a first-order-theme from several codes. My discussion follows the process as it happened and, therefore, I begin by describing a way of thematizing I started but abandoned, but from which I learnt significantly.

After completing the coding process fully I began combining codes in a way that I gleaned from published thematic analyses. Here researchers combined codes according to categories that define commonalities; they are determined by grouping codes that refer to or address similar issues (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Pollio & Ursiak, 2006). So I grouped codes according to the categories I had used in my text searches: situation before image event; image event; reflection; formulation

of intervention; impact as a result of intervention on therapeutic patient and relationship; assessment and further reflection on intervention; general conclusions about this process.

The physical process of generating themes meant to take my code cards onto a floor area where they could be spread out. I sorted them into small piles, taking each code card in turn and trying to match it with one or several others. Consistent with my differentiated approach to coding, I resisted lumping different codes together quickly. Rather, I preserved differentiation at this stage which meant a proliferation of piles containing only few cards or even a single card. Once I had a sense of what combined the codes of a pile I assigned a preliminary theme to that pile by sticking a post-it note onto the top card. Figure 2 below shows this process at the time when I had grouped about 30% of the code cards.

Figure 2. Identifying First-Order Themes

Following the approach I outlined above, I placed code cards on areas of the floor that represented the defined categories. For example, all the codes relating to the experience of the image entering the psychoanalyst's mind I put into an area on the right, supposing that they had something in common even if they did not all belong into the same pile. Likewise, I tended to put codes relating to issues of the therapist-patient relationship or to unconscious communication in proximity to each other, and so forth. In doing this, however, I became aware of similarities of expressions, metaphors and cods in general that cut a across these categories.

Let me explain this first thematizing process through the example of a set of codes that constitute the first-order theme *struggle, wrestling*. (Appendix C provides a full list of all 119 first-order themes.) Quite a few authors wrote about "struggle" or something similar as a feature in their experience but across the defined categories. So, Kern (1978, pp. 34-36) described his unbidden images of landscapes and backdrop scenery as providing "access to previously unknown struggles against a wish to act out certain countertransference fantasies with the patient". These images represented the struggle as a condensed dream image. Gardner (1983, p. 63) showed that his unbidden visualizations images expressed a struggle, tensions, between analyst and patient which were expressed in the content of the image, i.e., diverse scenes involving a dog. Also, he summarized the experience of working with his unbidden visualizations as "wrestling" (p. 51-2). Ogden (2001, p. 21), however, described the struggle to hold on to an image in his mind "before it is reclaimed by the unconscious". Similarly elsewhere, he named this struggle to keep reverie conscious as a "fight against repression" like when a dream slips away on awakening (Ogden, 2004a, p. 170). Yet Simon (1989, p. 487) writes about the struggle of hope and despair arising from conscious, verbal miscommunication between psychoanalyst and patient which, he argues, may produce an unconscious visual communication between them. These examples are not all the instances of codes that resemble "struggle", nor did I group all codes indicating struggle under the same first-order-theme. A code relating to a patient's struggle with unconscious rage, for example, was grouped with "negative energy". And where struggle referred to dealing with chaos, disequilibrium and "tolerable turmoil" (Gardner 1983, p. 70), I grouped these codes with two larger set of codes, "muddle" and "tolerable turmoil, disturbance". But after further stages of analysis "struggle" stood out as a quality of experience across several aspects relating to my topic and as a recurring pattern of meaning, and therefore it constituted a basic or first-order theme.

After noticing such connections, which involved contrasts as well as similarity or commonalities among codes, I began the analysis again differently. This time I grouped without categories. I also allowed myself to group according to a sense I had but without, at the moment of allocating cards to one another, expecting to be able to name it. Like other researchers I duplicated code cards if necessary when I decided they should be grouped also with different sets of codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pollio & Ursiak, 2006). Some code card piles still combined codes because they related to the same issue, for example, the first-order theme "vehicle, carrier" relates to the function

of the spontaneous image (that it conveys something). But I also generated piles and first-order themes that were much more focused on the *quality of experience* in the coded material, with less concern about the experience to which the quality refers. In the list of first-order themes in Appendix C, about 40% are themes expressing a quality of a thing or experience.

Physically, this was a process of allocating and re-allocating code cards and sorting piles in view of new themes emerging, i.e., each new pile that was forming meant that already existing piles (tentative themes) had to be reconsidered and possibly changed. As a consequence, I bundled and unbundled piles, separated them out and bundled them differently. By placing piles in proximity, I indicated potential "kinship" of themes, a potential that they had perhaps some relation, the nature of which might emerge only later in the process.

This first level of identifying themes was a process over several days and weeks. It was important to let the themes sink in and process them mentally and go back to the task with fresh eyes. Over time I memorized many codes and preliminary themes, including where on the floor the code card piles were placed. Somewhat more akin to psychotherapy work than social science analysis, I could let the material sink in and let my unconscious do some of the creative work of making connections and differentiations.

The analytical process of thematizing, then, also reproduced something of the quality of the texts I was analysing. I mean the use of associations and a way of thinking in which normal cause and effect relations are suspended—like dream-thinking in which experience can be thought about from multiple perspectives and which is evoked in relation to unbidden visualizations (Ogden, 2010). Methodical rigour come into this process through the close scrutiny of codes against the context of the text segment and which was recorded on the card. This prevented the associative process of generating themes to lift off, so to speak, by keeping it grounded in the meanings of codes, i.e., my interpretations of the original statements in the texts.

In an innovative paper Cayne & Loewenthal (2007) outlined ideas about how such psychoanalytic concepts and practices as free association and reverie may be integrated into a paradigm of qualitative methodology for research specifically in psychotherapy. Although they are discussing case studies and research with interviewees rather than texts, their point that free association and reverie are ways of "attending to what is given", "attending to experiences without attempting to fit them

within a theory, at least initially" is relevant here too (Cayne & Loewenthal, 2007, p. 209). The approach makes use of the researcher's subjectivity without imposing it on the research subject. Following Ogden (1997) they argued that the ability to differentiate between different kinds of experience is indispensable in this approach to the unknown and to knowing.

It is also my view that this process groups codes in a way which reflects how their interrelationships in the first-order themes that are generated. As in a sentence, the meaning of a theme is not only its referent (here the codes) but also its relationships with other themes (words in a sentence/themes in a set). In the example above, sorting out "muddle" from "struggle" or "tolerable turmoil" and other closely related codes such as "puzzled/puzzling" is part of this semantics of themes. Likewise, in the careful analysis of such relations among first-order themes I generated themes such as "active creative force", "joint creations, interplay", "alive with desire", "generative relationship", "mind as canvas"— but not "creativity" because it was too encompassing a concept. As it turned out, these differences mattered in the subsequent stages of analysis and the determination of higher order themes.

Once all codes cards were allocated, I reviewed all preliminary first-order themes. One pile contained a residual category of 7 out of 847 codes that I could not place with any others (they were: "seeing images does not mean a breakdown of thinking", "darkness before dawn", "phantoms of the id", "correctional emotional experience", "rarity", "double character of image", "reading the patient"). I reviewed the tentative themes: first, by reviewing similar themes against each other and second, by taking each pile of code cards separately and going through the codes and text segments of each pile, comparing each card against the first-order theme I had identified. Some codes were reassigned in this process, and I deleted some themes and identified others.

To me it seems that this checking of first-order themes against the original text segments is the step that ensures trustworthiness, which in other models of thematic analyses is provided by the coding frame, when preliminary codes are rechecked against the original transcripts, before being applied as final codes.

At the end of this reviewing process I put each pile of code cards with the label of the first-order theme back into index card boxes and wrote each first-order theme onto separate small white cards. This can be seen in Figure 3 below. As the list of all

first-order themes in Appendix C shows, I retained some codes which are phrases and metaphors as first-order themes where fitting.

Figure 3. First-Order Themes

Identifying Second- and Third-Order Themes by Clustering

The next step of analysis was to group first-order themes into higher order, more encompassing themes. In this subsection I describe this process, and as before, I briefly discuss how I began by following a linear model of grouping which was unsatisfactory. I changed it to a clustering model which had important implications for the results of my analysis. This subsection ends with two diagrams that show how this clustering of analysing first-order themes lead to my conceptualization of major themes, the final results of the analysis, as constituted by subtheme networks.

The next task in the process of analysing themes was to spread the white first-order theme cards on the floor and cluster them by analysing their relationships. Braun and Clarke (2006) wrote about this process as “combining”, and other examples of thematic analysis promotes a model of “theme hierarchy” showing a funnelling process in which higher order themes appear to summarize lower order themes (e.g., Meier et al., 2006, pp. 118-119). I would call this a linear process of analysis. Figure 4 shows my attempt at replicating this approach with my first-order theme cards. Inevitably, this linear process leads the researcher to sort the subthemes by commonality: to identify a higher order theme which identifies similarity or commonality among first-order themes.

Figure 4. Abandoned Linear Process of Analysis

While this step of grouping was relatively straightforward I became stalled when I tried to formulate preliminary terms for second-order themes. The result was disappointing and felt like a loss of what had excited me in the material so far. Too much of the meaning and richness of “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) still contained in first-order themes was lost in this step. Especially, pithy metaphors do not lend themselves to naming a whole set of meanings or themes and my second-order themes in this model were generalizations and abstractions. For me this is not simply a matter of trying to retain a descriptive level of semantic content, but to retain the quality and diversity of different kinds of experiences of a similar event or process which had been a concern for me in this research from the start. I wanted to keep my aims of this analysis alive, which is to understand psychoanalysts’ experiences of unbidden visualizations, especially the underlying and implicit meanings they have for them.

I looked for other examples of thematic analyses and found that Attride-Sterling (2001) and Pollio & Ursiak (2006) used a different model of analysis. They imagined the analysis of themes in terms of interrelationships, specifically of clusters and, in Attride-Sterling’s case, as thematic networks. To my mind, a cluster or a network is a more congruous representation of the idea of a theme as a pattern of meaning (Braun & Clarke 2006). A pattern becomes apparent, I suggest, when interrelationships among first-order themes are analysed and interpreted.

I began a new process of identifying themes by creating clusters of interrelated first-order themes. Figure 5 shows the first phase of this process.

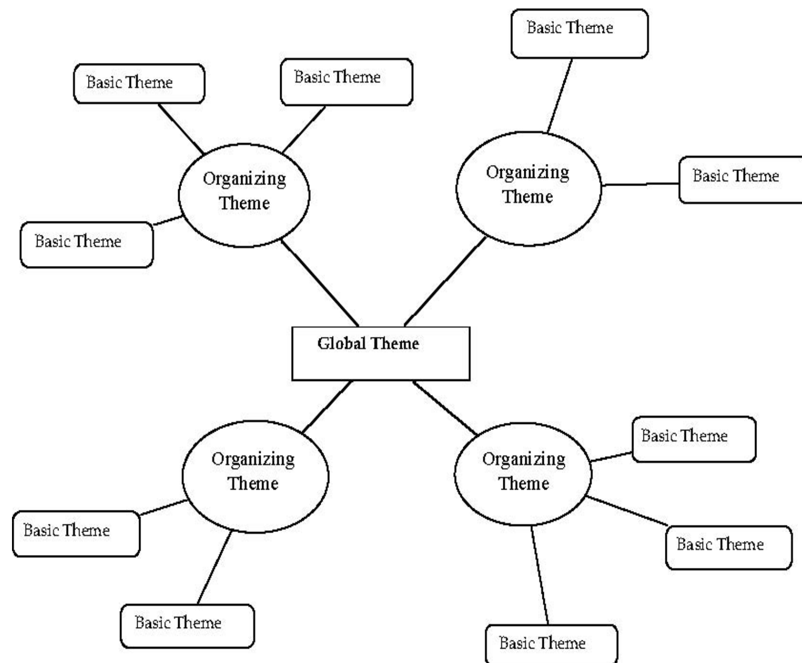
Figure 5. Clustering into Major Themes

I clustered theme cards according to a relation—that something that related them, a sense that they belonged together which gradually became clearer. This could be a similarity, a contrast, a tension or contradiction—in other words a relation rather than a commonality. The clusters that formed combined different numbers of cards, some were small, others large (e.g., in the left lower corner), yet others comprised a single or only two cards. This clustering process also brought into relief that some first-order themes were more specific and others more general. In this clustering process such differences did not cause the kinds of difficulties they did in the abandoned linear process. I indicated links among the meanings evoked by clusters by placing them in close spatial proximity. Here again, Cayne & Loewenthal's (2007) exposé on exploring the unknown through reverie was inspiring. I could bring aspects of clinical work into my study by allowing my unconscious to do some of this work. I followed intuitions and associations as they came up, clustering and re-clustering without thinking about the thematizing process as a problem to be solved but rather as a process in which to get myself involved, time and again. Also, the first-order themes written on these cards had a history, because for me they evoked the unbidden visualizations that gave rise to them.

Next, I mapped each first-order theme cluster as a diagram on paper and followed by mapping these into wider clusters and their interrelationships. I took Attride-Stirling's diagram (2001, p. 388) as a guide. Figure 6 below is a reproduction of her generic diagram of a thematic network. I need to stress that I followed the process

and structure of her model of thematic analysis but not the details of her coding process, nor did I adopt the names she chose for each theme level.

Figure 6. Attride-Sterling's Model of a Thematic Network Structure

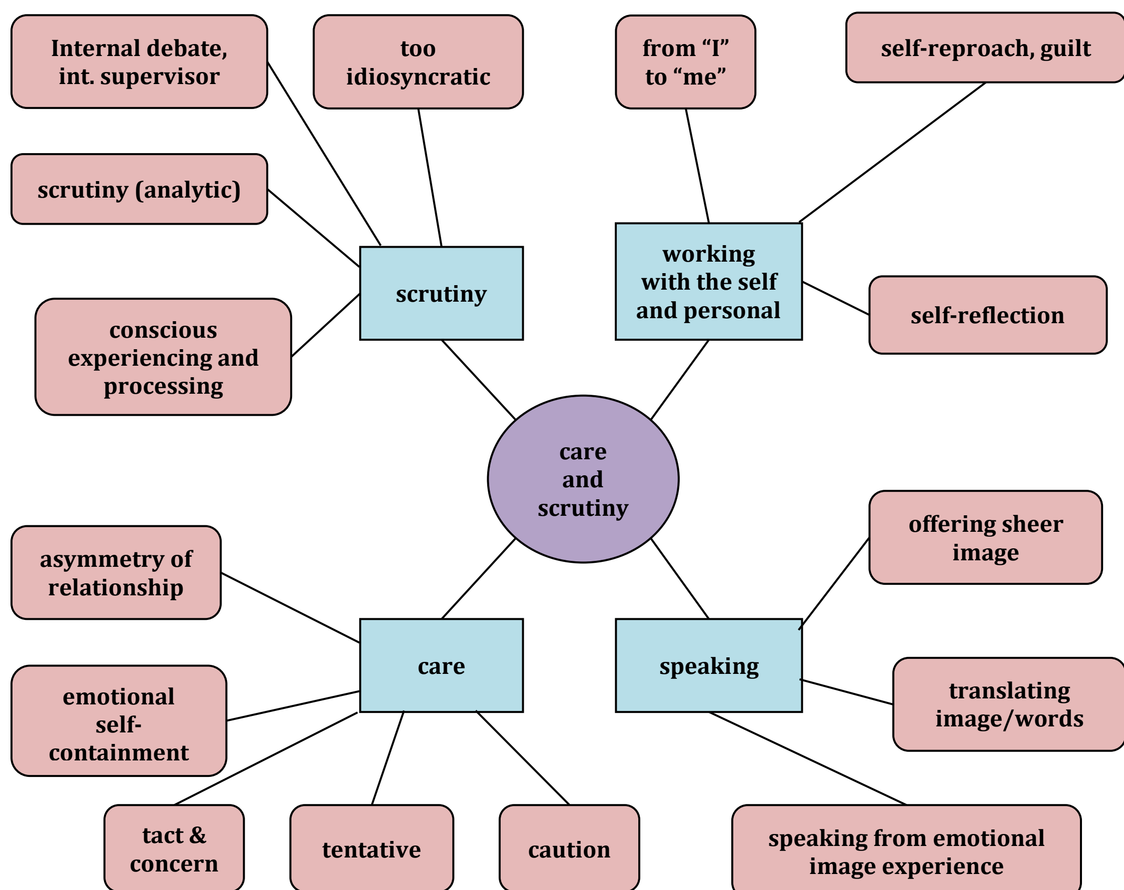


Following this network model meant that I analysed second- and third-order themes through a process of clustering rather than of separation and subsequent ordering into hierarchies of theme levels. Again, this enabled me to notice several simultaneous characteristics of themes and identify higher order themes on that basis. The model enables certain patterns of relationships among first-order themes to be revealed, not only similarities but also contradistinctions, oppositions and tensions. A somewhat similar approach is Pollio & Ursiak's (2006) study of the experience of thinking. Their theme "control" identifies experiences of "being in control", of "letting go of control", and of "being controlled", i.e. the subthemes refer to different meanings but all are related to control. As I will show in my results and discuss in Chapter 6, it was important in my analysis not to subsume such different meanings in an undifferentiated theme as they do, but to capture the dynamic created by such differences and tensions in the highest order themes. .

In total, my analysis produced 11 themes at third-order level which I call major themes. They were all analysed through the clustering process as I described it. Appendix D is a table of all major themes and their constituting networks of 33 first-order theme clusters. Figure 7 below provides an example of a third-order or major

theme network. It is a diagram of four first-order theme clusters which, together with four organising themes (second-order), constitute the network of the major theme *Care and Scrutiny*. The major theme *Care and Scrutiny* captures connections among subthemes which convey a set of meanings related to: a) the usefulness or otherwise of speaking about an unbidden image—whether and how the psychotherapist conveys anything of his or her image experience to the patient; b) to various forms of self-scrutinising analytical work on the part of the psychoanalyst, such as self-reflection and technical considerations; and c) themes relating to care, such as self-care, restraint, and concern for the patient and the therapeutic process.

