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Absent presence: can psychoanalytic theory contribute to our understanding of strategizing?

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Absent Presence: Can psychoanalytic theory contribute to our understanding of strategizing?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of

Sheffield Hallam University

for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

Marc Sweeney

April 2018

Abstract

This is a critical hermeneutic and psychoanalytic study exploring the question of strategy absence in a medium-sized professional services firm. The research considered the position of an organization which deployed a minimal strategy in spite of wide-ranging and disruptive environmental change. It investigated the phenomenon of the absence of strategy in this firm from within a subjectivist and interpretivist paradigm using psychoanalytic theory.

Taking psychoanalytic theory's premise that much of our experience is out of our conscious awareness, and that what is unconscious exerts a considerable influence on perception and behaviour, the research challenge was to investigate strategizing with an understanding that some of this mental activity is unconscious to the strategist. This presents both a problem and an opportunity for the organization, it is argued. It is problematic in the sense that overly rational and instrumental frameworks for understanding strategic issues will omit unconscious knowledge, which can be potentially negative for the team engaged in strategy, but it is an opportunity because the unconscious is a resource that is potentially available to them. Developing awareness of the unconscious dimension to human perception and behaviour and drawing upon this resource in strategizing practices is a developmental and reflexive process.

Lacanian psychoanalytic theory locates the unconscious in language and argues that language itself is unconsciousness. The research is therefore a study of language in the subject organization as members of the executive team reflect upon the strategic issues facing them and their possible responses to them. It is argued that in the unconsciousness of the language used by the senior team there is a presence of unconscious, sometimes traumatic and difficult, knowledge which prevents the articulation of strategy, or strategy discourse. This, it is argued is the presence within the absence of strategy.

Key words: Strategy; Strategy-As-Practice; Lacanian psychoanalysis; organizational psychology; critical hermeneutics; reflexivity

Candidate's Statement

This work comprises entirely my own original contribution to knowledge and management practice. It was not part of any collaborative group project of any nature and has not been submitted for any other academic award. All secondary sources of information and references are acknowledged in the text and fully referenced in the References section of the thesis.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my wife, Catherine, for all of her love, support and steadfastness throughout the doctoral project, and for her patience and attention in respect of all of my endeavours.

Acknowledgement and thanks is also due to my wider family (my first 'organization').

I wish to thank my academic team; Professor John McAuley for his psychoanalytic insight, his empathetic and sympathetic disposition and for telling me when something was 'good enough'. I want to thank my Director of Studies, Doctor Mike Crone, for his close and supportive questioning and attention to detail, and Doctor Pawel Capik for always finding the right words in his comments and questions. Principally, though, I thank John, Mike and Pawel for their friendship.

Thank you also to Professor John McAuley and Doctor Tracey Coule for their early insight which provided me with encouragement to find my passion in writing.

Finally, I wish to thank the support of the University and the anonymous participants in this research.

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1.Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This thesis is the outcome of my research on strategizing within a medium-sized professional services firm, for whom I work. I had set out to study strategy at my organization and moreover, the *absence* of a formal strategy. In this respect, I'm not speaking about a written strategy as such, but a commonly shared view of the medium-term plan for the organization consisting of answers to questions such as what type of business we are in a time of change in our sector, the nature of services that we sell, and to whom, the local and global markets we wish to participate in, the kinds of skills we have and wish to have and, less straightforwardly, what we want to be 'known for'.

The research study investigated the strategizing of the board of directors of Senatus and was based on interviews with those members. I am also a member of that Board and this is therefore an example of insider- and practitioner-research. The study is focused on a particular part of strategizing; sensing (Teece, 2007), being the perception of strategic issues and the believed appropriate responses to same. To an extent, the research is related to Senatus' absorptive capacity, defined "as the ability to recognize the value of new external knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends" (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990, cited in Van Den Bosch et al., 2003, p.278), except in their case, some of the, arguably more threatening, knowledge about their situation has been repressed from awareness, or is unconscious. The thesis provides an overview of the literature wherein I situated the research; the strategy and organizational theory literature, psychology literature as well as the psychoanalytic literature. In fact, the thesis draws heavily on this latter body of knowledge, psychoanalysis being a theory of the unconscious mind and its influence on human perception and behaviour. Therefore, the literature review positions where psychoanalytic research will be used to understand strategizing.

It can be relatively straightforward to explain why an organization should have a strategy; at the very least it provides a guide for the type of decisions businesses take over the

short to medium-term (Grant, 2010). Subject to the knowledge and expertise available within and outside the organization, it can even be a relatively straightforward proposition for a firm to develop a strategy, for better or for worse. What is far knottier, though, is to explain why there is an absence of strategy. One can guess, or one can research why: This research attempts to answer the question of this absence for the subject organization.

In this sense, my thesis argues that in order to investigate and explain this absence, one needs to adopt the methods of studying what is not apparently there. This is the psychoanalytic-hermeneutic method. In my thesis, I will argue that in the void of this absence, in the opaqueness of language in the studied organization, there are shadows of repressed thoughts, hopes, wishes, frustrations and even pain. The thesis is that these affects stand not just in the place of what is absent, but that they exert a presence instead of strategy. Overall, what is asked for here, in this thesis, is an examination of the foregoing affects so that they can be worked through to allow strategizing to take place.

The scope of the research is within the strategy, organizational psychology, and organizational theory fields, together with, as earlier, psychoanalytic theory. The research method comprised the gathering of material through interviews with the senior team of the organization, which material was subsequently analysed using and informed by a hermeneutic method. In the course of this analysis, five themes were identified. These were; Identity; Arbitrariness; Imaginary – Imagined Perception; the Escape from Choice; and Guilt and Responsibility. In later Chapters, these themes are explored in depth and psychoanalytic theory is applied to them. The implication of these themes for the organization is then discussed and evaluated.

In this Chapter, I provide a backdrop to the study of strategy and identify what I consider has been an aspect of strategizing which has not been addressed, namely the unconscious dynamics of strategy in organizations. I then introduce the studied organization, giving a contextual background to the industry in which it operates and some of the macro-environmental challenges which it faces. In the latter part of this

Chapter, I introduce my contributions to knowledge and management practice and then provide an outline of the contents of the remaining Chapters.

1.2 The Study of Strategy

The subject of strategy and how it is formulated by organizations is a topic of considerable research and interest both as an object of scholarly inquiry and as practitioner know-how. Much of strategy research is focused on how the firm selects its strategy from the competitive environment in which it is situated (Porter, 1996; 2008a; 2008b) or how the firm's managers can formulate strategy based upon the opportunity deriving from its own resources and competences in the form of the Resource Based View (RBV) (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Rumelt, 2011). While there has been a steady level of interest in strategizing by individuals (Balogun et al., 2003; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007) and how this occurs in practice (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Whittington, 2006; Chia & MacKay, 2007; Whittington, 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009), in particular the mental and emotional processes that take place within these individuals (Schwenk, 1984; Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002; Liu & Maitlis, 2014), there has been an absence in the literature on how other psychological explanations, such as psychoanalysis, explain how psychological processes impact upon decision making in strategy formulation (Sullivan & Langdon, 2008), including the micro-foundations of strategy.

Since Inkpen & Choudhury (1995), there has been little study of the absence of strategy and there have been no possible explanations for this from a psychological perspective. Instead, it is an *a priori* that a firm should have a strategy, whether deliberate or emergent, or where there is none, that there ought to be one. The predominant strategy literature does not try to explain why this might be the case. It is this absence, and the possible reasons for it, that is the focus of this study. Psychoanalysis is the study of lack, or loss, what has been repressed, its effect on the human subject and it is for this reason that I adopted this psychological perspective in the study.

The investigation of strategy has been primarily a twentieth (and now twenty-first) century preoccupation (Knights, 1992; Darwin et al. 2002) which brings as its promise an

illusion or fantasy of control over a world external from the individual that is confusing, complex and apt to change, twinned perhaps to a very singular and dominant philosophical assumption of what rationality is. The development of strategy is considered necessary along a dimension from one that is based solely on the firm's survival, and what I would term reductionist, right through to an organization that is integrated within its environments, internal and external, and responsive to its demands. An organization that has a minimal strategy is a 'cork tossed hither and thither by the vicissitudes of fate' (Darwin et al., 2002, p.8) and one where individuals respond differently to demands and challenges, depending upon situational or psychological considerations and exigencies; that is, they do what's necessary subject to the limitations of their understanding of contextual demands and their own awareness. Strategizing is a learning process where the strategy practitioner needs to understand and learn about his or her environment, the strategic issues present within it and to transform this knowledge into plans and practices that are useful to the organization to help it mitigate the effects of disturbing environmental change. To this end, strategizing always has to be about learning, change and practitioner subjectivity. This sounds very simple and rational, but learning is about different kinds of knowledge and understanding; from explicit to tacit (Polanyi, 1958), individual self-reflection (Schon, 1983), organized reflection (Vince, 2004) through to organizational learning (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2005) and so on. It is also about different kinds of change; from top down to more democratic forms of organizing. This is what makes strategizing so complicated and confusing for organizations' strategic actors, such as deciding what analytic tools to use, how to use them correctly, whether to engage a consultant in helping them understand their environment (and the puzzle about how this selection is made), how strategies are implemented and the ensuing diffusion of good or best practice.

This thesis makes a contribution to unravelling this confusion and is situated as part of the learning process that organizations should undertake to increase knowledge about themselves and their environments, so that their strategies can be more inflected with a deeper understanding of all of the known and partially known issues (Luft, 1961) affecting them. The specific 'partially known' knowledge that this research is about uncovering is

unconscious psychological knowledge; knowledge that can be helpful in discovering what is enhancing strategic development and what is inhibiting it. This research and the ensuing contribution is specifically situated in that exploratory phase of strategizing, what Teece (2007) has called 'sensing'. It is that part of the strategizing process which relates to becoming aware, and while there are many tools and methods of analysis for what the strategic issues are with conscious apprehension, there is a part of strategizing that must involve the organization looking in upon itself, auditing its own resources (Grant, 2010) and the challenges to and weakness of those resources if they are to be counted upon in the strategy to grow the firm.

1.3 Introduction to the Researched Organization

This is a study about strategizing in a medium-sized professional service firm, Senatus[1], who employ approximately seventy people. Senatus, the researched organization, are a firm of professional loss adjusters who have been trading, in their current form as a limited liability company, since 2001, but prior to this, they were a partnership with roots dating back to the 1880's. The company started as a firm of valuation and building surveyors, with some loss adjusting work, refocusing its activities, quite some years ago, to loss adjusting, eventually divesting their valuation and surveying business around the time of incorporation as a limited company.

Loss adjusting[2] involves the investigation of insurance claims (mainly) on behalf of insurance companies, the evaluation of liability under a policy of insurance and the resolution of that claim; "a loss adjusting expert shall be a person whose predominant activity is the investigation, management, quantification, validation and resolution of Property, Casualty or any other losses (whether insured or not) arising from any

[1] 'Senatus' is a pseudonym for the firm studied and all participants are subsequently anonymized.

[2] Whilst the profession of loss adjusting can trace its origins to the aftermath of the Great Fire of London in 1666, and the late 18th century when insurers were using 'assessors' to settle their claims, the profession of 'loss adjusting' appears to have been formally incepted with the formation of the Association of Fire Loss Adjusters in 1941 in the United Kingdom.

contingency and the reporting thereof" (CILA, 2014). This appears reasonably clear, but what emerges in the research is that loss adjusting as a profession is quite contested; it's not apparent whether the participants or their clients are clear what this means in terms of the services to be provided, resulting in implications for strategy practices at Senatus. Insurers, in the past, engaged loss adjusting firms on a case by case basis to handle, on the above terms, claims of both high complexity and value; that is, claims that were outside the scope of expertise of the Insurer's own staff, to a position now where there is a range of activities on which loss adjusting firms are engaged. This range consists of a 'professional services' model, largely unchanged from the case by case basis, through to a 'claims processing' model, whereby the Insurer, by means of a contractual agreement, outsources all of its claims to the loss adjusting firm, irrespective of value from first notification of loss to resolution. Along this spectrum, there are variations of these activities.

Alongside this development, there has been greater regulation of Insurers' activities, undertaken in the Republic of Ireland by the Central Bank of Ireland. The development of regulation of the insurance sector has been gradual (Brophy, 2012) with the introduction of regulations, on foot of European Union Directives and Regulations, such that there is a regulatory framework governing, among other things, consumer protection and the management of outsourced activities. From Insurers' perspective, loss adjusting firms, where they are not solely 'professional services', are an outsourced activity or 'outsourcers'.

The accumulated effect of the change of the business model for loss adjusting firms, hitherto solely 'professional services' firms, such as the researched firm, Senatus, together with the development of a regulatory framework for Insurers by the Central Bank, has led to loss adjusting firms needing to change their operating models. They have had to acquire management skills and personnel, organizing structures closely mirroring those of Insurers' claims departments and to institute the regulation of personnel in accordance with Central Bank requirements. Loss adjusting firms have had to introduce compliance practices – for compliance with regulation that affects them and compliance

with agreements with Insurers – and resources, at considerable cost, in order to continue to participate in their sector. The changes in the business model, from professional services to a claims processing/ service provider model and the introduction of compliance are significant themes that emerge from and are analysed in the research material.

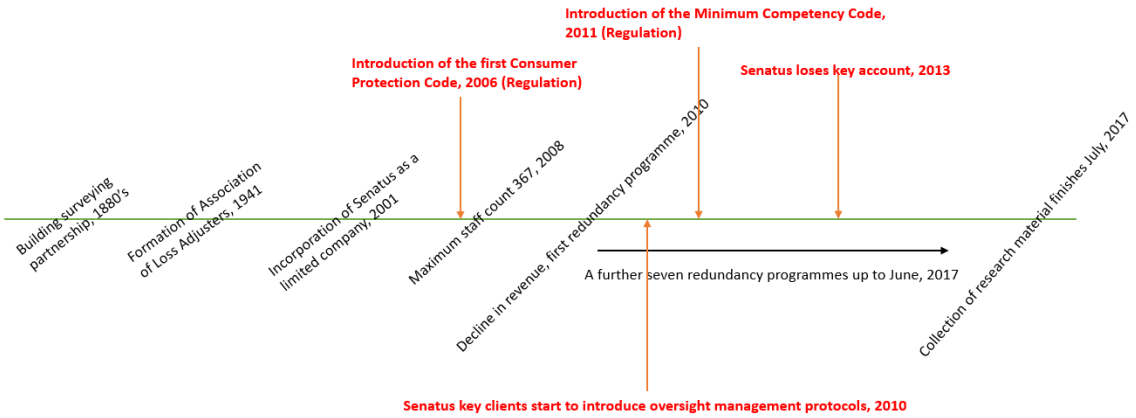

Figure 1. Time-line of the Senatus organization

1.4 The Absence of Strategy

Senatus currently have a minimal strategy. As can be seen in the time-line above, there have been strategic issues affecting the organization and these have, in the past been responded to, but more recent regulatory changes have not been formally addressed. There is however, no formal, codified or communicated plan for the growth and development of the firm, despite the challenges that they are facing in the present. In response to significant environmental disruption, they responded only with a minimal, cost-control and reduction strategy, rather than counter-measures. This, I argue, is an absence of strategy and Senatus are subject to the 'vicissitudes of fate' described by Darwin et al. (2002). Part of the issue here for Senatus is that there has been a change in their organization's activities from solely professional service to claims processing service without active reflection on the meaning and implication of this unasked-for re-designation. In this sense, there is commonality between Senatus' position and that

which has taken place in respect of other professions, for instance, medicine, to the extent that Evetts (2003) argues that there has a blurring of boundaries between professional and non-professional work. Nowhere has this boundary been diminished more than in journalism, as described by Splichal & Dahlgren (2016) who argue that the trend has been developing for considerable time, arising from "*technicalisation* of journalistic work in the late 19th century, when not only commercial considerations of the marketplace demanded technical rather than intellectual skills" (p.8), suggesting that it has been the development of all kinds of technologies which has facilitated this process.

There has, however, been a more recent 'trend' towards de-professionalization, rooted principally in managerialism (Randle & Brady, 1997; Thomas & Hewitt, 2011), a late twentieth century and early twenty-first century Taylorism described by Pollitt (1990) as comprising a number of practices, *inter alia*, the ubiquity of performance indicators and an emphasis on applying resources efficiently to increase productivity. Derber (1983) argues that this has resulted in an 'ideological proletarianisation', defined as "... the appropriation of control by management over the goals and social purposes to which the work is put. Elements of ideological proletarianisation include powerlessness to define the final product of one's work, its disposition in the market and its uses in the larger society" (Derber, 1983, p. 313). This is an apt commentary upon the strategic position that Senatus find themselves in. Their previous services, consisting of expertise in investigation and resolution of insurance claims, have been deprivileged by their clients, who are imbued with managerialist tendencies in favour of more marketized and commoditized services, an experience which has had an altering effect on Senatus' purpose and members' identity which has yet to be redefined, presenting as an absence of strategy.

1.5 'Organizations' & 'Firms'

I am conscious that while using them, 'organization' or 'firm' are problematic terms. I have adopted Hall's (1987) definition of an organization as being:

"A collectivity with a relatively identifiable boundary, a normative order, ranks of authority, communications systems, and membership-coordinating systems; this collectivity exists on a relatively continuous basis in an environment and engages in activities that are usually related to a set of goals" (p.40).

Organizations are not the 'collective sum' of individuals (Vince, 2004) on the one hand, and on the other, do not have the status of 'being'. They have, however been reified such that they are conceived of as 'things' (McAuley et al., 2014) and the social practice of people in organizations, "does not comprehend its objects but reflect(s) and contribute(s) to the re-shaping of society to resemble a thing of nature" (Freenberg, 2014, p.62) so that it becomes naturally given. Notwithstanding these problematics, I will use such terms throughout my thesis, while maintaining awareness of their questionable ontological status.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into a number of chapters. Following this introductory chapter, in Chapter Two, I set out precisely where in the literature my research is situated. This Chapter places the research within a specific literature context, namely the strategy literature as it relates to dynamic capabilities and strategic sensing: Dynamic capabilities are the ability of the organization to learn about itself and its environment and to put this to use. It also draws on the organizational psychology literature and the psychoanalytic literature. The Chapter introduces psychoanalysis as a method for the recovery of unconscious knowledge, from which literature the project draws on significantly, the premise of my argument being that approaches to strategy grounded in more instrumental-rational and cognitive perspectives are not suitable for uncovering this type of material. It links the developmental theories of psychoanalysis to the problems of organizations and introduces psychoanalytic concepts as they relate to language and its importance in this theory. I continue this Chapter by introducing the psychological concepts of anxiety and fantasy. Both of these are important in psychology because they closely interact; anxiety drives the person to create fantasies which avoid the discomfort of anxiety, whilst fantasies are powerful beliefs that influence and drive behaviour.

My philosophical position in relation to knowledge is introduced and explained in Chapter Three as is my research methodology and strategy. I explain how I view the importance of language within a phenomenological tradition and how language is a critical medium for the transmission of unconscious knowledge. The research was carried out within a subjective-interpretivist paradigm using a critical hermeneutic methodology. This methodology is grounded within a particular and long hermeneutic tradition of interpretation, and more specifically a tradition of *Alethia*, or uncovering. There is a further critical dimension introduced to the critical hermeneutic approach and this is brought by psychoanalysis, as one of Ricoeur's three hermeneutics of suspicion (Scott-Baumann, 2009). The research method is then explained, and the method ultimately adopted in relation to the analysis of the interview texts gathered is illustrated through an example of textual analysis. The Chapter concludes with an introduction to the themes from the analysis.

In Chapters Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight, I set out the findings from the research material. These Chapters are the outcome of the analysis of the research material using the hermeneutic cycle and spiral, going from the part to the whole and back again. There is a focus on the specific and the grand in order to pull forth, from the research material, an understanding, within the limitations of that concept, of strategizing at Senatus. I set out and explain the five clear themes that emerged from the material, providing examples from the texts.

In Chapters Nine and Ten, I expound the final stage of analysis of the research material in applying psychoanalytic theory. This is the stage of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion'. The Discussion and Implications of the research is set out in Chapter Eleven. Here, I explore what it means for Senatus' formulation of strategy to look at their strategy practices using this lens and I re-visit the literatures reviewed earlier in the thesis.

In Chapter Twelve, I set out my approach to research Ethics and Reflexivity and provide a Conclusion to the thesis. The overall object goal of the ethical stance adopted was to ensure that no harm was done to any of the participants, not least because the said participants are colleagues. In the Reflexivity section of this Chapter, I consider the

nature of the knowledge generated by the research and ask questions about its value, its fixity and whether it could have been approached in an epistemologically different way. In the final part of the Chapter, I conclude the thesis by demonstrating the research study's contribution to knowledge and management practice and bring it to a close by reflecting on its meaning and implications.

1.7 Contributions to Knowledge & Practice

My research makes a contribution to our knowledge of strategizing in practice as while much of the strategy literature is concerned with what strategies are made of and how strategy is formulated and executed, little of it is focused on its absence. This research attempts to provide at least part of the explanation for that absence, but also to show that strategy formulation cannot be conducted without an account of the unconscious and its effect on conscious discourse. The research is also a contribution to the management development literature, a sub-set of the human resource development literature and practice, where management development has been defined as a:

"metafield that emerged from a range of disciplines (primarily, though not exclusively psychology, social science, and management studies), which either attempts to frame the reality of management, or influences how the reality experienced by managers is reframed, with the aim of contributing to the personal resource base of managers, and/or the intellectual capital of organizations." (Cullen & Turnbull, 2005, p.337)

The research also makes a contribution to management practice: Strategizing must engage with unconscious meaning and identifications in order to be effective. The new understanding developed in the research is an attempt to contribute towards a 'reframing' of managerial reality, an alternative and 'perspectival' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) way of looking at the social world. These contributions are revisited in more detail in the final Chapter of the thesis.

The researched organization, Senatus, is an interesting one, not least because I work there, and its workings continue to fascinate and excite, but also cause frustration when

what appears to be 'obvious' is not acted upon. I suspect, however, that Senatus is not so different from other organizations, particularly professional service ones, where there has been significant change in what it means to be a professional, having trained as one, in the face of internal and external environmental change, an experience well captured in McAuley (1985). The term 'professional' itself is not uncontested; Torstendahl (2005) says that it cannot be defined, while Zardkoohi et al. (2011) add that neither can professional service firms be limited by simple description. Rogers & Ballantyne (2010) assert that what distinguishes professionals from those in other occupations is that they take responsibility for their work and their clients, carry out their work with honesty and integrity and have the capacity to reflect upon it. The participants in this research were not, however, asked how they defined 'professional' work, but their reflections on such indicate that they believe it has been 'lost'.

Senatus' story is one of loss, sadness, change, irreconciliation with its environment and coping as best as it can. It is also a story of survival, of remaining in business. The reasons for its tenacity are less clear. That would be a good story, no doubt. This story is about trying to understand why, in the face of considerable environmental disruption, which has at times been existentially threatening, Senatus have not adopted a strategy for growth. Rather, strategies for mitigation were adopted; financial ones such as downsizing, so that the organization survived, but there has been no next step.

2. Chapter Two - Situating the Research within the Literature

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This Chapter sets out the literature from which the research project has drawn, and indeed from where it departs. The fields of literature are strategy, organizational psychology, organization theory, and psychoanalysis. Following an overview of the areas of study within the strategy field, I explore some of the debates within, or challenges to pre-eminent strategy thinking. In this Chapter, the concept of the psychological resources of the firm is developed, encapsulating managerial cognition, the 'sensing' of opportunities and threats and the 'sensemaking' of same. The Chapter culminates in a detailed review of the psychoanalytic approach to subjectivity, language and organization theory.

2.2 Psychology as a Basis for Strategy

I argue that an individual's psychology is a unique resource to the firm, a source of heterogeneity and the basis for developing dynamic capabilities (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2007). Thus far "there are limited accounts of the dynamics involved in the build-up, development and change of organizational assets…that provide for competitive advantage" (Regner, 2008, p.566).

An appropriate field of enquiry for strategic management includes, *inter alia*, psychology (Rumelt et al., 1994) stretching back to the behavioural theory of the firm set out by the Carnegie school (Cyert & March, 1963), which has developed to encompass cognitive psychology (Barr et al., 1992; Kahneman & Lovallo, 1994; Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002), neuroeconomics (Loewenstein et al., 2008) and psychoanalysis (Hirschorn, 1977; Sullivan & Langdon, 2008). I am interested in the psychological processes that underpin strategic decision making and the sensing and perceiving aspect of strategizing in practice. What follows is a consideration of the social cognitive and psychoanalytic perspectives. My argument is that psychoanalysis offers a better method of explanation because of the richness of its analysis and its account of the unconscious mind, together with its use as

a management research method, to bring about what Cotter and Cullen (2012) refer to as a 'sustainable form of management'.

Hereunder, I set out a range of *possible* definitions of strategy and will discuss the importance of the psychology of a firm's senior managers, as those who are involved in strategizing. I will also discuss how a psychological perspective can enable a deeper understanding of strategy formation and will use the cognitive and psychoanalytic perspectives to attempt to show this, privileging the latter. I will explore the psychoanalytic perspective, one of the five main traditions in organizational psychology (DeFillipi & Ornstein, 2005; Arnold et al. 2016) and will set out my reasons for preferring this approach to advance one's understanding of strategizing. I am interested in the micro-foundations of strategizing, how the individual(s) in the firm, responsible for strategizing, articulates their understanding of their environmental context; strategic issues, threats and opportunities. In short, what Teece (2007) refers to as the sensing process and what Weick (1995) termed 'sensemaking', "a collective and often conflictual interpretive process for dealing with uncertainties about the business, the market, and the environment" (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013, p.965).

I will argue that it is the Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective, grounded as it is in the belief that we have limited sovereignty over our conscious experience (Kearney, 1986; Belsey, 2002), that provides us with the potential for a rich understanding of strategizing and the greatest challenge to the belief in our apparent rationality grounded in the Enlightenment project (McAuley et al., 2014). There has been a limited use of psychoanalytic approaches to the study of strategy and strategizing save for Hirschorn (1977) and Sullivan & Langdon (2008) and none where an empirical Lacanian psychoanalytic approach has been taken. Using psychoanalysis in this way, this will necessarily require the organization becoming reflexive (McAuley et al., 2014) and enhancing organizational 'strategic learning' (Vince, 2004), highlighting "aspects of the relationship between emotion, politics, learning and organizing" (p.2), where learning can be both sought after and defensively avoided, as the research material will demonstrate. This is a study of managers reflecting on the past,

the ‘unpredictable’, the forgotten and contested past, the present and the problematic and unreflected-upon future.

2.3 Strategic Content, Processes and Practice

Mintzberg et al. (2009) (helpfully and light-heartedly) describe some ten ‘schools’ of strategy. Broadly and traditionally, strategy has been conceptualised as an inquiry into the strengths and weaknesses of the firm (Andrews, 1971) but over time this has been re-cast, drawing on neo-classical economic theory as the evaluation of the competitive position of the enterprise in the external environment (Porter, 1996; 2008a; 2008b) and the Resource Based View of the firm (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Rumelt, 2011), grounded in evolutionary theory (Nelson & Winter, 1982) which is focused on the resources and capabilities held by the organization. Both of these latter approaches study strategy at the level of the firm, not the individual strategist. Latterly, over the last approximately fifteen years, the Strategy-As-Practice approach has developed, focusing on the ‘what, who and how’ of strategy, dissolving previous ‘false dichotomies’ (Jarzabkowski, 2005), such as inside or outside the firm, and opposing levels of analysis, and aims to study practice in all of its messy ‘lived reality’.

Strategy has multiple definitions. Strategy is generally conceived of as a means-end relationship (Bakir & Todorovic, 2010) whereby the means and establishment of the long-term objectives of the firm are related or connected in some way. It can be thought of as a set of rules and objectives that guide organizational behaviour (Ansoff & McDonnell, 1988) through which “organizations seek to achieve goals” (McAuley et al., 2014, p.10). Strategy has also been simply conceived as a “continuing search for rent” (Bowman, 1974, p.47), where rent is the firm’s ability to generate surplus value (Grant, 2010). Strategy is also considered to unexpectedly emerge (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985) where there may be no crystallized relationship between method and objectives. Many strategy theorists agree that there is ‘intendedness’ about strategy (Bakir & Todorovic, 2010), that it addresses the long-term goals of the organization and that it “involves learning, interpretation and creative activity” (Teece, 2009, p.9). But this is a contested terrain: Markides & Williamson (1994) said that we neither know what strategy is nor do we know

how to develop a good one. This ambiguity about conceptualising strategy is also recognised by other scholars (Johnson et al., 2008).

Strategy is studied in terms of its Content, Process (Miller, 1989; Pettigrew, 1992; Hart, 1992; Van de Ven, 1992; Marginson, 2002) and, latterly, Practice (e.g., Whittington, 2006), whereby Content refers to the actual strategy that is chosen or followed by the firm, and Process refers to the "logic that explains a causal relationship between independent and dependent variables" (Van de Ven, 1992, p.169), a category of concepts and a sequence of events denoting how things change over the course of a period in time (Van de Ven, 1992). Central to the study of strategy practice are the three concepts of praxis, practices and practitioners (Whittington, 2006) in which the 'doing' of strategy is the focus. This is the 'what', 'who' and 'how' of strategy (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015), or the concentration on practice, practitioners and practices (Whittington, 2002), and it is this combination in the study of strategy that is of particular interest here, as it has considerable potential to influence practice.

My focus is on understanding certain resources – psychological resources – and how these are applied in strategy-making. As I am seeking to understand managerial sensing and sensemaking, psychological processes, this empirical investigation is at the level of the individual. An internal strategy content has been developed around the RBV which focuses on the resource endowment of the firm, which was originally theorised by Penrose (1959) but which was taken up again by Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991). A considerable literature has since been developed in this perspective where it was felt, in its early days, that the "link between strategy and the firm's resources and skills has suffered comparative neglect" (Grant, 1991, p.114).

A resource can be considered as a strength and a weakness of a firm, whether tangible or intangible, and usually has a degree of permanence for the organization (Wernerfelt, 1984). Resources are wide in terms of their definition, but the resource endowment of a firm is evolutionary in terms of how it comes about (Lovas & Ghoshal, 2000), and there is fixity to their position within the firm. Therefore, if resources are linked to the strategy and profit potential of the firm then resource endowment is critical to the growth of the

firm. Resources comprise all tangible and intangible assets, organizational processes and knowledge (Barney, 1991). All resources are path-dependent, or evolutionary, insofar as the resources that a firm has today are entirely dependent upon the decisions about resources made in the past (Lockett & Thompson, 2001). Intangible resources include the "training, experience, judgement, intelligence, relationships, and insight of *individual* managers" and their knowledge (Barney, 1991, p.101) so it is appropriate to consider people being involved in the development of firm strategy, as a resource of the firm that is imperfectly mobile.

It is not simply the possession of resources that will give rise to competitive advantage, irrespective of how valuable and rare they might appear. Resources are inert possessions, to which something needs to be done, if they are to generate rent for the firm. Human resources, for example, do not spontaneously organize themselves towards a purposive objective, rather, the firm needs to set its goals to derive the most benefit from its resources (Locke & Latham, 1990; Mosakowski, 1998). In short, resources, or a combination of resources require to be organized. It is the *social organization* within the firm that is the contingent factor that gives rise to the ability to recombine resources (Galunic & Rodan, 1998) and it is knowledge-based resources that manipulate other resources to create value (Teece et al., 1997); determining the goods or services to be provided, how this is done, for what customers and where.

This knowledge-based manipulation of resources where they are organised so as to produce appropriate responses to external or internal environmental change has been the subject of much study. It is considered that the development of technological, organizational and managerial processes is essential to the creation of wealth for the firm (Teece et al., 1997). Dynamic capabilities are said to be the "firm's ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences" (Teece et al., 1997, p.516) to meet the challenges of environmental change. The dynamic capabilities concept recognises the influence of market positions and path dependence in the shaping of a firm's response (Leonard-Barton, 1992) and others argue that "resource 'stickiness' may constrain not only present performance but also future trajectories and the ability to

regenerate" (Tranfield et al., 2000, p.257). Historical antecedent matters in this perspective implicitly and challenges any idea of rationality and managerial agency to alter fundamentally the course of a firm without proper account being taken of its past and its ability to change and adapt. Rather, agency and human endeavour is a "temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.963). This is a particularly apt concept in the research material to follow in this thesis. There are many challenges, apart from path dependence and the rigidity of behaviour, where strategic actors are not "aware of what the underlying factors are that motivate their behaviour" (Obholzer, 1999, p.87) toward the development of strategy. There are challenges to learning about one's own organization; as Schein (2000) says "we don't know a lot about organizational learning… One of the greatest business challenges is to find some models for how a whole organization can learn" (p.103-4). This research contributes to solving that challenge of strategic learning.

There is a tendency, however, in the strategy literature to reify organizational resources, including intangible ones. While managerial 'sensing' is recognized and admitted into the literature, it is under-theorized, and it is inferred as a property that a manager 'has' rather one that is situated and embedded in interactions, within individuals and between individuals. Moreover, organizational routines can enable or inhibit organizational learning and change, maintaining a 'learning threshold' below which change may be unconsciously avoided (Tranfield et al., 2000). I argue that this research project's findings offer new light on the psychological resources held by organizations and how they link to and support the development of managerial sensing and strategic learning.

"A dynamic capability is the firm's potential to solve problems, formed by its propensity to sense opportunities and threats…and to change its resource base" (Barreto, 2010, p.271). I propose that an individual managers' psychological processes – their psychology – are a heterogeneous resource available to the firm. It is potentially valuable as an

organizing and sensing resource of a firm's dynamic capabilities, if properly understood. My research is concerned with developing managerial sensing, sensemaking and learning by uncovering the structures by which environmental information is perceived and acted upon by Senatus' senior team, the strategic actors in this research project.

2.4 The Psychological Resources of the Firm

Penrose (1959, p.113) said that an organization's "opportunities are largely determined by its existing resources. Its entrepreneurial and managerial personnel work within the framework provided by these resources and their interests and abilities are conditioned by them". A firm's managers are both constrained and enabled by their resources – including their psychology – in a recursive relationship of selection, application of attention, conditioning, and experience in respect of what they choose to focus on. A firm's future resource endowment is dependent upon its managers' ability to seek and sense opportunity and to mobilise its dynamic capabilities to take advantage of it.

The social cognitive tradition in organizational psychology has contributed significantly to strategic management literature. It suggests that managerial 'interpretive schemes' are altered by changes in the environment in which the manager or firm operates (Huff & Schwenk, 1990) indicating that there is a reciprocal relationship between the social world occupied by the manager and the psychological processes taking place within him or her. The mental model of individual managers shapes what information in the environment is attended to and what is not (Barr et al. 1992). A mental model is an individual's set of concepts and relationship used to understand situations. However, managers' ability to select and attend to complex environmental information is constrained – and sometimes enabled – by their respective cognitive biases or heuristics (Hodgkinson & Sparrow, 2002); compressed 'rules of thumb' that enable us to absorb complex data and make apparently rational decisions that make sense to us within its frame. However, while the social cognitive perspective acknowledges the limitations to our cognitive abilities, 'bounded rationality' (Simon, 1947) infers that if we had enough information and were able to process it, we could overcome the limitation. This view however is challenged by Stein (2000) in his study of the failure of a hedge-fund which had access to both

information and high-quality personnel to interpret it: Their rationality was bounded by unconscious emotion. Managers may therefore be overly optimistic and may have an illusion of control. This contrasts sharply with a mainstream assumption that "decision making is a unitary process – a simple matter of integrated and coherent utility maximization" (Loewenstein et al. 2008, p.649).

The ability to sense negative environmental signals is critical and it is considered that failing firms tend to miss such signals for a period of up to ten years before its failure arrives (Hambrick & D'Aveni, 1988). Therefore, to develop, an organization needs to both understand and be in a position to alter its mental models. This is a learning process (Barr et al., 1992) but some scholars have found that the overwhelming use of rational, analytical tools to support managers in their decision-making processes is less than useful, because they are too effortful in their application (Klein & D'Esposito, 2007). They conceptualise the problem as being one of the use of deductive tools of reasoning being utilised to understand ill-defined problems, such as a strategic issue, that is best left to an inductive approach to reasoning. Klein and D'Esposito (2007) attribute to Mintzberg the view that whilst strategic planning is a largely analytical exercise, the creation of new strategies requires the synthesis of many ideas and strands of information (p.171) denoting, that whilst conscious and deliberative work is required in making strategy, this can lead to the misspecification of problem situations (March, 2006). Other, less conscious forces have their role in the shaping of strategy, such as the mental representations of the strategist, the interdependency of factors when conducting analyses, which may transpire to be causative in nature (Klein & D'Esposito, 2007) or the operation of unconscious mental processes outside conscious awareness. Indeed, a confluence of factors cannot be processed by the human mind as efficiently as those factors that are processed in sequence (Kastner, 1998), a situation that is usually not possible in a strategically problematic situation for a firm.

The source of a firm's management's inability to sense negative environmental signals – or, for that matter potential opportunities – may lie, in one explanation, in the pre-eminence of the dominant logic of the firm (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995) where a firm's

management will find it difficult to think, strategically, about new problems in terms of key characteristics. The dominant logic is defined as the way a firm "conceptualize(s) the business and make(s) critical resource allocation decisions" (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986, p.490), but the authors went further to say that the dominant logic was stored in managers' mental models or representations and, critically, that these representations were not apprehended by conscious awareness.

Such representations are rooted in experience, are shaped by the past, but are developed through interaction with others in the firm or in the wider industry in which the manager operates. That is why intra-organizational learning, whereby managers share each other's mental representations of the world is critical to firms in this environment. Such interaction gives rise to cognitive complexity (Bogner & Barr, 2000) and thereby allows the firm to become more adaptive (Weick, 1995). Indeed, such is the limitation of our cognitive processing capacity, it is considered that we can only conceive of a small number of competitors at any given time (Porac & Thomas, 2002).

2.5 Strategic Cognition

The literature on cognition and strategy has developed into Strategic Cognition (Narayanan et al., 2011). Strategic Cognition focuses on the "linkages between 'cognitive structures' and decision processes in strategic management" (Porac & Thomas, 2002, p.165). Part of the Strategic Cognition literature has focused on the apparent divide between intuitive and analytical thinking, where it is considered that in environments that are turbulent an intuitive synthesis style of thinking contributes to organizational performance (Khatri & Ng, 2000). This is linked to a long-standing principle in cognitive psychology of dual-processing, whereby the cognitive processing of sensory environmental information may be considered either as effortful or as automatic, the fundamental mechanism underlying this duality being the mind's need to conserve processing capacity and to 'short-cut' information. Thereby, we fail to adequately process information, instead opting for the heuristics which process information according to existing rules or frameworks. Information which does not make sense or fit within the heuristic is discarded.

There is a debate regarding the polarity between effortful processing and intuitive processing of information. Rather, it is considered that such processes complement or operate in parallel with one another (Hodgkinson & Clarke, 2007) but that ultimately, they are two separate cognitive systems (Epstein et al., 1996). This is a demanding position for the individual-as-information-processor, required as s/he is to retain an awareness of which cognitive system is offering up the solution to any given problem. In addition to this, there are individual differences in the cognitive system we each use (Hodgkinson & Clarke, 2007) insofar as an individual has an innate preference for one approach over the other, expressed as one's cognitive style. An individual who possesses an intuitive cognitive style will have an ability to abstract an overall mental representation of a strategic situation – the 'big picture' (p.247) – but in so doing may overlook the distinctive data analysis of his or her counterpart which may lead to "ill conceived, arbitrary decisions" (ibid., p.247).

Those who are involved in the strategy process are also prone to cognitive inertia (Hodgkinson & Wright, 2002) where they may become used to thinking in a particular way such that the problems that they 'see' and understand are the ones that can be solved readily using the script within their existing mental representation. Clearly, this will preclude the actor from sensing strategic problems that are possible existential threats to the firm but will also direct the manager's problem-solving abilities in a particular way so as to find the 'solution' that s/he expected, based upon his or her memory of previous problems (Klein & D'Esposito, 2007).

