

## Abstract

The particular emphasis of Relational Psychoanalysis the Psalms is that transformation of the human psyche *requires* a relational construct. It is argued that one cannot manufacture or prescribe transformation; one can only describe the qualities of the relationship that characterize and facilitate it. This dissertation builds on Emmanuel Ghent's definition and proposes that the relationship that houses transformation in Relational Psychoanalysis encompasses recognition, faith, tension, and surrender. A study of the Hebrew word *bara*, meaning *create*, and the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship shown to be characterized by covenant, permission, violence, and surrender enhances our understanding of transformation. It is argued that Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms mutually reinforce one another and suggest a more comprehensive understanding of transformation of the self.

Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms: An Analysis of Transformation

Chapter 1

The Question of Transformation

*Prelude:*

*How much time do we have left?*

15 minutes.

*Okay, I need to ask you a question.*

Okay.

*Did you know this was going to happen?*

Tell me more about what you are thinking about.

*Well, maybe you did, you seemed so sure of yourself when we began. You never seemed to get shaken by me along the way. You seemed to know where we were going. I mean, did you know I would get here?*

Get here.

*Get to where I am. To stop crying every day, to know what is going on inside of me, and to know what I need.*

From early on I got a pretty good sense of what you were struggling with and knew what it might take, so I let you lead and I followed.

*Oh, I would disagree with that and say it is the other way around. You led me.*

I wouldn't have anywhere to go without you coming in here and sharing with me what was going on inside—what was throbbing, bleeding, and nameless inside.

Sure I received it and looked at it and talked about it with you, made links to other

aspects of your experience, named it, and it slowly became less bloody and painful; but you led me to where we needed to go.

*Well, yeah, I was forced to come in here a year and a half ago. I was hopeless but I knew you had hope for me so I soothed myself with that. I held on to your hope. I mean I cried for two years before I started with you then cried for the first year I was with you. I didn't have much hope for myself. I didn't know why or how you had hope for me... I just trusted you, after awhile. I hung on to that and stayed with what I knew, which was crying and talking to you. I doubted at times, doubted you, but I had no idea what was going on with me, so I felt like I had no choice but to keep coming and hold onto your hope for me. Something that is so necessary to me now, but at the time, I didn't know what to think of therapy or you. I mean, my family is still suspicious of the whole thing. But I am so grateful I did.*

You're one of the lucky ones—feeling forced to deal with your pain, and the darkness of it. So many people learn to cope with the pain they experience in their life by establishing old and familiar patterns that allow them to side step it, never experiencing anything new. After all, as you so well know, going into face the pain and darkness is terrifying; sometimes you feel as though there will be no end to it—that you would be swallowed up by the death of it.

*Yeah, there were times along the way that I really didn't know if I would make it, or if I could trust you that I would make it. Like the time I got really angry at you, questioning your motives with me. I really wasn't sure about who you were. I blew up at you. And I still don't know you. I mean I know who you are to me, how you are*

*with me, and so as you've said—I know a lot about you by my experience of you. And that is what I trust.*

You're thinking about how you came to trust me to help you through your depression.

*Yeah, but much more than that, I feel like I have changed.*

You have so much more of yourself that makes sense to you, and you know yourself in ways you never knew yourself—in new ways. You have let yourself experience me and others in a new way, which has resulted in you experiencing yourself in a new way. Now your experiences have new meanings.

*Yeah. Now I know the experiences in life I haven't had and am longing to have...It hurts like hell to be so aware of those longings and not have them met and think they will never be met because of who I am, but like you said, now I have so much more of me by knowing what I have and what I don't have, and what I am afraid of having or don't think I can get.*

Yeah, you don't have to cut off parts of yourself anymore because they feel too painful. You know what is going on with you, you know what you have experienced and want to experience, what brings you joy and what brings you pain, and you know how to talk about those things in you with an other..., like you have with me. Your life feels so much more like yours now. Painful as it is at times, it is extremely grounding and centering to you.

*Yeah, it's like I have gone through a transformation. I am so grateful.*

Individuals seek medical treatment because they are physically ill. They want to leave their medical doctor on the road to physical health, and generally their remedy is clear and patent – a pill assuages their symptoms, a bandage allows their wound to heal, a surgery rights the internal organ or system that has gone awry. Afterwards, we know they are well because their body is healed; it is again wholly and optimally functional. Likewise, individuals seek psychological treatment because they are emotionally and/or mentally sick. And they want to leave analysis on the road to emotional and mental health. But the remedy involved is not as concrete as it is in medicine, and the healing process is much more abstract and experiential. The question of sickness and wellness of the mind and emotions has been continuously debated and remains a primary focus in psychoanalysis. Since Freud, it has been suggested the task of the analyst is to transform that which is problematic in the patient. But how do we know someone has improved with the help of psychoanalysis? How do we determine a shift from sickness to wellness when working with the internal world?<sup>ii</sup> These are the questions of transformation of the self.

In broaching the topic of transformation, I recognize the inevitable emergence of a plethora of issues. The topic is broad and complex. It is not my purpose to ask who necessitates transformation or even what a “successful” transformation looks like. Further, this paper does not seek to characterize mental illness, that which is pathological, nor is it to purport a standard or model of wellness—a transformed self, as it were. This dissertation is not a procedural manual on how transformation occurs because such a manual is not possible. There can be no prescription for

transformation because transformation of the self takes place in the context of relationship, an abstract, amorphous, constantly shifting reality between two people. Nevertheless, it is necessary to articulate a definition of the term, which to this point has been used indiscriminately in the literature and in practice, and to present the characteristics of such an event. This dissertation attempts to elucidate the concept of transformation by addressing two questions: What is transformation? and What kind of environment facilitates transformation?

This dissertation is interdisciplinary in nature, encouraging a dialogue about transformation between the disciplines of psychology and theology, more specifically between Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms. Psychoanalysts and theologians are not in the same business; the focus of study in theology is God, whereas the focus of study in psychology is the human psyche. But transformation of the self is a central concept – though also an elusive one – in both disciplines. A central aspect of the message of the Judeo-Christian faith is that relationship with God yields transformation; the Psalms illustrate this transformation in the Psalmist. Likewise, the intent of Psychoanalysis, and the particular emphasis of Relational Psychoanalysis as articulated by Emmanuel Ghent, is that time spent in the analytic relationship can facilitate a transformation of the self. Thus, significantly, in these psychological and theological perspectives, transformation of the human psyche not only *comprises* but also *requires* a relational construct.

I argue that transformation, as it is defined within Relational Psychoanalysis and illustrated in the Psalms, is fundamentally a relational process. That being said, it is important to recognize that relationships are a social construction, and that they are

uniquely shaped according to the particular individuals involved. Further, relationships are dynamic and evolving. Every interaction is new and yet familiar—new in that it consists of two people coming together in a moment that has never occurred and will never occur again; familiar in that it arises from and would not exist without their cumulative relational history. Because of this inherent unpredictability, the transformation of the self is not something that can be manufactured; it can not be made to happen. But it is a process for which an optimal environment can be cultivated. It is the specific characteristics of this relational environment that will enhance our understanding of transformation.

My goal in this dissertation, therefore, is twofold: to present a new definition of transformation by augmenting Emmanuel Ghent's definition<sup>iii</sup> – the most direct definition to date—and, to delineate the necessary characteristics of relationships in which transformation might occur. The presupposition of this new definition and these characteristics is that transformation is something that *can* occur, but is not a *given*. In order to arrive at a clearer understanding of the characteristics that facilitate transformation, I will first provide a brief overview of transformation in psychoanalysis as it has been articulated within particular schools of thought from Freud to contemporary psychoanalysis, ending with Emmanuel Ghent. This brief look at the evolution of psychoanalytic theory provides the basis for my subsequent discussion on transformation, which, although discussed thoroughly by Bion (1965), has become most relevant with the onset of Relational Psychoanalysis. Examining transformation within Relational Psychoanalysis will elucidate the ambiguity that shrouds discussions concerning transformation, and the need for a clearer theoretical

understanding of this nebulous term in today's psychoanalysis. I will also investigate the idea of transformation in theology, and more specifically the Psalms. This interdisciplinary discussion supports my thesis that transformation of the self is fundamentally a relational event, and that, in order to understand it, we must explore the characteristics of that relationship. The zeitgeist of contemporary psychoanalysis and Relational Psychoanalysis in particular primes us for a fuller understanding of transformation by taking into consideration how relationality directly contributes to an experience of transformation in the consulting room.

I argue the characteristics found within Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms mutually reinforce one another, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of transformation of the self, and supporting my interdisciplinary approach to the topic. The relationality characteristic of Relational Psychoanalysis is akin to the relationality characteristic of the Psalms and serves as the framework in which the characteristics of transformation are housed. As will be shown, an interdisciplinary exploration of transformation in a relational construct yields particular characteristics that facilitate transformation. The characteristics have been delineated from the Relational Psychoanalytic literature via Relational Psychoanalysis Volumes 1 and 2 (1999 and 2005), as well as the Psalms in Old Testament scripture. While the Relational Psychoanalytic volumes are not, of course, the only venues for Relational Psychoanalytic literature, they are a kind of representative of, and forum for, the advancement of this theoretical tradition. I will expand further on each characteristic in Chapters 2 and 3, when I address how transformation is conceptualized in Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, respectively. Chapter 2

reviews the unique relationality characteristic of the patient-therapist dyad in Relational Psychoanalysis, and four key characteristics—recognition, faith, tension, and surrender—that facilitate transformation in this relationship. Chapter 3 presents a definition of transformation and delineates four characteristics present in the transformative relationship between the Psalmist and Yahweh—covenant, permission, violence, and surrender. Chapter 4 presents a comprehensive integration of transformation, bringing together the characteristics present in Relational Psychoanalysis and those illustrated in the Psalms. In this chapter I will discuss the significance of utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, summarize my idea of transformation, and state the implications in praxis for an understanding of transformation that includes the aforementioned characteristics.

This paper is a merging of two horizons (Gadamer, 1982). Beginning with Freud, psychoanalysis has cast religion as a projection of one's need for omnipotence, while theology has viewed with suspicion psychology's atheistic promises of healing and wholeness. As psychoanalysis has evolved, religion has become more accepted as a significant aspect of human experience. Likewise, as psychology has been validated in academia and the culture at large, the church has gradually accepted its role as a supplemental place of healing. By examining transformation within two disciplines that have historically been in opposition, I hope to extend our understanding of this elusive subject.<sup>iv</sup> Ultimately, though academic in its own right, this work is clinical in nature, seeking to assist analysts and therapists, as Ghent did, in their sacred and privileged task of psychoanalysis. It is the work of psychoanalysis to facilitate inner movements that allow for external changes in patients; all of this is done with the

hope of participating in something more than establishing better coping mechanisms or learning better ways living with reality—something much bigger than “change.” Ultimately, I would suggest, along with Ghent, that it is the hope of psychoanalysis that a transformation of the self might occur. This is a primary mission of the Judeo-Christian faith as well.<sup>v</sup> It is my end goal that we consider transformation of the self, in a more integrative and interdisciplinary way. In the spirit of Relational Psychoanalysis, a movement characterized by integrative thinking, we are able to draw upon a wider source of theory in our practice. Relational Psychoanalysis can be viewed as a contemporary theory that incorporates thoughtful new additions to psychoanalysis, while maintaining the central tenets of psychoanalysis. As Leo Rangell (2005) points out in his recent book, *My Life in Theory*, expansions have been and continue to be made to psychoanalysis, “but the indispensable cannot be dispensed” (Rangell, 2005, p. 7). Relational Psychoanalysis offers particular valuable and insightful concepts to psychoanalysis that have proven valid and enduring. Fundamentally it is a two-person psychology. By incorporating the Psalms into my notion of transformation, I attempt to recognize the fullness of the human experience, which for thousands of years has included the spiritual along side the physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects of being human. I do believe we ought to expect nothing less of ourselves as analysts.

*On defining transformation—a psychoanalytic overview*

In the case study at the opening of this chapter, B is a 30-year-old white male who entered therapy in order to get help coping with his recent bouts of crying “for no reason.” “I just can’t stop crying.” Due to the severity of his depression, the

patient soon agreed to come in for three sessions per week, and came to rely on the support he found in therapy as a necessity in helping him cope with his overwhelming emotional state. Though transformation was not consciously at the forefront of my mind, my intent was to help this patient first to understand what he was experiencing and then to assist him in psychic growth and integration. In agreeing to treat B, I believe I made a commitment to provide what was necessary to assist him in the necessary changes he would need to make in his self in order to tolerate his current emotional state. But more than sharing sage advice and helping him tolerate intolerable feeling states, I believe I made a commitment to see him through a possible transformation. This commitment to “transformation” was implicit in my work with B as with all of my patients; when it had happened in B, it was named. But what was “it” exactly, and what precisely was it in the therapeutic relationship between us that facilitated it?

Over the past 100 years, psychological theorists have offered models of transformation that have fit the culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Cushman, 1995), with the oldest being the Psychoanalytic tradition. Psychology emerged as a discipline focused on the study of human behavior in hopes of offering more helpful ways of dealing with the pain and suffering that come with being human. Both the types of pain and the methods of healing are culturally influenced. “Mental ills...are not universal, they are local. Every era has a particular configuration of self, illness, [and] healer” (Cushman, 1995, p. 7). Regardless, as a discipline, psychology has always striven to offer humane<sup>vi</sup> techniques to help people cope with all that is

experienced in being human, as well as to provide avenues for changing maladaptive behavior and living a fuller and saner life.

Within psychology, there are as many models of change as there are differences between schools of thought; analysts, and even analysts belonging to a common tradition differ in their approach. Freud introduced a mechanistic model that was the springboard for a diversity and richness of theory that followed. Freud's model was based on drive wherein change was intrapsychic and came by working through, thus gaining insight about, that which was unconscious. Much of the process of working through consisted of the ego mediating between the id and superego. With Klein (1957), the introduction and incorporation of the object (the mother) gave birth to the idea of Object-Relations wherein the focus was on gaining insight about one's internal world—the projection and introjection of objects. Bion, in his book *Transformations* (1965), concluded that the natural progression of his ideas, starting with *Learning From Experience* (1962) and including, "A Theory of Thinking," was a transformation in the person, a becoming of more than the person "is" (in a Kantian sense). For Bion, psychic growth is ultimately the transformation of the self because as one learns from experience one is becoming more of one's true/real self. Starting with Kleinian ideas, Kohut (1978; 1984) introduced the concept of the self-object, suggesting we are part-objects interacting with self-objects rather than whole objects interacting with whole objects. Kohut's theories formed the basis of Self-Psychology and focused on the self and the development of self. It emphasized the importance of the self and the need for the other in the formation of that self. In the 1990s, other psychoanalytic theorists further developed these ideas into a theory known as

Intersubjectivity. Now, the focus was both participants in the analytic work - two subjects interacting in the consulting room. Interpersonal theory places the focus on the interpersonal relationship between analyst and patient. With Relational Psychoanalysis, Mitchell and Aron (1999) attempted to incorporate both the intrapsychic and interpersonal relationships of the patient. Ghent aligned himself with Relational Psychoanalysis, with a clear goal in psychoanalysis to be transformation for the patient.

Transformation as it is defined in this dissertation is fundamentally relational. Attempting to examine transformation throughout the history of psychoanalysis would be both futile and an injustice to the complexity of the respective theories. Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) state in their discussion of Object Relations in Psychoanalysis:

A comparative psychoanalysis is not undertaken without risk. Different schools of psychoanalytic theory have developed out of different intellectual traditions, are based on vastly divergent philosophical and methodological assumptions, and employ different languages. Each theory is an intricate network of concepts which has developed through an internal progression particular to that theory, often in isolation from other psychoanalytic schools of thought. Therefore, it has been argued, psychoanalytic theories cannot be meaningfully compared without doing violence to the integrity of each. Surely the dangers to which this line of reasoning points, of forced and misleading comparisons and of reductionistic collapsing of distinct theoretical systems, must be kept in mind.

Thus, it is not my goal to define transformation for psychoanalysis as a whole but to gain an understanding of transformation within one particular theoretical perspective.

I argue transformation is the language of Relational Psychoanalysis, and is not as relevant to other psychoanalytic theories in the way that terms such as working through, cure, and therapeutic action fit with their particular theoretical constructs and genre. Though therapeutic and restoring to the self, the aforementioned perspectives on change that have evolved throughout psychoanalytic history are not *necessarily* transformative; they do not capture what can occur in a psychoanalytic relationship that is characterized by authenticity, spontaneity, and mutuality, the type of relationship that is fostered in Relational Psychoanalysis. Transformation as it is defined within this dissertation comes from Emmanuel Ghent and the Psalms: something new is created out of something old and disordered within a relationship.

Tracing the history of transformation is arduous because transformation per se has never been the subject of study because it has not been what has been sought in psychoanalysis (with the exception of Bion's contribution). Until more recently, with the influence of relational movements, transformation has been a word seldom found in psychoanalytic literature, and when it is found, its meaning is elusive.<sup>vii</sup> Freud's psychoanalysis has given way to different schools of thought, as psychoanalysts and psychologists have continued to study human nature and what it takes to change. Some may argue the term transformation captures any change that takes place during psychoanalysis, while others may believe that transformation rarely or never occurs. Classical psychoanalysts suggest that it is free association and transference – the frame that allows material from the unconscious mind to be released and reworked

through the transference between analysand and analyst – that facilitates transformation.<sup>viii</sup> The psychoanalyst who works with Winnicottian ideas provides the patient with a holding environment, which then acts as a transitional space where the patient might feel safe enough to discard the false self that was once necessary for a safe attachment to the other and allow the true self to emerge. Further, relational analysts uphold the idea that the relationship between analyst and analysand is fundamental to the movements made during psychoanalysis. In this relational view, the analyst engages in an authentic and mutual interaction with the patient, which allows the patient to experience a new way of being with self and others. From classical to relational analysts, the views on what constitutes transformation, how it takes place, or even if it takes place, in psychoanalysis are many and varied. All that said, what is clear is that the concept remains nebulous and equivocal in psychoanalytic circles.

Capturing the essence of transformation has been and continues to be a difficult task. While therapeutic action includes establishing better coping mechanisms<sup>ix</sup> and working through<sup>x</sup> includes becoming more equipped to live in reality rather than fantasy, what happens or can happen in the analytic process does not encompass therapeutic action, as it were. Nor is transformation included in that which is worked through. Grieving an absent mother or expressing anger toward an abusive father can be that which is worked through in analysis. Forgiving an abuser or becoming open to that which has been feared historically can be worked toward. Transformation is not limited to the therapeutic action where the unconscious becomes conscious or the harsh superego becomes a gentler superego. This

dissertation is not an attempt to disprove theory but an attempt to substantiate what has already been recognized, namely how the analytic relationship contributes to transformation.

My goal is to take seriously the relationship between analyst and analysand. Although ego-psychologists shifted the focus from the resistances of the id to the resistances of the ego, the focus remained on needing “to free the patient from the dominance of unconscious instinctual drives” (Aron, 1991, p. 91) and defenses, with the location of therapeutic action to be solely intrapsychic. With this view, and Freud’s, psychoanalysis remains a one-person psychology grounded in drive theory with a conceptualization of drives as “blind energy seeking discharge” (Aron, 1991, p. 91). In an intrapsychic model, it is unclear what role the analytic dyad plays in change that occurs for the patient in analysis. This view fails to incorporate schools of thought with a relational perspective. As briefly mentioned with the Kleinian theorists, developmental perspective, and cognitive thought, part of this evolution has incorporated a relational perspective. Incorporating a two-person psychology allows us to consider the role and power of the analytic relationship when addressing transformation of the self. However, even with intersubjective and interpersonal views, the qualities of the analytic relationship that might facilitate transformation are unknown and a precise definition of transformation has not been put forth.

Aron (1991) recognizes there are as many differences and opposing attitudes within these relational schools as there are similarities, thus the diversity that exists within relational perspectives requires separate schools of thought. However, citing Mitchell (1988), Aron (1991) states that each builds their theory on relational grounds

and suggests it is beneficial to examine how they complement each other in interesting and important ways. With Aron's (1991) "working toward," transformation includes an analytic attitude that works toward a new way of being in analysis rather than simply working through what must be given up and renounced. Although Aron's (1991) concept of working toward sets the stage, so to speak, for how I am conceptualizing transformation, it remains undeveloped.

In this paper, I support and elaborate a concept of transformation proffered by Ghent (1990; 1995) and expounded upon by Aron and Mitchell (1999) in *Relational Psychoanalysis*. In the editor's introduction on Ghent's (1990) paper on surrender, Aron and Mitchell (1999) suggest Ghent's task in psychoanalysis was a sacred one. "His psychoanalytic goal is not insight, information, or understanding alone, but, rather, transformation, a radical change in people's nature as they come into contact with the frozen parts of themselves that are yearning to be reached, known, and recognized" (Mitchell & Aron, 1999, p. 211). This idea is pervasive in Ghent's writings. In *Interaction in the Psychoanalytic Situation* (1995), he argues that over time in psychoanalysis there "has been a subtle shift from an informational to a transformational perspective, where insight is often retrospective rather than the active agent." In this paper Ghent offers a definition of transformation as "something new," and focuses on "a single facet of the need for recognition by another, i.e., the role of enacted response in effecting psychic change" (Ghent, 1995, p. 479). Ghent's paper *Masochism, Submission, Surrender: Masochism as a Perversion of Surrender* (1990) closely examines the concept of surrender and its role in transformation for the patient. Though Ghent's view of transformation alludes to characteristics necessary

for psychic change, i.e. recognition and surrender, the characteristics are not explicitly posited as characteristics of transformation, and there is some unevenness to their development, as Ghent focuses heavily on surrender. Ghent's paper on surrender is the inspiration for this dissertation. This paper is an elucidation of the goal of transformation which guided Ghent's clinical approach, and consequently guides others in Relational Psychoanalysis. I expound on Ghent's "something new" in order to define transformation; further, I delineate the characteristics present in a relationship that would facilitate such an occurrence, the characteristics that Ghent begins to reveal.

This "something new" is not common in everyday relationships. And I would propose this is because of the kind of relationality that characterizes everyday relationships. The kind of relationality that is more common to relationships at large is, in Winnicott's terms, a way of relating that uses the false self. Or in Kleinian terms, a way of relating that attempts to maintain one's psychic equilibrium, preventing an authentic coming together of self and other. Or in Freudian terms, it is an attempt to manage one's internal conflicts, where it is only about the other in so far as the other triggers one's id impulses. It is my thesis that Psychoanalysis and the Psalmic relationship provide a kind of forum that allow for a particular way of relating, and it is this particular relationality that is indigenous to my notion of transformation of the self. Transformation of the self is a new way of being in relationship to the other. In my view of transformation, a rebirthing of the self with the other is possible. What is indispensable to transformation is a kind of relationality that allows for an authentic coming together where self and other can make contact,

opening the possibility for a new way of being with the other. So then, in addressing transformation of the self, the question becomes, what kind of relationality is axiomatic for transformation of the self?

*Toward a definition of transformation*

An implication of this chapter is that transformation requires a two-person model, where the relationship between analyst and patient significantly contributes to transformation of the self. Though the above history of transformation includes therapeutic action and that which is worked through, these explanations are not adequate in defining transformation. Though they may and do lead up to an experience of transformation, on their own they are not what I am defining as transformation. Such experiences could be considered the foreplay to transformation. They are necessary steps toward transformation, hence transformative in their own right. Just as foreplay is necessary for sexual intercourse,<sup>xi</sup> and sexual in its own right, foreplay is not sexual intercourse. The creativity, generativity, birthing, and new life that can emerge in psychoanalysis, as that can emerge through intercourse, more accurately depict true transformation—that which can happen when two people come together and make contact—a connection that begets new life. Transformation, as delineated from Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, is concerned with something new created out of something old, a birthing or rebirthing, of the self that is relational in nature. Since it is primarily about a relationship, one can only describe the qualities of the relationship that characterize it; one can not theorize or prescribe transformation per se, one can only describe the relationship which seems to facilitate it. So that is my goal—to look at a transformative relationship and get a handle on the

nature of it.

*“Our ideal of ‘good analysis’<sup>xiii</sup> is something of a moving target—and rightly so for any discipline that continues to evolve and change...”* (Sorenson, 2004, p. 1).

In a recent class at an analytic institute in Los Angeles<sup>xiii</sup> where I am completing my doctoral training, the subject of “good analysis” was addressed. A panel of adjunct professors, analysts practicing anywhere between 10 and 50 years, sequentially answered the question, how does analysis cure?<sup>xiv</sup> One analyst replied simply, “it doesn’t.” Though unique in her directness, she was not alone in this perspective. Other analysts agreed as she went on to discuss the implications of the idea of “cure,” how it would imply that there is an illness to cure in our patients. That being said, as she lectured further, it became clear she was amenable and even endorsed such terms as curative, transformative, and transformation. Those terms, she argued, do not necessitate an illness, as cure does. If we take this perspective, it seems, then, that the term transformation does not imply illness. But if not to help sick people, what is analysis for? What does this propose about the purpose of analysis?

Emmanuel Ghent, founding Chairman of the Relational Track at New York University’s Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis and a prominent figure in Relational Psychoanalysis, considers the goal of analysis to be not “cure,” but transformation. As I presented in Chapter one, this is strikingly different than previous notions of the goal of analysis that have seemingly stopped short of asserting such a numinous claim. With Freud’s working through, the goal in analysis was attaining a level of “absolute psychological normality,” whereby the unconscious would become conscious by the removal of symptoms and a degree of

rational “control over instinct” would prevent future symptoms. For Klein, the therapeutic action of analysis was to focus on establishing a good internal object in one’s internal world which would result in an increased sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Winnicott’s (1971) attempt at providing a transitional space for the analysand, not unlike the environment that was to be provided by the “good enough mother,” would allow the true self to emerge through the protecting layers of the false self, a main goal of analysis in his view. This developmental perspective, along with Fairbairn, meant an experience in the relationship between analyst and patient that allowed the patient to experience the analyst in a way that would provide what had not been provided him or her at an earlier age. The goal of analysis was to supply what was missing or lacking for an individual, ultimately resulting in psychic integration. In Aron’s (1991) concept of “working toward,” the goal of analysis is for the patient and analyst to make the nuances of a new and "corrective" relationship explicit. This wide variety of theoretical postulations regarding the goal of analysis remains diverse and distinct. Further, though each theorist addresses what is transformative to the patient when the goal of analysis is attained, each theorist seems to address *how* psychoanalysis is transformative, rather than to define transformation or give a clear sense of the characteristics facilitative of transformation. The result has been ambiguity in the literature and mystification of the concept of transformation among both participants in psychoanalysis and bystanders of psychoanalysis. Although the term is pervasive in Ghent’s writings—he posits it as the goal of analysis, and circles around the characteristics facilitative for such an event<sup>xv</sup>—even he never fully unpacked the term. If we can agree that the term transformation is used

to describe the goal of analysis, its meaning has been derivative and unclear.

As I have illustrated with the history of transformation in psychoanalysis, a clear conceptualization of transformation and the characteristics necessary for such a therapeutic outcome remains ambiguous and most certainly controversial. Clearly, answering the question of what constitutes transformation is difficult. Further, the answer varies according to the particular school of thought in psychoanalysis and even according to the work of individual analyst. This paper attempts to solidify a construct that has until now been referenced capriciously. My focus in this chapter, then, is Relational Psychoanalysis, the branch of psychoanalysis with which Ghent aligned himself, and its contributions to our understanding of what transformation is and what characteristics are facilitative of transformation. I will argue that the critical characteristics of the relational environment conducive to transformation found in Relational Psychoanalysis are recognition, faith, tension, and surrender.