Figure 7. Network of Theme Clusters in Major Theme *Care and Scrutiny*



Note. First-order themes are in red boxes. Organising themes (second-order) are in blue boxes. The major theme (third-order) is in the central purple circle.

The final step in the process of clustering first-order themes to identify third-order themes was to review them against the original codes and text segments. This resulted in some fine-tuning, in some reallocations and renaming of themes.

In the final analysis and after reviewing all third-order themes I created two categories of third-order themes, nine major themes, and two dynamic major themes. In this chapter I described thematic analysis as a method, how I conceived of it and how I carried it out. These results of this thematic data analysis are the subject of the next two chapters where I focus on the description of each major theme and the meaning pattern each identifies.

Chapter 4

Results 1: Nine Major Themes

This and the next chapter present the results of my thematic analysis. They provide descriptions of each major theme that captures psychoanalysts' experiences of spontaneous visualizations and their reflections on them. Altogether, my thematic analysis identified 11 third-order or major themes. This chapter is focused on nine of them, while the next chapter focuses on two major themes singled out for their dynamic qualities (the themes *tensions of time and temporality* and *movement through tension and paradox*).

As the previous chapter showed, the method I applied posits thematic analysis as a clustering analysis of meanings which results in clusters of interrelated subthemes which in turn organise and, on further analysis, identify major themes. Major themes, therefore, are constituted by a network of interrelated subthemes. This presentation of results therefore includes a summary presentation of these networks as well as narrative descriptions of the meanings captured by each major theme.

This chapter is subdivided into sections, beginning with a section dealing with the way these results are presented, followed by individual sections addressing the nine major themes.

Issues Regarding the Presentation of Results

The task of this chapter is to present the results of my thematic analysis in a summary form and to provide an account that tells the story that the data tell while "providing sufficient evidence of the themes within the data—i.e., enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Likewise, Joffe advised that "in the name of transparency, researchers need to present systematically a sufficient portion of the original evidence in the written account to satisfy the sceptical reader of the relation between the interpretation and the evidence" (2012, p. 219). Indeed, Meier et al. (2006) whose thematic analysis resulted in a single, compound theme submitted extensive direct quotations of session material in support of several levels of subthemes.

Therefore, each section in this chapter is a description of a major theme and includes: a) an introduction to the major theme, b) a table showing the clusters and network of subthemes that constitute the major theme, and c) a description and discussion of the major theme network, including data excerpts.

Because the data of this thematic analysis are extracted from published texts, illustrations are quotations which need to be properly cited. Quotations can thus be traced which enhances the study's reliability and trustworthiness. But cumbersome citations interrupt the reading process. I am mindful of this tension between fluidity and accuracy.

Separating the presentation and discussion of results. My research subjected richly detailed, evocative and some conceptual accounts to a thematic analysis. As a method, thematic analysis is a reductive device, reducing the complexity of meaning by identifying meaning patterns. Unbidden visualizations are complex private experiences. Consequently, the authors in the dataset tell private and idiosyncratic stories about their experience, and they have specific, particular ways of understanding what happened to them, their patients and the therapy. My presentation of these results integrates stories about spontaneous visualization experience and stories about the ways in which the authors thought about what has happened to them, which include also some conceptual reasoning—how authors conceptualized, contextualized and reflected on their experience (which involves theorizing, in contradistinction to grand theory or psychoanalytic theorizing). The data, in other words, includes a level of reasoning and argument.

Therefore, my summaries of relevant results in this and the following chapter are more than a tabular summary of results. They inevitably include discussions, mainly about how subthemes relate to each other as a network and how themes capture meanings evidenced in selected data extracts. However, Chapter 6 will discuss these findings and their implications in a wider context.

Chapter organisation. The rest of this chapter is divided into sections that present in detail the nine major themes listed here (see Appendix D for a list of all major theme networks):

- Personal, inner experience.
- Disturbance by the unknown.
- Dream-like perceiving, experiencing the obscure and unconscious.
- Sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities.
- Revealing by giving shape.
- Care and scrutiny.
- Togetherness.
- Intimacy.
- Generative aliveness.

Each section begins with an introduction, followed by a table summarizing the results of the thematic analysis, and ending with a narrative account, including data excerpts, of the meanings captured by the major theme.

As described in the previous chapter, my analysis proceeded by clustering first-order themes around second-order themes, called organising themes, which I brought together in a further process of clustering to complete the network of themes that constitute each third-order theme, called major theme (see Figure 7 in Chapter 3). Each section presents results for one of the nine major themes and contains a table which displays a major theme's network.

Personal, Inner Experience

I begin this presentation of major themes with the theme *personal, inner experience* by way of introducing the reader to the very experience of having unbidden visualizations. While the theme *personal, inner experience* is prevalent in the dataset, its discussion echoes other prominent themes, e.g., the next major theme *disturbance by the unknown* or the nature of the therapeutic relationship captured in two different major themes. These kinds of interrelationships between major themes become more apparent as this report of results continues and theme interrelationships will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

Table 2 below shows the two clusters of first-order themes which my analysis identified. These clusters are organised by two second-order themes, called organising themes, the psychoanalysts' inner experience evoked by unbidden images. Spontaneous visualizations are a subjective, inner experience accompanied by feelings and physical sensations. Although they appear unbidden, spontaneously and incomprehensibly, unbidden images are creations of the psychoanalyst's subjectivity. An image calls up aspects of his/her biography, personality, conflicts, relationships, etc. A prevalent theme across the dataset is the mental state of inward attention in which spontaneous image experiences may appear. It is a way of being self-involved and at the same time being present and involved with the patient. This tension between the subjective and the relational is a thematic pattern which manifests in various ways in the meanings the experiences have for psychotherapists. This theme gathers them in terms of inner experiencing.

Table 2

***Major Theme* Personal, Inner Experience**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
connection within finding the patient within oneself response to patient (inner) attention inward two streams of consciousness/generative split silence, privacy	inner experience	personal inner, experience
analyst's own emotional state taken possession of, personally changed personal memories, autobiographical	personally involved	

Attention directed to inner experience involves silence, e.g., between patient and analyst and unfolding as the "opening of relational space" (Ogden 1994, p. 120), or a "heavy, awkward silence" (Jacobs 1997, p. 1054), or the analyst's silence while simultaneously listening to the patient and her/his own experience. Lothane described it as a "preconscious phase" of "activity of the imagination" that affords, like sleep and dreaming, the "gestation of ideas" when spontaneous images "erupt into consciousness" (2007, p. 160). Ogden described it as a private, undefended self-state (2004, p. 185). In this mode of being "evenly hovering attention is directed both to what the analysand is saying and expressing and to the thoughts, images, fantasies and emotions that arise from within" (Reiser 1999, p. 489).

Thomson (1980, p. 184) described this twofold attention as "two streams of consciousness running parallel", one with its source in the patient's communication, the other in the analyst's preconscious. Others named it a "split" (Arlow 1979, p. 204), a "benign split" (Symington 2003, p. 13) or "generative split" (Bollas 1982, p. 6). This split enables the psychotherapist's twofold receptivity, to him/herself and to the patient, and the arising dream-like experiences, including spontaneous visualizations, become ways of understanding what is going on in and between the two people who are present. For Ogden, spontaneous visualizations, like all associations and reverie experiences, are "an indirect (associational) method of talking to myself about what was occurring

unconsciously between [the patient] and me" (2001, p. 107). This split then is generative precisely because it enables the creation of images and other associations as a kind of language.

This language of spontaneous images is personal. Sensory images symbolize the psychoanalyst's personal memories, for example Kern (1978, p. 28) found himself suddenly visually and emotionally transported back to the living room where as a teenager he had an intensely embarrassing experience. Or Bromberg (2006) visualized the moment decades in the past, when he helped his daughter to ride her first bicycle; Bromberg called these images "felt memory" (2006, p. 17). Psychoanalysts have, like everybody else, their own "set of symbols" but they are more aware of them and "make use of [their] own biography" which is a "very personal and individual matter" (Thomson 1980, p. 198). Even when the unbidden image itself does not present the memory, it may "encode it" (Reiser 1999, p. 490), and reflection on the image reveals memories and recollections—of past events, feelings, fantasies and dreams.

Spontaneous images have a "proximity to memory" (Lothane 2007, p. 159) in that they represent past experiences. All authors in the dataset also maintain that one way or another unbidden visualizations are related to the patient's unconscious experience present at that moment. For example, Jacobs (1999) gave a detailed analysis of the spontaneous image of the alumni magazine which he uncharacteristically left lying on his desk that day; this image evoked a further memory, of an embarrassing and complex situation when he was a teenager and tried but failed to impress his sister's girlfriend. From this sequence of personal, visualized and felt recollections, Jacobs tentatively concluded that his unconscious motivation in leaving the alumni magazine on his desk, visible to patient, was to impress his patient; moreover, his unconscious motivation connected with his patient's current unconscious idealization of Jacobs which also involved competitive strivings. Jacobs concluded that spontaneous sensory images capture inner experience, here unconscious motivations, as a response to the patient's unconscious experience (1999, p. 160).

Such contact by a private and personal experience with the patient's mental state is, most authors in the dataset suggest, a profound and intense experience. Laquercia likened it to being taken over—"the analysand takes possession of the analyst's mind" (1998, p. 24)—and Jacobs (1997, p. 1047) to "giving oneself over" to the relationship and the patient. They and others described a receptive mental state in which private inner experiences potentially symbolize what is happening in the relationship. Ogden

(1999) argued that personal memory images are not only useful therapeutically, but because of the particular context in which they occur, the relationship with the patient, a spontaneous memory image “creates [the psychoanalyst’s] past anew” (p. 471), s/he is “changed” (p. 472) by the experience as her/his most personal inner life has been “altered” (p. 476). Spontaneous visualizations involve and affect the psychotherapist personally, in a state of mind that is, rather than solipsistic, a particular way of relating.

Disturbance by the Unknown

This theme captures three subtheme clusters, as shown in Table 3, which are organised by *unsettling not knowing*, *ruptures* in therapy or thought processes, and experiencing something *unanticipated* and *unexpected*. They gather meanings relating to experiences of the unknown, disturbing, intrusive, and negative associated with unbidden visualizations.

Table 3

Major Theme **Disturbance by the Unknown**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
tolerable turmoil, disturbance unsettling uncanny muddle, confusion, chaos puzzled/puzzling	unsettling not knowing	disturbance by the unknown
resistance rupture negative energy intrusion/disturbance	rupture	
suddenness out of nowhere surprise	unexpected, unanticipated	

As images appear unbidden in the psychoanalyst’s mind, they are unexpected and sudden which can be unsettling and disturbing. One author described feeling disturbed by an “intrusion of his [psychoanalyst] own current fatigue, narcissistic self-absorption, preoccupations, unresolved emotional conflicts, and so on” when he visualized the garage door of the workshop in which he left his car in the morning (Ogden 2001, p. 13). Similarly, when the patient talked about “lies” but the analyst visualized an vivid image of “lice”, like in a pun, the analyst experienced it as a disturbing “imposition” (Schust-Briat 1996, p. 384). Hallucination-like images can feel

disturbingly uncanny (Appel 2000). Gardner characterized the appearance of meaningful images and reveries into the calm receptive state of mind as a "tolerable turmoil" of challenging complexity (1983, p. 70).

Unbidden images can draw attention to disturbances in the therapeutic process, to "ruptures of communication" and the "non-availability of the analyst" (Simon 1981, p. 485) caused by rage, negativity, or resistance generated intra-psychically or intersubjectively. When the images occur these ruptures are not yet recognised, however, and the experience remains disturbing until what the image reveals begins to emerge in the analyst's reflections or in the therapeutic dialogue. The unbidden, intrusive nature of mental images and their function of pointing to unconscious rupture causes feelings of confusion, chaos and being muddled. For example when a patient's unconscious communication "emanates from a place in the psyche of the patient where psychic structure does not follow clear definite, linear lines" (Laquercia 1998, p. 24) and this is communicated in an unbidden image unrelated to what the patient is communicating verbally.

Dream-Like Perceiving: Experiencing the Obscure and Unconscious.

This is an encompassing theme which integrates five first-order theme clusters, as shown in Table 4. Clusters are organised around the psychoanalyst's mental state, unconscious processing and emerging awareness of unconscious perceptions in the spontaneous image experience. Most authors drew analogies between unbidden images and dream images, between their receptive state of mind and dreaming, and in the conscious and unconscious levels of meaning in dreams and unbidden images. I decided that the complexity of meaning of the analyst's mental functioning was best not thematically separated but represented in the encompassing network of a single major theme.

Table 4

***Major Theme* Dream-Like Perceiving: Experiencing the Obscure and Unconscious**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
registering instrument, echo, resonance mind's eye, third eye, third ear mind as canvas cogent unconscious	cogent unconscious	
fleeting, flash, glimpse, figment elusive getting a sense	a sense of something	
seeing the hidden patient partial and particular indirect blind-spots	hidden, obscure	dream-like perceiving: experiencing the obscure and unconscious
mind wanders/off somewhere else unfocused mild depersonalization, disconnect drowsy, sleepy	letting the mind wander	
twilight region between subliminal preconscious experience dream, dreaming, dream analysis	unconscious to conscious connection	

Many authors described the unbidden appearance of significant images as "seeing in the mind's eye" (Gardner 1983, p. 50; Reiser 1999, p. 491) or seeing with "the third eye" (Schust-Briat 1996, p. 387) which connotes Reik's "listening with the third ear" (1949). The mind's eye sees when the mind is relaxed, when the "mind wanders" (Ogden 1999, p. 475; 1997, p. 585), is "off somewhere else" (Simon 1981, p. 485), and "moves freely" (Gardner 1983, p. 50) among "random thoughts" (Arlow 1979, p. 200). It is an unfocused attention in which the analyst "hears the patient, yet not fully" so that listening approximates a "sleeping state" of "mild depersonalization" (Laquercia 1998, pp. 24-25), of being "barely conscious" (Singer 2006, p. 183). What is happening in the mind is "barely available to self-reflective consciousness" (Ogden 1997, p. 585).

In this “twilight region between reality and fantasy” (Reik 1949, p. 109) the imagery process is a “preconscious” or “subliminal experience” (Thompson 1980, p. 183-184) that “bypasses consciousness” (Appel 2000, p. 44). Reiser linked such unconscious processing with knowledge as memory, as “cogent unconscious remembrance” (1999, p. 495). Similarly, for Marcus unbidden images emerged from “processing what I knew unconsciously” (1997, p. 231) which is a kind of knowing “without knowing I knew it” (Gardner 1983, p. 71). Therefore, Ogden called it “a psychological event at the unconscious-conscious frontier” (2001, p. 10) in which the analyst “conceptualizes the clinical data outside consciousness” which produces an “inner unconscious to conscious communication” (Arlow 1979, p. 205). Ogden discussed in detail the conscious and unconscious experience of an unbidden visualization which, like reverie in general, “symbolizes unconscious processes” (1994, p. 120), while Lothane explained that “images and pictorial thought” are “experienced in consciousness, but are the products of antecedent preconscious mental activity” (2007, p. 160). In sum, like dream images, spontaneous mental images are not unconscious, they appear in consciousness, but they are an effect of unconscious perception, experience and processing.

This capacity to dream while awake has been theorised since Freud as the psychoanalyst’s use of her/his unconscious as the analysing instrument. “Instrument” has a double meaning, being a tool of both perception and resonance. Figuratively speaking, the mind becomes a canvas (Bollas 1999, p. 58) where both the analyst’s and the patient’s unconscious perceptions and communications are registered. Reiser (1999) called this intersubjective, unconscious processing a “mode of operation”, in which psychoanalysts unconsciously process their own sensory perceptions and stimuli originating from the patient (Marcus 1997, p. 231). Marcus emphasised: “the analyst must allow the subliminal message to reach the unconscious where it can be noted, processes and ‘dreamed’” (1997, p. 235). Therefore others wrote of (inwardly) “echoing the patient’s thoughts” (Lothane 2007, p. 161) and letting them “resonate” in their “inner life” (Jacobs 1997, p. 1047).

Because the unbidden image reveals hitherto unconscious processes, i.e., what had been hidden or obscured from consciousness, having spontaneous images is an experience of the obscure. Like dreams they are “not immediately comprehensible” (Bollas 1995, p. 17) or “translatable in to what is going on” (Ogden 1997, p. 569) but seem “meaningless” (Appel 2000, p. 44) and not “traceable” (Kern 1978, p. 21).

Experiencing an unbidden image is a connection with the obscure, obscuring and hidden. This hidden dimension is embodied in the image's content which, like a dream image, also holds the potential of revealing what is hidden and obscured through an "unknown connection" (Laquercia 1998, p. 25) with the analyst's self, the patient, or their relationship.

Unbidden images emerge from the unconscious as a fleeting, still obscure experience by offering a "glimpse" (Appel, 2000; Reik, 1949; Singer, 2006), "flash" (Laquercia 1998; Peltz 2012; Schust-Briat 1996), "figment" or "fragment as in a dream" (Laquercia 1998). It may be a glimpse of what I thematized as *the hidden patient* and what the authors in the dataset invariably described as the patient's defended conflicts, split-off self-parts, resistances, and generally unconscious process. For example, Appel (2000) was looking at his patient during the first session and spontaneously visualized a cherub face in an uncannily realistic vision. But later, when thinking about this patient, he also spontaneously visualized the patient's face as menacing bully. Over the course of therapy, Appel identified this patient's split identities and self-parts in these images. Ferro wrote that parts of his patient's unthought and unknown self come to him as waking dream images when "he [the patient] has come to realise that there are many things inside him that he did not know were there" (2007, p. 22), while Jacobs (1993) wrote movingly about visualizing a trauma his patient is not talking about:

> I see Mr V as a young child lying on a table, his abdomen tightly bound by gauze bandages. Immediately I realize that I am remembering a piece of my patient's history. (p. 12)

Through unbidden images psychoanalysts get just a sense of something going on, as through a dream (Bollas 1983; Kern 1978; Ogden 1994, 1999, 2001). And as with dreams all authors in the dataset wrote about the work involved in making their meaning less obscure and more conscious—analytical work done often, but not always, after the session, involving free associating to an image's elements so that unconscious "understanding work" is coupled with conscious "dream work" (Ogden 1997, p. 587).