Furthermore, individual managers may react in a rigid, inflexible way to serious problems and threats, reverting to previously learned behaviours that, perhaps whilst not successful, may certainly have been *adaptive* for the individual in the past (Staw et al., 1981). Whilst decisional stress, such as in a threatening strategic situation, can be useful to stimulate creativity, too much decisional stress can lead to dysfunctional behaviour, highlighting previously unacknowledged or hidden dangers to the individual manager (Hodgkinson & Wright, 2002).

The social cognitive perspective in the strategy literature is useful in throwing light upon how information is processed by individuals, but its limitation is that the strategist is conceived as an information-processor (Schneider, 1991) in what can be seen metaphorically as a computer; if information is input correctly, whilst being aware of the 'processor's' memory and speed limitations, then one can expect an optimum outcome. With its use of terms such as 'adaptation' and 'limitation' there is a sense that this perspective holds that, as humans, we are not operating 'optimally', but this belies the complexity of individuals. Easterby-Smith & Lyles (2005) similarly criticize this approach as it appears to suggest that but for the characteristics that make us human, decisions affecting organizations could be made with far more certainty regarding their outcome.

A further aspect of the psychology of strategy, the emotional perspective, relates to the circumstantial basis of the decision and whether the cognition is 'hot' or 'cold'. The cognitive model used is largely situational (Bernheim & Rangel, 2004) and whilst the affective (emotional, or 'hot') basis for cognition can be overcome, through deliberative action or willpower, this ultimately requires applying considerable psychic energy (Loewenstein et al., 2008) but that, nonetheless, the 'hot' mode of cognition is the one that is normally operating for people. One's approach to novel risk situations, such as strategic uncertainty, suggests that we overreact emotionally to these situations but underreact to situations we are more familiar with, even though the novel event may have a low probability of occurring (Loewenstein et al., 2001).

Complementing this theme, others have studied how certain strategically important capabilities such as sensing, seizing and reconfiguring (Teece, 2007) require less of the effortful cognitive processing described earlier and more intuitive processing (Hodgkinson & Healey, 2011). The latter argue that the more behavioural and cognitive approaches to the processes of strategic decision making have overlooked the emotional processes. Developing Teece's (2007) work in respect of the sensing and seizing of opportunities and threats, and transforming enterprises to take action in light of these, Hodgkinson and Healey (2011) argue that much of the strategic management literature does not account for the emotional processes that can undermine organizational actors'

efforts to overturn inertia and that deliberative effort in this respect is not sufficient to counter such forces. Like Bernheim and Rangel (2004), they develop a model of 'hot' and 'cold' cognition, the latter having much lower affective input than the former, however, 'hot' cognition, being more non-conscious, has the property of directing and controlling attention and, where anxiety is high in a period of uncertainty, the focus of managerial attention can be very narrow (Hodgkinson & Healey, 2011) leading to avoidance of situations that evoke psychological discomfort (Karlsson et al., 2009).

People also tend to choose decision alternatives based upon how they are feeling at the time of making the choice, rather than how they might feel regarding the outcomes to those choices (Loewenstein et al., 2001). Whereas the conventional recommendation is for a firm struggling to overcome the framing bias of a strategic problem to introduce more effortful, cognitive processing (Teece et al., 2007) – to 'think harder' - a strategic process that incorporates a reflexive awareness of affective factors would appear to have a greater chance of sensing and seizing threats and opportunities (Hodgkinson & Healey, 2011). A causally ambiguous link has also been found between an intuitive style of cognitive processing and financial performance of SME firms (Sadler-Smith, 2004).

The Strategy-As-Practice perspective has built on the intellectual heritage of the various strategy schools and it argues that one should not focus on one dimension to understand how strategy is made, but rather that the level of analysis should be strategizing itself; that "a practice perspective helps us to see that the assumed tension between deliberate planning practices and emergent strategies represents a false dichotomy" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015, p.254). Insofar as the managers who were participants in the present study were asked about their perspectives on the business environment in which they are situated, this is a study of managers' reflections, a strategizing practice. For Jarzabkowski (2005) reflections, and other strategizing actions, are all socially accomplished and situated activities.

Reflection in the Strategy-As-Practice perspective is a process taking place within strategy making whereby the past and the present are constructed or interpreted. This is 'temporal work' (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013) within which managers "come to settle on

particular strategic accounts that link interpretations of the past, present, and future in ways that appear coherent, plausible, and acceptable" (p.965). Nevertheless, such interpretations do not always cohere. The past is 'unpredictable', as it is not always known to the individual who is reflecting. Aspects of the past, carried into the present, can be disavowed. The settlement of an account of the past and present is not always uniform or agreed for this reason, something that, in the Strategy-As-Practice tradition, is recognized as being a 'dynamic interplay' of interpretations. Recognising that "the past influences action based on the ways actors reconstruct histories out of their different prior experiences" (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013, p.966), this tradition acknowledges the weight of the contested past on present, and future, action; in this respect, this thesis argues that the repressed (even recent) past (Stapley, 2006) is unconscious to us as individuals and needs to be recovered if it is then to be reconstructed. Kaplan & Orlikowski (2013) write that it is important to understand "why some accounts [of the past] lead to change and others reinforce the status quo" (p.966); a psychoanalytic analysis would argue that it is necessary to reconstruct both the conscious and the unconscious past to complete this understanding.

In this section, I have provided a summary of the work and literature in respect of understanding strategy processes, including how it is conventionally seen as being formulated, latterly focusing particularly on the Strategy-As-Practice perspective on strategy. In the following section, I focus specifically on the phenomenon of the absence of strategy.

2.6 The Study of the Absence of Strategy

Having completed an overview of the strategy literature as it relates to the individual's psychological resources, I wish to situate the research within a specific area of strategy literature. The research was undertaken in order to address a particular question: Why, in the face of considerable negative environmental change did Senatus fail to set a strategy? The extant strategy literature addresses the question in two ways. Firstly, the absence of strategy is considered a belief by the firm's management team that it is not

necessary to set one, for a number of reasons, and secondly, it is approached as a question of organizational inertia, although this is not quite a theory of strategy absence.

Inkpen & Choudhury (1995) expressed a view that "strategy researchers have devoted considerable attention to the identification and classification of competitive strategies" (p.313), but that the "underlying assumption of this work is that all organizations have a strategy" (ibid., p.313) a depiction they had noticed was not the case. For Porter (1980) "every firm competing in an industry has a strategy whether explicit or implicit" (p.xiii) and for Mintzberg (1978) strategy is a 'pattern in a stream of decisions', so for both the planning and emergent schools, strategy is a property that can be cohered, whether through intentional acts or by reference to the interconnectedness of decisions taken over time.

Inkpen & Choudhury (1995) were not satisfied with either explanation: They asked if there could be instances of firms making decisions over time that were not interconnected. Once the question had been asked, it seemed to open up an area for exploration. For them, "limited attention has been directed towards cases of strategy *absence*, that is, where strategy is expected but it is not" (p.313). They opined that "the field of organizational strategy largely became a presence-oriented paradigm" (ibid., p.314) and concluded "a lack of a pattern in decision making may be evidence of strategy absence. This is not a trivial issue" (ibid., p.315). They went on to model three instances where strategy absence may be discerned: strategy absence as evidence of management failure, as a transitional phase in an organization's life-cycle and as a largely positive phenomenon where management 'chooses' to have no strategy so as to allow for more creative decision-making (this could be likened to 'emergent strategy'). They conceptualized these phenomena as 'absence as failure', 'absence as transition' and 'absence as virtue'.

Their ideas were not greeted with universal acceptance: Bauerschmidt (1996) responded by challenging the "adequacy of Inkpen's attempt to speak of absence and raise the issue of the silence of strategy" (p.665). Bauerschmidt remarked that Inkpen & Choudhury's work was 'paradigm protecting' insofar as they were implicitly asserting that the

'property' of strategy is present, even when it is absent. So, it is an ontological question, proving the previous scholars in the area correct when they said that *all* organizations have a strategy.

Whether for this or other reasons, the field of strategy absence has never quite developed save for Rodwell & Shadur's (2007) work in which they argued that strategy absence exists as part of the activity configuration approach to strategy, labelling strategy absent firms as 'drifters' "in that they do not *have* a strategy and they do not focus their efforts in any one area or range of areas, short of the extreme focus on everything" (p.53). This, however, doesn't appear to be the same phenomenon that Inkpen & Choudhury were characterizing and may be closer to the concept of 'strategic drift'.

Strategic absence is not strategic inertia: Inertia is associated mainly with the failure of organizations to change. The management team, caught up in organizational routines, may be cognitively too 'rigid' to spot the need for change (Hannan & Freeman, 1989), or otherwise may not act on weak signals. Describing an intervention using scenario planning, Hodgkinson & Wright (2002) depict a confrontation with 'cognitive' and strategic inertia – an (un)successful intervention in an organization facing an uncertain future. Inertia may be said to be a response to environmental change, dependent on a number of factors, such as the rate of change (Kelly & Amburgey, 1991), but it is not the same phenomenon as strategy absence.

The study of the absence of strategy in the literature has not therefore significantly developed since Inkpen & Choudhury's (1995) paper. This research aims to build upon that theorization, arguing that the study of absence requires certain methods and a philosophical approach which avoids essentialization and categorisation, such as that present in Rodwell & Shadpur's (2007) identification of 'drifters'. The position taken in this thesis is that strategy is a '*good thing*' for organizations. Though a definition of the concept itself may be difficult (Hambrick, 1980), it is to be seen as a guide for decision making by those tasked with leading organizations and so "the seeking of strategy where it is not" (Inkpen & Choudhury, 1995) should be a matter of concern.

In the next section of the Chapter, I explain the psychoanalytic perspective and what this has to offer in helping us to understand unconscious mental processes and absence.

2.7 The Psychoanalytic Perspective

This section commences with an introduction to the developmental theory of psychoanalysis, its understanding of the unconscious, leading to how this has an impact on organization decision-making. I explain why psychoanalytic theory is appropriate to use as a method to study the absence of strategy in Senatus and how the ways in which language in the organization has real material effects on members' perception and behaviour. In the latter part of the Chapter, I illustrate that subjectivity and strategizing are related and that there is an emotional or affective component to organizational strategizing which is not always clear, and which requires a deep type of study to understand, which psychoanalysis brings.

Psychoanalysis is a theory of absence; in essence, the unconscious mind is something that cannot be seen, and which is not readily understood when presented. Psychoanalysis asserts that there cannot be a positive discourse of anything as there is always a contiguous discourse at work, out of one's awareness. The social cognitive and emotional perspectives in psychology challenge the perceived rationality of decision making and alert us to the awareness of a bounded rationality (Simon, 1947). However, not all of our emotions and thought processes are available to our conscious awareness. Rather, the psychoanalytic perspective in organizational psychology would hold that our intra-psychic world is unconscious to our awareness and that these unseen forces exert the greatest control over our behaviour. So, whilst the invocation from the foregoing perspectives appears to be for managers to engage in less effortful, more intuitive processing, our intuition cannot always be bidden to awareness by us through deliberative focus. The psychoanalytic perspective holds that our internal psychic reality is our *actual* reality which is constituted through our interaction with others who are important to our well-being in the earliest years of our lives and that how we learned to relate in these years are templates for relating throughout our lives. The intimate care received from the important others in our life acts as a micro society that lays the basis for our future acting

the social world (Thomas, 1996). Central to the idea of psychoanalysis is that our internal world is made up of our ways of relating to others and that we represent the external world within our mind symbolically whether through felt-sense or through language. These internal representations are primitive, in that they are non-complex emotionally, but are nevertheless highly charged and persistent in their presence and efficacy to influence our behaviour, and indeed in longevity in that they endure throughout our lives.

In the psychoanalytic approach, a person is considered to relate to the world in terms of people exterior to the person who are 'objects' that are fantasised, where said objects 'act' upon the person causing him or her to behave or relate in a particular way to the world (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988) and where the object is also that to which desire is directed towards (Rycroft, 1995). Psychoanalysis identifies human discomfort with anxiety as a primary mobilising force within us and that in order to avoid it, we develop psychological defences which, through their unconscious deployment, systematically distort our understanding of real situations. We are "defended creatures who distort reality because we cannot bear the psychological pain of the truth" (Thomas, 1996, p.288) and create an arbitrage between what is just enough in terms of an accurate portrayal of what is really 'going on' and a complex distortion of the truth of it, just to maintain our psychological integrity and to minimise the pain of our anxiety. We are "rationally goal-directed with respect to unconscious motives" (Thomas, 1996, p.289) and people, rather, are protected by psychological defences "that, in contexts where change is desirable, exert a dysfunctional influence" (Brown & Starkey, 2000, p.102).

These concepts are a complement to the cognitive-intuitive dual processing models or systems of cognitive psychology. It is the 'cognitive unconscious' where most of our processing of information occurs outside of our conscious awareness, effortlessly, and this is considered adaptive from an evolutionary perspective, because it is a more efficient mode of processing (Epstein, 1994). This gives rise to "two ways of knowing" (Epstein et al., 1996, p.710) wherein there are two ways of coming to know about things: a rational mode based upon one's intellect and a more intuitive one based upon one's feelings. All behaviour by the individual is considered to be a product of the joint

operation of both systems of information processing and that behaviour is driven by need whether for relatedness, for self-esteem (Epstein et al., 1996; Brown & Starkey, 2000) or desire (Evans, 1996).

From a strategic sensing and seizing perspective (Teece, 2007) there is a question around what is attended to consciously or unconsciously by the manager and what might *not* be attended to because of an underlying bias or activation of a psychological defence. As this unconscious information processing system is always outside of awareness, it is not subject to control by conscious, effortful information processing. However, through the process of reflexive psychoanalysis, it is possible to bring unconscious understandings of the world to awareness. Indeed, there has been criticism of strategic organizational interventions that focus on the outward manifestation of a problem – the symptom of the strategic problem – rather than understanding and tackling the psychological root of it (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984). This research project is about understanding how individual strategists make sense of their environment and how they perceive the challenges of it (Teece, 2007). What the research uncovers, however, is that in spite of perceived threats and opportunities, that there are other dynamics at work that prevent the formulation and articulation of strategy.

2.8 Subjectivity and Strategizing

The approach I have taken involves a consideration of the subjectivity of organizational members who *should* be involved in strategizing – they are all members of the Board of Senatus. Strategy and subjectivity are intertwined (Laine & Vaara, 2007) and I approach subjectivity from a psychoanalytic perspective because while cognitive psychology has contributed significantly to the field of strategic decision-making, there has been little research conducted from a psychoanalytic perspective which seeks to explain the influence of the unconscious in people's behaviour and decisions.

The psychoanalytic perspective is grounded in the belief that we have limited sovereignty over our conscious experience (Kearney, 1986; Belsey, 2002). Hodgkinson & Healey (2011), writing from a cognitive psychological perspective, note that "the biases and

inertial forces that undermine (strategic) sensing…capabilities have emotional roots" (p.1501). This affective basis of strategizing therefore makes it an appropriate subject for psychoanalytic investigation. Moreover, as Regner (2008) points out, "a dynamic-strategy view needs to…explain the mechanisms of how certain conditions interact to produce certain organizational assets" (p.568) and in consequence of this, I am interested, like the strategy-as-practice perspective, in the activities (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009) that constitute this dynamic. Hitherto, the strategy-as-practice approach, whilst studying strategizing in natural settings and focusing on its activities, does not take account of unconscious motivations which "impact visible performance" (Arnaud, 2012, p. 1122) of organizations.

The psychoanalytic theoretical lens involves a consideration of the subjectivity of organizational strategic actors and of the psychoanalytic concepts of fantasy, anxiety, lack and desire in the organization and their appearance in language, or discourse. The psychoanalytic approach brings the unconscious mind into the organization and "provides an account of the way these forces operate in the individual's experience" (Frosh et al., 2003). In contradistinction to more rational approaches to understanding organizational phenomena, it illuminates and potentially offers up the use of apparently less rational workings of organizations. In their evaluation of a critical incident case study, Hodgkinson & Wright (2002) found that strategic decisional stress in a top-team resulted in dysfunctional psychological coping mechanisms that were best understood using a psychoanalytic frame of reference. Psychoanalysis brings a range of rich and textured approaches to understanding such apparent irrationality as the unconscious. It is a theory of symbolism and is "not so much about behaviour as about the meaning of behaviour" (Schwartz & Hirschorn, 2008, p.1).

The purpose of organizational psychoanalysis is to doubt, challenge and subvert the illusion of positivity in management practice (Zaleznik, 1989) consisting of imaginary signification which promises to cover over and fill in the void, lack or "'crack' that goes to the centre of our being" (Webster, 2013, p.139). What is offered here in this thesis is an explication of strategic discourse from a psychoanalytic perspective, which I argue allows

us to further our knowledge about the less apparent, the uncanny and often ironic aspects of strategizing and sensing. Psychoanalysis promotes reflexivity in organizational practice (McAuley et al., 2014) as a method for both considering the objectives of the organization and how this informs its organizing to meet those objectives. The conclusion of my argument is that when organizational members undertake strategizing that they should do so with an awareness that their strategic discourse is riven through with unconscious associations. Psychoanalysis provides a means for understanding unconscious mental and emotional processes and the psychoanalytical field is replete with descriptive and detailed concepts. These concepts comprise, *inter alia*, principally fantasy, anxiety and desire. In Lacanian terms (drawing on the ideas of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan), its concepts include the ideal-ego; lack; the Other; the signifier and the three modes of subjectivity; the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic, which concepts are developed later. These latter modes, in psychoanalysis explain how subjectivity is 'split' into a discursive space that is not internal to the person but is rather located both in the unconscious mind and in the symbolic order of language.

This is in opposition to the conventional study of strategy as being a positive discourse, "taken as self-evident and legitimate, and … used without questioning" (Eriksson & Lehtimaki, 2001) and as being one that is about selection of strategy based upon either the competitive forces at work in its environment (Porter, 1996; 2008a; 2008b) or one that is solely based upon the resources and capabilities at its disposal (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Mahoney & Pandian, 1992; Rumelt, 2011). I advance an argument that the unconscious in organizational life is not accounted for by these approaches nor by the cognitive approaches to strategy (e.g., Barr et al., 1992; Gaglio & Katz, 2001). What I aim to show in the research material and findings is that Senatus' strategic actors have ways of talking about their environment, internal and external that communicate their perceptions of the strategic issues affecting them, and that these prevent the formation and articulation of a strategy. Instead of a strategy discourse, there is an *other* discourse; the articulations of the unconscious. Or, more accurately, the strategy discourse is substituted by this *other*, unconscious discourse, replaced by particularities of desire (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) producing a *lack*, or an absence of strategy.

My interest in Lacanian psychoanalysis as a method for examining strategic discourse is partly in common with the narrative and linguistic turns in strategic management research (Balogun et al., 2014; Alvesson & Karreman, 2000; Barry & Elmes, 1997) where the selection of narrative has been studied as a method used to construct our identity; however, the meaning of the words that we use can be abstractions of unconscious psychological processes: we do not mean what we say and that "desire and identification are channelled by discursive practices within organizations" (Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010, p.1022). Language is available to us for our self-expression, however, it is not 'for us' but rather has been given to us, so there is a disruption between language and what we lack and a division between our unconscious and the symbolic order of language. Therefore, language is performative (Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010) but in order to 'hear' we must attend equally to what is *not* said. For Gabriel (1999), the use of terms such as 'management' and 'organization' have semantic opposites; they appear to be terms designed to repress what is unsaid and unprocessed into conscious mental life and this offers a critical perspective on strategic management research.

2.9 Subjectivity & Language in the Organization

In this section, I explain the psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity, which favours one where the person maintains certain cognitions in awareness, but that there are many thoughts, influences and drives to human behaviour which are outside one's awareness. I also set out the argument that one's subjectivity rests in three domains, namely the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, dimensions of human experience that are quite separate, but which operate as modalities that are interchangeable for the human being. These three dimensions are also present in language; the Symbolic is language and culture, which is available to the Imaginary as the basis for misrecognitions as to what is happening in reality, while the Real exerts a presence and force on language and experience, but which cannot be totally symbolized into words. It is that dimension of human experience, usually traumatic, which we never fully express.

Other psychoanalytic concepts are introduced such as desire and lack. As human beings, we lack (something) and this provides the basis for our desire (for something). This

desire, and the lack that underpins it, is also present in language, communicating (im)possible demands and wishes that words carry and transmit to anyone who is prepared to listen to them (deeply). It is for this reason that language is said to *be* unconsciousness, not just a medium of the unconscious. When words and their combinations are spoken, they are understood in this tradition to carry unconscious significations of desire, trauma, the rules of culture and the alien-ness of the Real.

2.10 The Split Human Subject

The Freudian project fundamentally decentred the human subject (which last term I do not use pejoratively, but to limit the conception of the human being as the locus of total agency) and Lacan identified what can be thought of as three modes of being, or subjectivity. For Lacan, as for Freud, the subject is split or divided between what is unconscious and conscious. Subjectivity is considered by Lacan to reside in the three registers of the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. The Real is a pre-linguistic state of plenitude as existed in infancy (prior to and subsequent to birth), but as infancy develops, the Real recedes. The Real is a state of being that is without language but also without lack, a fundamental concept for Lacan, and the point at which language fails (Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010). It is "the presence of an irrecurable antagonism at the heart of the subject" (Eyers, 2012, p.16). Because there is an absence of nothing, it is a state to which we as subjects wish to return and is closely associated with the death drive, *thanatos*, (Rycroft, 1995) a Freudian and Lacanian concept that characterises our drive to a position of non-being and withdrawal from the psychological anguish of existence (Evans, 1996). The Real is always imminent and always present, threatening to invade and eclipse our conscious thought and it is this imminence that anxiety has as its object.

The register of the Real is not extra-discursive to the human subject, or a higher form of objectivity. It is not an experience that can be symbolized but is an over-determining of the unconscious and is apparent in gaps and key signifiers in a speaking subjects' apparently unified spoken discourse. The Real is traumatic experience which hasn't been put into words, for example, the emotional effects of an accident before they are 'processed'. It is an ineffable gap or lack which prevents discursive closure on meaning

(Glynos & Howarth, 2008) and therefore a discontinuity which may be confronted in order to engage in a dialectic for the potentiality of new meanings. Lack is crucially important for the human subject in that if one did not want for anything, there would be no desire to achieve satisfaction in anything, particularly in this instance the desire to create the direction of an organization.

The Imaginary also begins in infancy and is the infant's imaginary construction of itself into a *Gestalt* that overcomes its sensory-motor deficiencies. It is, in effect, an imaginary projection by the infant of itself onto others. The subject forms an image of how it appears to itself and others through images of others' forms and bodies. The infant does this by taking into itself images and part images of others in what are termed 'ego-ideals', loose assemblages that are the building blocks of an 'ideal-ego' or imaginary self, one that is not stable, but which is constantly being re-formed by the subject's contact with others. The ego-ideal is an introjection both of others and of society's norms as communicated through language (Eyers, 2012; Evans, 1996), and is a model with which one's psyche identifies (Childers & Hentzi, 1995). In the organization, this is effected by the subject taking into itself significations from organizational discourse such that, over time, the subject's imaginary identifications can potentially coalesce with the firm's dominant or hegemonic discourse, which is akin to the pre-eminence of the dominant logic of the firm (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986; Bettis & Prahalad, 1995) and where a firm's management will find it extremely difficult to think, in strategic terms, about strategic problems such as the changing of industry structure, because their organizational discourse has become fixed, and over-determined by, certain signifiers.

The final register of subjectivity is the Symbolic. The Symbolic order is language and the social order of relations and is presented to us in our pre-linguistic state as a means of relating to other subjects. But, language, whilst providing us with the means of communication with others ultimately bars us from access to that original experience. Irrespective of the detours through language and signification, we will never get to that original place of plenitude.

Linked to language, the Other is a fundamental concept in how the subject comes into being. This concept derives from Hegel (2004) where the subject, in order to become a subject requires another subject thereby creating intersubjectivity. But the Other is also a designation beyond another subject. Because other people use language, and because language is laden with historical and symbolic designations that language conveys, another human subject *and* language is termed the 'Other'. However, whilst the Other "promises to offer the subject some symbolic consistency" (Stavrakakis, 2008, p.1045) the price that is exacted from one is the renunciation of unmediated access to the Real; by using language we get to communicate with others but lose access to original experience. However, while language is used by us, it is also subject to penetration by the Real through gaps and discontinuities.

2.11 The Lacking Subject

The subject's motivation or desire is about returning to that original state of completeness, but it is subservient to language. Language acts as an impossibly frustrating intermediary to what is termed the 'lost object' (Nobus, 2013) and consequently, in this view, all conceptualisations of organizational routines (Tranfield et al., 2000), processes and decisions must be considered as a desire for such a return. This is our desire to fill our 'lack'. This is a conceptualization of the "idea that the human subject is never a whole, is always riven with partial drives, social discourses that frame available modes of experience, ways of being that are contradictory" (Frosh, 2014, p.20). Because language is the intermediary of our experience and that through which others interact with us, it is considered by Lacan to be strange to us. Satisfaction through any object, such as the development of an intangible strategic asset of the firm, is not ultimately possible because the aim towards satisfaction is bound up with a linguistic and symbolic articulation of the object; the object cannot be accessed through the representational order of language. In this respect, language is a system of signifiers and in Saussure's (1966) formulation of the signifier, it has a physical form, such as a letter, word or image, which corresponds to the speaker's mental concept of it. However, Lacan argued that a signifier can always only represent another signifier (not a signified) and

that the meaning (signified) of a signifier for the speaker could only emerge through association in a structured form of discourse, such as psychoanalysis. Therefore, to express a strategic end, such as the development of a new product or market certainly says *something*, but that there is always an excess of meaning which is not translated and which contains the speaker's true desire.

Subjectivity, therefore, managerial subjectivity is not experienced as internal to the person. Rather, it is constituted dialectically by and in the Other (Gasparyan, 2014), in the form of the Symbolic and another person, and the two other modes of subjectivity. Accordingly, for a strategist in Senatus to signify something in language, such as '*understanding the client's needs*' is to engage the three modes of subjectivity; the Symbolic Other insofar as the 'client' is a master signifier in that it expresses something significant about the wider cultural assumptions in terms of what the 'client' is, but in actuality says nothing about any 'clients' in particular. In this sense, using the term 'clients' is an unconscious signification of something that the speaker does not fully understand, but which legitimizes his or her discourse – it does not have a fixed meaning and moreover has meanings which precede the speaker's understanding. Secondly, the Imaginary mode is engaged in that the speaker, by using the term, has a belief about what s/he means by it, which is bound up with their identity as a strategist and indeed his or her relationship with 'clients'. Finally, the mode of the 'Real' expresses, in the signifier, through its affective content, the speaker's desire, which is unconscious to him or her. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject itself is formed by language, and through language is determined by the symbolic order of the Other. For Lacan, the rational 'I' or ego, which the subject believes to be him or herself, is de-essentialized in favour of the symbolic order and the signifier, under which one's perceptions, understandings and behaviour is 'governed' (Dor, 1998).

2.12 Language, the Vehicle of Desire

The unconscious desire which is behind speech occupies the place of the subject's motivation. One's desire, one's drive, is created by our fundamental 'lack' as human subjects; we lack because we have become separated from experience, conventionally in

psychoanalysis considered to be before we are born (Verhaeghe, 2001) and through our first use of language. Lack is a "permanent state of not having something that one never had…a lack of being" (Driver, 2013, p.408). It is this feeling of lack that provides us with motivation, or our desire, which can never be quite articulated or understood (Driver, 2013). Our break with real experience when we enter the world of language renders us *dividua*, divided subjects (Kearney, 1986).

The idea of lack, therefore, is a useful way in which to approach strategy as it is a gap and a negation of what is apparently positive in organizational life. One attempts to overcome this gap, or lack, with desire. Desire, however, is not simply constituted by the individual but is rather a dialectical relationship between the individual subject and others (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010), other objects and other discourses in circulation, such as the discourse of the client's needs. This dialecticism of psychoanalytic understanding should inform us about strategizing because it requires a consistent posing of a question as to what the apparently rational understandings about situations, interactions and contexts are.

In the organizational setting, the Other is present in the Symbolic order of language and in the ordering of subjects' relations and reproduces, in their discourse, structures and meaning. For Zizek (2006), "language is a gift as dangerous to humanity as the horse was to the Trojans; it offers itself to our use free of charge, but once we accept it, it colonizes us" (p.12) and we are forever part of the symbolic order which has been instated prior to our coming to be in the world. The Other inhabits us as language and it is no longer an instrumental means of communicating. When taking up this inhabitation, all of the structures and institutions that have been discursively created are also instated such that our "discourse is the discourse of the Other" (Campbell, 2004, p.40) which we continually reproduce through the use of master signifiers in speech and writing: This is an especially significant process in Senatus in how it has emerged in the texts.

The unconscious combines diverse elements to give voice to a repressed desire which is consciously imperceptible. The signifier, constructed "by means of overdetermination, creates from elements of low psychical value new values" (Freud, 1900, pp.307 – 308)

such that the subject, when speaking it, is quite unaware that s/he has brought into the word formation an assembly of words, behind which a cluster of signifieds are gathered, which cannot be understood without reference to the subject's system of signifiers. Just like a language which cannot be interpreted word by word by means of a dictionary, and which is subject to a law of equilibrium, certain words are chosen paradigmatically by the unconscious over others and then combined syntagmatically to give rise to meaning. However, it is in what is absent – what absent signifier is represented by the conscious signifier – that one may discern the unconscious (Dor, 1998). This is what Lacan is referring to when he says "the signifier is the instrument by which the missing signified expresses itself" (1955-1956, p.221). In this regard, in the unconscious process of selection and combination of signifiers of apparently positive strategic discourse, one may discern the lack that is present in it. In selecting and giving form to one's – illusory - subjectivity as a strategist the manager excludes other signifiers.

For instance, I referred earlier to the signifier 'client'. What the customer 'wants' can be a potentially powerful organizing signifier in the organization, the 'client' and 'their' needs taking pre-eminence and significance far greater than those of the organizational members'. In the Lacanian view, there can be no fixed and stable meaning of the signifier 'client' and when one attempts to unpack the term, one is simply referring to other signifiers; there is a fundamental indeterminacy to its meaning. That is, an indeterminacy until the analysis of signification resonates with a traumatic truth, such as, for example, the exclusion and repression of an organizational subject's voice when the master signifier 'client' was mobilized. The selected signifier is a veil, or a fantasy. However, whilst the master signifier is "referentially open to re-definition, it is connotatively attached to the practices" (Walker, 1983, p.161) of the organization's strategy. While the strategy development process is one of "learning, interpretation and creative activity" (Teece, 2009, p.9), it is one that must attempt to see beyond the illusory opportunities, threats and misplaced optimism or pessimism of the firm's executive, which within the psychoanalytic view, is not possible without an understanding of the repressed signifier. What I attempt to show in the research findings is that this taking on of the Other's desires has consequences, some of them quite traumatic, for the subject organization.

Strategic discourses, made up of words and practices are themselves fantasies covering over the anxiety of lack; beliefs are mediated by the Symbolic order and people take up discourses in order to fill a lack. A lack is an absence and the discourses that may fill this lack are always precarious because they are based in language and are subject to the unconsciousness of same. Trauma always results in a difficulty in language and in the emergence of signifiers or discourse in use which may not ultimately be helpful to the organization's actors. In Senatus' case, as organizational realities have changed, due to external change principally, so too do actors' ways of talking about those realities need to change, incorporating those difficult or repressed elements. Otherwise there is propensity for repressed psychological material to re-emerge in the form of symptoms.

2.13 Fantasies of the Other

Fantasies are the "organization of unconscious wishes" (Blass, 2014, p.2) and unconscious mental processes that structure the way in which an individual approaches the world; they therefore have important implications for strategy discourse. They are fundamental in the way in which we understand what is external to us as subjects. Fantasies are one's beliefs, assumptions and interpretations about one's own and other people's behaviour (Segal, 1992) and their emotional basis influence sometimes unrealistic worldviews. It is the illusory nature of the fantasy that provides one with the basis for an accommodation with the social world.

Whilst based on an illusion about how the external social world is constructed so that the subject can act in a particular way, fantasy thereby 'supports' reality for the subject, but the fantasy is also an interpretation and response to the Other's desire. This is because fantasy is linked to one's early, infantile experiences and the rise of our desire (Homer, 2005) for, not only the Other, but the Other's desire: to want the gaze of the Other, to want what the Other desires. Its origin is in the hallucinatory satisfaction of the infant's drive where "the infant reproduces the experience of satisfaction" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p.24) in order to sustain itself. This primitive method of hallucination defends the infant against the intrusion of the Real, which represents itself to the infant in the form of a basic need such as hunger which threatens to engulf its existence if not satiated. This

process of hallucinating satisfaction as a defence against an existential anxiety continues in the subject throughout life and "we are anguished" (Naveau, 2012, p.2) by it.

Fantastic (Kersten, 2007) thinking can take as its object material and non-material substitutes for original satisfaction, but the hallucinated form of the object is stronger than any substitution for it. In this sense, the object is not a direct substitute for a need of the subject's drive as an organism. "Freud's notion of the object is that of anaclisis…(or, that which) is necessary for its preservation" (McFeely, 2010, p.1) and in this regard the subject unconsciously variously invests its psychic energy in different objects external to itself. So, whilst the fantasy's aim is satisfaction in the object and to perpetuate an illusion of unity with the Other, the human subject finds a variety of routes to it. That is not, however, to say that the cause of desire is an object – external satisfaction – but rather desire is a seeking itself, a relentless search for the lost object to fill a lack or absence. For Lacan, however, the fantasy operates not as a basis for understanding what a subject him or herself wants or desires, but rather is the setting or staging for understanding the desire of the Other, perhaps the 'client'. In this regard, one must understand that the desire of the Other – what the other desires – is enigmatic and puzzling for the subject, hence if what the subject desires is to be the object of desire of the Other's desire, then the fantasy functions as the hallucinatory plane for what s/he wants.

Such a Sibylline enigma of the Other's desire provides a wide tableau for the subject to unconsciously explore, interpret and respond in his or her own fantasy to the question of what others want from him or her. And, in the interpretation of this question, to act in the social world in particular ways and through which an identity is formed by which the subject's universe is regulated (Zizek, 2006). In the organization, the subject's response to this question emerges, *inter alia*, in strategic discourse, in how the subject forms his or her identity, for example, in seeing him or herself as a particular kind of professional together with all of the practices associated with that profession, and in the structure of the firm, which can become distorted due to the presence of repressed anxiety.

Fantasy prevents a confrontation with the imminence of the Real, of which anxiety is its insistent and imminent signal. Anxiety is a "response to an unrecognized factor…in the

environment or in the self…evoked…by the stirrings of unconscious, repressed forces" (Rycroft, 1995, p.8). Menzies-Lyth (1988) and Menzies (1960) has demonstrated that how a firm sets about organizing its work is itself a defence against anxiety as a result of an unconscious agreement brought about by collective interaction by organizational members over time, the 'self-sealing' that Argyris & Schon (1976) refer to. This is distinct from an appropriate method of organizing to achieve an objective. This organizing has the risk of regression as members mobilise their respective needs to defend against repressed anxieties (Driver, 2009a). In this respect, the conscious primary task of the organization, its purpose, (Hirschorn, 1977) may become occluded by how action can be taken by its members that bring about its meaning's submersion in its anxiety. There is an important lesson to draw on here; strategic reconfiguration of the firm, insofar as we understand it as a social process in the organization (Regner, 2008) can therefore itself be *an organizing* against the anxiety of confrontation with difficult environmental threats or opportunities.

How the firm views its resources and capabilities can determine its organizing principles. The firm's way of organizing may defeat its explicit goals, and this is termed the 'primary risk' (Hirschorn, 1977). A similar observation is made by Hodgkinson & Wright (2002) writing in a social cognitive psychological perspective who refer to a "danger that actors may become overly dependent on their mental models of strategic phenomena (and) fail to notice changes" (p.949) in the business environment. An explanation for self-defeating cycles may lie in the psychoanalytic concepts of repetition and compulsion, which the fantasy structures, of which there is evidence in the research material.

2.14 Repetition of the Repressed

The psychoanalytic approach to organizations considers that they have the propensity to engage in difficult and unproductive patterns (signifiers) of repetition. This concept is bound up with Freud's idea of repression which comprises the exclusion of difficult emotional material from awareness, so as to prevent their actualization (Atwood & Stolorow, 2014) but this risks the return of that which is repressed (Freud, 1896). That which is repressed in the organization returns in the form of a symptom or a maladaptive

behaviour. Strategically, the return of the repressed may be apparent in the repetition of previous strategic projects that were less than successful – when viewed psychoanalytically this occurs when difficult emotional material, repressed from crystallizing in awareness, reappears in a compulsion to repeat in the unconscious hope that something will change, or to defend against an anxiety that the organization's purpose may be incompatible with the demands of its environment. The symptom, the compulsion, should be read like a text, an expression of an action that requires re-reading, from a doubting and challenging perspective. Moreover, symptoms are "the site of undermining, since they reveal the gaps…and failures of" (O'Regan, 2014, p.609) the Other, or the certainty of master signifiers which have previously been used to legitimize a given behaviour.

Diamond (2008) argues that "repetition compulsions are observable as a result of routine emotional leakage and enactments manifested in counterproductive and destructive behaviour" (p.360) and that the psychoanalytic approach is about listening and "linking the narrative of the past into present day circumstances" (ibid., p.362). The return of the repressed is the multiplication of signifiers engaged by organizational subjects in their active discourse. The repeated symptom is also a signifier and it is argued that "in the very force of repetition…(there lies)…the possibility of de-privileging that signifier" (Butler, 1993, p.89). In this regard, privileged organizational routines are "rooted in values" and may have a "downside that inhibits innovation…called core rigidities" (Leonard-Barton, 1992, p.111). Such core rigidities are textual signifiers that are a significant counter-point to the development of strategy.

So, whilst a strategic discourse acts as a *suture* – very finely stitching over the organization's executives' lack, it cannot exceed the symbolic order, because it operates through fantasy and imaginary identification within a hegemonic discourse of master signifiers, designated, as we will see, principally by the Other. The discourse is limited by the words – the Symbolic order - and understandings of strategy that circulate in the organization. Stavrakakis (2008) argues that the interpretation by the subject of the desire of the Other through the enactment of fantasy "predisposes social subjects to

accept and obey what seems to be emanating from the big Other, from socially sedimented points of reference…and…presented as embodying and sustaining the symbolic order" (p.1045). In terms of the primacy of the signifier, this can be seen to operate through master signifiers such as 'competition' or 'market share' which foreclose other forms of thinking and approaches to strategy as they appear to come from a more knowledgeable and authoritative discourse. However, the Symbolic order cannot fill a lack and cannot become the executive's object-cause of desire. In other words, the meaning of strategy development cannot be found in words, in signifiers, but rather their repressed meaning(s) for the subject-as-strategist who speaks them.

2.15 An Absent Presence: Active Negation of Strategy

As will be demonstrated, fantasy forms the basis of how the subject – the organization's executive – structures reality and how, by interpreting the Other's desire through fantasy, the executive attempts to understand what the Other wants from him or her. This is how the individual executive's beliefs and assumptions internal to him or her are mediated by the exterior symbolic order, which the executive attempts to go beyond by taking up various discourses which display the possibility of filling the executive's lack and which may provide a *suture* between the Symbolic and the Real – an imaginary matching of what is believed to be his or her desire to a course of action.

We may say that psychoanalysis is a negative ontology that assists in the unravelling of the dichotomy of presence and absence (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010) and strategy and no-strategy. It is a negative ontology as it is concerned principally with what is not there – lack and what is absent. The unconscious of repressed signifiers has a precarious, and principally negative ontological status. In Senatus, the studied organization, there is a minimal strategy and this research project is about the study of the 'not there'; that in the absence of strategy, there is an instatement of unconscious psychological dynamics.