As noted, within relational perspectives such as Relational Psychoanalysis, the term transformation is familiar to the literature. Sullivan has argued that interpersonal acts are transformative (Aron & Harris, 2005). Bollas (1987) posits adult persons are searching for transformation. He suggests “this search arises not out of desire for the object *per se*, or primarily out of craving or longing...it arises from the person’s certainty that the object will deliver transformation” (Bollas, 1987, p. 27). In Ghent’s (1995) article “Interaction in the Psychoanalytic Situation,” he suggests there has been a shift from information to transformation in the psychoanalytic process, reflecting the “growing awareness of the need to be deeply recognized and responded to by another human being.” Within this two-person psychology, “insight is often

retrospective rather than the active agent.” Ghent (1995) addresses how the role of human recognition, “an enacted response,” facilitates psychic change. Though relational perspectives seem more amenable to the use of the term, they have failed to posit a clear conceptualization of the term. Ghent has been the clearest in his use of transformation, stating it as the goal of analysis and providing a working definition of the term.

By defining transformation within Relational Psychoanalysis, some might suggest I am proposing Relational Psychoanalysis to be a superior or superordinate theory. However, it would, of course, be short-sighted to uphold one theory as *the* theory. Psychoanalysis has a rich and complex tradition, and any attempt at simplifying the diversity of the varying theoretical perspectives is a move towards missing the complexity of the human being. Further, such a claim would be incongruent with the integrative quality of Relational Psychoanalysis, a tradition whose origins reach back to Freud. This dissertation is not an attempt to elevate Relational Psychoanalysis over and above other theory in psychoanalysis. Certainly by using Relational Psychoanalysis as my foundation, I am proposing Relational Psychoanalysis has something to offer to a definition of transformation that other theoretical perspectives do not. In this vein, I am in agreement with Leo Rangell (2004) in his latest book *My Life in Theory*, where he recognizes the importance of taking into consideration the role of the analyst in regards to gaining a deeper understanding for the patient. However, he demurs “the replacement of accretion by substitution in the evolution of theory” (Rangell, 2004, p. 7). Additions to psychoanalytic theory do not warrant replacements. Thus, I have chosen Relational

Psychoanalysis for the additional components it offers psychoanalysis (primarily its component of relationality) is fundamental for my definition of the process of transformation.

My main interest with the Psalms is psychological; in other words, I seek primarily to examine them as a text with psychological relevance.<sup>xvi</sup> That being said, I do recognize the inevitable theological implications of incorporating the Psalms in my analysis. So why use them? What is it about the Psalms—as opposed to, say, a novel, or a great film, or anything else that encapsulates human relationship—that helps us better understand transformation? Arguably so, the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship functions as a space for transformation. Further, I believe the Psalms contribute significantly to a dialogue on transformation for the following reasons; First, my overarching goal is to take into consideration the fullness of being human—including the physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the self. Second, the Psalms are unique in that they offer a very human experience grounded in theology. Much like a song or a poem does for the listener or reader, the Psalms provide a glimpse of the intrapsychic experience of being human in a relationship, thus illumine the experience of the analysand in the consulting room. Third, the Psalms come from a religious tradition that upholds transformation as a primary goal. And, due to their intrapsychic perspective, the Psalms have much to offer psychoanalytic notions of transformation of the self. They offer an illustration of what, at times, occurs in the consulting room—an existential wrestling with what it means to be human. And fourth, as I will show, the Psalms plainly illustrate that transformation requires space for the psyche within a relationship.

The kind of relationality I am describing embodies the characteristics of covenant, permission, violence, surrender, recognition, faith, and tension. By explicating each characteristic, I will further illustrate and define the particular relational environment that is necessary for transformation of the self. I will do this by expounding on Emmanuel Ghent's notion, as he introduced and defined it (1990; 1995). I will draw upon Jessica Benjamin's (1990) notion of recognition, Michael Eigen's (1981) concept faith, and Mitchell and Aron's (1999) understanding of tension within Relational Psychoanalysis. Finally, I will examine the role of covenant, permission, and violence in that environment facilitative of transformation of the self. By delineating these facilitative characteristics from Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, primarily embodied by a relational environment, I will posit a working definition of transformation of the self and the necessary characteristics for transformation to occur.

## Chapter 2

### Relational Psychoanalysis

*How do I know if you can help me? I mean, I don't know who you are. I don't know anything about you.*

You seem anxious about who I am and if I am capable of helping you.

*Yes. I mean in my other relationships we both open up, maybe not at the same time, but one of us shares things that are going on and then the other shares. I don't hear anything about you and don't know very much at all about you... I know I am not here to hear about your stuff, I know that... but it makes it hard to share and open up.*

You're right we are here for you. I am not coming here to talk to you about what I am going through. At the same time, I am not sure that precludes you from knowing me. I think you do know a lot about me. You know how I treat you. You know how you experience me. So you don't have information about me but you do know how you experience me, which is really important when you are in relationship with someone—how you are treated.

*Yeah, I guess I do know that, and I think that is true. And you treat me well. But it is still hard to trust.*

Yes it is. Really hard and scary sometimes.

### *Defining Transformation*

The influence of the analytic relationship on the work of psychotherapy is not yet fully understood. It has been noted that “psychoanalytic theory has no constructs for the dyad...the relationship between persons is undeveloped theoretically” (Aron & Harris, 2005, p. 5). Further, the concept of the analytic dyad as a transformational

space remains undeveloped. With its focus on the relationship between analyst and analysand, and with the work of Ghent (1990; 1995) opening up discussion about transformation, Relational Psychoanalysis offers the best hope for illuminating transformation in a relational environment. At its core, Relational Psychoanalysis is an attempt at developing a theory of analyst and analysand, as well as addressing what analyst and analysand come together for—the goal of analysis (Sorenson, 2004). By examining and synthesizing the literature of Relational Psychoanalysis, particularly Ghent, Michael Eigen (1981), Jessica Benjamin (1990), Mitchell and Aron (1999) I will elucidate the unique aspects of the analytic relationship that create a transformative environment.

Although employed ambiguously by various authors, the term transformation has been used to capture the essence of what happens to the self in psychoanalysis. It has also been upheld as the goal of the psychoanalytic relationship particularly within the Relational Psychoanalytic movement. The analytic relationship is diagnostic to transformation of the self. According to Ghent (1995) and others, transformation is what is sought through psychoanalysis. In the editor's introduction of Ghent's article "Masochism, Submission, Surrender: Masochism as a Perversion of Surrender" (1990), in *Relational Psychoanalysis: the Emergence of a Tradition* (Mitchell & Aron, 1999) Aron and Mitchell address the concept of transformation. They suggest Ghent's definition of transformation is "a radical change in people's nature" which is Ghent's goal of analysis. They cite and paraphrase Ghent by suggesting that this "radical change" occurs as people come into contact with frozen parts of themselves as they make contact with an *other*<sup>xvii</sup> who is able to "reach, know and recognize" the

self. In Ghent's understanding, then, transformation is something new that happens to the self in relationship; it is a kind of thawing out. Once this fragmented part of the self, previously isolated and lost, is found, recognized and embraced, a warming up to the other occurs. In his discussion on surrender Ghent distinguishes the analysts whose emphasis is on information, where insight is understood to be what cures, in contrast to analysts whose emphasis is transformational, where insight comes as a result of cure<sup>xviii</sup> (Ghent, 1990; Aron & Mitchell, 1996). Transformation therefore does not happen *by* learning something about the self rather transformation *allows* one to learn things about oneself.

I agree with Ghent that transformation is “something new,” and with Aron and Mitchell (1999) that it is a “radical change” that occurs because of the *other* who is able to “reach, know, and recognize” the self. The term “radical” is used in an attempt to capture a type of newness that occurs with transformation. In his article *Interaction in the Psychoanalytic Situation* (1995), Ghent introduces this newness. “Of special moment in each of the examples is that, along with the old pattern of behavior, *something new* was happening,” going on to assign the newness to the interaction between analyst and analysand. Though the point of using such terminology is to suggest that transformation is momentous, the definition remains frustratingly nebulous. “Radical change” and “something new” can encompass many ideas – the literal shift from life to death, the biological change of a caterpillar into a butterfly, a new pair of jeans to replace the old worn pair. The question still begs asking, to what does “a radical change in nature” and “something new” refer? In my view, transformation of the self is human and relational. In the context of the analytic dyad,

I argue that transformation is defined as *something new comes alongside of something old within a relationship*. That is, transformation is not the old thing looking and/or feeling different; it is not an old view of the self dressed up in a new perspective. It is the old self becoming new in front of and with the other. Because transformation of the self occurs within relationship, the transformed (new) self remains recognizable. This recognition is still possible because the new self is created in front of and with the other; the other's presence is vital, in that it allows for and facilitates this radical change.

My purpose is to expound on this posited notion of transformation by closely examining this relational context that allows for and facilitates it. Yet, relationship is not merely a means to an end. Rather, transformation by its very nature is relational. Relationship allows for transformation in that relationality is intrinsic to transformation and relationship facilitates transformation in that it is the specific venue where it occurs. "It seems reasonable to infer that the nature of a relationship in and of itself could effect ameliorative psychic change—being taken seriously, being listened to with empathic sensitivity, being recognized in a meaningful human sense..." (Ghent, 1995, p. 487). I suggest by examining the relational context to which Ghent alludes, we discover that certain characteristics are active when transformation occurs. By examining these characteristics, we will come to understand transformation better. In what follows, I uncover that the relationship that houses transformation encompasses *recognition, tension, faith, and surrender*. These characteristics are drawn from various sources within the Relational Psychoanalysis

literature and comprise what is, in my view, a necessary relational environment for transformation of the self to occur.

*The Relational Environment of Relational Psychoanalysis*

In light of a century-old history of psychoanalysis, Relational Psychoanalysis might be perceived as being in its theoretical pre-pubescence, and yet, its roots are embedded in classical psychoanalysis. Stephen Mitchell (1988) has suggested Relational Psychoanalysis is a theory of integration, a bringing together of theoretical postulations that are located in different schools of thought but maintain a similarity in relational perspectives. As I have demonstrated in Chapter 1 in the history of transformation in psychoanalysis, the nascence of relational perspectives began soon after Freud. Though many theorists attempted to develop a relational model compatible with Freud, Mitchell distinguishes Relational Psychoanalysis as fundamentally alternative and conceptually incompatible with drive theory<sup>xix</sup>. Mitchell's relational theory is *purely* relational; all meaning is generated in relation with the other, with nothing innate quite like it is in the drive model. Mitchell suggests a theory that encapsulates the relational theorists that have preceded him, including Thomas Ogden, McLaughlin, Hoffman, Renik, Philip Bromberg, Daniel Stern, Jay Greenberg, Lewis Aron, and Stuart Pizer, thus being integrative. It further draws upon other relational models in so far as Mitchell's "relational matrix" is understood; it is not understood in the motivational sense, but in a paradigmatic sense that encompasses innate wiring (i.e. Bowlby's response patterns), motivational intent (i.e. Fairbairn's object seeking and Klein's drive toward reparation), and implicit interpersonal processes involved in self-definition (Winnicott's "facilitating

environment” and Kohut’s self-object relations). And it is the relational theorists who follow in Mitchell’s tradition of relationality that operate within this same mindset. For all of these aforementioned theorists, the relational environment is critical to what happens in psychoanalysis.

In Relational Psychoanalysis, human beings are understood to have a central motivational thrust towards relationship. With Fairbairn came a shift in the understanding of the libido, from that which is pleasure-seeking to that which is object-seeking. With this view, human beings are created for relationship, and it is from this perspective that Relational Psychoanalysis unfolds. “The superordinate need of the child is not for pleasure or need gratification, but for an intense relationship with another person...it is the contact...that is primary” (Mitchell, 1998, p. 27). In the book *Relational Concepts in Psychoanalysis: An Integration* (1988), Stephen Mitchell builds the case for Relational Psychoanalysis. He suggests that our earliest attachments compose much of who we are, arguing that we are *relational by design, by intent, and by implication* (p. 26-33). Bowlby, Fairbairn, and Sullivan support the notion that we are “relational by design.” From this theoretical lens, the mother is seen as necessary for survival of the baby, who has been designed to need a mommy. “Who the other is, what the other does, and how the other regards what is going on is critical” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 24). The infant’s world is centered on the mother meeting his needs. When we further examine Fairbairn’s Object-Relations theory, we see that we are also “relational by intent.” We crave relatedness, not only *needing* mommy, but *wanting* mommy. The central motivation in human experience is seeking out and maintaining an intense emotional bond with another. We long to be connected to the

other. And finally, Mitchell cites Winnicott and Kohut to support the notion that we are “relational by implication.” We are self-conscious beings who develop and maintain a self-awareness, self-image, and self-esteem. A self-reflective experience is intrinsic to our being. Our self concept always occurs in juxtaposition with another. And it is in relationship with the mother that the infant is first able to nurture this sense of self-consciousness. “Individual cognition grows out of a re-cognition, whereby the child learns to know himself and find himself in the mother’s eyes and words” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 30). “The capacity to experience and hold a sense of one’s own being as real depends on the mother’s doing so first, mirroring back to the child who he is and what he is like” (Mitchell, 1988, p. 32).

Relational Psychoanalysis’ inception during the early 1990s occurred when social and cultural factors, feminism and postmodernism, began to shape this particular relational orientation within psychoanalysis. It is a tradition that is characterized by such themes as spontaneity; playfulness; authenticity; transparency, but perhaps most importantly by “the significance of mutuality and reciprocity between patient and analyst as they move toward” intimacy (Aron & Harris, 2005, p. 4). This analytic relationship provides a place to work through many of the experiences that characterize our everyday relationships with family, friends, spouses, and partners, and is central to Relational Psychoanalysis. With that said, it is important to take a closer look at the relationality characteristic of Relational Psychoanalysis in order to understand its unique and necessary contribution to transformation in Psychoanalysis. I believe that it is this particular understanding of the relationality conceptualized within Relational Psychoanalysis that is intricately

involved in facilitating transformation. For this reason it is necessary to further elucidate the theory of Relational Psychoanalysis, since its particular relational environment is so central to its conceptualization.

A quote by Emmanuel Ghent (1992a) serves as a platform for the characterization of the relationality that shapes this relational psychoanalytic orientation:

There is no such thing as a relational analyst; there are only analysts whose backgrounds may vary considerably, but who share a broad outlook in which human relations—specific, unique human relations—play a superordinate role in the genesis of character and of psychopathology, as well as in the practice of psychoanalytic therapeutics.

Relational theorists have in common an interest in the intrapsychic as well as the interpersonal, but the intrapsychic is seen as constituted largely by the internalization of interpersonal experience mediated by the constraints imposed by biologically organized templates and delimiters. Relational theorists tend also to share a view in which both reality and fantasy, both outer world and inner world, both the interpersonal and the intrapsychic, play immensely important interactive roles in human life. Relational theorists do not substitute a naïve environmentalism for drive theory. Due weight is given to what the individual brings to the interaction: temperament, bodily events, physiological responsiveness, distinctive patterns of regulation, and sensitivity. Unlike earlier critics of drive theory, relational theorists do not minimize the

importance of the body or of sexuality in human development. Relational theorists continue to be interested in the importance of conflict, although conflict most usually is seen as taking place between opposing relational configurations rather than between drive and defense. Relational theory is essentially a psychological, rather than a biological or quasi-biological theory; its primary concern is with issues of motivation and meaning and their vicissitudes in human development, psychopathology and treatment (p. xviii).

Those associated with the relational orientation are concerned with how relationships, both interpersonal and intrapsychical, contribute to the genesis of character and of psychopathology. Relational Psychoanalysis, primarily characterized by this kind of relationality, is concerned with making meaning out of *relationships*, both internal and external, and it incorporates both the interpersonal, as well as the intrapsychic.<sup>xx</sup> “The more profound significance of the term relational is that it stresses relation not only between and among external people and things, but also between and among internal personifications and representations” (Ghent, 1992a, p. xx). It is from this perspective that psychopathology is understood within the relational tradition. Mitchell (1988) suggests the objects with which we interact are both, manageable and unmanageable, remote and immediate, toxic and safe. With the understanding that we are created for relationship, the question begs to be asked, why would one want to isolate and engage in a self-preserving state if one is created for relationship? Asking what the patient does with his or her communal existence is critical to understanding the internal world of the patient, and thus the external world of the patient. How we experience our interpersonal and intrapsychic relationships

characterizes our experience of self; knowing our experience in relationships gives us a glimpse into one's relational matrix (Mitchell, 1988), and thus one's experience of oneself. This learning and knowing one's experience of oneself in relationship is, I argue, elucidated in the relational environment in Relational Psychoanalysis and critical to transformation of the self.

The relationality of Relational Psychoanalysis broadens our understanding of the term relational. Lewis Aron (1996) further explicates the connotation of the term relational by contrasting it with the term social. Aron proposes the term relational to capture both the interpersonal and intrapsychic, in contrast to the term "social," which tends to carry "too much of the baggage of 'social psychology' in connoting a behavioral or superficial level of analysis" (Aron, 1996, p. 27). Aron goes on to say, "'Social' is too often taken to mean external relationships, whereas the term relational has been associated with theorists who focus on both internal and external relations, or on relationships as they are psychically experienced rather than as they occur behaviorally or from the point of view of an external observer" (Aron, 1996, p. 27). In this view, one's personal experience of relationships, how one makes sense of one's relational world, both internal and external, significantly impacts her communal experience.<sup>xxi</sup> Thus, the relationality of Relational Psychoanalysis allows for a deeper understanding of our internal relationships and how they influence our external relationships.

Though it is already implied, a relational model takes the analyst into consideration. More specifically, a relational model considers how the analyst feels in the presence of the analysand; it considers one's personal reactions to one's patients.

This is the subjectivity of the analyst that is recognized by Ehrenberg (1974), Benjamin (1990), and others, as a developmental achievement in the mother-infant relationship. Mitchell (1997) cites Thomas Ogden's notion of "the analytic third," in order to explicate more closely the kind of interaction that occurs in the analytic relationship<sup>xxii</sup> that exhibits intersubjectivity, thus recognition of the other. Ogden suggests the distinguishing feature of the analytic relationship is the analyst offering himself as a "container for the patient's projections of dissociated dimensions of experience" (Mitchell, 1997, p. 151). Building upon Harold Searles (1979) work on symbiosis, Ogden "depicts the co-creation, by analyst and analysand together, of a "third" subjectivity that belongs to neither of them individually but requires both of them, in their different roles, to emerge" (Mitchell, 1997, p. 151). With Ogden, the analytic relationship was no longer viewed as merely two separate subjects, but two separate subjects engaged in a relationship, generating a separate space. Ogden says,

I do not view transference and countertransference as separable entities that arise in response to one another; rather, I understand these terms to refer to aspects of a single intersubjective totality experienced separately (and individually) by analyst and analysand (1995, 696n).

Ogden pioneered the notion that the relationship between analyst and analysand generated a third space necessary for the work of psychoanalysis. Ogden's (1996) sense of intersubjective permeability is conveyed in the opening of his book, *Subjects of Analysis*.

It is too late to turn back. Having read the opening words of this book you have already begun to enter into the unsettling experience of

finding yourself becoming a subject whom you have not yet met, but nonetheless recognize. The reader of this book must create a voice with which to speak (think) the words (thoughts) comprising it. Reading is not simply a matter of considering, weighing, or even of trying out the ideas and experiences that are presented by the writer. Reading involves a far more intimate form of encounter. You, the reader, must allow me to occupy you, your thoughts, your mind, since I have no voice with which to speak other than yours. If you are to read this book, you must allow yourself to think my thoughts while I must allow myself to become your thoughts and in the moment neither of us will be able to lay claim to the thought as our own exclusive creation (Ogden, 1996, p. 1).

In this excerpt, Ogden speaks to the created analytic third between reader and writer. Ogden suggests it is partly through the subjectivity of the analyst that the patient's dissociated present and past can come alive, characterizing the analytic relationship as profoundly interactive and interpersonal (Mitchell, 1997). Much like what happens in Ghent's notion of transformation where the frozen parts of self come into contact with the other and consequently thaw in the presence of the other, Ogden's analytic third creates a relational context that is facilitative of transformation.

A relational context characterized by intimate contact with the other, both in our interpersonal and intrapsychic relationships, is a fearful prospect. As Ehrenberg (1974) implies, being in intimate relationship with an other is a trepidacious adventure:

If we could know beforehand what will happen, it would be more like plugging someone into our own script than really allowing ourselves to engage with and be touched by another. This would allow no room for surprise and for experiencing the real mystery and wonder of another or for exploring the limits of relational possibility (Ehrenberg, 1974 p. 27).

She goes so far as to suggest it is this experiencing of the real and mysterious wonder of another at the intimate edge that will transform you. She quotes Guntrip (1969) who states, that “what is therapeutic what it is achieved, is ‘the moment of real meeting’ of two persons as a new transforming experience for one of them” (Ehrenberg, 1974; Aron & Harris, 2005, p. 8). By being in relationship as it is characterized here—when you have both a self and other who engage in intimacy and mutuality—transformation can occur. However, the relational environment central to transformation of the self requires more unpacking. I argue certain characteristics characterize an environment that fosters the possibility for transformation to occur.

*Recognition as a characteristic of transformation*

You’ve helped me to see that I have feelings but I do not become them.

Coming here has helped me a lot. I have learned that I have feelings and that it is okay to feel them. I deal with them in a way where I can tolerate how I feel rather than spiraling down to a place where I am incapacitated. It’s like I can actually feel my feelings now, knowing that they are, what they are and why they are, instead of being buried to the point of darkness in something that feels nebulous and all-consuming.

*It seems like spending time with me has helped you recognize and understand what is going on inside of you. But more than that, that there is something going on inside of you that has a lot of meaning for you. You have learned that often times your feelings are trying to get your attention to tell you what you need. Before you didn't even know what was missing. It's like you have been able to see yourself because I have seen you. Now you can step away from your experience enough to recognize and name it. Now you can stay at the center of yourself and know what you are experiencing, thus know what you need.*

Recognition is one of four characteristics I posit to be necessary aspects of a relational environment that might facilitate transformation. Emmanuel Ghent has been esteemed as one of the most important contributors to the “vital and generative” convergence of the synthetic integration of the interpersonal and object relations tradition that Aron and Mitchell (1999) posit to be Relational Psychoanalysis. Due to his extensive study in interpersonal theory, Ghent spent much of his time examining the interactive nature of the analytic relationship. His pioneering work provided a modern relational approach to psychoanalysis, which includes internal and external object relations, one-and two-person psychologies, paradoxical thinking versus dichotomized thinking, a transformational versus informational perspective, and the role of interaction and recognition with the emergence of wishes and needs (Aron & Mitchell, 1999). Much of Ghent’s work has been cited and built upon by relational analysts that have followed since. For example, the concept of recognition mentioned above has been developed and substantiated by feminist and relational theorist Jessica

Benjamin (1990). I will incorporate Benjamin's idea of recognition, one of four aspects of a transformative environment in Relational Psychoanalysis, which also stems from Stolorow's intersubjectivity, in order to further substantiate my concept of transformation.

Recognition is critically important to Ghent's view of transformation in psychoanalysis. In the following vignette, Ghent illustrates how recognition is constitutive, thus transformative.

Many years ago I had an office...that was quite susceptible to chilly drafts...one such day a woman patient was haltingly recounting, as was her wont, the details of some such event that had recently occurred...She was sitting in a chair at right angles to me, about 15 feet from the windows. Suddenly, but not abruptly, I got up, went over to where a Scottish throw was folded on the couch, picked it up, cover her lap and legs with it, and returned to my chair. As I sat down I noticed, to my surprise, that she was sobbing silently. It was the first time in our work, by then over two years duration, that there was any indication of distress, pain, or even sadness. After some time, her first words were, "I didn't even know I was feeling cold," and then she wept profusely (1995, p. 482).

Ghent offers his analysis and a blanket before she even realizes she is cold. Referencing this vignette, Adam Phillips (2001) says of the analytic relationship:

It is the kind of thing a parent might do with a young child, such is its touching and wholly convincing ordinariness...The patient expressed her unhappiness, only after Ghent had recognized it, and gone some way to meet

it. His ordinary recognition prompts her recognition...What had been missing in her—an expression of her unhappiness—was made possible when Ghent recognized and satisfied her unthought need (Phillips, 2001, p. 489).

Both Ghent and Phillips suggest recognition of a need that is unthought by the patient is transformative. Ghent in this paper says that there is “a need in the patient for a quality of experience in the analysis without which therapeutic effect will be minimal” (Phillips, 2001, p. 489). He says that the patient depends on the therapist's willingness to look for them and recognize the patient's felt needs because the patient has not yet experienced a relationship in which such needs could be recognized. And it is this recognition of one's unthought need that is transformative.

Recognition of the other is a fundamental aspect of the relational environment of Relational Psychoanalysis. Benjamin (1990) distinguishes her version of intersubjectivity theory from the like of Stolorow and others “by emphasizing that she views intersubjectivity as a developmental progression with a series of key moments of transformation” (Aron & Mitchell, 1999, p. 183). The subjectivity that Benjamin speaks of is not synonymous with Stolorow, Atwood, and Brandchaft's (1984) intersubjectivity, however it does build on the same concept of infant development. She attempts to solve the “problem of understanding how separate subjects can recognize each other as equivalent centers of experience” (Mitchell & Aron, 1999, p. 181). For Benjamin, recognition demonstrates a developmental achievement wherein the infant can recognize the mother as a separate and different other. This differentiation is much like the developmental stage coined by Margaret Mahler (1994), separation-individuation. In this stage the infant moves from a symbiotic

relationship with mother wherein mother is an extension of the infant, to an individuated or mutual relationship with the mother, wherein the infant recognizes the mother as separate, thereby allowing the infant to individuate and become a separate self. This move from fusion to connection is characterized by an intimacy that attempts to find and make explicit “the point of optimal closeness and distance in the relationship, a point which is constantly changing from moment to moment.”

Further, according to Ehrenberg (1974), such intimacy,

provides the kind of experience in which the participant’s awareness expands via the relationship as they clarify what they evoke and what they respond to in each other. This can only move in the direction of new experiences of mutuality and intimacy, and towards increasing self-knowledge and individuality (Ehrenberg, 1974, p. 16).

Making such contact with another in relationship must include a *recognition* that the other is separate and different from oneself. And this recognition is not one-sided in Benjamin’s mind, but includes both subject and object.

Mutual recognition is a central component to the analytic relationship in Relational Psychoanalysis. In the Editor’s Introduction of Ehrenberg’s article (1974) “The Intimate Edge of Therapeutic Relatedness,” the foundational cornerstones essential to the relational approach within Relational Psychoanalysis are highlighted, including Benjamin’s concept of recognition (Aron & Harris, 2005). Ehrenberg (1974) recognizes the profound and radical implications of the interactive nature of the analytic field on analytic technique, and consequently, on transformation of the self. “I believe that an effort for a sustained and enduring, increasingly developing

intimacy over time, not isolated somewhat discrete moments of meeting, ultimately becomes the characteristic for maximum growth; and that the “intimate edge” is the point from which such intimacy can develop” (Ehrenberg, 1974, p. 6). The “intimate edge” as defined by Ehrenberg is the “point of maximum and acknowledged contact at any given moment in a relationship without fusion, without violation of the separateness and integrity of each participant” (Ehrenberg, 1974, p. 6). Ehrenberg’s intimate edge captures the essence of connecting with the other, without losing oneself in the other; it speaks of the intimacy that might be gained through Benjamin’s developmental accomplishment of recognition. A relationality that exhibits this kind of intimacy allows for a recognition of the other’s subjective experience, thus, room for mutuality in connection—a *mutual recognition*.