Sensing and Evocatively Gathering Unsayable Complexities

The hidden dimension which spontaneous images bring to a consciousness has not been symbolized in words—it is the unsaid—and it may not be available to thought and symbolization—it remains unsayable. Patients communicate these hidden dimensions of their being to their psychoanalyst who unconsciously perceives these communications, processes them unconsciously, and produces spontaneous

visualizations in their minds. This is the capacity which is expressed pervasively and emphatically across the data and captured in the major theme *sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities*, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Major Theme **Sensing and Evocatively Gathering Unsayable Complexities**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
emotional reality emotional background, mood, & context emotional meaning of patient's story emotional substance feelings, emotions of image	feelings	sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities
sensations, sensuous, sensation images what experience feels like multitude, psychic symphony	sensation experiences	
obscure what cannot be said in words, the unsaid	obscure and unsaid	
pulling things together evocative complexity encapsulated in an image, condensation saying more than words can	gathering complexity beyond words	

The organising theme *feelings* captures emotions and feelings evoked by unbidden visualizations. Among the many mental images that occur to psychoanalysts as they are listening, it is the affective charge that suggests that an unbidden image may be significant. As such the image contains emotional substance which it provides to the therapeutic work (Brown 2009, p. 46; Ogden 2001, p. 43). For all authors the emotional experience and emotional reality captured by the image is key to its understanding and its potential use. Jacobs (1993, p. 9) stated that it is not the image's depiction but the "affect situation that is relevant", e.g., having a spontaneous mental image of his father evoked fear, particularly of male competitiveness and brought to consciousness his fear of his patient's competitiveness which the patient communicated only unconsciously which is similar to Schust-Briat's "visual translation" of her patient's "latent anger" (1996, p. 384). Thomson (1980, p. 184) spontaneously visualized Jonah being devoured

by the whale, feeling he was the whale and his patient Jonah. The image brought him in contact with his own and his patient's fears of passivity and being controlled, indeed devoured, by men. Thomson used these feelings and conflicts evoked by the image to formulate interpretations. This is an example of spontaneous images symbolizing, in a complex, condensed assemblage of metaphors, what may be going on between patient and analyst and for each individually.

Unbidden images are emerging, tentative expressions of an "invisible emotional background"(Ogden 1997, p. 585), the patient's "invisible self" (Ogden 2001, p. 21) or "mood" (Laquercia 1998, pp. 29-30). Kern (1978) wrote poignantly about spontaneous visualizations which he suddenly noticed in session with several patients, but on reflection he realised that these images of houses, interior settings and landscapes had been a persistent part of how he imagined these patients' lives. The images symbolized emotional backdrops which he unravelled by tracing the memories and recollections the images brought into his consciousness and which pointed to dimensions of his patients' lives which they had not talked about.

In this major theme the recurrent theme *obscure* (see also Table 4 above) is clustered with the unsaid, which foregrounds the capacity of unbidden visualizations to do what cannot be done with words. They do so by engaging the senses, by their nature of being sensory images. For Shaddock (2010, p. 246) the meaning of unbidden images was "pure story"— not quite an idea nor with the intentionality of metaphor. Rather, unbidden images bring to the analyst's consciousness the "unarticulated and not yet felt" between patient and analyst (Ogden 2004, p. 183), that which "cannot be said by ordinary means" (Simon 1981, p. 486). Crucially, spontaneous visualizations express this unthought, unsaid story visually (Ferro 2007, p. 22) and therein provide an object with sensory qualities, structure, evoked emotions and other sensations so that thinking and talking about them can begin.

This is why the sensory qualities of a spontaneous image matter so much. It conveys a whole physical, emotional and aesthetic experience. Hence, Bromberg stated emphatically "I feel it with a physicality" (2006, p. 17) and Ogden defined unbidden visualizations as "sensuous fantasy experiences" and "sensation images" (1999, pp. 466, 473). Marcus (1997, p. 227) reflected on his hallucination-like experience—he called it fantasy—of being touched by and caressing his patient as unconscious communication in the relationship transformed into physical sensations. Subsequently, the patient not only identified in herself matching desires and fears, but the very realness in which

Marcus felt these spontaneous images physically while at the same time not acting on them, became a pivot for this patient to process her unarticulated trauma.

By virtue of being pictorial and sensory, an unbidden visualization captures a complexity in a single object. It is, indeed, a glimpse of what is not yet conceptualized, but a composite glimpse which helps, as Gardner put, “say more than one thing at once”, even one thing and its opposite (1983, p. 71). For Laquercia (1998) his sudden unbidden image, a rifle, brought together a whole set of memories for himself and his patient. The rifle image popped into his mind and led to vivid memories of military service and shooting rifles; when he offered the rifle image as a pure image to think about together, his patient was stirred to start remembering what he had never talked to Laquercia about because he no longer felt and remembered consciously a series of traumatic near-death childhood events that resulted in his hospitalization. In Bollas’ felicitous phrase an unbidden visualization is a “complex psychic symphony” (1992, p. 109) as it contains a multitude and complexity, and is itself embedded in a multitude of experiences all of which it has the power to evoke.

By “pulling things together” in ways that words cannot (Gardner 1983, p. 71) the spontaneous image “gives form to the unarticulated” (Ogden 1999, p. 476). While in the network of this major theme this form is yet unformulated and obscure, because sensory and pictorial, the power of giving tentative form by evoking what cannot be talked about is captured in more detail in the following major theme.

Revealing by Giving Shape

This major theme captures the function and capacity inherent in unbidden images as pictorial representations. It has a revelatory capacity which, as Table 6 shows, clusters around the organising themes of providing a shape, carrier and representation. The focus here is on the image content, what it contains and how it acquires a function and has effect.

Table 6

***Major Theme* Revealing by Giving Shape**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
metaphor, representation details matter vehicle, carrier	image representation	revealing by giving shape
clear, etched, definite framing giving shape	giving shape	

The unbidden image is "giving form" to the unsayable and unsaid which is, eventually, "taking form" (Ogden 1999, p. 476). The spontaneous image may appear sudden, as just a figment or a glimpse, but all authors in the dataset wrote that once recognised and taking hold, the image is clearly seen and definite, even "sharp" (Marcus, p. 231) or "etched" and "not easily shifting or changing" (Kern 1978, p. 22). Its details can be considered; like a dream image its elements are condensed and need to be considered one by one as the elements of a story which begins to form. Marcus (1997), provided a richly detailed account of unbidden visualizations and wrote that the images' details are crucial for understanding them and making use of them with patients. When he suddenly visualized and felt his right cheek touching his patient's left cheek he told her about the image rather formulating an interpretation about touch or what the image may symbolize; the patient recognised in this image a gesture of loving maternal care for which she had been longing since childhood. What may have appeared as an erotic gesture was also maternal gesture that connected to the patient's unconscious feelings of unrequited longing. Bollas observed that a spontaneous image captures something about his patient which he had previously put in the abstract, "but the image seemed much more representationally accurate" (1992, p. 121). It brings a thought alive as a mental experience.

With few exceptions the authors in the dataset regard spontaneous images as "tied" to what is going on between analyst and patient (Kern 1978, p. 27). Spontaneous visualizations have "intersubjectively generated meaning" (Ogden 1999, p. 470) from which the analytic pair can learn (Reiser 1999, p. 486). When describing their reflections on the possible meaning of an unbidden image, all authors discussed how the image functions, and what kind of symbolization it could be. Levy (2012) described how over many sessions his patient attacked any symbolizations that expressed her

emotions because psychic contact with them was unbearable. In one session he suddenly visualized a food processor that grinds vegetables into a “formless pulp” (p. 854); he offered this image to her to as a simile, along with his interpretation that he thought this was what happened to her feelings. Here, the food processor is a symbolic image for Levy’s experiences of his patient’s capacity to think as “pulverized into emptiness” (p. 856).

A spontaneous image may contain several representational functions, e.g., in Laquercia’s (1978) rifle image discussed above. Because the rifle image evoked such vivid memories of discharging a weapon in combat, he asked his patient whether he had any idea why he, Laquercia, should think of a rifle. His patient first made use of the rifle as a metaphor (precisely, a metonym) for his brother who always carried a rifle in his car but whom he had not mentioned before. The rifle accurately represented the brother’s characteristics which caused the patient conflict which he began to access. But further work over many sessions revealed that Laquercia’s unbidden rifle image and his subsequent vivid recollections of the violent jolt of discharging a rifle in battle also represented mortal fear and pain. It symbolized through such sensory referencing a traumatic incident in his patient’s childhood when his brother had intended to kill him—not by using a rifle, though, but by pushing him out of a moving car. The patient had repressed this violent event and his subsequent hospitalisation.

Elaborating on Laquercia’s account, I suggest that in the countertransference he emotionally enacted, and in his unbidden image he contained, what the rifle symbolized beyond metaphor—an act of killing violently and intentionally—which his patient unconsciously communicated to him. The unbidden image functioned as a symbolization of the patient’s unformulated trauma; the rifle image had different meanings for Laquercia and his patient, but these meanings were intersubjectively related—one elicited unknown meanings from the other. Laquercia’s unbidden visualization contained his patient’s unconscious experience intersubjectively.

Care and Scrutiny

This major theme captures patterns of meaning related to the careful analysis and scrutiny psychoanalysts apply when they integrate spontaneous mental images into their therapeutic work. The theme is organised by the four subthemes: care, scrutiny, working with the self and personal, and questions of how to speak about the image, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

***Major Theme* Care and Scrutiny**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
internal debate, internal supervisor too idiosyncratic scrutiny (analytic) conscious experiencing and processing	scrutiny	care and scrutiny
from "I" to "me" self-reproach, guilt self-reflection	working with the self and personal	
speaking from emotional image experience offering sheer image translating image/words	speaking	
caution tentative tact & concern emotional self-containment asymmetry of relationship	care	

The first-order theme *internal supervisor* that the theme *scrutiny* involves self-reflection as well as the whole range of technical and theoretical capacity available to the psychotherapist. *Care and scrutiny* as a major theme integrates the considerable work involved in the conscious, cognitive processing of what was a dream-like experience and contact with the unconscious.

The dataset contains many accounts of unbidden images which the psychotherapist dismissed or disparaged on impulse as too idiosyncratic, too unrelated to the patient's material and indicative of self-absorption. Invariably psychotherapists use self-analysis, internalised supervision experience, self-questioning and internal debate to think about the usefulness of their unbidden visualization; the aim is not to burden the patient with what Bollas called "denuded subjectivity" (1992, p. 102). Bollas argued that psychoanalysts' spontaneous images, indeed all inner experiences and associations, are only meaningful and potentially useful on "objective reflection" (p. 113), when the analyst understands the image. Likewise, for Thomson (1980, p. 196) reflection and analytic scrutiny need to uncover the significance of the latent function of the image in order to render it meaningful. The image's obscure and hidden connotations are thus brought to consciousness and potential use. This movement from

dream-like experience of contact with the unconscious to something that is subjected to critical thought is expressed poignantly by Ogden as a transformation from “I”—from the self as the subject of inner experiencing—to “me”—the self as an object of analytic scrutiny (1997, p. 568; 1999, p. 490). Since the “me” here is also in relationship to the patient and the therapy process, in effect, this is also a reflection of “me and you” or “me in relation to you”.

Others made different use of their unbidden images, e.g., Marcus and Laquercia in the illustrations discussed above. They also scrutinised the image and reflected on their experience, but offered the image as such to the patient so that its meaning and usefulness emerged in joint process of dialogue. Psychoanalysts make careful judgments about when to speak, what to say and how to reveal unbidden visualizations or experiences. This scrutiny is embedded in their theoretical orientation, personal style and their current thinking about the patient and the work—in Bollas’ words this is an “operational intelligence, as the analyst puts into effect what he believes to be the best psychoanalytic intervention” (1995, p. 40). Likewise, whether and how to speak about the image (i.e., revealing it) or from it (i.e., making an interpretation based on it without revealing it or its occurrence) are judgments and the data vary on this point. Authors are unanimous, however, that the decision is the result of considering the patient’s mental state and the therapeutic goals. They weigh up different interventions: sharing the image as such, as in “see if it helps you [the patient] in any way” (Lothane 2010, p. 162), but not “to burden the patient with the additional task of dealing with the analyst’s mental state” and private affective associations (Reiser 1999, pp. 496, 500), or talking about the feeling state and experience which the image encapsulates without revealing the image itself (McLaughlin 1975, p. 376), or keeping silent while registering the image internally as a tentative insight into what might be going on with the patient (Appel 2000).

Tact, tentativeness, concern, empathy, and reflection on the total therapy situation are captured in the subtheme *care*. Care involves care for the self, one’s own privacy and emotional containment, and care for the patient, i.e., the responsibility caused by the asymmetric therapeutic relationship, the respect for the patient, his/her privacy, agency, and needs. Unlike the patient’s freedom to voice anything “without censorship” (Reiser 1999, p. 489), psychoanalysts offer unbidden images or their derivatives with considerable care. Simon (1981, p. 479) cautioned against talking about an unbidden images even if it seems useful, because it potentially signals competiveness

and narcissistic motivation, that the analyst validates her/his intuition over what the patient is struggling to say and should be free to find his/her own way to say it, or not.

Togetherness

This major theme together with the following one, *intimacy*, integrates those meanings that situate psychotherapists' unbidden mental images in the therapy relationship, i.e., how they come about relationally, how they function and are put to use. Table 8 shows how *togetherness* consists of two theme clusters which foreground the quality of the connection between the psychoanalyst's and the patient's minds: a combination of two and a meeting through shared alikeness.

Table 8

***Major Theme* Togetherness**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
two minds connected working together/acting upon each other what is happening between patient and analyst combining the two minds	combining the two minds	togetherness
alikeness, similarity eating and digesting each other flowing together overlapping, imbrication	alikeness	

Ways of working together, collaborating, and acting on each other are prominent meanings across the dataset and integrated in the theme network of togetherness. Althofer's (1983) work with an adult, female patient is a moving example of this (and of *scrutiny and care* also). On first meeting her patient Althofer had a sudden visualization of her as a "slovenly tomboy teenager" and she imagined cooling her burning forehead with a rag which felt like an empathic gesture. A rag, however, developed over many sessions into the central image of their connection, symbolizing the patient's traumatic history, which involved being gagged with a rag, and Althofer's own early trauma of helpless, silent paralysis. The rag image also contained the "transliteration of our word for rage" (p. 52). Her first unbidden visualization prefigured the raging fury and torment which would dominate the work, but its meaning also changed over time. Yet through that painful and challenging work patient and analyst

reached a point when Althofer's visualization also appeared to "prefigure a predominantly empathic and productive working together" (p. 54). Therefore, the complex, condensed and multiple meanings and function of the unbidden visualization could only be understood through working with the patient, and in collaboration with her. Gardner (1983, p. 67) elaborated that spontaneous images connect the analyst with the patient, in Lothane's words, like "two minds plugged into each other" (2007, p. 161).

The terms and metaphors authors use for such connection connote alikeness, similarity and confluence. They are prevalent in the data and Alhofer's example above and shared by many: that patient and analyst connect through a "similarity of psychic experience" (Reiser 1999, p. 495), through an "overlapping of our inner worlds" (Thomson 1980, p. 195) and a "sharing of emotional pain" (Lothane 2007, p. 160). An unbidden image brings to consciousness this connection through alikeness —or as I think of it, through feeling emotionally akin. Gardner (1983) discussed several complex and emotionally charged spontaneous dog visualizations in which he saw a black dog sitting alone in a dog house and on a white porch of a mansion; these connected to his patient's feelings of "being left in the doghouse", of emotional isolation, anger and feelings of having to work like a dog to be admitted, symbolically, to the main house. Gardner began to recognize their emotional similarity, "the dog in both of us" (p. 65), and concluded that "whenever and wherever I look I find allusions to ways in which my patient and I are alike" (p. 58).

In their complexity, then, psychoanalysts' unbidden images contain the two minds in relationship. This theme foregrounds especially a relationship in which boundaries are less differentiated but blurred by similarity and mutuality. Thomson (1980, p. 195) described how images of public places, road intersections, and landscapes that belonged to his own and his patient's biography and cultural heritage first emerged as unbidden visualizations, in a combination of a "field of mutual symbolism". Laquercia experienced his mind as unconsciously combined with his patient's through the sensory qualities of his visualizations (1998, p. 26). And Gardner concluded that the metaphors, mannerisms, memories of analyst and patient contribute to his unbidden images and are created mutually but unconsciously (pp. 67-68).

I thematized this kind of experience as a *togetherness* which is fostered by the unbidden image experience and resembles empathic identification. Authors expressed it in metaphors of flow, in which boundaries and separation become blurred, when joining

another’s inner experience is like a kind of eating one another as a “tasty meal” in a “merger of minds” (Thomson 1980, p. 195), when patient’s and analyst’s images “slide into each other” (Gardner 1983, p. 54). And yet, these psychoanalysts also described intra-subjective flow, i.e., the flow in and out of their dream-like image experience, of their wandering mind, and their conscious scrutiny and deliberate mind, so that “reverie experience seamlessly melts into other more focused psychic states” (Ogden 2001, p. 13). This inter-subjective and intra-subjective movement and flow is, as I will discuss below, a generative moment. Here, in the context of connection and togetherness, it points to other meanings of being together which the next major theme demonstrates.

Intimacy

This theme emerged less from descriptions of the experience of spontaneous images themselves than from authors’ reflections on experience, especially their reflections on an image’s function and effect in the therapy. The theme refers to the ways in which psychotherapists understood their spontaneous image experience, its content, function and effect. My thematic analysis picked up on their use of descriptive language, some of the concepts they used and on understanding the therapeutic process and the unfolding of the relationship over some time, as an extended data extract at the end of this section illustrates .