The question of absence is intimately related to the replacing fantasy, the significations that come to represent such absences and ultimately what signifieds, the opening up of desire, stand in their stead. Here, in the research, we will see that unconscious concerns

and preoccupations stand in the place of a strategy, giving rise to an absence, or a negative. Zupancic (2000) argues that a negative ontology allows for the development of concepts that cannot be bounded. Bounding concepts in such an ontology are inevitably and always negated as negation requires and provides space for a continual questioning. Lacan argues that we should focus on what is missing, what is unsaid and to allow the non-essential to acquire the positive elements of being (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010) and in this project, I am drawing forth the negative absence of strategy, by placing words on the unconscious worries and dilemmas occupying Senatus, so that they fill out this absence.

The implication for strategizing is that whenever the subject-as-strategist acts to interpret an environmental change, whenever s/he sets about discussing this interaction with others, there is an absence that is present in his/her discourse. For each word paradigmatically chosen, another is repressed, and it is in this negation that meaning and understanding may become an emergent property within the strategic discourse. So, when the strategist draws upon his or her understanding of their environmental context in order to develop a strategic direction, this exercise results in a number of signifiers being chosen that psychoanalysis would argue have been unconsciously chosen from the dominant discourse or master signifiers at work. These need to be challenged from a position of radical negativity (Dreyer Hansen, 2014).

There is a paradox between what is perceived as present and absent; there is a dialectic at work. Absence is a fundamental manifestation of negation (Saury, 2009) and is experienced as a 'lack' which is established in consciousness in a relationship with an object in "the mode of not-here" (p.249). The experience of lack disappears when it is replaced by a presence, the fantasy; the belief that the social world is something other than it is and whereby intention is directed towards objects that are "experienced as not being perceived as being there" (ibid. p.251). The fantasy is then an illusory object of an unconscious subject that is mediated through a split, non-essential subject. The organizational fantasy is then an illusion about the meanings and assumptions of the organization insofar as it interprets the wants and desires of the Other, or the 'universe'

in which it is situated. It interprets what it is for others. In other words, in the fantasy is the question that the organization never asks itself about what it truly desires.

Accordingly, there is an insistent dialectic at work; Stavrakakis (2008) argues that there is a fundamental and "inextricable dialectic" (p.1037) between subjectivity and otherness, between one who lacks and an "equally lacking Other" (ibid., p.1042) where the Other is the language by which strategic discourse is mediated. By striking out and designating a problem as something over another, the strategist is unaware that s/he has thus designated the strategic issue within his or her fantasy or structuring of reality. One can look at the sensing of a strategic issue and its meaning within a strategy discourse from the perspective of its binary nature of absence and presence of signifiers in how this is articulated and the fantasy that is built-up in its articulation. There is an obscurity insofar as the absence or lack is unconscious and the fantasy cannot be readily translated, or its signifiers easily deconstructed, however, there may be contradictions within it that can contain clues to meaning.

Thereby, Bicknell and Liefooghe (2010) argue that a strategy discourse may be 'reupholstered' so that new *points de capiton*[3] might be developed and new signifiers hooked onto them. The question arises as to what these new *points* might be. The principal concept underlying the *point* is that whenever a *point* is arrived at, it is temporary and ephemeral as the signified that lies beneath the web of signifiers hooked around the *point* may shift and slide and new meanings for the organization need to be found. This consideration of absence, within the psychoanalytic tradition, therefore differs to that presented within the strategy literature, such as that taken by Inkpen & Choudhury (1995). In that literature, absence is either a failure, transition or a 'virtue', but here, in psychoanalysis, it begs a question. One wonders, in this tradition, what stands in the place of an absence, and particularly in relation to strategy and the subject

[3] *Points de capiton* are the 'buttons' used by upholsterers when securing the stuffing in furniture so that it doesn't 'slide around'. Lacan likens these to points in discourse where meaning is temporarily arrested or stabilized.

organization. If strategy is a '*good thing*', guiding the organization in its challenges in its environment, then a question should be posed as to why it is not present at Senatus.

2.16 Beyond the Clinic

So, the psychoanalytic perspective allows one to consider that the question of strategy dynamics is one where there may be meanings within the strategic discourse which conceal a fantasy, a belief about what the world is like. Inasmuch as the strategy discourse constrains or ties the firm into a set of signifiers, the fantasy acts as a similar barrier to meaning and change. Psychoanalysis therefore has something more to say than just the clinical treatment of pathology and its cure. It is also "concerns the subject's relation to his unconscious desire" (Rowan, 2010, p.1-2) and to the extent that this is the case, the obscuring of the organizational subject's desire, and its splitting from its conscious intention, is a bar to the firm's development of strategic resources.

Strategy has been understood as a set of rules, goals and objectives that guide organizational behaviour (Ansoff & McDonnell, 1988), however, I have tried to illustrate that this is not entirely the case, that many distortions of apparent rationality can occur in the endeavour to achieve such clarity, most notably in the way psychoanalysis conceives of organizational subjectivity residing in the Real, the Imaginary and the Symbolic. Psychoanalysis as a science and practice started with its objective to understand the psychopathology of the individual; the neuroses and psychoses. But it also has "something to say…about normal functioning" (Arnaud, 2012, p.1122). It has developed into a practice that can support ethical decision-making because it is a "foundation for both critical thought and a curative ethos" (Webster, 2013, p.147).

In this respect, "whenever organizational realities undergo modification, actors' imaginary investments of this reality are always likely to be invalidated, hence threatening to block processes of adaptation" (Arnaud, 2012, p.1129), so the organization needs to develop processes and capacities for critical reflexivity. In the absence of such reflexivity, the organization will risk developing "neurotic and dysfunctional tendencies…expressed in the culture and structure of the organization" (Kersten, 2007, p.65). Psychoanalysis is

considered to pose a problematic for scientific and managerial discourses and is "unique in its systematic study of the dimension of the excluded" (Arnaud & Vanhuele, 2013, p.1664) and the absence or lack that is at the centre of subjectivity.

For this reason, applying psychoanalysis as a focus on strategic discourse forces one to re-evaluate what was previously thought, known and given. Indeed, "the very notion of management can find itself transformed, through having been deconstructed and reconstructed as a result of the organizational insight induced by a psychoanalytic orientation" (Arnaud, 2012). From a practice perspective, this involves an exploration of the signifiers – language – at play in the organization as it relates to its strategic discourse and inviting its strategists to deconstruct them and to symbolize, in language, new meanings and new purposes, and to question the master signifiers in their discursive field. To the extent that strategy enactment is a linguistic activity "speech does not belong to it but is rather an expression of a larger structural whole" (Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010, p.1025).

A strategy discourse, including the more naturalist Strategy-As-Practice perspective that omits the centrality of the unconscious and language from its ambit is operating at a level of non-awareness and potentially represses the undiscussable but which needs to be said. A strategy discourse that disavows lack and absence is itself splitting off an important element of the dialectical process that can be the cause of its progress and development. It will obscure the potentiality of presence in absence. What this demonstrates, in pursuing an argument for negation – looking for what is not there – is that we, as seeking and desiring human subjects, make it our life's project to desire, in order to cover over a lack, and to regain what we never had; to seek the lost object and to return to a place of plenitude and primary narcissism (Vorus & Wilson, 2004).

Negation causes the human subject, as for the organization, to pose questions should it so choose in a reflexive process of inquiry about its purpose, its meaning for its members, its objectives, the kinds of good and services it produces, its processes for sensing, seizing and reconfiguring its resources (Teece, 2009; 2012), and sensemaking about its past. It poses fundamental questions about it as an *organizing* of people to produce goods and

services in an enterprise and psychoanalysis provides a practice that helps the organization take account of the unconscious in its reflexive inquiry. Psychoanalysis "helps the person to develop a deep understanding of who he or she is and helps develop methods of reflexivity" (McAuley et al., 2014, p.377) which leads to a self-awareness and an ability to overcome the distorting effects of neurotic behaviour, whether manifest at the individual or organizational level.

Where organizational goals are not clear, there will be an absence and potentially a primary risk (Hirschorn, 1977) will emerge. Or, the absence may constitute another part of the dialectic in a 'principal contradiction' (Whitaker & Lieberman, 1964) which creates such antagonism so as to bring about an entropic synthesis of the organization's death and its return to the Real.

2.17 Issues Arising from the Literature Review

In this Chapter I have linked the ideas of anxiety, or what is unconsciously avoided, fantasy, lack, absence and strategizing together with a possible picture of an organization that has actively repressed or avoided a strategy. In this frame, the avoidance of anxiety is the objective, and the perception of reality, the fantasy, is created to accommodate this avoidance. This repression of significant material from awareness can result in the repetition of behaviours that are painful or maladaptive and which present as a symptom. It is useful to consider the import of the literatures.

The conclusions from the literature review can be summarized as follows:

- Conventional strategy research is generally directed at the level of the firm, not the individual, although the Strategy-As-Practice approach has developed this area. This applies equally to the Resource Based View, which is explicit about its focus on resources and dynamic capabilities together with managerial 'sensing'. Resources clearly includes people, their experience and knowledge, but this view does not develop its theorizing at the level of the individual, their ability to firstly sense and make sense of their environment, and secondly to act on that to change it.

- Previous strategy research can be broadly divided into studies of the Content of strategies and the Process by which strategy is formulated. The Strategy-As-Practice perspective, while avoiding a reification of practices (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015) focuses on who, what and how strategy is formulated and enacted and holds promise for understanding the more micro-foundations of strategizing. This thesis is considered to contribute significantly to this perspective by studying managers' reflections as they consider challenges in their organization's environment.
- The social-cognitive and emotional psychological perspectives on strategy, as critically important as they are, are limited by their emphasis on the models of sensory and cognitive information processing that they are reliant upon, but could be enriched by psychodynamic and psychoanalytic insight, a position alluded to, but not developed, by two writers in the social-cognitive tradition (Hodgkinson & Wright, 2002).
- The Strategy-As-Practice approach is explicit in its goal of understanding 'how' strategy is formulated – "a focus on everyday activity is critical because practices are understood to be the building blocks of social reality" (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p.1241) – and while there have been excellent insightful studies on strategizing practices (e.g., the discursive practices of strategizing by Mantere & Vaara, 2008) it is argued that there is something of a 'pre-step' to strategizing practice, which is missing, wherein people consider and try to make sense of their business environment. The study of reflections and perceptions by those tasked with strategy is not reflected in the literature.
- The strategy literature treats with strategy as either a 'property' that the organization has, or latterly as something people do: In both senses it is something 'positive' that can either be observed or described, in some way. While there has been an attempt to theorize strategy absence, it has not been developed as a concept in the literature. This research attempts to build upon the theorization of the absence of strategy.
- While the psychoanalytic literature has addressed questions of organizational purpose – its primary task – and the primary risk to this, there has been relatively

little focus on the formulation of strategy, as such, save for Sullivan & Langdon's (2008) work. While Butler (2017) has conceptually critiqued the Strategy-As-Practice approach from a Zizekian philosophical-psychoanalytic perspective, there have been no empirical studies on strategy drawing from a Lacanian psychoanalytic tradition.

3. Chapter Three – Philosophical Commitment & Methodological Approach

3.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This Chapter provides an outline of my philosophical commitment and methodological approach; it sets out how I 'see' the social world and my approach to how it should be investigated. In this regard, my philosophical approach privileges the importance of language both as a medium and the object of study. It is through language that I approach others' language, represented as texts arising from the research material. I explain the method used to gather the research material and the hermeneutic 'attitude' required to open up the subsequent texts. In these respects, I set out what I understand about language, the decision to adopt interviewing as the method for gaining the research material and introduce the idea that the interview transcripts are texts to be worked through and interpreted using the hermeneutic method.

My approach to this research is principally a phenomenological understanding of an aspect of the social world which is mediated to us through language. My philosophical approach is subjectivist-interpretivist in which the conventional assumption in research of being objective is questioned. My particular interest is in understanding how lacking and desiring human subjects attempt to interpret their business environment in order to produce a response to it, noting that, ontologically, both lack and absence, being deprived of any positivity, are filled with signifiers that have real effects in the social world, but which otherwise carry subjective, unconscious meaning for the speaker and the organization.

The Chapter starts with a discussion about language and how the words that are spoken construct the reality of the speaker and the listener, turning then to a consideration of the phenomenological idea of the intentionality of consciousness towards objects, thereby creating 'things'. I then introduce the idea that the word and what is signified are split – that they do not have a natural and given correspondence – mirroring the split in the human subject between consciousness and unconsciousness, but adding that words are always spoken by a real human being who has desires, a history and who is in communion with other subjects. It is on this basis, I argue, that discourses need to be

understood subjectively and that within these discourses there are depths that need to be opened. This is alethic understanding in hermeneutics – making visible what was once hidden – and in the case of Senatus, this is desire, loss and trauma. This narrative provides the setting for me to outline my methodological approach to the research.

3.2 The Study of Words at Senatus

This research project is about the strategizing process in my organization, and specifically 'strategic sensing' (Teece, 2007), that part of the strategic process concerned with the perception and evaluation of strategic issues; how people involved in strategizing understand their strategic context, the issues and challenges. I set out to establish how they construct and interpret these issues and what choices they consider that they have as a result. I set out to gather the words that are in use about strategy in the subject organization, Senatus, to listen to them, to analyse them and to try to make sense of them against a theoretical framework.

Johnson & Duberley (2000) argue that "epistemological commitments are a key feature of our pre-understandings which influence how we make things intelligible" (p.1) and while much research fails "to consider the theoretical underpinnings of the methodology chosen and the link between the methods employed" (Whitehead, 2003, p.512) this Chapter starts with a development of my philosophical position with regard to researching social and organizational phenomena, centring on a discussion of ontology and epistemology and the place of language within that, the reflexive position adopted by me in consequence of this, namely a subjectivist-interpretivist approach, together with an overview of the critical hermeneutic philosophical and methodological underpinning of that position.

My interest is not in looking back on the outcome (content) of a strategy taken nor is it in an evaluation of the process(es) undertaken in reaching a strategy. Rather, it is focused on a particular micro-foundation (Foss, 2009; Molina-Azorin, 2014) of strategy – reflections on strategic sensing, the absence of strategy, and the perceiving of important questions about the organization and what it must do in order to approach change, while noting Kincaid's (1996) reservation that "searching for lower-level accounts can be

informative as a complement to, but not a substitute for, more macro investigations and that reduction is not the only route to the ideal of a unified science" (p. 142). Nevertheless, the micro-foundations of strategy are a 'behavioral paradigm' (Devinney, 2013) of which this research is an instance. While cognitive psychology has contributed significantly to the field of strategic decision-making, there has been little research conducted from a psychoanalytic perspective. A psychoanalytic perspective offers something different from conventional methodologies; it is the study of what is not there, what is absent and unconscious. Psychoanalytic organizational research and intervention is about "understanding on the part of the consultant, who…presents recommendations aimed at enhancing rationality" (Zaleznik, 1989, p. 357) and to deepen awareness. I also hold an assumption that "methodologies cannot be true or false, only more or less useful" (Silverman, 1993, p. 2). A psychoanalytic perspective redresses some of the other, more post-structuralist approaches to discursivity which exclude the psychological in favour of a determination of people as "empty subjects that parrot social meanings" (Saville-Young, 2014, p.279-280).

I consider that language is both an impediment to any social reality and that it is through language that we come to understand the structure of social reality, because, from birth, we are structured by the representational order of language; it is from this formation that our social structures are created. I also argue that we need to understand who 'we' are in our relation to others and the phenomena that we are studying, that this understanding affects what we take to be knowledge about what we study, and that the "interplay between philosophical ideas and empirical work marks high-quality social research" (Alvesson & Sklodberg, 2009, p.10). Research is about "interpretation rather than representation" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.11) of a given reality, contrasting with a positivistic belief that 'data' are facts that are already there, awaiting discovery by the researcher who will organize and "synthesize" them (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.16) into governing laws of predictability. Moreover, it requires an awareness that "before we interpret language, language itself is an interpretation" (Uggla, 2010, p.4).

What is required for research, I argue, is therefore a proposition that we understand our own subjectivity, what we take to be reality and how we can know it while being aware

that this can be constructed and changed by the sliding of meaning in language. In this sense, I approach research from a subjectivist assumption "about the ontological status of the social phenomena that we deal with, which, philosophically, entails the view that what we take to be social reality is a creation, or projection, of our consciousness and cognition" (Gill & Johnson, 2010, p.201) and that the alternating poles of subject and object is a questionable differentiation (Moran, 1999). This is even more pressing as, coming from the perspective of the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Scott-Baumann, 2009) – psychoanalysis – our projections, through language, are unconscious to us. I will also attempt to explore the question of truth and authenticity in research by considering the usefulness and appropriateness of looking at phenomena as they appear to be and, rather, arguing for a position of authenticity that adopts psychoanalysis, critical theory and hermeneutics. This requires a fundamental understanding that "there is no inner and outer in hermeneutic research, in the sense of an unbridgeable chasm between self and world" (Moules et al., 2015, p.75) and that hermeneutic enquiry is about comprehending what it means to be in the world in different and particular instances, such as that which obtains in Senatus. This leads me to adopt a position of arguing for epistemic reflexivity (Johnson, 1995) in research that requires the researcher to look awry (Zizek, 1992) at a given situation, to deploy a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Scott-Baumann, 2009) and a psychoanalytic gaze that will uncover the unconscious meanings of speech in interview texts, the method of knowledge production that I have chosen (Kvale, 2003).

3.3 Consciousness of the 'Thing'

Husserl said that there is always intentionality to our consciousness (Kearney, 1986); that when we apprehend phenomena, our consciousness reaches out to it and that we need to examine how phenomena come into our knowledge. What matters is how the world comes into our knowledge rather than there being a world that is objectively comprehensible and 'out there'. The world, for Husserl, is an experience that we live as against an object that we can know and to know about something is to first experience it. An apparent objective truth must be based in a living consciousness prior to it becoming a thing. For Husserl, the world is not an object awaiting the subject. This is

significantly different from positivistic views of the social world where "central to empiricism is the view that human beliefs about the external world only become valid knowledge when they have survived the test of experience" (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.15).

In Husserlian terms, the world is transcendent, and we exist in it before we become aware of it, but the world is always disclosed to us in a way that it is always *for* us and our understanding is grounded in a way that is about our relationship to our experience. Positivism would seek to represent our world to us in a reducible way that appears to correspond with reality (Johnson & Duberley, 2000) so that consciousness is reduced to fixed and measurable parts. For the realist, to observe something, to count it, is to provide evidence for its existence, whereas for Husserl, when we bring something to mind, we have an intentional relationship with the thing and it is this that provides us with evidence, not of the physical thing, but of our lived experience. It is our understanding of our lived experience that provides us with meaning and as our understanding of the same experience may deepen over time, this provides us with meaning, and with meaning, choice. Human consciousness is intended for purpose and is built upon by our interaction with others (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and human perception is inextricably linked with context: "The content of consciousness is not a reflection of an external reality but the result of an intentional engagement with an object of cognition" (Stahl, 2014, p.3).

In phenomenological terms, there are implications for how we can understand the world; in the first instance, there is no social reality existing independently of our consciousness, and secondly, knowledge is something that is shared amongst conscious beings, not something that can be discovered. What is given is left to the imagination of the perceiver, the subject to decide. Husserl leads us back to the things themselves – *zu den Sachen selbst* (Kearney, 1986) – so that we may, before we objectify the world, understand our experience in it and that it is "only through hermeneutical reflection am I no longer unfree over against myself but rather can deem freely what in my preunderstanding may be justified and what is unjustifiable" (Gadamer, 1967, p.38). This

is true both of the research strategy and of the reflexive way of knowing I elaborate on in the final chapter addressing reflexivity.

3.4 Division of the Word, the Object and the Human Subject

In my approach to language, the word referent is never fixed between the object of consciousness and the signification given to it by the subject, the knower, except at the level of a subjective truth. This thinking follows de Saussure who said that the sign for a signifier – the relation between a word and the concept that it signifies do not have a direct correspondence – and that signs (words) can only be understood in their relation to all other signifiers in the signifying system. Language is considered to be the place from where all thought emerges: "…one can neither divide sound from thought nor thought from sound" (Saussure, 1966, p.113) and "as people think and speak, they concatenate signifiers in signifying chains" (Arnaud & Vanhuele, 2013, p.1666). From my methodological perspective, there are two critical points at play here: first, the pieces of interview text both analysed and quoted in the research are not 'pieces of reality' describing an 'as is' state of affairs in Senatus and, second, my interpretation of these texts and the ensuing intertextuality of these texts that form part of wider, dominant or hegemonic discourses in Senatus, cannot, within the hermeneutic and psychoanalytic traditions be free of my 'subjective bias' or 'prejudice' (Gadamer, 1966). Accordingly, I advance the view that it will not be possible to remove all constructions and biases to arrive at the 'truth', but it will, I argue be possible to provide 'better', more 'useful' (Silverman, 1993) and 'good enough' explanations of the phenomena studied that is done so in a manner of authenticity.

Words, signifiers, carry unconscious significance and desire. The presence of unconscious desire informs every choice that we make and is apparent in the omissions, contradictions, tangents and gaps in our speech. The study of the unconscious in organizational strategizing is therefore the study of discourse whereby the "interest in language has tended to move from limited linguistic units to larger textual units" (Alvesson & Skolderg, 2009, p. 234) and moreover "discourse analysis looks at how reality is constructed in fine-tuned ways in language" (ibid, p. 235). I have also adopted the

psychoanalytic approach because "traditional rational perspectives on decision making take strategic decisions at face value" (Hendry, 2000, p. 956) and "the rationalistic, objective tradition within the strategy field…is questionable" (Balogun & Johnson, 2005, p. 1). It questions whether thinking can be solely effected through rational self-control (Evans, 2008; Kahneman, 2011; Slingerland, 2015).

Within the psychoanalytic lens, I consider that there are a number of challenges to the study of how individuals involved in strategizing understand their environment and express it and I believe that it needs to be understood within a subjectivist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and here, this perspective differs from the "methodological monism" (Gill & Johnson, 2010, p. 148) of other approaches in the social sciences. There is however a commonality with feminist methodology in that experience is viewed as something which cannot be accessed easily as it is always mediated by societal institutions, discourses, culture and language (Dunker & Parker, 2009).

As I am interested in how the unconscious shapes strategic priorities, this raises a question as to what can truly be learned from research participants who are involved in strategizing who do not necessarily have conscious awareness of unconscious desire (Kearney, 1986). An equally important consideration is how I as the researcher am ostensibly positioned to determine the presence of something that is not consciously expressed in speech and whether any conclusions about the knowledge I believe I gain from the encounter can be anything other than a construction on my part.

This latter point is particularly relevant in my approach, in that I studied members of my own organization who are involved in strategizing where the "relationships and bonds between researcher and researched are part of the 'meaning' researchers make of their findings and of the research accounts that they write" (Tietze, 2010, p. 54) requiring ethical awareness and a reflexivity that will involve not only 'thinking about thinking' (Gill & Johnson, 2010) but also an awareness of the socio-cultural and historical situatedness of my position as both actor and researcher in the organization. Indeed, those interviewed for the research were not only organizational members, but are, with the exception of the managing director, peers. Peer research is not an uncommon methodology and can be beneficial as long as positionality is identified and maintained in

awareness (e.g., Byrne et al., 2015). This was salient in my instance as I wanted to understand something that appealed to my inquisitiveness and in using a hermeneutic methodology, I "cultivated the art of discernment, of seeing into the singularity of the situation, into the unexpected demands of the singular, seeing what the situation is calling for, hearing what calls to us in this situation" (Caputo, 2015, p.xviii). This singularity of situation is one organization and the senior team within it, of which I am a member.

The methodological approaches of hermeneutics and psychoanalysis, an alignment that McAuley (2004) supports, offer a deep understanding of textual discourse, and focus on the inconsistencies and discontinuities of speech as it is spoken by the (split) subject (Kearney, 1986). This was a qualitative approach to researching strategizing where there are "innumerable meanings…truth must be fought for and the point is precisely to engage in this struggle, which is already a discursive entanglement" (Neill, 2013, p. 336). This struggle over meaning is conducted within the hermeneutic circle, a "generative recursion between the whole and the part" (Moules et al., 2015, p.122) so that there is movement along its contours; the researcher moves inside the material, comes outside it, reflects and moves into it again.

My rationale for choosing psychoanalysis as a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Scott-Baumann, 2009) is because I believe that this research approach helped me uncover the deeper meanings of an aspect organizational strategizing. The hermeneutics of suspicion advocates a sceptical stance in respect of what is apparently known and given, that an unmasking is required in a methodological approach so as to enhance criticality. Hermeneutics is interpretation leading to transformation (Ferraris, 1996) and therefore to interpret is to engage in some form of transformation, at the very least of some words into other words. But there is more to this 'transformative possibility' (Kinsella, 2006) and the people who inhabit and populate organizations are part of its culture, history, traditions and fabric. "At the heart of hermeneutics is the idea of aletheia" (Moules et al. 2015, p.3) which Caputo (1987) called "the event of concealment and unconcealment" (p.115) and what Roberge (2011) refers to as 'show and hide'. This 'event' is important as when an interviewee at Senatus speaks about a

topic, they are bringing something into awareness, but because it is wrapped in the conventions of language, such as metaphor, its meaning is simultaneously known and concealed. This 'event' therefore, can be potentially emancipatory, or may continue to be repressed from awareness.

My approach to understanding the social world is that I do not deny that "objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.108). Methodologically, then, I interviewed colleagues and analysed those parts of their speech that 'perform' something, such as giving sanction to a particular course of strategic action; where it appears that there is 'closure' on a subject through the use of certain words, but where this 'smooth' discourse may be opposed elsewhere in the text. In other words, the methodology brought 'suspicion' to what was said. Kvale (2003) says that interviewing subjects is "pointing to a paradox that knowledge originally produced by qualitative interviews has become generally accepted but the interview method producing this knowledge generally rejected" (p.275), so choosing interviews as the method for collection of material is not unproblematic. Citing Adorno's (1993) and Dichter's (1960) work, Kvale explained that both researchers asked somewhat indirect questions so as not to motivate psychological defences in what was termed by Dichter a 'depth-interview', and this is the nature and style of interview technique that I adopted, one that was an 'open mode' of interviewing (Kvale, 2003) such that "the interview enquiries were directed towards the interpretation of meaning, unfolding the complexities of the subject's answers, and not forging them into predetermined categories for subsequent quantification" (p.280). Interviewing participants in this depth-interview and open mode therefore appeared to be the optimal approach to gathering research material suited to my philosophical and theoretical position: I was interested in how strategy was talked about and how strategic issues were perceived at Senatus.

Psychoanalysis involves the study of speech by the human subject who is contextually and dynamically situated in socio-cultural discourses (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010) which underpin the bond between humans, mediated by language. It essentially involves

listening to discourse, listening to speech. In order to access the unconscious, it is argued that one must understand language and a key idea of the research is that language itself is unconsciousness as it is not at the full disposal of the speaking human subject.

This next section of the Chapter is divided into two parts. In the first, I explain how I went about collecting the 'words spoken' at Senatus as they related to strategizing and how these became constructed as texts. I also outline the hermeneutic approach to texts and the understanding within this tradition that the study of texts requires a 'melding' of any subject-object distinction.

In the second part, I describe the analytic method ultimately chosen, and the basis for same and then provide an example of a cycle of analysis of a piece of text. I then conclude the Chapter by identifying the five themes that were gathered from the research material's analysis.

3.5 Listening to Unconscious Discourse

I was interested in the discourse of the senior team at Senatus as "it is the primary arena for action, understanding and intersubjectivity" (Wiggins & Potter, 2007, p. 73). It seemed appropriate therefore, that I should interview my research participants in order to listen to their reflections on a certain subject and which form the basis of the research material. Interviewing has "long been a central technique of knowing" (Alvesson & Lee Ashcraft, 2010, p.240) and a way of gathering the 'talk' of the subject organization. My understanding of my approach to qualitative research is that it involves an epistemological position that is interpretivist where the "stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 386); however, psychoanalysis adds another dimension in its positioning of the opacity of desire and lack in discourse.

Psychoanalytic listening and reading is attending to "the discourse that recounts an experience, for its discontinuities…paradoxes…the analytic path is opened up by something that resists, something that disrupts the continuity of conscious meaning" (Felman, 1987, p.108). Accordingly, I was interested in Senatus' reflections on strategy. Discourse is not a binary or dialogic process between individuals, but rather a triangular

structure where discourse must pass through the socio-symbolic order of language (Felman, 1987). In this respect, the signifier carries a message in regard to its placing in the structure of discourse, but it does not necessarily capture or embody meaning for the human subject, who is the subject of the unconscious. The implication for me as researcher in understanding this spoken or written discourse is that the use of common signifiers in strategizing discourse structures the way organizational members perceive, but that there is always an alternative reading of signifiers.

An important aspect of discourse is that, because the human subject is also the subject of the unconscious, unconscious desire is also present in his or her speech. For psychoanalysts, there is an aspect of speech that eludes symbolization, which cannot be put into words, an excess of meaning. Therefore, what I sought to understand in the texts were the narratives that superficially appear complete, but which cannot be closed, perhaps because of a doubt or an incompleteness.

This relates to the strategist's desire: From the perspective of organizational strategizing, this is manifest in repeated strategies that fail to be realised. But it is in repetition, the "price we pay for the failure to grieve our losses" (Russell, 2006, p. 83), and repetitive failure, that insight into the unconscious is to be located and whereupon the signifier of failure can be read textually. Repetition of failure may be experienced as "occurring and totally determined by the present situation, but which…can only be understood as determined by the past" (ibid. p.87) and it is the hermeneutics of suspicion that tries to uncover this linking of past trauma to current strategic behaviour and understandings. As will be seen in the research, Senatus used a particular financial strategy repeatedly – downsizing – through which a hoped-for outcome was elusive.

A fundament of the research approach is that the unconscious is ever-present in the subject's spoken discourse; "key signifiers, which are full of repressed desires for the subject undergo repression" and this is "precisely where desire pierces" speech (Arnaud, 2002, p.695-696). But signifiers can represent, albeit temporarily, opposing ideas. A repressed signifier might coalesce with an innocuous one in organizational discourse, such that the single signifier can "hold contradictory ideas or desires together" (Gabriel, 1991, p.321) resulting in a 'compromise formation' producing a distorted version of

"something of the pleasure which they are designed to prevent" (Freud, 1907, p.125). In this way, the participant's phrasing is important as unconscious fantasy gets enacted through the substituting effect of normative forms of organizational talk.

The psychoanalytic understanding of the organization approaches "manifest aspects of behaviour with either indifference or suspicion" (Gabriel, 1991, p.320) so it is appropriate that the discourse of an interview text might be looked upon from a position of non-understanding. For Arnaud (2002), a "group imaginary does indeed exist, (but) it must be referred to a symbolic universe upon which it depends" (p.695), so in this sense when analysing discourse, one must have reference to the history of the organization and its own understanding of its place. For instance, certain master signifiers confer legitimacy or naturalness when used and the strategist's belief that s/he can, say, predict the future using an analytical model is in fact an understanding of environmental control which provides a "foundational fantasy for management" (Roberts, 2005, p.630). So, when certain key signifiers are selected and incorporated into spoken discourse they become ostensibly unchallengeable. The objective of a psychoanalytic analysis "is to show how a single meaning is expressed and ramified at many levels and laying the basis for co-ordinated" (Schwartz & Hirschorn, 2008, p.23) organizational strategy.

3.6 Interview Method

My research approach involved interviewing eight people who comprised the senior team and Board of Senatus. I was aware when devising the research strategy that this is a small number of people, however, this is a case study (Yin, 2009) and fits within the definition of same in that it is an "inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (p.18). It comprises the full senior team (save for myself), and is not dissimilar in scale to other professional doctorate case studies (e.g., Foster, 2011). The team are a 'homogenous' group in that they are all members of the Board and are part of the executive management team at Senatus. There were no more potentially suitable participants involved in the strategy and direction of the firm, and this team *should* be involved in strategizing. Guest et al. (2006) has guided that between four and twelve participants is appropriate for a study of a homogenous group. I was

conscious that not all directors may have wished to participate however, it transpired that all directors were content to form part of the research project. One 'voice' is privileged, however, and that is the managing director's, Harry, who is ostensibly charged with the responsibility for setting the direction of the organization.

My interview approach to knowledge-acquisition is grounded in the Romantic tradition where it is considered that "the nearer we come to the respondent, the closer we are to apprehending the real self. Through closeness and depth, we can find the authentic and true expressed in talk" (Alvesson & Lee Ashcraft, 2010, p.242). I carried out these interviews in an unstructured format (Saunders et al., 1997) to allow space for the interviewee to develop their thoughts and points. The position as interviewer that I adopted was one of being non-directive, following the Rogerian craft of psychological interviewing (Kvale, 2009) which advocates a stance of positive regard for the interviewee (Rogers, 1989).

In the interview setting, I wanted to "create a stage where the subject is free to talk of private events recorded for later public use" (Kvale, 2009, p.16), so as to then create a text that can be interpreted using the hermeneutic method for uncovering meaning, which contrasts with "a methodological positivist conception of knowledge, as given facts to be quantified" (ibid. p.18). It is about not only understanding the text created, but what is beyond the text and what is linked into wider cultural themes. In this respect, hermeneutics differs from other forms of textual analysis, rooted in discourse analysis which are perhaps informed by post-structuralist philosophies.

As part of the unstructured interview, I posed just two questions which I considered would allow the participant to reflect on the subject of the organization's strategy. These were open questions and were '*can you tell me about what you believe are the strategic issues facing our organization'* and *'what kind of response do you believe we should have to address them?*' Then I probed (Egan, 2007) further points that I found were interesting in the interview-conversation, or where I felt that the participant had a particular interest (please see 'Appendix A: Interview Guide'). This is consistent with the approach set out by Schorn (2000) who suggested that interviewees should not be presented with a list of questions, particularly where they are being asked to 'unfold' about a topic.

According to Hollway & Jefferson (2000), who developed a psychoanalytic approach to qualitative research interviewing, "subjects are motivated *not* to know certain aspects of themselves" (p.169) and they produce narrative accounts of their actions which actively avoid this type of knowledge. This suggested that the interview should be informal, relaxed and that I as the interviewer needed to put the participant at ease as much as is possible so that psychological defences were not too strong such that they became an impediment to the dialogue. Following the recommendation of Rosenthal (1993) and Schutze (1992), Hollway & Jefferson (1997) suggest that the questions posed are open-ended, that one avoids using 'why' questions as this generates 'intellectualizing', to elicit concrete stories and to frame follow-up questions using the respondent's own ordering and phrasing. I used the Rogerian exhortation to 'positive regard' for the interviewee to achieve this.

Alvesson & Sandberg (2013) argue that in the "craft of qualitative interview research…there are few standard rules or common methodological conventions" (p.15). In approaching the interview, I as the researcher needed to understand that "conflict, suffering and threats to self operate on the psyche in ways that affect people's positioning and investment in certain discourses" (Boydell, 2009, p.19) so that what is actually said in the interview in terms of strategic understanding may be motivated by unconscious processes. An idealized interpretation of an organization's current situation or future state, in this frame, can be interpreted as a psychologically defensive process wherein interviewees are motivated to disguise the meaning of their actions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

In order to enhance the quality of the research interview, however and to try to overcome such psychologically defensive processes, I decided on the open questions noted earlier, so as to elicit stories to bring about a greater sense of indexicality and to remove abstractness (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). Hollway and Jefferson emphasise the importance of 'free association' in the research interview where possible; a method developed by Freud, which does not depend on encouraging narrative coherence. Hollway & Jefferson (2000) remark that when interviewing subjects and analysing data with a psychoanalytic attitude one should attend to and reflect upon what one notices;

why one notices what's said; and how one can interpret what one hears in a manner that is the most 'correct', but that this can only be done with respect to the entire text. The 'why' of what one notices links into the concept of counter-transference and how one should notice what one feels in the research interview as this may point to important material that one may reflexively focus on in the textual analysis stage (Holmes, 2014; Marks & Monnich-Marks, 2003). Therefore, recording my own thoughts and feelings about how I felt during the interview formed part of the reflexive treatment of the research material.

Psychoanalytically-ordered research is therefore interpretivist in that the participant is describing their understanding of 'reality' where "the primary concern is to understand the subjective experience of individuals" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.253), the philosophical roots of which are in Kantianism and German Idealism. It understands "the social world as an emergent social process which is created by the individuals concerned" (ibid, p.28). The potential meaning of the spoken or written signifier requires successive iterations of figure and ground interpretation. This approach is therefore hermeneutic in its application as it is ultimately revelatory, or alethic: concealment and unconcealment.

3.7 Hermeneutic Approach to Texts

I carried out a textual analysis of a key organizational discursive source; text from interviews with a senior team on their reflections about strategy. I had hoped to obtain Board minutes, which I was initially confident to obtain permission to use, however, upon requesting consent to use this information, permission was not refused, but I was left with an impression that this would be considered uncomfortable for the steward of that information, the managing director. It is indeed difficult to know what was lost by not having this material to analyse, but ultimately, I believe that the 'speech' of the senior team was sufficient to understand 'reflections' on strategy at Senatus taking the perspective that "social phenomena of all kinds should be analysed in detail, and interpreted as texts" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p.237), particularly in this instance, interviews, so that their "exegesis culminates in the interpretation of the written records of existence" (Dilthey, 1976, p.228).

This textual source was, I believe, suitable for a hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutics "dissolves the polarity between subject and object into a more primordial, original situation of understanding, characterized by a disclosive structure" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.95). Like psychoanalytic knowledge, hermeneutic philosophy argues that the world precedes one's conscious reflection and the object external to the subject is a "dubious secondary construction" (ibid. p.116), following a Kantian Idealism; that textual interpretation of organizational actors' speech and actions is about understanding the discourse in its context, as part of its own history, not something separate and extra-discursive to the circumstances of the organization. Like the signifier, there is an indecidability between the text and what is ostensibly 'out there', but also that "a successful interpretation is from a perspective, takes place from within a position in history" (McLeod, 2001, p.22) and the aim of hermeneutics is to "expand the 'historical consciousness' through which we read" (ibid. p.31) a text. The hermeneutic "goal is not to carve away at all the extremities of the phenomenon of interest to reach an essence or core, to achieve an uncontaminated description of it stripped of its context" (Moules et al., 2014, p. 3), but to provide an alternative reading.

I have adopted a critical hermeneutic position (Kinsella, 2006; Roberge, 2011), linked to psychoanalysis: "Critical hermeneutics asks how certain texts contribute to the maintenance or evolution of (a) system of meaning and hence to the patterns of social relations in particular situations" (Phillips & Brown, 1993, p.1548). This hermeneutic doubts existing taken-for-granted interpretations and ways of understanding. It "focuses on uncovering and articulating the social and historical conditions and structures that produce meaning" (Mendonca, 2015, p.213). The psychoanalytic approach to knowledge is a dialectical one; the conscious articulated discourse by an organizational subject is opposed or subverted by the unconscious discourse which attempts to poke through in hesitancies, repetitions and gaps. Whereas the conscious discourse is enunciated and effected by the subject through *master signifiers*, the unconscious discourse provides an opportunity for pause and potential creativity. In reality, it is impossible to provide a detailed and grounded epistemology for knowledge that is effectively unknown, but that should not stop us from trying (Neill, 2013). We cannot 'know' what is out of the subject's

awareness, but as I have said above, there is the possibility for listening to what is absent from conscious speech and written texts. In this sense, psychoanalytic knowledge is exegetical, revealing to the reader and listener alternative signifiers which have been repressed from awareness; in the moment of a word or phrase being spoken, there is both unconcealment and concealment.