Today’s analysis provides the opportunity to freely discover and playfully explore one’s own subjectivity, one’s own imagination. A metaphor to think about subjectivity in the analytic relationship is demonstrated by the analyst becoming “a kind of portrait painter of the patient’s experience, revealing the inner structure of that experience” (Mitchell, 1993, p. 54). Benjamin’s recognition challenges and thus transforms the terminology that has been historically employed, arguing the use of the term *object* to describe mother or other, is insufficient and misleading. That in fact, there are two subjects involved, and it is a developmental accomplishment for the infant to move to recognize the mother as a subject herself. In order to be recognized by an other, recognized as possessing our own independent will, “we are dependent upon another to recognize it” (Benjamin, 1990, p. 190). Winnicott points out how “...the reality of survival is so satisfying and authentic” because the mother who

leaves is “not bad but independent, a person like me” (Benjamin, 1990, p. 193). This transformation in the infant’s mind occurs when the aggression and destructiveness of the infant, the

mental act of negating or obliterating the object, which may be expressed in the real effort to attack the other, we find out whether the real other survives. If she survives without retaliating or withdrawing under the attack, then we know her to exist outside ourselves, not just as our mental product... When the destructiveness damages neither the parent nor the self, external reality comes into view as a sharp, distinct contrast to the inner fantasy world. The outcome of this process is not simply reparation or restoration of the good object, but love, the sense of discovering the other (Eigen, 1981; Ghent, 1990; Benjamin, 1990, p. 192).

This advance in differentiation means that “we can share feelings without my fearing that my feelings are simply your feelings” (Benjamin, 1990, p. 194). Mutual recognition leaves room for the tension between fantasy and reality, similar and yet different feelings. “...you know what I feel, even when I want or feel the opposite of what you want or feel” (Benjamin, 1990, p. 194). This is the necessary tension between two subjects allows a recognition of the self as subject, and thus, a recognition of the other as subject. This tension allows for something new to be created out of something old between two selves engaged in a relationship characterized by intimacy and mutuality.

*Tension as a characteristic of transformation*

Tension is a second characteristic necessary in a relationship that might facilitate transformation. As mentioned earlier, Ghent (1992) suggested that Relational Psychoanalysis is characterized by paradoxical thinking as opposed to dichotomized thinking. Mitchell and Aron (1999) seemed to agree. At a conference honoring Mitchell's life, Aron (2001) gave a presentation illustrating how either/or thinking can impede the attainment of a constructive solution. Dichotomized thinking obscures more than clarifies what is going on in a given relationship. By transcending the concrete level of the problem and examining it from a third point of view, acknowledging an aspect of truth in both of the original incompatible propositions, a third solution can be found. Mitchell (1997) developed this theme in his book, *Influence and Autonomy in Psychoanalysis*. He said, "Psychoanalysis becomes a struggle to find and be oneself in the process of atonement and reconciliation in relation to others, both actual others and others as internal presences" (Mitchell, 1993, p. 137). What was central to the analytic process for Mitchell's Relational Psychoanalysis was overcoming the idea that one must choose between being oneself and being influenced by others. For Mitchell, one can be in the presence of the other, and be influenced by the other without losing our autonomy. This paradoxical thinking about relationship allows one to need the other, be affected by what the other offers, while maintaining a core sense of self.

Tension is present in recognizing the other as different and separate from oneself. Jessica Benjamin's concept of recognition in Benjamin's article, "Recognition and Destruction: An Outline of Intersubjectivity" (1990), she tackles

the problem of how we relate to the other's independent consciousness. Benjamin's thinking is characterized by an approach of both/and that allows for tension rather than of either/or that tends to collapse tension into an argument of one side or the other. "Benjamin has managed better than most to keep the tension, holding out for a theoretical space that makes room for complexity and paradox" (Mitchell & Aron, 2001, p. 182). This space for tension that is fundamental to Relational Psychoanalysis includes the tension of the intrapsychic and intersubjective. This is the contrast made between drive theory and relational theory of Relational Psychoanalysis. Where Drive Theory emphasizes an intrapsychic conflict requiring resolution, relational theory encompasses both the intrapsychic and the intersubjective, with the intersubjective requiring meaning making.

Tension allows room for the self and other to be recognized in the analytic relationship. Aron and Mitchell (1999) write that Benjamin's version of intersubjectivity, or recognition, holds the tension of self and other. Benjamin (1990) unpacks this recognition by asking the question, "what difference does the other make, the other who is perceived as truly outside, not within our mental field of operations?" (Benjamin, 1990, p. 185). Benjamin's concept of intersubjectivity makes the distinction between the other as subject rather than the other as object. This idea is central to Relational Psychoanalysis. Benjamin's intersubjectivity includes a series of key moments of transformation<sup>xxiii</sup> throughout a developmental progression, which includes paradox (Benjamin, 1990, p. 182-183). For Benjamin, much like Winnicott's object relating and object usage where there is a need for both recognition and negation, Benjamin's recognition entails a fundamental paradox; "in the very moment

of realizing our own independent will, we are dependent on another to recognize it” (p. 183). We need the other to recognize and experience our own subjectivity. We need the other self to come to be a self.

Listening to the other includes tension. Ghent (1992) also contributed to this idea of tension in Relational Psychoanalysis by highlighting intrapsychic tension. He was concerned with embracing the whole person in psychoanalysis, which would mean holding opposites in tension.<sup>xxiv</sup> Ghent engaged in a stereophonic-like listening that captured a multiplicity of the analysand’s states all at once converging in one single moment, including hope and dread, yearning and refusal, longing and withdrawal. It is this kind of listening, a listening that tolerates tension, that allows for a response to patients that would incorporate their whole state of being. Bass (personal communication, May 7, 2006) described Ghent’s listening to patients as follows,

[T]he kind of special attention he brings to the task [listening] which allows him to follow the twists and turns of the patient's psychic experience in all its nuances, the movement in and out of true self experience, from self-state to self-state, from what he calls moments of submission to surrender and back again.

As it includes a holding of opposites in tension, this kind of listening is paradoxical. And it is this paradoxical approach to the other that allows the whole person to show up in relationship. Making room for tension both interpersonally and intrapsychically in psychoanalysis is welcoming the whole person, which ultimately is necessary for transformation.

The holding environment creates room for this tension-filled experience of sustained emotional connection amidst disconnection in the patient with the analyst. Slochower expounds on Winnicott's notion of the Holding Environment in her article *Holding: Something Old and Something New* (1996) in the edited book *Relational Psychoanalysis Vol. 2: Innovation and Expansion*. Slochower says the holding environment must be constructed in such a way that encompasses its paradoxical qualities. By paradoxical qualities, she is suggesting "The analytic process requires that we tolerate paradox and illusion as the treatment space is transformed into the particular affective arena needed by the patient" (Slochower, 1996, p. 35). This means that, in order for the patient to make use of the holding environment provided by the analyst, the patient must be able to sustain an illusion of analytic attunement in the face of the inevitable fluctuations and momentary nature of that attunement. "That capacity requires an ability to tolerate and enjoy illusion, that is, to suspend disbelief and live within the paradoxical boundaries of the analytic relationship without questioning its essential affective vitality" (Slochower, 1996, p. 45). The affective attunement experienced by the analysand must be perceived as authentic and ongoing, even though there are inevitably interruptions in that attunement. The patient needs to know he or she "has" the analyst, even when she does not. The patient needs to believe there is a holding environment for her, even when there is a move in and out of this space. It is this holding environment that makes room for the paradoxical experience that allows the patient and analyst to make use of the psychoanalytic context.

The construal of new and old, safe and dangerous objects, and need and wish experiences, have to do with both the analyst and patient's experience. In examining the construal of the analytic dyad, Steven Cooper and David Levitt (1998) highlight various aspects of tension. On the patient's end, they recognize that that patient is both looking to stay with what they know and have known, and to experience a new way of being that would change things from being painful to less painful, intolerable to tolerable. "Relational theory has generally emphasized that the patient is looking both to repeat old experience and to be exposed to new experience" (Cooper & Levitt, 1998, p. 53). Sometimes the patient is not able to experience something new because of his attachment to the old. "The patient's inability to trust the new or even to see the new is never entirely separable from his or her attachment to the old object or the old representations" (Cooper & Levitt, 1998, p. 64). On the analyst's end, Cooper and Levitt state there is value for the patient in the analyst being able to hold a tension between both expressiveness and restraint. The analyst must discover when to intervene with the patient and when reticence is optimal. This tension is critical to transformation in the analysis. Cooper and Levitt (1998) cite Greenberg (1986):

Unless he [the patient] has some sense of the analyst as a new object, he will not be able to experience him as an old one. The inability to achieve this balance is responsible for many analytic failures. If the analyst cannot be experienced as a new object, analysis never gets under way; if he cannot be experienced as an old one, it never ends (Greenberg, 1986, p. 98; Cooper & Levitt, 1998, p. 63).

By examining the analytic relationship and its influence on the process of psychoanalysis, we begin to see what the psychic limits and psychic possibilities are in psychoanalysis. In Cooper's book *Objects of Hope: Exploring Possibility and Limit in Psychoanalysis*, Aron and Harris (2005) suggest Cooper develops an integrated relational approach to issues of hope and hopefulness in human experience, thus in psychoanalysis. The most hopeful aspects of human growth frequently entail accepting the most destructive elements of our inner lives. Because objects of hope are also "objects of disappointment, danger, competition, and envy," he suggests hope elucidates "the central dialectic tension in psychoanalysis," psychic possibility and psychic limit. "...psychic possibility has less to do with consciously experienced hope and more to do with the capacity to face and integrate painful experience that underlies consciously experienced hope....psychic possibility has much more to do with the threat of trying to be more consciously hopeful in the face of loss or disillusionment" (Cooper & Levitt, 1998, p. 69). Relational theory recognizes the paradoxical tension of the old and new that exists interpersonally as well as intrapsychically, and thus, I argue, makes room for the possibility of transformation of the self.

The issue of tension brings us back to the question of what can and cannot happen within psychoanalysis. Can one experience transformation in psychoanalysis? Does this experience reach the limit of psychic possibility? The answer is yes, and the answer is found, in part, within the acceptance of the tension that exists within human relationships, internally and externally. Tension is necessary for transformation to occur. In order for a new experience of self to emerge, old ways of being must be

granted permission to continue on in their destructive forms. It is not in the intolerance of old ways of being that new ways of being may emerge. On the contrary, it is the tolerance of old ways of being that new ways of being are allowed to enter in, to be created. Full acceptance of the self allows old ways of being and new ways of being to coexist. By accepting the tension of the old and the new, it seems a permission of sorts is granted to the self to experience transformation. This permission allows the new way of being to emerge into its full form – to move, breathe and have a way out. Out of the old, the new is created. And I argue it is by a kind of *faith* that moves one from the old to the creation of something new.

*Faith as a characteristic for transformation*

Thirdly, faith is a necessary characteristic of a relational environment that might facilitate transformation. Being in an intimate relationship requires depending on an object that you cannot control. This is the terrible predicament of relationships. We cannot ensure our safety, nor can we dictate how the other will respond to our needs. One could say that we are not in control of our own development. We cannot ensure how we will be shaped or influenced by the other. As a result, a wish is stimulated to avoid being in such a position, to resist being subject to the other's influence. Thus, a de-valuing of the other can occur. However, this, again, is a terrible predicament. If we think about the mother-infant relationship, we see how distressing this can be, particularly to the infant. To de-value the source of your life is to endanger your own health and safety, your very life; this is the double-edged sword of relationship. We need the other to sustain us, to ensure we will be safe and cared for. I argue needing the other necessitates a faith that the other will be there to meet

your need. We *need* to believe we will be okay with the other, that the other will show up in a way that allows us to make contact. We *need* to know we can ‘go on being,’ as Winnicott suggested, while in relation to the other. This experience of self and other will result in being affected or touched by the other. My third characteristic necessary in a relational environment that would facilitate transformation is faith.

Faith is a necessary characteristic of the relational environment of transformation in Relational Psychoanalysis. In order to unpack my notion of transformation further, it is helpful to highlight Ghent’s use of Michael Eigen’s argument (1981) where Eigen underscores a dimension of faith that yields therapeutic action. Eigen’s notion of faith is delineated from Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion’s theoretical positions. In Eigen’s article found in Mitchell and Aron’s *Relational Psychoanalysis: the Emergence of a Tradition* (1999), Eigen says “[by] the area of faith, I mean to point to a way of experiencing which is undertaken with one’s whole being, all out, ‘with one’s heart, with one’s soul, and with all one’s might.’”<sup>xxv</sup> (p. 3). Of Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion, Eigen (1981) writes,

For them, I believe, the vicissitudes of faith mark the central point around which psychic turmoil and conflict gather. In the hands of these authors, further, the area of faith tends to become a founding principle for the possibility of a fully human consciousness, an intrinsic condition of self-other awareness as such (Eigen, 1981, p. 3).

For Winnicott, Eigen (1981) highlights that faith is a necessary element of the notion of transitional experiencing, “when the infant lives through a faith that is prior to a clear realization of self and other differences”<sup>xxvi</sup> (Eigen, 1981, p. 4). This is the kind

of faith that allows the infant to be met in his or her need. It is this faith that allows the infant (patient) to act on his longing to yield the false self to the other, with the hope for a new opportunity of the self with the other. Eigen (1981) suggests Lacan's notion of "gap," which is mainly concerned with the Symbolic order, points to a presupposition of faith. And the focus for Bion for Eigen's discussion on faith is Bion's work on O, which denotes ultimate reality. Eigen's discussion demonstrates the interweaving and overlapping of these theoretical positions that enrich the concept of faith in psychoanalysis.

For Ghent (1990), the ontology of transformation includes a faith in the *other*. My notion of transformation requires this kind of faith. As Eigen shows, Winnicott, Lacan, and Bion's work that centers on faith demonstrates this self-other awareness. Winnicott's notion of faith is the paradox of "profound vulnerability" and "saving indestructibility" (Eigen, 1981). Winnicott suggests the infant needs to live through the fantasy of destroying the other in order to come to love the other. This is when the mother is made real to the infant.

The category of mastery is irrelevant to the kind of self-other awareness at stake in the moment of faith, where all that exists of importance is the fact that we are real together, living in the amazing sense of becoming more and more real, where destructiveness makes love real, and loves makes destructiveness creative (Eigen, 1981, p. 8).

Eigen argues this separation inherent to self-other differences that comes through faith for Winnicott is akin to Lacan's idea of gap comes with living real life. Further, for Bion, "the more real the psychoanalyst is, the more he can be at one with the

reality of the patient” (Eigen, 1981). For Bion, sustaining faith in O without having to know O, will allow the patient to become “more at one with himself,” more real (Eigen, 1981). It is this kind of faith that Eigen delineates that makes room for an experience of transformation.

*Surrender as a characteristic for transformation*

Fourthly and finally, surrender is a necessary characteristic of a relationship environment that might facilitate transformation. Often humans engage in an illusory sense of control in order to sustain a sense of agency as well as safety over their lives. It is a terrible predicament to acknowledge the lack of control one has over life. Freud called this “omnipotence of thought.” Mitchell states that it is this illusory control that strips life of its richness of the real, saying “omnipotence degrades authentic experience into shallow manipulation” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 25). Mitchell suggests we must resist our desire to place “moving but unsettling experiences” under control (p. 92). Extending this idea, I suggest that transformation of the self requires, as argued above, a faith in the other, wherein one can relinquish control or, in other words, surrender.

This relinquishment of control is a fundamental need of all human beings. Ghent proposes that we are driven to expand and liberate the self, let down defense barriers, and dismantle the false self. Ghent’s notion of surrender is “a quality of liberation and expansion of the self as a corollary to the letting down of defensive barriers,” dismantling of the false self, with and in front of the other (Ghent, 1990). He points to the period of transitional development when the infant lives by faith before being able to realize self and other differences – incorporating a faith,

surrender, the beginnings of creativity, and symbol formation. Ghent (1990) draws on Winnicott's concept of *object usage* to highlight the developmental step when the infant demonstrates the ability to distinguish between self and other. During transitional experiencing wherein the infant is able to take in and use something that is "not-me," which Winnicott calls *object usage*, the symbiotic self moves to the differentiated self. Ghent states, "One might imagine the subject saying to the object, 'I went all out, completely vulnerable, in the faith that someone was out there—and it turned out to be true, as I could only have known by destroying you with all my might, and yet here you are. I love you.'" This kind of faith allows for a regression that makes the surrender of the false self possible.

Because we long for a rebirth we search for an object in the environment that would withstand our regressive tantrum. Ghent (1990) proposes such an object would allow for a surrender of the false self that disguises and hides us. Winnicott's (1971) describes the false self as "missing the boat," "missing," and "being absent." The parallel to the Hebrew word for sin in the Old Testament is uncanny: to miss as in "missing the boat" or "missing an opportunity to be present, alive" (Fromm, 1966, p.132; Ghent, 1990). Ghent (1990) cites Winnicott (1954) who suggests that, as a result of the impingement of an environment that fosters defensive barriers in the infant, the false self becomes a "caretaker self" that looks out for the infant's survival. It is only after years of analytic work that a caretaker self can be handed over to the analyst. When the necessary environment is in place, the self surrenders to the ego. This yearning to surrender the false self is intrinsic to regression and provides a hope for a new experience, an unfreezing of parts of the self (Ghent, 1990). This is the

birth or rebirth of the true self we long for. In order for this longing to be met, there must be a faith that the original failure may be corrected, that the surrender of the false self that did not occur may occur. This regression is a part of what Ghent calls the healing process. Ghent's notion of *healing* has as its etymological cognates, *making whole* and *holy*. Thus, "the cure for missing is to become whole through surrender; the cure for sinning, in this sense is to come alive, to be present in full awareness, authentic, centered in true self, holy" (Ghent, 1990).<sup>xxvii</sup> Ghent's notion of healing, or transformation, incorporates a surrendering of the false self so that the true self might emerge within the relational context of another who proves to be available, via a step in faith, to the subject.

This type of surrendering in relationship must be carefully distinguished from resistance and submission. Ghent (1990) defines resistance as a force that operates against growth or change, maintaining the status quo, and argues that submission operates in the service of such resistance. Further, he explicates defenses as protections from seemingly intolerable emotional states, such as anxiety, shame, guilt, and anger. In contrast, he proposes surrender to be a force that thrusts the subject towards growth. Surrender, then, is a longing to "come clean" from such defenses and deceptions, and is a part of a bigger longing to be known and recognized and to know and recognize the other. We long to surrender so that we can know and be known.<sup>xxviii</sup> Thus, Ghent's notion of surrender facilitates a relational connection that allows contact with the other.

Ghent (1990) suggests surrender does not require another person's presence "except as a guide." This may seem contradictory to a definition of transformation

that includes the primacy of relationality. However, his purpose is to further distinguish surrender from submission. “One may surrender ‘in the presence of another,’ not ‘to another’ as in the case of submission” (Ghent, 1990, p. 215). Here, Ghent makes it clear that surrender is not to be understood in western terms, wherein surrender has always connoted defeat. In Ghent’s (1990) surrender, there is an absence of domination and control. The line between masochism and surrender is a fine one, and is all too often misconstrued and abused. Ghent states that masochism is “a perversion or distortion” of the longing to surrender, to let defenses down and be penetrated by another so that one can be known and recognized. He cautions that “submission, losing oneself in the power of the other, becoming enslaved in one or other way to the master, is the ever available look alike to surrender” (Ghent, 1990).

In contrast to submission where one’s identity is put aside for the other, or masochism where one becomes enslaved to the other, in surrender one seeks to discover one’s sense self with other human beings. In submission, “one feels one’s self as a puppet in the power of another” (Ghent, 1990, p. 216). But surrender includes a unity with other human beings, which is restorative to intrapsychic as well and interpersonal relationships. Though surrender may include a feeling of dread and death – which may feel similar to the experience of submission – surrender also results in a sense of clarity, relief or ecstasy. It is important to notice submission and surrender are often found juxtaposed to one another, but, as highlighted by Ghent, submission is seen as a defensive mutant of surrender used for exploitative purposes. Thus submission and surrender are intrinsically different. The distinction between resignation and acceptance further explicates Ghent’s surrender. Resignation is

described as despondent and heavy, whereas acceptance often accompanies surrender and is joyous in spirit. Surrender is not a resigning to but an acceptance of.

The dread of surrender captures the fear that accompanies the emergence of the true self from the false organization of the self, (i.e. annihilation anxiety, dread of dissolution, ego fragmentation, etc.). The wish for surrender highlights the desire to be freed, liberated and offered a new way of experiencing self and others. According H. Guntrip (1969), ego dissolution can be reflected in the deepest dread of the loss of self (what the subject has come to know as the self) and connected to the ultimate longing to release the “frozen-in” true self. The false self is what is known, the true self is what is unknown. We are more apt to stay with what is known rather than move toward what is unknown. Thus, we both dread and wish for a new experience of the self. It is our desire to experience a new way of being that thrusts us towards surrender. Perhaps paradoxically, then, surrender is involuntary. It is not an activity on which to embark. Surrender cannot be made to happen. One can choose to submit, but one can only succumb to surrender; however, one can participate in facilitative characteristics for surrender to occur.

Surrender consists of being in the present moment where both past and future have receded from consciousness, and the present is all that is experienced. In this sense, the person experiencing surrender encounters a presence of mind that is unobstructed. This is much like the artist at work. Ghent cites Marion Milner (1957) who says creating art consists of a different way of functioning that is essential if something new is going to happen. She proposes that this is not only a part of the creative process but of the process of living, “the blanking out of ordinary

consciousness when one is able to break free from the familiar and allow a new unexpected entity to appear” (Milner, 1950; Ghent, 1990). Christopher Bollas (1987) suggests the use of the transitional object, is the infant’s first creative act. Ghent suggests this process of creativity is akin to the psychoanalytic process. This different way of functioning supports my definition of transformation, where something new is created out of something old.

In the wish to surrender, there is a plea to engage in object usage, the wish to discover the reality of the other, and thereby experience the true self. In contrast to traditional notions of surrender, this is a version of surrender that is outreaching and penetrative, characterized by a desire to deeply know, penetrate, and discover the other. According to Ghent (1990), in Winnicott’s terms, it is a “using” of the other that is a diving deep into the other in order to discover the “true other.” It is in this process of penetration, if the other is not destroyed, the false self turns out to be the false image or representation of the other, thereby allowing the true self to be unveiled. “The successful use of the object, or being used by the object in the form of surrender, is one’s bid at overcoming the fear of the other” (Ghent, 1990, p. 229).

Ghent proposes that the patient longs for surrender in the sense that the patient longs for “the wish to be found, recognized, and penetrated to the core, so as to become real, or as “Winnicott put it in another context to come into being” (Ghent, 1990, p. 226). Ghent says “In the West, freedom has usually meant freedom from dependence, and we see it in the celebration of autonomy at the expense of the human connection” (Doi, 1973, p. 84; Ghent, 1990, p. 219). In the East, the word *amae* denotes freedom as a “the freedom to bond” (Doi, 1973, p. 84; Ghent, 1990, p. 219).

Ultimately, the patient wants to give up control within the psychoanalytic relationship until the patient feels the strength of the analyst to not be afraid of the full presence of the patient. Just as the mother serves as transformational object—an object that invites the child to surrender—the analyst serves as a transformational object so that the patient might surrender control. This surrendering is a relinquishment of defenses, allowing the patient to become real to the other—being found, recognized and penetrated.

This idea of being found, recognized and penetrated was central to Ghent's notion of transformation in psychoanalysis, a voluntary, inadvertent, yielding of the false self that begets the possibility of a more authentic personal desire and discovery “of one's identity, one's sense of self, one's sense of wholeness, even one's sense of unity with other living beings” (O'Flaherty, 1973, p. 216; Epstein, 2004). This view of psychoanalysis involves a radical reclamation and revitalization of the patient's experience of the self, healing the disordered subjective experience.

### *Conclusion*

In my introduction, I ask the questions, what is the purpose of analysis and what constitutes a good analysis? With an argued goal of analysis to be transformation, I suggest the necessity of solidifying a construct for transformation. By building on Ghent's (1990; 1992) transformational perspective of psychoanalysis, that which entails a newness and radical change in nature that occurs in relationship wherein the other is able to “reach, know and recognize” the self, I define transformation to be something new created out of something old in a relationship. I argue such an event is housed in, and requires, a relationship that is characterized by

certain characteristics fundamental to the process of transformation—recognition, tension, faith, and surrender. I examine the relationality characteristic of Relational Psychoanalysis in order to delineate such characteristics that create the relational environment necessary for transformation.

The relationality characteristic of this relational environment is set apart from drive theory in that we are made for and exist only in relationship. It encapsulates the genesis of character and psychopathology, interpersonal and intrapsychical relationships, and issues of motivation and meaning for human beings. I argue both our interpersonal and intrapsychic relationships are critical to transformation. Both Ogden (1999), with the analytic third, and Ehrenberg (1974) with the intimate edge, speak to the possibility of transformation occurring in the psychoanalytic relationship. The characteristics necessary for transformation to occur—recognition, tension, faith, and surrender—not only facilitate a relational environment that houses the possibility of transformation, they also describe the radical internal changes that take place within the individual as a result of the transformation.

A passionate analysis, if it is to be maximally effective, must contain an awareness of the limits of the process and the necessary omissions and constraints of this particular dyad (Mitchell, 1993, p. 84).

Jessica Benjamin (1992) suggests a closely related but much more honest and clarifying approach, drawn from the German tradition of critical social theory. The best way to approach theoretical revision, she argues, is to “recognize precisely what phenomenon or problem the old theory was trying to explain and to show how that problem can be understood better with a different analysis,” thus, “[t]he purpose is

also to unfold from within the contradictions or inadequacies within that theory” (p. 417). Mitchell (1988) cautions that preserving anachronistic concepts which no longer speak directly to the clinical experience of practicing analysts could have detrimental effects on our patients. My attempt in this chapter has been to open up a theoretical discussion on transformation.

## Chapter 3

## The Psalms

The Psalms have universal appeal. They are quoted and prayed by both political leaders and preachers during times of tragedy. They are sung as rock and roll ballads of our time and as hymns by congregations from hundreds of years ago. They are studied and mimicked by poets and authors from every generation. For Jew, Christian, or nonbeliever, the Psalms are approachable and relevant. Although they are buried in the middle of the Old Testament, scripture for Jews and Christians alike, the Psalms seem to be everyone's book. Their basic framework is quite simple to understand: a human being is speaking to God. Specifically in the Psalms of Lament, the Psalmist tells Yahweh what he/she is experiencing, and the reader is left with a clear idea of the Psalmist's (human being) circumstances. In these Psalms, the reader is brought into the Psalmist's personal encounter in a glaring and palpable way: the effect is immediate and visceral, as the reader identifies with the Psalmist's conditions. This might be what makes this religious book so appealing and functional for so many. Every person can relate to the Psalmist's experience because it captures the fullness of the human experience.

With deeper study, we realize that any comment on the Psalms is limited. One comment requires another comment, with any explanation incomplete and tentative. The material is more than what can be addressed and managed, as no one interpretation is comprehensive of the Psalms. Every conclusion we draw is inevitably limited (Brueggemann, 1984). Still, there is much to be gained with a study of the Psalms as the Psalm literature is rich and complex with insight. My purpose in

this chapter is to draw upon such insight from the Psalms to elucidate the concept of transformation. My study of the Psalms is not an attempt to make exhaustive claims about the Psalms literature. The Psalms are too dense for such a task. My goal is to examine the relationship between the Psalmist and Yahweh and thereby hear what the Psalms have to say about transformation. I will first provide a foundation to my argument by looking at the basic ways that the Psalms are studied, as history and literature. I will then posit a definition of transformation within the context of the Psalms, emanating from Psalm 51. Finally, based on my study of the Psalms, I will suggest the conditions necessary for transformation to occur—covenant, permission, violence, and surrender.