As a major theme *intimacy* names a pattern of meanings in the data which describes the therapy relationship as two people who are simultaneously connected and separate, and in which their separateness enables their connection. *Intimacy* thus contrasts with and complements *togetherness* which identified being akin or alike, combined, and merged as aspects of this relationship. Table 9 below presents the theme clusters for *intimacy* identifying intersubjective separation and otherness as constitutive of the analytic pair, in which difference is crucial to what each is to the other and brings to the relationship.

Table 9

***Major Theme* Intimacy**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
in and of/interdependence pair, couple, unity intimacy separate but formed by each other	separate but formed by each other	intimacy
afford, provide, enable readiness (unconscious) working unconsciously together conduit, medium, processing agent mobilize, activate, elicit	activate and elicit	

Gardner subtly evoked separateness as a necessity to the kind of unconscious mutual participation he experienced with his patient in relation to his dog visualizations which I mentioned above: “Between image-making that serves as a constructive sense of unity and image-making that arises out of confusion of self and other lies a narrow divide” (1983, p. 76). Consider Brown (2009, p. 42) who used the metaphor “we were clicking” for his connection with his patient, as a “thinking couple” (p. 45), which to me suggests a match of two separate shapes, like two pieces of a puzzle perhaps, rather than combination and sameness. And Symington’s (2003) often used metaphor “embrace” which connotes intimacy, e.g., he posited that as a representation a spontaneous image is evidence of a mind embracing another. I read “embracing”, or “clicking”, as the kind of holding that keeps the other intact; and indeed, Symington argued that such embrace enabled pain to be felt as opposed to done away with. As Ogden (2004) argued, the analytic pair is separate but formed by each other, acting in unity and separateness as analyst and patient constitute each other, in direct analogy to a healthy mother-infant relationship: “the mother-infant unity [the analyst-patient unity] coexists in dynamic tension with the mother and infant [analyst and patient] in their separateness” (p. 168).

Intimacy is perhaps most poignantly thematized by Reiser (1999) and his associated notions of reciprocity, complementarity, functioning, and reacting. This connotes two separate entities, engaged in an exchange and not a fusion:

> This connected pair operating together constitutes a virtual ‘analytic instrument’ to implement the work of analysis. Each half, complementing the other and functioning reciprocally, contributes to,

> perceives, and reacts to the messages (words, images, fantasies, and feelings) that rise to the analytic surface during the hour. (p. 489)

Ogden (1999) developed the notion “the analytic third” to theorize this dynamic tension of being both in and of a relationship (see my discussion in Chapter 6). Others used words such as afford, enable, facilitate, e.g., “the image affords shared perception” when it is talked about and becomes a verbal object (Shaddock 2010, p. 246) or “the spontaneous image in the analyst, which erupted like Minerva out of Jupiter’s skull, facilitated unfolding of the analysand’s reminiscences” (Lothane 2007, p. 160). Others argued that their revelation of their unbidden image enabled the patient to see and feel her own spontaneous images (Bromberg 2006, p. 18) and was “stimulating the patient’s capacity” (Jacobs 1999, p. 179).

The authors in the dataset wrote about a corresponding, matching but different function in the patient’s psyche which activates, elicits or motivates unbidden visualizations in the analyst, because the analyst’s mind registers covert communications (Jacobs 1997, p. 1051) which, according to Reiser, neurologically activate “powerful, personally significant affects and memories” (1999, p. 492). For example an unspoken, unprocessed “conflict within the patient mobilized a conflict of the analyst’s own” and manifested in a spontaneous image (Thomson 1980, p. 196), or a patient’s unconscious and conflicted need for touch elicited an unbidden erotic visualization in her analyst which combined expressions of regressive and mature desire (Marcus 1997).

When functioning as a pair in which unconscious communication and mutual activation operates, the emergence of spontaneous images may signal the pair’s readiness to think about previously unacknowledged experiences, such as conflicts (Simon 1981, p. 475) and struggles. For Kern posited that unbidden images “open up the analyst’s empathic awareness to an aspect of the patient’s emotional struggle” (1978, p. 38), but in Thomson’s experience they are most likely to occur when the patient’s fear of the emotional struggle has eased (1980, p. 197).

In a functioning intimate relationship that entails connection and separateness, the analyst uses his/her faculties to understand the unconscious processes in him/herself as well as the patient (Thomson 1980, p. 201). The analyst’s subjectivity becomes a “medium for the patient’s unconscious thought” (Bollas 1999, p. 189) which is why Bollas (1983) also stated that “in order to find the patient we must look for him within ourselves.” For Brown the analyst is a “processing agent” for the patient’s emotional

truth (2009, p. 51) which matches Marcus' (1977, p. 236) description: the analyst's unconscious mind "receives" and "processes" and "dreams" the patient's unconscious, unprocessed messages which manifest themselves in spontaneous images. Understanding them with the patient's by revealing their qualities or content, then, brings to the patient's consciousness his/her unconscious message.

Extended illustration. I present a longer data extract so that the complex relations and exchanges that the theme *intimacy* conveys can be traced. The meanings encapsulated by *intimacy* develop in a process. This extract manifests many themes already discussed in this chapter, and I will also draw on it in later sections and chapters. Reiser (1999, pp. 492-497) provides an extensive account of psychoanalytic sessions with a patient, "Eve", during which he experienced an unbidden visualization which had a major impact on the course of the analysis. Eve wanted to get pregnant but could not bring herself to stop her contraceptive. During the phase leading up to Reiser's unbidden visualization, Eve often talked about the time when she entered kindergarten and her mother was preoccupied with an unplanned pregnancy. Eve experienced a painful loss and a "terrible change in her world" (p. 493):

> Never again as a child was she to feel carefree; instead she was burdened with a feeling of responsibility for her mother's persistent unhappiness and with a sense of obligation to make things better. (p. 493)

As Eve was recalling her difficult time in kindergarten, Reiser experienced the following:

> As I listened and began to empathize with Eve, a vivid image appeared in my mind's eye. It was the famous fresco by Masaccio, *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, in the Brancacci Chapel of Chiesa Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence. Along with this vivid image I experienced the same strong feeling of dismay and abject despair the painting evoked the first time I viewed it and has every time since. I thought I knew now what it was that Eve had felt as a child sent off to kindergarten. But why, I asked myself, did she seem to dread the possibility that she might feel that way again now were she to become pregnant? (1999, p. 493)

Based on his spontaneous image Reiser said to Eve, "sounds as if you felt like you'd become expelled from the Garden of Eden" and she responded "I lost my good mother, the baby came, and it was never the same again . . . Maybe I wanted a baby" (p. 493). This put her tentatively in touch with her present and past wish to have a baby and its association with the dread she felt at that time in the past and her "inner prohibition" (p. 494).

In his interpretation Reiser used the emotional content of the spontaneous image, and the feelings and memories it evoked in him, to express what he believed Eve had activated in him and might therefore be going on for her. This illustrates the theme cluster organised by *activate and elicit* —the analyst's functions as a conduit for the patient who mobilizes his/her unconscious capacities, or how the pair work unconsciously together and enable material to emerge.

However, Reiser also emotionally connected the fresco with a time of loss, the time when he first saw it shortly after his mother's death. Reflecting on his emotional link to his mother's death years after completing work with Eve he recalled that he had experienced an earlier loss of his mother, when she forgot to pick him up after his first day at kindergarten. The whole theme network constituting *intimacy* becomes apparent, then. Reiser and Eve's work as an analytic couple who are formed by what each affords the other to feel, their separation as two subjectivities who recognize each other's emotions but whose feelings are differently caused and experienced. Eve experienced the emotional loss of her mother but not her death as Reiser did; Reiser experienced his mother's preoccupation as a loss in kindergarten but not because she was pregnant with a sibling etc. Their otherness is constitutive of their capacity as a couple to elicit unknown or un-present feelings and emotional histories in each other.

The fresco he had visualized remained with Reiser as a "leitmotif" as he listened to sessions of Eve's present and past experiences of feeling unwanted and at fault. They linked to Eve's known feelings of being intrinsically bad and responsible for her mother's depression (p. 495). After Reiser's internal use of his unbidden visualization, it very vividly reappeared in his mind yet again. As a consequence, he revealed the fresco image to Eve and said:

> When we first spoke of your feeling of having been thrown out of the Garden of Eden, the image of a painting came into my mind. [I identified and described it.] I find myself thinking of it again and believe we can learn from it. Adam and Eve were expelled because they had acquired sexual knowledge. I think it's time to add what we already understand. it's not just to the idea of having a baby—it's also the idea of sex, of making a baby that contributes to making you feel so bad. (1999, p. 496)

As Reiser himself stressed, he shared the unbidden fresco image "without revealing my personal private affective associations and memories" (p. 496) but by talking about what he believed the image continued to communicate to him about Eve's unconscious conflict and stuckness. He did so in a collaborative way that referenced again their

separateness, e.g., the privacy of his internal experience and its idiosyncrasy and subjectivity.

The complexity of the fresco image provided a shape for both analyst and patient to think with and to unravel the unconscious meanings it brought to consciousness. Reiser reported that over the following five months their analytic work deepened through transference work, until Eve had a dream that enabled her to remember a baby pet bird she was given at the critical time of her mother's unplanned pregnancy. She looked after it and enjoyed it very much. Her mother accidentally crushed the bird to death but accused Eve of having been negligent and therefore responsible for the bird's death. For Eve, then, the guilt, sin and loss also shown in Reiser's unbidden visualizations of the fresco and which were feelings contributing to her internal prohibition to becoming pregnant, finally began to take shape—she could begin to feel and think about what had happened and still is happening to her. This development or growth was enabled by the use she could make of her analyst's unconscious creativity and her intimate connection with him.

Generative Aliveness

This major theme relates to *togetherness* and *intimacy* in the therapeutic relationship and integrates meanings in four subtheme clusters, listed in Table 10 below, which focus on creativity, a generative movement towards change and growth, and aliveness in spontaneity.

Table 10

***Major Theme* Generative Aliveness**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Major Theme
freedom, free risk/daring spontaneity danger	spontaneity	generative aliveness
living experiences vivid, intense, emotionally charged alive with desire coming to life	alive	
generative relationship impulse toward, thrust generating empathy	generative	
joint creations, interplay active creative force	creativity	

This theme captures creativity as an "active force" (Symington 2003, p. 15) at work in unconscious spontaneous image creation, which for Symington is part of the general creation of the mind through symbolizations. Thomson (1980, p. 186) linked unbidden images to an "inspirational phase of creativity". Reiser saw unbidden images as a "key mechanism in the generation of empathic responses" (1999, p. 491) which for Lothane (2007, p. 158) is particularly felt when the image contains the psychoanalyst's alikeness with the patient. Rather than staying in the grip of being overwhelmed, which is where the patient may be, the "thrust towards representation" (Symington 2003, p. 14) manifests itself in the analyst's capacity to unconsciously perceive the patient's emotional world and generate an image association. The relationship itself is therefore involved in creativity and generating imagery which relates the themes *togetherness* and *intimacy*.

Such creativity is much in evidence in the extended illustration in the previous section (p. 83) of Reiser's (1999) work with Eve. Over a period of time Reiser's unbidden visualization of the fresco depicting Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise provided a medium through which a conflict became alive and available for analytic work. The experience for both was emotionally charged, generated empathy and a generative relationship.

In my reading and understanding, then, these conceptualizations of creativity express an aliveness intrinsic to the functioning relationship. Such aliveness is echoed throughout the dataset in the very vividness and intensity in which psychotherapists experience spontaneous images. Ogden maintained that the unconscious is not “behind” unbidden visualizations but is “coming alive” in them, in the conscious experience of visualizations (2001, p. 107). And as I have shown, for these psychoanalysts their unconscious is intimately connected to what is going on for the patient. Spontaneous mental images, then, speak of this very aliveness between the psychoanalyst and patient in which their unconscious connection, through the analyst’s unbidden visualizations, is vital, as Ogden poignantly stated, “the unconscious of the analysand is brought to life in the analytic relationship” (2001, p. 99).

Ogden also determined the moment before a spontaneous image appears as “alive with desire” (2001, p. 9) which may connect to the subtheme of unconscious readiness in the analytic pair mentioned above. But I also discerned aliveness in Marcus’ (1997) account, discussed above, of the patient’s unformulated longing to which his unbidden visualization responded or in Kern’s understanding of spontaneous images as fantasies of the analyst’s desires to act out (1978, p. 36). Aliveness in these contexts connotes desire.

All the mental images discussed in the dataset texts appeared spontaneously. This experience of spontaneity entails freedom and aliveness as well as risk and danger, all of which are pervasively represented in the data: the risk inherent in speaking (Laquercia 1998, p. 26), the risk of offering of oneself, the unbidden image creation, when perhaps the patient is less ready for such a gesture and its content than was perceived, and the ever present danger of affect overwhelm. In this sense, all the other themes tie in with *aliveness* and point to dynamic tensions in the events and processes involved in making use of spontaneous mental images. This point will be taken up below in Chapter 6.

Such dynamic and generative features became more apparent in the final stages of the thematic analysis. They also afford a way of creatively thinking about interrelationships among major themes. The remaining two major themes identify such dynamic meaning patterns and are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Results 2: Two Dynamic Major Themes

In the previous chapter I presented nine major themes identified in my thematic analysis. In addition two major themes were identified that have dynamic qualities and which are the subject of this chapter. They are the third-order themes *tensions of time and temporality* and *movement through tension and paradox*. The results of their analysis are the subject of this chapter. After a short explanation of the difference between dynamic themes and the major themes discussed in the last chapter, this chapter consists of two sections describing the two major dynamic themes, structured as in the last chapter, and ends with some concluding remarks on these themes.

The two dynamic major themes in this chapter capture meanings in the data that have more implicit, tacit and to some extent background qualities. When authors make them more explicit they tend to use abstraction and concepts. While time is ubiquitous, it is often experienced as a background economy, and the authors in the dataset are no exception to this. However, I will show that through the metaphors they used and the ways in which they described what happened when and after they had an unbidden visualization, temporal processes and relations are an important part of their experience. Time matters in relation to spontaneous images. Similarly, tensions and paradox are not sensory experiences but convey a certain abstract understanding of relationships between experiences and parts of the therapy process. Compared with time, paradox has been more theorized in psychoanalysis and some of the authors in the dataset make reference to paradox as a concept, as I will discuss below.

What these two major themes offer and what differentiates them from the nine major themes in the previous chapter is that they convey dynamic patterns of meanings in the data. They capture aspects of the unbidden visualization experience which are about the effect of the spontaneous image on the therapeutic process, how it contributes to the way the therapeutic couple operates and makes certain processes possible—how it contributes to movement in the relationship. Generally speaking, the nine major themes of the previous chapter are more static. In addition, the two dynamic major themes open perspectives on interrelationships among the other nine major themes which will be discussed in Chapter 6.

Tensions of Time and Temporality

Table 11 below shows three first-order theme clusters constituting the dynamic major theme *tensions of time and temporality*. It identifies the temporal and temporalizing experiences involved in unbidden visualizations. Unbidden mental images happen in time, in the ongoing of the therapy. And they are of time itself—they create a moment (the event of their occurrence) that alters the temporal ongoing of the process of therapy, and this also affects the therapeutic relationship. The organising themes shown in Table 11 (*direction, facing what is to come*; *holding on, facing what has happened*; and *expanding the present moment*) highlight this tensed experience. In the wake of an unbidden visualization the psychotherapist's intra-psychic work unfolds and feeds back into the work and development of the therapy relationship; some of these effects have been mentioned in the description of the theme intimacy and the extended illustration given there, on p. 83.

Table 11

***Dynamic Major Theme* Tensions of Time and Temporality**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Dynamic Major Theme
prefiguring, foreshadowing, anticipating leitmotif	direction, facing what is to come	tensions of time and temporality
retrospectively understanding taking hold, sticking	holding on, facing what has happened	
it takes time slowly appearing, tentative, unobtrusive	expanding the present moment	

The organising theme *direction, facing what's to come* gathers how a spontaneous mental image creates momentum forward in time, even though what lies ahead still remains unknown to the psychoanalysts—here the unknown and obscure aspects of unbidden imagery is echoed again. But as Reiser stated, unbidden images become a "leitmotif for analytic work" (1999, p. 491), especially when the image is recurrent or he continually remembers it (p. 486). Similarly, Gardner writes that as "the image carries on in the mind" (1983, pp. 50-51), it acquires significance. In these two examples the unbidden image endures into and points towards the future.

Althofer interpreted her hallucination-like visualization on first meeting her patient as an "adumbration of things to come", it "prefigured" countertransferential problems and struggles (1983, pp. 51, 52). She could not know the intersubjective

process about to unfold between her and her patient, but the image captured the complexity of their unconscious connection in the moment in which it occurred. Ogden writes that unbidden mental images and the sensory experiences they evoke are his "emotional compass" for the relationship: "My reverie experience serves as an emotional compass ... about what is going on unconsciously in the analytic relationship" (2001, p. 13; see also 1997, p. 570). As obscure, unknown or disturbing the future may be, and as obscure and disturbing the unbidden image may be, it has the capacity to prefigure the unknown and provide emotional direction by "foreshadowing" (Reiser 1999, p. 495) and "anticipating" (Ferro 2007, p. 22). In this sense, I posit, the unbidden visualizations endure beyond the present moment by initiating a process of reflection and framing of the therapeutic work.

The experience of a spontaneous mental image happens as an event in time, but only if the image is recognised. For example, Ogden explained how he struggled to hold onto the image as it was "slowly taking shape" before slipping away (1994, p. 126). For many others the sudden, intrusive or disturbing appearance of the image creates a memorable event. This moment, however, must also gain significance to be useful as a directional compass. For example, Reiser described how his spontaneous visualization of a particular fresco depicting Adam and Eve's expulsion from paradise influenced the way he listened to his patient—the fresco image "returned from time to time", "announcing the advent of significant material" (1999, p. 495). Images that stay in the mind, then, remain with the psychoanalyst as a backdrop which, I suggest, opens up an emotional and perceptive disposition and therefore changes the therapeutic relationship.