I am interested in "the ordering effects of texts" (Cederstrom & Hoedemaekers, 2010, p. 1) and by questioning them, there is an uncovering of meaning, a belief that behind the presented word form, or signifier, that there is an alternative meaning. Before we interpret signification, we must use signification; this is the hermeneutic circle (McAuley, 1985; McAuley, 2004; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) and in "the hermeneutic sense of knowing, the researcher is immersed in…the scene of study (McAuley, 1985, p.294). This coheres with Lacan's assertion that there is no 'meta-language' (Parker, 2005), no lofty place from which the objective researcher may use a higher discourse to disentangle other discourse. By pressing through with an interpretation of speech or text, another discourse is being created; the discourse of hermeneutic interpretation.

Hermeneutics is as concerned with history as psychoanalysis is and the process of understanding is similar to the latter where the psychoanalyst moves back and forth between what is studied, his/ her own understanding and a theoretical framework (McAuley, 1985) such that there is greater understanding of meaning-making and a space for self-reflection for me as the researcher about the text of study and the social relations that support and reinforce it (McAuley, 2004). Hermeneutics is about drawing out the plurality of meanings (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) both in terms of myself as researcher and the underlying meanings of texts as they present themselves, including those of one's intuition wherein one's subjectivity in relation to the subjectivities of others cannot be ignored (McAuley, 2004). It is concerned with the "primacy of the symbol, where meaning emerges as indirect, mediated, enigmatic, complex and multi-form" (Kearney, 1986, p.92) and the hermeneutic detour through signification is a necessity. In common with the psychoanalytic approach to knowledge a "common trait of the hermeneutic circles is that they present a processual, dialectic solution" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.91). The dissolving of the subject/ object polarity is the back and forth between part

and whole, figure and ground described by McAuley (1985). By going into the text, immersing in it and playing with meaning, there is an anticipation that this will open up the text, bringing 'difficulty' (Caputo, 1987) to what seems straightforward: "When we are asked the precise definitions for common words we cannot give them, simply because they have no precise meaning" (Linge, 1977, p.xxxiv). Indeed, Linge (1977) argues that one cannot escape Heideggerean 'facticity' and that one's situation or circumstance informs one's ontology of understanding and interpretation. This introduces Gadamer's (1967) idea of hermeneutical reflection, through which "I am no longer unfree over against myself but rather can deem freely what in my preunderstanding may be justified and unjustified" (p.38). Thus interpretation, and here psychoanalytic interpretation, is to be judged within its own methods, traditions and debates, which results in a 'fusion of horizons' between my preunderstanding of the strategy literature, the psychoanalytic literature, the organization in which I work, the interview and analytical process, and the conclusions drawn.

My approach to the text of the interviews was to move between them and my own understanding, not to get to a true end necessarily but to ask questions of my own pre-understanding and understanding as I worked on the texts; to knock on the text (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) and ask questions of it. I would argue that my role as the researcher-interviewer was to "reach one (or more) interpretations that are relatively the best, given current knowledge" (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.108) about the text at hand. The hermeneutic endeavour is concerned with the movement of signification from one platform of understanding to another through an engagement with language. Whereas the line of the Imaginary in psychoanalytic understanding seeks to hold the subject to a single signifier (a corporate identity, perhaps), the psychoanalytic-hermeneutic approach to knowledge favours a free play of signifiers from one-to-one reference to allow the freeing of signification and desire to emerge. So far as psychoanalysis is concerned, the bar between signifier and signified is not just a barrier that needs to be overcome to attain meaning, but is instead an obstacle to meaning (Jones, 2009) and goes to the heart of the Freudian ontology of the split subject (Glynos, 2010).

That there is considerable movement or sliding of meaning in hermeneutic text interpretation, should not point to a relativistic approach. Drawing on Guba & Lincoln (1989), Whitehead (2003) suggests that the 'trustworthiness of a study can be endorsed" (p.513) if one firstly interpret one's own experience, thereby demonstrating credibility, as I will attempt to do in the final chapter concerning reflexivity, if secondly, the reader can transfer their understanding of the research to another situation, demonstrating dependability, and finally if no ambiguity can be found about the choices made in my interpretations. This involved being clear in my "foreshadowed understandings" (ibid., p.514) or pre-understandings.

3.8 Textual Analysis

In this section of the Chapter, I begin by setting out the idea that there is no 'one way' to analyse texts and that the ultimate approach taken is dependent on one's philosophical orientation. Hermeneutics is first a philosophy, then an attitude and lastly, a method of sorts. Mostly, I believe, it is about finding one's way through a text. Nevertheless, some form of structure is necessary, not least to make some inter-textual comparisons as I do in the subsequent analyses, and in the following I describe, stage by stage, the full cycle of analysis undertaken for every text.

Ultimately, the approach taken is about disrupting the perceived order of the texts, so that they are not taken at 'face-value'. Rather, they communicate something much deeper, at times existential, and this is consistent with the hermeneutic respect for tradition. Even taken at 'face-value' these texts would not make sense. Psychoanalysis argues that we work hard to present ourselves as making sense, pulling in words and discourses to make ourselves appear 'whole', but that this is an ongoing and mostly contradictory struggle. These texts speak to the situation at Senatus and they are of themselves disordered, but that is not a deterrent to deriving meaning which is manifested in the themes.

Parker (2014) argues that "the notion that there should be a fixed method or grid for reading text is anathema to Lacanian psychoanalysis" (p.38). Instead, it is possible to have many readings of a text. Drawing on the ideas of Badiou and his concept of 'event', Parker

& Pavon-Cuellar (2014) argue that other discursive analyses "stop at and focus on the reality of disclosure" (ibid. p.7) whereas the analysis of discourse should look for the irruptions in its flow as this represents the possibility that there is something outside discourse, such as the Real. The 'event' is a philosophy of "failures, dislocations and discontinuities" (Negro, 2014). The challenge for an analysis of discourse, developed by Parker & Pavon Cuellar (2014) is to bring the 'event' back into discourse by having regard to its place in the structure of the text.

My approach to analysis is an attempt to de-stabilise the single meaning, to unseat the 'universe of one' (Neill, 2013). Instead, it is accepted within psychoanalysis, because the subject is split, that there are many overlapping narratives, and opposing accounts in a subject's discourse. So, when a participant speaks "something is always left out precisely because something more can be said and each new saying will add a dimension, often contradictory" (Frosh, 2014, p.23). Like Neill (2013), the objective of my analysis was not necessarily to retrieve a single meaning or signified from the text. As part of the hermeneutic approach, it moves between the part and the whole in an attempt at illumination, but there is an apparent tension between the refusal to tie a single signified to a single signifier and the 'fusion of horizons' in hermeneutic philosophy (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Therefore, from the perspective of analysing the texts generated, I looked to establish whether there were 'doubts' or gaps in what was spoken by participants, or whether there were contradictions in the discourse thread. What I hoped to retrieve from the analysis was the meaning of the words spoken in their context and how they have come to be spoken by that person in their context. However, in keeping with a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', I wanted to remain suspicious of my own interpretations, sceptical as to whether I have or can retrieve a single meaning. Rather, I expected to find a meaning that 'worked best' for the context.

Dilthey argued that one could not 'know' or empathise with individuals and moved from a position of "personal identification with individuals to an examination of socially derived systems of meaning" (Crotty, 1998, p.95). Similarly, for Ricoeur (1974) hermeneutics was about "a thinking where the plurality of interpretations and understanding may collide and bring inspiration" (p.91) suggesting that there is no 'final' truth to be learned about

what a subject 'thinks' from an external position of knowing, but that there might be a 'truth' for the subject. In this regard, there might be a linguistic 'event' that may give rise to pause in textual analysis.

3.9 Analytic Method

3.9.1 The Stages of Analysis – A hermeneutic process

In this part of the chapter, I set out my analytic process. This is based on a hermeneutic understanding of texts, although there is no fixed method within this tradition for doing so; there are however, general philosophical principles to guide interpretation and it is important to say at the outset that while a reader may not agree with the interpretations developed, my process should at least enable them to understand how I arrived at an interpretation (Whitehead, 2003). Alvesson & Sklodberg (2009) have detailed their own approach to hermeneutic interpretation and I generally follow this, save for some amendments.

My hermeneutic approach starts from that outlined in Figure 2., where the overarching goal of the hermeneutic process is to reach an understanding. More precisely, it is a perspectival understanding, one that is an alternative reading of a text, in its widest sense, to include Ricoeur's definition (Kearney, 1986) consisting of people's talk, written works and social action, to achieve a more useful understanding.

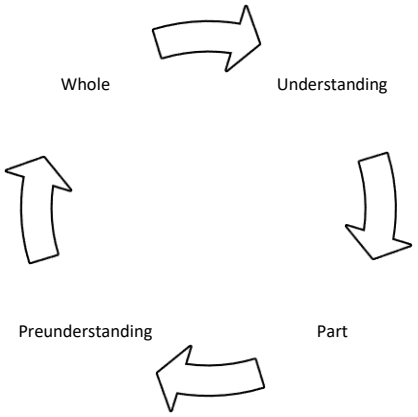

Figure 2. The hermeneutic process (Adapted from Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009)

Here, understanding is incomplete without pre-understanding, or what Gadamer (1976) calls 'prejudice'. Pre-understanding, or prejudice, is that which we know about a phenomenon prior to trying to understand it; in my context, it is my professional daily practice, my prior psychological training, formal and informal management training and the literature review that I have undertaken prior to and during my collection of material. The notion of prejudice is linked to bias: "biases are not to be understood as solely negative or as necessarily closing off understanding. They provide us with a vantage point from which to gain access to a certain subject that we seek to understand" (Metselaar et al., 2016, p.34). For Gadamer (1960/ 1994), "prejudices are our biases of our openness to the world. They are simply the conditions whereby we experience something" (p.9) so they are something that the hermeneutic researcher should bring to mind, not eliminate or 'bracket' in the Husserlian tradition. Rather, it is through 'dialogue' that this precondition to understanding will alter. My prejudice is to use a psychoanalytic lens to understand a social and organizational phenomenon, with which I will dialogue with in the final chapter concerning reflexivity.

As one goes 'into' the material, one's understanding changes through a continuous interaction between what the data is telling one and one's pre-understanding. This is an essential part of the hermeneutic process; one does not come to a phenomenon to study free of pre-understanding, and understanding should not be approached from the perspective of trying to reduce subjectivity through some form of methodological

reflexivity (Johnson & Duberley, 2003). Therefore, one enters a dialogue with the text and through such dialogue one generates patterns of interpretations.

This dialogue takes place at the level of the individual piece of text and at the level of the whole of the text and it is through understanding the part and the whole that one comes to a better understanding of the original text "ensuring that analysis does not move beyond the hermeneutic circle" (Whitehead, 2003, p.512). There is also an aspect of inter-textuality in my research whereby the text of one person is contrasted with another's. It is however, important to note that I do not believe that I can somehow combine all of the texts together to come up with some grand understanding of the phenomenon. That said, however, there are, in the subsequent analysis, common themes and ways of seeing the context of the organization.

When considering the stages of analysis, I took and adapted the approach to hermeneutic analysis as described by Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009), in Figure 3.

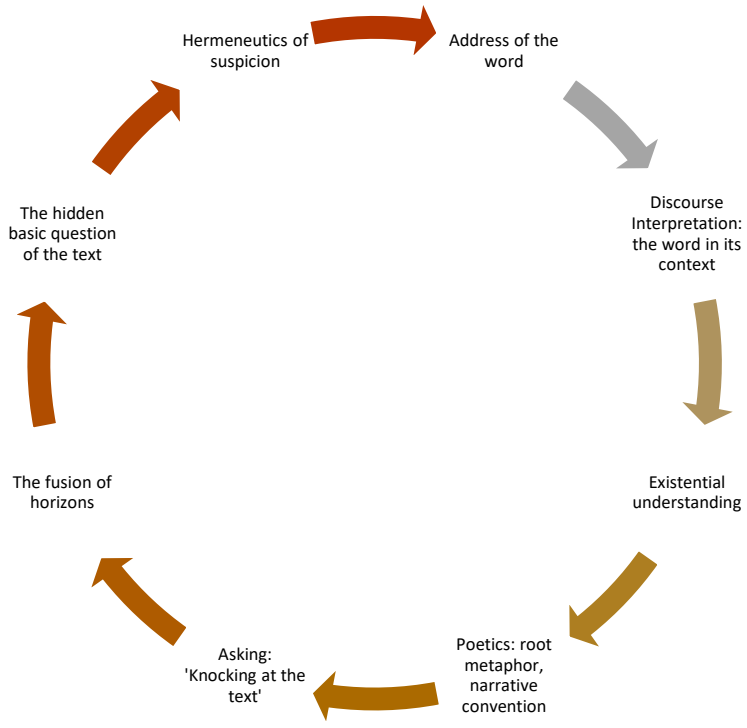

Figure 3. Stages of Analysis Adapted from Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009.

As I am primarily interested in the 'word', its appearance in strategic discourse and its effect on same, I started my analysis with the 'word', 'signifier' or 'code' in terms of how

I was 'addressed' by it (Chang, 2010). This follows a Gadamerian hermeneutic approach where we are 'addressed' by something and our attention is drawn to it. It also follows a general psychoanalytic clinical practice where the psychoanalyst exercises an "evenly suspended attention" and focuses on those words that appear to 'stand-out' in the analysand's speech, an approach echoed in the 'free association narrative' approach to interviewing (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000); words that may be repeated or which seem important, or what Froggett & Hollway (2010) term 'provocations' in the text. In the respective Gadamerian, 'free association narrative' and psychoanalytic clinical approach, the word that addresses the analyst is reflected upon and what is striking about that word, or signifier, is thought about.

In my method here, I reflect on the word and why it interests me. This a preliminary attempt to generate a 'scenic understanding' (Bereswill et al., 2010), a Lorenzian (following the sociologist and psychoanalyst, Alfred Lorenzer) hermeneutic approach which suggests that words or phrases that interest us when we hear them usually have some wider cultural significance. That is, they have been used before, heard before and point to a past or present cultural practice. Or, in a Gadamerian sense, they carry within them tradition, or an understanding of the past, if one is prepared to listen. The idea of tradition is particularly apposite in the subject organization's case in that the tradition of 'professionalism' is referred to by a number of interviewees in their texts. This stage of the process therefore involved me reflecting and writing on that word's significance for me. This is not enough to make an interpretation, just as a psychoanalyst will not make an interpretation until the time is right. It is, rather, a speculation to be written up, reflected on, and written up on further.

My next stage was to carry out a piece of discourse interpretation (DI) (Bell, 2011). I chose this approach as I was unhappy with the general discourse analytic approaches. Discourse analysis is primarily informed or underpinned by a post-structuralist philosophy where the text is considered to be autonomous and to represent discourses that only speak through the person. Rather, my view is that there is a speaking subject, a real person behind the text, not necessarily full of agentic potential, but a person who has had experiences and who attempts to articulate his or her understanding of their world

through words, signifiers that are not their own. Therefore, the word as it is inscribed by the person in their speech is partially made up of both their (unconscious) meanings and associations with the signifier and with what one would generally understand of the word in its specific context.

In this DI cycle of analysis, I was looking to see how the signifier performs the text, or how the unconsciousness of the signifier works through the text to create a potential alternative meaning. This is similar, on some level, to Critical Discourse Analysis (e.g., Fairclough, 2013) where the researcher points up alternative meanings, or opposites in the text in order to disrupt it and to show how dominant ideologies are working through the text. My concern with this approach is that it does not recognise there is a real person behind the text who has his or her own personal story which is, in a way, grafted onto the words spoken such that they carry other, personal and unconscious meanings, or to explain where such words are carried throughout the text creating subject positions, realities and perceptions of the world.

The 'existential understanding' stage of analysis follows Heidegger's *Sorge* or *Dasein (*Kearney, 1986). In this stage, I looked at the piece of text in the context of choice and the acceptance of involuntary positioning, which, as it happens was particularly useful in terms of the nature of the material I have collected. There are questions of existence and finitude as interviewees contemplate redundancies, times past, the loss of identity and shifts in temporality. Temporality appears frequently in the interview texts as people contemplate what has been but find it difficult, or do not have the words to project into the future: an absence of strategy.

The next stage was to examine the poetics of what was being said by the participants and how creatively language is being used to articulate something – a position, a felt sense (Gendlin, 1996). I also drew on 'poetics' (Shotter & Katz, 1996) to develop a deeper understanding, such as looking at metaphors and idioms. The texts are full of very lyrical and rich language which can be considered a form of poetic diction. Poetic diction is a form of speech within which there is potential for creativity and a way of looking at something, a situation, anew.

I then 'knocked at the text' to ask questions and so enter a dialogue between me as the researcher and the text. These questions gave rise to a 'fusion of horizons', an imagined understanding, a stage of better interpretations. Questioning a text is important and as Gonzalez (2006) remarks, for both Gadamer and Heidegger, questions had priorities over answers in the so-called Socratic tradition. The final two stages were about trying to understand what the fundamental, say existential, question(s) of the text was and applying psychoanalytic theory as part of the hermeneutics of suspicion.

These latter two stages were about assuming that there were deeper layers to the texts which required exegesis. For my particular research question, a hidden question in the text might relate to who, as a business, Senatus are and what the failure to decide this question means to them in terms of how they perceive problems and how they respond to them. Once I concluded these cycles of analysis, I was then in a position to generate themes that were working in the texts.

In terms of the practical approach in this method, once the recorded interviews had been transcribed, I considered how I would set about the analytic process. I reviewed the literature in relation to guidance for a suitable process and considered software aids, such as NVIVO (in fact, learning how to use it). This is where the search process became difficult. There is little guidance in the literature about how to conduct an analysis of a text in a hermeneutic fashion. McAuley (2004) explains that interview transcripts should be considered ideographically, allowing the research material to be followed in terms of its own logic and that patterns and themes should emerge intuitively following immersion. Echoing this, Uggla (2010) explains that the hermeneutical circle – the back and forth – "indicates an ontological relationship where understanding is determined by the horizon of both text and reader" (p.50) and to emphasise the 'back', Moules et al. (2015) counsel that "data analysis in hermeneutic research…is divergent rather than convergent: it involves carefully opening up associations that strengthen understanding of the topic" (p.117) and that "interpretive analysis can be thought of as a movement through the landscape of the topic" (p.118). Within this methodological context, the selection of words and phrases into codes and then nodes of such software appeared unfaithful to the texts. There was also a question of ontology: the codification of words

suggests an underlying realist ontology that perceives them as 'pieces of reality' rather than as elements of discourses, or as vehicles of unconscious desire and trauma. Rather, textual reading and analysis is a "separate cognitive realm regulated by the rationality of verstehen" (Uggla, 2010, p.33) "manifested by the key concept of fusion of horizons (horizonversmeltzung)" (ibid., p.38).

With these ideas in mind, I developed a method of working through the texts as set out hereunder:

Table 1. Template for Analysis

Signifier	What strikes me	Its relation to its text	Its relation to the whole	Emergent theme	Application of Hermeneutics of Suspicion
Word	How I am addressed by the Word	Interpretation of the Word in its context (DI)	Categories	Emergent theme or discourse	Application of theory
This is a word or phrase that strikes me in the interview transcript.	Here I explain what strikes me about it and what it relates to, i.e., say, 'identity'. This is the part of the text that I will go back to, in order to try to make sense of what is being said, in order to arrive at a 'good enough' interpretation. This is where I explore 'why' I think that the signifier is important.	Here I look at what the signifier 'does' in the text. What is it trying to 'achieve', say in relation to 'identity' and whether this is successful or not or whether it is contradicted or unseated elsewhere. In other words, what 'work' is the signifier doing in relation to this single piece of text.	Here I look at the signifier and its relation to other texts – interviews, my own journaling – and see how these interact, complement or conflict. I then grouped signifiers together, and defending my choices, to create themes.	In this cycle of inquiry, I try to identify the [senior team] wider discourse that this is a part of, such as 'loss of professional identity'.	In this stage of the data analysis, I look at how theory interacts with what I'm finding, such as that around 'identity' and to what extent theory can enhance understanding.

In terms of the Signifier or Word, I used the approach set out in Saldana (2016). He sets out different coding and categorisation strategies, which he calls first and second cycle methods. The general approach I used was an Affective Method, particularly a 'Values' one, where I focused on beliefs, attitudes, values and interpretations using initially the words used by the person. When I categorised, I linked the signifier into a larger discourse, or theme and then tried to understand how this signifier, group of signifiers – *points de capiton* – supported the wider, atomised, discourse amongst the senior team.

It is relevant to note that the hermeneutic method or template for analysis outlined above did not come immediately, or even after much reflection. Instead, it came about after a number of attempts at analysis which 'got stuck' or where I felt that there was a limitation to the understanding, thereafter prompting me to explore further ways of opening up the texts. The method above provides a higher-order view of the analytic process, the substrate of which were the 'hermeneutic cycles of analysis' which followed my adaption of the Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009) suggested methodological approach indicated earlier. This informed a methodical approach to the cycles of hermeneutic analysis that I followed in the analysis of all of the research material, as below:

1) Reading of the interview text
2) Slow reading of the interview text and selecting words and phrases that interest or strike me
3) Address of the word: my explanation for why the word strikes me
4) Discourse Interpretation: the word in its context
5) Existential understanding
6) Poetics: root metaphor, narrative convention
7) Asking: 'Knocking at the text'
8) The fusion of horizons
9) The hidden basic question of the text
10) Hermeneutics of suspicion

Having determined from the cycles 1 – 4 above, what particular words or phrases 'called out' or addressed me in the topic, I wrote notes on these and then further reflected on them using the set of approaches above.

I address each in turn:

3.9.2 Existential understanding

The interpretative technique in this approach was to examine the text for themes of life; the past, history, future, situatedness and so forth. Both hermeneutics and psychoanalysis are informed by existential philosophies.

3.9.3 Poetics

Language can be both descriptive and creative. Metaphors and metonymic links can have potential to show new light on a topic and here the process was to identify and draw out possible meanings.

3.9.4 Asking: 'Knocking at the text'

In hermeneutics, the text is not passive, to be read by the reader: "the purpose of reading and writing literary texts is to evoke a shadow meaning network whose structures, messages and effects control our lives, but whose truths are evasive" (Ragland-Sullivan, 1984, p.404). The text calls out, but it is also permitted for the researcher to ask questions of the text, particularly about what is hidden.

3.9.5 The fusion of horizons

This cycle of analysis involved trying to enter into the participant's frame and bringing together my latent and manifest pre-understanding to arrive at *an* understanding of the piece of text.

3.9.6 The hidden basic question of the text

This part of the analysis involved considering each interview text as a whole and trying to understand what questions it was asking. This is what is meant by the back and forth of interpretation between the part and whole. By their nature, these questions tended to be existential in nature, contemplating finitude and concerns about who the speaker/ author of the text believes himself to be.

3.9.7 The hermeneutics of suspicion: Application of psychoanalytic theory

The final cycle of analysis involved one of the hermeneutics of suspicion, psychoanalysis. Ricoeur called Nietzsche, Marx and Freud all 'masters' of suspicion because they brought doubt and questions to what was apparently given. I have chosen psychoanalysis and, in keeping with my own pre-understanding and prejudice, I use this as a final cycle of analysis.

3.9.8 An Example

I now provide an example of the process whereby I analysed a piece of text using all of the cycles of analysis. This is an extract from my interview with Harry, the managing director.

Harry said:

There is "*alienation er of the C-suite and what's going on on the shop floor*"

What strikes me

Alienation is an unusual word to use. It suggests a 'divorce' from the task and its purpose. Use of shop-floor is also interesting as it strikes a comparison between manual and office labour. We used to call (a competitor firm when I previously worked there) a 'sweat-shop'. We did it all the time because Management hated that.

Interpretation of the word in its context

Harry has positioned alienation, senior management and shop floor labour in the same sentence. There is an alternating positionality to this. He says it's alienation of the C-suite, not the shop-floor. Why? If the shop-floor, who are professional workers are alienated from the C-suite, what are the C-suite alienated from? Is this an unconscious comment on the alteration in status from professional to 'worker'? Does Harry implicitly 'admit' this in what he is saying?

Existential understanding

This word 'shop-floor' is fascinating, because it occupies a 'site' in management imagination of what is going on with employees. What are they thinking? I have found this term particularly interesting because Harry seems to be saying that the C-suite is alienated. That's true. They are alienated from what is in the 'minds' of the people on the shop floor. But I also find this particularly fascinating because it seems to refer to the site where professional workers in our organization actually carry out their work. It's the shop floor. What is the 'professional' equivalent? Where do they work? Where is the *site* of their work?

The term belongs to another time, where different types of work were carried on, such as more manual-based labour. It also belongs to a time when there were perhaps clearer divisions of categories between 'management' and 'worker'. When Harry categorizes people in this way, it brings into question what they are and the fixity of their positions according to this assignment or designation. Words are hermeneutic in themselves because they convey meaning; they evoke an 'attitude' in the person using or hearing it. In other words, they create positions in themselves. To use words is to interpret the 'already there' world itself.

Poetics

The use of the term 'C-suite', whilst ubiquitous in management and business literature, nonetheless has a 'roll off the tongue' quality. There is sibilance here and when heard

first has a sound of something light, childish and homely. I wonder why that is? The 'C-suite' sound sweet, lovely and neutral. Does it neutralise managerialism?

Asking: 'Knocking at the text'

Why does 'alienation' appear here? What is it trying to say? Yes, there may be alienation in our work, but where is it coming from and who experiences it? Is it suggested that there is alienation experienced by the 'C-suite' or those to whom their messages are addressed?

In the classical understanding of Marxism, alienation occurs from the production of goods which are then sold and from which surplus value is appropriated by the capital owner. The worker neither has control over the goods that are produced and so is alienated, because they are produced for an unseen 'market', and the value that he produces is always in excess of what an individual would need, and therefore this value is appropriated, so therefore the alienation is twice done.

If people are alienated, surely that is not a consequence of the message – the strategy message from the top to the workers – but rather the nature of the work being done, which in a Marxist sense is inherently alienating because of the separation between what is done – work – and why it is done – markets – and the appropriation of value that arises – profit.

Is Harry saying here that therefore, as the result of this alienation, we are being exploited? The point here would appear to be that there is a separation or decoupling of meaning in the messaging from the top to the people with whom we interact thereby resulting in a form of relationship that may be exploitative. We produce services that *we* do not want to, there is a battle over the value that is created; do they own it, get to keep it over us?

The fusion of horizons

Harry's interview text is one that is a response to questions about strategy; our strategic context as an organization and our strategic response.

Surprisingly, or perhaps not so, the text produced by Harry in his answer(s) to me says very little about strategy, or at least our strategy. This is the core question of my research. What is impeding the articulation of this in our organization? What is unconscious language communicating in our organization, and why have steps not been taken to grow the firm? In the seven years since 2010, when we first started to take notice of our reducing revenues, we have consistently downsized such that our revenues continue to fall. We have not articulated either a coherent understanding of the phenomena, and indeed this may be beyond our understanding, nor have we articulated a possible response to it.

Harry's text does not adduce a strategic response either, but it does nevertheless point to what is (un) consciously discussed, thought about, in all of its contradictions, poeisis, falters and indeed coherence.

Harry opens his textual response by speaking about alienation and this is a theme that runs through his textual production. He speaks about alienation in the sense of operational management in the client firms that we work for being 'alienated' from the strategic messages from the top of their respective organizations.

The hidden basic questions of the text

I have already questioned the text and, in places, posed questions that suggest certain types of answers, but when I reflect on Harry's text, particularly after having come through a fusion of horizons, where my understanding of the issues merge with Harry's, I see that the primary hidden question is: How do I enact my desire?

I say this because when I read through it, Harry continually expresses his anger, disappointment and frustration, as well wishing to be different, at the current predicament through words and turns of phrases that evoke fear (monster), anxiety (disruptors) and a need to be transgressive (no-man's land and a dark art).

Harry, I believe, wants to find a way through this web in order to develop a clear understanding of the situation and a response to it. This is very much easier said than done. Many things and situations have gotten in the way, such as the decoupled message of client organizations and their operations. This is complex and it is not easy to steer through this. Hence it is difficult to diagnose the situation and to talk strategically about how to deal with it. Harry, therefore, wants to disrupt it. So, in this way, Harry wants to enact his desire.

The second basic question of the text, for me, is: Who or what are we?

Harry's text is difficult to follow. It is difficult to understand what he is trying to say, and as I said earlier, despite being led by a question-set structured around strategy, there is very little coherent strategic conversation taking place. Harry says that he sees 'massive potential for exploitation' of the customer 'space', but he is not specific about what how this is done, nor indeed what services we would offer, given that we do not act for the public.

The final basic question is: What will the future be like?

I think that this question is a source of anxiety in Harry's text. He speaks of globalised firms responding to customer demands through algorithms who will disrupt our industry. This is something over which we will have no control, so we too will be disrupted. I think that this ability to read the future, or to guess what it might be like is causing our paralysis and results in our inability to respond creatively.

The hermeneutics of suspicion

The insertion of 'er' into the text suggests hesitation. What was Harry hesitating to say? Is it fallacious to say that the 'C-suite' are alienated in some way? What would Harry have said if he had not hesitated. The use of the word 'alienation' suggests that people are excluded from a certain discourse. Who is alienated? The inversion of the term 'alienation' from its classical understanding says something; in Marxist understanding, it is the 'shop-floor' that is alienated, not the other way around. This other-way-roundness

or inversion posits something interesting about how Harry may see the business environment. Does this follow through the rest of the text?

3.10 The Generation of Themes

Referring back to the method framework that I set out above, I was always alert to emergent themes. McAuley (2004) suggests that the researcher intuit the emergence of themes through engagement with the text. Moules et al. (2015) advise that hermeneutic enquiry is always about "what it means to the practitioners involved" (p.117) and that one should proceed in opening up associations that build towards an understanding of the text, but not so much as to develop one overall theme, advocating that the researcher should not look to achieve reductionism. Bryman & Bell (2011) say that thematic analysis does not have any "identifiable heritage" (p.571) but for some is synonymous with a 'code' "whereas for others it transcends any one code and is built up out of codes" (p.572). This being an inductive piece of research, notwithstanding being informed by existing literature and my own pre-understandings, my approach was to look for themes, not as full explanations in themselves, but to guide understanding of the particularity of the topic. Thematization is, after all, a heuristic, a device to reduce the amount of all available information to something more comprehensive, workable and meaningful. I considered that there were five clear themes emerging from the material. There may, in fact have been more, but to remain faithful to the texts and the advice of McAuley (2004), I intuited the five themes of Identity, Arbitrariness, the Imaginary – Imagined Perception, the Escape from Choice, and Guilt and Responsibility.

In terms of Identity, this arose as a strong theme. The participants expressed their thoughts about the firm's strategic position in relation to their own identity. Who the executive personnel at Senatus believe they are appears to be strongly linked to how strategy is thought and talked about.

The theme of Arbitrariness related to Senatus' relations with their clients and how they perceive the world in which they operate as being difficult to operate in and difficult in which to find consistency. Most of all, it is perceived as being out of their control.

In the theme of the Imaginary-Imagined Perception, the participants fantasize about themselves, their clients and what they believe that their clients think about them. The theme of the Escape from Choice is more difficult to express simply, other than by saying that the executive appears to actively vacillate around possibilities, opportunities and choices.

The final theme is darker and concerns Guilt; Senatus have had to take decisions that have been difficult and costly in human terms. This is carried as Guilt and Responsibility by members of the executive, but it is not acknowledged. Most of all, this theme appears to show that there is guilt for not having pursued desire.

4. Chapter Four – Identity

4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The purpose of this Chapter is to set out the findings under the theme of Identity from the research material. This is a good illustration of inter-textuality in that the theme emerged from a number of the interview texts. This theme is multi-layered containing a questioning of the value of the professional, the motif of identity as a struggle, the disavowal of the loss of identity at Senatus, the shift or movement of identity and the acceptance of 'burden' as being part of the identity at Senatus.

I present the findings of the analysis of the research material through these explanatory themes, or metaphors. Metaphors create new ways of seeing and form the bases for potential action (McCourt, 1997). These themes are useful heuristics for understanding what is occurring in the unconscious discourse at Senatus. They are, like all heuristics, however, fallible, or 'rough and ready'; on the one hand, I am trying to capture an important aspect of the social life of Senatus, but on the other, do not want to reify, essentialize or even reduce the surplus effusion of meaning of the texts to five metaphors: 'Any given metaphor can be incredibly persuasive, but it can be blinding and block our ability to gain an overall view' (Morgan 1997, p.347). They are to help me to understand what is taking place, and to report this study of the unconscious phenomena at Senatus as it relates to strategizing.

While Laine & Vaara (2007) have elsewhere observed that subjectivity and strategy are intertwined, and while this was an apparent assumption, or 'hunch' of mine prior to undertaking the research, I was surprised at how dominant a strain identity *qua* professional identity has been throughout the interview texts and analyses. As a theme, Identity emerged and cut across all of the research material. For those who took part in the research at Senatus, identity was a discursive formation that expressed who people believed that they are in relation to their work and the project of the organization in which they work. The people interviewed thought of their work in terms of themselves; the participants' perceptions of who they are is intimately bound up with how they see

the organization. To be clear, I did not ask any questions about identity. Rather, I asked questions about the business' environment. This suggests that the individuals tasked with making strategy at Senatus see *who* they are as being a critically contingent component of *what* they do. In conventional strategy research, what is studied tends to be something that is believed to be apart from the individual – the processes, the contents of the strategic plan, individuals practicing strategy, and whereas the Strategy-As-Practice perspective addresses aspects of this, I would suggest that my finding indicates that there is a deeper, more intricate, layered and messy aspect to understanding where the individual strategy maker ends and where the output of a strategic process begins.

I have chosen the term 'identity' over that of 'subjectivity', although the two are relatively interchangeable. I've done so because 'identity' conveys a sense of 'identification', something I will return to, by the person with ideas about who they are as they attempt to order the changes of their environment into something comprehensible.

It is a fundamental premise of my argument that the individual comes to know and understand their world through the language used by significant others in early life, and later, and that s/he takes in words, signifiers, and images that allow him or her to construct a subject position, an identity, that is not fixed and unitary, but rather many, dispersed and fragile. It is this fragility, this precariousness, that is subject to threat in times of change, such as the directors of Senatus are experiencing, giving rise to an existential anxiety. Senatus' board identify strongly with an identity of the 'professional' which they individually consider to be under threat; I show that when thinking and talking about business challenges, the senior team saw these questions inextricably threaded to their individual identities.

4.2 The Value of the Professional

Professional identity for Senatus' senior team is suffused with a belief that the work that they carry out is not properly understood, while at the same time it struggles to articulate

its value proposition. Harry opined that there was an invisibility to the work that the organization does, one that is:

> *'invisible [piece] again that's not measured, not recognised, not paid for, not penalised when it's not done'*.

Such invisibility is interesting in that there is, for Harry, a softer aspect to the work that defies measurement. Another director, Larry, echoed this when he said:

> *'I don't think they really understand what we do to any great extent or the value that we bring'.*

There is loss, too. A remembrance of what once was. As Patrick says:

> '*yes, loss adjusting was a profession, we were say, when you and I started years ago, particularly working in insurance companies, loss adjusting isn't, people, people don't think like that anymore, there's no…insurance companies don't…'*

and then trails off. He finds this difficult to express. The expression of loss is beyond articulation, no words have been found for it. The loss of professional identity is not part of the articulatory practice (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) of the organization, and this is a point worth dwelling on. Whilst the loss of professionalism and professional identity is a strong theme arising from the research material, it is not an avowed loss, or an avowed discourse at Senatus. In other words, it is not spoken about. Patrick struggles to put the experience into words or a smooth discourse. Patrick here has failed to symbolize the full expression of his experience of loss of professional identity. This inarticulation is a manifestation of the Real in his discourse – something inchoate and vague.

The identity of Senatus' leadership is very much positioned in relation to their clients. I will discuss something more of this in later themes, but from an identity construction perspective, the team talk about themselves in relation to their clients. I have used the plural of client here, but in the texts, clients are referred to as 'they', 'the client', or the 'Insurer'. This suggests that the 'client' is more than a simple designation and rather has

characteristics in common with Lacan's concept of the 'Other' (or the 'big Other, because of the capitalized 'O'). The Other for an individual has its origin in its entry into language, so brought into it by others with whom it has a bond. This process continues throughout life and so our understanding of social processes, institutions and rituals are brought to us through a combination of language, images and significant others, hence the 'Other', a term which conveys something more than the sum of the word 'client'.

This close bond with the Other is a relationship of unequals, or one that is seen as such. For Harry, it is a site of struggle, of resistance. In the context of speaking about their relationship as an intermediary, where Senatus act for a client Insurer, and engage with their customer, Harry says that this relationship with their clients' customer is:

> *'a unique piece of space and sometimes it's a no-man's land that there are no rules and you're trying to serve all masters and sometimes none'.*

This seems, on the face of it, an extraordinary description of that relationship. I was intrigued by the terms '*space'*, '*no-man's land*', '*no rules*' and '*serve all masters and…none*'. This suggests that Harry sees Senatus as outsiders, who are not bound by the rules of other social and contractual conventions, and where there are people taking 'shots' at the firm. This also speaks to desire. In this rich metaphor that evokes the calamity and mayhem of WWI, it captures Senatus' strategic position very well, but contains a truth of desire that the force of authority can also be weak in 'no-man's land'.

Earlier, I had asked Harry if he felt that Senatus were 'inextricably linked' to the insurance industry. Harry replied that he believed that they were not, that '*if you have something unique to offer you are therefore a cohort in industry in a sector of your own*'. This sounded hopeful but did not answer my question. It almost did not make sense, unless one looks at what Harry is saying in the context of what his desire is for Senatus: To be different. As long as Senatus are 'linked' to their clients in the insurance industry, they are not in control of their destiny; but out there, in no-man's land, they make their own rules, they have agency. They wear a 'uniform' but this is immaterial in the 'field' of conflict; interestingly, loss adjusters also work 'in the field'.

I was reminded of the 'informal organization' (Ashworth, 1968) in what was said. There is desire not to be bound, to be independent, but this is seen only in 'oppositional' terms, transgressive, not visible. When Harry spoke about 'space' in the interview, I thought of Winnicott's 'transitional object' (1953), where the infant human holds something symbolic in their mind, represented by an actual object, which is a 'psychological bridge' (Carr, 2004) to help them enter the world of real things. So, here I see a wish to leave something, to start anew and that this space is the starting point. This emergence from one thing and going to another is in fact redolent of Senatus' role as a go-between. Senatus, in their professional life hear one message from the Insurer's customer and transform that message into something meaningful to the Insurer. This is almost the work of Hermes. Hermes overcame the strictures of his purpose by being playful. Here, Harry overcomes his by keeping an imaginary space in mind where, although dangerous and risky, no formal authority can get to him.

Like all struggles, they can be wearing, and this struggle for identity has worn down Senatus. For Patrick:

'we only have one stream of income, one trick pony'

Here there is a sense of a tired, circus animal who has no more 'tricks'. It expresses a sense of fragility, a sense of the ephemeral nature of Senatus' 'strategy' or their 'evolved strategy'. It suggests that Senatus were good at so many things, but now those services, in the way that they are delivered are not so much no longer required, but the market can only bear a particular price. Now, in light of Senatus' position and the business environment that they operate in, there is a question of how it should respond to creeping managerialism, a practice based upon an assumption that better management will resolve most economic and other problems (Pollitt, 1993). Like the tired pony, it suggests that Patrick believes that Senatus are out of tricks, out of ideas.