### *Studying the Psalms*

The Psalms have been viewed as a book on how to pray—an instruction manual. They are considered unique in that “the rest of scripture speaks to us while the Psalms speak for us.”<sup>xxix</sup> The voice of the Psalmist is the voice of a human being, and it is evident from the Psalms of Lament that living life according to God’s ways does not always allow for a more peaceful and harmonious existence. We learn from the Psalms that life with God includes not only love and forgiveness, but strife, heartache, and fury. The Psalms presuppose that God welcomes us to share our experience, whatever its form or content. The Psalms depict a human being communicating with God, with the divine respondent seemingly silent (God rarely directly addresses the Psalmist as the Psalmist does God). Yet theologically they have also been understood as a commentary on God. Because the Psalmist’s words have implicitly been accepted by God, they teach us a great deal about the God to whom

and about whom the Psalmist speaks. Thus while the Psalms speak to God, they also speak for God and reveal His ways. We learn about who God is and what God does by reading the Psalms. For instance, in Psalm 118 God is good and exhibits steadfast love and in Psalm 11 God offers refuge to human beings. In Psalm 30, when the Psalmist says *O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me...you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life*, we learn that God is a listener, healer, and life-giver. In over half the Psalms, we are taught that God can handle our violent assaults. Cumulatively, the Psalms use the human mouthpiece to communicate the nature of God.

The Psalms have been studied in many different forms, including as history and personal poems, with each perspective limited in its own way. The Psalms as history is an attempt to connect the poems with specific instances in the life of Israel. For example, Psalm 42-43 depicts someone's exile, Psalm 44 depicts a military defeat, Psalm 45 a royal marriage, and Psalm 46 an invasion and deliverance. But while we know that the Psalms are historical, we do not know the specific historical events to which they are linked.<sup>xxx</sup> The Psalms as history is also an attempt at becoming familiar with the life of David. Because many Psalms are "of David," it is commonly understood, particularly in church cultures, that David wrote the Psalms, and thus, each Psalm depicts specific situations in David's life. In truth, we do not know if David actually wrote the Psalms. Though some Psalm headings provide specific connections to incidents in David's life, it is impossible to date the Psalms to a particular biographical context. For example, the heading of Psalm 51 associates the Psalm with David's confession of having been with Bathsheba. However, several

considerations suggest this is not its original background. The literary parallels of Psalm 51 are more closely linked to literature of a later date in the monarchy. It may be that the heading does not give us historical information about David but invites the reader to identify with the Psalmist in her particular circumstances. Though there is something to be gained in reading the Psalm as reflections of David's life struggles, I argue that such a reading of the Psalm is a popular method of study because it facilitates personal application for the reader, which is also the function of the poem. As Tate (1990) writes,

All good poets and hymn writers have the ability to enter into the experience of human life in such ways as to seem extremely personal and with language which evokes positive identification and response from many different hearers and readers. Further, it is certainly not improbable that the writer of Psalm 51 deliberately designed it with David in mind. It was and is an appropriate prayer for David—and for all the other ‘Davids’ who have followed him in history (Tate, 1990, p. 10).

By assigning a Psalm to a particular historical event, we lose the impact of its time-transcendent appeal. Thus, viewing the Psalms as history is at once illuminating and discouraging. In contrast, one of the most compelling aspects of the Psalms is their pervasive universal quality. This is, in my view, the deeper power of the poem.

While other books of the Old Testament are third person histories, prophetic messages, and oftentimes filled with platitudes, the Psalms contain personal prayers and emotions of individuals and communities. These poems are birthed by a variety of authors, both men and women, conveying the reality of their particular

circumstances, whether positive or negative, in a literary form. They come from individuals or communities who are living real life, at a certain address, surrounded by a particular community, dealing with the stuff that makes up life. They consist of prayers of praise, thanksgiving, lament, and trust, and yet each Psalm conveys its own uniqueness, and in fact their particularity gives them their universal appeal. “Often their power and meaningfulness derives from their having been the expression of real people’s personal turning to God, which our experience resonates with even if we do not know precisely what their experience was.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Each of us knows what it is like to live at a certain address, surrounded by a particular community, dealing with the stuff of our lives. It is the immediacy of these voices, alive and impassioned, that give the Psalms their power.

We read the celebration and lament of individuals as they experience their lives and, though centuries removed, their words give voice to the emotions that accompanies our human experience as well. As we read the words of the Psalmist, poems birthed from deeply personal circumstances, we identify with his cause for thanksgiving or lament, release ourselves to share in his expression of deep emotion, and consequently, become more fully human. The personal nature of the Psalmist’s voice touches each of us in our specific and yet common experience. Regardless of historical authorship, I argue it is the personal nature of the Psalms that generates their universal appeal.

My study of the Psalms is psychological. I am most interested in the psyche of the Psalmist as it is exhibited in relationship with Yahweh. This includes the Psalmist’s experience of herself and her circumstances, and her relationship with Yahweh. My

hope in this study is to hear the Psalmist as human being. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Psalms are the most psychologically dense book of the Bible. The voice of a human being facing her experiences permeates the book. By reading the Psalms, one enters into the fullness of the human experience, both internally and externally. John Calvin suggested the Psalms offer a mirror of the human soul (Calvin, 1971). This includes the intrapsychic, as well as the interpsychic conflicts that arise in relationships and make up one's psyche. Donald Capps suggests the Psalmist gives voice to "deep feelings that reflect serious intra-psychic conflicts," which include "resentment, anxiety, envy, anger, and despair, on the one hand, and gratitude, serenity, confidence, and joy on the other" (1981, p. 48). For example, Psalm 38 conveys wrath, surrender, anger, overwhelm, distress, grief, desire, physical illness, loneliness, weakness, betrayal, and dependency:

*O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath...there is no health in my bones...my friends and companions stand aloof from my affliction, and my neighbors stand far off...all day long I go around mourning...O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me.*<sup>xxxii</sup>

The Psalms include the full range of human emotional experience. They show us that the excavation of one's affective experience is the excavation of one's psyche.

Arguably the Psalmic tradition upholds transformation of the human being as one of its goals.<sup>xxxiii</sup> With the perspective that the Psalms are to be taken as an instruction manual on prayer, we find examples of how to communicate different aspects of our experience to God. But to take the Psalms as simply prayers of

thanksgiving, lament, praise, and trust, is to rob the Psalms of their full richness and leave the reader bereft of the fullness of what the Psalms have to offer. I argue the Psalms offer an implicit definition of transformation, as well as present the characteristics necessary for such an event.

*Definition of transformation in the Psalms*

No literal equivalent of the term transformation is found within the Psalms, or anywhere in the Old or New Testament. One might argue that the absence of such a word suggests that transformation is a moot point or fallacy in Judeo-Christian theology, thus in the Psalms. However, in the task of language translation oftentimes there is no literal translation for a particular word but an aggregation of words or a similar word that approaches the concept. The closest translation of my concept of transformation in Hebrew is the word *bara*, which means *create*. The word is used roughly 30 times in the Old Testament, in Genesis, Isaiah, and the Psalms. However, it appears only once in the Psalms, in Psalm 51:10. When *bara* is used in all three of these books, it is understood to be a sovereign act. Further, when it is used in Genesis, it is commonly understood that something new is being created out of nothing at all—creation *ex nihilo*. Genesis 1:1 says, *In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.* Although creation *ex nihilo*, creation out of nothing, is a widely understood translation, it is a misunderstanding of this sovereign act. On the contrary, this passage shows creation of something new emerges out of ‘a formless void and darkness, waters’—disorder and formlessness. God’s creative act uses this murky shapeless matter to create the

world. God creates something new out of something that is disorganized and formless. When *bara* (create) is used in the Psalm – *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me* – something new is being created out of something old, something that is disordered, gone awry, and dirty. The commonality in these verses is the sovereign act that creates something new out of something formless and disordered.

Psalm 51, a Psalm that generally falls under the classification of an individual lament<sup>xxxiv</sup> (Tate, 1990), houses *bara* in the context of the Psalmist requesting that Yahweh remove his sin. When the word *bara* is employed, the Psalmist not only asks that his sin be removed but that his whole person be changed (Westermann, 1989). Throughout the Psalm, the Psalmist repeatedly enlists God’s help in forgiving his sins, drawing upon Yahweh’s steadfast love and mercy. Then in verses 10-12, the Psalmist says,

*Create in me a clean heart O God, and put a new and right (or steadfast) spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your hold spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing (generous) spirit* (NRSV).

The center of the Psalm depicts the Psalmist asking God to “make possible a new and changed life” for the Psalmist (Westermann, 1989, p. 98). Though traditionally understood as a Psalm of confession of sin and plea for forgiveness, I contend the Psalmist is seeking something far beyond forgiveness.<sup>xxxv</sup> By employing the word *bara*, I contend the Psalmist is seeking transformation,<sup>xxxvi</sup> wherein something new is created out of something old and disordered.

This transformative understanding hinges on the use of *bara* in verse 10, where Yahweh’s divine action is responsible for bringing “forth something new and astonishing” (Tate, 1990, p. 23). The Psalmist pleads with Yahweh to find her forgiven of her actions in light of her sinful ways; but the Psalmist asks Yahweh to more than forgive her particular actions but to create a new person in her. The Psalmist in Psalm 51: 10-12 is requesting Yahweh create something new out of something old and disordered, *in her person*. This plea for a sovereign act is for something new to be created out of the preexisting material of the Psalmist’s existence, wherein something has gone awry and needs healing. Preposterous as it might sound, it is a daring and audacious request to Yahweh, to create a new heart *in much the same astonishing way* as the new earth was created (Tate, 1990; Westermann, 1989). The Psalmist is asking Yahweh to annihilate her current way of being and replace it with a new way of being, not out of the stuff of heaven and earth, but out of humanity – transforming what has been disordered. What we learn from the word *bara* in the Old Testament, and more specifically the Psalms, is that a transformation occurs in a person, wherein something new is created out of something old and disordered. This is the contribution the Psalms make to a definition of transformation.

The Psalmist’s plea for transformation continues in the Psalm in verse 12 when the Psalmist requests that Yahweh perform a particular kind of inner work in her. When the Psalmist requests a restoration of “heart” (*leb* in Hebrew) and “spirit” (*ruach* in Hebrew), she is asking that the volitional center of her being be restored. In this text, the heart and spirit includes “perception, reason, wisdom, and source of will,” not merely a change in feeling as might modernly be applied to such

terminology. In Biblical language, such terms represent the whole person. When a *clean heart* and *steadfast spirit* is requested by the Psalmist, “the establishment of a steadfast inner disposition” (Tate, 1990, p. 22) is desired. Again the text supports that the Psalmist wants Yahweh not merely to alter her current feelings/emotional state, but to organize a change in her inner person, thus her outer person. What we learn about transformation in this Psalm, as in other Psalms, is that it “results in a new order of existence, a new arrangement, or a new emergence of something” in the internal and external world of the Psalmist (Tate, 1990, p. 23). The Psalmist desires a new heart, and a different state of affairs that would arise from a new heart. The Psalmist wants to experience a new way of being, in relationship to Yahweh and others, rather than having to endure the old and familiar state of affairs.

And while this explicit request for transformation comes specifically from Psalm 51, I argue that the desire for transformation is implicit in the whole of the Psalms, particularly the lament Psalms; that an implicit thrust of these particular Psalms is for God to organize a change in the inner person of the Psalmist, so that something new is created out of something. The Psalmist does not explicitly ask for transformation but asks for it implicitly in her plea for Yahweh’s companionship and saving power, rescue and relief; the Psalmist’s thoughts, words, and actions in relationship with Yahweh are permeated with a desire for transformation. This, I argue, is consistent with our human experience. We do not always (or ever, in some cases) directly *ask* to be transformed; but our thoughts, words, and actions in relationship indicate that we cry out for a transformation. As will be shown, I suggest the Psalmist’s engagement in the following characteristics in relationship with

Yahweh throughout the Psalms is *de facto* evidence of this familiar yet unclaimed desire to be transformed.

It is clear that the transformative act made explicit in Psalm 51 and implied throughout the Psalms is a result of Yahweh's divine power and activity; that is, it is Yahweh who transforms the Psalmist. Though it is not my intent to usurp the power of the Divine<sup>xxxviii</sup> in this dissertation, I am suggesting there is more involved in transformation than Yahweh's action. To suggest that transformation only involves Yahweh is short-sighted, particularly when considering the Psalms. The Psalms have more to tell us about transformation than Yahweh's power. In their framework and content, the Psalms implicitly argue for the importance of relationality.

The Psalms teach us that all activity of the human person occurs in relationship. This is the predicament of being human: we are born into relationship; we do not exist outside of relationship. From the Psalms we see that we are born out of and into relationship with God. This includes for the Psalmist, as a fetus. Psalm 139 says,

*For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb...for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.*

The Psalm further states that there is no place where the Psalmist can get away from Yahweh. If we are in heaven, hell, or at the end of the sea, we are still with Yahweh, we are still in relationship. In essence, there is no being human outside of this relationship. Thus, we learn from the Psalms that we are always a self in relation to an

*other*, the other being Yahweh. Psalm 27, a Psalm of trust,<sup>xxxviii</sup> teaches us that the Psalmist and Yahweh are in the most intimate, entrusting relationship there is, the relationship between God and human. The Psalmist says *the Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.* Psalm 27 offers the sense that the Psalmist and Yahweh are going to be together forever, even when the most important people in her life have gone. Yahweh meets the Psalmist in all aspects of life. In Psalm 139 the Psalmist asks, *Where can I go from your spirit? Or when can I flee from your presence?* These questions are answered in the following verses, with Yahweh in heaven, in Sheol, at *the farthest limits of the sea*, and in the darkness of the night. Psalm 55:16 says, *Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he will hear my voice.* Psalm 6 shows how the Psalmist is overcome with sadness, then entrusts his pain to God by calling on God, with God then hearing the Psalmist—*for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord accepts my prayer.* The relationship between Yahweh and the Psalmist is intimate, trusting, and ubiquitous.

Thus we see from the Psalms that human persons do not exist outside of relationship. We also see from the Psalms that transformation is a relational event, and it is a particular relationality between Yahweh and Psalmist that allows for the possibility of transformation. I argue the Psalms suggest that a *self* and an *other* are involved in transformation. They tell us transformation is rooted in relationship—rooted not only in God, but in *relationship with God*. The Psalms cry out for and demonstrate a particular relationality that is necessary for transformation. As will be

shown, this relationality that is the atmosphere of transformation in the Psalms is characterized by covenant, permission, violence, and surrender. I argue the Psalms show us that transformation of the self requires a *covenant* with the *other* with whom the subject is in relationship, a covenant that offers a steadfast bond of loyal-love. The Psalms demonstrate a *permission* that is offered to the Psalmist by Yahweh, permission to bring one's whole self to Yahweh. The Psalms exemplify a *violence* that the Psalmist releases to Yahweh, a violence that the Psalmist has incurred as well as assaults Yahweh with. And finally we see from the Psalms the *surrender* that permeates the relationship between the Psalmist and Yahweh, surrender that is mutual and provides the opportunity for transformation. These conditions are prevalent throughout the Psalms, and I argue are necessary for transformation of the self to occur. Having argued my definition of transformation, I will now turn my attention to elaborating each condition. A closer examination of the Psalms will enhance my definition of transformation by explicating each condition that is present when transformation occurs.

*The Environment of Transformation in the Psalms:*

*Covenant, permission, violence, and surrender*

*Covenant in the Psalms.* In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the relationship between human person and Yahweh has been described in many different ways through the lenses of the Old and New Testaments. Yahweh has been referred to as Father, Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. The Psalmist (individual or group of individuals) in relation to God has been called son, child, creation, and servant(s). The relationship in the Old Testament is a covenantal relationship. In Hebrew, the word for covenant

is *berit* which translates as committed or commitment. In describing the nature of the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel, another Hebrew word that is commonly understood to describe this relationship is *hesed* which means loyal-love or steadfast love (unfailing love), that which includes attitude and action from Yahweh. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (1978; 1985) describes *hesed* as a characteristic of *berit*, suggesting that Yahweh's loyalty preceded, thus accompanies, the covenant. According to Goldingay (Personal Communication, 2005), *hesed* is a kind of commitment that implies pledging oneself to someone when one has no prior obligation to do so, or keeping such a pledge of commitment no matter what happens. "God simply gives the covenant [to humanity]...they do not even have to believe in it. It will still be a reality" (Goldingay, 2004, p.182). Goldingay also says if the other person does not keep their pledge and thus forfeits any right to such commitment, Yahweh *still* holds to the covenant (Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2005). Because of this loyal-love, there is nothing one can do to get outside of the covenant. The environment of this covenant is all-encompassing; it has no end. Covenantal love receives and holds the other, whatever their state or behavior, forever.

Throughout the book of Psalms it is continually evident that the God of the Psalms is a God of loyal-love. It is arguably Yahweh's most prized characteristic. This loyal-love that characterizes covenant is referenced in nearly every Psalm, approximately 127 times in sum. This covenantal relationship is coveted and prized by the Psalmist. It is because of the *hesed* that the Psalmist feels the freedom to initiate with Yahweh. In the Psalms, Yahweh's *hesed* is taken for granted (in a good sense); it is the basis of appeal, not the contents of appeal.<sup>xxxix</sup> Thus the Psalmist relies

and depends on Yahweh's covenantal love, continuously and repetitively throughout the Psalms. Psalm 21: 7 says, *For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.* Psalm 117 says, *For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.* Psalm 69:13 says, *in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me.* Psalm 69:16 states, *Answer me O Lord, for your steadfast love is good.* Yahweh's relationship with the other is characterized by this kind of love; it permeates all dimensions of their relational framework. And this covenant stands regardless of whether the other is creation, the nations, Israel, or an individual person. The God in the Psalms is not just a distant God on a throne or high up in the sky; he is also deeply and personally engaged in real relationship with the human being. This is the essence of the covenantal bond between Yahweh and the Psalmist.

This covenantal love is also exhibited in Yahweh's love for creation. We understand from the Psalms that creation is secure because of Yahweh (Psalm 93), that it continually declares God's glory (Psalm 19), and that it is of special interest to God (Psalm 8).<sup>x1</sup> We see God's love and care for creation expressed through the Psalmist's lavish descriptions. Psalm 19:1 says, *The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.* Yet, we also see that the Psalmist is cared for above and beyond the value of anything else in the created world:

*When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor (Psalm 8:3-5).*

Through these and other Psalms, it is evident that God cares for humanity and the everyday lives of individuals in which they live. God is both a cosmic Creator who has set the world in motion, stepping back to watch things work and God is also intimately involved. Covenant is first and foremost characterized by loyal-love; however, there is more to covenant than this. I use Brueggemann's expansion of the idea of covenant that captures the nature of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel throughout the Old Testament, in order to help us think about the covenantal relationship in the Psalms further.

The Psalms teach us that we encounter all that it means to be a human person within this covenantal relationship between God and human. For Brueggemann (1995, p. 150), covenant is a worldview, a way of perceiving reality, a reality that has been shaped by God. He suggests that God wills, makes, and keeps covenant, and that this covenantal reality posits that "human persons are grounded in Another who initiates personhood and who stays bound to persons in loyal ways for their well-being"<sup>xli</sup> (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 151). Covenantal relationship with Yahweh means human persons do not encounter a reality outside of this relationship with Yahweh. That being said, this relational reality is not restricting, or even protecting, to the human person. According to Brueggemann (1995, p. 165), covenant is where humanness happens, which includes real dangers and threats. To live within this covenantal relationship is "to place ourselves in that vortex where life is granted, received, and risked" (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 165). All that can happen for and to a person, the Psalmist, occurs within this covenantal reality.

We see from the Psalms that mutuality and openness characterize covenantal relationship. I use mutuality here to describe an engagement in a relationship undertaken by both parties. Brueggemann (1995, p. 135) writes more broadly of the notion of covenant,

I take this metaphor of covenant in the broadest possible way to refer to a relationship that matters intensely to both parties. In such an interaction, the action of either party may place the other at risk in serious covenanting, and each party submits to some governance or redefinition by the covenantal partner. ...The notion that God may be at risk in the covenantal relationship is a subversive idea. This conviction subverts the contractual, *quid pro quo* theology of the ancient Near East, and it intends to subvert all scholastic notions of theology that put God well beyond all the issues and the risks of relationship.

Scripture suggests that the relationship between Yahweh and human is one of hierarchy and mutuality. Not only are human beings affected by God, but that God is affected by human beings. “Who this God is and what this God is about are defined as surely in the covenant as are the identity and vocation of the people”

(Brueggemann, 1995, p. xvi).

As shown in the Psalms, the ability to authentically depend on the other entails a perilous freedom. Brueggemann (1995, p. 162) explains that the human being in this covenantal relational context experiences tension, dangerous freedom, identity/personhood, and faith/trust. In covenant, tension pervades our identity, resulting in wanting our circumstances to be changed or not wanting our

circumstances at all. “We would rather deny than grieve... sulk than rage... introspect than praise.” This “permit[s] us to keep life turned in on us, to pretend we are the center of existence and the shapers of our own destiny this allows us to keep life centered on us, we being the center of our existence and shapers of our destiny,” resisting our dependency on the other (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 163). Further, even when we acknowledge our need for the other, the tension and danger remain.

What is promised in this covenant is not equilibrium but faithfulness. And faithfulness—contrasted with the quiet security yearned for by this world—is flowing, surging, and moving. The upshot of faithfulness, then is not certitude but precariousness—precariousness that requires a full repertoire of hoping, listening and answering to live joyously. The Bible is realistic in knowing that life does not consist in pleasant growth to well-being, but it consists in painful wrenchings and surprising gifts (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 163).

This dangerous freedom is necessary for the covenant to stay alive. Each partner in the covenant must be granted freedom by the other and neither is free to engage in freedom that does not take into account the reality of the other. This dangerous freedom requires a faithful trust that is not controlled. The other party can be trusted but cannot be controlled. “The disposition of God toward us can be counted on, but it is a conviction, not a fact. To reduce that conviction to a proof is to deny the other his or her personhood and, in fact, to move away from the metaphor of covenant” (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 164). Thus, a sense of identity and personhood is part of the fabric of covenant. There is a sense with covenant that “only the one to whom we are seriously committed can seriously threaten us” precisely because this One is the

ground of our existence, this One's movement against or toward us is perilous (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 164). That being said, trust or faith is part of the fabric that makes up a covenantal relationship. "[B]elieving the vow the other one has made, even when it cannot be demonstrated or proven" (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 164) is essential to understanding and participating in covenant. With the recognition of the tension, dangerous freedom, identity/personhood, and faith/trust included in covenant comes an acceptance of all that is at stake in this covenant. Covenantal relationship is dangerous because we are given freedom to establish and express identity and personhood. We are dangerously free in covenantal relationship because we are fully accepted, as is demonstrated in the Psalms.

The Psalms teach us about the kind of loving acceptance that permeates Yahweh's covenant to the Psalmist. Though the Psalmist's deep love for Yahweh is evident by the Psalmist's repeated turn toward Yahweh throughout the Psalms. Yet because of Yahweh's explicit silence in the Psalms,<sup>xlii</sup> the extent of Yahweh's love for the Psalmist is not as obvious. To fully understand and be impacted by the content of the Psalms, the reader benefits from a deeper understanding of the aforementioned context of covenant. There is a generosity to Yahweh's acceptance of the Psalmist that says, come as you are, however you are, and be held. Only through covenantal love is this kind of total acceptance possible. This loyal-love of Yahweh is called upon because it is thought to be that which could alter the Psalmist's plight; it is a love that has a transformative power. In Psalm 51, where the Psalmist most explicitly asks for transformation begins with calling upon God, reminding God of this love.

*Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your*

*abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.* The Psalmist seems to set the stage for a transformative act, knowing the act would require Yahweh's covenantal love of which the Psalmist is confident.

This welcoming and embracing, non-judging and accepting, constant and unchanging committed love is transformative. Real newness characterizes the covenantal relationship. This covenant-making God wills and has the power to make something new, to usher in transformative action. God's commitment to creation places God in a partnership with humanity; the creation-making action was also a covenantal-making action (Brueggemann, 1995). In an age of modernity, this aspect of the covenantal relationship is difficult to comprehend as it demands that God be more than an object but a subject with whom one relates. It demands that we understand that God is an active participant in this partnership, one who declared, *I will be your God, you will be my people...I have called you by name, you are mine* (Isaiah 43:1) (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 156). By way of engaging with the Other in a covenantal relationship, newness that redefines human life results; human persons are set in a new context because God is God. Human persons are being addressed after silence and indifference, belonging with and belonging to after abandonment and shapelessness, and subject to surprise and amazement after oldness in this covenantal relationship (Brueggemann, 1995). God is presumed to speak and act in this covenantal relationship that begets newness. "The metaphor of covenant presumes that this other One speaks, and by such speech things are changed (Rom. 4:17)" (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 156).

Throughout the Psalms, the Psalmist pleads, wrestles with God to transform his circumstances or transform his inner state from an intolerable one to a tolerable one that might result in a new identity. For example, Psalm 118 says, *Out of my distress I called on the Lord; the Lord answered me and set me in a broad place...The Lord is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.* Psalm 55 tells us that the Psalmist asked Yahweh to tend to him and answer him, relieve him of his trouble, anger, fear, and horror, and as the Psalmist's words indicate, Yahweh responds, leaving the Psalmist unharmed. There is a sense of mutual uniting between the Psalmist and Yahweh; both are shaped by the other's authentic engagement. Psalm 25:16-18, a lament Psalm, says, *Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins* The Psalmist depends on Yahweh to change his loneliness into companionship and his distress into peace, essentially by looking past what he has done in order to grant him a new identity. Psalm 30, a thanksgiving Psalm, expresses gratitude for the transformation that has already occurred. Verses 2-3 and 11-12 says,

*O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit... You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.*

The Psalmist professes Yahweh to have given him life when he was dead, to have transformed his mental state from depression to joy, consequently filling the Psalmist

with gratitude. By being open and dependent on Yahweh, mutual and authentic contact can be made with the Psalmist's inner life, so that transformation might be facilitated.

I argue this covenantal relationship is foundational to transformation of the self. It is this unique relational environment that houses transformation. Psalm 30 and 51 illustrate the centrality of this relationship to transformation. Psalm 30, a Psalm of Thanksgiving, declares gratitude for Yahweh having transformed the Psalmist's plight. Yahweh, you've *drawn me up...healed me...brought up my soul...restored me to life...turned mourning into dancing...taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy*. It seems the Psalmist went through hell and Yahweh brought him out of it. Yahweh is intimately involved in experiencing the deadness the Psalmist endures as well as restoring a sense of life to the Psalmist. Brueggemann (1995) says Psalm 30 contains the power to live and the passion to praise God because of the remembered transforming moment that moved the Psalmist from death to life. The Hebrew context of the covenantal relationship emphasis is on "this life" whereas death meant the "disruption of the covenant relationship with God." In the Psalmist's eyes, *this life is it* and this life requires a relationship with Yahweh. Because of this, the gratitude expressed in this Psalm is understood to be intensely passionate and meaningful because Yahweh was always within ears distance from the Psalmist; Yahweh heard the Psalmist's request, allowing the Psalmist to stay alive. In this Psalm, we see how important Yahweh is to the human person's sense of aliveness.