Gardner's unbidden images "stick" in his memory, they take hold in the "after-hour-drift", a mental state "on that border between recall and relive" (Gardner 1983, pp. 50-52) in which the associative work about the image begins, and when, I suggest, the image as event comes into being. Associating to and beginning to understand the image is a process of imagining and thinking the words to translate and give meaning to the image (Appel 2001, p. 38). This understanding, however, happens in retrospect, "after the fact" (Ogden 1999, p. 488). Unbidden visualizations therefore also initiate an orientation back onto themselves and into the past, a "holding on" of various kinds: holding on to it as a sudden, intrusive event, or to reflections of what had been going on between psychotherapist and patient in the moment when the visualization happened, or to reflections of the context of several sessions, or to the psychoanalyst's memories of the patient's stories about his/her past, to the imagined past of the patient. Therefore, in

its “sticking” power, the spontaneous image expands the moment in which it happened, providing a compass into the future and back into a reconsidering of the past. This is also where its potential usefulness beyond the mind of the psychotherapist becomes conceivable (Ogden’s transformation from “I” to “me”, discussed above).

All authors in the dataset show that unbidden visualizations often only become useful over time—useful in terms of being meaningful, understandable, falling into place (Althofer 1963, p. 54). Links between the spontaneous image and the therapy, or links between seemingly unrelated images over several sessions, take time to be recognised and processed, even in those cases where the psychoanalyst revealed the image to the patient in the same session in which it happened (Laquercia 1998). Indeed “it takes a good deal of time” (Jacobs 1997, p. 1054) to “allow meaning to accrue” over sessions, whether this is collaborative work or in the psychoanalyst’s mind. The moment of the spontaneous image event thus is further expanded.

In these ways unbidden visualizations create and contain a temporality—they happen in a moment which, as they take hold, becomes an event that orients the mind of the psychoanalyst towards the future and the past. Therefore, they expand the present moment in which they are effective. They open up a new time-space of tenses, i.e., of past, present, and future orientations that runs parallel with other time-spaces created by the events and experiences that constitute the relationship between psychotherapist and patient in its particular and singular dynamic.

Such temporal dynamics are not easily imagined, and I offer the illustration in Figure 8 below as a representation which sheds some light, perhaps, on this conception of time as temporality and continually opening and closing time-spaces. When reading Duchamp’s painting from right to left, strands of interconnected ongoing time-spaces can be seen, along which events, as stoppages, create new directions of time-spaces in an expanding network of openings and endpoints, while the whole surface of the painting is a palimpsest of temporal layers (for a more detailed interpretation, see Gell, 1998, pp. 242-251).

Figure 8: ***The Network of Stoppages*** **by Marcel Duchamp (1914). Museum of Modern Art, New York.**

[This image has been removed by the author of this dissertation for copyright reasons.

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Movement Through Tension and Paradox

This second dynamic third-order theme clusters first-order themes which convey conflicting experiences and ideas that refer to tension and paradox. Paradox is an experience and concept discussed in some psychoanalytic literature but it has not been developed into a theoretical concept proper (but see Pizer, 1998). But Ogden discussed paradox in the context of his concept “the analytic third”, including two texts in the dataset (Ogden 1997a, 1999, 2001, 2004). He referred to Winnicott’s (1965) notion of paradox in relation to the tensions ensuing from the analyst’s and patient’s (the mother’s and infant’s) separate bodies and individual subjectivity on the one hand, and on the other their mutual intersubjective constitution as persons through the relationship with one another— the persons they have the potential to be through one another. I take up a discussion of paradox and thirdness in Chapter 6.

However, paradox also refers to an everyday experience and is used in ordinary language as a way of thinking about common human experiences, and as an experience it occurs in psychoanalytic relationships. My thematic analysis identified tensions between conflicting themes and I noted the explicit use of *paradox* in Ogden’s, Bollas’ Laquercia’s and Thomson’s texts. This third-order theme *movement through tension*

and paradox captures meanings of the experiences and experience-near understanding psychotherapists wrote about in relation to their unbidden mental images, rather than the meanings of theoretical arguments. The theme discerns the experience of contrasting or contradictory experiences and meanings which cannot be resolved, and according to Winnicott (1965 [1960]) and Ogden (2004) should not be attempted to be resolved but rendered meaningful. Winnicott's (and Ogden's) theorising of paradox preserves it as the experience of tensions.

Here I present paradox as a theme permeating implicitly the whole dataset but that have been made explicitly by only a few authors. Table 12 shows its constituting subtheme networks. The organising themes *dynamic movement* and *growth* organise meanings of experience, whereas *images come effortlessly and afford great effort*, organises more implicit paradoxical relations.

Table 12

***Dynamic Major Theme* Movement Through Tension and Paradox**

First-Order Theme Clusters	Organising Themes	Dynamic Major Theme
paradox dynamic tension movement	dynamic movement	
shift, expansion, discovery fundamental to analytic process	growth	movement through tension and paradox
calm effortless great effort struggle, wrestling	images come effortlessly and afford great effort	

A striking thematic tensions exists between experiences of great effort and struggle, and effortlessness and relative calm. Lothane characterised his state of mind when unbidden visualizations happen as "spontaneous effortless thinking" (2006, p. 716), as a state in which psychotherapists happen to end up, as when Kern wrote "I found myself visualizing" (1978, p. 28) or Ogden described drifting into reverie without noticing (1997a, 1997b, 2001).

However, many authors wrote about struggle. For Ogden it manifests as anxiety and urgency (1999, p. 472) while "fighting repression" in order to "keep the [image] conscious" (2004, p. 170) "before it is reclaimed by the unconscious" (2001, p. 21). Gardner described the whole process of thinking about an unbidden image and the work with the patient as "wrestling" (1983, p. 51) with the image; indeed the unbidden

visualizations he described also express intra-psychic tensions and conflicts in himself and in his patient which lead to struggles between them (p. 63). Others wrote about a struggle entailed in the unbidden visualization happening. For Simon (1981) spontaneous mental images signified a failure of communication between psychotherapist and patient; when they occur, they represent and communicate a "struggle of hope and despair" which can potentially be repaired by working with image content (p. 487). However, for Kern unbidden visualizations were evidence of countertransference struggles, of "previously unknown struggles against a wish to act out certain (countertransference) fantasies with the patient" (1978, p. 34) whereby the image content showed the fantasy in a condensed dream-like image (p. 36).

The great effort that spontaneous images require, though, goes beyond such struggles. Jacobs wrote about the difficulty of making use of inner experience (1997, p. 1051), and Thomson (1980, p. 186) about the enduring effort involved in integrating the disturbing inner experiences generated by unbidden visualizations while keeping his mental equilibrium. Ogden "labored" to connect his imagery to the patient's material (2004, p. 173) and asserted that it requires "great psychological effort" to be attuned to his experience and make the images analytically useful to himself (2004, p. 185; 1999, p. 476).

Such mental equilibrium may be a re-found calm that eventually results from a spontaneous image experience, e.g., after being confronted with the patient's anxiety the psychotherapist feels calm again while thinking about the image (Bromberg 2006, p. 17). Brown (2009) described how he and his female patient both calmed when he shared his unbidden visualization which was a memory from a trip to Russia. He noticed that "there was an immediate sense of her relaxing" as if "loosened from a hold" as she began to develop her own thoughts in response (2009, p. 42). In Symington's (2003) self-analysis the unbidden image of a ship tossed about in a turbulent sea is "a safe haven" of understanding, because as a representation of his tumultuous inner state it is an object to contemplate and therefore a first step towards its transformation. Bromberg described this tension of effort, struggle and calm inherent in the experience of unbidden visualizations as two simultaneous "self-states" intrinsic to psychoanalytic listening (2006, pp. 17-18)—the urgency to work (interpret) and the calm, even an extreme calm, which comes with focusing on the immediate experience of himself and his patient. The next chapter takes up the theme of paradox in a wider discussion of paradox as a concept.

Reflective Comments on Time and Paradox as Themes

Before turning to the next chapter I wish to make some final comments on the results presented in this chapter. These two third-order themes identify patterned meanings relating to time and paradox. They both refer to an interplay of diverse experiences involved in unbidden visualizations which create tensions that appear to be vital to the therapy. This may be because time and paradox are existential conditions in which the therapeutic relationship unfolds, in terms of the therapeutic frame and in terms of existential conditions of human relationships. Compared with the other third-order themes these two themes are, however, more abstracted. As much as time is ubiquitous it usually forms a background to experience that is rarely made explicit in descriptions, and much is the same for paradoxical experiences which are rather thought about as strict dichotomies or conflicts to be resolved (Pizer, 1998).

Before embarking on this research I was aware of Ogden's work (2004) which defined at the heart of the therapeutic relationship a dynamic tension between coexisting ways of being, i.e., the psychotherapist's and the patient's separateness and their simultaneously their being formed by each other, their unity. In his theoretical passages he defined this dynamic tension as paradoxical. With regard to time and temporality, I have a particular sensibility to the effects of time and temporal modalities on human relationships, agency, and the generation of knowledge because of my previous research in social anthropology (Gross, 1998). These sensibilities and interests contributed to the interpretation of meanings and identification of themes in my thematic analysis.

Concerning such subjectivity, Rennie (2012) argued that interpretation is an activity that involves embodied experiencing. I did not set out to analyse paradox, time and temporality in the dataset texts and did not code with these concepts in mind. But they are part of my subjectivity and way of experiencing. Temporal and paradoxical dimensions occurred to me in the context of analysing first-order themes. Later I became aware of Loewenthal's work on relational methods. He formulated ways in which a researcher's subjectivity, i.e., his/her interests and theories, are neither imposed on the research subject or object nor neutralized, but thoughtfully used in the ongoing, tentative, incomplete process of understanding (Loewenthal, 2007b). In this study I am attempting to do this.

The next chapter is a discussion of these results, the presented in this and the previous chapter, in terms of their implications and in a wider context.

Chapter 6
Discussion

Over the preceding chapters I presented a thematic analysis of a set of published texts from which I extracted data about psychotherapists' experiences of and reflections on spontaneous visual images in their clinical work. The analysis resulted in 11 major themes, two of which I categorised as dynamic. This chapter is a discussion of all of these themes and their implications. By way of an orientation, I begin with a summary of the most significant findings which will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow. The largest section deals with interrelationships among themes and includes a comprehensive diagram (p. 106). Following on from this discussion are sections about the themes in relation to the concept of *the third* in psychoanalysis and to paradox. The final sections address clinical implications and limitations of this research. The sequence of section topics is as follows:

- Summary of findings.
- Implications of the particular application of the method in relation to findings.
- Findings in the broader context of current issues in psychoanalysis.
- Interrelationships among major themes.
- Triangular space and thirdness.
- Activation of paradoxes central to psychoanalysis.
- Clinical implications.
- Limitations of this research and implications for further research.

Summary of Findings

I suggest that the most significant findings of this study are:

- **Time is a critical factor**. Unbidden images only become meaningful and useful over time during which they initiate past and future orientations into the therapeutic process. This is conveyed by the dynamic theme *tensions of time and temporality*. These temporal dynamics are more implicit in the dataset.
- **Acuteness of paradoxes.** Unbidden images crystallize certain paradoxes inherent in the therapeutic relationship. These paradoxes are present as sometimes disturbing and challenging subjective and intersubjective experiences that the therapy needs to negotiate. The paradoxical aspects of the unbidden visualization experience are conveyed by the dynamic theme *movement through tension and paradox* and are somewhat explicit in the dataset.

- **Interrelationships**. All major themes convey meanings relating to the tripartite research question of this study. They can be grouped into three categories to which they predominantly but not exclusively relate: The psychotherapist's experience of his/her mind as it produced the unbidden image; his/her experience of the unbidden image itself, its effect and function; and his/her experience of the relationship with the patient in which the unbidden image occurred. The two dynamic major themes, however, convey temporal and paradoxical meanings which are more encompassing across these categories. Most important for the interpretation of all themes and for the significance of this thematic analysis, though, are their interrelationships.
- **Triangular space**. Unbidden images are creations of the psychoanalyst's unconscious and conscious mind but motivated by the intersubjective process between patient and psychoanalyst. As objects with certain capabilities and functions they open up a triangular space in which the psychoanalyst and eventually the patient can think about what is going on for the patient and in the relationship between them.
- **Methodological implications**. The specific approach to thematic analysis I applied in this study which conceptualized themes as constituted by networks of subthemes clusters fostered significant insights into the data. This is most visible in the analysis of tensions, contrasts and interrelationships more generally among all themes and in the development of two dynamic themes. The following section takes up these methodological issues.

Methodological Implications of the Method as Applied

In this study the number of themes generated by the thematic analysis is higher than in other studies which resulted in one to four core or global themes (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Meier et al., 2006; Pollio & Ursiak, 2006; Ward et al., 2009). However, rather than reducing the 11 themes further to a few core themes, e.g. the two dynamic major themes, I chose to keep with the network model and clustering approach also in the final steps of the analysis and the presentation of results. This choice has practical implications on how themes are analysed. These have been extensively described in Chapter 3. More significant is its impact on the way themes can be thought about.

Using a clustering rather than a linear process of analysis, as described in Chapter 3, resulted in the conceptualization of major themes as internal networks of

subthemes and in a focus on interrelationships among themes as "patterns of connection" among themes" (Pollio & Ursiak, 2006, p. 290). Pollio & Ursiak described theme interrelationships as "interwoven within descriptions of specific events and experiences", forming a "complex pattern of interrelationships" and argue against the analysis of independent and mutually exclusive themes (2006 pp. 290-1). As I will discuss in a section below, the interrelationships among all major themes critically add to the understanding of psychotherapists' unbidden visualization experience to which this study contributes. Furthermore, the two dynamic major themes offer a specific perspective on theme interrelationships. In this section I discuss methodological implications.

Thematic analysis usually proceeds by discerning "common components" among meanings extracted from the data. This is a reductive process of subsuming difference under commonality (Ward et al., 2009). But in the process of my thematic analysis I became acutely aware of tensions among themes which would be obscured if subsumed under a commonality. Rather, these are connections among themes, relationships which are not based on commonality but other qualities such as contradiction, contrast, simultaneous dual experiences and other forms of tension.

As researchers of thematic analysis show, themes provide a way of describing what the data are about by capturing the patterns of connection between and among the data and the analysed themes. In this analysis such connections include tensions and contrasts which the authors in the dataset did not address or only partially addressed. However, Joffe's astute observation is that a thematic analysis "looks at manifest themes as a route to understanding more latent, tacit content" (2012, p. 220). It was important, therefore, to keep certain meaning distinctions thematically alive.

Moreover, the two generative dynamic themes *tensions of time and temporality* and *movement through tension and paradox* evince these kinds of tensions among major themes. For example, the major themes *togetherness* and *intimacy* express tensions between two modalities of relating: between relating through a recognised alikeness in which the experience of sameness or oneness predominates and the separateness of self and other is in the background without acute presence, and the experience of relating through mutual exchange and influence in which separateness, difference and internal privacy of self and other predominate and are a precondition for such relating. As the extended data illustration and the shorter examples in Chapter 4 showed, the interplay of these two modalities—within the totality of all relational modalities that constitute a

particular therapy (e.g., also transference)—is critical for a good therapeutic use of spontaneous image experiences. The illustrations also showed the crucial component of time and temporality as a theme implied in the data: the relational interplay takes time, and it unfolds as a process and develops as a dynamic. This leads to intra- and intersubjective movement in the therapeutic couple, to discovery and therapeutic growth as the theme *movement through tension and paradox* captured. (Further tensions and interrelationships that indicate how spontaneous images create movement and growth in the therapeutic process will be discussed in the section on theme interrelationships below.)

Subsuming this relational difference and tension under a common component, e.g., “awareness of relationship”, or “tension between self and other”, would diminish the thematic analysis. The experience evinced by the themes *intimacy* and *togetherness* is, rather, the oscillation between the two relational modalities over time and at different phases in the unfolding of the process which the spontaneous mental image initiates. Unbidden visualizations therefore experientially bring to life a relational paradox central to the therapeutic relationship which needs to be not resolved but negotiated (Brown, 2011; Caper, 1999; Ogden, 2004a; Pizer, 1998). I therefore preserved the different components of this relational paradox and other dynamic thematic tensions for the analysis, rather than reducing them to a few less descriptive categorical themes.

The next section begins the discussion of findings not related to method and addresses thematic findings in the context of broader debates and issues in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy.

Findings in a Broader Context

The major themes reveal that the psychotherapist’s experience of spontaneous images and their clinical use have significance for ongoing debates in psychoanalysis. For example, debates about the relationship between a psychoanalyst’s inner experience as it happens and the unconscious dynamic of the patient, i.e., how the patient’s unconscious processes communicate themselves to the attuned analyst. Spontaneous images prompt very careful reflections on the quality of the relationship between psychoanalyst and patient.

Countertransference and unconscious communication. The results of my analysis could be further analysed to contribute to discussions about the technical use of countertransference, the nature of direct unconscious-to-unconscious communication,

and the integration of different kinds of thinking in psychoanalysis (e.g., Bollas, 2009, 2011; Brown, 2011; Ogden, 2010). In terms of using the countertransference by revealing parts of it to the patient, for example, the results are inconclusive. There is no how-to way of using spontaneous images in relation to the patient. Rather, the results show that the ways in which psychotherapists silently thought about their unbidden mental images, or also spoke of or about them to the patient, are diverse and in some cases developed differently over time. Instead, the results suggest that all psychotherapists studied in this research scrutinize their experience, their motivations and the state of their relationship with the patient before making decisions about revealing or not revealing an unbidden visualization or part of their emotional experience.

In terms of direct unconscious communication in psychoanalysis, the results of this study would need to be compared and combined with studies of other forms of direct unconscious communication, e.g., projective identification or telepathy. The same applies for their analysis in relation to different types of thinking practiced in psychoanalysis, such as dream-thinking, transformational thinking or insight.