4.3 Identity as Struggle

Struggle is a motif that moves across most of the interview texts. Larry says that Senatus '*try our best to provide the service which we're asked and try to provide quality…I would*

see a continuous struggle'. Larry says this in the context of where the firm is 'trying' and doing its best:

> *'try to cover costs, constantly to try to make a return on what we're being paid and try our best'.*

I was struck here by the repetition or overlexicalization (Machin & Mayr, 2012), suggesting significance, of the term 'try', which is repeated three times in the extract. Taken aside, and with the term '*continuous struggle*' later in the extract, this suggests that Larry sees himself and Senatus expending considerable effort but with no clear result. The idea of 'continuous struggle' is important. It seems to denote what Larry feels is the current state, the steady state and something that will define Senatus' existence as a business. Irrespective of whether this is true or not, it is the structure of Larry's reality, and may be a 'vision' that is shared by others. In the absence of a clear(er) vision, a strategy, Larry's vision for the business is one of continuous struggle. Some organizations define their objectives as one being achieved by continuous struggle, such as campaigning protest movements. This not a strategy normally associated with a commercial organization. Perhaps there is however, viability to this strategy; one that grabs and claims 'political' space for Senatus' objectives if it can define them clearly, from their clients. Equally, perhaps a discourse of continuous struggle will at best be considered maladaptive to the environment and at worst, destructive and chaotic.

But despite this perception of struggle, there is a parallel discourse of what I would call 'ceremonial' resistance. Larry, speaking about a client who wanted a discount on their fees, says:

> *'Well then they come along and say, right you've got to take a 10% cut…Well we resist a little bit…'*

It's important to be seen to resist, for the sake of appearance rather than to actually resist. There is a sadness to this, but also a complicity. There was no strategy for resistance, just a 'whimper', a futile, pointless 'display' resistance. One can only wonder whether there was an opportunity to challenge, and whether this was discussed by the

senior team in this way. Larry's use of '*well*' at the start of this sentence suggests that 'well we all knew that resistance was not possible, but we gave it a go'. There is an acceptance of the position, which is a 'down' position (Frosh et al., 2003) so that the Other will treat Senatus kindly. This 'down' position is patterned, a way of being for Senatus, of responding to outside stimuli or challenges, such that it becomes malleable and pliant. Resistance to the Other, the client, is to be seen as largely symbolic. Impotent, they are expected to protest, but not too much, to challenge, but not to actually challenge.

4.4 The Disavowal of Loss

The complicated, uncertain, contingent and indeed ambivalent nature of identity is expressed in the disavowed discourse of lost professionalism. For Dunker & Parker (2009), disavowal is "a strategy of denial alongside a simultaneous instrumental use of what is denied" (p.61), or a maladaptive defence to reality (Stapley, 2006) like nominally calling oneself 'professional' while at the same time mourning the loss of this identity. In the texts, there is a discernible dimension of professionalism vs. non-professionalism, in other words what counts as being professional work and what does not. This is an interesting dimension, because the discourse proceeds not on the basis of there being professionalism in Senatus, and it not being present elsewhere, say in their clients' organizations, *qua* an in-group – out-group dimension (Terry & O'Brien, 2001), but rather this dimension is within Senatus.

Larry explained that:

> *'why I referred to it as a yellow pack is maybe somebody who you're taking on cheaply because they don't have the qualifications'*.

Here, Larry is explaining that, at a point in time, the business recruited personnel who were not skilled and competent in the profession. They didn't have '*the qualifications'*. Hence, they were '*yellow pack'*. This is a curious aspect of 1980's marketing discourse that has persisted and found its place in talk around whether something has the attribute of 'low-cost', with believed characteristics of 'low quality'. It is a phrase that has crept

into the Irish vernacular and refers to 'own label' or generic goods, introduced in the 1980's by a company that was taken over by Tesco. It referred to 'cheaper' goods that were unbranded in yellow packaging with a black block printed description (Pope, 2011) like 'custard creams'. They were inferior, but it was what people could afford and branded goods were a luxury treat. As people became more prosperous, they disappeared from the shelves. They 'did the job' (another interesting phrase), but they didn't either, as they were limited to the functional experience of eating something but did not come with the accompanying emotional associations. Here, in Larry's text, we have someone doing an approximation of the work of a loss adjuster, but who isn't one really.

Interestingly, however, Larry is not differentiating Senatus from the competition by saying that others provide a '*yellow pack*' service, but that Senatus do not. Instead, Larry is saying that it was a decision made by the business at a point in time to recruit people at this level, but not to invest in their training. In this sense, from an identity formation perspective, there is a discourse of professionalism which is unacknowledged, but within this discourse, there is another side to it, one that pejoratively constructs a non-professionalism. That is, it is *not* this. There are two points to make here: there are two dimensions of discourse arising from the threat perceived to identity by the actors in Senatus, consistent with what Hey (1997) has said: asserting one identity and simultaneously repudiating another. Secondly, the process of identity construction is carried out in a fragility that is marked by difference, not positivity. This accords with Saussure's perspective on language as being a 'system of differences' (1966). Instead of being able to say what one believes what one is, particularly within a discourse that is disavowed, one can very clearly say what one isn't. Identities, like words, don't have positive essences. Other words are necessary to mark out the boundary of "what one is trying to say at" (Faulkner, 1930, p.194). Just as words and identities are not positively constituted, they lack, and it is this lack which causes us to desire to be *something* or other. Larry very clearly does not construct his identity as '*yellow pack*', instead he is *not* this, but his identity is not positively constituted, just that it is under threat. He, nonetheless, has been part of a strategic decision, at some point, to admit unqualified people into the business to act as loss adjusters. For sure, this strategic decision does not

appear to have been consciously made; its meaning and implication is construed retrospectively here, by Larry.

Patrick establishes in his text a similar ambivalence to professional identity. He speaks about the need to divide the business respectively into highly commoditized and highly customized parts:

> *'I think we need to segment it into erm, I want to call it a yellow packed product, but maybe a low value claims product…it might be with some type of […] not necessarily a business but try and deal with all those low value claims at desk at a certain price and only have to deal with […] deal with a professional service on the larger claims'.*

So, whereas the loss of professional identity was contemplated earlier, here Patrick attempts to bring the two dimensions of professionalism into a singular discourse, one where there is no binary choice – both dimensions can be brought together.

However, the ambivalence is evident later when Patrick says:

> *'They're not interested in looking under the cover on the smaller claims unless there's a specific problem.'*

This suggests that Senatus' clients, for a certain level of claim, are not interested in quality. That's doubtful, and one might suggest that Patrick may not believe this himself. Here, Patrick is speaking about the 'micro' level, or what is required in a process-driven service model:

> *'I think more to the micro level, by the micro level do you know what I mean, to how, how you manage that, like I'm saying you'll be looking at […] you break it down into […] find something as a customer from the outside in to us.'*

This lacks a coherence and clarity, and it is this inchoateness that suggests that there is an alien-ness to this commodity claims processing service, something not fully grasped and symbolized. This is a question of identity and of who Senatus are: If these are the kinds of claims they want to deal with, they need to identify what the requirements are,

and then meet this requirement, but it requires two moments. A moment of acceptance and understanding of the inchoateness and then a moment symbolising and cognitizing what they, as an organization, want to do. This may be a business 'reality' for Senatus, but it is something that they wrestle with.

Patrick speaks about the 'dumbing down' of the profession. He says:

> *'I think it's been dumbed down, I think we're complicit in allowing it to be dumbed down.'*

Later, in his text, he says:

> *'I think we've just been a little bit like nodding dogs'*

The term 'dumbing down' is of interest in a profession where advocacy, report writing, and negotiation are key competencies. The use of the word 'dumb' potentially means 'without voice', rather than what is conventionally meant, such as low-cost or de-skilled. The word '*complicit'* is also striking because it suggests a conspiracy, but one that it is disadvantageous to Senatus. In using the term '*nodding dogs*' this suggests an obedience and acquiescence; I am trying to understand how Senatus' 'voice' has been lost, how it has been '*dumbed down*'.

Being dumb, or silent appears to have led to the profession being 'dumb' and the skills required being 'dumbed down'. Patrick expresses an equivalence between dumb, being silent, and being stupid. So, in being silent, they have also been stupid. These are quite pejorative terms, especially when used about people who have been trained in, are qualified in and have considerable experience in their field. This links to the idea of 'complicity'. But whereas complicity suggests an element of forethought, this does not. This suggests total obedience. Patrick, like the other directors, is also one of the '*nodding dogs*', simply because the organization failed to articulate a response to the changes in their environment, including the changes in their clients.

The pejorative terms used illustrate an aspect of impatience here, an impatience for himself, and an absence of forgiveness. But this grappling, this failure to understand and fully symbolize what is happening is an effect of the trauma of loss. There is a searching for answers and an attempt to join up two competing discourses – non-professionalism and professionalism to address the perceived loss of professional identity.

4.5 The Movement of Identity

While Patrick considers the loss of professionalism, it is apparent that identities shift and change. Simon refers to his subject position being altered as the result of the internal economic challenges to the firm:

> *'Um, because of the contraction on the market…that has determined our focus…it has been the prime driver for my role'*

Simon is defining how he has seen his role and the activities flowing from that. A contraction in the market has dictated that Senatus must contract. Simon sees his role as being '*determined'* by this contraction. With each contraction, he needs to conserve existing resources. How does Simon, seeing his role in this way, constructing a particular subject position in this way, consequently 'determine' how he sees his choices? This suggests that Simon sees the world in terms of 'forces' which structure how a response should be made, or the limited range of responses which that allows, such as the reduction of costs.

In this, I see an acceptance of external conditions and not so much an adaptation to them, but rather an accommodation with them. An alternative might be to seek new markets or to try to diversify in some way. On the contrary, the 'strategy' has been to continue on the same path, and Simon has seen his role as to help to do this within an orderly framework of cost management and reduction.

He also says:

That it was '*a very time consuming, difficult and fraught role*'

In Simon's felt need to conserve resources in his role as perceived, I wonder what kinds of arguments and disagreements he had with other directors. There is something personal being said here about what Simon has seen as being a battle between various interests in the firm and in which he has had to continue 'bearing a message' about the need to respond to the contraction in revenues, and the fulfilment of an unwanted, but 'necessary' subject position.

He expands:

'Um, they're also more conscious of what we have got' [Directors]

It is suggested here that he has had to convince the other directors of something – they are now more conscious of what Senatus '*have got*'. This suggests that he had a job of work to convince them. Simon doesn't expand on this, but the way that he expresses this sounds as though he has come through a fractious time with others, but that he feels that his work is now done.

4.6 The Taking-On of 'Burden'

There is a heaviness to this and others' traumas. Senatus, being a professional services organization with its own rules and protocols of professional performance was slowly, by relative stealth, required to take on additional obligations in terms of regulatory compliance by virtue of their acting for Insurer clients. This is a development, or series of developments, that Senatus has not reconciled itself to. Harry referred to this as *'the compliance monster'* and a '*burden*'. Ross said that *'we are now a compliance business'* and refers to compliance similarly as a '*burden'* as did Gary. This similarity of expression appears in each of their texts and deserves to be unpacked. Whether a '*monster'* or a '*burden'*, compliance is now a part of Senatus' everyday operations, but it is seen as something autochthonous, imposed from the outside and now taking up residence in the organization.

Earlier, in Harry's text, (when speaking about client organizations) he said that strategy should be '*rolled'* out by the leadership of that firm, but that the problem was that it was

not properly '*ingested'* by clients' staff. He said that strategy needed to go *'down indeed rather than out'* such that it *'percolates to the shop floor'* but that it was a *'mission statement that doesn't necessarily get ingested'*. I was struck by the congruence in this early part of the text with what he spoke about later – a '*monster'*, both of which metaphors could be said to relate to eating.

On the one hand, clients' staff are infantilized as people who find it difficult to '*ingest'* whole their own leaders' message, and on the other, Senatus have had to accommodate a monster that is consuming their profitability. A monster, something that one ought to be afraid of in case it gobbles one up, is however, also related to technological innovation for Harry: '*now it's a monster but in fact a market disruptor'*. Here, Harry was speaking about technology which could disrupt many businesses, including Senatus', portraying it as a monster – voracious in its appetite – but then later he saw that they have not only taken in a monster, but that they were also monsters, themselves:

'our ingested version of it (compliance) is a monster'.

Here, the business, to Harry, has not been correctly ingested (similar to their clients' staff). Then:

'we have invented a monster…something of a dark art.'

This suggests that Senatus has now '*invented'* its own monster, which could, in its own way be useful to them. It's not entirely clear. Nonetheless, there is an unconscious association between the message from the leaders of Senatus' clients' organizations, which is not correctly ingested by *their* staff, who then give this to Senatus' staff, who equally do not ingest it correctly and who create a monster. This monster, whilst dangerous and voracious, could however, be useful and Harry is tempted to proverbially 'play with fire' in a '*dark art'*. There is a desire to transgress and to be something to be reckoned with.

The imposition of compliance is also a '*burden'*. For Harry, it is '*a burden and a burdensome thing'*. For Ross, it is '*one of those burdens that will be a cost to the business'*,

and indeed Ross repeats the term '*burden'* a number of times in his text. Gary considers the business' reducing revenues *'in the context of, erm, I think a compliance burden'*.

In the use of these terms, there is a 'thrownness' into something heavy and difficult to get out from under. It 'feels' like a millstone, weighing heavily in all that the business does. There is a poetic and alliterative emphasis in what Harry says – '*a burden and a burdensome thing*' - which sustains the heaviness, the importance of what is being said. The word 'thing' is also interesting. It suggests something that cannot be described, is beyond description such that the word, even though it describes nothing, describes something excessive – it could be anything. In psychoanalytic terms, 'the thing' is that piece of discourse which cannot be analysed or translated, that piece of the Real, which cannot be hollowed out (Ragland Sullivan, 2011).

Elsewhere, Harry in his text referred to the *'benefits of compliance, properly ingested'*. But here, he may mean much more than what is actually said, and the signifier '*burden'* communicates something that is heavy, pressing and which is to be carried. This is in contradiction to what the actual benefits of compliance, '*properly ingested'*, might be, and here there is unconsciousness. Compliance is to be ingested whole, but it is burdensome and heavy, something to be borne and carried. There is a direct dialectical tension here in Harry's speech. This suggests that Harry has not come to terms with this, with compliance, and his relationship to it.

Ross remarks that their purpose as a business has changed:

> *'it's become a compliance business rather than a loss adjusting business'*

This links into a wider narrative within Senatus, also informally spoken about by staff who see the business they work in changed.

Ross relates a situation in which he considers that Senatus are '*way ahead of the competition'* but that he talks of a '*burden'* to go with being innovative: One that is something heavy, hard to carry. But it also represents responsibility and I wonder why it is that Ross feels that the business has a 'responsibility' but not necessarily a choice. A

choice not to accept this burden, to walk away from it and why he feels the need to continue to carry it. I note that he does not say cost, he does not say activity, but rather he says '*burden'*, the responsibility and a debt that is to be carried. Having allowed it in, forced it on the business, Senatus are now obliged to carry it.

In the discussion of the theme of 'Guilt and Responsibility', I explore the question of a debt, or rather a 'symbolic debt', but in this Chapter, I have explored and developed the theme of identity that emerged and shown that the strategizing that Senatus does is concerned with whom the actors see themselves as being.

5. Chapter Five - Arbitrariness

5.1 Introduction to the Chapter

All of the themes are inter-linked, insofar as they form part of the structure of the perception and thinking of members of the senior team at Senatus. One of those themes is that of Arbitrariness. This theme is linked to the theme of Identity. This is so because the team's perceptions of themselves are bound with the behaviour of their clients, 'the client', or the 'Other'.

The theme of Arbitrariness ranges from one of dependence on the Other to a belief that the Other is all knowing but who also restricts the autonomy of Senatus as a separate organization. In this theme, the Other is seen as fickle and whose staff do not understand even their own organization's strategic goals. There is some confusion in the text between dependency on and expectation of the Other, but a sense of being confined by it together with a belief that the Other has nobler objectives that go beyond even its own staff's understanding.

5.2 An Unconscious Dependence

The Other is perceived as arbitrary and Senatus' team in many ways describe an environment that is at times whimsical and capricious. The Other can behave mercurially or may at times be relatively stable and benign. In both instances, Senatus see the relationship as one of mutuality, at least on a surface level, but through the unconsciousness of language, the relationship might be said to be one of dependence.

Larry says:

> *'I think they're squeezing us as hard as they can.'*

This sounds painful and 'squeezing' evokes a metaphor of being pressured and being unable to breathe, but there is a duality of meaning here. Squeezing also has a romantic meaning – a 'squeeze'. A 'squeeze' in this sense also suggests that the squeeze does not

have an identity or volition of themselves. This 'squeeze' is someone who appears as an 'appendage' on someone's arm to make them look good. They remain the other's squeeze so long as they make the other look good; not expressing their own opinions or doing things that make them appear as though they have a mind of their own. But the 'squeeze' is still squeezed. Their oxygen - will and agency - is squeezed out of them.

When analysing this term, I consider whether this helps one's understanding of the relationship with Senatus' clients. The second meaning of the term might be that Senatus are painfully and malignly squeezed so that the life evaporates from them. In both respects of the term, the effect is the same. In one, one feels better for a while, in the other one is reasonably clear from the outset. One could argue of course, that this was just a turn of phrase for Larry, however, Senatus are not being 'strangled', nor 'hammered', nor 'beaten up'. This is not a pleasant experience, but it is not a fatal one. They are deprived of oxygen, maybe not of life, but certainly of the ability to do anything with what little oxygen they have left when they are squeezed. Instead, when they are '*squeezed'*, Senatus are lifeless, limp, pliant. Perhaps this is the effect that Larry is feeling in his relationship with his clients. Despite this perception of the Other, Senatus continue to do business with them, likely as the result of believing that there are no alternatives available.

The Other changes its requirements and can be said to be fickle. According to Simon:

Clients are always '*changing the emphasis on what they want*' and whereas now they are focused on customer retention and service, previously:

> *'for the last five or six years, all you were listening to was compliance, compliance, audit, audit'*

Simon, here is saying that he was '*listening to'* these words, perhaps not feeling involved, as though he could not shape what was going on, reinforced by the repetition in his speech. This mercuriality, in spite of procurement practices, extends to the selection process for Larry, also:

'we can pick any of one of them, now how do I get the best value out'

Larry perceives that the Other exploits the firm and the process is driven only by price:

'We end up doing more work than we used to for less money.'

'I think it's price driven, they don't look at quality.'

When Larry says, '*we can pick any one of them'*, I was struck by the apparent arbitrariness of this. The Other can select or deselect. 'Pick' any similar firm, like in a line-up, or a beauty parade (a pejorative phrase sometimes used to describe the selection process by clients). The arbitrariness perhaps arises because Senatus may not know what they are aiming for, how they can achieve the standard required and even if they do, whether they will be '*picked*' or not. In Larry's imagined fantasy, he sees that the Other, the client organizations, 'select' on the basis of opaque criteria, what firm(s) they want to use. Once they do this, they then '*try to get the best value out'* of them. This process attributes great skill to the Other. It is probably an attribute of economics that this should be the case, rather than individual characteristics of the staff involved in the selection process, but this does not remove the feeling of arbitrariness and powerlessness that Larry evokes in what he says. This seems like a persecutory fantasy in that not being 'picked' will leave the firm guessing or wondering where they have come up short; just as was the case when Senatus lost a key account some four years ago giving rise to feelings of not being 'good enough', with neither evidence to prove/ disprove this nor being able to do anything about it. One isn't picked, so one is left wondering.

5.3 The Fantasy of the All-Knowing and Demanding Client

It is a fantasy because it is an imagining of the client organization's staff banding together to think and behave in this way. It's persecutory because being unsuccessful allows one to speculatively wonder, and to believe that one is targeted, but also to justify non-action, simply because it is so arbitrary it can never be addressed.

Talking about this de-selection, Patrick said:

'we saw it with [a former client] where we didn't do an awful lot wrong.'

This is interesting; the account that Senatus lost without understanding why. When Patrick spoke about this, he did so without prompting from me. I wondered why this is still important to Senatus and what is being said here. This is said against the earlier comment about Senatus being either a small or a large 'player' and how this can change, quite quickly. The loss of two key accounts could be significant and bordering on catastrophic. There is the plaintive-sounding '*we didn't do an awful lot wrong'*. This may indeed be true, but this is perhaps beside the point; it happened, some years ago, and yet here it still appears in speech, in talk about strategy. I wondered whether this is something that Senatus have addressed, processed, and appropriately symbolized. There is something more to be said here. It is something that cannot be understood, cannot be put into a clear narrative, is not in any way symbolized in language. In Lacanian terms, it is the presence of the Real; raw unmediated experience.

So, for Senatus, this causes them to 'second guess'. Will what they are doing now jeopardise something else and what are they to do in such circumstance? The conclusion is inevitably to do nothing. Unless Senatus can resolve this dilemma, they will continue to guess, continue to ask questions and wonder; 'what did we do wrong?' This question must cause considerable existential anxiety.

While the Other can be opaque in what it wants, it can also be demanding, unreasonably so. Ross says of this:

'the whole justification of what the adjuster does and being able to document it is a difficulty.'

And that:

'a lot of insurers require so much in terms of MI, back-office MI, support and everything else'.

So here Ross speaks of having to justify oneself and account for oneself. But in addition to this justification, the client demands '*so much*' of things that are not the core activity of what loss adjusting is about, echoing Larry's earlier comment about the Other's ability to get Senatus to '*end up doing more work…'*

5.4 The 'Forbidding' Client

The Other is also silent on other things. Returning to what Harry said under the theme of Identity, regarding the '*dark art*' that the business is supposedly skilled in, the Other does not want to know about this, about what it takes to get the job accomplished, involving as it does messy invisibility. The Other can be silent, approving, but also silencing and disapproving, so making its motives murky and difficult to read for Senatus. Harry speaks, unconsciously, of '*proscription*':

> The '*engagement dynamic is such that there's a paint by numbers set of criteria that somebody has proscribed as an interpretation of somebody else's outline of strategic objectives… we have to negotiate the space between who, and I think it drives certain behaviours.'*

Harry is speaking here about how the operational management of a client organization will direct what is to be done, and how the tasks are to be done, to Senatus. The word 'proscribed' was used very clearly by Harry, not *prescribed*. This means something has been excluded by someone. Someone set the objectives, and elsewhere in the client organization, this was subverted somehow.

This proscription, this exclusion, and what is laid down, what is *pre*scribed, has to be 'negotiated' as a space. I wondered if this was the same 'space', what I called the 'transitional space', akin to Winnicott's (1963) 'transitional object', as before. It is a contested space, but Senatus appears to have less control over this when compared to the '*no-man's land*'.

There is also the 'dynamic' that is an assuredly undynamic '*paint by numbers'* in which some other activity (professionalism, perhaps) through this managerialism has been

proscribed. Something in what Senatus does, for Harry, has been proscribed. If the paint by numbers approach has been proscribed, the question is what else are Senatus supposed to do, giving one an insight into the arbitrariness that they are subject to.

I believe that Harry probably meant to say 'prescribed' as that would appear to fit the logic of the sentence, but the 'slip of the tongue' suggests something that has been banned. Harry grew up close to the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and 'proscribed' was a term that was in particular use in the 1970s in media discourse, and would have been a word that he, as a young person, was acquainted with[4].

It related to paramilitaries, who were members of 'proscribed organizations'. I would venture to guess that 'proscribing' for Harry is a strong signifier relating to being silenced. I have no doubt that Harry was not a 'republican' in the sense of a being a supporter of the Provisional IRA, but like many Irish people, there is a historical, unpalatable memory of being silenced by authority. In other words, there is an ambivalent relationship between censorship, proscription and illegality.

Certainly, in the Republic, government ministers were alleged to have been involved in smuggling arms to Republican groups in the early 1970's, mirroring an ambivalence in the general population toward the Northern Ireland administration. The idea of 'proscribing' organizations that represented some part of this struggle would not have been a generally supported practice and would not have had support among moderate Nationalists or even non-Nationalists in the Republic, at that time. This part of the text is something that I have found so interesting and compelling, linking as it does into a complicated and contested historical narrative. In a 'slip of the tongue' (Olivier, 2004; Saville Young & Frosh, 2009) Harry meant to say that someone in the client organization

[4] Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act 1960 (Republic of Ireland) gave powers to the Minister for Justice of the day to preclude the broadcast of interviews with members of organizations 'proscribed' by the Government of the United Kingdom. The Minister could 'direct the (RTE) Authority in writing to refrain from broadcasting any particular matter or matter of any particular class and the Authority shall comply with that direction'

has laid down a set of rules that are 'paint by numbers', but in fact said something deeper about unconscious resistance.

I would say that 'proscribe' here suggests something that has both been prescribed, in that it has been laid down, and proscribed in that it forbids something else and that the thing *pre*scribed is something that Harry is ambivalent towards (managerialist practices). There is a multiplicity of meaning; being told what to do, being silenced, and forbidding other things from being done. In this sense, the word 'proscription' has been overdetermined, so that it is pouring over with meaning.

Continuing the idea of speaking up and advancing a professional opinion, of *not* being proscribed, the signifier of losing the key account four years ago, for reasons that were never explained, is a strong one. The Other was silent.

Referring to that client's decision, Patrick said:

> *'that's something we don't have access to.'*

Patrick is saying that Senatus does not have access to the rationale behind the decision that was made by that client. This is grasping, a struggle that has not been symbolized. It may not have made any difference if Senatus knew the reasoning behind the decision, but not-knowing is striking.

The decision and silence felt arbitrary.

5.5 The (In)Digestion of Strategic Aims

The arbitrary behaviour of the Other is not limited to how Senatus is treated with as an organization: The Other behaves in the same way towards its own staff.

Harry says:

'erm authorities on strategy they are talking about articulating a vision of a company of an organization and then rolling that out, rolling that down indeed rather than out…and percolates to the shop floor…'

It's a:

'mission statement that doesn't necessarily get ingested.'

As with the theme on Identity, within Harry's perception of strategy, there are 'authorities' who direct messages that are then '*rolled down and out'* and through a process of 'percolation' they are 'ingested'. *'Authorities'* suggests something immutable. Harry talks of a vision being articulated and it being '*rolled'* down. This sounds like an 'vision' being instantiated and then '*rolled'* down a hill onto people. The '*authorities'*, or the Other, are not interested in what their organizations' members have to say, but they are, or are expected to be pliant and at the will of the Other. It doesn't really concern us whether this is a matter of fact or not; it is how Harry perceives a crucial aspect of the business environment. I was also interested in the other-way-roundness of the '*down, rather than out'* comment. It sounds like 'down and out', a phrase more associated with a person who is down on their luck. One could read what is said here as being that Senatus were an organization, on an equivalent level to a medium sized domestic insurer, but that now they are 'down and out'.

I considered the terms '*percolate'*, '*shop-floor'* and '*ingestion'*. The word percolation has associations in the business as loss adjusters relating to 'percolation areas' serving septic tanks, which can fail and can be the subject of an insurance claim. Percolation in this sense is very much about '*leaking out'*; 'foul water' leaking out, which is then 'ingested', by the 'shop-floor'. I considered whether Harry thought of the employees of the firm as a 'shop-floor', summoning up industrial relations power asymmetries and perhaps construing the 'shop-floor' as a category of employee to be feared. Rather, Harry constructs them in a passive way so as to possibly understand them as ingesting what is percolated down to them. But even the term 'percolate' is interesting because it suggests that employees should not be informed about what the strategy of the firm is; it should

be percolated out to them so that they can 'ingest' it. This signifier is important because it helps throw some small light on the absence of strategy in Senatus. Strategy is not something to be understood, but rather ingested as it leaks out to the '*shop-floor'*.

What was striking in this and other parts of Harry's text, was the imagery around eating. In Kleinian (Segal, 1992) psychoanalysis there is rich theorization about the infant's experience in feeding. It revolves around the infant's perceptions and fantasies about the part 'objects' that feed it, such as the mother's breast or a bottle. The infant wants to take the part object in and to make it an internalised object, available on demand, but as the part object is taken away, fantasies develop (Stapley, 2006). Here, for Harry, what is good for one – breast milk in Kleinian terms - is something that is to be taken in, but it is heavy and not easily digested. It is 'hard to take in' or 'to swallow'. There is no way of taking this in so that it is in any way wholesome.

There is a contradiction, also. Harry talks about people not 'ingesting' properly, but there is also a suggestion that there are benefits for them. This is a fantasy of 'infantilization' of employees, and I thought about people not 'knowing what is good for them'. For Harry, employees likely would not understand the strategy of the firm, so it's best to keep it to himself and allow it to leak out, or percolate.

The team at Senatus were unsure of the direction that the environment would take. The Other, dominated the agenda of Senatus with their changing requirements. Referring to good customer service and a professional ethos, Simon said:

> *'we were doing that instinctively, anyway but our, our eye was taken off the ball, it had to be, in terms of quality of the, the way we were doing things'*

There is a contradiction in what Simon says. At the start of the extract, he is saying that the focus on the customer was 'instinctive', but later in the extract he is saying that things had to change, because the quality of the work was poor. There's something pulling against what Simon is saying; here the Other may have responded to the poor quality and its actions might be more readily understood, such that:

'they have determined to a great extent, not totally, not totally, okay, to a great extent, how we operate'

In spite of the nature of the arbitrary power of the Other, Simon repeats twice that the Other has *'not totally'* taken over. In saying '*not totally'*, Simon is perhaps preserving or retaining something, for instance, the values of professionalism of the firm.

This Chapter presented the theme of Arbitrariness, showing how this is manifested in the strategic discourse at Senatus. The client, the Other, is experienced by Senatus' senior team as being arbitrary and wilful resulting in an orientation toward the Other that is not a straightforward commercial relationship, but something more dependent.

6. Chapter Six - Imaginary & Imagined Perception

6.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This Chapter introduces the theme of the Imaginary and Imagined Perception. The Imaginary changes and is never one thing. While Imaginary thinking captivates and imprisons the person who is in thrall to the Imaginary idea or fantasy, it can also be a site for the revelation of desire, illuminating the complicated modality of desire and fantasy. To be in thrall to a fantasy is to believe a state of affairs, a reality. Sometimes that imaginary fantasy can be troublesome and in the simultaneous illustration of the fantasy, there can be a wish that the state of affairs was something other than it is. While a fantasy operates to mitigate anxiety, and prevent a confrontation with the Real, it is nonetheless never complete, and it is this inability to complete itself that provides an opportunity for organizational reality to be re-designated.

The team at Senatus hold certain key ideas and concepts about the Other in mind and this structures how the Other is perceived by them. Their Imaginary consists of ideas which pose the question of what it is that the Other wants from Senatus, while the theme of Imagined Perception considers the notion that Senatus' senior team members hold in their imagination concepts about what the Other thinks of them. To an extent, there is a 'breaking of the spell' of the Other insofar as there is a realization on at least one director's part that the Other is not going to tell Senatus what it should do: This is a potential 'site' of undermining the fantasy.

6.2 The Imaginary – A Dimension of Being

Lacan refers to the Imaginary as being one of the dimensions of being, in addition to the Real and the Symbolic (Benvenuto & Kennedy, 1986; Homer, 2005; Olivier, 2004; Zizek, 2006). In this theme, I refer to the Imaginary dimension of being, particularly in the form that functions as fantasy for the individual member of the senior team.

The senior team has a pre-occupation with the Other, what the Other thinks about them and whether the Other is willing to help, guide and support the organization. In the

previous theme, Arbitrariness, I referred to what I believe to be a dependence that Senatus has on the Other. This is not just economic dependence, which is straightforward and understandable, but it is also psychological dependence on the Other. The Other is the network of signifiers that form the social bond or glue that binds Senatus to it and the way in which the relationship with the Other is structured.

This wondering about what the Other might want from them is, potentially, limiting for Senatus' senior team, but it is a ubiquitous mental process, as is evidenced by the psychoanalytic literature. So dependent is the infant and child upon its care-giver that it is vital for life and emotional well-being to wonder whether the care-giver is attendant solely upon one's needs, whether s/he has any other interests, whether s/he will always be there for one, and crucially, in return for all of his/ her love, care and support, what s/he wants in return, encapsulated in the phrase from Lacan; '*che vuoi*?' What do you want?

6.3 The Fading Illusion of the Beneficent Other

Larry puts this rather expressively when he says:

> *'they're not going to tell us what we should be doing and it would ruin our business and to some extent the insurer's business'*

In the first part of this sentence Larry says something that is quite obvious. Why, one wonders, would a client organization tell Senatus the strategic path they should follow? This sentiment is so 'obvious' I wondered why it might have been said at all, if not to say something important. Larry appeared to be expressing both a truth, but also something of revelation, as though he has just realised that no-one is coming to Senatus' aid. In the second part of the sentence, he speaks about the potential for '*ruin'* to occur to either the client's business or Senatus'. The potential for someone to '*ruin'* a business and their own in the process summons up individuals who are out of control, and who do not see the implications of their decisions. How would an Insurer understand Senatus' business more than they do, so that they need to listen to what the Other says, that the Other somehow could determine what was 'best' for Senatus' business? This has a suggestion

or hint that the Other is believed to be knowing all and knowing what is best for Senatus. This seems like a realisation by Larry, but also perhaps anger with the client. There is an expectation beneath this extract which is that the Insurer ought to help Senatus, that it is their role to do so. This signals a dependency on the Other.

Patrick, similarly, expressed this sentiment:

> *'I haven't heard anyone else, when you talk openly, let's say, when you go into companies I don't think anyone like XXXX can say, yeah that's possibly the way forward, like, you know, they recognize that'*

Patrick is sounding out his thought process as he is speaking. Clients have their own internal and external environmental challenges to address, so it is unlikely that they would signal a particular type of strategy, desired by them for Senatus to follow, but it strikes me that Patrick seems dependent on the Other to position this rather than developing his own direction. It seems as though Senatus wishes the Other to 'bless' what they do. This is the fantasy that the Other knows Senatus best, and that they will always act in Senatus' best interest. But this is riven with contradiction, not least because of what Patrick has said earlier about the client '*changing hugely*'. The client no longer appears to 'want' Senatus as a professional service but wants them as a service provider for a more commoditized service.

For Ross, the fantasy is that the relationship with the client is one based on mutual co-dependence:

> *'they need us, we need them'*

This sounds 'zero-sum' and redolent of 'mutually assured destruction' (Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics, 2009). It sounds like the twinning of the respective fates of Senatus and their clients such that this co-dependency should ensure mutual success. But while Senatus may feel this way, or at least Ross does, I wonder does he feel that Senatus' clients also feel this way. Whether he does or not, this is likely not the reality, as Insurers do not consult with Senatus in respect of their proposed strategies. This is an interesting

contrast, between Senatus, who have a belief that their fate is intimately linked with that of the Other, and the Other who is perhaps, not so much indifferent, but who has allowed the market laws of supply and demand determine the fulfilment of their need apropos their claims handling service. Ross' perception, however, is that his fate and that of Senatus' is intimately connected with that of the Other. It fantasises a relationship that is based on mutual and reciprocal need and that this is stable, unchanging and predictable.

6.4 The Desire to Transcend Interdependence

Harry imagines that things were different. He imagines less what the Other might be thinking and more about Senatus. Harry's desire appears to be to move away from the interpersonal interaction that is so characteristic of a professional encounter, to something less interdependent. Harry first imagines a world where trust is not necessary:

> *'people are trusting their own…what does a peer know about a particular service? The peer happens to like the particular service…with all their foibles, with all their biases, with all their prejudices, with all their…racial predisposition…could do a deeper philosophical meaning about the meaning of trust…I don't think there's any need and in fact I think that Amazon, Googles of this world are using their algorithms to bypass all that thinking…'*

In this extract, said with considerable expressive force through Harry's repetition of '*with all'*, Harry is speaking about a situation where trust between people is no longer required, just peer ratings of other consumers. This speaks to a particular kind of discourse of liberalism, where people are individuals, free of a social bond, free to trade with one another. They are not in society with one another. But perhaps more than this, Harry appears to have lost hope, or maybe trust, in people to make the right decisions, and has sought refuge in something inanimate. McAuley et al. (2014) speak about organizations where anxiety drives people to look for solutions in machines, rather than confronting difficult or disturbing realities, such as that evidenced by the unconscious discourse which runs through Senatus. It is also a rejection of the past, of tradition. Harry does not just

want to break with the past, but the past is inherently lacking in utility for him. It is an unusual thing to say; this is particularly so given that so much of loss adjusters' professional training is in respect of '*uberrima fides*' or utmost good faith (Walmsley, 1997). Trust is one of the most important factors in the insurance relationship. Yet, here Harry appears to suggest it is better to deliver this service through a computer algorithm rather than a competent, trained person.

I was also interested in what Harry said about consumers' '*foibles';* '*with all their biases, with all their prejudices, with all their…racial predisposition'*. Harry appeared to be saying that society and the politic did not matter. It seemed to sketch out some kind of post-ideological 'wonderscape' where one cares not about who people are or how people think or behave, but rather whether they want to buy something from one another. Instead of creating a harmonious society, these signifiers are doing the work of establishing a harmonious world of equality of opportunity to purchase things. It sounds postmodern, where the position of the professional, previously underpinned by the acquisition of specialist, technical knowledge, is less important and relevant than the ratings that s/he will receive. What Harry said, though, was pointedly sad for me; algorithms to be used to bypass human trust.

There are clues to this fantasy of dominance, where Harry, in different parts of his interview text he said:

'it ensures we'll shake off the shackles'

'might unshackle us a little bit from them'

Harry was speaking about what he referred to as the 'no-man's land' of the loss adjusting role, and what he also called later an '*interregnum'*. When asked about whether he felt that Senatus where inextricably linked to the insurance industry, he said that he didn't believe that they were. Here, though, Senatus are '*shackled'* to their clients and while both extracts speak to a state when Senatus are no longer shackled, they are, or have been in a state of unfreedom and bondage. This contradiction is worth exploring a little further. This is a rather beautiful example of the unconsciousness of language and its

dialectical opposition in that it is the metaphor that betrays the unconscious thought. The unconscious thought is carried away or swept up in a metaphor which says something else, something different and laden with tradition and history.

I consider why it is that Harry feels that Senatus are so constrained. When I put it to him later about constraints on Senatus' thinking, Harry avoided the question which I found interesting. In this regard, I had asked Harry whether he believed that the thinking of Senatus had become constrained, in which regard I was thinking of a potentially mal-constructive 'dominant logic' (Bettis & Prahalad, 1995). He answered:

> *'the current version of progress is inhibiting thinking…a perspective and if you like a set of baggage, a collection of baggage that is inherently constraining on thought, inherently restrictive on creativity and inherently alienating in terms of meaning of work for staff'*

This seemed Sybilline and impenetrable in terms of an answer to a question which seemed so ready to be asked in the context of Senatus seeking to throw off its bondage. Yet, Harry had difficulty in providing a direct reply, almost exhibiting the constraint on thinking that prompted me to pose the question, in the first instance. This caused me to consider whether this is how Harry experiences this bondage.

There have been two opposing discourses in Harry's speech. The '*monster'* of the present who Senatus must carry and be tethered to and the lionised future with technology, where Harry potentially desires to be that monster:

> *'we have invented a monster…something of a dark art'*

Fundamentally, though, Harry wants to be separate from the Other, notwithstanding what he had said elsewhere, in a confused way, that Senatus were not linked to the Other and where he could not countenance a possibility that his thinking might be constrained by the Other.

The Other is held in the imagination of Senatus' senior team in a very rich and complex way. There are both feelings of dependency expressed, but also the drive of desire; to be different, for things to be other than they are. Neither the dependence nor the desire is consciously articulated, but it is present, tangling up the current situation so that it remains unclear. In this Chapter, I have developed the theme of the Imaginary and the Imagined Perception of the client, which underpins and sustains this thinking.

7. Chapter Seven - The Escape from Choice

7.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The purpose of this Chapter is to explain the theme of the Escape from Choice; what this theme shows is that the difficulty in making choices – and that important 'trade-off' (Porter, 1996) – at Senatus arises from a fundamental existential uncertainty as to who Senatus believe that they are, together with the question as to whether Senatus should persist in being a professional services firm, knowing that this horizon has changed, but to which change they have not reconciled themselves. It is also the case that it is Senatus' relationships with their clients that has made making their own decisions difficult. There is, however, also a difficulty for Senatus in grasping issues of strategic importance, and this difficulty in sensing strategic issues has resulted in a form of reactivity. This has led to questions being posed regarding the leadership of the firm.