In Psalm 51, the Psalmist asks Yahweh to remain in relationship with him amidst the Psalmist's plea for transformation. Essentially the Psalmist asks God to

hold true to the covenantal relationship, to remain loyal to the Psalmist amidst her disloyalty. The Psalmist says in Psalm 51:11, *Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.* We see from this request that transformation of the self requires *staying with the other.* Yahweh's sustained relationship with the Psalmist is critical to his or her transformation. A prerequisite to the establishment of a new internal order in the Psalmist is the presence of Yahweh. The Psalms teach us that there is a *self* and an *other* involved in transformation, rather than merely an other performing a unidirectional act on the self. The Psalms suggest transformation can occur in a relationship when the other remains present to the one undergoing transformation. I argue it is this covenantal relational presence that allows the Psalmist to undergo transformation.

But there is more that is required for transformation to occur than merely entering into a covenantal relationship. If only this kind of relationship was necessary, than one might see and experience transformation as much more pervasive in life. Mutuality, openness, intimacy, authenticity, housed in a covenantal relationship characterizes many adult relationships—sometimes marriage and even close friendships. There is a reason for transformation's dearth; for covenant does not complete the kind of relationality that is facilitative of transformation. There are further certain conditions that must take place in this relationship that facilitate the possibility for transformation to occur. I will show how permission, violence, and surrender are also present in the Psalms and consequently facilitative of transformation. In choosing these words I recognize that they are imperfect terms, and

their meanings overlap. But they are an attempt to capture the most pertinent aspects of this covenantal relationship that lead to the possibility of transformation.

*Permission granted in the Psalms.* We see from the Psalms that this relational environment of covenant gives us permission to come as we are and give voice to where we are. As illustrated in the Psalms, permission is granted to give voice to our human experience. Further, the Psalms reveal the reality that Yahweh listens to the declaration of our human experience. Whether the human being sings a song of praise, cries from the pit of despair, or dances on the peaks of mountains, the Divine other is interested in the creative expression of the human soul. The Psalmist is granted permission to vocalize anything and everything that a human person experiences. In the Psalms, the Divine waits to know how it feels to be human. For example, from Psalm 4 we learn that we feel distress, shame, betrayal, and loyalty. *You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer. How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies...the Lord hears when I call to him.* Psalm 13 tells us that we experience abandonment, loneliness, pain, sadness, and dominated. *How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

The permission granted in the Psalms is paradoxical. What is unique about the covenantal relationship between God and human person in the Psalms is that it is a binding relationship wherein one party, God, holds authority over the other, the Psalmist. The relationship between God and Psalmist is mutual but not equal. The

hierarchical nature of the relationship between Yahweh and the Psalmist includes mutuality, and the covenantal nature of this relationship facilitates freedom. “In covenanting, the contradiction of freedom and authority is overcome. The binding of God is precisely the freedom of the human person, and where there is no binding, there is no freedom” (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 156). The covenant is what allows the human person to be free; a freedom that invites us to name and speak to every aspect of our human experience. It is this recognizing and sharing our story that is enlivening to us. Though the following list is not meant to be exhaustive of what the permission granted in the Psalms allows, it is clear the Psalms permit us to engage intimately, speak out, wail, confront, depend, and accept the reality of one’s experience.

The Psalms further grant the Psalmist permission to put words to his experiences – human experiences – and make these experiences become real and known to others. Psalm 107:2 says *has God redeemed you? Then speak out! Tell others that God has saved you.* The Psalms call us to be more alive in life by naming and sharing our experience. Giving expression to our experience makes it come alive in the way that God intended our particular experience to come alive. As illustrated in the Psalms, by naming our experience with another, we come to know ourselves in ways we would not have otherwise known. For example, Psalm 138 says,

*On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul...*

Psalm 63 says, *My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips when I think of you on my bed, and meditate on you in the*

*watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.*

By this naming and sharing, the Psalms call us to live more connected with our individual and communal experience of life; the Psalmist comes to know his needs by putting words to his experience. And consequently, the Psalms show us that we can live a more connected existence with ourselves and others by simply sharing with another what is going on inside and out with us. With the Psalms, we are granted permission to talk about both our internal and external experiences. Without such global permission, our ability to experience the fullness of life and transformation is stunted.

The permission in the Psalms fosters intimacy—a kind of closeness between Yahweh and the Psalmist. The Psalmist knows God is a covenanted God and will mutually engage in the Psalmist's innermost struggle in an authentic spontaneous manner. The content of the Psalms are therefore the real, natural, spontaneous reactions to the experience of being human and thus of being in relationship with Yahweh. They include responses to evil, pain, trauma, joy, and peace. These responses are blatantly honest, reflecting an intimacy that freely comes out of the inner life of a person as a result of the permission intrinsic to a covenantal relationship. For example, Psalm 55 says, *My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me...* Psalm 56 says, *O Most High, when I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?* Psalm 142 says, *With my voice I cry to the Lord; with my voice I make*

*supplication to the Lord. I pour out my complaint before him; I tell my trouble before him. When my spirit is faint, you know my way.* It is this covenantal relationship that grants permission to the Psalmist for such expressions. This intimate response from the Psalmist is possible because,

...the psalmists are covenant writers, whether their perspective is individual, national, or that of Israel's cult. And their knowledge of God is rooted in the covenant; they respond to God in prayer, in praise, or in particular life situations because of an already existing covenant relationship which makes such a response possible" (Craigie, 1983, p. 40).

The Psalms of lament also grant us permission to confront the other with whom we are in relationship. Brueggemann (1995) describes lament as rhetorical terrorism; an assault on God, others, and anyone else who gets in the way. The nature of a covenantal relationship allows us to voice our anger; any other type of relationship will not hold up to the onslaught of such rage. Psalm 22 says,

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet you are holy enthroned on the praises of Israel. In you our ancestors trusted, and you delivered them.*

Psalm 25 says, *To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame...Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord.*

When we are despairing, despondent, angry, and discontent, the Psalms show us we have permission to tell God our experience does not line up with Yahweh's character. We can call Yahweh to address the incongruous nature of our experience and the life offered with Yahweh.

The Psalms of lament further demonstrate the intimacy and freedom we are permitted to experience with Yahweh. Brueggemann (1986) says, without lament, coercive obedience is the only possibility. Yahweh is not a coercive God, controlling and manipulating our every thought, feeling, and move. Yahweh is a God who seeks a covenantal relationship where honesty and freedom exist to explore and discover what it means to be human and be in such a relationship. Further, this freedom invites intimacy. "...lament involves a deeper emotion because a lament is truly asking, seeking, and knocking to comprehend the heart of God. A lament involves the energy to search, not to shut down the quest for truth. It is passion to ask, rather than to rant and rave with already reached conclusions. A lament uses the language of pain, anger, and confusion and moves us toward God" (Allendar, 1995, p. 27).

The Psalms also give us permission to wail in our grief. As mentioned earlier, over half the Psalms consist of laments. This includes expressing our utter despair and despondency, anger and discontent to God. Psalm 22 again is a useful illustration of this point. *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.* Psalm 5 says, *Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray.* Psalm 130 says, *Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.* Psalm 31 says, *Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye wastes*

*away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away. Psalm 38 says, My wounds grow foul and fester because of my foolishness; I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all day long I go around mourning. Psalm 58 says,*

*The wicked go astray from the womb; they err from their birth, speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear...O God, break the teeth in their mouths; tear out the fangs of the young lions, O Lord! Let them vanish like water that runs away; like grass let them be trodden down and wither. Let them be like the snail that dissolves into slime; like the untimely birth that never sees the sun.*

We learn from the Psalms that wailing is included in and even a necessary part of the human experience.

The Psalms allow us to depend on the other. We are given permission to lean on, to need the other. It is much like the dependency that characterizes the mother-infant relationship, wherein the infant depends on the mother to feed, clean, and love him so he have a chance at life and go on living. This is the nature of the covenantal relationship between Psalmist and Yahweh, dependency breeds life. So it is not a dependency that is an end in itself, but a dependency that fosters independence. For example, Psalm 16 says,

*Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you. ...The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. ...I keep the Lord always before me' because he is*

*my right hand, I shall not be moved...my body rests secure...You show me the path of life. Psalm 23 says, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters' he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.*

We see from the Psalms that human persons can depend on God, a kind of dependence that is life-sustaining.

Finally, the Psalms permit us to accept rather than deny the reality of our experience of life. The Psalms tells us that human experience includes thanksgiving, praise, trust, and lament. By including lament, the Psalms grant us permission to accept both the joyful and painful aspects of life. We also see from the Psalms that part of accepting life as it is, is by sharing it with another. The Psalms shows us that part of accepting life as it is requires voicing it. When we mute our experience the consequences are a deadened experience of life in the Psalms. For example, we see in Psalm 31 that when the Psalmist is not heard by the other, he experiences loneliness, abandonment, and ultimately death. *Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily...I have passed out of mind like one who is dead; I have become like a broken vessel.* Psalm 54 says,

*Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth. For the insolent have risen against me, the ruthless seek my life; they do not set God before them. But surely God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life...I will give thanks to your name, O Lord, for it is good. For he has delivered me from every trouble...*

The Psalms call us to have a full experience of life, which includes the difficult and depressing experiences that accompany being human. As painful as it is, the Psalms show us that the reality of life is to be accepted.

With the permission implicitly granted in the Psalms, I argue that the Psalms depict a model of empathic engagement. I argue, by the Psalmist's unrestrained, affect-laden expression of her experience, we see how the Psalmist trusts in the other's listening attuned ear. The Psalmist's earnest and open expression of the contents of her soul and the very personal nature of her circumstances imply a listening, interested other; an other with whom the Psalmist is in relationship and to whom she depends. For example, in Psalm 25 the Psalmist cries out to Yahweh,

*Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress... Consider how many are my foes, and with what violent hatred they hate me. O guard my life, and deliver me; do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.*

In Psalm 71 the Psalmist says,

*In you, O Lord, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock and refuge, a strong fortress... rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp and the unjust and cruel. For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.*

I argue, throughout the Psalms, by the Psalmist continuing to speak to Yahweh, it is implied that Yahweh listens attentively to the Psalmist, offering permission to share whatever the Psalmist deems necessary to share, with Yahweh fully attuned to every

aspect of the Psalmist's experience, good or bad, right or wrong. Because of the covenant, Yahweh does not leave the Psalmist alone in his experience, or his sharing. Yahweh remains unwaveringly present and attentive.

*Violence in the Psalms.* We see from the Psalms that lament is a part of the human experience. The pain, trauma and even death that characterize the horrific circumstances that the Psalmist endures shape a category of Psalms known as the Psalms of lament. Over half the Psalms fall into this category of Psalms. Laments are expressions of hurt and pleas for help from individuals or groups. The basic structure of a lament is a pattern of utterances: invoke God, recall what God has done in the past, lament one's current plight, plea to be heard, saved or to punish one's tormentors, praise God for hearing one's plea, and finally, profess belief that the plea has been heard.<sup>xliii</sup> The Psalms of lament are filled with "hurt, betrayal, loneliness, disease, threat, anxiety, bewilderment, anger, hatred, anguish," (Brueggemann, 1995, p.67) and even death. "Lament is a form of prayer through which the believer can hold God accountable for God's covenantal responsibilities" (Brueggemann, 1986, p. 104). Because of the covenant, lament allows the human person to take initiative with God. Lament allows the human person to say "life is not right" (Brueggemann, 1986, p. 105) and assault God with the responsibility for making life right. Without lament, there is no honesty about life. These Psalms are unique in that they are a confrontation of Yahweh, an assault on his character for not holding to his promise of *hesed* that would sustain the Psalmist in peace and safety. I argue that this confrontation is a form of violence. Lament is a violent assault on Yahweh in an

attempt to change Yahweh's mind, in an attempt to change the Psalmist's internal and external reality.

There are four kinds of violence in the Psalms: the violence the Psalmist has endured from God and from others, the violence the Psalmist has inflicted on others, and the violence assaulting Yahweh. The word violence is misleading in that I am not speaking of an acted out<sup>xliv</sup> violence, though the violence in the past or future may include action. What I see in the Psalms is a violence in the present; a violence that is spoken. It is a violence not in action but in word, though abusive or destructive just the same. Further, this violence is a disruptive, and I argue, generative in that it disrupts the order of things. In this sense it is a constructive violence, allowing for something new to enter in. The world is a violent place; we are wounded merely by living in it. Yet too often we are told to stifle our rage at the violence that has been done to us, to submit instead in peace, without first recognizing the violence without and, more importantly, within. I argue, this stifles that which might, and ought, arise from such an articulation of violence.

There can be no peaceful transformation. Violence must break through the old and allow for the creation of a new way of being. This violence is akin to the violence of a birth, the searing cry and terrible pain that begets new life. The chaos that precedes transformation is like the trauma of a birth; nothing is born into this world without violent pain. The Psalms clearly demonstrate violence in relationship with Yahweh. The Psalmist is not willing to settle for passivity in the face of her pain. In order for the Psalmist to have something new happen within her, she must assault Yahweh. She must confront Yahweh with her rage, with a violent outcry that is an

echo of the violence that has been done to her. This is what allows the Psalmist to uncover the reality of the covenantal love Yahweh holds, thus, the Psalmist encounters a new way of being in relationship.

The Psalms confirm the reality that human experience includes pain, trauma, and death. Although the Psalms highlight the fact that darkness and death are clearly part of experiencing life with God, all too often, life with God is not depicted as such. Much of “Christian piety and spirituality is romantic and unreal in its positiveness” (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 11). In such an atmosphere, it is improper to include our difficult and despairing moments in our communal and private life of faith. It is rather quite common to hear one person encourage another who is struggling by encouraging them to not get upset but instead to trust the Lord. “The assumption is that trust precludes struggle; faith erases doubt; hope removes despair. Therefore, lament is unnecessary if one trusts, loves and obeys God” (Allender, 1995, p. 26). Brueggemann (1984) suggests that as a result of the age of enlightenment, we censor and side-step moments of living that are inherently wrought with despair, seemingly in an attempt to have life make sense. The tragic death of a child in a drowning accident is explained as God’s timing. The earthquake that kills tens of thousands is understood to be a part of God’s plan. When the Psalms are considered, such logic is ludicrous. “...such a way not only ignores the Psalms; it is a lie in terms of our experience” (Brueggemann, 1984, p.11). The Psalms are “peculiarly in touch with what goes on in our life” (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 10). It is this honest confrontation of the loss and darkness that characterizes part of our experience in life that characterizes the Psalms. In the Psalms, the voice of darkness and disorientation<sup>xlv</sup> is

the voice that precedes new life. And avoiding or ignoring difficulties in life in the name of “cogito ergo sum” logic, I would posit, precludes the possibility of transformation.

The Psalms also teach us that giving voice to this violence is part of human experience. For example, in Psalm 10 the Psalmist experiences abandonment and God hears his confrontation. *Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? ...But you do see! Indeed you note trouble and grief, that you may take it into your hands...* In the laments, the Psalmist exudes a resounding plea to be free of his tormenting circumstances. The Psalms of lament are much like the life of a poet. “For like the life of this poet, the life of the world is saturated with pain and ache not yet finished, not yet answered, not yet resolved. And we are left with the demanding question, what shall we do with so much of hurt that is left unfinished?” (Weems, 1995, p. viiii). The answer from the Psalms is to speak it. “What strikes one about the book of Psalms, if one notices anything at all, is that nearly one half of the Psalms are songs of lament and poems of complaint. Something is known to be deeply amiss in Israel’s life with God. And Israel is not at all reluctant to voice what is troubling about its life” (Weems, 1995, p. x). The resounding message of the Psalms is to speak out about one’s experience. According to Brueggemann (1984, p.77), losing lament results in the loss of authentic personhood. Experiencing violence and giving voice that that experience is an aspect of our human identity. The freedom to express and explore our experience with Yahweh, including all our pain and angst, fosters intimacy with Yahweh. “It is an act of profound faith to entrust one’s most precious hatreds to God, knowing they will be taken seriously.”

Part of the Psalmist's plea to God for rescue moves to a wish for vengeance against the one who has caused hurt. "In addition to the good asked for self or for community, the lament also asks bad for the enemy. Thus there is frequently in these poems a wish for doing something hurtful and punishing and destructive to the human adversary. The pain risks what is most ignoble in human intention and daringly brings to speak what is darkest, and what is most unacceptable, in conventional theology and conventional social relations" (Weems, 1995, p. xi). Psalm 137:9 depicts murderous rage. *Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!* is a cry for vengeance on Israel's enemies, those who have destroyed the Holy city of Jerusalem. This harrowing prayer for revenge comes out of utter despair and devastation. Israel's home, Israel's place of safety and security, has been destroyed. The wound is violent and deep. The Psalmist is uninhibited in his expression of anger and rage towards his aggressor. In order to kill off a nation, one must kill off the nation's children. Thus, the Psalmist is most offensive in Psalm 137 in its wish to snuff out the nation that destroyed Israel, by brutally killing its children. This Psalm shows us that anger, or in this case murderous rage, is expressed in a covenantal relationship. Anger is expressed to the other when the other is big enough and strong enough to handle such anger. Yahweh is not shaken by such violent and abrasive words. This violent expression of anger grounds us in the reality of Psalm 137, the utter pain inflicted by the perpetrator on the victim in the Fall of Jerusalem.<sup>xlvi</sup>

Sometimes we experience such violent traumas from another that call for the articulation of such extreme rage. It is the violent articulation of the rage that informs us of the violence of the inflicted wound; the internal violence is reflected in the

articulation or externalization of it. The poems are uttered in extremes because human persons feel in extremes. To wish and voice harm against the other – this is a violent act, and goes against “trust and wait in silence” theology.

To what end are such extreme utterances? To merely suggest it is cathartic, that one feels better after talking about what one is experiencing, is acceptable in part though only partly true. In order to understand the end of such utterances, one must look to whom those utterances are made. In the Psalms, such extremes are uttered and directed at Yahweh. In the Psalms, there is tension of living with the old, that which is dead and hoping for the new, that which is living. There is the hope that articulating such “speech works new reality” (Weems, 1995, p. xiii). The speech in the Psalms is a performative speech. “One cannot join this procession of poets without imagining that grief said without apology demands that God reenter the world in a different way, at a different place, in order to do a different work...In place of indifference, transformation...” (Weems, 1995, p. xiii). It is not that poets invoke transformation but it is clear that transformation will not occur without such utterances. It is the expression of one’s internal world that allows for newness to usher in.

We see from the Psalms that violence precedes newness. The violence in the Psalms is the violence necessary for a birth. The violent cry of the Psalmist is the violent cry of the infant being birthed, of the pain of the mother in labor. The violence of the Psalms is a similar rupturing which allows new life to come into being. The basic structure of the lament supports this idea—belief that Yahweh has heard one’s plea follows the articulation of one’s plea. Psalm 39 says, *I was silent and still; I held my peace to no avail; my distress grew worse, my heart became hot within me. While*

*I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue...Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not hold your peace at my tears.* Brueggemann, (1986, p. 66)

says Psalm 39

characteristically brings to speech the cry of a troubled earth (v. 12). Where the cry is not voiced, heaven is not moved and history is not initiated. And then the end is hopelessness. Where the cry is seriously voiced, heaven may answer and earth may have a new chance. The new resolve in heaven and the new possibility on earth depend on the initiation of protest”

Psalm 40 follows with *I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.*

The violent assaults on Yahweh in the Psalms are a protest against that which the Psalmist does not know or understand. For example, Psalm 88 depicts the Psalmist in chronic emotional despair.<sup>xlvii</sup> The Psalmist’s *soul is full of troubles* and his life *draws near to Sheol*; he feels helpless, isolated and alone. He experiences solidarity with the dead, feels forgotten, is left and abandoned, and cut off from relationship with Yahweh and his friends, who have since become enemies. He is full of sorrow to the point of having difficulty seeing – shut in the dark. Yahweh hides his face from the Psalmist and the Psalmist experiences himself as the object the Divine’s wrath; he pleads with Yahweh to be heard, even though Yahweh appears deaf and absent. In Psalm 88, the relationship between Yahweh and Psalmist teaches us about the profound sense of darkness and dependency the Psalmist feels. It is both a plea for relief and a protest against this dependency. Yet it is this dependency that leads her to

Yahweh, who vows to be with her even in the darkness. Honestly confronting Yahweh with the darkness of our lives allows us to experience a real God who is committed to being in relationship, even in our weakest of states. Brueggemann (1984, p. 12) says,

[T]he Psalms issue a mighty protest and invite us into a more honest facing of the darkness. The reason the darkness may be faced and lived is that even in the darkness, there is One to address. The One to address is in the darkness but is not simply part of the darkness (John 1:1-5). Because this One has promised to be in the darkness with us, we find the darkness strangely transformed, not by the power of easy light, but by the power of relentless solidarity.

This rage is a protest against dependency, a needing of the other. “To accept blame for everything is not to take God seriously. Rage is a form of trust and an acknowledgement that finally one must come to terms with this One in whom we are grounded” (Brueggemann, 1995, p. 159). The violent assaults on Yahweh in the Psalms are a protest against our surrendered position to Yahweh. “It is inconceivable to surrender to God unless there is a prior, declared war against him” (Allendar, 1995, p. 26). The surrender characteristic of this covenantal relationship is what is necessary for transformation to occur.

*The surrender of self to other in the Psalms.* A sense of surrender is characteristic of the Psalms. In the Psalms, surrender is present in the very word used to describe the human being—the Hebrew word *nephesh*. Though traditionally translated “soul,” this does not capture the breadth of meaning in the word. Depending on the particular

context, in the Psalms and throughout the Old Testament, the translation of the word can mean throat, breathe, neck, desire, soul, inner person, spirit, life (as opposed to death), person, and self (Feyerabend, 192-, p. 220). The word *nephesh* describes animal, man, man as possessing mental and emotional faculties, man as cut-off from God, and man as dead. By examining the contexts of the word *nephesh* we learn it primarily shows us in our need and desire (Wolff, 1974). For example, the word *nephesh* is used to describe the human person as mortal and subject to death, a death from which one can be saved and delivered, and granted a prolonged life if Yahweh hears the Psalmist's need and desire for life. Psalm 3:2 says *...many are saying to me, 'There is no help for you in God,'* with the Psalmist going on to describe his deliverance by the Lord. Psalm 6:4 says *Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me from the sake of your steadfast love.* The self in the Psalms is in a surrendered position, needy and dependent on the other—the other being Yahweh.

The specific types and content of the Psalms further confirm this surrendering to Yahweh. Psalm 25, a lament Psalm, teaches us about the dependency that characterizes this relationship between Yahweh and Psalmist. In this Psalm, as in many lament Psalms, the Psalmist is surrendered and in need of Yahweh. The Psalm states, *To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me...Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress.* The Psalmist is dependent on Yahweh to keep him safe and save him from his enemies, preventing him from experiencing shame. The Psalmist wants to align himself with Yahweh; he says he will wait for Yahweh and asks Yahweh to stay with

him. In verses 6-7 the Psalmist asks Yahweh to look past the wrongdoings of his childhood by appealing to Yahweh's steadfast love and faithfulness. Further on in the Psalm the Psalmist hopes to experience Yahweh's love rather than abandonment. In verses 16-18, the Psalmist requests that Yahweh pay attention to his internal experience that is characterized by loneliness, affliction, trouble, and distress. In Psalm 25, it is clear how much the Psalmist depends on Yahweh to attend to his external and internal world, in hopes of changing his experience.

Though paradoxical, this surrendering continues to be pervasive in the Psalms addressed to a king. In the Psalms, even the kings are in a surrendered position to Yahweh. As the Psalmist articulates the characteristics of a good king, a simultaneous acknowledgement and dependency on God is implied. Psalm 72 is a prayer for the king, that he might fulfill God's reign and God's will in the world. Verses 1-17 talk about the characteristics of a strong and powerful ruler-ship then ends with verses 18-19 that places God as the one responsible for ruling the world. *Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed by his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth.* Verse 1-7 focus on God's justice and righteousness which results in peace, particularly for the poor and needy. The kingship participates in a kind of leadership that surrenders to the poor and needy. There is the paradox of the king in the surrendered position of king to Yahweh, and there is the paradox of the king in surrendered position to the poorest of poor.

As has been shown, what is quite obvious in the Psalms is the Psalmist dependent position to Yahweh. What is less obvious is Yahweh's surrender to the Psalmist. Throughout the Old Testament, Yahweh surrenders in relationship to Israel.

Goldingay (2003) states, “Yahweh has been submitting to death through the First Testament story, persisting in a relationship that continually involved rejection and hurt...paying the penalty for utilizing Israel in seeking to implement a plan to restore the world to what it was meant to be...bearing the cost of relationship with Israel” (p. 830). In the Psalms, it is not as obvious how Yahweh surrenders to Israel. However, the mere inclusion of the Psalms in the canon demonstrates that Yahweh puts his agenda aside, in order to listen to and attend to the Psalmist.<sup>xlviii</sup> For example, Psalm 5 says *Give ear to my words, O Lord; give heed to my sighing. Listen to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you I pray. O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch.* I contend not only does the Psalmist surrender, as demonstrated above, but Yahweh also surrenders. Throughout the Psalms only rarely do we directly hear from Yahweh.<sup>xlix</sup> Yahweh is seemingly silent and in a position of listening and not responding to the Psalmist.<sup>1</sup> Yahweh does not stop to correct the Psalmist on the accuracy of what he is experiencing. Yahweh does not interrupt the Psalmist to offer another point of view for the Psalmist’s plight. In the Psalms, Yahweh puts his agenda aside to listen to the Psalmist’s agenda, taking it at face value. I argue the Psalms demonstrate Yahweh also surrendering to the Psalmist.

In Brueggemann’s (1995) depiction of a covenantal relationship, he suggests a covenantal relationship requires a listening that entails surrendering to the other. “Serious listening is yielding to another, being at the disposal of another, letting our lives be shaped by another who takes initiative for us” (1995, p. 158). When such a sentence is read, it is in our default thinking to consider Israel, the Psalmist, or the

human person<sup>li</sup> in the position of surrender to Yahweh. However, this kind of thinking is inadequate. Though we are in the position of being shaped by the one who takes initiative for us, we are not the only one surrendering to the other. What is counter-intuitive for us is to consider Yahweh surrendered to Israel, the Psalmist, or the human person. “Listening to the voice of another with seriousness is, then a decision to live by grace, to let us be impacted and defined by that other voice” (p. 158). I argue, in a covenantal relationship, which is mutual, surrender is also mutual, and it is this mutual surrender where both parties surrender to the other’s desires and needs, that open up the possibility for something new to happen.

### *Conclusion*

The Psalms capture the experience of the Psalmist (human being) as lived out in a relationship between human being and Yahweh. By studying the Psalms we see the Psalms use the human mouthpiece to express the experience of being human and to communicate the nature of God. Studying the Psalms as history teaches us about being human on an individual scale, however, the greater function of the Psalms transcends context. Studying the Psalms as literature focuses on their personal and poetic nature which makes them universally appealing. As Patrick Miller described of Brueggemann’s (1995) work in the editor’s introduction to *The Psalms: The Life of Faith*, my study of the Psalms has a broader focus, taking “the final form of the text as the primary subject of interpretation” (Brueggemann, 1995, p. xvii), which is the psyche of the Psalmist as it is exhibited in relationship with Yahweh. Thus, my study of the Psalms is an excavation of the human psyche, so to speak. Further, I argue the

Psalms demonstrate transformation of the self within the context of the relationship between Yahweh and Psalmist.

I argue the Hebrew word *bara* captures the transformation that occurs in the Psalms, where something new is created out of something old. Whether implicit or explicit, in the Psalms, the human being asks for this transformation. In Psalm 51, the use of *bara* in verse 10 indicates the Psalmist desires “something new and astonishing” within him. The use of *leb* and *ruach* in verse 12 indicate the Psalmist desires a change in his inner person. Beyond this specific Psalm, the predominant thrust of the book is the Psalmist’s desire for transformation. Further, the Psalms argue for the importance of relationality in transformation, as the Psalms demonstrate we are always a self in relation to an other. Further, the Psalms demonstrate transformation occurs within a particular relational environment characterized by covenant, permission, violence, and surrender.