Making use of the personal. The themes convey the considerable work psychotherapists need to invest in order to make unbidden visualizations meaningful and technically available in the therapeutic work. And yet, the theme *care and scrutiny* reveals that they are often, and certainly initially, not inclined to treat unbidden visualizations as significant, because they deem them unworthy, too disturbing or self-indulgent to be useful. Scrutiny results from their hesitations, doubt and care in making use of spontaneous images.

A difficulty of working with spontaneous images as meaningful to the therapeutic work is their dream-like, personal and sudden quality—and yet, paradoxically, it is in that personal quality meaning can be found. When making use of unbidden visualizations psychoanalysts need to re-experience personal, often painful and conflicted experiences of their own childhood or current life situation. They need to put their inner life, their history and feelings, under scrutiny in terms of their subjective meaning and their potential meaning to the patient and their relationship. Unbidden visualizations are instantiations of the personal, and personally felt, involvement in the process as countertransference, as it is recognised and made useful in the project of understanding of the patient's inner life and unconscious process.

Two authors in the dataset expressed this incisively: Laquercia likened the experience to being taken over, "the analysand takes possession of the analyst's mind" (1998, p. 24) and Jacobs to "giving oneself over" to the relationship and the patient (1997, p. 1047). Critically, they and other authors argue that only in such a mental state can private inner experiences be signs of receptivity and potentially symbolize what is happening in the relationship. In this sense the results show that the experience and use of unbidden mental images are a key example of the modern psychoanalytic approach to make use of the self of the psychoanalyst. While the stance of neutrality and non-judgmental acceptance is critical, this stance does not imply a neutrality of involvement or the idea of a psychoanalyst whose countertransference has been neutralized, but rather that the self-knowledge and understanding a psychoanalyst brings to his/her countertransference reactions helps him to make use of his/her self for the good of the therapeutic process. I think that this thematic analysis of unbidden visualizations contributes something to the understanding how such use of countertransference and the personal works in practice.

Universal experience, diverse use. However, an important finding of this analysis is that psychotherapists of diverse theoretical orientation experienced and made therapeutic use of unbidden visualizations. While the range is diverse, the use of spontaneous images is not limited to a particular approach. Unbidden visualizations are not experienced only by psychoanalysts and psychotherapists of a certain school or approach. Moreover, their experiences and clinical reflections are comparable even while their theoretical arguments and conclusions differ. How they differ, and how their arguments relate to various historical and theoretical contexts, are issues beyond the scope of this dissertation. Suffice it to say that the dataset includes psychotherapists and psychoanalysts practicing a variety of approaches.

They include several authors who routinely worked with dreams, reverie and free association (Bollas, 1983, 1992, 1995, 1999; Gardner, 1983; Lothane, 2006, 2007, 2010; Ogden, 1994, 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2001) and a smaller group whose framework for the discussion of unbidden images was a careful analysis of countertransference processes and enactments triggered by the particularity of work with a patient (Althofer, 1983; Kern, 1978; Simon, 1981; Thomson, 1980). Also included are a few authors who explored the psychoanalyst's self-states and fantasy as clinical technique (Bromberg, 2006; Jacobs, 1993, 1997, 1999; Marcus, 1997), and two authors with a specialised frame: one linked unconscious communication with neurological processes (Reiser,

1999) and another shed light on the enigmatic and occult in psychotherapy (Appel, 2000). Another group of authors was concerned with the phenomenology of unconscious perception and intersubjectivity but from diverse psychoanalytic approaches, e.g., neo-Kleinian, ego psychological, intersubjective (Arlow, 1969a, 1979; Brown, 2009; Laquercia, 1998; Schust-Briat, 1996). A low majority of authors in the dataset could be classified as being intersubjectively or relationally oriented, but many others are classically trained or integrate Kleinian and object relations models—the range is diverse and the experience of unbidden visualization and their usefulness is not associated with a particular theory.

More significantly still, my thematic analysis shows that the experiences of unbidden visualizations are comparable, as are the effects and functions of psychotherapists' unbidden visualizations in their work with a patient—even when their use of them is particular to their personal history, their style and the particular patient. The thematic analysis has shown that among this diversity there is relative similarity and certainly comparability, in terms of practitioner's state of mind, inner processing and in the care they apply when dealing with unbidden visualizations.

Interrelationships Among Major Themes

This section is a discussion of interrelationships among all major themes through which the working of unbidden visualizations in the therapeutic process, especially their potential to bring about development and change, can be shown. I begin by summarizing the themes and explain their interrelationships with the help of a diagram. This leads into the discussion of triangular space, time and paradox.

Groups of interrelated themes. The threefold research question of this study attempts to address the totality of psychotherapists' unbidden visualization experience and deals with:

- Psychotherapists' experience of spontaneous images as they occur, the experience of their mind or self.
- Psychotherapists' experience of the effect of spontaneous images and their function in the therapeutic process.
- Psychotherapists' understanding and use of spontaneous images in the therapeutic relationship.

All major themes capture meanings related to this threefold question, but they can be grouped into the three categories of interrelated themes distinguished by the threefold research question.

Psychotherapist's self-experience. The psychotherapist's experience of his/her mind as it produced the unbidden image is most distinctly captured by four themes:

- Personal inner experience.
- Dream-like perceiving: experiencing the obscure and unconscious.
- Disturbance by the unknown.
- Care and scrutiny.

These themes are interrelated and convey the essentially private experience of unbidden visualizations through which the psychotherapist makes fullest use of his/her mental capacities. At the centre is the connection with his/her unconscious experiencing and perception around which the work with the image revolves. This work resembles dream work as the experience of unbidden visualizations has dream-like qualities. But because they occur in a waking state and present content heard by the unconscious third ear, they do not make sense in relation to what the psychotherapist consciously hears in the patient's spoken communication. They create a disturbance, similar to the experience of the uncanny. Parsons (2000) called uncanny and revelatory experiences of creative perception "moments of illumination" and characterized their peculiarity:

> Seeming to come from nowhere, they come from nowhere but within ourselves and, like dreaming, give us a sense of a deep internal process, part of ourselves and strange to us at the same time. (p. 24)

This experience activates the relational paradox of connecting with the other, the patient, through such self experience which was already mentioned in previous chapters and is further discussed below. It also activates the paradox of play which is equally central to the nature of psychoanalysis (Winnicott, 1971). As in play—and as in the creations of the psychoanalyst's imagination and unconscious—unbidden visualizations are real and unreal at the same time: experientially real but also unreal in that they cannot be directly related to the reality of the therapeutic relationship. Bateson (1972 [1955]) showed that play depends on a connection and differentiation of primary and secondary processes that is comparable to the inner experience of psychoanalysts captured by the four themes above. Unsurprisingly then, unbidden visualizations prompt the psychoanalyst to serious play—to self scrutiny, care and the freedom to associate to the spontaneous image, to let it take hold, have an effect and reveal what it contains. One of the critical issues that follows for the psychoanalyst is how and when this play with spontaneous images can also include the particular patient in whose presence they appeared.

Effect and function of the unbidden image. The experience of the unbidden image itself and its function is mainly conveyed by three themes:

- Sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities.
- Revealing by giving shape.
- Generative aliveness.

These three themes convey a threefold power and capacity inherent to unbidden visualizations: they contain complexities that neither patient nor psychotherapist are able to express or process in other ways at the moment when they appear. In doing so, they provide a first shape of the unconscious process or experience which thrusts itself into the therapeutic relationship. They reveal what is yet incomprehensible by pushing themselves into the foreground of attention through their sensory qualities and potentially bringing to life that which they symbolically contain and which demands attention in the therapy at that moment. The spontaneous image creates a moment initiating a change of direction which, though, has the potential to generate learning, connection and aliveness in a situation where communication otherwise was not possible, because, for example, the patient was muted by trauma or the relationship was stuck. As with the previous themes, these three themes evincing the potential of spontaneous images are internally interrelated.

Experience of the therapeutic relationship. The experience of the relationship with the patient in which the unbidden image occurred is characterized by the themes:

- Togetherness.
- Intimacy.

These two themes and their connections and differentiations from each other have already been extensively discussed in Chapter 4. Here I want to stress again that the data suggest clearly that the presence of both relational modalities—togetherness through alikeness, sameness and combination, and intimacy through separation, difference and exchange—come into play in the context of unbidden visualizations. As the themes also indicate, a distinctive and important feature of the therapeutic relationship which manifests itself through unbidden visualizations is that the psychoanalyst's mind functions as a medium, processing agent or conduit for the patient's unconscious experience and processes, echoing Bion's (1962a) concept of the analyst's container function.

From this perspective, unbidden images are intra-psychic events (internal to the analyst) that are intersubjectively motivated. Out of this intersubjectivity and

unconscious connection the analyst takes hold of his/her subjectivity as a separate subject in two ways: as psychoanalyst to his/her patient, by reflecting on the unbidden image experience as a communication from his/her patient; and by holding on to the subjective content of the unbidden visualization which contains the separateness on which the unconscious communication depends. In this sense, and as the subthemes of this network revealed, the psychoanalyst's unbidden mental images are themselves a symbolic medium in which the patient's unconscious takes form and happens, and in which the psychoanalyst's personal history and experience are also activated. I discuss this idea in further detail below.

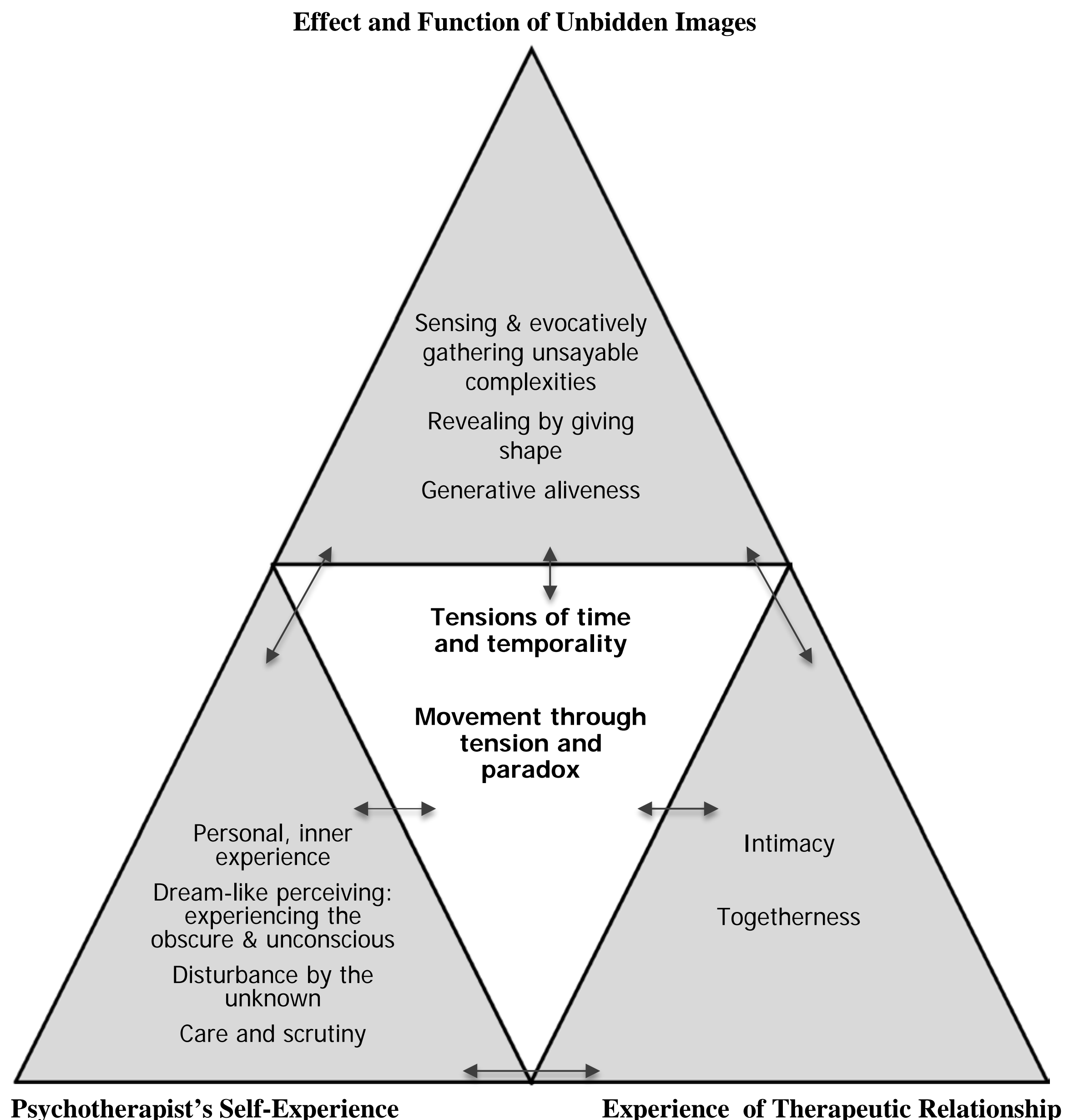
Complex interrelationships. These themes are predominantly but not exclusively related to these areas. The two dynamic major themes which convey temporal and paradoxical meanings, however, are more encompassing and convey meanings that relate to all three areas and to further interrelationships among all themes. These interrelationships are best represented in a diagram. Figure 9 is a triangle of major theme interrelationships and of the experiences which they predominantly characterize. The triangle is internally structured into four triangles: a central unshaded triangle and three shaded triangles at each corner. The three shaded triangles represent the three areas of inquiry. They are labelled and contain the themes predominantly associated with them:

- The experience of the effect and function of the unbidden image, represented by the shaded triangle in the apex corner.
- The experience of self, represented in the shaded triangle in the bottom left corner.
- The experience of the therapeutic relationship, represented in the shaded triangle in the bottom right corner.

The central unshaded space contains the two major dynamic themes expressing aspects of time and paradox which generate certain interrelations among all themes. The arrows in the diagram represent interrelationships among themes, both direct interrelationships and those evinced by the two dynamic themes in the central triangle. However, I need to stress that the internal structure of the triangle of Figure 9 should not be seen as a firm structure with solid boundaries. All themes evince the psychotherapist's mental experience and functioning since this is what all the data are about. For example the theme sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities captures the psychotherapist's sensing and his/her understanding of the image as an evocative representation of something yet unsayable. What the internal structure does

convey is, however, in this example, that the psychotherapist attributes this capacity to the unbidden image.

Figure 9. Triangle of Theme Interrelationships.



I now want to point out some significant interrelationships among themes. The three themes relating to the unbidden image's effect and function interact with themes conveying the psychotherapist's self experience. For example, unbidden images draw attention to themselves by being sensory or sudden which causes a mental disturbance which in turn is prolonged because of the image's unknown and uncanny quality. The theme *sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities* directly interrelates with the theme *dream-like perceiving: experiencing the obscure and unconscious* which conveys the psychotherapist's experience. Spontaneous images are creations of

unconscious processes appearing like dream-images, because of their capacity to provide form and shape to something unavailable to secondary processes. The theme *generative aliveness* also relates to the interplay of the themes *intimacy* and *togetherness* in the therapeutic relationship: the patient's thrust towards contact with the psychotherapist—the intrusion into the psychotherapist's mind through unconscious communication in order to bring something alive—manifests the patient's separateness, i.e., the separateness of the patient's unconscious experience which belongs to him/her and needs attention; but the unconscious act of intrusion itself is made possible by togetherness, i.e., the combination of their two minds, the flow in and out of each other.

Figure 9 also shows diagrammatically the interrelationships revealed by the two themes *tensions of time and temporality* and *movement through tensions and paradox*. The details of the qualities that these themes express in the experience of unbidden visualization have been extensively presented and discussed in the previous chapter. The diagram makes visible, however, how time and paradox mediate interrelationships among themes. For example, the three themes *revealing by giving shape*, *sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities*, and *dream-like perceiving: experiencing the obscure and unconscious* connect with the themes *generative aliveness* and *togetherness* in that they suggest an ongoing and flow of internal thoughts and intersubjective relatedness between analyst and patient. In temporal terms this thematic ongoingness, however, creates tensions with other themes that suggest a temporal stoppage—an interruption of ongoingness, expressed in the themes *disturbance by the unknown*, *care and scrutiny*, and *intimacy*. These themes evince the psychotherapist's personal inner experience as cognitive functioning, as objective reflection and scrutiny, and therefore also his/her separateness which halts (disturbs, stops) the effortless flow of dreaming and togetherness, and imposes effort.

Such aspects of time and temporality were not explicit in the data at the conceptual level, but temporal metaphors and terms implying temporal experience were, e.g., leitmotif, foreshadowing or in retrospect. These metaphors and terms have been discussed in the previous chapter. As Figure 9 also suggests, the themes are temporally interrelated not in a single linear process but in a process that begins when the unbidden visualization appears and creates a disturbance of what has been going on and which initiates a movement through different experiences which are captured by the themes. It is a movement towards change and growth, towards generative aliveness in the therapy. Also, several temporal movements between different mental states and modes of

thinking are implied in the psychotherapist's experience. Not only does he/she move in and out of the separateness of dream-like experiencing and attention to the patient's communication, but also between the withdrawal when he/she takes time to stop and think about the unbidden visualization self-consciously, as conscious thinking, and in unconscious thinking, when being lost in thought (Beck, 2002; Bollas, 1992). It is through the tension of these two modes of thinking that the unbidden visualization's power to reveal what it contains becomes manifest: the two modes of thinking constitute a creative, benign internal split (which is identified in the interrelationships among the four themes associated with the psychotherapist's self experience) which is temporally managed as an oscillating movement of transitions.

I want to suggest that this a temporal dynamic, a movement, which opens up the time-space initiated by the unbidden visualization into a process and space, a triangular space (Britton, 1989, 1998, 2004).