The strategic story of Senatus appears to be one where choices do not appear to be clear, or are closely bound up with other matters, such as their relationship with their clients. Here, strategic issues emerged in the course of the interviews but were not necessarily identified as such. There is an avoidance of the question of leadership succession and while, on a surface level, there appears to be some positive statements made about leadership, beneath-the-surface (Stapley, 2006) there is an absence of engagement with the future.

7.2 A Question of Being

Senatus' present and recent past has been marked by an absence of choices exercised. All of the senior team have something to say, something to express an opinion about, but these discussions are characterised by one thing: a failure to decide and to make choices. There has been both continuous and discontinuous change in Senatus' internal and external environments over the last eight years, yet the course 'chosen' is one where, save for cost control measures and downsizing, there has been relatively little change. One might say that Senatus have been 'muddling through' (Lindblom, 1959). That being

the case, however, this is not something freely chosen, but instead Senatus have reacted to circumstances where they have had to. Whilst there has been an operational strategy to reduce cost, improve business processes and adapt technology to support this, the business strategy has not changed. Senatus largely have the same customers as seven years previously, operate in the same markets and provide the same services.

In short, Senatus have not decided what they want their business to be. There is more to this, however, than simple indifference to any need for change. The vicissitudes of their business are evidence that it is anything but stable and steady. Senatus have deep concerns, are aware that their business model and their environment is changing, but in the face of these concerns, these threats, some of which are ontological, they find it difficult to respond. Insofar as choices are clear or not, the findings show that Senatus actively avoid choice.

This failure to decide is well expressed when Patrick stated:

> *'I think we need to segment it into erm, I want to call it a yellow packed product, but maybe a low value claims product…it might be with some type of […] not necessarily a business but try and deal with all those low value claims at desk at a certain price and only have to deal with […] deal with a professional service on the larger claims'*

In this extract, Patrick wants to both have a low-cost model, but also a '*professional service*' on claims that are high in value. In other words, he wants it both ways. There is no choice being made for one or the other. This is particularly relevant when it comes to questions of the skill-sets required. Lower value, lower complexity claims require less skill, the converse being the case on high value losses. Yet, Senatus have not made a decision to pursue either and to resource it appropriately, or indeed to pursue both ends of the spectrum and to resource accordingly.

This is evidenced by what he says in relation to the concerns that the Board of Senatus attend to:

'I'm going between Billy and Jack here – but a lot of the stuff we have, let's say, in board meetings is operational…it's not strategic…it's not thinking, right, where are we going'

Yet, whilst saying this, Patrick himself is participating in this absence of choice-making. The choice, as presented by Patrick, is binary. That is not necessarily the case, but this is how Patrick sees it. The continued discussion at the Board of operational matters is clearly an impediment to thinking and debating more about this concern.

Patrick, later in the text speaks about the cost to the business of dealing with lower value claims. He says:

'if we analysed the cost of servicing claims below €10K, I think we'd quickly realise we've convinced ourselves, like, you know, why are we doing this?'

An important part of this sentence is 'if'. Patrick says that 'if' Senatus carried out an analysis of the costs involved in handling lower value claims they would understand that they were losing money. That being the case, I would ask why Patrick has not initiated this review; one wonders why he would not want to know the answer to this question.

7.3 Relationship to the Other

I believe that it is partly related to the relationship that Senatus with the Other. It is the dependency that is puzzling. Senatus, for sure, trained as professionals who served only the insurance industry. But, at some stage on this trajectory Insurers decided that they did not want a professional service. They wanted claims to be processed. In this respect, Patrick is on to something in terms of his idea of segmentation but is not clear enough.

There is disappointment later in what Patrick says, too, about the role once being a professional one. The role, the industry, the environment has changed. There is a sense of trying to get to grips with this and for this reason there is a dependency on the client to deliver the solution, to signal something. There is a feeling that Senatus 'couldn't' say no to the client, even when they are losing money, otherwise perhaps they would have

carried out that analysis on their business. There is a sense that this is a necessary relationship, one that Senatus extract something from, but perhaps one which is not so healthy because they believe that they have 'no choice'. But, insofar as Patrick is talking about possible choices, the experience is more marked by the inability to make choices, the inability to decide. The implications for this inability to decide, this inability to say no, is that there is no clear strategy, or no strategy. The relationship is also marked by an imaginary belief that Senatus are something to the client that they are not, that they are the professional service that they once were. There is an awareness in Patrick that this has changed, but it is also characterised by puzzlement coupled with the belief that the client wants to extract maximum value.

7.4 The Failure to Grasp Strategic Issues

The idea of Senatus not debating or engaging with important strategic issues is echoed by others on the senior team. Ross, for instance, spoke about the only strategic decisions being made were ones that had a financial dimension:

> *'a lot of those strategic decisions were more made out of, eh, financial…implications'*

These were decisions that related to people, either by way of reducing headcount, not recruiting or not investing in skills training. Prior to this, Ross spoke about the business '*trying to sort of, make strategic decisions'*. I was interested in this '*sort of'*, which might also be said to be 'not quite'. He is saying that perhaps the appropriate level or quality of effort is not being exercised correctly by the senior team. In other words, he is not satisfied that the right effort had been made to think strategically about the future of the business when these decisions were made.

Don attributed this inability to exercise choice to uncertainty:

> *'I think, you know, that uncertainty, you know, amongst directors as to where we're going, you know, at one level is not helpful to driving the business forward…there are a lot of challenges for the business but, you know, if we're not, er, agreed at*

board level…one of the weaknesses in this company is we're good at talking about strategy but we don't implement it…procrastinating about stuff that in the end makes no difference'

Uncertainty is striking. For Don, the directors are uncertain as to '*where we're going'*, but there is no address to this concern. There are challenges, and Senatus talk about them, but do nothing about them and they procrastinate about the things that they should do. This is interesting from an ontological perspective. There are challenges there, but I wonder how 'real' they are, and whether they are so great as to engender considerable anxiety and denial. Senatus seem to defer decisions on things of no importance, according to Don. So, the unimportant things just get talked about resulting in what Don is saying that there is no strategic response to the serious issues that face Senatus. Even unimportant matters are not decided upon.

Quite unusually, Don brought up the introduction of technology to Senatus some seven years previously which was not a success. Upon its introduction, the Board had to be persuaded to scale back the project and strip out some of the functionality of the system that impacted on the productivity of the business. Here Don says:

'We were trying to, to bring in a, a new IT system and there was a huge amount of flux amongst the staff as to what was happening and who... they were being told one thing by one, er, director and another thing by another and, you know, and that leads to, you know, er, you know, if, if, if you're sitting out on the floor as I call it, you know, they're going to start questioning, well what are you doing? Who's doing this and that's... you know, I still find that that, that is still, you know... I think we certainly have improved and if we're, you know, we have a, you know in terms of you know technology, you know how we do things, I think we certainly have improved'

Don paints a picture of considerable confusion and, as he says, '*flux*'. Don, I believe, is about to say that such confusion still abounds, that people do not feel as though they are

led – *'you know, I still find that, that is still, you know…'* – and just before, what I speculatively believe he is about to say this, Don pauses and represses this thought.

He speaks about continuous change with directors saying different things; what are the staff to think? In his text, Don is referring to the chaos of a number of years ago, the continual changes in direction when this major change was introduced. This underscores or typifies the kind of lack of certainty that Don refers to earlier and the response to a strategic issue. That Don is able to summon this up quite quickly and place it as an example in the present, as such, says something about the 'reality' that he is carrying with him.

He is trying to say more than he says with the continuous repetition of '*you know'*, which he repeats nine times. This level of chaos was the 'preferred' decisional position for the board at that time: Contradictory messages and the introduction of an expensive system that did not meet the needs of the organization. It absorbed a huge amount of energy and I would say was traumatic for Senatus' employees who were the principal users of the system. It coincided with a surge in work, too, but that was the way business change in the organization was accomplished at that time. Don is unsure of what the nature of the 'improvement' is. There is still uncertainty, there is no longer chaos, but it is but a thin membrane between the two.

There is the reference to the '*shop-floor'*; Don positions himself between different directors and the '*shop-floor'*, a disinterested observer, tying in with what Don said earlier in his interview text about not having a viewpoint that is heard. It also links in with what Harry termed the 'shop-floor', a contested space; one that Don identifies with, and one that Harry has infantilized. Don attempts to express something difficult, nevertheless. He tries to articulate this, to symbolize it: '*I still find that that, that is still, you know...'* In the first moment of symbolization, it is something vague, non-descript, the Real, but then becomes something more symbolized when he says that things have improved. But in his searching for words, he is not trying to say how things have improved, he is trying to say something about the chaotic and directionless situation that prevailed in the firm. The second moment of symbolization, which gives rise to the 'meaning', in a conventional

sense of the sentence, suppresses another meaning, in favour of something smoother and readily understandable. Something vague, haunting and lacking in meaning. But this meaning, in the second moment, is rendered somewhat incoherent by the presence of the Real pressing upon it when Don says in the second part of the sentence: '*if we're, you know, we have a, you know in terms of you know, technology, you know how we do things, I think we certainly have improved*'. As Don struggles through this sentence, the Real is progressively diminished and some meaning is slowly instated.

7.5 Reactivity

Don believes that decisional entropy is still an issue:

> *'it was still made up on the hoof. We make up the thing as we go along and that, to me, is not right…misunderstandings, favouritism, this sort of stuff'*

Don says something important about strategy; that for Senatus, it is made up on the hoof. Impromptu and spontaneous. This suggests that while there is an anxiety about the future, it is thought about very little, that decisions are made seemingly without respect to future consequences. This suggests that change by the firm, in response to external changes, is made reactively. Don says of this reactivity: '*that, to me, is not right*'. This touches on something about the absence of strategy and what happens in its place. Things happen when people are '*on the hoof*'. This suggests a lot of movement occurring when an issue arises, rather than some thought and analysis taking place; a bias for action. Don also speaks about '*misunderstandings'* and *'favouritism'* but he doesn't elaborate further on this and the thread of this thought is lost.

7.6 Future Leadership

The succession and leadership of the firm were also preoccupations about which no clear strategy, choice or decision has been made, or broached by the firm. This was a source of anxiety for Ross. Ross first said this, as he approached his concern about leadership:

'we're a great company to make money…when we're really busy is the only time, you know, when everybody's flat out, everybody's flat out working and the difficulty there is that you're not taking time out often enough to say okay, well the 'what ifs' or the when it will happen and you know the business has been very fortunate having such continual leadership ehm whether it be like Harry'

Ross' extract starts by saying *'we're a great company…'* but finishes by saying that as a senior team, Senatus' Board do not think enough about what they are doing and why. Unconsciously, Ross is using the language about Senatus' business model – the common understanding of what it 'takes to get things done' – to question and doubt whether this is sustainable or workable. Ross is however, anxious about how this 'doubt' may be 'heard' and moves to counter this by affirming confidence in Harry later in the extract.

This 'common understanding' of the model is a view that has been shared by other directors in conversations; '*when everybody's flat out*'. It is a suggestion that Senatus can only be solvent when everybody is under pressure. Ross recognises that this is not sustainable, though. He implies that Senatus do not have the resources to take time out to ask 'why' or 'what if', linking into the earlier idea of reactivity.

In this extract, it is the repetition of '*flat out*' that is the thing that wants to be heard. Being 'flat out' suggests that there is no room, no space for anything else. One thinks of a machine running at full capacity, wearing out its parts and it evokes imagery of being over-stretched and being exhausted. This is the business model that should be aspired to – one where everyone is working '*flat out*'. This does not seem to 'add up', really. While Ross is saying it, repeating it, he is also, shouting *'flat out'* as perhaps a protest at this behaviour.

Ross then says of the leadership of the firm:

'the whole sort of vision of the company, the direction of the company has been spear-headed by (…) you know to everybody's gain, albeit with good strategic thinking from a financial point of view'

He is talking about vision, but it is a *'sort of'* vision. If it is a *'sort of'* vision, I question whether it can it be a vision at all. Then, Ross says that the firm '*has been spear-headed by…'* after which there is an absent pause. No-one is named, but the senior team have all gained. The lexical suppression indicates that there is some unconscious doubt here, some contrary view is repressed. This is suggested especially if one looks at what Ross says later around '*continuity*'. There is also anxiety that strategic decisions have been based on financial implications only.

This is also, however, muddled. When speaking about leadership earlier in the previous extract, Ross finished with '*whether it be like Harry*'. Here, the firm has been 'spear-headed' by something/ someone that is absent and the only strategic decisions taken have been financial ones. The silence after '*spear-headed by'* is significant. According to Billig (1999), as we speak, we repress, or Parker (2011) would say that when we say one thing, we repress another by disattending to it. This pause then is where presumably Harry's name *should* have been placed. But who, or what is the absent signifier, and what is signified by this absence is not explicated. Put differently, I would ask what it is that stands in the place of Harry as an absent signifier.

So, one could re-construe the sentence as saying that Senatus have no vision and that they are being led by no-one, or an absence. This has been done for everyone's benefit, 'albeit' as Ross says, strategic thinking from a financial perspective only. The choice that is being made here is not to choose; there is no vision, according to Ross, and there is no-one leading it. The choices that have been made have *only* been financial ones; reducing costs, presumably, and this is certainly something to be valued. The business is still operating. But there is no next stage, no vision.

Completing his thoughts on leadership, Ross says:

> *'the continuity piece post… it should be on our strategic agenda'*

I was struck by the punning power of 'continuity piece'. Here Ross is saying what he believes needs to happen in relation to the succession of the business. Apart from the fact that this is not a 'live' issue and I did not bring this up as a question, I was struck by

what *'continuity piece'* sounded like. It sounded like '*continuity peace'* meaning, I believe that he fears the change that might be brought about by any possible departure of Harry from the business. For Ross, it appears that he needs this 'peace', he needs to be assured or certain that things will go on the way they have gone on for the last twenty-five years that Ross has worked in the business.

When Ross is speaking about continuity, he is speaking about 'succession', but he is not at the same time. He is talking about the continuity of the leadership of the business. But I wonder how one can succeed someone else yet continue what they were doing. There is therefore an anxiety at the heart of what Ross is saying. Ross, I believe, fears this succession issue. He believes that Harry has been thinking about all of the issues and problems, minding them, so to speak, so much so that he has not had to think about them hitherto.

There is also a sense of 'going along with' in Senatus, as evidenced by what Gary says:

> *'so I don't know, I think, I think I support everything we're doing at the moment, but I'm thinking, you know, the time will come when we have to make a decision maybe to, you know, divert investment towards…to grow the business'*

There is uncertainty here in what Gary is saying. He hesitates, doubtful, but the future has to change. He seems prepared to 'indulge' what is taking place now, but that it has to end. It might be argued that he does not agree with what is happening right now, but he is not prepared to voice this and to be visible about expressing a preference.

There is a sense that there is awareness of strategic issues but that they are simultaneously approached and avoided by the team. The relationship with clients, the absence of planned change in response to the introduction of technology and questions of vision and leadership are all issues that were touched upon, but their expansion was repressed from conscious thought. These are all existential questions for the organization which are not engaged with and where choices are not actively sought out but are avoided.

8. Chapter Eight - Guilt & Responsibility

8.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The final theme that emerged from the research material was 'Guilt & Responsibility'. This was an intriguing theme that presented itself, but which is unacknowledged, in any conscious way, by the senior team at Senatus. This Chapter sets out and develops the theme of Guilt, which theme itself is tied to an emblem of violence carried out on the organization itself. Guilt arises from the failure to speak up and to develop the 'voice' of the organization. But this failure has been accomplished through collusion with the Other, albeit unconsciously.

I have argued elsewhere that the themes are linked and inter-implicated in one another. In this respect, the theme of Guilt can be said to link to the Escape from Choice and Identity. In navigating the challenges of its business environment, the senior team have experienced as loss the changing nature of their identity. This is intimately bound with the fact that choices were not made to work through and to preserve some aspects of their professional identity, notwithstanding the apparent changes that they have experienced. To be clear, and this goes to the heart of the disavowal of this theme, those interviewed did not consciously express guilt or remorse about any decisions or unmanaged change experienced by the organization's members.

I considered that there may be some symbolic debt being repaid by the senior team to the rest of the organizational members. No-one needs be aware that this is the case, not least those who are making the repayments and those who are ostensibly supposed to be banking them, but this is a manifestation of unconscious processes. The failure to avow and honour guilt, and the effort directed at atoning for it, even privately among the senior team, does not prevent its signification taking place in the organization.

8.2 Violence and Loss

This is Ross speaking about a decision made by the Board to centralize operations and close regional offices, resulting in loss adjusting staff working from home:

'we were all very keen, you know, get rid of the offices…somewhere to go to think…it may not be as productive…it can't be, make it a little difficult, to have sort of somewhere, how basic it needs to be, for somebody to call base. The, the adjuster is really the key to the business…something that's going to be fulfilling…them comfortable…they're not feeling that they're just being raped and pillaged at all counts…and you know compared to…they're being asked just to keep on the treadmill…and not necessarily to be respective of their home, family life difficulties'

Reading this, it appears clear that Ross believes that others on the Board – note that he distances himself from the decision when he expresses *schadenfreude* in saying *'we were all very keen'* – behaved in a rapine manner in closing regional offices and requiring people to work from home. It appears that something may have been taken away from staff in so doing. The use of '*somewhere'* and '*somebody'* are quite alliterative and provide emphasis for Ross's appeal for a private thinking space so necessary for the work of loss adjusting.

The words 'raped' and 'pillaged' really stand out because of their violence and the images that they evoke. They're usually associated with the conquest in myth and stories. It's hard to see what the connection is between such myths and what Ross is saying. One could say that he believes that management have 'vanquished' the staff, or exercised an unjust power over them, and that they have disempowered the loss adjuster in some way. The use of very violent language portrays the decision as being something he remains angry about, years on, not because of the act itself, but because of the erosion of the role. When Ross says: '*being raped and pillaged at all counts*', it is interesting, because Ross is not talking about just one aspect of the work, but rather there appear to be other aspects where they are being violated. 'Rape' is a particularly violent term and it brings to mind an unlawful, violent, unwanted bodily intrusion. 'Who', for Ross, is doing the 'raping' as, of course, Ross is one of the senior management team. And of the term pillage; to pillage is not just to steal. It's to steal in certain conditions of disorder, such as war or riot and implies violence, synonymous as it is with rape. So, for Ross, there is

violence being perpetrated against loss adjusters, at every turn, by everyone, including, it seems, the management team.

Ross also starts to say something in this extract but stops. He says, '*and you know, compared to'* and I wonder what this pause or absence is saying. If Senatus are being compared to some other firm, I wonder who that might be and why can Ross not bring himself to put this into words? What is being actively repressed, excluded from conscious expression? What might this alternative be? This is the pause in which there is possible creativity (Driver, 2009b) or Badiou's 'event' (Bistoen et al., 2014). It is the moment wherein an intervention might be meaningful and important, such as providing an expressive space where Ross might say what he really wanted to say. It doesn't matter whether this is something that is 'true' or not, that is whether there is somewhere better to work, but rather that Ross possibly *believes* that there is.

When Ross says '*getting rid*' it points towards something unwanted, unclean or unnecessary. He has linked the office space with somewhere to think and then to the firm's identity as adjusters, and so creates an equivalence between the management decision to 'get rid' of offices as exemplifying Senatus' senior team's attitude to staff. He recognises that 'thinking' is a key part of the job. When Senatus 'got rid' of the premises, they left no space to 'think', therefore removing a fundamental part of the role and identity. I am struck that where Ross says, '*for somebody to call base'*, one could substitute base for 'home' and that this would be the 'true' meaning of this sentence.

There is sympathy here too, for someone who has to work from home. He says '*respective'* instead of 'respectful', but he is delineating the multiple components of a person's life and how it is made up. Here '*respective'* is placed with 'home, family, life', important pillars and places, say, where violence should not belong. Saying 'respectful' might have made more sense. It would have read more straightforwardly, but by saying 'respective' Ross has forced a 'stop' or an arrest of meaning. He has appropriated an unfamiliar word to this context and has gotten me, as researcher to stop, so that I start to wonder what he means. When I place 'home, family, life' together with 'respective' as Ross has done, I believe that he has divided these things up, so that they are separate

and perhaps meaningful in their own way. Ross, as it happens, is very much a 'family man'. His weekends are taken up with family activities, community activities and get-togethers. I thought about whether Ross here was expressing *his* desire and what is of importance to him and which should not be violated.

He makes a point that the adjuster needs to have '*somewhere'* to call a '*base'*. The 'base' is something that recalls the attachment theory of Bowlby and the 'secure base' (Braun, 2011). It also calls to mind a mother's 'reverie' (Froggett & Hollway, 2010) which is a way of being with an infant that allows their difficult feelings and frustrations to be contained in safely. It is redolent of instances where the adjuster might be involved in difficult situations or faced with decisions that have financial implications, but which can be subject to challenge. One is, as the loss adjuster, really 'out there' on one's own, in the field. Those who challenge the loss adjuster's decisions may never have to face the same kinds of situations that s/he does, so there can be considerable distance between the respective positions. I also heard pleading in Ross's appeal here. He is saying the 'something' can be basic; there is a modesty of expectation, but it is that safe place that is missing or has been taken away.

I wondered what Ross was talking about in terms of 'thinking'; emotional space because it can be a demanding job, research time for technical questions or case strategy. As I reflected on Ross's interview text I noted two things: that, as before, very few of the respondents spoke about anything strategic, and that none spoke about the practice of loss adjusting, how it can be improved, how to add greater value and so on. As I read and hear this, I think of the frenetic pace of the workplace, the demands and the inability to find somewhere to think. It sounds busy, without a place to 'land' and to just contemplate a problem, or perhaps to share one.

I also found it interesting that Ross spoke of 'fulfilment': He appears to be ascribing some form of meaning to the work, that now perhaps is missing. By saying that there needs to be something fulfilling, Ross is perhaps saying that this is absent. There is an absence of fulfilment in the work.

Harry says two things relevant to this point:

To be: *'truly customer centric you start with the coalface and work back up, nobody does'*

And:

That Senatus had run staff quality meetings for feedback but that the:

> *'quality circles were going great until we got busy…speaks volumes about what we think of that as an approach…the key internal thing that we're missing, that's the first thing'*

When actually working at a coalface, this is hot, dark and dangerous work; loss adjusters can sometimes deal with difficult customers and it could be argued that Senatus' people work in sometimes difficult conditions. I wondered whether this is an unconscious recognition of a difficult situation, subverting the idea of the possibility of Senatus being 'customer centric' at all, or at least until some of the difficult situations that people operate in are recognised. The question must be asked whether and how one can give everything of oneself and truly serve the customer if one finds the work difficult and how such a person is to be supported in their work.

In terms of the quality circle, the idea was to establish a community of practice and to meet with staff, understand their concerns and to bring feedback to management. While it was agreed that this was a worthwhile concept, it was neither resourced properly, nor was any feedback ever formally accepted or implemented. One might therefore ask what the purpose was. The business became busy, but the question is whether this ought to have taken precedence over staff concerns, but here Harry is disowning any responsibility for the failure of this community. For him, that was someone else's problem or failure, something which Harry has disowned, but about which he appears concerned, notwithstanding that there is an inability to invest the correct level of resources to support '*a key internal thing that we're missing'*.

This is a preoccupation for Harry. If the business is to be '*customer centric*', employees need to be trained and supported, yet this is something that the business was not prepared to resource and something that one might say that he was not prepared to take responsibility for. This has surfaced as a concern, yet when there was an opportunity to support an initiative, there was a side-stepping of responsibility. I interpret this as though one side of an equation has been solved, but that there is disavowal or failure to lead this through with deeper reflection to achieve an appropriate balance. In this sense there is a circling of guilt or responsibility, but not an acceptance.

8.3 The Loss of Voice

Patrick expresses guilt, but links this to clients' behaviour towards Senatus as a firm and the loss adjusting industry in general:

> *'I think what they want to do is, they want […] I think a lot of them look at loss adjusters as service providers. We need to […] we need to get as much as we can, yes we have to pay them, but you don't pay them too much, we need the cost base for servicing claims as low as possible. I think […] I can see that, I've seen that…I think they're all […] yes, they're, they're […] we just don't seem to…we've allowed it to happen'*

And:

> *'I think it's been dumbed down, I think we're complicit in allowing it to be dumbed down'*

And:

> *'we've allowed that to happen, did we step back and think about it and say, what are we going to do about it? We probably did, but didn't do anything about it. Erm, and I say we didn't do anything about it, we tried to address it internally, we realised we had to seriously up our game'*

I note what Patrick says about Senatus being '*a service provider to them'*. If I was to insert a word into this extract to render a deeper layer of meaning, I would insert 'just'. This is pertinent particularly where later Patrick talks about Senatus being, or once being, a professional service. Changing now to being a '*service-provider'* from being a 'professional service'. Patrick pauses at the end of this extract and then says that '*we'* allowed this to happen. I consider whether Senatus did allow this to happen and whether they trusted the Other too much, even though it appears that the Other did not think of Senatus in the same way. This is interesting because all Insurers call Senatus a 'service provider' whereas it was once the case that they were 'loss adjusters'. It's useful to ponder when exactly the term changed, and the practices with it, and this likely arises due to the preponderance of managerialism (Pollitt, 1993) within the insurance industry – the need to measure, count and break down the component parts of service work so that better 'control' can be achieved.

In the first extract, Patrick pauses a lot and repeats some terms, almost in a sense of incredulity. He wonders what has been happening and struggles to try to get his head around things. He interprets how the client now understand Senatus, what they want from Senatus in terms of service and how this is different from what would have been the way things were. There are lots of pauses and hesitancies in this extract as Patrick tries to grasp what is going on, as he fantasises about the Other.

Worst of all, Patrick believes that Senatus have '*allowed this to happen'*. In this respect, he is speaking about compliance and the impact on their productivity, the costs of which they have had to 'absorb' from their clients. This again demonstrates a failure to recognise and to exercise choice. This is something that *'we have allowed to happen'*. A failure to do something, to simply allow something happen and there is a responsibility taken for this. It is interesting that Patrick here is accepting responsibility for the organization's 'unfreedom' or servitude. Senatus' management have been complicit in this and have been willing participants in their own servitude.

8.4 Collusion with the Other

I wonder whether this participation in servitude to the Other is because Senatus is uncomfortable with or afraid of choice. Senatus have allowed the business to 'evolve' but this evolutionary process would have been interrupted had they made their own choices. Rather than live with the anxiety of choosing, they have chosen the certainty of acquiescence or servitude. The avoidance exemplified is significant. Something was debated, a conclusion arrived at, but Patrick is saying that Senatus '*probably'* didn't act on it. There was perhaps a void in leadership. Senatus now have to bear responsibility and maybe explains why there is an obligation to deal with the client in a certain way, even if their requirements eliminate Senatus' profits and increase their costs, introducing the idea of a 'symbolic debt', to be discussed later.

In this and the preceding four Chapters, I have presented the themes which have arisen from my analyses of the interview texts. Some of the themes were albeit stronger than others. The analyses were based on a hermeneutic methodology and were aimed at exploring the texts as presented by the speakers to simultaneously uncover secondary meaning but also to restore the texts back to their original difficulty (Caputo, 1987). These texts, taken as they have been from spoken discourse, are nevertheless, from the speakers' perspectives, rational, smooth accounts of their thoughts about a particular topic relevant to the business of Senatus. However, as I have problematized language as being unconscious and constitutive of the individual's psychological unconscious a further dimension has been revealed, giving rise to a difficulty as to what has been said. It is this difficulty that I will explore further using the hermeneutics of suspicion (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), or Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, in the next two Chapters.

9. Chapter Nine – Experiencing the Loss of Identity

9.1 Introduction to the Chapter

In this and the next Chapter, I explore the themes from the research and consider their implications for the organization, organization theory and strategic management practice using the final cycle of analysis, the hermeneutics of suspicion (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Similar to hermeneutics, psychoanalysis is a theory and practice, with its own set of concepts, and while I discuss in a later chapter my awareness of the difficulty in using any theory to investigate research material, psychoanalysis should be thought of "as a conceptual structure that permits many articulations" (Lapping, 2011, p.9).

In this Chapter, I will discuss what it means for Senatus to have existential concerns of identity. I will also discuss the possible reasons for these unconscious concerns which I argue rest mainly in failures and discontinuities of discourse. Just as these concerns have no positive essence, are ontologically negatively construed, because they are unconscious, so too are they constructed in the negativity and system of differences that persists as language and are expressed in repetitive symptoms. Similarly, the reified entities that comprise the 'Other' are not positively construed and how they are thought and talked about is unconscious. These *points des capitons*, or unconscious anchors of meaning have been stabilised in the minds of Senatus' senior team in ways that preclude a response to the strategic issues facing the organization. The existential anchors of meaning are manifestations of anxiety about the uncertainty of Senatus' strategic position. Any emergent discourse which seeks to establish a working reality is weak because it fails to absorb or address the unconscious existential anxiety that is present in the discourse of the senior team. It is a case of presence in absence: In the absence of a strategic response, there is something present in the strategy discourse of Senatus, which I argue to be unconscious concerns about identity, arbitrariness of the client, the imagined perceptions of the client, the escape from choice and guilt for past actions. Guinchard (1998), speaking about employee absence from work, said that absence, generally, was "a signifier of the lost object or of the unsatisfactory object" (p.487) and this is relevant here when considering what is in the place of the absence of strategy at

Senatus. These prevent the formation of a coherent strategic responsive discourse, because of their unconscious disavowal.

The rationale behind the research was to understand why Senatus, as a modern organization, do not have a strategy and/ or have not developed a strategy in response to considerable disruptive change in their industry. Senatus had 367 employees, at its maxima, in 2009 and now, after eight redundancy and downsizing programmes, their staff has reduced to 70. The same business activities, albeit on a lesser scale, are carried out now by Senatus as in 2009. In this time, Senatus has also seen both its revenue and profitability reduce, and in some recent years it has reported losses.

Senatus' senior team has attempted to develop responses to cope with the reduction in revenue and profitability. The operational strategies pursued, consisting of Lean programmes and the introduction of technology has allowed Senatus to maintain quality, despite the loss of competent staff, and so retain its client base. Some of its senior team participated in an externally provided management development programme. It has, however, failed to develop business strategies that might allow it to address the contraction of the market in which it operates. This is not for want of its trying. Senatus' senior team are intelligent, articulate, competent and experienced professional people who understand the difficulties that it faces and who thoughtfully consider and weigh up the many threats that it faces.

The argument I pursue to explain this failure rests in there being an unconscious, other discourse at work in the Senatus senior team. This discourse takes the place of a coherent strategy for the development of the organization where strategic developments include "all kinds of activities and processes related to the deliberate or emergent development of the business and organization" (Laine & Vaara, 2007, p.10). This unconscious discourse consists of concerns and preoccupations in the participants' speech. In the previous Chapters, I developed themes to heuristically describe this unconscious discourse. The unconsciousness of the language used by participants is full of individual concerns, such as identity which are particularities (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) that are not addressed in any of the (operational) strategies at Senatus. *A* strategy has been used a number of times

by Senatus; downsizing, and while it is possible that this has been unconsciously or consciously troubling to Senatus' executives, it did not surface as a preoccupation in the interview texts. It is nonetheless a repetitive behaviour, about which more later.

Irrespective of that minimal, *financial* strategy, the unconscious discourse which I argue has taken the place of strategy development nonetheless continues to occur, to maintain a presence in the speech of Senatus' key actors and prevents the articulation of any new strategy. Unconscious discourse, however, is not a distraction from strategy making, necessarily, in my view. Instead, these unconscious concerns are being worked on *instead* of strategy – they continue to be repeated throughout the texts – and the absence of strategy only becomes "understandable if we suppose the existence of such an unconscious inner world" (Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert, 2008, p.21) and if one accepts the premise that "institutions are used by individual members to reinforce individual mechanisms of defence against anxiety" (Jaques, 1955, p.247).

It is in the face of considerable change, which Senatus has interpreted as existentially threatening, that Senatus has unconsciously chosen not to develop a strategy. This decision is not outwardly rational, nor indeed observable to its members, but it makes sense in the context of the deep worries that Senatus' executives have concerning their reason for being, the structure of their relations with their clients and the choices that they believe they have open to them. The signifiers spoken by Senatus' executives are a discursive formation of the individual members' speech as they seek to repress (Billig, 1999) uncomfortable, threatening and anxiety provoking traumatic truths. Traumatic memory is unsymbolizable and represents a permanent dislocation in the individual (Homer, 2005) and what is lexically selected represses some other word so that the 'truth' becomes less available to consciousness the more often words are spoken, and chains of discourse are developed.

My argument in this Chapter is that when people in Senatus speak, unconsciously, about Identity, for instance, the structured way in which they perceive their business environment is revealed to show a concern principally for how those individuals see themselves and their firm, and indeed how they construct identity through the prism of

loss and lack, quite apart from developing a business strategy grounded in, say, its place in the structure of their industry (e.g., Porter, 2008) or based on the uniqueness of their resources (e.g., Barney, 1991). Senatus' failure to develop a strategy is principally a failure of discourse, rather than the senior team's ability or otherwise to absorb complex ideas about its industry structure and resource reconfiguration. In terms of a failure of discourse, it is a failure to achieve a hegemony of ideas within its own organization, and to some extent outside it. I am interpreting hegemony of discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) as being the absorption of the diverse particularities of the strategic discourse practiced by Senatus and expressing them in a way that that allows unconscious concerns to be surfaced and addressed and so to create a new strategic discourse. Hegemony of discourse allows new *points de capitons* to be stabilised and for organizational members to works towards a purpose. Anchors of meaning are mechanisms through which "the signifier stops the otherwise indeterminate sliding of signification" (Lacan, 1960, p.303).

Once I have completed these analyses in the next two Chapters, in Chapter Eleven I will address the over-arching consequence for Senatus in failing to instate a hegemonic order of ideas that absorbs the complexity of unconscious particularity and its implications for strategy.

9.2 The Process of Identification

In Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, subjectivity qua identity is not "an innate or universal human condition but rather…a contingent possibility enabled by the effect of signification on the living organism" (Bell, 2014, p.39) where the subject, the human being, is divided from the signifiers of language in two moments: Alienation, where the subject must take on communication through entering a "representational order" (Bell, 2014, p.40) of language, and of Separation, where the subject is forced to avow that it is not the sole object of the Other's (caregiver's) desire. When Lacan spoke about the subject, he referred to the subject of the unconscious, because the conscious subject is not the sole, central determinate of action.

In this reading of identity, the human subject is split or divided between the words and images that circulate around him or her, and what is unconscious – his or her affective investment (Cederstrom & Spicer, 2014) in these words and images. This can be glimpsed readily in any everyday conversation: certain words are emphasised, invested with a charge of affect, others less so. In the Senatus team, Patrick expressed this when he said '*you know, we were once professionals'*. As apparent as the meaning of this may seem, there are many questions one might like to pose to this signifier: *what are you now?*, might be one of them. In this regard, "the 'subjectivity' of the subject, the meaning-making activity through which people forge their lives, their narrativizing core" (Frosh, 2014, p. 17) is something that is ongoing and considered by Senatus' executives situationally and through an act of a protecting narrative story. Laplanche (2003) argues that this narrativizing in itself is a defensive process. This is what Lacan means when he said that the real subject is missing from language (Lacan, 1970). I have no access to the full realm of meaning for Patrick when he said this. There are many associations, and I expect that these would continue to expand each passing day as experience accumulates and as the Real diminishes. Language obscures unconscious desire and knowledge. It becomes opaque, ephemeral and elusive, but there is a presence there, nonetheless, perhaps a shadow cast by the real subject who is split, alienated and separated.

The interplay of words and images is important in Lacanian psychology in how identity is constructed (Fotaki, 2009). An infant first takes in an image, which is then symbolized by another person, the caregiver. This naming, this introduction to a universe of differences is an important mediator of the regulatory Symbolic order for the human infant, but it also links the Symbolic to the Imaginary order of being, or not so much being, or non-being, but the potentiality of being. In this sense, the image, the imago, is crucial, because it is specularly taken in by the subject, added to others, from which an identity is objectively formed. It is specular because the concept of self is achieved firstly in the moment of vision before it then becomes actualized in movement and behaviour (Samuels, 1993). The Symbolic operates on the individual so that consciousness is achieved and simultaneously challenged externally before it is internalized (Samuels, 1993). But all images, like words, are partial – they are never the full thing. They are

what-is-believed-to-be and in this sense the human subject always 'over-reaches' (Vanier, 2000) and imagines that it is more than it is. Just as the human infant and adult constructs an imaginary of what, say, the back of his or her head looks like, identity-images are imaginary because they are firstly partial, and, like the back of the head, are always mediated through a mirror, a photograph, or a description in words. The construction of identity is to be seen as processual and an ongoing attempt to fix, or tie down, the signification of the self (Hoedemaekers, 2010).

The construction of identity is always therefore imaginary, driven by 'lack' (Driver, 2009a, 2013) and the process is an ongoing struggle for coherence. This striving for coherence in identity can be experienced as stressful, generating anxiety (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010). When certain words and images are settled on – "various suitable 'ideas' of the day" (Fotaki, 2009, p.148) - this is temporary, as they never quite describe the full picture and so they circle around the void which is the "crack" at the centre of our existence (Webster, 2013, p.139). We keep filling the void with other words and images until this this is seen to be unsatisfactory and other identities start to be formed anew.

When Patrick said '*you know, we were once professionals'*, he could be speaking of an identity that once was, or he could be establishing an identity of the professional-that-once-was. For Patrick, this could be his subject-position (Frosh et al., 2003), a patterned way of behaving such that he understands himself as being that 'once was' and cognitively filters (Garud & Karunakaran, 2017) out information that might challenge this. In this sense, Patrick, in referencing an identity that once was and evoking a possible return to this, he constructs "an invention of some new content (which) can only occur in the illusory form of returning to the past original truth" (Zizek, 2006, p.29). Therefore, this identity construction is a new thing, despite its reference to and possible wish for the recovery of the past. Holding an identity for something that is no longer possible, and which may never have been, is an illusion that Patrick looks to, for in that moment he ceases to be neither in the present nor the past, but in a new psychical space that represents a retreat from anxiety provoking threats to Senatus. Constructing a 'once-

was' identity is a subject position (Frosh et al., 2003) that has become established and patterned.

Equally, there is loss here, a perceived loss of an identity once held. For Wilkinson (2016), there is already "too much loss" which "insistently presses upon us the force of its desire" (p.395). Professional identity, constructed as an object, is lost. In this reading, professional identity as a loss adjuster is now over, irretrievably gone, but it also has its own 'force' and compulsion. This theme of lost identity swept across most of the interviews with the team, and to which extent Senatus could be described as an 'inconsolable organization' (Stein, 2007) where the work of mourning of this loss has not taken place. It is quite possible, and likely, that the individuals involved have reacted differently to this loss. Kahn (2017), following Freud, differentiates between mourning and melancholia. The former is a process whereby the lost object – professional status – is grieved for but ultimately accepted as being lost, allowing the individual to make something anew of what is now their situation, but the latter however is something more profound, and not reparative. In melancholia, the person does not move beyond mourning their loss, but rather internalises, holds onto and preserves the object, unwilling to let it go. This is an unresolved mourning "associated with 'self reproaches'"(Lapping, 2011, p.17). Professionalism is potentially that object for some of Senatus' members, something that is lost or lacking.

Gary says;

> *'I think it's across the board, it's a problem for Ireland, it's a problem for financial services, it's a problem for our industry, and then it will be a problem for us as adjusters'*

In this respect, he is speaking of the onset of automation and globalisation. Interestingly, Senatus are fourth on his list, they have come last. This is in keeping with melancholia, akin to depression, where there is the sense of the catastrophic. This is so because no other choices appear to be available as the object has been lost, but the idea has been clung to. Melancholia is not universally considered pathological, however. Eng & Han

(2003) argue for a trenchant holding onto of melancholia as by so doing, the social value of the object may be transformed. This is especially salient for Senatus' members who hold onto a lost professional status: By melancholically holding onto this attachment they may yet achieve its, at least, partial recuperation.