The relational environment in the Psalms is primarily characterized by a covenantal love which is a loyal-love. The relational environment in the Psalms allows us to encounter the fullness of what it means to be human and remain recipients of Yahweh’s love. This covenantal relationship highlighted in the Old Testament is characterized by mutuality, openness, dependency, and authenticity that results in a transformed identity.

A further explication of the relational environment characterized by covenant demonstrates what is at stake. Covenantal relationship is dangerous because it is a loving and accepting environment that facilitates contact made with the Psalmist’s inner life; we are given freedom to establish and express our identity and personhood.

Such contact, also including permission, violence and surrender, creates an environment facilitative of transformation. The relational environment in the Psalms grants us permission to voice our human experience, binds us in relationship that permits freedom, shows us that we can be more deeply connected with ourselves and others, allows us to confront the other with whom we are in relationship, grants us permission to grieve, permits us to depend on the other to sustain our life, permits us to accept rather than deny the reality of our life, and substantiates the divine other's empathic attunement. The Psalms of lament demonstrate a violence that is included in relationship with Yahweh – a violent outcry that is an echo of the violence that has been done to the Psalmist and a violence that begets new life. We learn from the Psalms that violence and expression of such violence, which includes the articulation of a wish for vengeance, is a necessary step toward transformation. The violence in the Psalms is a hatred of our dependent state on the other, that which allows us to encounter the real presence of the other. And finally, the environment of the Psalms is characterized by surrender wherein the Psalmist is in a surrendered position to Yahweh and Yahweh in a surrendered position to the Psalmist. This mutual surrender in the Psalms allows transformation to occur.

In conclusion, when we are in a covenantal relationship that is mutual, open, intimate, dependent, authentic, spontaneous, where we are permitted to bring our whole self to the other, express the violence we experience, and are allowed to surrender to one another—I argue we experience the fullness of what it means to be human and consequently allow for the possibility of transformation. As we see in the Psalms, this experience in covenantal relationship allows us to encounter the primary

anxieties that accompany the human experience, including rejection, abandonment, and even death.<sup>lii</sup> By entering into this kind of relationship, we are brought to the edges of our selves as human beings, forced to confront who we are and entertain new ways of being. We are able to see how we enter into relationships, we see who we are in relationships, and we are given the opportunity to be with the other in a new way. It is this kind of relationship, the relationship that is depicted between Yahweh and the Psalmist in the Psalms that sets the stage for the possibility of this new experience—a transformation of the self.

## Chapter 4

## Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms:

## An Integrative Dialogue on Transformation

To talk of transformation is like talking about love, or forgiveness, or healing, or joy. It is one of those abstract concepts, slippery and difficult to name and know. In this sense, this dissertation has been an attempt to make the unknown knowable and is in the same vein as Julia Kristeva's discussion on love. As Kristeva (1987, p. 2) says, "Trying to talk about it [love] seems to be different from living it... No doubt the risk of a discourse of love... comes mainly from uncertainty as to its object. Indeed, what are we talking about?" In fact, where the language of transformation is most familiar to me is from patients in the consulting room or from Christians who have encountered God. An analysand might reflect on his experience in analysis as transformative, just as a new Christian might speak of being "transformed." But just what does this mean? As was shown in Chapter 1, the use of the word leaves us wanting if we are to move beyond experiential knowledge. How do we capture what transformation means in a more precise manner that would allow us to name and know it?

This dissertation attempts to solidify something that is experiential and unique to two individuals interacting in the work of psychoanalysis. In a way it is true that transformation can only be known interpersonally and experientially, rather than theoretically. Since the kind of transformation to which I refer is a relational process, one can not manufacture or prescribe it; one can only analyze the characteristics of a relationship that seems to facilitate it and hope, thereby, to gain a greater

understanding. As shown in Chapter 1, the zeitgeist of contemporary psychoanalysis, a relational view, is ideal for a theoretical understanding of transformation. So that has been my goal in preceding chapters—to closely examine a transformative relationship and delineate its characteristics. My goal in this chapter is to move toward an integrative theoretical understanding of transformation as it described in the Psalms and occurs within the analytic relationship.

Integration in this dissertation is a conversation between two disparate traditions. Though the Psalms offer a keyhole view into the human psyche in relationship, they are not a procedural manual for therapy but a prayer book for Yahweh's people. Relational Psychoanalysis is an approach to responding to individuals in need. They emerge in different historical eras; they speak to different audiences. That being said, I believe a conversation between these two traditions has something to offer to our understanding of transformation in analysis. Though Relational Psychoanalysis is in its infancy as compared to the book of Psalms and to theology as a discipline, it has something to offer. Relational Psychoanalysis hails from a rich tradition, one that has studied the human being in relationships in a systematic and comprehensive way, and offers a theoretical lens with which to think about the relational environment that facilitates transformation. In attempting to understand transformation, a dialogue between psychology and theology is richer than either perspective standing alone.

On the other hand there are similarities. I have chosen to examine transformation within Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms because both assume that transformation occurs within relationship. In the preceding chapters, I have

sought to delineate a definition of transformation within Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms. I have shown the function of the Psalms is transformative, much like the function of Relational Psychoanalysis; both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms exhibit a human person discovering a new experience of the self within relationship.

The premise of this Chapter's dialogue is that transformation is *in vivo* and relational. In Chapter 1 I stated the problem—the lack of a consensual understanding of what transformation is—and proposed my solution: to examine the relationship that houses it. In Chapter 2 I examined both what Relational Psychoanalysis contributes to a definition of transformation, and what facilitative characteristics are present in that particular analytic dyad. In Chapter 3 I presented a definition and characteristics of the transformative relationship between the Psalmist and Yahweh. In this final chapter, I argue that an interdisciplinary dialogue about transformation between Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms offers a more complete definition and richer understanding of the kind of relationship that begets transformation.

In the following section, I will focus on relationship in the conversation between the Psalms and Relational Psychoanalysis. First, I will examine the intersection of Ghent's "something new" and the Psalms *bara* and how these concepts both supplement and are in tension with one another in defining transformation. In the next section, I will discuss how the relationship in the Psalms reflects key aspects of an analytic relationship and complements the analytic relationship, thus undergirds our understanding of the kind of relationality that begets transformation in analysis. Finally, I will discuss each characteristic in turn, and present how the characteristics

found in the Psalms and those found in Relational Psychoanalysis complement, supplement, parallel, or oppose one another.

The work of integration includes the work of bringing forth old insights and utilizing them in a new context. My objective in integrating the previous two chapters is not to add together the characteristics delineated from Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms. Nor is it my intent to search for the least common denominators between the two.<sup>liii</sup> Following the lead of Randall Sorenson (2004), my desire is to take seriously “minding spirituality” in the work of psychoanalysis. Sorenson held to the professed pursuit of Relational Psychoanalysis to “hold each tradition in tension with its competitors, honoring and safeguarding points of disagreement while being open to whatever is useful clinically” (Sorenson, 2004, p. 34). My hope is that this chapter multiplies the understanding of transformation offered by each discipline.

*Dialogue on the definition of transformation*

The definitions of transformation, as I have delineated them from Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, both supplement and are in tension with one another. In the Psalms the act of creation is a sovereign act where something “new and astonishing” (Eichrodt, 1961) is brought forth within a human being, out of the old and disordered content of their self/existence. This helps supplement Ghent’s definition of transformation as “something new” in an old pattern of relating, and Aron and Mitchell’s description of it as a “radical change in nature” (Mitchell & Aron, 1999). In the Psalms the word *bara*, which means “create,” unveils that *transformation is a kind of creation*, and that it bears a resemblance to the sovereign act of the astonishing radical creation of the world in the book of Genesis. With this

term, the Psalms tell us that transformation is something “new and astonishing” created out of something old and disordered.<sup>liv</sup> This is also a site of tension between the two. Unlike the “something new” that is created in Relational Psychoanalysis, the Psalms creation is a sovereign act. However, though Yahweh is the agent of this act, there would be no creation if the Psalmist were not approaching Yahweh. Thus the creation arises out of the interaction of the relationship, much like it does in Relational Psychoanalysis where the creation arises out of the interaction between patient and analyst. With the understanding of transformation as an astonishing creation out of something old and disordered, the Psalms substantiate the magnitude of what can actually occur in a person who is in a transformative relationship with another; they tell us that something new and astonishing is possible *in a person*, when that person is in relationship, and gives us a way to recognize the mysterious aspect of transformation. In using this biblical idea to supplement the analytic definitions, we see that when transformation happens, a creation is happening—a creation that is transcendent occurring in a person.

This new definition from the Psalms and Relational Psychoanalysis – *something new and astonishing created from something old and disordered in a human person within a relationship* – gives us a different, clearer, and fuller way to think about transformation as it might occur in the consulting room. Relational Psychoanalysis’ primary preoccupation is with the psyche in relationship with the analyst while the Psalms depict the Psalmist’s preoccupation with her intrapsychic experience with Yahweh. Whether in the Psalms or Relational Psychoanalysis, a new experience intrapsychically – wherein the “relational matrix” is turned on its head and

persons can experience themselves differently – is possible. We do not have to follow the old script with mom and dad, with Yahweh, or other relationships in general.

Both traditions assume that our relationships do not doom us to certain patterns – we are not doomed to the oldness that we have always known. In a transformative relationship, things can go differently. Regardless of our past relationships, we can still experience transformation – newness arising *out of* our old and disordered self – thus encounter new parts of our self that have remained unknown and dead to ourselves and others.

A psychoanalytic view of the Psalms helps us understand what we long for intrapsychically in the consulting room. Just as the Psalmic definition of transformation supplements our understanding of Ghent’s “something new,” likewise Relational Psychoanalysis brings psychological insight to the Psalmist’s request for a new inner disposition (Tate, 1990). Psalm 51 says, *Create in me a clean heart...restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.* The Psalmist’s request for a new inner disposition – a clean heart – bespeaks the human desire for renewal, the same desire that draws people into analysis. Individuals enter analysis because something feels as if it has gone awry in their internal world and they want help dealing with the chaos that entraps them. They want to be free of the consuming feelings that imprison them, such as anger and guilt or sadness and loss. By including an intrapsychic relational world in addition to the interpersonal world, Relational Psychoanalysis assists our understanding of what happens to the self in the Psalms, and what can happen to the reader of the Psalms vicariously.

Psychoanalysis offers a lens from which we might illumine the meaning and depths of our affective experiences and their impact on the self. Relational Psychoanalysis, in particular, offers a language that substantiates the affective experience of the human being in relationship and a respect for the depth to which that experience reaches in relationship. I say this because I believe what Relational Psychoanalysis offers is an opportunity for clinicians and theoreticians to dialogue in a language that allows us to understand one another amidst the diversity of the varied schools of thought in Psychoanalysis. This requires finding a discourse that allows us to name what happens in the consulting room and engage in interdisciplinary discussion. The main journal of Relational Psychoanalysis is *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, “which is dedicated to facilitating debate among theoreticians and clinicians working within this array of relational perspectives...it continues to explore common ground; to clarify differences; and to raise the level of debate within the analytic community above slogans and formulas--all in the interest of enhancing our understanding of the intricate richness of the psychoanalytic process.” Thus Relational Psychoanalysis offers a unique lens through which to see the depth of the Psalmist’s psychological and emotional duress with Yahweh. In true psychoanalytic fashion, such a reading of the Psalms causes us to ask the question “What’s going on around here?”<sup>lv</sup> with the hope of understanding more fully the Psalmist’s experience and, ultimately, her request for transformation.

Through Relational Psychoanalysis, we are able to appreciate more fully the old and disordered way of being the Psalmist is enduring and the Psalmist’s request for newness and order. Notably, this request comes in the form of a plea for

“symptom removal,” just as it does for the analysand. The Psalmist asks Yahweh to rescue, save, come be with, take away pain, remove her enemies, and so forth, just as the analysand asks the analyst to tell him what to do, to change how he feels, to medicate him, to relieve his suffering. However, it is not symptom removal but a new way of being that is the focus of both the Psalms and Relational Psychoanalysis.

It goes without saying, the definition of transformation I have posited—something new created out of something old and disordered in relationship—assumes there will be a positive effect on the patient, as is the aim of psychoanalytic therapy. However, as I have mentioned earlier, transformation is not something that can be manufactured; rather it is begotten of an organic process. One can not determine how someone will respond to analysis, and one cannot determine how one person will be affected by another in relationship. Transformation is much less like the answer to a perfectly formulated mathematical equation, and much more like the outcome of a painter’s or sculptor’s work—the result of a relationship between the artist and the art.<sup>lvi</sup> In this sense, relationship is not merely the means to transformation but the very nature of it. The following section is a discussion of the kind of relationship that can facilitate a positive transformation.

*The Transforming Relationship: Relationship in the Psalms parallels and illustrates, relationship in Relational Psychoanalysis, enriching our understanding of transformation.*

In this section I will show how a transformative relationship, as it is delineated from both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, enriches our understanding of transformation. I will do so by discussing how they parallel, differ, illustrate, and

complement one another in the following ways: They parallel one another in that they are both anchored in relationships, what is long-term and yet unfamiliar, they are a kind of re-parenting, and they are co-constructed. They differ in that one is a relationship between the human and the Divine – hence a significant power differential exists – and the other is a relationship between two human persons. They illustrate in that the Psalms demonstrate silence as it is sought to be used in the consulting room, to allow the psyche to emerge. Finally, they complement one another with the excavation of intrapsychic and interpersonal relationships. First I will address the parallels.

Both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms are grounded in a relationship, anchored in something that is old and yet unfamiliar. Old because it is a relationship that has a history, though the analytic relationship does not have the longevity of the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship. Regardless, both psychoanalysis and the Psalmist's relationship with Yahweh are designed to be long-term relationships. Yet it is also unfamiliar because both the analytic relationship and the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship operate differently than other relationships. Both are a new kind of relational experience, and both have a healing quality to them. In the Psalms, the Psalmist discovers that things can go differently with Yahweh; Yahweh offers her a new experience of being in relationship, in much the same way the analyst does. Yahweh receives the Psalmist, as analyst receives an analysand, to come, be fully accepted, and transformed.

With this healing, accepting quality, the relationship in both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms function as a kind of a re-parenting. Both Yahweh and

the analyst send the message, “Come and be fully accepted, as you have not been able to do with the other objects in your life. Come to this other, and experience something new—a transformation.” Though the individual has not wronged the analyst or Yahweh necessarily, this transformative environment offers an opportunity to “clean herself up” in a way that she has not or is not able to experience with the others in her life. In my clinical practice, I have heard patients say, “There are things I will never be able to experience with my mother, but have experienced with you” or “There are ways I will never be able to talk to my father about how he has affected me like I can talk to you.” Likewise, it is not uncommon to hear those of the Judeo-Christian faith say, “There is no relationship on earth that offers me the experience I can have with Yahweh...no one understands me like Yahweh does.”<sup>vii</sup>

I stated in the second chapter that the analytic dyad in Relational Psychoanalysis is understood to be co-constructed. I argue that the relationship in the Psalms operates in much the same way. This view of the mind is consistent with the model of mind that Relational Psychoanalysis subscribes to—a model of mind that is co-constructed. Westermann (1989, p. 2) writes that the Psalms are a reflection of a co-constructed reality.

Unlike a modern poem, [the Psalm] has not arisen from the mind of an individual human being but from what has happened between this human being and God. The form of the psalm is rooted in this exchange between God and man. The author of the psalm has not ‘thought up’ what he says in it.

The mere presence of an other creates another reality. In the Psalms, the experience of the Psalmist as it is conveyed in the Psalms arises out of the reality of her relationship

with Yahweh, thus the reality in which they operate is co-constructed. “In an analytic relationship, the notion of individual subjectivity and the idea of a co-created third subject are devoid of meaning except in relation to one another, just as the idea of the conscious mind is meaningless except in relation to the unconscious” (Mitchell, 1997, p. 151). In this view, we require a self to become a self, and this relationship with the other helps construct the reality in which we live. In Relational Psychoanalysis, the reality of the patient is co-constructed with the analyst in the consulting room. The analyst is there with the patient, not only listening attentively, assisting the patient in sorting out and re-organizing his experience, but also creating a new reality with the patient. As in the Psalms, the relationship allows the possibility for the co-creation of a new reality.

The obvious difference between the relationships in Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms is that in Relational Psychoanalysis two human persons are involved, whereas in the Psalms, the relationship is between the human and the Divine. Throughout this paper I have drawn parallels between God and mother/father, and between God and analyst/therapist. These parallels require us to address the question raised in psychoanalysis of whether the image of God is manufactured out of the early parental images of our caregivers, the hypothesis being that, “...imagos, images, and representations are formed by complex processes” in order to maintain psychic balance. (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 7). Rizzuto quotes Freud from 1914 saying, “all of [the child’s] later choices of friendship and love follow upon the basis of the memory-traces left behind by these first prototypes ... It is out of this matrix of facts and fantasies, wishes, hopes, and fears, in the exchanges with those incredible beings

called parents, that the image of God is concocted” (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 7). To some extent, I believe this is true, and we must consider, as Ann Ulanov (2001) has suggested, our subjective God-image and our objective God-image. Ann Ulanov (2001) says our subjective God image is that which contributes to our personal image of God... our experience with other believers or experiences with mother and father. Ulanov suggests these experiences influence our understanding of how God might relate to us. Our objective God image is that which contributes to our communal image of God. This is more like our experience of God through dogma or through the church Sunday morning. Both can lead to a distortion of our understanding of God. Distinguishing how our relationship with God is influenced by our human relationships is critical to having a relationship with God that is not primarily projection. At the same time, I do believe it is possible to have a relationship with God that is not a conglomeration of parental images or human relationships. In this paper, it is my intent to take as seriously one’s relationship with God as any other relationship in one’s life.<sup>lviii</sup> Thus I examine the relationship in the Psalms in much the same way a psychoanalyst might examine the analytic dyad.<sup>lix</sup>

Thus, as we think about the function the analyst serves the analysand that of the transforming object—to use Bolla’s idea (1987)—we see how much the Psalms illustrate the dependency and surrender Relational Psychoanalysis strives for, which is necessary for transformation to occur. The Psalms show the human being in all her naked need crying out to her caretaker. Thus the Psalms make a good model of the infant-parent relationship. The relationship between Yahweh and Psalmist is intimate, ubiquitous, and trusting, just as an infant experiences, requires, and perceives her

mother to be.<sup>lx</sup> A “good enough”<sup>lxi</sup> mother makes every effort to discern what the nuances of her baby’s cries mean by staying empathically and presently minded. Sometimes the cry of the infant is a cry to be held. Sometimes the cry is for food. Sometimes all the baby needs is for the mother to hold him and let him cry. As the infant develops, he learns to articulate his own needs and voice them in relationships, but until then, he depends on his mother’s mirroring and attunement to identify his needs. The Psalms illustrate this developmental achievement, and undergird the necessity, posited by Relational Psychoanalysis, of being able to talk about one’s experiences and needs. The Psalms show tremendous respect for the genuine emotional experience of the human person, and thus would be supportive of such authenticity in the work of psychoanalysis.

The Psalms also illustrate a presupposition of the analytic relationship that, in order for the psyche to emerge, silence is required. Inherent to the Psalms is a respect for humanity’s facing, naming, appreciating, and lamenting facets of human experience, which is precisely what analysis strives for. In Relational Psychoanalysis, this is facilitated by the analyst by inquiring into the anxiety-ridden areas of the patient’s life. Some of this inquiry is verbal and some of it is nonverbal. Where the Psalms and Relational Psychoanalysis appear to differ is in the empathic engagement of the analyst to the analysand regarding his or her circumstances. Relational Psychoanalysis involves one human being—the patient – engaging with another human being—the analyst—whereas the Psalms involve a human being engaging with a silent, invisible *other*.<sup>lxii</sup> Yet, in psychoanalysis, it is silence that allows the therapy to begin. It is with the experience of silence that the analyst is able to see

where the patient's mind goes, what the patient does when he is given the space to come out. Silence provides the opportunity for the patient to be recognized by the other, leaving space for his self to be seen, heard, and understood. Thus, exploring the silence is a way of exploring the psyche of the patient. The Psalms resound with this active silence. By reading the Psalms, we learn about the Psalmist precisely because of all the space she is given to unpack her experience. The silence in the Psalms, as in psychoanalysis, is the starting point to an interactive relationship. Ultimately, Yahweh's silent and presumed listening posture allows the Psalmist to feel seen, heard, and understood.

In this sense, the Psalms complement the goal of Relational Psychoanalysis—the excavation of intrapsychic and interpersonal relationships toward the purpose of transformation. Much attention has been given to what might be called the interpersonal relationship between human and the Divine in the Psalms. However, what has seemingly gone amiss in the literature is highlighting the intrapsychic dynamics in the Psalms. As in Relational Psychoanalysis, the interpersonal informs us of the intrapsychic and the intrapsychic informs us of the interpersonal. So in the Psalms, the Psalmist's relationship with God informs us of the Psalmist's intrapsychic experience and the Psalmist's intrapsychic experience tells us about her interpersonal relationship with Yahweh and with others. The intrapsychic lens allows us to see the old and disordered dynamics at play and how the Psalmist longs for a new experience.

This multidimensional view allows us to thoughtfully consider such questions as, How and why is the Psalmist crying out for a new relational encounter? and, What

do we learn about the Psalmist by listening to her requests of Yahweh? By listening to the Psalmist's intrapsychic pleas, we learn that the Psalmist wants to be re-aligned in her relationships, including her relationship with herself, with others who have wronged her or whom she has wronged, and with Yahweh. Ultimately the Psalmist wants and needs to know that Yahweh is on her side so that she can be restored in both her internal and external relationships. The Psalmist's intrapsychic experience teaches us what it means and gives voice to this longing in all of us to be in close connection with the other, showing us in our desire to be heard, seen, and recognized by the other.

By looking at the Psalms, we are reminded of what Relational Psychoanalysis posits—that we are made to be in relationships where our true self can be received. In both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, we learn further about the specific characteristics that are present in order for the self to be known and transformation to occur. The following is a discussion of the characteristics that facilitate transformation—recognition, tension, faith, and surrender; and covenant, permission, violence, and surrender—in Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, respectively. My list of characteristics are not exhaustive however, by examining the relationship of Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, I believe we begin a discussion about the kind of relationship in the consulting room that might facilitate transformation.

*Characteristics of a transformative relationship*

*Recognition: The Psalms undergird and illumine Relational Psychoanalysis' valuing of subjective experience and meaning in that they have similar aims and assumptions about what it means to be known. "Today's analysis provides the opportunity to*

freely discover and playfully explore one's own subjectivity, one's own imagination" (Mitchell, 1993, p. 25) and I argue, though it is not their exclusive function, so do the Psalms. They have similar aims. With the move away from drive theory and toward incorporating relational perspectives in contemporary psychoanalysis, "analysts today speak less frequently of clarification and renunciation and more often about the importance of accepting 'containing,' 'mirroring,' 'holding,' 'embellishing the patient's subjectively embedded psychic reality'" (Mitchell, 1993, p. 24). Mitchell notes there has been a move in psychoanalysis, a fundamental shift from de-emphasizing to emphasizing the patient's sense of meaning and value. Though still important, the articulation of unconscious fantasies is no longer sufficient to the process of psychoanalysis. Instead, what is central is "the emergence, development, and enrichment of the patient's sense of subjective meaning" (Mitchell, 1993, p. 31). Relational Psychoanalysis stands by its conviction that the analysand not only comes into therapy to receive relief of his symptoms, but to be known by another.

The Psalms illustrate a similar valuing of subjective experience and meaning. In contrast to much of the rest of the Old and New Testament, the Psalms depict the voice of the human being talking directly to God. Thus we learn of the Psalmist's subjectivity through the articulation of her circumstances, and we learn more about our own subjectivity by reading of her experience. The Psalms illustrate that it is important to God to know the human being's circumstances, whatever they are, and to know what they mean to her. The Psalms show us that the sense of meaning and value – or lack thereof – the human being experiences in life matter to God. But more than that, the Psalms imply that God takes pleasure in making contact with the

Psalmist as she endures the pain that comes with her loneliness, the praise that arises out of her sense of Yahweh's presence, and the gratitude she feels as Yahweh rescues her. Yahweh wants to hear and know the Psalmist's internal and external reality, and to be with the Psalmist in that reality, in much the same way a psychoanalyst would her analysand in Relational Psychoanalysis.

The Psalms demonstrate Relational Psychoanalysis' assumption that we long to share our internal reality with the other to be known by the other. Though analysands do not (usually) know it at the outset of psychoanalysis, they come to analysis to know themselves better and to embark on a journey to achieve this is by being known by another (the analyst). On the surface, they might come to analysis because they are having difficulty in their relationships, because of the distress they are experiencing inside themselves or in relationship with another. But through the process of psychoanalysis they learn a different and new way of relating, both with themselves and with others. Thus, analysis is not an end in itself but a means to a new way of being in relationships. In analysis, one learns how to relate in a way that is connecting, thus satisfying. That being said, the Psalms depict a true self relating in all her humanness to God. They illustrate a way of relating where vulnerability is permissible, thus contact with another is possible. In the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship, a relationship where need for the other is acceptable, we see what we are striving for in analysis—to know and be known.

The kind of knowing that goes on in the relationship between Yahweh and the Psalmist is a deep, penetrative, core knowing. There is nowhere the Psalmist can go to get away from God, and there is no part of the Psalmist's person that can be hidden

from God (Psalm 139). In this sense, the Psalms provide an illustration of what it is to be fully known and recognized, as is sought in the psychoanalytic relationship. This kind of knowing of the other is foreign to most relationships for many reasons, one being fear of rejection—potential judgment is always looming in the background, waiting to be expressed. Because we are afraid of judgment by ourselves or by others, we can remain unseen, unheard, and consequently unknown. This is the source of much angst because we are made for and to be in relationships wherein we can be deeply known. Neither in Relational Psychoanalysis nor in the Psalms is the individual free of self-judgment; however, because of the commitment Yahweh and the analyst make to the Psalmist and analysand, respectively, the threat of losing the other is eliminated; the self is able to come out in a space that is safe and sustaining. It is the process of being known by another so deeply and fully without self or other-judgment that one begins to accept parts of herself that she has previously condemned. This is the reaching, knowing and recognizing of which Ghent speaks. The Psalms provide an illustration of what we strive for in the consulting room—to be fully known and fully accepted, in the deepest and most intimate inner places of ourselves, by another.<sup>lxiii</sup>

The Psalms affirm the idea of mutual recognition as it is posited in Relational Psychoanalysis. Not only do the Psalms imply that God seeks to recognize and know the Psalmist and her circumstances, just as the analyst seeks to know the analysand and his circumstances, the inverse is also true. Thus mutual recognition, as it is sought in Relational Psychoanalysis, is also sought in the Psalms. The Psalmist seeks to know God just as the analysand seeks to know the analyst. In Aron's (1996) paper,

“The Patient’s Experience of the Analyst’s Subjectivity,” he writes, “patients are motivated to probe beneath the analyst’s professional façade much as children are motivated to penetrate beneath and to connect with their parent’s core selves” (p. 80). It is much the same with the Psalmist and Yahweh. The Psalms depict the Psalmist pining for Yahweh, for Yahweh’s presence, companionship, safety, comfort and love. Psalm 84 talks about the longing to be near and know Yahweh. *“How lovely is your dwelling place...my soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.”* The Psalmist longs to penetrate and know Yahweh’s core self.