Triangular Space and the Third

The themes identified in this analysis and their interrelationships reveal the complex mental operations involved in experiencing unbidden visualizations meaningfully and in relating them to the therapeutic process and the patient's inner life. In this section I want to adumbrate a way of thinking about these results which relates them to a set of ideas and concepts in psychoanalysis about the third. The third has been theorized in a variety of ways in psychoanalysis (cf. Diamond, 2007); among others as transitional space (Winnicott, 1971), triangular space (Britton, 2004), thirdness (Benjamin, 2004), the analytic third (Ogden, 1994, 1999, 2004a), the relational unconscious (Gerson, 2004), and the third element (Green, 2004). The precise delineation of these distinct conceptualizations or the precise interpretation of my results in terms of these concepts is beyond the scope of this dissertation. But the themes capturing the experience of unbidden visualizations suggest to me various links to some of these ideas about thirdness, or the third, which indicate that spontaneous images as objects and as mental phenomena present a special case on the basis of which thirdness could be further explored. Here I merely outline some of these links.

In drawing the diagram of theme interrelationships as a triangle I had in mind that spontaneous images as mental objects interrupt and disturb a mental state and initiate reflection, particularly of the analyst on him/herself as "I" in relation to "me", "not-me", and "me as an object to an other". Through this effect, spontaneous images initiate a time-space or process and their temporality.

I also had in mind that psychotherapists experience them as both real and unreal—as products of their own minds but while they were somewhere else in their minds, as eventually significant but initially dismissed, as dream-like unrelated self-absorption and as meaningful for the therapeutic process. This suggested to me ideas akin to Winnicott's "transitional object": a child's use of an object in play which belongs both "to inner and external shared reality" and which Winnicott himself also connected to "intense experiencing" in adult imaginative living and creativity (1971, p. 14). And Parsons (2000) elaborated on the importance of movement, time and creativity which resonates with my themes:

> the significance of the transitional object is that it represents a process, a movement from one state to another. It embodies 'betweenness'. In that sense it is transitional. But what constitutes the object is the unfolding of the [creative] process. (p. 160)

Winnicott (1971) also emphasised the importance of symbolization in developing psychic reality and a creative relationship with the world. In that sense, then, an unbidden visualization can be theorized as a transitional object, as a symbol of something unknown. But by being a symbol, an image, it is not identical to that unknown for which it stands. This is the quality that makes it available to ironic reflection ("me" and "not me") and play (Bateson, 1972 [1955]).

The triangle of the diagram with the unbidden mental image's effect and function represented at the apex, then, also suggests the triangular space that unbidden images open up as a process—the space afforded by a third position as vantage point from which to reflect on the psychotherapist's self, the patient's self and, crucially, their dyad. For Britton, who developed the concept of triangular space out of the developmental importance of the Oedipus complex and the "third element" to the mother-child dyad (the father), "a third position comes into existence from which object relationships can be observed" which provides the capacity for self-reflection, for entertaining another point of view (1989, p. 87). In my view this is what in the data is indicated by the use of the words split, genitive split and benign split—separation that enables and opens up a space. This third position, then, is not only a participant in the relationships of the Oedipal triangle, but the position of observer, witness and objectivity which becomes integrated into the internal world as the capacity to think and self-reflect (Britton, 2004).

I suggest that the unbidden visualization offers the potential of a third position with the ambiguous role of witness and participant. It captures something that is going

on in the therapeutic dyad and appears at the same time as if coming from nowhere, as an intruder, as if from outside the dyad. And yet it is, as the results show, ultimately experienced as being produced by the psychotherapist-patient dyad. This also resonates with Gerson's (2004) notion of the relational unconscious, which he defines against other notions of the third not as an entity or space, but as the intersubjectivity of the dyad which creates "processes through which individuals communicate with each other without awareness" (p. 81) but in mutual regulation and "unconscious configuration" (p. 89) wherein they express their subjectivities.

Whereas the connections to thirdness outlined so far can be traced in the immediate experience captured by the results of my thematic analysis, the extent to which this applies to Ogden's concept of "the analytic third" (also "subjugating analytic third" and "third subjectivity") is less apparent to me (1994, 2004a). This is curious, since some of Ogden's texts contain experience-near accounts which are part of the dataset. However, he developed this complex concept based on his theory of projective identification as unconscious communication and enactment and in relation to reverie as a technique or analytic stance. As a consequence, the analytic third is underpinned by ideas of co-creation and surrender: "The analytic third is a creation of the analyst and analysand, and at the same time the analyst and the analysand (*qua* analyst and analysand) are created by the analytic third" (Ogden, 1994, p. 93). It seems to me that perhaps my research, which is focused on the psychoanalyst's experience, does not provide sufficient material on the patient's experience and inner processes to shed light on this concept which emphasises mutuality and posits the third as an entity—which I surmise would be the creator of the spontaneous image. Additional research focused on client material (which Ogden provides in some of his writings) combined with a careful concept analysis of the "analytic third" and of Ogden's concept of reverie could lead to a critical evaluation of Ogden's notion in relation to unbidden visualizations.

Notions of thirdness are ways in which psychoanalysts have addressed some fundamental paradoxes of the therapeutic relationship and some of these are crystallized in the experience of unbidden visualizations and their effects, as the themes I identified show. The next section takes up this discussion.

Activation of Paradoxes Central to Psychoanalysis

Unbidden images are part of the experiences prompting Bollas' incisive conclusion that "in order to find the patient we must look for him within ourselves" (1983). They activate this and other central paradoxes of psychoanalysis. The themes

togetherness, *intimacy*, *disturbance by the unknown* and *personal, inner experience* together express empathy as an encompassing happening and activity: the psychotherapist's simultaneous interplay of experiencing sameness, difference, the privacy of his/her thoughts and the disturbance caused by the experience of another's unconscious communication in the stream of inner experiencing.

Spontaneous image as medium. The theory of containment, according to which the psychotherapist's mind processes the patient's unthought and unprocessed subjective experience, was first developed by Bion and is closely connected to the maternal capacity for reverie which enables her child's development to think (Bion, 1962a, 1962b; Brown, 2011; Cartwright, 2010; Grotstein, 2007a, 2007b; Ogden, 2004b). My results suggest that unbidden images are both expressions of this function and at the same time the creations of the psychoanalyst's mind, motivated by the patient's subjectivity, that offer a mental object with which to begin to think about and process the emotional and unconscious content that motivated them. Boris (1994) formulated the psychoanalyst's container function thus:

> The analyst is the medium in which the patient happens. It is the patient occurring within and upon him that provides him the data. It is necessary for the analyst to ignore the patient who is in his consulting room in favour of the patient who is happening at the very centre of his own inner experience. (p. 173)

Spontaneous images in the psychoanalyst's mind are, I want to suggest, data as well as medium in this sense. As creations of the psychoanalyst's containing mind they are also the medium by which that which needs to be contained is revealed and is expressed in a sensory, visual form. The image, as the themes evince, reveals the complexity of the contained, gives it shape and brings to life a way of processing the contained. However, as I discussed above, it offers more than containment but the very means by which to think about that which needs containment—it offers a third object and position for both psychoanalyst and patient.

Paradox of privacy and connection. As the results therefore also show, unbidden visualizations are a poignant manifestation of a paradox defining psychoanalytic work: the paradox of inner stillness and privacy which seemingly removes the psychotherapist from what is going on for the patient when in effect it enables deeper contact with him/her. A few authors in the dataset conceptualized their experience as paradoxical, and their comments shed further light on the interrelationships among themes as the patterns where the paradoxical and temporal are

revealed. Laquercia reflected on unbidden visualizations in relation to disconnection and connection:

> I have found times when the hovering, poised attention gives way or leads to a paradoxical condition which, while appearing to create a disconnectedness, actually presents a way to become more deeply connected. In such moments, listening approaches a sleeping state, a kind of floating drowsiness. (1998, p. 24).

His work shows that this paradoxical condition is generative; it has the potential to lead to discoveries that shift and expand the therapeutic work. Simon (1998, p. 475) calls a spontaneous image a "vehicle to discovering" miscommunication with the patient which causes a shift to a renewed connection. The spontaneous image is not only expression of previously unconscious material but medium of growth, because, in Gardner's words: "the image contains more of what the image maker knows" (1983, p. 65).

Not only is such delving into a most private and personal state, and finding the patient there, a paradoxical experience, so is the initial dismissal of unbidden visualizations. They appear as if not worthy as a psychotherapeutic activity and yet with proper attention they are part of "the real business of analysis" over time and when properly considered (Simon 1981, p. 477). As Ogden (1997a) writes of reverie in general and unbidden visualizations in particular:

> Paradoxically, while reverie is for me critical to my ability to be an analyst . . . the emotional tumult associated with reverie usually feels as if it is . . . a reflection of the way in which one is not being an analyst at that moment, . . . [but] a manifestation of our failure . . . a product of our own interfering current preoccupations, excessive narcissistic self-absorption, immaturity, inexperience, fatigue, inadequate training, unresolved emotional conflicts etc. (p. 571)

Primary and secondary process. Spontaneous images "cannot be clearly read" (Ogden 1997a, p. 571) when they occur, but with scrutiny and care they become part of the movement of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the analytic process (Ogden 2004, p. 177). Therein lies a further paradoxical experience, when

> the more the analyst opens himself to the sweep of his unconscious primary process and non-discursive experience . . . the more it is essential that he shall have secured himself in his stance of neutral objectivity towards patient and self. (Thomson 1980, p. 188)

Thomson points to the dynamic tension and temporal oscillation between the primary process of subjective experience (the "I") and the secondary process of subjectivity as self-reflection on that very experience as an object (the "me") and as an event in the

relationship with a patient. For Bollas (1995, p. 17) this paradox can be experienced directly when making an intervention that relates to the analyst's spontaneous image, because speaking of or from the image is an interruption of the patient's process while at the same time it speaks to the mutuality between them. The negotiation of these paradoxes involves time as a critical factor which the interrelationships among themes confirm.

Clinical Implications

There are several clinically significance issues raised by the results.

Information. Unbidden visualizations can occur to any kind of psychotherapist independent of their orientation and approach. They are discussed in psychoanalytic literature because of all the psychotherapeutic approaches psychoanalysis is mostly concerned with unconscious processes, and this study therefore focused on this literature. But they are a product of unconscious processing of experience and of unconscious communication. As such they have the potential to provide important information about the patient or a current issue in the treatment relationship. An unbidden image is therefore worth noting with a view to what it might reveal over time, especially if an image recurs or if unbidden visualizations happen frequently. They should not be dismissed as insignificant.

Scrutiny. This analysis has shown, however, that even seasoned psychoanalysts question their spontaneous images and hesitate to take them seriously. They subject them to rigorous scrutiny to distinguish them from absentminded preoccupations or personal bias or other ways in which what happens to the psychotherapist may be a sign of a closed rather than an open mind. Likewise, considerable scrutiny is involved in reflecting on the image, associating to it and unravelling what it might be representing. This analysis shows that spontaneous images may appear as very clear sharp images or more vague and dreamlike, but their meaning is never obvious. As the themes show, time is a critical factor in understanding the unbidden visualization— the time involved in letting possible meanings of the image emerge, the time it may take to grasp how the image could be related to the patient's process, and time as development and transformation, the way the meaning of the image may change as the therapy progresses. As the results show, as easily as spontaneous images pop into psychotherapists' minds, it is difficult to try to understand what their meaning and function could be.

Care. Therefore it is with considerable care that psychotherapists make use of unbidden images, be it by forming silent hypotheses about what is going on with the patient or by disclosing it or parts of it. Even though the results imply an unconscious readiness in the patient to bring this material into the relationship, it is unconscious. Disclosing a spontaneous image or its emotional content must be done carefully; those authors in the dataset who disclosed their unbidden visualization in the session in which it occurred did so with patients who were accustomed to this kind of collaborative work on comparable unconscious events, e.g., dreams or associations. The question of disclosure seems to be a matter of personal style and theoretical conviction, which means that the use of unbidden visualizations needs to match the whole of the psychotherapist's working style and philosophy of practice.

Metaphor and simile. The use of metaphor in psychotherapy is well established as a technique (e.g., Barker, 1996; Morton, 2003). As some of the data excerpts presented in the results chapters show, unbidden images can be used in the formulation of metaphors that give a more experience-near and sensory quality to interpretations. For example, a particularly apposite use of his unbidden visualization in formulating his response to his patient is demonstrated by Reiser (1999) which is summarized in the extended illustration in Chapter 4. While not yet understanding the significance of the unbidden image of the fresco depicting the expulsion of Adam and Eve, he had feelings of dismay and abject despair which he thought were similar to the feelings his patient was expressing in her story. He used the metaphor "feeling like expelled from the Garden of Eden" and his patient's response showed that it helped her expressing her feelings of loss. This does not mean that all unbidden visualizations lend themselves to such usage when they occur. Reiser's example shows, that the metaphor is effective if founded in the psychotherapist's empathy and concordant feelings in the countertransference.

Pervasiveness. There is no evidence in the dataset that the occurrence of unbidden visualizations is linked to a particular client group. The results of this study therefore would not suggest that they could be used for diagnostic purposes. Rather, unbidden visualizations speak of unconscious connection and communication between patient and psychotherapist, and a certain receptivity on the part of the psychotherapist.

Time and paradox. In terms of sheer experience the analysis shows that unbidden mental images cause mental and emotional disturbance, because they are manifestations of paradoxes intrinsic to the therapy relationship, especially in

psychotherapy concerned with unconscious processes. Unbidden visualizations challenge everyday assumptions about the boundaries of self and other, and transference and countertransference, through direct unconscious communication between two minds. They also challenge assumptions about cognitive functioning because they are evidence of unconscious processing which comes to consciousness while the psychotherapist is awake. Indeed the results show that daydreaming (as in letting the mind wander) can be a valuable activity which may be counterintuitive for many practitioners.

Additionally, unbidden visualizations posed challenges to the psychotherapist, because they activate multiple strands of temporal orientation: they impose themselves in a present moment by drawing attention to something as yet unknowable and obscure, and away from what is apparently going on. Simultaneously they may also evoke the past, i.e., a psychotherapist's personal memory or the patient's or the therapy's past, and they may evoke something so unknown and yet unknowable that they appear as intrusions of a possible future. These are complex and difficult experiences and staying present to them in clinical practice is not straightforward. To render them meaningful and useful to the therapeutic process, the psychotherapist is offered an object, the spontaneous image, to think with. As the results show, such thinking involves thinking about complex relationships between the psychotherapist's self experience, the sensory qualities of the image, the patient, and the therapeutic relationship—all of which are potentially evoked by the image's capacity to present something in a condensed symbolic form which cannot be formulated in words yet.

Limitation of this Research and Implications for Further Research

This dissertation has several limitations, each of which suggests ideas for further research.

Scope. The most significant limitation of this research is its focus on published literature. This study would be useful for formulating hypotheses for an empirical study of practicing psychotherapists' experiences with unbidden visualizations. The limitation to published texts means that only success stories could be considered. Case material of clinical mistakes is hardly ever published, and the search for this research did not yield any. But examples of failure would further understanding of when unbidden images should not be used therapeutically, e.g., the psychotherapist's disclosure of an unbidden visualization which lead to a derailment of the therapy. Such material may be more available through sensitively carried out interviews. Likewise, in-depth interviews with

psychotherapists would enrich the information on experience and reflection available in publications. With few exceptions, the publications which contain clinical material on unbidden images were written to support specific theoretical or conceptual arguments. Interviews would potentially elicit less constrained accounts.

Contextualization. This study has a clear but limited focus on a specific type of mental imagery, which contributes to the robustness of findings. Further research on comparable phenomena—e.g., on the integration of psychotherapists' night dreams into their work, on other sensory imagery such as sound, or on comparable unbidden body sensations—would provide comparative contexts for this analysis; for example, they would show similarities and differences among these varied but comparable experiences.

Similarly, this study excluded literature on psychotherapy with children and adolescents. Many child psychoanalysts work with imagery, including their unbidden visualizations, as well as drawings, squiggles games and other pictorial techniques. A further study of this area could contextualize the current findings in a comparative context. Drawings in these therapies are often made collaboratively or their interpretation is a collaborative process. This suggests that the psychotherapist has other, non-verbal or only secondarily verbal ways of disclosing his/her internal experience, including unbidden visualizations; this would add a promising perspective of difference to the current results.

This study excluded Jungian analytic psychology. A separate study of a Jungian approach to the experience of unbidden visualizations could explore differences and similarities with the themes analysed in texts in the Freudian tradition of in this study. These two fundamental paradigms in psychoanalysis are still largely separated; unbidden visualizations could be useful focal point for a comparison.

Finally, a further avenue for study which seems to me very promising and which could build on the findings of this study is cognitive research on pictorial thinking, processing of emotion and creative processes. As a cognitive phenomenon, this is the wider context of unbidden visualizations experiences. Such additional research not on the phenomenology of unbidden visualizations but understanding the cognitive and neurological processes involved in their creation may potentially shed new light on ways of understanding and using them therapeutically.

Method. While thematic analysis is a rigorous method if applied robustly, it is as yet under-theorized. It sits in an awkward place between a social, behavioural science

approach without sound theoretical grounding, as its proponents admit (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006), and a hermeneutic and interpretive framework. This relationship has only tentatively been developed and does not fit well within the conventions and format of reporting research in the social, behavioural sciences. There are interesting beginnings in psychotherapy research of developing a relational methodology within a hermeneutic, interpretive framework which is, after all, what also informs psychoanalytic and therapeutic practice. This approach could be further refined for a thematic analysis (Loewenthal, 2007a; McLeod, 2011).