9.3 Strategy and Desire

What I believe that I have found in my exploration of identity in the research is that not only does desire drive the need for completeness through identity construction, but that an individual's desire is implicated in the formation, or non-formation of strategy. Laine & Vaara (2007) looked at how strategy and subjectivity went hand in hand and how there was a discursive struggle in organizations which looked at the empowering, or otherwise, effects of strategic discourse in organizations. For them, subjectivity was "a discursively constructed sense of identity and social agency in specific contexts" (p.5), such that individuals make use of strategy talk in order to perform their identity. Knights and Morgan (1991), similarly, spoke of individuals transformed into subjects who obtain a "sense of purpose and reality" (p.252) from strategizing. Here, though, in Senatus, there is almost a converse of this position, in that there is no visible strategy but in that absence there is a bubbling of desire, when speaking of strategy, which is evidenced in the talk that expresses identity formation. Desires project toward 'hallucination' of their objects' meaning and much of the time achieve satisfaction through ideas, concepts and actual objects, at least for a while, that escape reality (Soufon, 2004), meaning that the team members experience satisfaction of their unconscious wishes in fantasy. There are, to borrow Laclau & Mouffe's (1985) terminology *particularities* of desire among the team.

The expression of this desire is not clear-cut, necessarily. Whereas Patrick sees himself as a once-was professional, Gary as a professional loss adjuster and Simon as a finance director who has had to alter his identity in light of external challenges, such that he now interprets all incoming stimuli through this lens, there is, common to all the team, a desire not to be 'named' by the Other. This is a peculiarity of human desire – it is always in relationship to another, always, in some way addressed to an other (Ricoeur, 1977). The Lacanian understanding regarding the acquisition of language and culture is that the

human infant sees something, attends to it and so it is named by the (m)Other. The Other is enigmatic and is developed as a concept in infancy. The world is brought by 'others'; people who speak with love, to rules, to normalcy, behaviour and conformity. It is a regulatory mechanism that stabilizes meaning in the world, bringing constancy, sharing and holding secrets and a source of knowledge, one that persists in the human subject.

9.4 The Naming of Identity

The Other confers the word upon the infant and relates it to other things in terms of marking out its differences from them (dogs are not cats). Words, ideas, images are then used to build identities that are protective and defensive of an ideal-ego. In Senatus' case, the words that are used by the Other to name Senatus and what it does are not necessarily compatible to the ideal-ego that the team have of itself. Words like 'service-provider' have replaced the terms that Senatus use to refer to itself; loss adjuster, or once-were loss adjusters. The 'subject is always a signifier for another signifier' (Lacan, 2006, p. 15) and while the subject is wholly reliant on another, the Other, to recognize and name it, the Other may selectively re-signify what it wants, setting in place "a continual process of identification with the signifiers offered by" (Kenny, 2009, p.6) the Other. This is not so much therefore a case of the understanding of the Other that Ross has when he says, '*they need us, and we need them*' as 'when we need you, we'll call you'. That Ross has constructed the relationship with the Other in this way, thereby forming part of the 'narrativizing core' (Frosh, 2014) of his identity, suggests that this is fragile and subject to the mercurialness of others.

Thus, there is no real communication between parties here but rather signifiers coming together to signify and re-signify meaning for themselves. This is problematic when one signifier, the Other, the Insurer, looks at the world differently and while for Senatus the world may be seen as one where its *raison d'etre* has been to expertly and professional investigate and adjudicate insurance claims on behalf of the insurance industry, Insurers' strategies change and have become more diverse, mixing between their own claims functions, loss adjusters, claims management companies and so on. In this sense, the 'founding word' (Zizek, 2010) of Senatus has changed. The 'founding word' is that lexical

designation conferred on a subject upon his/ her emergence from the abyssal Real (Zizek, 2010) providing the subject with a name and symbolic identity. In this case, loss adjusting as a profession constituted itself as such in 1941 (Sharp, 1988), and while this was an important act in itself, its signification could only be complete with its recognition by the Other. With its founding word now so disrupted and subverted, Senatus are faced with a challenge greater than an absence of strategy, which is the symbolic death of their profession. This subversion of their founding word is both an explanation for the absence of strategy and for their existential anxiety, so preventing strategy development.

9.5 The Symptoms of Loss

Where there has been such disruption to identity and whereas the strategic discourse of Senatus is substituted partially by a discourse of identity formation, I want to draw out my findings from the research material that suggests that multiple *particularities of desire* are played out, unconsciously. Desire has a central place in both Freudian and Lacanian psychology: "private desire is anchored to shared social reality" (Kirshner, 2005, p.87). In this respect, part of the theme of identity carries the desire for transgression. It is unlikely that any member of Senatus senior team would have stated explicitly that they would want their business' mission to be so radically different as to be unrecognizable from the activities carried out at present, but language carries desire and it appeared clear to me that there was a desire to do something radically other as a business.

Harry spoke about a '*no-man's land*' and later of an '*interregnum'*. In both of these metaphors there is a mental play of psychological space that allows for someone to act beyond the rule of authority, but paradoxically to be working within the rules of a broader authority that constructs these psychological and discursive spaces from the outside. In other words, these discursive spaces have their limits. That said, within them, people can, in fantasy, move around freely and create situations where they have their own authority and 'rules'. Segal (2000) says that fantasies "represent illusions about the world" (p.42) and "determine our interest in the world, our beliefs and assumptions, what attracts our attention and what we do with it" (ibid., p.72). Fantasies are powerful and both metaphors spoken by Harry evoke something chaotic and unruly.

Harry said:

'we've got that interregnum…a no man's land'

And:

'we've ownership of that middle ground space, that interregnum'

In the first extract above, Harry conflates '*interregnum'* with '*no man's land*' and with the second extract he is confirming that this psychological and discursive space is beyond reach, from anyone, including the Other. In these parts of the research material, Harry is expressing a desire for owning disorder, uncertainty and potentially chaos, just as the political realm between kings might be, or the no-man's land of war. Both metaphors express a wish to find a discursive space and identity, not just to be different and to operate outside normal laws, but to do so amidst chaos and uncertainty. Whereas the Other is all seeing, present and knowing, there is a wishful hope that even the Other won't be able to withstand the pressures of the chaotic destabilisation of society. Glynos (2008) speaks of "a problem summarising those situations in which a subject appears both to affirm an ideal and, at the same time, systematically to transgress it" (p.679) and for Harry there is present the wish to be needed by the Other, to be the professional of choice, but also to be beyond the reach of the Other.

Gary's desire for Senatus appears more reparative, when he says:

'and that's when I always convince myself that, you know, 20 years got me to where I am now, so if I started something else in 20 years I could be the equivalent of something else. I, I…it's not a personal thing for me, I look at the business like that'

'That's when I'm back to where if I won the lottery…of the Euro millions with enough to…I would buy the business and bring it on that journey'

There is an intermingling of desire: What Gary wants for himself and what he wants for the business are the same thing. There are a range of identities being worked out here by the Senatus team. They are potentially disruptive and conflicting against each other,

but none are clearly expressed and articulated. They are unconscious identity formations which are constantly being worked on. It is this searching for renewed identity, in light of its serious disruption, that is consuming the psychical energy of Senatus' senior team. Their 'founding word' as a firm of loss adjusters has been disrupted, although this has not been outwardly acknowledged, but it is unconsciously carried and is being worked on through symptoms (strategies) such as downsizing, which Kahn (2017) describes as "a series of endings for those experiencing a rationalisation process" (p.46). Expanding on this, Kahn (2017) cites Stein (1998) who cast downsizing as a euphemism for sanitising 'organizational death', regarding which Kets de Vries & Balazs (1997) argue that "the effectiveness of downsizing as a way to bring an organization back to organizational health and increased competitiveness has been seriously challenged" (p.12) and a 'return to normal' does not ensue following such a change. Moreover, the social effects of such processes are not considered so that downsizing is not about the future but rather solving an immediate problem for the business concerned. Whilst a financial strategy, or a minimal strategy, downsizing is not a business strategy for the future as its short-term nature can be destructive to the organization, and while nonetheless helping it to survive, it is a survival that has a consequence. It is this destruction-survival 'scorched earth' juxtaposition that contains the knot of paradox; a fusing of death and life, the symbolic death of others who have been 'let go' with the gratitude of survivors.

The destructive, aggressive effects of downsizing, particularly where there have been numerous such programmes as in Senatus, can be seen in the psychoanalytic concept of aggressivity. Aggressivity, commonly seen between one person and another, including within organizations "is a function of a primordial destructiveness toward oneself" (Boothby, 2014, p.39), while affecting others, is principally about aggression towards oneself. The imaginary-ideal-ego has not lived up to its promise, because it is a fundamentally alienating formation and so there is a wish to destroy it, or oneself. Senatus wishes to be what they were; a professional services organization, but even this ideal is an alienating imaginary. Kets de Vries & Balazs (1997) raise the question of *lex talionis* – expectation among those who do the downsizing for retaliation, and, of course feelings of guilt. Having failed to live up to its ideal, the ideal-ego is subject to internal

destructive fantasies, but to protect itself, these aggressive-destructive impulses are projected outward, towards others. Gary alluded to this destructiveness:

"or be able to take the bits and pieces, all of that work and discard the rest"

This speaks to something possibly changing, that there is little to be saved from the present, that something new can come about if only Senatus could start anew. It recalls Schumpeter's 'creative destruction' (Regner, 1999; Abrahamson, 2004), a wish, a need to break something up into smithereens to salvage something precious or worthwhile. There is a fantasy that by destroying one thing, something more worthwhile can be brought about:

"I think we can rebuild in a much better way, a more appropriate way"

Gary positions shrinking and rebuilding as something positive, a possibility of building something anew, but the emphasis in both extracts is on deconstructing what Senatus has at present. This is said at a point in Senatus' life-cycle where already numerous downsizing programmes have taken place, yet there remains here a desire to break down, destroy into parts and to start again. There are two things to be said about downsizing as a repeating symptom; firstly, Kahn (2017) illuminated something profound when she said it was part of a rationalisation process. One might ask for whom and whether there is anything rational about downsizing where key resources are divested at the potential expense of delivery of a core business strategy. Secondly, I describe downsizing as a symptom as it was something, an activity that Senatus performed repeatedly, clearly because it was about conserving resources, but it performed a kind of release, a solution, to anxiety about mystifying change in the external environment. For Lacan (1953b), a symptom "is itself structured like a language…because it is from language which speech must be delivered" (p.59). It is described by Ornstein (1989) as a 'nodal point', a way into what she terms narcissistic injury, or trauma to the ideal-ego. The symptom is both a structure of disorder but also a way into it.

The symptom is linked to death. The drive towards death is a fundamental motivation for human beings (Freud, 1917; Kahn, 2017) whether this is manifest in murderous intent

towards others or towards oneself qua an aspect of the self. This is what "Freud called a drive toward death (which) is to be related to the alienating structure of the imaginary ego. The death drive has its origin in the conflict between the subject and its imaginary identity" (Boothby, 2014, p.41) and so the impulse towards death arises because of the alienation of the human subject, within words, from itself. This alienation is first captured in that initial Gestalt that the human infant constructs for itself: "It is precisely the point of Lacan's mirror stage to delineate a period in which self and other are radically indistinguishable. Yet it is in this very period that the most profound alienation occurs" (Boothby, 2014, p. 43). It is the mediation of the mirror that provides fertile ground for the infant to imagine what it is – in essence, for Lacan, the subject as the subject of the unconscious, not what it sees itself to be, such as an image in a mirror, and the real human subject will always be in tension with the imagined ideal. This tension can result in the wish for death of an aspect of the self.

Kernberg (2009) also notes that the compulsion to repeat problematic symptoms is synonymous with the death drive, describing Freud's "successive formulations regarding the ultimate drives, culminating in the dual drive theory of libido and the death drive" (p.1010), such that repetition of destructive symptoms will continue until they are 'worked through' (Freud, 1914g); the process by which psychoanalysis brings insight to problematic repetition, described by Freud (1909) in the case of the 'Rat-man' as a neurotic way of remembering, or rather trying to remember, against the force of psychical repression. On the one hand, Senatus are responding to an environmental reality: Diminished revenues and reduced demand for services has led to cost control and the redundancy of multiple positions. On the other, Senatus has not reacted to this environmental reality by setting and implementing a strategy. It has continued to downsize. In this respect, the repetition of this process – eight times in the last seven years – has the characteristic of a symptom. A symptom is a "coded message about my innermost secrets, my unconscious desires and traumas…the symptom's addressee is not another human being" (Zizek, 2006, p.11) but is instead the Other.

Repetition of a symptom is a defence against anxiety. It is an attempt to return to the past, again and again, to either rewrite it or find a way out of it. The trouble is that the meaning of repetitive behaviour is unconscious – it is repeated but its object cause is elusive. Psychoanalytically, repetition always has 'interpretive potential' (Rogers, 1987) and "in the very force of repetition" there lies "the possibility of deprivileging that signifier" (Butler, 1993, p.89). Lacan (1955a) termed it 'repetition automatism', because of the inability to consciously reflect on the behaviour, and located it at the level of the 'signifying chain', just as Senatus repeat symptoms both in behaviour and speech. The symptom is a symbolic message delivered to 'anyone or anything' out there prepared to listen and help unlock it secrets. Senatus, through its symptom, is sending out there, to the world, its coded message about its desire. One of its secrets is the trauma of the disruption of identity, which, if made explicit, could be worked through (Ornstein, 1989), reducing the symptoms by acknowledgement, mourning and the development of a strategy.

Identity formation and struggles are being worked out unconsciously. According to McAuley et al. (2014) an organization can act as a 'holding environment' to allow its members to work through these explorations, safely; in other words, to become a reflexive organization. Or, it can fail to be an environment that provides a secure and safe place from which to explore the outer world and instead fail to provide direction and support against the vicissitudes of the external world. The absence of reflexive practices in Senatus prevents identity concerns being brought to conscious awareness.

10. Chapter Ten – Experiencing Arbitrariness, Imaginings, Choices & Guilt

10.1 Introduction to the Chapter

This Chapter brings together four of the themes from the research material, namely, Arbitrariness, Imaginary-Imagined Perception, the Escape from Choice, and Guilt and Responsibility, and presents the findings of the analysis of these themes using the final cycle of analysis. Following the spirit of this aspect of hermeneutics, I adopt a sceptical stance to what is said by the respondents in order to open up the texts and to apply Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

I use this Chapter to explore a number of ideas. The first is the idea of the master-signifier and how its loss removes the ability of Senatus to differentiate and separate themselves from the Other. I further develop the concept of imaginary fantasy, how this is fuelled by the need to fill a lack and the anxiety that this creates. Imaginary fantasy is also driven by affect: Why do we become more invested in some signifiers, or discourses, than others? There is also the question as to why painful actions are repetitively pursued. In this regard, I introduce the psychoanalytic concept of *jouissance*. I also explore how 'busyness' has allowed a manic culture to operate at times in Senatus precluding its engagement with strategic issues, the psychological defence of 'splitting' in order to manage anxiety together with the idea of guilt as a need for punishment for a transgression that is elusive to the senior team, but in respect of which a symbolic debt in the form of compliance costs is being paid.

10.2 The Failure of Symbolic Authority

Senatus see their clients as acting arbitrarily and mercurially. Vidaillet & Gamot (2015), when examining the situation of a factory under threat of closing down, spoke about the symbolic authority of the Other – in the form of an unidentified third party 'causing' the business to fail – being 'obliterated'. This obliteration, or removal of a symbolic authority that hitherto had set out the 'rules of engagement' between the factory and its outside world – bankers, buyers and so on – set in motion a fantasy "where there exists an

omnipotent force with unbridled power" (p.4) which "it demands must be satisfied without fail if one is to avoid being condemned, which makes any form of resistance difficult" (p.5). Non-psychoanalytically speaking, the factory's workforce had no idea what was going to happen to their future and that everything they knew – their theory about how the world worked – had changed. Psychoanalytically, the symbolic authority established by its relations with the Other were deconstructed.

In Senatus' terms, their relations to the Other have hitherto, or historically been structured around a fundamental understanding; Senatus were a professional services firm who contracted for loss adjusting services to the insurance industry. Now, the insurance industry, due to pressures of its own, have developed fragmented strategies for mitigating the effects of and meeting the needs of change in their globalized environment; this has had the cumulative effect of altering the nature and requirements for services provided by organizations such as Senatus. This understanding has been rendered a *misunderstanding*. "The symbolic designates the unconscious underpinnings of the realms of language, law, filiation and discourse…" (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015, p.8) and so the symbolic authority by which Senatus have ordered their life, in fact the compelling necessity for not having a strategy, has been obliterated. Whereas symbolic authority allows for the ordered predictability of business life, and the designation of a place and title allows one to cover over a fundamental lack, its absence generates a fantasy of an 'unbarred' Other, experienced by Senatus' leaders as omnipresent and persecutory. Therefore, a paradoxical situation emerges where the perceived freedom of not having one dominant Other produces a sense that "far from increasing the freedom of the subject, the banning of symbolic authority and concomitant non-recognition of lack brings about a heightening of fantasy, particularly in the form of an unbarred Other, compensating for the absence of law" (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015, p.11). With such absence comes anxiety. In Senatus' instance, the unpredictable client, the ones who have imposed additional costs, who have prevented the development of Senatus as a professional services business, who have imposed 'monsters' has become an 'unbarred Other', resulting in the sense of helplessness and arbitrariness that Senatus' leaders have articulated.

10.3 The Master Signifier and Its Disruption

It is useful to introduce the Lacanian idea of the master signifier here. Master signifiers are words around which meanings are temporarily stabilised and take place through two moments: of enunciation and identification. Through enunciation, one is named by the Other. In this regard, Senatus have been named (the 'founding word') as a firm of professional loss adjusters by the Other who recognizes it as such. Through this enunciation it is invited into a chain of signification against which it, Senatus, identifies: That loss adjusting has a history and tradition, starting at its official incorporation in 1941 (Sharp, 1988) carrying out certain business activities, and excluding others. These are all signifiers and utterances around which knowledge of loss adjusting is constructed (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015) linked to the original act of enunciation – that act of being called and named – all of which provides a consistency and predictability to the professional world of Senatus. Having been called and named, Senatus' senior team have identified with the ensuing discourse, for which there is an 'enjoyment'.

Nevertheless, the business environments of Senatus' clients, the insurers, has become increasingly blurred, multifarious, and fragmented. It is natural that those who supply them with key services also feel the effects of such changes. For Zizek (2009) a crucial aspect of neo-liberal economics and politics is to deprive one and organizations of the agency of the master signifier. In other words, there is a decoupling of enunciation and identification. Senatus might have been named as loss adjusters, even called up to perform this activity, but there is a paucity and limitation of identifications against which it may align. That is difficult for them, for it is the master signifier alone that has the capacity of "imposing meaningful order onto the confused multiplicity of reality" (Zizek, 2009, p.29).

In this situation, Senatus, "deprived of the imposition of a master signifier and of the production of a symbolic authority, are faced with an extremely distressing reality which is in danger of collapsing at any time" (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015, p.31) and it is this fragility that is apparent in the speech and talk of Senatus' executive team. Senatus' senior team are subject to injunctions from the Other to not only 'get on with it', but to 'enjoy': having

accepted that this is their enunciated name, but being unable to reconcile this to the signifiers normally associated with such work, Senatus are powerless to "resist the endless demands presented to them as choices they are entirely free to make or not make" (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015, p.32) but they must nonetheless accept the narrow range of such choice as laid down by the Other. In this sense, "the disappearance of the master signifier partly results from the obliteration of the traces of enunciation" (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015, p.34) so that while retaining the title 'loss adjuster' the Other has refused to recognize it as such.

As Senatus seek to grapple with the loss of symbolic authority, the destruction of the master signifier that has held together the meaning of the organization, it has experienced the Other as arbitrary, wilful and mercurial. The Other however, is not fully formed because it too, like the subject, is constituted in language and can neither fully symbolize the totality of everything – i.e., there is no transcendental signified – nor can it totally determine the subject, in this case, Senatus; the human beings of flesh and blood who are albeit enunciated and identified through language, nonetheless have a real presence and a Real dimension to their being. The Real is that dimension of being which is 'being-in-itself', beyond appearances, words and images and is therefore pre-Symbolic, such as trauma or the experience of loss (Samuels, 1993; Homer, 2005). Senatus therefore cannot be totally identified by language and in the Other's discontinuities, gaps and ruptures there are spaces for re-signification not yet determined by the Other. These are spaces through which hope may appear for Senatus.

10.4 The Affective Dimension of Fantasy

I wish to turn now to the implications of both the imagined perception and the dimension of the Imaginary pursued by the senior members of Senatus. Earlier, I illustrated where Senatus' executives constructed elaborate fantasies concerning their relationships with their clients; or, in psychoanalytic terms, the senior team constructed and acted under a number of 'fantastic' constructions of the Other. They were concerned with what the Other thought about them, as an organization, whether the Other was prepared to set aside its own concerns and to focus on Senatus' and whether the Other was prepared to

lead it, to set its strategy for it. Psychoanalysis positions one's desire as always being about the Other's desire (Dor, 1998), that there is always a wondering about what the Other wants.

In Lacanian terms, this is the realm of fantasy: Fantasy about what the Other is thinking, and fantasy about what Senatus thinks of themselves and their role. All fantasy functions as an unconscious effort to cover over and fill the void of lack. In this sense, Senatus' leaders are interpreting the desire of the Other. Don says, "*the fact that we're in a service business and we have to service our customers whatever way they desire to be serviced…"* and Larry says *"I suppose it's their desire to make profits…"*. In both cases, they are oriented towards what the Other desires or needs, not what they, as directors of Senatus, desire or need. Bicknell & Liefooghe (2010) comment that the unconscious interpretation of what the Other desires can lead to behaviour in one that is both stressful and enjoyable. Enjoyable because it can be rewarding to have met and served a purpose but stressful because the orientation towards fulfilling the Other can leave one feeling depleted in the service of someone or something else: "beyond that lies suffering" (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010, p.323). This is the pleasure-pain of *jouissance* (Muller, 2012); imagining what the Other's desire is can be all-consuming and it arises "from the relentless pursuit of desire. Thus there is *jouissance* simply in the attempt to satiate the Other's desire" (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010, p.323), such that, much like Hegel's master-slave dialectic, there is meaning and pleasure to be gained from serving the Other, until such point as this becomes painful and difficult, such as reduced revenues, and a contracted organization.

In its attempts to overcome failures, Senatus have participated in *jouissance* – persistence in taking unprofitable work, an inability to determine its own structuring master signifiers, such that "in the unconscious response to the desire of the Other we enact a fantasy these desires can be satiated" (Bicknell & Liefooghe, 2010, p.327). In Senatus' case, this fantasy translates into a minimal strategy whereby it is 'muddling through' (Lindblom, 1959) and failing to contemplate how different things might be in its future. This seems paradoxical. Were Senatus to question the *jouissance* being undertaken, which entails

the endless repetition of unproductive and repetitive patterns of service production, and the symptom of downsizing, they might see that this work is indeed counter-productive to strategic development. That would first, however, entail a recognition that there is no strategy and secondly that "organizations are not primarily motivated to learn to the extent that the learning entails anxiety provoking identity change. Rather, they maintain individual and collective self-esteem by not questioning existing self-concepts" (Brown & Starkey, 2000, p.102). Non-questioning ultimately leads to conservativism resulting in the preservation of the painful status quo and failure to learn occurs "because of the operation of ego defences that maintain collective self-esteem, focusing specifically on denial, rationalisation, idealization, fantasy and symbolization" (Brown & Starkey, 2000, p.104). Repetition is an endless moving back and forth between the Real of existence and the Imaginary of fantasy "to substitute for the hole or gap that results from the foreclosure of the symbolic order of language" (Gans, 1998, p.416).

Fantasy nonetheless has a very important place in strategy development. Without being visionary, organizations cannot hope to develop ambitious strategies to counter real threats in their environment. Equally, fantasy is a lure, something bright, efflorescent and seductive. Moreover, fantasy is part of the Imaginary order of being and in this regard, is a critical component for the development of that ideal-ego, so sought after by the developing human subject. Being Imaginary, the ideal-ego is subject to consistent misrecognition (or misunderstanding, as earlier noted). The subject believes itself as being something it is not (the human can't see the back of its head and imagines it). The Imaginary is a mosaic of the Symbolic order. Words and images that are appealing and cause one to 'turn around'. One might usefully ask, in its Imaginary misrecognitions, what causes Senatus' senior executives to 'turn around': this derives from the Althusserian concept of 'interpellation' whereby, when one is called, one 'turns around' and answers (Kavanagh, 1982; Madra & Ozselcuk, 2010; Choi, 2012). Joining this to the idea of lack and absence, and again linked to identity, one might ask "how lack is articulated in identity discourse and how it may absorb, suck up or (re) appropriate larger, potentially controlling discourses" (Driver, 2009b, p.489).

One may see in the research material findings that different discourses cause the senior team to 'turn around'. For Harry, it is technology, a future with the certainty of the machine. For Gary, it is the fantastic (Kersten, 2007) promise of a lottery win that will reverse the fortune of the company, and so forth. In Lacanian terms, these are misrecognitions; ideas and concepts about the present and future that are not grounded in certainty. They are fantasies that cover over lack and the substance of which change as attractive and appealing discourses take shape and emerge. One might reasonably ask what it is about these various discourses that makes them so appealing, or what it is that causes people to 'turn around'. Zizek (1990) argued that the post-structuralist explanations of appeal – termed by him as 'discursive idealism' - were unsatisfactory and that what psychoanalysis offered was an understanding of libidinal investment. Human beings invest in particular discourses because they are enjoyable, even if there is an element of psychic pain or cost to them (*jouissance*) and irrespective as to how discourses are taken up, they are continued because they are above all else enjoyable. This libidinal investment in discourse provides a "positive ontological consistency" (Rustin, 1995, p.234).

There is also a further curious dimension to the Imaginary and its functional relation to the Symbolic and this relates to the Imaginary being formed from it. There is very little new, nothing that has no origin, irrespective of how obscure, in the Symbolic. This is the very foundation of the recombination of resources – physical, psychological, intellectual, financial – to produce something new (Schumpeter 1947; Teece, 2009). It is not to suggest that the Symbolic is there, at our disposal to select from at will, to recombine to develop new identities and strategies. The human subject's entry into the symbolic chain is first marked by lack; "identity is NOT. Or rather identity is what is missing from discourse in which identity is articulated as a definable entity as this is an imaginary construction that necessarily fails" (Driver, 2009b, p.488). We, as human subjects, are brought into language by (an)Other. It is their words, images that introduce us to the world and so this travel through signification and re-signification constantly takes place. Senatus are not free to pick and choose its 'strategies' – discourses call out to it. Drawing on their own creativity to disentangle the webbing of signification is the first step to

discriminating what *is*, from what *could* be. There are many misrecognitions to work through; Senatus imagining that they are one thing and not another does not allow it to move on and freely create strategy. In Lacanian terms, it must 'traverse' the fantasy – literally walk alongside and up against their fantasies: Recognize them, where they come from, their appeal, and then break their illusory spell. For Fotaki (2009) this can "bring a temporary suspension and overcoming of phantasy's hold…the act of traversing the phantasy may lead to experiencing the moment of freedom before we succumb to a new one" (p.154).

The Other is everywhere; in words, images, the systems of rules, regulations and culture that sustains Senatus' relations with the Other. But there are places where the Other is not, and this is in the Real. The Other cannot fully determine Senatus – real human beings form that organization and while a hollowing out of the Real can take place through symbolization, the Real presses upon and shapes, through avoidance and other defensive strategies, Senatus' relations with its clients. This totality was referred to by Larry in his interview. He referred to Senatus being forced by a client to provide a discount on their fees. That is not quite how he put it, though. He said: '*you've got to take a 10% cut*'. Here, the Other *demands* that Senatus take a 10% 'cut'. They do not ask, negotiate or plead. Senatus allowed their clients to demand because this is the way Senatus understands how their relationship with the Other is structured. Upon receipt of a demand, they 'cut'.

Larry went on in his interview to say that Senatus ceremonially resisted. Resistance to the Other, the client, is to be seen as largely symbolic. Impotent, Senatus are expected to protest, but not too much. There is an interesting idea here about castration. Being inducted into language, into the law of social relations as infants, we are 'castrated'. That is, the undifferentiated and unmediated experience that was our being, the Real, is limited by the castrating effect of language. In our relationship with the Other, we do not seem to have our language, our discourse, only *theirs*. We are interested in and attentive to *their* problems, but we don't expect reciprocity for ours, and so this is the case for Senatus. They are in a structured relation with the Other where there are words only for

its pain, *its* desire, but there is no space for Senatus'. Deprived of the right words, Senatus are 'castrated', their relationship with the Other laden with affect.

10.5 The Failure to Realize Choices

The Escape from Choice was another theme that developed from the research material. Looked at psychoanalytically, this escape can be viewed as decisional avoidance arising from a psychological defence. In psychoanalytic thought, defences are constructed in order to protect a fragile ego, the ideal-ego, from debasement and damage. Such threats can arise exogenously from the environment or endogenously within the linguistic-symbolic system unconsciously created by the subject. In this respect, our unique and particular inner representations of our world are erected so as to serve personal, ideal-ego ends, leading to denial or idealisation of reality (Thomas, 1996), where Senatus' members are very much "rationally goal-directed with respect to unconscious motives" (p.289). So, again, as in identity-formation, preservation of the ego is important and information that challenges this will be excluded, filtered out and not recognised.

Some of the senior team had an awareness that decisions should be made, but weren't, such as when Don said:

> *" if, if, if you're sitting out on the floor as I call it, you know, they're going to start questioning, well what are you doing? Who's doing this and that's... you know, I still find that that, that is still, you know..."*

Something prevented crucial decisions being made. There was an element of chaos and a fundamental question of who was making the decisions. While there was an awareness of this entropy, there was an equal absence of awareness of the temporal dimension of the strategic issue in case. At that time, Senatus were introducing an expensive and organization-transforming IT system, yet the behaviour exhibited was that no leadership was required. It is as though time did not matter and things could simply continue as they were. There is both an existential dimension to this question and a psychoanalytic one. Existentially, there is an unconscious belief that things can go on forever. Psychoanalytically, the period that Don characterises here is redolent of a manic culture.

For Stein (2008), mania is based on the psychological defence of denial. The organization, aware of its vulnerabilities, reacts to these in an unhealthy way; while people, such as Don here in the interview extract, were clearly aware that something was wrong, they did not signal or express this in any way. To have done so might have invited others to similarly worry, something that the organization actively constructed a social defence not to do (Menzies, 1960). In this way, anxiety was managed, despite the clear chaos that was unfolding. This chaotic behaviour – busyness – was effected by senior individuals in the firm who "engage in over-activity in order to dispel any concerns about their risks and vulnerabilities" (Stein, 2008, p.176).

Don, even at the remove of over five years since that period, still found it difficult to bring to full symbolization precisely how he felt about what was going on. He says "*you know, I still find that that, that is still, you know...*" as though no signifiers have been found to express what is meant. Rather, the Real maintains a haunting, traumatic presence; "any possibility of encounter with the Real is a trauma" (Arfi, 2012, p.794). This trauma is not available to full consciousness – something has happened, but it has not been fully processed – and it is this "irreducible kernel of the Real" (Vidaillet & Gamot, 2015, p.9) that is a potential starting point for an alternative reading of the situation to be made.

Following on from that period described by Don, decisions continued to be avoided. This is supported when Peter says:

> *"we react to that crisis and again, there's not really a plan around it"*

The Real, still being present in Don's speech of that time is an opportunity to symbolize here and now what has happened. That is, because Don's understanding of that experience has not been brought into speech, it is not part of the Symbolic order – it remains outside it in the Real. Bits of it are there, but not all. Senatus could potentially collectively reflect (Vince, 2004) on what happened and create an understanding that links the mania of that time to the practices of today, how that might take shape and re-form for the future; that is, in the form of a strategy. What prevents that happening now,

however, is present in what the directors of Senatus, including Don, are saying now about their situation.

Unconsciously, Peter presents a paradox. Speaking about the need for a strategy, he says:

"it's not necessarily a choice, it's something that's required I would have thought"

There is a fundamental, unconscious truth here: What Senatus *should* do is make choices, that is what they are required to do. The paradox is in the *requirement* to do so. Here, there is a demand for a strategy to be developed. In an area of developing creative choices in order to mark out a path for the organization, Peter sees this as a requirement; the inverse of creativity.

Later, speaking of the requirement for choices, Peter says:

"whatever happens, happens"

This seems rather fatalistic in the context of what was said earlier. Choices need to be made, but that in the absence of these, there is a nihilism and an abandonment to fate. This is echoed by Gary when he says:

'so I don't know, I think, I think I support everything we're doing at the moment, but I'm thinking, you know, the time will come when we have to make a decision maybe to, you know, divert investment towards….to grow the business'

Therefore, it seems for the present, Gary, in common with other senior executives does not believe that a decision about the future of the business is necessary. He says, *'the time will come'*, but one might ask when that might be, or whether that should be the purpose of the business – to make plans for its continued existence, for the benefit at least of its owners. Gary is hesitant to speak about what the investment should relate to: it's '*maybe*' and he pauses. Senatus do not articulate what this investment should be and to what end. The closest to an articulation of the current service provision and how it should change is from Patrick who spoke about 'segmentation' of the business. It will be

recalled that this involved for Patrick splitting the business in two – professional service and 'yellow pack' handling.

The viability of Patrick's suggestion hasn't been explored by Senatus, but his segmentation – splitting - of the business into two sections is resonant of Klein's (Segal, 1992) concept of splitting into 'good' and 'bad' objects. This is a defence mechanism of humans developed first in infancy (which obtains all through life) where stimuli external to the infant – tactile senses, feeding, sounds – are divided into what is good and pleasing (nourishing breast or bottle) and what is not (an unavailable breast). The pre-verbal infant forms mental representations of these good and bad objects and can develop a pathological splitting into good and bad as a method of defence against anxiety. Antonacopoulou & Gabriel (2001) describe an 'economy' of emotion whereby mildly threatening emotions can easily be held in check as against stronger, more threatening emotions which may prevail unopposed leading to either their discharge or some significant unconscious defensive work. This defensive work can be splitting; an unconscious psychological process whereby there is a "coexistence at the heart of the ego of two psychical attitudes towards external reality…The first of these attitudes takes reality into consideration, while the second disavows it and replaces it by a product of desire" (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988, p.427). In this case, reality is that there is a problem with the business, but the 'product of desire' is the unsullied professional service. The splitting into good – the professional service – and bad – the 'yellow pack' claims processing service – is a primary defence against anxiety. If both of these activities can be done, satisfied, then anxiety will be allayed and abated, but this illusion psychologically perpetuates the fantasy.

So, rather than being seen as a rational strategic choice, this idea of segmentation is a way of dividing the world into good and bad objects. The pejorative 'yellow pack' bears out that the low-value and -complexity claims handling is very much the 'bad' object. And, again, this is not a decision that has actually been made. Senatus are, at the time of writing, performing that spectrum of activities from professional service through to claims processing, so it's interesting that Patrick has presented this as a *possible* 'choice'

in his interview. Therefore, through the lens of strategic development and choice, Senatus have 'chosen' not to decide.

10.6 Unconscious Guilt

I do not postulate that the senior members of Senatus feel *actual* anguish or guilt at the level of conscious awareness, but that they do so unconsciously. This is most poignantly expressed by Ross when he says:

> *'we were all very keen, you know, to get rid of the offices…'*

Ross's speech positions him as a person who had foreknowledge of the consequences of a poor decision – to '*get rid*' of offices – but who held back so that he could be 'proven' correct. It speaks to 'well we've done that now and look where it got us', but the rest of what he says about this decision and its consequences for employees expresses guilt. He says that '*they're being asked just to keep on the treadmill…and not necessarily to be respective of their home, family life difficulties*' such that there is no end in sight.

Equally, Larry expressed remorse when he said:

> *'we certainly brought in people and used people that […] were sub-standard I would think, into our profession…those are all faults and we certainly got ourselves into a certain amount of trouble'*

Freud treated with the subject of guilt when he studied melancholia, that deep form of mourning where the person does not want to let go of the lost, or dead object (professional identity). In its most problematic presentation, melancholia can carry feelings of self-reproach and denigration leading to a wish to destroy the ego – suicide. This was conceptually developed by Freud as the super-ego, the (sometimes extreme) moral conscience or 'inner critic' (McKay & Fanning, 2000) that attacks the ego with accusations of, say, not having loved the lost object enough, done enough and so on. In Ross's account, the super-ego is the 'voice' in his speech that is calling whoever is listening to account. There is reproach, and the ego is attacked for having both countenanced and

then allowed a situation to emerge where employees are being '*raped and pillaged*' and not being '*respective* (respectful) *of their home lives*'. No-one is accusing Ross of reproachful behaviour, but it is a pre-occupation and unconscious psychic energy is directed towards the work of withstanding the super-ego's attacks on the ego; not just Ross's, but on others in the senior team.

The super-ego, comprised of individual identificatory signifiers and that which is coming from outside – the Symbolic – left unchecked can continue to impose guilt on the human subject. Zizek (2005) says that "the Superego draws the energy of the pressure it exerts upon the subject from the fact that the subject was not faithful to his desire, that he gave it up. Our sacrificing to the superego, our paying tribute to it, only corroborates our guilt. For that reason, our debt to the superego is unredeemable: the more we pay it off, the more we owe" (p.68). In this regard, the super-ego, while drawn from the outside influences of the Symbolic is something which is experienced as internal to the person. Ross is experiencing guilt for having been part of a collective decision to close down offices and imposing the world of work onto the world of the individual employee's home. Despite the collective nature of this decision, Ross, in his speech has attempted to distance himself from it. Ross feels the pressure of guilt for the collective decision but attempts to alleviate this by distancing, but it is the fact that he did not speak up, did not exercise his desire, that is confounding his feelings of guilt.

Freud (1924) speculated in 'The Economic Problem of Masochism' that unconscious guilt might more correctly be termed a 'need for punishment'. This is an interesting perspective on the latent guilt feelings apparent from the research material. When I counter-pose this 'need' against Senatus' acquiescence with the Other's objectives – to force additional costs on Senatus, to force the mechanisms of regulatory compliance on Senatus, to force them to take on activities that may not be a strategic fit for Senatus – I wonder whether the presence of such a 'need', or feelings of guilt, have allowed the sails of Senatus' strategic ship to be severed adrift.

Harry unconsciously expressed masochism, or a need for punishment, when he said:

'the monsters we've built for ourselves'

Prior to saying this, Harry had spoken of 'monsters' being those things that had taken up residence in Senatus – compliance and the way of doing things as demanded by the Other. Here, he is saying something different; now, Senatus have built their own monsters, a kind of taking-on of the Other's desire.

In respect of this 'strategic' position, Patrick remarks:

'we've allowed it to happen and that's not, that's not going to change'

When Patrick says 'allowed', this turns the extract and evokes a sense of responsibility that has failed, or even guilt for not having prevented something. Here there is resigned-ness. They have allowed this to happen and it's not going to change. Patrick feels that Senatus are now obligated to do something and there is here a lack of forgiveness, and of Patrick berating himself and the rest of Senatus for allowing certain changes to happen, rather than taking an opportunity to see how these came about and how they might now respond to them. Therefore, this positioning of guilt and responsibility is not seen as an opportunity. Nonetheless, there are consequences for the materiality of these signifiers. In this regard, Senatus are 'caught in the snares' (Arnaud, 2002) of the signifiers of guilt.