An understanding of what is meant by “knowing” in Hebraic language will help us further understand this mutual recognition. To know in Hebrew is an experiential knowing of the other. In Chapter 2 I referenced a clinical vignette in which Ghent offered his patient a blanket before she even knew she was cold. Ghent knew of her need, and with a Hebraic understanding of knowing, he was committed to help her in whatever way he recognized. The modern understanding of “knowing” differentiates between experiential and informational knowledge. For example, developmental psychology, along with psychoanalysis, teaches us that much of development depends upon the nurture a child receives. It is not what a child “knows about” his parents but how a child experiences his mother or father that the child knows who his parents are and, consequently, how he comes to know himself. We develop a self in the context of a relationship within the experience of that relationship; how we are treated and how we experience the other treat us shapes who we are. Likewise, it is not what we “know about” God but how we experience God

that facilitates our transformation in relationship with Him. The Hebraic understanding adds to this the idea of commitment. To know, in Hebrew, is to obey or to be committed to.<sup>lxiv</sup> Thus the longing to know the other is, at its core, a longing to know the experience of the other and the experience of ourselves with the other. This mutual recognition is, in my view, essential to a transformative relationship.

In this sense, analysis is good practice for a person relating with God (as relationship with God is good practice for analysis). The experience demonstrates that life with God is not about a relief of symptoms, but about a relationship of knowing and being known, a life shared with the other. Relational Psychoanalysis offers a place to articulate one's experience to another human being, one who can listen, attend, probe and receive anything and everything one has to say about his life. And like Yahweh, the analyst, in her posture of warmth, genuineness and positive regard for the analysand, seemingly takes pleasure in knowing the analysand and his experience. Further, if we see the Psalms as a text that seeks to move (persuade) readers, with its goal to move them into an intimate and authentic relationship with God, psychoanalysis has something to offer the reader of the Psalms. In this sense, psychoanalysis acts as a place for practicing, even birthing the ability to relate—in all of one's vulnerability and need for the other—to the other.

The Psalms remind us of what is sought by analysand's in Relational Psychoanalysis—that we do not always know what we need, but that having someone who is open to discovering what our need is, is transformative to us. In the Psalms we see the Psalmist plea to be rescued, saved, heard, and more, and yet Yahweh seemingly remains silent and does not respond to her pleas. It is as if Yahweh knows

of another need of the Psalmist. And I wonder if the Psalmist's need—our need—is staring us in the face: the need to be recognized in all our plainness and vulnerability, our true self with no defenses. Not a removal of what pains us, but a sitting with us in the midst of our pain—the tension of our experience. It is this recognition that tolerates the tension of intolerable feelings, allows us to be known and is transformative. As the Psalms speak for us, they reveal and recognize our subjectivity. In doing so, they send us a message that being human matters, that this life matters. But more than that, by reading the Psalms through the lens of recognition from Relational Psychoanalysis, we see that the tension of our internal experience matters to the other.

*Tension: The tension pervasive in Relational Psychoanalysis—the tension of tolerating intolerable feeling states in relationship until something new emerges—is illustrated and illuminated by the Psalms with the tension between life and death, separateness and connection, but Relational Psychoanalysis does not offer an answer to the deeper questions of the purpose of existence.* The irony of psychoanalysis is that people see the profession as an advertisement for happiness, when in reality much of what we do is assist our patients in tolerating dissatisfaction and pain. Today's culture sends the message that everyone can have happiness and if you do not end up experiencing happiness—existential happiness—something is wrong with you. Many people come to therapy in hopes of being relieved of the dissatisfaction and unhappiness that plagues them, but this is not what psychoanalysis offers. Psychoanalysis cannot answer the existential questions that come with being human: Why are we here? What are we supposed to be doing? How do we experience

joy and contentment? However, psychoanalysis does offer a place for us to wrestle with such questions and contain the tension of asking the unanswerable. The Psalms give us a picture of this existential wrestling. The Psalms show us that we are not guaranteed happiness, by voicing the tension in which the Psalmist lives.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the Psalms show us that life comes with pain and sadness, loneliness and despair, abandonment and sickness, and that sometimes Yahweh does not relieve or rescue the Psalmist from the intensity of her dissatisfaction. The Psalms thus demonstrate that which Relational Psychoanalysis upholds as a characteristic of the analytic relationship—the importance of tolerating intolerable feeling states that accompany being human. The Psalms tell us that living life as a human being includes being with the other in such states rather than relieving ourselves of such states. We learn from the Psalms that being human includes tolerating the tension that is part of life and having another there with us to help tolerate such tension. We also see from the Psalms articulating what we feel to another helps us name and know the tension we are experiencing. In this sense, the Psalms illustrate what psychoanalysis offers; a relationship that gives us the opportunity to understand and tolerate what we are experiencing.

One example of this in the Psalms is the tension between life and death. The tension between life and death in the Psalms offers a new way of speaking about our emotional lives in Relational Psychoanalysis. Although as humans we experience one literal life and one literal death, a Hebraic understanding of emotional aliveness and deadness suggests there is an emotional experience of death where the subject feels deathly or deadened, and there is an emotional experience of life where the subject

feels alive or enlivened. The poetic books in the Old Testament, Psalms included, understand life and death not as a literal experience, nor as necessarily separate events. In the Old Testament, people saw, or felt, experiences such as illness, depression, separation from God, oppression, and loneliness as a loss of fullness of life—with death having a hold of the person throughout their life.<sup>lxv</sup> In other words, one could experience ‘death’ prior to the actual biological end of one’s life. Thus the Psalmist must hold aliveness and deadness in tension, just as the analysand must do in analysis. In Relational Psychoanalysis, the analysand longs to be fully alive, yet he is also plagued by deadness. The Psalms offer a way for the analysand to name and know the tension inherent to his experience, and that way is via relationship.

The Psalms are in tension with Relational Psychoanalysis in that the Psalms demonstrate—that which an analysand longs for—that another will be with us in all the angst that accompanies being human.<sup>lxvi</sup> From the moment we are born to life we are faced with the threat of death.<sup>lxvii</sup> Throughout our lives we wrestle with love and hate, joy and sadness, greed and gratitude, significance and insignificance. The Psalms teach us that though we cannot reconcile such dilemmas, having another with us as we face them is of utmost importance. Psalm 42 shows the Psalmist wrestling with Yahweh’s absence and pining for Yahweh’s presence. *I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully...as with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, where is your God?* Psalm 88 talks about how the Psalmist is forgotten by everyone, including Yahweh, having to sustain a life of darkness in the “depths,” feeling overwhelmed by Yahweh’s wrath and “waves.” Psalm 23 speaks to the contentedness

that comes with Yahweh's presence. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want...Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me.* The Psalms remind us that having the other with us helps us tolerate the tensions that accompany life, but more than that, they illustrate tension is intrinsic to relationship.

The Psalms are similar to Relational Psychoanalysis in that the Psalms help illumine the truth that tension is inherent to relationships—the tension in the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship is also present in the analytic relationship. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Benjamin makes room for the tension inherent in relationships, the paradoxical tension between separateness and connection. With her concept of recognition, she attempts to address the problem of relating to the other's independent consciousness—longing for a sense of uninterrupted connectedness with the other, while tolerating one's independence from the other. We see this paradoxical tension in the Psalms as well. The Psalmist longs for genuine connection, yet she must tolerate that she is separate from Yahweh and others and thus susceptible to loneliness and abandonment, even death, the ultimate separator.<sup>lxviii</sup> This tension is fundamental to Relational Psychoanalysis, and is also the tension that faces the Psalmist. And it is this inherent tension in relationships that allows for the possibility of transformation. We learn from Relational Psychoanalysis that separateness allows for connection, and that contact with the other allows for something new to enter in, new life to emerge—for transformation to occur.

Tension is a critical characteristic of the atmosphere of transformation. In order for transformation to occur, we must be able to tolerate the both/and instead of

the either/or experience; the tension of hope and hopelessness, gratitude and lament, life and death, separateness and connection. The consulting room resounds with these paradoxes, as do the Psalms. Both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms teach us that tension is inherent to relationships and necessary for something new to emerge out of something old. Making room for tension makes room for the possibility of transformation.

*Faith: The Psalms both underscore and conflict with that which Relational Psychoanalysis believes, that transformation requires faith in the other and in the relationship.* As I mentioned in Chapter 1, transformation cannot be manufactured or made to happen, but it can be begotten. It is a process for which an optimal environment—a relationship—can be cultivated. In the course of analysis neither analyst nor analysand knows if a transformation will occur. Psychoanalysis requires a faith that something good will result. This faith is a trust in the analyst and analysis itself, but more than that, it is a faith in the relationship. According to Eigen (1981), faith is “a way of experiencing which is undertaken with one’s whole being, all out, ‘with one’s heart, with one’s soul, and with all one’s might’” (p. 3). The Judeo-Christian commandment found in Deuteronomy 6:5 further enhances our understanding of Eigen’s (1981) faith: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”<sup>lxix</sup> This way of loving Yahweh requires the whole self—a loving that means reaching the limits of one’s humanness. Eigen’s (1981) faith is a kind of entrusting of the self to the other; a trusting that one can bring one’s whole self to the other and not experience rejection or abandonment. It is this kind of faith in relationship that is required in analysis—a

belief that the analyst will receive the analysand in whatever condition he is in and with whatever content he has to share, and act on his behalf.<sup>lxx</sup>

I argue the Psalms also illustrate this faith. The Psalmist entrusts herself to Yahweh over and over again, believing that Yahweh will show up when needed, offer what is longed for, stay with and protect the Psalmist, and continue to offer the fullness of life that the Psalmist craves. However, the Psalms also differ with this faith. In the Psalms, faith is much more than “a way of experiencing” that which dependent on the subject who experiences. In the Psalms, faith is both objective and subjective. The following is a dialogue on how Relational Psychoanalysis’ faith both supports and differs with the faith of the Psalms.

The Psalms demonstrate a trust that the other will be there, even through all of one’s pushing, prodding, probing, needing, and longing—it is a faith in the other’s steadfastness and faithfulness. In this way, the Psalms underscore the faith of Relational Psychoanalysis. In the Psalms, the Psalmist does not question Yahweh’s existence but rather is focused on trusting in Yahweh’s character, repeatedly calling upon Yahweh to be her help. One definition of faith as it is defined in Judeo-Christianity *is the assurance of things hoped for the conviction of things not seen* (Hebrews 11:1). This helps us further understand Eigen’s definition of faith, which includes an implicit belief in the other’s stability. Eigen implies the other is strong enough, big enough, and good enough to receive the subject—her *whole being*—in all her angst. Eigen’s faith is a kind of trusting in the other, a trusting that the analyst is good and has the analysand’s best interest in mind.

The faith in the consulting room is not a faith that requires the analysand to believe that the analyst exists – her existence is not in question.<sup>lxxi</sup> Rather it is a faith that hopes that the analyst has certain qualities, qualities the analysand has not yet seen but which are necessary to help him in the way he needs helping. Eigen's faith speaks to what it means to entrust oneself, wholly, to the other, to trust that the other will exhibit the qualities necessary to withstand assaults, tantrums, and violations, qualities that are inherently good. It is a faith that the other has the qualities believed to be necessary for the subject—in all her humanness—to experience transformation.

The Psalms of lament further enhance our understanding of what it means to have faith in the other that allows transformation to occur. The Psalms of lament turn our firm, unshakeable, omnipotent God into a tender, loving responsive mother who is able to withstand her child's tantrums, accusations, and confrontations and give them back to the infant in a tolerable form. Using Object-Relations theory, Brueggemann (1995, p. 103) talks about the Psalms of lament serving as an avenue for developing ego strength. "The argument made in this theory is that the child, if she is to develop ego-strength, must have initiative with the mother and an experience of omnipotence. This happens only if the mother is responsive to the child's gestures and does not take excessive initiative toward the child." A true self develops, according to Winnicott (1965), by the mother implementing the infant's omnipotent expressions. If the mother does not respond to such gestures by the infant but instead takes initiative, then the mother is experienced as omnipotent. This is a consequence of the mother not being able to sense her infant's needs, and the result is catastrophic for the infant, fostering a false self. If we are to think about life with God as a

developmental process where we are learning to mature into claiming a responsible faith of our own, this same process of mother and infant applies. As Brueggeman (1986, p. 61) writes,

Where there is lament, the believer is able to take initiative with God and so develop against God the ego strength that is necessary for responsible faith. But where the capacity to initiate lament is absent, one is left only with praise and doxology. God then is omnipotent, always to be praised. The believer is nothing, and can uncritically praise or accept guilt where life with God does not function properly. The outcome is a 'false self,' bad faith which is based in fear and guilt and live out as resentful or self-deceptive works of righteousness. The absence of lament makes a religion of coercive obedience the only possibility. What is at issue here, as Calvin understood so well, is a true understanding of the human self, but at the same time, a radical discernment of this God who is capable of and willing to be respondent and not only a initiator.

This kind of God makes transformation possible. God's unshakeable demeanor is a useful model to the analyst. Though the analyst is not God, she can emulate certain qualities of God. In this sense, analysis is a good place to "practice" genuinely relating to God, because analysis offers a place to test one's limits against the unshakeable other who withstands, receives, and returns such assaults in a more tolerable form. This kind of whole-being experiencing, as Eigen (1981) defines in his concept of faith, is transformative.

That being said, the concept of faith in Relational Psychoanalysis differs from the faith in the Psalms. In Relational Psychoanalysis faith is subjective in contrast to the Psalms, wherein faith is both objective and subjective. Objective in that it describes the doctrine of the Judeo-Christian faith; “the body of truth to be found in the Creeds...held to embody...the teaching of Christ and to be willfully rejected by man only at the peril of salvation” (Livingstone, 1977, p. 188). Subjective in that it is a specific response is to Divine truth. “Faith in this sense is a supernatural, not a natural, act, and is dependent on God’s action on the soul...It demands an act of the will and is thus more than intellectual...faith is a higher faculty than reason” (Livingstone, 1977, p. 188). In this sense then, the faith of the Psalms helps illumine how transformation is a kind of creation within a person that is beyond the control of the two individuals involved. I argue faith as it is defined in the Psalms, particularly the subjective response, allows us to make room for a transcendent experience that is involved in our understanding of transformation. Even with these striking differences in definition, the Psalms definition can still illumine what we know about the faith required in transformation.

*Surrender: The Psalms both affirm and differ from Ghent’s notion of surrender to the other.* The following clinical vignette is based on a session with the same patient from Chapter 1. This session followed the first by about 6 months.

*Can we talk about the dream I shared with you during my last session?*

Sure. Did you have some more thoughts about it?

(The patient sits in silence with her head bowed for a few minutes, then eventually looks up to me and says with tears in her eyes.)

*I need you.*

(Struck by how much shame accompanies her self-disclosure—a self disclosure that, at face value, seems it ought to remain hidden and unexpressed—I realize the sacred ground I am on by the mere articulation of her three words. I remain quiet, with my silent demeanor communicating an invitation for her to share more.)

*My need keeps me coming back to you.*

You're thinking about how in the dream you came to my office after hours and were worried about how I might get angry with you, even shame you, for wanting to be with me at a time that we had not planned to meet. You were afraid that I might scold you for your desire to be near me.

*Yes. And yet you have never done that to me, so it doesn't make sense. It tells me just how ashamed I am of my own desire to need and know you. But not just you, I feel that way with other people in my life as well.*

In psychoanalysis, one of the things that is longed for and yet resisted is an acceptance of our own need and desire for the other – longed for because we are made to be in relationship, and resisted because admitting our need requires us to be vulnerable with the other. Ghent proposes that we are driven to let down our defensive barriers to another, to expand and liberate the self by dismantling the false self—that we are driven, in other words, to surrender. Regression is essential to this dismantling in Relational Psychoanalysis, because it allows us to make contact with the other. And when we regress we become vulnerable with the other, thus make contact with the other, opening ourselves up to the possibility of experiencing

rejection and/or abandonment, hence our resistance. However, when we are estranged from others, particularly those we are close to, we do not feel right; we long to surrender our masks so we can make contact. And it is this contact with the other that offers the experience of being understood thus known by the other. As Betty Joseph notes,

How often the pseudo-cooperative part of the patient prevents the really needy part from getting into contact with the analyst, and that if we are taken in by this we cannot effect a change in our patients because we do not make contact with the part that needs the experience of being understood, as opposed to “getting” understanding (1989, p. 79).

The purpose of this surrender is to be fully known by the other, thus experience transformation. In my view, the Psalms illustrate this kind of surrender. In the Psalms, the Hebrew word *nephesh* is used to describe the human being—it is a word that depicts the human being in all her need and desire for Yahweh. In this sense, the Psalms remind us one thing that is true about our relational nature that we need one another. The Psalms validate the dependency that we try to avoid and hide from in ourselves and from others, and support Ghent’s idea that we yearn to surrender to the other. And that surrender brings relief because we are able to both depend on the other and be who we truly are.

The Psalms illustrate a relationality that fosters this kind of surrender, where God does not impinge on the Psalmist, but creates a space where the Psalmist is permitted to emerge as she is. This is the kind of surrender that a child needs to develop; it allows the space the self requires to emerge. It is much like Winnicott’s

(1971) transitional space where the true self can emerge. This space provided the child requires that all else is put aside while the child essentially creates who they are. This kind of *attending to* is critical to the development of a child's sense of self. In order for a child to develop, the mother must assist the child in naming his internal experience, putting words to that which seems nameless. This is extremely organizing to the child's sense of self, helping the child to know and understand what he or she thinks and feels, resulting in the child's ability to make his way in the world. The mother who puts something into the mind of the child when that is not what is needed is experienced as intrusive and invasive, stunting the child's ability to develop his own mind. The mother who listens and assists the child in naming his experiences participates in a putting together of the self. In this space, the child can play and create and come to know who he is, while the mother watches attentively, assisting the child as necessary. I argue this is what is occurring in the Psalms. Ghent suggests surrendering does not require a guru, but a transitional object. What is essential is that the object not impinge on the subject with its own ego. Ghent even suggests the object could be God. "We need to find something or someone who so totally transcends our experience, whose presence is so total and affirming that we will take a chance on surrendering" (Ghent, 1990, p. 217). In this sense, this is where the Psalms differ from Ghent's notion of surrender.

The God of the Psalms is not merely a transitional object, but a subject who is central and critical to the Psalmist's experience. The God of the Psalms is the Creator of the Psalmist. Further, the notion of surrender in the Psalms defines the Psalmist's very self, in contrast to Ghent's wherein surrender is what is longed for, thus separate

from one's experience. It is as if Relational Psychoanalysis seeks the surrender that is already inherent to the experience of the Psalmist. Further, in the Psalms the focus is a *surrender to Yahweh* whereas in Relational Psychoanalysis the focus is a surrender *of the false self*. This might explain the ease of surrender in the Psalms as evidenced by the Psalmist's authentic engagement with Yahweh in contrast to the yearned for surrender in Relational Psychoanalysis. The Psalms depict surrender between the human and Divine rather than a surrender to another human being. The surrender in the Psalms, the very nature of the psalmist's position to her Creator, to Yahweh's ego, gives the Psalmist a reason, a permission, so to speak, to relate authentically with the other. Thus, we see that this dialogue between the Psalms and Relational Psychoanalysis on surrender suggests that they differ yet enrich one another.

*Permission: The Psalmist-Yahweh relationship exemplifies that which Relational Psychoanalysis assumes—the analysand is granted permission to share whatever is on his mind with the analyst.* Authenticity in Relational Psychoanalysis is a requirement for transformation in that it gives the analysand permission to be real with the analyst. Though he does not know it at first, the analysand learns, as he continues to show up for treatment, to trust that he does not have to check in parts of him self at the door of the consulting room. In analysis, there are very few rules proposed at the onset of therapy, with the essentials being—show up, pay, and do not destroy my office or hurt the analyst physically. When patients discover the very few boundaries that exist in the consulting room, it is threatening, particularly if boundaries are what have kept him together most of his life. This freedom offered to the analysand allows him to live, move, and have his being.<sup>lxxii</sup> It is a derailing

freedom in that it allows one to encounter oneself in a new way. With this permission to look at all aspects of oneself and one's experience, one might discover that the boundaries that have been employed to help protect and define actually imprison and falsify one's self.

This kind of boundary-less permission granted in Relational Psychoanalysis is much like the experience of the Psalmist with Yahweh. In this sense, the Psalms augment Relational Psychoanalysis. Yahweh welcomes the fullness of the Psalmist's experience. Permission is implicit in the Psalms, and I argue that it facilitates transformation. Permission to acknowledge what and how one feels permeates the poems. I argue that this education on emotion—how to identify how one feels and what to do with the feeling—and this mining of the Psalmist's psyche is similar, but not the same, to that which occurs in psychoanalysis. The psychoanalyst enters into and uncovers the experience of the analysand by means of empathy, with the end being psychic integration for the analysand. Such integration of the self occurs by means of voicing hidden and unknown affect and linking it to one's experience, in order to achieve a more cohesive sense of self.

In this way the Psalms function much the same as psychoanalysis, providing a venue to focus solely on the external and internal world of an individual in an attempt to know and understand her experience and ultimately, her self. Thus the Psalms teach us what psychoanalysis teaches us— that voicing the full range of our affective experience is transformative. However, though such permission is presupposed in both Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms, how it is used and how it is achieved is different in each. The Psalms demonstrate this permission in

action. This is where I think the Psalms have something to offer Relational Psychoanalysis—a model of how to make use of such permission.

The Psalms are not an illustration of what goes on in the consulting room initially; rather they depict what is striven for in the consulting room—permission to voice one’s affective experience. Much of analysis consists of this long and tedious process of excavation of emotion, and it is in this process that the Psalms differ from Relational Psychoanalysis. Relational Psychoanalysis consists of the analyst engaging in a mutual exploration of the analysand’s internal experience with the psychoanalyst entering into and uncovering the experience of the analysand by means of empathy, helping the analysand uncover his affective experience. In contrast, in the Psalms the Psalmist offers her internal experience without such an empathic pursuit. The Psalms illustrate a freely unsolicited stream of consciousness, a free association that gives us a glimpse into the human psyche. The Psalmist demonstrates the ability to stay with one’s state of affairs, one’s state of being, and one’s affect. To stay with such self-introspection, to look at what is going on inside oneself, is a goal of analysis. However, it is not attained at the onset of therapy. Much of psychoanalysis consists of the analyst pointing out to the analysand the ways in which he diverts himself from experiencing the affect that accompanies his struggle. The Psalms give us permission to stay aware of how we feel and voice how we feel—the deepest pains and highest joys that accompany being human.

Anne Alvarez (1992) says what Ghent (1995) and Benjamin (1990) say – we do not know ourselves until we experience it with (are recognized by) another. The permission implicit in the Psalms exemplifies such a point; they exemplify mental

health—being aware of and sharing how we feel. We see from the Psalms, as in psychoanalysis, that part of being fully alive is talking about our experience. This talking about our experience helps us to accept rather than deny the reality that life brings. So many people keep their experience hidden, not only from others, but also from themselves. Bion (1984) suggests a psychotic is one more concerned with the evasion of pain than the pursuit of pleasure. It is a fantasy to live a life without pain. Pain is the stimuli to pursue what we want. Essentially, if we do not have feelings of lack, we do not have anything to pursue. Thus if the patient's pain is unbearable, then we want to find out why it is unbearable.<sup>lxxiii</sup> It is critical we have the opportunity to express our experience as it comes. Accepting and articulating our subjective experience is critical to our mental health. But, as I said in Chapter 3, voicing one's experience is not as easy as it sounds. It means accepting life as it is and, as we see from the Psalms, (and life outside the Psalms), life as it is includes horrifying difficulties. Being human feels and is intolerable at times, and because of the frequency and familiarity of discontentment and distress in the human experience, it is the tendency of human persons to mute the story of their lives and downplay their circumstances. However, this muting and downplaying not only silences the pain of life, but deadens all aspects of life, including joy and contentment. The Psalms call us to have a full experience of life, which includes the intolerable experiences that accompany being human.

With the Psalms, we have a lens through which to look through and understand the depth of our affective experience and how it impacts us and our relationships. Relational Psychoanalysis offers a venue to unpack that experience

with another in an authentic and spontaneous way. In this sense, the consulting room consists of a process of accessing then articulating these pure feelings. The Psalms offer an illustration of this self-disclosure of the primitive affect that accompanies being human. In this sense, the Psalms offer analysts a picture of voicing one's experience, when it is owned and integrated. Most of human life does not resemble the pure affective expression found in the Psalms, but more often consists of denial, repression, suppression of pain, and pursuit of pleasure. The Psalms function as an education on what it is to be human—an emotional education on the range of affect we experience and how it is to be shared, including the emotional violence we experience.

*Violence: The lament Psalms illustrate the violent rupturing that is required for newness to emerge in the relationship of Relational Psychoanalysis that might facilitate transformation.* Life includes heartache, pain, loss, loneliness, rejection, abandonment, death, and violence. The Psalms are relieving in that they mirror even these aspects of our experience. The Psalms suggest that our lives center on hymn/worship, lament, thanksgiving, trust, and community/authority, depending on the time and circumstance. During periods of lament—what Brueggemann calls disorientation—human life consists of “anguished seasons of hurt, alienation, suffering, and death,” which evoke “rage, resentment, self-pity, and hatred” (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 19). However, it is not uncommon to feel ostracized for experiencing such negative feelings. It is as if, with the onset of modernity, we ought to be above all that, unsullied by the kind of primitive affect that accompanies the traumas of life. But the Psalms say otherwise. Brueggemann says the lament Psalms

have a “recognizable shape that permits the extravagance, hyperbole, and abrasiveness needed for the experience” of ragged, painful disarray that characterizes aspects of life (Brueggemann, 1984, p. 19). The Psalms of lament remind us of how important it is to express the violence we experience in life; however, there are very few safe spaces in which we can do that. Analysis offers such a place.

In the Psalms there is a profound sense of danger, with the Psalmist’s very life threatened. The burden of past, present, and future trauma emoted in the Psalms is the same heaviness with which people walk into the consulting room – the profound sense of pain they are experiencing because of the violence that has been done to them, the violence they are experiencing, and the violence they believe is coming.<sup>lxxiv</sup> Part of the process of healing in psychoanalysis is what is illustrated in the Psalms—it requires that the patient express the kinds of violence he has known. In this sense, the permission granted in the Psalms to express violence offers a model of what is also granted in Relational Psychoanalysis. For example, Psalm 6 and 88 speak to what I have heard and hear from patients time and time again:

*I am terrified of anger, I am terrified of death, I hate to hear myself whine, I feel like I may cry for years, my tears will not stop coming, I don’t get along with others, I hate everyone and want them to feel shame like I do; I feel troubled, dead, helpless, isolated, alone, like a walking zombie, forgotten, left, abandoned, heavy-hearted, like the universe is against me, like I am suffering, terrified, suffocating, shunned, like I live in darkness, like no one wants me around, like everyone else is living in darkness. I hurt, I have been hurt.*

The violence voiced of the Psalms is the violence voiced in the consulting room. The Psalms illustrate the permission the patient requires to express his pain and trauma, to voice the violence that has been done to him, the violence that he has inflicted, and the violence he feels capable of inflicting on others. Much like the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship, the analytic relationship operates as a safe place for the analysand to talk about such violence. This permission to get in touch with the trauma that has been done to him, to voice it, to violently rupture the pall of silent complicity, is a critical part of the grief process that leads to healing. The Psalms illustrate that sharing our violence with another is an aspect of our experience as human beings, and I argue, fundamental to mental health. But more than that, sharing our violence includes what is so plainly illustrated in the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship—the need to violently assail the other. In this sense, the Psalms teach us what is necessary in Relational Psychoanalysis, how to share our anger with another.