A particular limitation in this study which is focused on publications is the limited applicability of a thematic analysis to texts that involve arguments, conceptual discussion and theory; careful modifications would be necessary and other interpretive methods of textual analysis may be more suited. The current results could be tested against a critical content analysis of the same texts in the dataset, for example, which would provide a critical analysis of the clinical material in light of the arguments and theoretical conclusions that authors posit. This may show strengths and weaknesses in the way this study was carried out, in thematic analysis as a method, or it may show clearly the different strengths and weaknesses of either method.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

In this dissertation I applied a thematic analysis to a set of texts, all written by psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic psychotherapists, in which the authors describe their experience of unbidden visualizations, reflect on their effect on the therapeutic process and on what they meant with regard to the relationships with their patients. The strength of a thematic analysis is that it enables experience-near meanings to be collected and systematically analysed across different texts, different authors and diverse experiences. Furthermore, building on a hermeneutic-interpretive reading process, a thematic analysis reveals tacit and implicit meanings in texts, i.e., meanings which the authors did not or not fully include in their own discussions of the subject.

My analysis of these texts provides a complex picture that captures what psychotherapists' experiences of spontaneous images was like, independent of their own theorizing and the concepts by which they understood them and framed their accounts. My analysis shows that time matters to the ways in which spontaneous images as objects have an effect and can be made useful therapeutically. It also shows that spontaneous images are demanding to work with, because they bring into sharp relief paradoxes that are not straightforward to navigate for a psychotherapist, paradoxes of intimacy and togetherness, of privacy and relatedness, of the intra-psychic contact with the inter-psychic. And I have argued, on the basis of my research results, that unbidden visualizations afford a triangular space for the dyad of psychotherapist and patient in which to think about what the images convey as expressions of unconscious perception and unconscious creativity.

By way of conclusion, I want to add a few remarks about how I have come to think about unbidden visualizations in psychotherapy and how I think my research may be useful.

In my discussion of results, I have already begun a critical conversation with Ogden's concept *the analytic third* which is worth pursuing if we believe that in psychotherapy the best theoretical concepts capture something about the experience of the thing they conceptualize, among other functions they also have. As private and personally significant as unbidden visualizations are, they represent psychic elements of both analyst and patient—for Ogden this means that they are *of* the shared space between them, while I have argued that they *create* a space between them. As objects—

as mental "things" which can be considered, thought about, remembered, called upon, even materialized as a painting or drawing if one so wishes—spontaneous images seem to me to create a reference point in time and have an intrinsic power that opens up a triangular space in which to think about them. Because as objects they draw attention to themselves and invite the psychotherapist to think about *them* and what they evoke in the first instance. As Symington (2003) expressed it, they are objects to contemplate and offer transformation. This contemplation enables thinking about that which they contain, speak of or represent—that which hitherto has been unthought and unsayable.

Bollas offered an interesting illustration of this kind of process. He described a short interaction between Marion Milner and himself which captures something about the processes I have been analysing in this research:

> I asked Marion Milner a question that I knew she had considered in differing ways throughout her life:
>
> Author: I am trying to describe that part of a two-person relation where one (or both) are engaged with one another, in some way, but are not fundamentally being 'inter-subjective, when their respective inner experiences are thick and deep and not 'mutual'. What type of relation is this?
>
> Marion Milner: You mean, when the self uses the other as a medium like a painter a canvas?
>
> Author: Yes, that's it.
>
> Of course, if the canvas could speak, what would *it* say? (1999, p. 58)

I want to suggest that I have shown something of what the canvas would say—about the spontaneous images which the psychotherapist's self as a medium, as a canvas, created. His/her self brought an image forth that was painted as if by another—the patient. The canvas, through what has been painted on it, thus begins to speak independently, as an object, about what otherwise would have remained muted.

The results of my analysis brought to light problems inherent in the psychoanalyst's very act of speaking—what kind of intervention in the therapy process and in the patient's process is the psychotherapist's speaking, what can be spoken of, and when and how can a thought, an impression, a sense be formulated and uttered—what can be said and what cannot be said in words. Such problems with language and speaking are not confined to psychoanalysis. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein proposed "whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent" [In the German original: "*wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen*"] (2009, p. 108). I share his conviction, not only in relation to certain kinds of philosophical discourse. In the context of psychoanalytic psychotherapy, moreover, it is worth noting

that in 1917 Wittgenstein also wrote: “And it is like this: if one does not endeavour to speak about that which cannot be said, then *nothing* gets lost. But the unspeakable is—unspeakably—*contained* in what has been spoken!” (1968, pp. 108-109, transl. C. Gross). This idea resonates with psychoanalytic practice.

But what Wittgenstein did not think of is that: what matters is not language alone—when we speak, we do not only utter words. We also call upon another mind, we imagine another mind, we are in the company of another mind. And we, as humans, are able to express our mind in more ways than with words and language alone: our unconscious does it in the presence, imagined or real, of another person, of a receptive mind. Bollas’ exchange with Milner above illustrates this and others have thus argued (Bion, 1962b; Bollas, 2011; Ogden, 2010; Tauber & Green, 1959). Our unconscious will speak to us in our dreams and it speaks when we engage in the kind of thinking that is dream-thinking or feeling-thinking, and whose mode of expression is imagery. Our unconscious also “speaks” to another mind about that which we cannot put into words, as I believe my analysis in this dissertation shows. But once imagined, once dreamt, we are able to begin to talk about what we *see* and *feel* is happening in these images (before we can talk about what is happening in us).

Bollas wrote “Freud made the dream the cornerstone of the psychoanalytic moment” (1999, p. 181) as a way of thinking about emotional experience. I believe that this dissertation demonstrates that, similarly, the psychotherapist’s waking-dream, the unbidden visualization, is a way of thinking about emotional experience, namely simultaneously that of the psychotherapist him/herself and that of the patient. As an image, an unbidden visualization belongs to the emotional experience of both, while as a waking-dream experience it is personal to the psychotherapist. This is made evident in the theme *togetherness*. And at the same time, my analysis also shows that such togetherness—that kind of immanent contact with another mind in a dyad—as well as the unbidden visualization as an object that manifests and processes emotional experience, is, paradoxically, only possible because of their separation. This is made evident in the theme *intimacy,* and in the sheer intrusiveness of the image as an object through which it forces a separation in the dyad which in turn affords the space to think about and feel what otherwise in the dyad was unspeakable. This is the paradox that the spontaneous image as an object embodies and that is played out in the therapy as the temporal oscillation between togetherness and intimacy as relational modalities.

Unbidden visualizations are not the same as night-dreams, but I think my research shows that they are important to the therapeutic process in ways that are worth theorizing in analogy to night-dreams. It is important to understand the different ways in which they are experienced and what these experiences reveal, if we want to theorize psychotherapists' spontaneous images in their own right and not only by lumping them together with other countertransferential phenomena. This dissertation is a contribution to this end.

Appendix A

The Dataset

This is a list of all 39 texts comprising the dataset and which were coded either fully (Althofer, 1983; Appel, 2000; Bollas, 1983; Gardner, 1983; Jacobs, 1997; Kern, 1978; Laquercia, 1998; Lothane, 2007, 2010; Marcus, 1997; Ogden, 1997a, 1999; Reiser, 1999; Schust-Briat, 1996; Simon, 1981; Thomson, 1980) or in passages (Arlow, 1969a, 1979; Bollas, 1992, 1995, 1999; Bromberg, 2006; Brown, 2009; Ferro, 2007; Jacobs, 1993, 1999; Levy, 2012; Lothane, 2006; McLaughlin, 1975; Ogden, 1994, 1997b, 2001, 2004a; Peltz, 2012; Reik, 1949; Searles, 1959; Shaddock, 2010; Singer, 2006; Symington, 2003).

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Appendix B

Spontaneous Mental Images Described in the Dataset

All images are internal experiences happening to psychoanalysts. These brief descriptions or labels describe their perspective (i.e., "his" or "her" refer to the analyst). This is not a comprehensive list of all unbidden image events, as those that occurred as a sequence of linked images or narrative would be difficult to separate out, but all single occurring images are listed.

- all pores of the patient's skin as infants' mouths
- an area of land at the outskirts of an English industrial city
- analyst as small child exploring a garden and its hedge
- analyst's father, on the phone shouting and hanging up
- analyst's grandparent's apartment, mezuzah at doorframe
- angelic curly-haired girl
- another patient, as a six-year old girl, hitting a ball
- approaching his (analyst's) father, who is lying on the couch, with a baseball glove in hand
- architectural features of buildings
- being slapped in the face
- big head
- bird everting its stomach and eating it
- birdcage
- bombardment
- boy sitting alone on a park bench
- champagne going flat
- Charlotte's web—cobweb writing
- Charlotte's Web—spider's egg sac
- Charlotte's Web—Templeton the rat
- Charlotte's Web—Wilbur the pig
- cherub
- childbirth
- crashing through a door
- dog in a house
- dog in the main-house
- dog sitting on a porch
- dog-house
- dogs in man-houses and men in dog-houses
- dream image from previous year of patient ripping consulting room door off its hinges
- Edward leading Gloucester to the cliff (King Lear)
- expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise (painting)
- face of the patient hovering in front of analyst, frontal view
- food processor
- Galapagos Island tortoise
- going to look at furniture together
- graveyard of discarded statues
- hands with fingers bent, pressed hard against a surface
- Jonah and the whale (several images)
- keeping a beach ball in the air by punching it
- landlord, master of the house
- landscapes with different features

- large stainless steel container in food processing plant
- ledge of a building
- little girl aged three in tutu and ballet shoes performing for Mummy and Daddy
- little girl on highchair refusing food by keeping lips tightly shut
- little girl refusing to go pee in a chamber pot
- memory of conversation about "refusing to believe" turning 50
- menacing bully
- mezuzah at the front door to analyst's office
- number 2½ (as a figure)
- outdoor museum in Moscow
- overgrown grass next to a well-maintained museum
- patient looking like coming to a party
- patient as slovenly tomboy
- patient as young child in bandages in hospital
- patient calls analyst "honey"
- patient gets up and kisses analyst on cheek
- patient standing on a beach in the sun
- patient's face as a clown
- patient's family home
- patient's offer of a poem to read (memory)
- placing a cool compress on patient's forehead to alleviate burning anxiety
- rag as a gag
- releasing hold on patient's bike who then drives off
- rifle, then shooting a rifle
- room arrangements of a living room
- ruthless military figures, Hitler and Napoleon
- Sargent Major
- seeing patient wearing a red dress
- sergeant major
- ship in a storm
- small black dog
- small, white lice
- small, white lice in pubic hair
- spider (big, black)
- standing in front of closed garage doors of a car repair shop
- storm at sea (painting)
- stroking the patient's thigh
- suicide by shooting in a car, seen from the outside
- Tasmanian devil
- teaching a three year old to ride a tricycle
- teaching the patient to ride a bike
- tidal wave
- Toronto street intersection
- touching patient's cheek with his own cheek
- treeless, muddy lakeshore strewn with unattractive debris
- turbulence in water
- Viennese actor, Max Pallenberger, on stage
- violent death to sounds oblivious to the event
- visit to football match aged 18
- visiting his (analyst's) dying father in hospital

Appendix C

Alphabetical List of First-Order Themes

847 codes were combined into 119 first-order themes

- active creative force
- afford, provide, enable
- alikeness, similarity
- alive with desire
- analyst's own emotional state
- asymmetry of relationship
- attention inward
- blind-spots
- calm
- caution
- clear, etched, definite
- cogent unconscious
- combining the two minds
- coming to life
- complexity encapsulated in an image, condensation
- conduit, medium, processing agent
- connection within
- conscious experiencing & processing
- danger
- details matter
- dream, dreaming, dream analysis
- drowsy/sleepy
- dynamic tension
- eating and digesting each other
- effortless
- elusive
- emotional background, mood, context
- emotional meaning of P's story
- emotional reality
- emotional self-containment
- emotional substance
- evocative
- feelings/emotions of image
- finding the patient within oneself
- fleeting, flash, glimpse, figment
- flowing together
- framing
- freedom, free
- from "I" to "me"
- fundamental to analytic process
- generating empathy
- generative relationship
- getting a sense
- giving shape
- great effort
- impulse toward, thrust
- in and of, interdependence
- indirect
- internal debate, internal supervisor
- intimacy
- intrusion/disturbance
- it takes time
- joint creations, interplay
- leitmotif
- living experiences
- metaphor, representation
- mild depersonalization, disconnect
- mind as canvas
- mind wanders, off somewhere else
- mind's eye, third eye, third ear
- mobilize, activate, elicit
- movement
- muddle, confusion, chaos
- multitude, psychic symphony
- negative energy
- obscure
- offering sheer image
- out of nowhere
- overlapping/imbrication
- pair, couple, unity
- paradox

- partial and particular
- personal memory, autobiographical
- prefiguring, foreshadowing, anticipating
- pulling things together
- puzzled/puzzling
- readiness (unconscious)
- registering instrument, echo, resonance
- resistance
- response to patient (inner)
- retrospectively understanding
- risk/daring
- rupture
- saying more than words can
- scrutiny (analytic)
- seeing the hidden patient
- self-reflection
- self-reproach, guilt
- sensations, sensuous, ‘sensation images’
- separate but formed by each other
- shift, expansion, discovery
- silence, privacy
- slowly appearing, tentative, unobtrusive
- speaking from the emotional image experience
- spontaneity
- struggle, wrestling
- subliminal, preconscious experience
- suddenness
- surprise
- tact, concern
- taken possession of, personally changed
- taking hold//sticking
- tentative
- tolerable turmoil, disturbance
- too idiosyncratic
- translating image/words
- twilight region between
- two minds connected
- two streams of consciousness/generative split
- uncanny
- unfocused
- unsettling
- vehicle, carrier
- vivid, intense, emotionally charged
- what cannot be said in words, the unsaid
- what experience feels like
- what is happening between P and A
- working together/acting upon each other
- working unconsciously together

Appendix D

First-, Second- and Third-Order Themes

119 first-order themes were organised into clusters and networks. This generated 33 organising themes (second-order themes) and two types of third-order themes: nine major themes and two dynamic major themes.

<table>
<tr><th>First-Order Theme Cluster</th><th>Organising Themes (second-order)</th><th>Major Themes (third-order)</th></tr>
<tr><td>tolerable turmoil, disturbance
unsettling
uncanny
muddle, confusion, chaos
puzzled/puzzling</td><td>unsettling not knowing</td><td rowspan="3">disturbance by the unknown</td></tr>
<tr><td>resistance
rupture
negative energy
intrusion/disturbance</td><td>rupture</td></tr>
<tr><td>suddenness
out of nowhere
surprise</td><td>unexpected, unanticipated</td></tr>
<tr><td>two minds connected
working together/acting upon each other
what is happening between patient and analyst
combining the two minds</td><td>combining the two minds</td><td rowspan="2">togetherness</td></tr>
<tr><td>alikeness, similarity
eating and digesting each other
flowing together
overlapping, imbrication</td><td>alikeness</td></tr>
<tr><td>connection within
finding the patient within oneself
response to patient (inner)
attention inward
two streams of consciousness/generative split
silence, privacy</td><td>inner experience</td><td rowspan="2">personal, inner experience</td></tr>
<tr><td>analyst’s own emotional state
taken possession of, personally changed
personal memories, autobio-graphical</td><td>personally involved</td></tr>
</table>

in and of/interdependence pair, couple, unity intimacy separate but formed by each other	separate but formed by each other	intimacy
afford, provide, enable readiness (unconscious) working unconsciously together conduit, medium, processing agent mobilize, activate, elicit	activate and elicit	
internal debate, internal supervisor too idiosyncratic scrutiny (analytic) conscious experiencing and processing	scrutiny	care and scrutiny
from “I” to “me” self-reproach, guilt self-reflection	working with the self and personal	
speaking from emotional image experience offering sheer image translating image/words	speaking	
caution tentative tact & concern emotional self-containment asymmetry of relationship	care	
freedom, free risk/daring spontaneity danger	spontaneity	generative aliveness
living experiences vivid, intense, emotionally charged alive with desire coming to life	alive	
generative relationship impulse toward, thrust generating empathy	generative	
joint creations, interplay active creative force	creativity	

<table>
<tr><td>metaphor, representation
details matter
vehicle, carrier</td><td>image representation</td><td rowspan="2">revealing by giving shape</td></tr>
<tr><td>clear, etched, definite
framing
giving shape</td><td>giving shape</td></tr>
<tr><td>registering instrument, echo, resonance
mind's eye, third eye, third ear
mind as canvas
cogent unconscious</td><td>cogent unconscious</td><td rowspan="5">dream-like perceiving, experiencing the obscure and unconscious</td></tr>
<tr><td>fleeting, flash, glimpse, figment
elusive
getting a sense</td><td>a sense of something</td></tr>
<tr><td>seeing the hidden patient
partial and particular
indirect
blind-spots</td><td>hidden, obscure</td></tr>
<tr><td>mind wanders/off somewhere else
unfocused
mild depersonalization, disconnect
drowsy, sleepy</td><td>letting the mind wander</td></tr>
<tr><td>twilight region between
subliminal preconscious experience
dream, dreaming, dream analysis</td><td>unconscious to conscious connection</td></tr>
<tr><td>emotional reality
emotional background, mood, & context
emotional meaning of patient's story
emotional substance
feelings, emotions of image</td><td>feelings</td><td rowspan="4">sensing and evocatively gathering unsayable complexities</td></tr>
<tr><td>sensations, sensuous, sensation images
what experience feels like
multitude, psychic symphony</td><td>sensation experiences</td></tr>
<tr><td>obscure
what cannot be said in words, the unsaid</td><td>obscure and unsaid</td></tr>
<tr><td>pulling things together
evocative
complexity encapsulated in an image, condensation
saying more than words can</td><td>gathering complexity beyond words</td></tr>
</table>

First-Order Theme Cluster	Organising Themes (second-order)	Dynamic Generative Themes (third-order)
prefiguring, foreshadowing, anticipating leitmotif	direction, facing what is to come	tensions of time and temporality
retrospectively understanding taking hold, sticking	holding on, facing what has happened	
it takes time slowly appearing, tentative, unobtrusive	expanding the present moment	
paradox dynamic tension movement	dynamic movement	movement through tension and paradox
shift, expansion, discovery fundamental to analytic process	growth	
calm effortless great effort struggle, wrestling	images come effortlessly and afford great effort	

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