The Psalmist wants her anger to change God in much the same way the analysand wants his anger to change the analyst. In the Psalms, the Psalmist recurrently assigns blame to Yahweh for her internal and external state. *Yahweh you have abandoned me. Yahweh you have left me for dead. Yahweh you are nowhere to be found.* The concept of projective-identification helps us wonder if the Psalmist is saying, *Yahweh, I am going to suggest you are the abandoner so that I do not have to deal with the pain that exists in me for my parents leaving me, or that I have to deal with the way I continue to abandon myself over and over again. I will take this part of me and put it into you so that I do not have to get honest with myself and own my tendencies and pain and behavior.*

Projective-Identification, a term familiar to psychoanalysis, occurs when partners expect to be “all in all” to one another (Dicks, 1967) when we expect to get all our needs met by the other. In projective-identification, there is an attempt to get all our needs met by another so that we do not have to tolerate the unmet needs in us. It is easier to project than to tolerate the ambivalence inside ourselves. In the Psalms, it is by projecting onto Yahweh and Yahweh accepting the projection and containing it, that the projection gets metabolized and given back to the Psalmist to restore her sense of wholeness. In this process, the Psalmist learns she can put these projections into Yahweh and have them held then returned back to her in a more tolerable form so that she owns the parts of herself that she could not tolerate before. This process looks much like the process of mother and child, wherein the child will throw a tantrum with the mother and the mother does not reciprocate, with a similar tantrum, seemingly un-phased by the outburst. This lack of reciprocation returns the projections to the child in a more tolerable form because the child has seen that the tantrum does not upset or damage the mother. Because of this the child learns that he can tolerate how he feels.

This sense of acceptance of the extremities of one’s experience by the other and consequently by oneself is transformative. One of the things that is happening here is that the Psalmist is asking Yahweh if Yahweh can handle these hate-able parts of her and her experience because they are so intolerable; or parts of her she does not want to own because that would mean being responsible and achieving a certain level of maturity. This vocalization of our self-hatreds, hatreds of our experience, and hatreds of the other to the other is a demonstration of making it allowable to regress

to a child like dependence, without censure of loss of dignity, in the security of knowing that the other accepts us because he can tolerate this “little needy ego” when it peeps out, just as a good parent would.

In this sense, God acts as the good parent who is able to withstand such assaults. This is the promise people seek when they search for the one person who will be unconditionally loving, permissive and strong—the person who will enable one to fuse all part-object relations into a meaningful whole and be enhanced by it—someone who will love even the hate-able parts of you. I would contend, this is what the Psalmist is seeking when she turns to Yahweh, and this is who Yahweh is to the Psalmist, particularly in the most desperate Psalms, the Psalms of lament. *Yahweh, you love even the hate-able parts of me.* The Psalmist discovers Yahweh does not turn away but listens and embraces her extreme emotional distress, without reciprocating such distress back. Though such an experience of vocalization is healing in its own right, it does not stop here. This vocalization is embedded, housed, and concretized in a covenantal relationship. There is a growing knowledge in the subject that the other will not leave amidst such accusations and confrontation. The tension of the fragmented self is juxtaposed with and into the solidity of the relationship. The “little needy ego” is received in its full blown primitive tantrum into an unshakeable, covenantal, relationship, thus the self experiences transformation.

*Covenant: The covenant love in the Psalms enriches the implicit commitment made by analyst to analysand in Relational Psychoanalysis.* Case example: This is a vignette from an approximately 30-year-old male who had been in treatment multiple times per week for about two years.

*Something's different. Last session I really gave it to you bad. I accused you of being interested in me to satisfy ulterior motives of your own. I was suspicious of you, that you might be getting something out of our intimacy for yourself, and that felt yucky to me. I yelled at you and shut you out. I wasn't sure I was going to come back.*

Yes, you were really angry with me, there was a part of you that hated me in the last session. I wasn't sure if you would want to come back either.

*Yes. But today, I feel like something has changed. There is something healing in having been able to be intensely angry with you, for you to have withstood my assault, and you to still be here. There is something healing in coming back here today and you're still here. You survived my venting and are not damaged by it. And you're still interested in me. You didn't make it about your being hurt by me, you are here wondering about what it meant to me to be able to get so angry with you. Makes me think of my mom and how she would have made it about her and her wound and the way I was feeling would have been left behind, I would have been left behind to have to tend to the way I hurt her for my getting angry with her! You stayed with me and kept the focus on me, which is what it was about really, not you. Something big has happened and I don't know if I fully get it yet.*

Yes, your anger at me tells me that there is something yucky and distrusting about getting close to someone, and it sounds like that getting close, truly sharing what is going on inside of you, usually gets turned around onto the other person and you get left behind. So closeness means you lose yourself and have to attend to the other. Intimacy with another is dangerous to you. Your anger was a self-protective move.

“If the psychotherapist cannot genuinely love a patient, genuine healing will not occur” (Peck, 1978, p. 175). The work of psychoanalysis is the work of loyal-loving. Though they might not know it at the time, this is why some analysands enter and stay in analysis – to be loved. Some of the people who walk through the consulting room door have never been sat with, listened to, empathically attuned to, and stayed with for as long as they will with us. Their relationships resemble more of a train wreck or terminal illness than a steady, non-judging, all-accepting, committed presence. If an analysand stays in and benefits from analysis, he will learn a new way of being in relationship because of this loyal-loving, because this loyal-loving is unshakeable. The analysand assails the therapist—for not empathizing with the accurate feeling, being late for a session, making them pay, raising the fee, leaving them to go on vacation, or even getting too close—and discovers that the therapist withstands such assaults, even comes back knowing there is more to come. It is then that the analysand discovers something new—a covenantal love, and thus, a new way of being with the other.

The above patient has not previously been loved with the kind of love that withstands assaults and wrong doing; she has not been loved with a covenantal love. Early on Freud suggested cure through psychoanalysis came through love. Freud wrote Jung in 1906 "in essence a cure through love" (Jones, 1955, p. 485). But just what that meant was subject to interpretation. With those that followed, Ferenczi and the like, the notion of love got distorted, consequently abusively employed.<sup>lxxv</sup> I think the notion of covenant in the Psalms clarifies Freud’s original suggestion that psychoanalytic cure comes through love.

Covenantal love in the Psalms—*hesed*—is a prominent characteristic of the relationship between Yahweh and the Psalmist. As I mentioned in chapter 3, it is a kind of loyal-love that does not change, no matter what the other member of the covenant does to dismantle the covenant. This kind of covenantal love allows one the freedom to come and go, always knowing and trusting the other will be there for them. Though Relational Psychoanalysis does not use the term covenant, I posit the kind of relationship fostered in Relational Psychoanalysis is demonstrative of such committed love. I am suggesting a good<sup>lxxvi</sup> therapist offers covenantal love to her patients. Though being committed to patients is implicit in the work of psychoanalysis, the commitment stops short of what covenant in the Psalms has to offer Relational Psychoanalysis. Covenantal love in the Psalms, I am suggesting, adds a rich layer of understanding to the relationality in Relational Psychoanalysis that might facilitate transformation. In my view, when you add covenant to the authenticity, spontaneity, and mutuality of Relational Psychoanalysis, you get at the keystone of growth-fostering<sup>lxxvii</sup> relationships. Can Relational Psychoanalysis really do *hesed*? I believe so. The characteristic of covenant as it is present in the Psalms is, in my view, what is already implicit but un-named in the work of psychoanalysis. Furthermore, I suggest covenantal love as it is exhibited in the Psalms is what is of most valuable in our understanding of transformation in Relational Psychoanalysis.

Covenantal love employed in Relational Psychoanalysis allows the possibility for transformation. Kristeva (1987, p. 1) says in her discussion on love, “For what is psychoanalysis if not an infinite quest for rebirths through the experience of love, which is begun again only to be displaced, renewed, and, if not abreacted, at least

collected and set up at the heart of the analysand's ulterior life as an auspicious characteristic for his perpetual renewal, his non-death?" In other words, psychoanalysis offers a covenantal frame for the person to come and be loved into a new experience of living. That being said, I would like to revisit the aforementioned case study and tell you how I heard it. My patient was essentially saying to me,

*Something is different. I violently assaulted you and you still loved me. I have never had that happen to me before...never with my mom. There is something very healing and new for me to have you stay with me through my own aggression, my aggression that was directed at you. It makes me think other relationships could go this way...that I could share I am feeling without the risk of losing the other...and that has never been a thought of mine, that I could get angry and maintain the relationship. I have never known that in my relationships before you.*

As analysts, our way of talking to people can stir up a lot because we speak to their interior world. We speak to our patients in a way that they are not normally spoken to, and sometimes, have never been spoken to. Psychoanalysis offers a space for someone to come and seek something new for themselves and their relationships, and what are patients primarily seeking is but a new way of being loved. I think the idea of covenant in the Psalms helps illuminate the kind of love psychoanalysts offer to their patients, and the kind of love they long for in their relationships—a kind of love that is transformative.

### *Conclusion*

This dissertation is an integrative study of transformation. By examining Relational Psychoanalysis, I build on Ghent's definition to suggest transformation is something new that comes alongside something old. Further, I delineate four characteristics of the analytic dyad in Relational Psychoanalysis, to arrive at a clear conceptualization of the kind of relationship that might facilitate such a change: recognition, tension, faith, and surrender. By examining the relational environment of the Psalms, I believe I have offered an illustration of transformation as it appears within a relational construct exhibiting the characteristics of covenant, permission, violence, and surrender. A study of the word *bara* has shown that the Psalms clarify and demystify transformation, revealing it as something new being created out of something old and disordered within relationship. In examining the experience of the Psalmist, I have argued the Psalmist's plea is to experience transformation. Subsuming the psyche in my examination of the Psalms provides a new language to speak about this experience; additionally, if we understand the Psalmist as a stand-in for humanity, the book offers a new lens with which to understand the analysand's plea for transformation. A study of the Psalms has been shown to enhance my definition of transformation and the relationship in the consulting room. The further unpacking and interdisciplinary dialogue on these characteristics is what I have hoped to contribute to our understanding of transformation.

Although I am arguing a definition and a particular location for transformation, by no means am I claiming an exhaustive examination of the subject in this dissertation. Throughout my research, I have asked questions such as: What

does it mean? Does it actually happen? What characteristics might facilitate it? Having examined the relationship that facilitates transformation, we are faced with further questions. What does one look like after having undergone such a process? Is transformation only to occur within the psychoanalytic relationship or Psalmist-Yahweh relationship? I argue no. As I have said, I have chosen to examine these two relationships because they both have a goal of transformation, thus provide a way of seeing transformation in a relationship. However, I believe transformation is not exclusively reserved for these two relationships, and I argue that my study in this dissertation implies this possibility. In attempting to define transformation, I have also offered a way of thinking about relationships. From early on in life, we all learn, both consciously and unconsciously, how to be in relationships. Many of these relationships thwart any sort of newness, seeking to maintain what is old and familiar for the sake of preserving the status quo. Arguably, we are forced into therapy for two reasons, internal psychic distress or external psycho-social distress, we are having problems in our relationship with ourselves or we are having problems in our relationship with others. We are seeking something new in our relationships. The very nature of this dissertation suggests, by incorporating the aforementioned characteristics, any relationship can be transformative.

In this paper, I uncover that relationship is both the means and the end to transformation. Though I have professed no interest in what a person looks like post-transformation, I do have some thoughts about how one might look after undergoing such an experience. One way of viewing analysis is to suggest that patients come into analysis to learn a new way of relating. Prior relationships have

taught them a way of relating that is not sustaining or sustainable, or worse, have been traumatizing to them. Thus they seek to know a new way of being in relationships. In this sense, the question of what a transformation might look like is answered here. Though in this paper I argue that the relationship is the mean to transformation, I also argue that it is the end. Thus someone who has experienced a transformation in relationship will exhibit the characteristics they have experienced with the other in their own relationships. As Brueggemann (1995) suggests about the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship, one must come to terms with the one with whom we are grounded...we must come to terms with the experience we have had with the other and what it has done to us. By doing so, I believe we undergo a kind of acculturation into a new way of relating, exhibiting such characteristics we have newly experienced in our relationships with others. And making further transformations possible in those we relate to.

In this paper, transformation has been examined unidirectionally; it is the self in analysis and the Psalmist in the Psalms who are the subject of transformation. However, it is not my intent to suggest transformation is one-sided. My understanding of transformation can be mutual. In fact, it is quite consistent with the Relational Psychoanalytic view, that the analyst can in fact undergo such a process.<sup>lxxviii</sup> This gets to the heart of what we do with patients. Although it necessitates significant boundaries, psychoanalysis nevertheless provides a real-life relationship to those who have not yet experienced any relationship quite like it in their lives. We provide covenantal love, permission, recognition, and hence surrender ourselves to their particular experience so that the patient can express the violence they have

undergone, the tensions that feel intolerable, the faith (or lack thereof) that they possess, and the surrender that they long for, in order to experience themselves in a new way with the other. Though I have not addressed it here, others have studied how the analyst undergoes his or her own change in the consulting room.<sup>lxxix</sup> My focus for this paper is to call us as clinicians to examine our work with patients. I want us to ask, What is it we are attempting to accomplish? And, thereby, possibly transform how we approach our work.

As previewed in Chapter 1, this final chapter is a merging of horizons arising out of a desire to dialogue between two seemingly historically opposed disciplines. This dissertation is written in the spirit of psychoanalysis, where the aim is to open up discussions on human experience rather than foreclose them, and it is in this spirit of openness that I write. Further, this paper was written from within my tradition. Much like the late Sorenson, “I write from my own tradition because it’s who I am and it’s what I know. But more importantly, I also believe that belonging to a tradition does not necessarily preclude dialogue and may well be a precondition for it” (Sorenson, 2004, p. 15). My hope is that more informed integrative dialogue will take place in our profession.<sup>lxxx</sup>

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> This dialogue, and others to follow throughout this manuscript, are not transcripts but are based on a sessions with patients for whom identifying information has been changed to protect confidentiality.

<sup>ii</sup> Recently the need for evidenced-based treatment has become the focus of much conversation and publication. Division 39 of the American Psychological Association (APA) has recently established a committee on Evidence-based Practice (EBP) in an attempt to acknowledge the importance of engaging in treatment that is research evidenced with clinical expertise and patient values in order to provide optimal care for patients. The need to establish psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapy as a “science that relies on qualitative as well as quantitative data” is critical to the life of psychoanalysis (Valone, 2005; Darwin, 2004).

I do not view quantitative research as superior research, trumping all other conversations, as if it accounts for what has really happened. I do not hold the view that quantitative research banishes qualitative and theoretical research as mere opinion or speculation.

<sup>iii</sup> Ghent’s definition and its subsequent interpretation is an expansion by Aron and Mitchell (1999). I am working primarily with Ghent’s ideas on transformation, but will also reference Aron and Mitchell’s (1999) interpretations.

<sup>iv</sup> Though psychology and theology have been merged on a variety of topics (see the four volumes of J. H. Ellens and W. G. Rollins *Psychology and the Bible*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), this is the first time the dialogue between Relational Psychoanalysis and the Psalms has centered on transformation.

<sup>v</sup> The Great Commission is to bring others to come to know God through Christ. Ultimately though it could be argued the primary mission is to worship God for God's sake.

<sup>vi</sup> Though these techniques have, at times, been inhumane due to the nature of scientific study that has treated human beings as objects of study rather than subjects.

<sup>vii</sup> It is duly noted that the term transformation is often found in Relational Psychoanalytic literature, though a consensual working definition seems elusive and ambiguous.

<sup>viii</sup> The term transformation is used in parallel with terms such as change, therapeutic action and working through, for two reasons. The term is used here to exhibit how it has historically been instituted both liberally and interchangeably, as well as, to contrast the daft and deficient use of the term with my posited notion of transformation in this dissertation.

<sup>ix</sup> Though therapeutic action does include establishing better coping mechanisms, by no means do I mean to imply that this captures the fullness of therapeutic action.

<sup>x</sup> Though working through includes coming to grips with living in reality rather than fantasy, the definition of working through is too broad to address in this paper.

<sup>xi</sup> The foreplay suggested here is not defined by certain actions or an amount of time necessary for sex to occur, as sex can occur with very little foreplay at all. But it is whatever facilitates the ultimate contact that is made through sexual intercourse (Schnarch, 1997).

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<sup>xii</sup> Sorenson put this in quotes, though I have italicized it to relate my understanding of his use of the phrase “good analysis.” I think he is using the phrase to say, analysis that is helpful and allows for change in the patient, including the possibility of transformation of the self.

<sup>xiii</sup> Wright Institute Los Angeles is a Clinical Psychology Pre-doctoral and Postgraduate training site.

<sup>xiv</sup> The class was penned after Heinz Kohut’s book *How Does Analysis Cure?* (1984).

<sup>xv</sup> In the editor’s introduction to Ghent’s article “Masochism, Submission, Surrender: Masochisim as a Perversion of Surrender,” Mitchell and Aron (1999) posited Ghent’s goal of psychoanalysis is transformation which stems from Ghent’s work, primarily his article, “Interaction in the Psychoanalytic Situation” (1995).

<sup>xvi</sup> In this sense, my notion of transformation as gleaned from the Psalms includes a psychological space that has been historically undermined and dismissed in theological circles. Thus, my examination of transformation is not a postmodern idea that seeks to manipulate scripture for its own subversive psychological purposes, but rather emerges from an age-old truth anchored in the Judeo-Christian faith that, I believe, has been overlooked and misapplied throughout history.

<sup>xvii</sup> It is meant to refer to the analyst, though will later be used to refer to Yahweh in the Psalm literature.

<sup>xviii</sup> I find it interesting that the term cure is used here, juxtaposed to the term transformation. It seems twenty years down the line, contemporary analysts, also categorized as postmodern, are considering the use of the term cure to be misleading.

<sup>xix</sup> It is important to say Drive Theory originating with Freud because Drive Theory has also gone through its own evolution, nuanced according to the particular psychoanalytic theory. For example, Freud and Klein both conceptualize their theory within Drive theory, though Klein introduces the fundamental role the mother plays in drives of the infant.

<sup>xx</sup> Ghent defines intrapsychic as “a way of referring to the structuring or patterning of internal psychic experience or organization” (Aron, 1996, p. 17).

<sup>xxi</sup> This takes transformation to the societal level, which is not the focus of this paper. However, I am interested in building on this topic of transformation on a societal, national, and international level in light of the state of affairs in the world today.

<sup>xxii</sup> The kind of interaction Ogden highlighted is “precisely a carefully defined, constructive, distinctly analytic kind of dedifferentiation in which the boundaries around the self-experience of the two participants become permeable” (Mitchell, 1997, p. 151).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Again the term transformation is used without a clear sense of what is meant by its use.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Ghent’s writings are influenced by Indian mythology where the “intermingling of lower and higher, sensual and spiritual, self and other, and erotic and enlightened has always been much more the rule” (Epstein, 2005).

<sup>xxv</sup> This definition of faith closely parallels the Judeo-Christian first and primary commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might,” and Jesus’ words in

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Luke 10:27, “You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind...”

<sup>xxvi</sup> Eigen also suggests surrender, creativity, and symbol formation to be elements of transitional experiencing.

<sup>xxvii</sup> This corresponds with Jesus’ words in John 10:10, I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly, that suggest whole living is living that is characterized by full life.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Ghent cites Fairbairn’s notion of libido – which proposes that our central motivational thrust as human beings is to be object seeking.

<sup>xxix</sup> There is some debate as to where this quote originates. However, it is understood to be a summary of Athanasius’s thought, apparently deriving from a Canadian prayer book, in B.W. Anderson’s (1983) book *Out of the Depths: The Psalms Speak for Us Today*.

<sup>xxx</sup> In a personal communication, Goldingay (2006) states that Psalm 137 is the exception.

<sup>xxxi</sup> I owe this point to John Goldingay (Personal Communication, 2006).

<sup>xxxii</sup> All Biblical references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> This is implied by Brueggemann’s Orientation-Disorientation-New Orientation model of transformation for the Psalms, which corresponds with my definition of transformation whereas something new is created out of something old.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Though Psalm 51 is a unique Psalm, it can be understood as a lament. “In a broad sense, Psalm 51 may be called an individual lament, but it is more

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specifically an individual confession of sin and a prayer for forgiveness” (Tate, 1990, p. 8).

<sup>xxxv</sup> Although, I might argue that transformation often tends to include forgiveness if we understand forgiveness in the way that Karl Barth has defined in his *Dogmatics* (1994) as that which allows us to be “with” the other whom we are forgiving.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> As I am defining transformation in this dissertation.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Some theological perspectives would consider entertaining any proposition that claims Yahweh is not in control of all that occurs in life is blasphemous, not to mention weakening of God’s sovereignty. In such a theology, Yahweh is responsible for anything and everything that happens in life. This kind of theology lies on the opposite end of the continuum of the openness of God, where human beings are understood to not only make things happen in life, but influence God’s actions. My intention is not to propose a particular theological perspective, but to think about transformation.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006.

<sup>xl</sup> Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006.

<sup>xli</sup> I recognize that Brueggemann sets this definition in the context of pastoral care, however, I argue the definition is not limited to such a practice.

<sup>xlii</sup> Goldingay (Personal Communication, 2006) recognizes this is partly because the Psalms are the human beings' side to the conversation. Yahweh's love is expressed in material where Yahweh speaks - e.g., in the Prophets.

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<sup>xliii</sup> Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006.

<sup>xliv</sup> Acted out is also a psychoanalytic term, alluding to action taken that is not consciously thought out but a mere expression of an unconscious conflict.

<sup>xlv</sup> The use of this term will be further illustrated in Walter Brueggemann's model of the Psalms: Orientation-Disorientation-New Orientation.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Psalm 137 is the only Psalm that has a direct historical reference, thus the one Psalm we can date. It is understood to explicitly relate to the Fall of Jerusalem, such in Babylon after the event. Consequently, it supports the idea that all the Psalms are related to historical events. This obsession with knowing when Psalms were written and by whom, results in missing so much that the Psalms have to offer.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Although Psalm 88 is a lament, it is set apart from other lament Psalms because there is no acknowledgement of the Psalmist's plight changing. In verse 11, Yahweh's steadfast love and faithfulness is referenced, but only as a question as to whether those parts of Yahweh will be experienced.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006.

<sup>xlix</sup> I say directly to acknowledge that we learn about and hear from Yahweh indirectly through the voice of the Psalmist.

<sup>l</sup> There are a few Psalms that say that Yahweh speaks. Psalm 50 says *God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting*. Psalm 60 says *God has promised in his sanctuary: "With exultation I will divide Shechem, and portion out the Vale of Succoth...."*

<sup>li</sup> These three categories can be understood as distinct and connoting the same thing.

<sup>lii</sup> Freud penned the three of five primary anxieties as the loss of love (abandonment), loss of love to another (rejection), and loss of identity.

<sup>liii</sup> In his discussion on the dialogue between different schools of thought in Psychoanalytic theory Randall Sorenson uses this phrase to capture the spirit of Relational Psychoanalysis that seeks to respect theoretical differences.

<sup>liv</sup> Genesis 1:1-2 "...God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness cover the faces of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters." My "old and disordered" speaks to the creation in Genesis that emerged from the "faces of the deep."

<sup>lv</sup> This classic psychoanalytic question comes from Levenson (1985) and other interpersonalists who followed, addressing the psychodynamic force of perceptions epigrammatically.

<sup>lvi</sup> What I am getting at here is similar to what Vincent Van Gogh got it with his quote regarding Christ's work. "Christ is more of an artist than the artists. He works in the living spirit and living flesh, he makes men instead of statues" (Belzen, 1994).

<sup>lvii</sup> It should be noted the difference with the Psalms is that there was an existent good relationship between Psalmist and Yahweh that Yahweh has imperiled.

<sup>lviii</sup> For more on deciphering the nuances between one's relationship with God and one's relationship with human persons, see Ann Ulanov's work, particularly *Picturing God* (1986) and *Finding Space* (2001).

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<sup>lix</sup> John Goldingay (Personal Communication, 2006) says some would say that we are born with a God image, rather than a blank slate, and that our experience with our parents may work to crystallize or pervert that.

<sup>lx</sup> Recognizably, both exhibit un-trust and protest.

<sup>lxi</sup> The “good enough” mother is a concept from Winnicott (1971).

<sup>lxii</sup> I owe the following point to Goldingay: “I am not sure we should infer that the psalmist is engaging with a silent God. Would they really keep on doing it if God never answered? One has to allow for the fact that our transcript only gives us the human side. It only rarely includes God's response. But lots of passages outside the psalms indicate that there was [a response].”

<sup>lxiii</sup> Goldingay (Personal Communication, 2006) points out that “it is important that there is much more self-acceptance in the Psalms than we are used to in our culture.”

<sup>lxiv</sup> Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006.

<sup>lxv</sup> This notion of life and death parallels the New Testament book of Johns understanding of “eternal life” that begins on earth as people experience a fullness of life, while “eternal death” begins on earth as people fail to experience the fullness of life with Jesus Christ (Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006).

<sup>lxvi</sup> With the exception of Psalm 88, we are assured of Yahweh’s presence. However, I would argue, although Yahweh’s presence is not explicit in Psalm 88, it is implicit by the mere fact that the Psalmist continues to tell Yahweh what she is going through.

<sup>lxvii</sup> For more on this idea, see Ernest Becker’s *The Denial of Death* (1973).

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<sup>lxviii</sup> The Psalms were written before the idea of eternal life which accompanied the theology of Christ.

<sup>lxix</sup> Luke 10:27 in the New Testament also states the commandment. “You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind...”

<sup>lxx</sup> This point, as suggested by Goldingay (Personal Communication, 2006), is congruent with a Hebraic knowing where knowing equals acknowledgment equals commitment.

<sup>lxxi</sup> This is where Eigen’s (1981) faith and Judeo-Christian differ because Judeo-Christian faith includes a belief in the other’s existence, even if the other remains un-encountered (Goldingay, Personal Communication, 2006).

<sup>lxxii</sup> Acts 17:28 says, “For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’” The first quotations are attributed to Epimenides and the second from the opening lines of the *Phaenomena* by Aratus, a Greek poet of Cilicia who was a Stoic, according to the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> It is important to note here the danger of medication in that it seeks to alleviate symptoms. However, in psychoanalysis, the premise is that some discomfort is necessary in order to grasp the underlying dynamics of the unconscious.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> The paranoid patient is always awaiting a violent act to done to them. The severely depressed and suicidal patient obsesses about his potential imminent suicidal act.

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<sup>lxxv</sup> This is the origin of the stigma with psychotherapy that has plagued us since, and rightfully so, that having sex with your patients is unethical.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> The use of the word good here is so arbitrary and full of meaning at the same time. In an attempt to move toward a kind of therapy that would facilitate the goal of a positive transformation, I employ the word, recognizing it is a value-laden word.

<sup>lxxvii</sup> I borrow the term growth-fostering from the Stone Center in order to describe a relationship that is life-giving to both parties involved. The Jean Baker Miller Training Institute is based on the Relational-Cultural Model of development at the Stone Center at Wellesley College. This model focuses on growth-fostering relationships as the central human necessity and disconnections as the source of psychological problems. It assumes that all growth-fostering relationships and all disconnections are constructed within specific cultural contexts.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> Getting into this in the Psalmist-Yahweh relationship is too large of a topic to address in this dissertation but I'd like to see something on this...

<sup>lxxix</sup> Lewis Aron (1996) and other relational psychoanalytic literature focuses on how the analyst can be changed by the patient, though this is not the focus in this paper.

<sup>lxxx</sup> In his book *Minding Spirituality*, Sorenson (2004, p. 121-122) says, "My hope is that, however strange what I am proposing may sound initially, it not only opens up the possibility for new thought but also...is reversible and need not be permanent to be worthwhile."