Citing Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich's (1977) findings in his article, Schutze (1992) reflected critically on the former's findings regarding Germans' feelings of guilt regarding Nazi terror prior to and during WWII. The former suggested that Germans had avoided mourning and suppressed their feelings of guilt in order to stave off severe feelings of depression. Rather, Schutze (1992) argued in his research on ideologically non-committed Germans, 'Mitlaufer' or fellow-travellers, that such people, on the contrary, suffered many crises in their later lives which were, in his view, manifestations of guilt, a phenomenon he called 'delayed mourning'. Schutze (1992) writes of a person's inability to escape a 'collective trajectory', such as National Socialism. He says of his research participant; "his capacity to mourn about the collective trajectory was not lost, but even *he* was afflicted by the collective loss of moral dignity and existential meaning" (p.204-205) during the war itself, and that it was only later in life, in pressure situations that he

became incapacitated by anxiety. It would be flippant and insensitive to compare the situation in this respondent's narrative with that of Senatus, of course; but it is germane to observe that a failure to mourn and to accept responsibility for past actions, such as downsizing and the acceptance of an externally imposed 'strategy', will have consequences. The consequences of these ideas are unconsciously carried by the strategic actors in Senatus.

10.7 Guilt as Failure to Pursue Desire

Ross, Patrick, Larry and Gary in their respective interview texts spoke of the failure to stand up and to carve out their own path for Senatus. It is this heady mixture of the suppression of desire and resulting guilt from such suppression, as well as guilt and responsibility from actual events in Senatus' recent history that simultaneously causes a repression from awareness of such guilt and its apparition in the speech and language of the senior team. Such self-reproach arises from a perceived failure to 'measure-up', that there is something about what the Other wants Senatus to be and what they are. What Senatus are is unconscious to Senatus' members; therefore, there is an invocation and invitation to perform (a command), to be something ideal for the Other. Senatus, however, are not sure about what that is or whether they can ever measure up. The 'ideal' as set out by the Other is opaque so there is a wondering but also reproach from guilt. The Other says, '*you should be this'*, but Senatus are not that – it could be, but it is not sure what it wants to be, due to its preoccupations. Consequently, it consistently fails to meet the ideal leading to an "amplified guilt" (Ozselcuk & Madra, 2010, p.337).

One wonders why Senatus have accepted their position, as imposed on it by the Other; it is perhaps the acceptance of this position, of having found themselves in it, without awareness of their own desire, which has given rise to guilt. Being told to '*take a 10% cut'*; wondering whether one will be '*picked'*; the *'rape and pillage'* of employees; bringing in '*sub-standard'* and '*yellow pack'* people to the business – all of these actions and beliefs are the *real* things that Senatus' executives might be guilty of. In contemplating this guilt and responsibility, I returned to the signifiers of terror and weight apparent repeatedly in the interview material. Time and again, members of the senior

team spoke of '*burdens'*; the burden of contractual and regulatory compliance and the burden of responsibility.

I wondered why or how Senatus could tolerate such burdens and monsters and I began to think of them in terms of a symbolic debt being repaid to the Other; not the Other in terms of the client, but as the general Symbolic order. The Other just happens to be the recipient. Again, there is materiality to this symbolic debt: Senatus have taken on additional costs to their business in terms of oversight and compliance costs, they subjugated their own strategic preferences, albeit not fully articulated, to those of their clients' and they have allowed the competitive space in which they operate to reduce and to be continually contested. These are real costs, and real activities must be undertaken to address and manage them, consuming real precious resources. I struggled to understand why Senatus, an accomplished, well established and respected organization, would willingly take on additional costs and compliance into their business, something which has variously been referred to as a '*monster'* and a '*burden'*.

If I am to follow the invocation of Vansina & Vansina-Cobbaert (2008) which is that a phenomenon sometimes only become comprehensible when looked at through a psychoanalytic lens, I reflected on what it meant for Senatus to invite, or to be complicit in, the acceptance of these burdens. I wondered whether it was associated with guilt; whether by masochistically accepting such burdens of responsibility from the Other, that Senatus were somehow working something off. On this basis, then, I explored the idea of an exchange value between guilt and the acceptance of burdens. If Senatus' executives spoke of such costs solely in financial or processual terms, I would be prepared to exclude the possibility of there being any underlying meaning, but that was not the case; Senatus believe that '*monsters'* and '*burdens'* have been visited upon them and the repetition of these signifiers is communicating something. It is this 'saying something' that is confusing and paradoxical. Psychoanalysis is not about trying to find the final ground of meaning to everything. That is an impossible task as language has a history both independent of the subject and a simultaneous, albeit unconscious subjective meaning system. Ragland Sullivan (1984) speaks of the knowledge contained in language as being one that is

"fragmentary, an impersonal and alien system of dead letters, voices and archaic desires" (p.394), so one should be conscious that the executives at Senatus are speaking through this system. For Lacan, the subjective meaning of the Symbolic order of language, rules and norms, is taken in by the subject and repressed, but its words and practices continue to be used and followed, so that when Ross, Harry and Gary use these signifiers there is variously a Symbolic exchange value (Pavon-Cuellar, 2014) for us as the listener or reader, a subjective, repressed meaning and the impression of the Real pressing upon it; the "piece of the Real in the Symbolic" (Ragland, 1996, p.200). That is, these signifiers have a meaning for the speakers in Senatus, but also for us. There is no referential equivalence to the signifiers, even within Senatus, but we can Symbolically exchange the value of that meaning between us as speakers, readers and listeners.

Felman (1987) draws on the myth of Oedipus (a classic of psychoanalysis) to try to explain how the real drama of that period of childhood development sets off a problematic unconscious seeking of the expression of desire through language, which does not rest: The Oedipus complex is not a "simple psychological triangle of love and rivalry, but a socio-symbolic structural positioning of the child in a complex constellation of alliance…in which the combination of desire and a Law prohibiting desire is regulated, through a linguistic structure of exchange into a repetitive process of replacement – of substitution – of symbolic objects (substitutes) of desire" (p.104). What Felman is saying, as indeed any other Lacanian, is that in any word expressed there is desire. This seems contradictory as on the one hand there is an element of the Real, such as where one tries to put words on something that is just too difficult to describe, to a borrowing of that word from the Symbolic order to now expressing a repressed desire, but that is just what psychoanalysis attempts to unravel and explain. Recall where Harry spoke of '*monsters'*, but also where he seemed to be saying that he wanted to be that monster. He said:

> *"we have invented a monster…something of a dark art"*

Whereas prior to this Harry had spoken of having ingested monsters, of valorising market disruptors who were also monsters, they are an object that is to be both feared and fascinated. In there, in that fear, there is fascination and desire. One may have *an*

understanding of what the speakers mean, but their experience of Real traumatic events is not equal. Furthermore, while they may have a common sharing of Symbolic markers there is no *de facto* equivalence in these signifiers. Each member of the Senatus team experiences and expresses signifiers in their own particularity. In my analysis, I have identified the Symbolic markers of guilt and responsibility because this is how the stories appear to have been told.

The bearing of guilt is revealed in the exchange value of the terms used and related to other parts of the Senatus story. But guilt itself has its own exchange value. Seemingly innocuous acts in our personal lives are explained by feelings of guilt and they also resonate in our culture. Consider when the apocryphal story of the husband who buys flowers for his wife is retailed; we usually expect the wife to ask 'okay, what have you done'. This is a cultural trope, perhaps not grounded in anyone's subjective reality, but there is an expected cultural response for what might otherwise be a simple, spontaneous act of kindness. In other words, in this cultural trope, there is an exchange value for guilt. One party does something, unknown to the other, but motivated by guilt makes up for it by buying flowers.

10.8 Repetition and Guilt

In contemplating this exchange value, or an economy of guilt, I explored the idea of whether payment to the Other in the form of an accepted burden of the cost of compliance, is in fact a symbolic debt repayment. Hegel remarked that "by repetition that which at first appeared merely a matter of chance and contingency, becomes a real and ratified existence" (1991, p.313) and here, in the acceptance of additional costs, Senatus have ratified the Other's actions or insistence that it is they who accept the costs. Whilst this ratification may appear immutable to the Other, it's something that Senatus are not comfortable with – it evades symbolization, and the presence of the Real intrudes upon this experience. It is in repetition that any possible chance for resistance or recovery of voice is undermined and diminished.

I have postulated earlier that the reasons for this guilt was that Senatus had, principally, given up on its own desire (failed to set a strategy). For me, as researcher, the actions with which Senatus' executives were not happy with "opened up the guilt, and it was this guilt, this debt, which was the real driving force of the repetition. The event did not repeat itself because of some objective necessity, independently of our subjective inclination and thus irresistible, but because its repetition was a repayment of our symbolic debt" (Zizek, 1989, p.65) and so therefore, as long as there was a debt to be paid, the repetition continued. Symbolic debt repayment is axiomatic with guilt. We have, in Senatus, evidence of the payment; we might ask what the guilt is for.

11. Chapter Eleven – Discussion & Implications

11.1 Introduction to the Chapter

In the preceding two Chapters, I applied psychoanalytic theory to the themes that emerged in the analysis of the research material. Some of the themes have been foregrounded more than others, such as Identity, the Imaginary and Guilt, but that is not to argue that that they are privileged more than the remaining themes. Rather, these themes are equally important insofar as they are unconscious discourses that actively undermine the making of strategy in Senatus or display a manifestation of this absence. In this Chapter, the meaning and implication of the themes is discussed and the extant strategy literature on these issues is reconsidered by providing an overview of the research themes and drawing a conclusion or an implication for strategizing at Senatus.

What appears important in all of the themes is Senatus' relationship with its clients, or the Other. Here, I introduce and return to a number of concepts, such as *jouissance*, how this is related to the payment of a psychologically symbolic debt and the 'paternal metaphor'. An aspect of the Oedipus myth, it is argued that the paternal metaphor is absent from Senatus' relationship with the Other and its absence allows dependency to develop. Myths are important as they provide insight into human behaviour (Freud, 1900).

I also argue that as meaning is never fixed, that it is possible to alter the articulatory practices of Senatus, changing the signifying reality for Senatus' senior team. The themes, as complex, intricate and multi-layered as they are, all constitute the current articulatory practice of Senatus. The discourse of Senatus is one where there is an absence of strategy. Senatus cannot penetrate the current discourse without 'filling out' and working through the themes that have emerged. I argue that the research themes need to become the articulatory practice of Senatus, incorporating the particularities of loss, lack and desire of the senior team.

11.2 Repetition and *Jouissance*

Repetition is intimately associated with the death drive. Freud considered that the compulsion to repeat was "tantamount to a desire" (Boothby, 2014, p.74) to return to something in the past, an inherently conservative instinct, while Lacan equated repetition with the 'negative *jouissance*' of the death drive (Ragland Sullivan, 2011). Traumatic experiences result in the overwhelming of the psychic system precipitating the initiation of the conservative instinct to return not only to the past but "an impulse toward return to an inorganic state" (Boothby, 2014, p.75) or death, and in respect of repetition, this is an instance of 'primordial masochism' (Boothby, 2014). The death drive is not about death itself, but the reduction of tension between what is Real – what is happening, the sum of traumatic and unsymbolized experience – and the ideal-ego which has been created, in imaginary terms, by the human subject. The Real threatens to encompass the ideal-ego and the fractured ego attempts to defend itself by engaging in activity such as repetition. By repeating something, one wants to simultaneously experience the event again and again, but also to reduce tension or anxiety, by returning to an inorganic state. So, by accepting additional 'burdens', Senatus not only accepts a need for punishment, but because it continues to accept that its strategy should be set by the Other, reducing its profitability, it is both trying to revisit and rewrite the past and to express its own desire. By repeating something loathsome, it allows its subjects to both expiate their guilt and not to have to uncover and confront their own desire. Masochistic behaviour functions in two ways: to provide gratification in doing something which might be conventionally undesirable (to thwart one's own desire) and to satisfy the need for punishment for doing something which is felt ought not to have been done (Ornstein, 1989). Symbolic debt repayment itself also has the characteristic of *jouissance*, that uniquely Lacanian category best described as 'pleasure-pain' (Muller, 2012). In *jouissance* there is the possibility to enjoy something, repeatedly, even when it becomes counter-productive. Enjoyment however, is not to be confused with pleasure as it always attends with anxiety (Hallsby, 2015). Ozselcuk & Madra (2010) relate *jouissance* to the super-ego, that commanding voice (outside and) inside one's head instructing one to 'enjoy!'. Here, Senatus are working off a moral debt, and there is enjoyment, but the

method of payment can be frustrating and debilitating, or more succinctly, costly both economically and psychologically. *Jouissance* is the taking up of something which appears to hold the promise of desire, such as the expectation of reward, or recognition by the Other, but *jouissance* can be unstable, precarious and self-defeating.

In these terms, when Senatus submits its desire to the desire of the Other, and when it institutes what the Other wants – divestment of its costs to Senatus – it pays a symbolic debt to the Other. The term 'symbolic' is important, because it is not the Other whom Senatus owes. Rather, from the research material it seems apparent that some executives believe that others are owed, such as employees. But the Other holds Senatus' world in place. Senatus believe that the Other is the Other of the Other (Lacan, 1958-1959); that the sum limit of its symbolic universe is the world as disclosed by the Other to it. But the Other that Senatus knows is also believed to be the limit of the Symbolic order, that behind the Other, there is no further Other. But the Other, Insurers, and the world discursively formed by it or them, is only one part of a larger discursive formation, which is "inconsistent, self-contradictory, thwarted, traversed by antagonisms, without any guarantee ('there is no Other of the Other'), with no ultimate norm or rule totalizing it – in short, the big Other is not some kind of substantial Master who secretly pulls the strings but a stumbling malfunctioning machinery" (Zizek, 2014, p.14). There is no 'Other' that will stabilise meaning, and the Symbolic order that Senatus once knew and understood has changed.

One wonders what one is to conclude from the analysis of research material that has been at times confusing, contradictory, difficult to understand and puzzling. Psychoanalysis teaches us that this is the work of the unconscious. Human beings, constructed in language through lack and desire continually strive, in their own way, for the realization of their desire, which is unconscious to them, through the attainment of desirable objects – strategies, included – which are not complete and not *all that* (the objet petit a of Lacan (Childers & Hentzi, 1995)). But in Senatus, there is something different, as there is an absence of strategy. In this sense, the study of Senatus' strategizing has been the study of lack, or the interplay of lack and desire, to produce no

business strategy. To the extent that the executives are lacking, desiring subjects, they are also subjects who have developed psychological defences against the operation of the Real, or the buried truth of trauma. The unrecognized, disavowed and unsymbolized Real of trauma remains present, and this stands in the place of strategy, providing a Real presence in absence. In these respects, Frosh (2014) observes that many experiences are outside language despite its structuring tendency and that these "experiences can be central elements in people's lives, key components of psychological functioning, and that they have a specific connection with trauma and the processing of traumatically troubling events" (p.21).

A rather complex psychological picture has emerged to account for the absence of this business' strategy. It will be recalled that the interviewees at Senatus were not asked about their identity, were not asked what they thought about the difficult decisions that had to be taken, and how they now felt about them. Yet, compellingly there has been another discourse at work, alongside or even subverting the conscious discourse of whoever was speaking, and this other discourse has communicated something interesting about the unconscious preoccupations that their senior team have. It is these preoccupations that have taken the place of a clear, coherent business strategy. These preoccupations, in their particularity, have prevented the articulation of something clear and unambiguous. We are dealing here with a hitherto successful business staffed at its top level by committed, intelligent and professionally educated people. The suggestion of following a number of tried and tested management tools and formulae, such as effortful rational analyses, to arrive at a clear strategy would not be appropriate here. That instrumental-rational discourse, whatever emerged from such analyses, irrespective of how apparently fruitful, would be subverted by this *other* unconscious discourse. In fact, members of this team did participate in an externally facilitated management development programme in the recent past, and are equipped and skilled in conventional management models, but no clear strategy has arisen from that training.

What has emerged in the analysis is that there are multiple particularities of desire, loss and trauma in the unconsciousness of the strategic discourse at Senatus. Fotaki (2009)

comments that the philosopher, Slavoj Zizek "identifies parallels between the development of individual subjectivity and social reality, which are rooted in the individual or collective unconscious, concealing within it traces of a formative traumatic experience and having its roots in the internal split between imaginary and symbolic, which cannot be healed" (p.148). Therefore, each of these particularities, in their own way, shape the position of the firm in its structured relationship with its clients, what I have heretofore termed the Other. This 'structuration' of relationship is one of dependency and an oscillation between an idealized, fantasized relationship and a relationship where the organization is perceived to have been left on its own, that the Other is not coming to its assistance to tell it what to do.

11.3 The Paternal Metaphor

The structuration, the structure from which Senatus' members draw meaning, of the relationship with the Other has resonance in the Oedipal dyad. The Oedipus complex is a classic psychoanalytic metaphor that explains a pivotal stage in the psychological development of the human being's subjectivity – how s/he will relate to the self, significant others and the wider social world. For Lacan, the Oedipal stage is a *triad* constituted by the child, the primary care-giver (the mother) and the father, or the 'names-of-the-father', known as the 'paternal metaphor' (Homer, 2005). This is so called owing to 'father' occupying the position of the 'mother's' interests in the triad which breaks the fulfilment of the child's wish for unity with or the total focus of the mother. This breaking of the child's desire is brought about primarily through the introduction to language and all of its codes, regulations, rituals and limitations. This "initiation to the law of the symbolic and its prohibitions constitute a set of traumatic events signifying the loss of wholeness and unity" (Fotaki, 2009, p.147) with the mother.

The 'paternal metaphor', the names-of-the-father is, in Lacanian terms, the bringing of Law to the Oedipal dyad, the requirement that the child give up its desire for its mother and accept the Law as it is given in language and culture; to seek its desire in the Symbolic order. This is an important and difficult stage of human development, leaving scope for many possible outcomes. Using the psychoanalytic metaphor of the Oedipus complex,

Senatus are placed in an unusual position with the Other. On the one hand, the Other is the focus and centre of their activities, regulating their interactions, providing consistency to their members' ongoing back and forth between 'it' and the wider world. On the other, the Other is experienced as wilful and mercurial and has altered the 'rules' of its regulating mechanisms with Senatus; they are no longer required to be a professional service, but rather service providers, or claims processors. Moreover, the Other has also introduced additional layers to the relationship with Senatus, by imposing its regulatory compliance obligations – and costs - onto Senatus. Peculiarly, the Other, on whom Senatus so depends, and from whom it wants to be guided, is also bringing the Law to Senatus.

The Other discursively constructs the Law in the form of contracts, service criteria, the need for regulatory compliance, all of which have been understood and constructed by Senatus as alien objects and imposes it on Senatus. A discursive structure "is not a merely 'cognitive' or 'contemplative' entity; it is an articulatory practice" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.82) which constitutes and organizes the social relations in its sphere. The Other is therefore the bearer of the Law and occupies two positions in the triad. In psychoanalytic terms, this is the failure of the paternal metaphor, which should come from outside the dyad. If that was the case, Senatus could find a source of regulation and consistency in the Law, creating the triad.

Zizek (1989) speaks of the idea of transgression sustaining the Law, or in other words that there can be no Law without transgression. It will be recalled, particularly in Harry's text, that there was a wish to go beyond what was given and to occupy a space in '*no-man's land'* or within an '*interregnum'*. This discourse speaks to a desire to transgress the codes that have been given to it by the Other, but it is a private desire, with no public manifestation. Harry believes that Senatus occupies this psychological 'space', but it is not 'recognised' and this is perhaps because there is no external Law on which Senatus may rely to regulate its relationship with the Other – to impose the paternal metaphor. This lack of instatement of the paternal metaphor leads to the experience of the Other

as arbitrary and omnipotent; the Other is one that Senatus relies on, but who also makes the rules.

Looked at in this way, the structuration of Senatus' business relationships with its clients appears problematic. It is legitimate to ask how this situation, this way of seeing the world, has come about and how it is reproduced in more or less consistent ways, or what Stavrakakis (2008) calls "the way the subject and the organized Other become inter-implicated in the institution and reproduction of social life" (p.1038). In this regard, the work of Laclau (1988) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is interesting and may bring further light on what is taking place. Both Laclau and Mouffe draw on Lacanian theory to develop their understanding of the social and politics. Their work, labelled 'post-Marxist', attempts to break with pre-existing concepts of ontological social subjects such as 'class' to lead to an understanding of society as being discursively constituted: 'Society as a structured space, as the underlying mechanism that gives reason for or explains its own partial processes, does not exist, because if it did, meaning would be fixed in a variety of ways…' (Laclau, 1988, p.254). Their notion of 'antagonism' is useful in the context of understanding Senatus' predicament, although I will argue that their relationship with their clients is *pre-antagonistic*.

11.4 The Fixing of Meaning

Senatus experience the Other as arbitrary, yet they depend on it. The meaning of the Other has become somewhat fixed around *points de capiton*. Neither Senatus' perception of the Other, nor the Other itself are fully constituted, fixed entities, but the perceptions of Senatus' members have materiality – they affect real behaviour in its structured relations with the Other. Laclau (1988) says social agents, such as Senatus, have a 'pure presence'. Its members exist, but their meaning, and consequently how they behave in the world, is unfixed: '…this presence is precarious and vulnerable. The threat which the other represents transforms my own being into something questionable. But at the same time those who are antagonizing me are also not a full presence because their objective being is a symbol of my not being; and in this way, their objective being is overflowed by a meaning that fails to be fixed, to have full presence'

(Laclau, 1988, p.256). The Other, therefore, is not fully present. It has only been discursively constructed into being so by Senatus' members' unconscious expression of it. Certainly, there are clients, and ones who pay for services delivered, but it is how the Other is experienced, *inter alia* through the traumas of loss, that have fixed its meaning, and objectified it in a particular way for Senatus' senior team.

The structuring of the relationship between Senatus and the Other resembles an antagonism. An antagonism is the limit of the possibility of the discursive formation: In this case, the relationship cannot be thought of in any other way, other than being arbitrary and dependent, although this has not achieved its expression consciously, rendering the experience, I argue, pre-antagonistic. In Laclau's terms, borrowing from linguistics, an antagonism is a collapse of differences which creates a 'chain of equivalence', such that a situation can be understood in a particular way, however, it cannot be 'said'. Here, in my analysis of the research material, a situation appears clear, but it is unconscious and not 'sayable' (Laclau, 1988). Antagonism always results in the formation of social identity, or an (borrowing from Freud) 'overdetermined subject position' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.148) through which an antagonistic relation is externalized. The meaning of Senatus' relations has become overdetermined, a Freudian category that denotes a surplus of meaning condensed into a smaller number of actions, or symptoms, such as guilt, dependence and so on. The condensation of these meanings into a smaller number of symbolic values, such as the relationship with the Other and downsizing, results in these values being overdetermined; they mean more than just the value that they appear to represent. I term them pre-antagonistic because they are at the limit of the current discursive formation that exists between Senatus and the Other. I argue that were the unconscious themes to emerge into consciousness that an antagonism would be created and alternative symbolic identities and values would be established. An alternative way of presenting this argument is that should the level of awareness of the unconscious discourse change, then this would alter the meanings of the relationship that Senatus has with its clients and bring about a different social identity; one where the predicate is not whether the organization is a professional service, or a service provider, but where there is an opportunity for Senatus to reflect on

the changes in its environment and to develop appropriate strategies to accommodate them.

It might be reasonable to ask why Senatus have not, themselves become aware of the obviousness of the pre-antagonism. Palacios (2004) borrowing from Castoriadis (1997, 1998) explains that discursive formations are self-instituting. In this instance, Senatus' members have 'forgotten' that their 'founding word' - the profession of loss adjusting - was brought into being by insurers, the Other. That being the case, the possibility of non-being, or non-existence is experienced as a threat, something that *could* happen, and so antagonism is existential, but crucially this awareness is repressed. If Senatus were to surface the antagonism, this might allow for the emergence of new metaphoric combinations to describe the activities and identity of Senatus, and in this lies the possibility for the instatement of a new paternal metaphor. This is so because Senatus, then being drawn into an antagonistic relation with its environment, would be forced to seek an extra-discursive source of identity, one which recognizes the particularities and occurrences of desire and loss present in the unconsciousness of its discourse and which interprets overdeterminations in the context of possible available strategies.

This is an invocation for Senatus to become a reflexive organization (McAuley et al., 2014); they explain that psychoanalysis "helps the person to develop a deep understanding of who he or she is and helps develop habits of reflexivity that enable the person to become more self-aware" (p.377) because otherwise ways of looking at the world can become inflexible. Senatus has ways of looking at its world, its relationship with its clients and what it does for work that are inflexible. Its ways are inflected with individuals' particularities of desire. Moreover, Senatus is 'positioned' by its history, its way of talking and what it sees as counting for strategic development; the research question posed. Its discursive positioning is one of an absence of strategy leaving the organization a 'cork upon the ocean' (Darwin et al., 2002). Hirschorn (1997) speaks of the organization that is unable to make decisions, whereupon "when executives are unable to make a pragmatic decision, when people in the organization describe their experience as 'drifting', it is useful to assume that the organization has been unable to

take a primary risk" (p.170). While this is helpful in terms or understanding the avoidance of decisions, it does not quite capture the situation at Senatus: in the absence of strategy an *other* discourse is taking place.

11.5 Revisiting the Literature Reviewed

In Chapter Two, I explored the strategy and organizational psychology literature and identified a number of areas that could be useful or developed upon in this research project. Aside from the more recent Strategy-As-Practice approach, most research in the area is focused at the level of the firm. Here, however, the study focused on those responsible for strategy at Senatus and a critically important resource; managers' psychological sensing of their environment. This is a richer activity than that depicted in the literature. While extensively referenced in relation to the dynamic capabilities approach, it isn't explored beyond an implicit or assumed understanding as to what this means. In this section, I 'test' the existing strategy literature against the themes that arose from the research material.

11.5.1 Identity

This was a surprising finding. It surprised me that individuals, reflecting on strategizing, would unconsciously work out questions of identity. Identity formation is a central question of all schools of psychology at an individual level, and this is carried through in psychosocial and sociological approaches to collective and organizational identities. Having an identity brings a level of coherence to a person's position in the social world; it gives consistency to decision-making (as does business strategy) and also 'saves' vital cognitive resources by allowing one to pull from many repertoires for acting in different situations. Oliver (2015) says that "whether explicitly or not, questions related to identity…frequently underlie a great deal of organizational strategizing, making identity a theoretical construct worthy of examination…" (p.331), but in respect of which there is a tension between the teleological orientation of strategy and the more retrospective construction of identity.

In the literature connecting strategy to identity, it can be looked at from three angles: a strategic resource, a framing lens or as a form of 'work' (Oliver, 2015). In common with individual identity, which is reciprocal with the environment, strategy practices too shape identities in organizations (Chia & MacKay, 2007) and that "although identity is influenced by the social context, individuals and organizations experience it as a deeply personal phenomenon" (Gioia et al., 2013, p.173). The distinguishing features of a corporate identity can be considered as unique advantage for a firm, or a valuable resource (Sillince, 2006), both in terms of its relations with clients, but also its ability to attract resources, particularly people. It can assist in the framing of decisions such as the allocation of resources and how competencies are managed (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) or 'work' that can be an enabler of or constraint to strategy development (Oliver & Burgi, 2005). It is this latter approach, identity as 'work' which has some promise for the theme which arose from the material. In this regard, Johnson et al. (2010) found that CEOs, when constructing their own identity also had an effect on organizational identity while Laine & Vaara (2007) noted that strategy 'talk' was used by people to perform their identity, to both legitimate their identity and the practices they were introducing. Identity and strategy are, no doubt, linked.

In this research however, the expression of identity is complex and is not explained by the foregoing. In the first instance, the formation of identity is unconscious to the individual and driven by desire. In the second, there is a concern about the loss of identity, or the disruption of identity, and in the third, a reflection on strategy became an exploration of the inconsistency of members' identity. This is somewhat different from Oliver & Burgi's (2005) assertion that identity can be formed through strategizing and inferred from strategy. What appears to have been the case at Senatus is that there is a pre-step to actual strategizing and this involves the working-through of identity where this has become disrupted as the result of environmental change. In this respect, one of the outcomes of this change has been a perception of the loss of professional identity. This idea of identity loss links into Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory which relates to the emotional significance and value that one attaches to membership of a social group.

Such a perceived loss, as is the case of some members at Senatus, is both significant and difficult.

11.5.2 Arbitrariness

There is little in the strategy literature on this matter. This includes the business process outsourcing literature; from Senatus' perspective, they appear to be grappling with the change that has taken place in their industry – the move from professional service to 'outsourcer' – so it appeared appropriate to look this literature. It is not to say that a client has acted arbitrarily, but that the experience of Senatus' members is of being treated arbitrarily, nevertheless amounting to the same thing from the point of view of perceiving and acting in the world.

From a philosophical perspective, to act arbitrarily is to act without reason: "the chain of reasons cannot end with an arbitrary reason – one for which there is no further reason" (Klein, 1999, p.299). It is likely correct to say that Senatus' clients do not act arbitrarily. They act for reasons that are in the (perceived) best interest of their organizations. But here the reasons are not given nor understood – recall the commentary on the selection processes used by their clients or losing a key account. Engelsma (2014) argues that if an act is not to be arbitrary, there must be a reason available for it. That this reason is elusive to Senatus' members probably satisfies the conditions for it to be arbitrary. Reasoning for decisions *could* be objectively available, but they are not communicated, but because the decisions by clients have strategic *effects* – from providing one type of service to another – the experience is arbitrary. While not fulfilling Klein's (1999) definition of the term, there is a subjective arbitrariness to the conditions Senatus face.

11.5.3 The Imaginary

I have elsewhere subjected the fantasies and imaginaries of Senatus' senior team to analysis using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, but here I consider whether there are elements of the strategy literature where this phenomenon can be located. It is generally accepted that strategy is a creative process, requiring knowledge of the firm, the industry, peripheral environment and capabilities to problem-solve, thereby creating new ideas

and choices (e.g., Regner, 1999; 2003; Paulus, 2000). There is also a significant literature which suggests that organizational routines reinforce both inertia and rigidity (e.g., Leonard-Barton, 1992) and a more recent literature suggesting that they are a basis for creativity (e.g., Feldman, 2000; Feldman & Pentland, 2003). In all cases, there is an opportunity for creativity.

Strategy is a future oriented pre-occupation. It involves consideration of current problems and projecting beyond these into the future. This requires both an understanding of the current state, however this is arrived at, whether by analysis of industry or of resources, and imagining to a point which represents a 'stretch goal' (Locke & Latham, 1990). It requires sound analysis and imagination. What is apparent in Senatus' instance, however, is that there are certain perceptions taking place in the senior team as they reflect on the current environment. They have views and positions about 'what is going on' that others, not in that situation, might not come to or agree with. The reflections on the environment by the team have produced an analysis of conditions obtaining which may not be objectively described, but they are however, real. In this sense, taking these analyses as being real and in common with the literatures alluded to above, there are opportunities to analyse the component elements of these reflections and to re-work them.

11.5.4 Escape from Choice

In their study on strategic inertia, conducted from a socio-cognitive perspective, Hodgkinson & Wright (2002) evaluated an intervention they had conducted where a senior management team failed to substantively engage in scenario-planning strategizing. They did so to "explore the reasons why our attempts to utilize these methods did not yield the benefits anticipated" (p.949). They reasoned that their intervention with that management team failed because of 'defensive avoidance', an ego protecting psychological defence devised by Janis & Mann (1977). Such avoidance strategies are examples of procrastination. Writing about the breadth of the phenomenon, drawing from historical, literary, poetic and philosophical writings, Steel (2007) has said that "it is evident that all conceptualizations of procrastination recognize

that there must be a postponing, delaying, or putting off of a task or decision" (p.66). Interestingly, not all scholars write from a perspective of having defined the term, necessarily, so it's not always clear as to what they are speaking of.

Of those who do write within a defined construct, some researchers cite and rely on the Steel (2007) definition above (Grunschel et al., 2013; Gustavson et al., 2014; Rebetz et al., 2016). While definitions are diverse, there are some common features to those cited in this literature. Van Eerde (2003) helpfully advises that "defining procrastination is problematic in the sense that it is an intra-individual process that is regulated by internal norms of delay" (p.1402).

Notwithstanding, many of the identified definitions have a number of concepts in common. Procrastination:

a) has a temporal dimension;
b) is a voluntary decision made incorporating a juxtaposition of time, task or decision;
c) is a voluntary decision may be below the level of conscious awareness;
d) involves a decision style that is patterned;
e) is a self-defeating behaviour, or decisional preference style;
f) reflects an inability to self-regulate.

In Hodgkinson & Wright's (2002) intervention, the participants avoided engaging fully in the exercise as to do so would produce an outcome, one that they would have found difficult to engage with and enact. There are many explanations for procrastinatory behaviour in the psychological literature, representing the various traditions within the field, but in Senatus' case, I do not believe that one may argue that the failure to develop a strategy arises from this patterned decisional preference style. The earlier analyses suggest that it is deeper than this, and insofar as it is related to the protection of the ego, is related to the working out of subjectivity.

It will be recalled that Inkpen & Choudhury (1995) determined that not setting a strategy arose because of the management's failure, there being a transitional phase in the

organization's life-cycle or a belief by management that it was not necessary to set one. While the phenomenon is described, the possible reasons for management failure are not put forward, save those that may arise due to inertia. The Hodgkinson & Wright (2002) work is not, however, linked specifically to the strategy absence literature, although it clearly speaks to the subject. I believe that in Senatus' case I have made the argument that the phenomenon under study is not inertia, strategic or otherwise, and further, that the failure to set a strategy cannot be argued to be evidence of dilatory behaviour, solely. For sure, decisions of a strategic nature are not being taken, but the possible explanations for this are not reflected in the strategy literature.

11.5.5 Guilt & Responsibility

The themes of guilt and responsibility do not appear in the strategy literature. This is 'obvious' of course, on the one hand, but it is reasonable to ask why this is so. Are there ever decisions made by organization executives about which they feel remorse? There is clearly a significant literature on 'downsizing' and the experiences of those whose jobs have been made redundant, those who remain behind and of those who have made or executed the decisions. In this literature, there are two key models. Brockner & Greenberg's (1990) model rests on the principle of justice and fairness; the downsizing 'survivors' consider the fairness of procedures followed by management and where these have been scrupulously carried out there are positive outcomes with respect to future work intentions. The second model by Mishra & Spreitzer (1998) is similar to the previous but adds that where downsizing is accompanied by job re-design and empowerment policies that there are positive outcomes for the organization. An ethical approach by management to the situation is believed to support this.

While downsizing rightly deserves scholarly scrutiny, both in terms of those who are subjected to it and the performance of the organization, this is not the sole cause of guilt or the seeking of responsibility for an activity. There thus appears to be a narrowness of foci on the causes or experiences of guilt, with psychoanalytic approaches having more to say on this area as against the more conventional strategy literature.

11.6 Elements, Links & Close

This Chapter sought to bring together theories from the existing strategy, psychoanalytic and psychological literatures so that some 'ordering' of the implications for Senatus could be discerned. In the first section of the Chapter, I looked at the relationship that is experienced by Senatus' senior team from the perspective of the Oedipal dyad and triad, introducing the concept of the paternal metaphor. It is argued that the failure of the paternal metaphor has led to a breakdown of the 'Law' and normal mechanisms of commercial relationship regulation. The acuity of the failure of the metaphor is that those at Senatus cannot look outside the dyadic relationship with the Other and must instead rely upon and obey the rules as they are 'arbitrarily' introduced by the Other. They are, however, free to 'enjoy' the symptoms of the failure of the metaphor as they wish, i.e., through the repetition of unhelpful activities.

The failure of the 'Law' to intervene in this dyadic relationship with the Other is linked also to the quest, questioning and search for (lost) identity; it is unlikely that Senatus will find its 'true' identity within this relationship, but must seek one outside it. Without the words to do so, however, Senatus cannot find new 'signifiers'. The discourse in which the relationship is constructed seems complete and totalizing and the words that are there and are used are condensed and overdetermined: A 'loss adjuster' is not what it once was, but what is it? Meanings within this discourse are fixed, to a point, but they are also unstable and subject to challenge. While the Other wants Senatus to be 'claims processors', Senatus' members will not identify with this and so, meanings are simultaneously constructed and destabilized. This pre-antagonistic state is ready for reflection on the themes from the research material.

Within the strategy literature, the idea of strategy absence is, paradoxically 'present', but it is not developed. For sure, the absence of strategy is a 'failure of management' (in Senatus' case) but why is this so? A psychological explanation may, for another firm, lie in decision-avoidance, or procrastination. This cannot be the case for Senatus, however. There is, nonetheless, a discontinuity of strategic discourse at Senatus. In the tiny unwoven holes of the fabric of strategy discourse at Senatus, there are discontinuities:

Little bits and pieces of talk that carry desire, lack and loss and which seek to be recovered and to become part of the conscious, reflected upon speech of its strategists. These carry the opportunity to re-fix meaning.

For Senatus, to re-fix meaning is to tell the 'other' side of the story. In straightforward terms, a discursive formation is the story through which Senatus and others make sense of their social world. The story has been told in a certain way by the words of the Other. Yet, another story, hitherto repressed, is being told, but it is disparate and elemental. For a new meaning to emerge and to bring a creative tension to the discourse, Senatus need to 'fill out' their story and to incorporate words into their narrative that have been previously disavowed.

12. Chapter Twelve - Ethical Considerations and Reflections

12.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The purpose of this Chapter is to explain my position in respect of ethics and reflexivity, which I consider to be linked with one another, and to conclude the thesis. I wish to show that both ethics and reflexivity have been considered over the life-time of the research project. Part of this illustration is to explore how ethical and reflexive concerns are more nuanced when it comes to the question of insider-peer-practitioner-research, bringing with it issues both of confidentiality and loyalty, or friendship. As a researcher in training, I don't believe that I was blinded by either, but I will admit to being motivated by a principle of care and interest in my colleagues and the organization which employs me.

I believe that all of these considerations affect how knowledge is created, a question further explored in the second part of the Chapter. Both ethics and reflexivity call for an exposition of my positionality as a researcher in training and indeed my choice to write in the first person. This positionality is explored, carrying with it an ethic to myself, also; to do myself no harm. The Chapter concludes with a discussion of motivation to research and write within a particular discipline or tradition; a reflexive methodology underpinned by the psychoanalytic hermeneutic attitude.

12.2 The Arc of Ethics Across the Research Project

Questions of reflexivity and questions of ethics are interlinked; where does knowledge come from and how is it obtained? These were the issues that dominated my thinking throughout the research project. Not only are reflexivity and ethics intimately linked, but they are not separate from methodology. Therefore, when I came to write up my approach I took account of the process that I had engaged in from conception of the research question, the approach to its investigation and the analysis of conclusions. These are considerations of what it is to 'know', the 'knower' and how what has now become 'known' was approached and obtained.

In an earlier Chapter I set out my methodological position and methodical approach and did so in advance of presenting the Findings and Implications of the research. In keeping with the above, methodology really belongs here, with ethics, as much as ethics belongs with reflexivity in a recursive circle of reflection and questioning. Save to say that I won't reiterate my methodological approach here in this Chapter, but I will reference some issues of methodology by necessity, insofar as it furthers this Chapter's primary focus.

There are additional implications and considerations for me as the 'knower'. They were three-fold; not only was I an insider-researcher, but I was also a peer-practitioner who used a particular methodological approach – philosophical hermeneutics and psychoanalysis – which both claim to gain warranted knowledge from textual analysis beyond that which the speaker knows. There are already philosophical, ethical, reflexive and methodological conundrums in that statement, all of which I propose to address in this Chapter. This Chapter is therefore an engagement with the reflexive concerns of knowledge acquisition and the ethical concerns of how that knowledge was attained. In it, I try to trace the knottiness of these issues at different stages of the research and my attempts to grapple with them. This is accordingly a discussion of the formal process of ethics' reflection and of the *informal* process of ethics' reflection, as it were, beyond the ethics approval of my University, into the private space of me as an insider-peer-practitioner-researcher. Within this, I endeavoured to be authentic (McAuley, 2004) to the research material and to the psychoanalytic ethic of faithfulness to the integrity of the interpretation process.

To the extent to which I was becoming aware of these issues, I started to engage with the reflexivity and ethics literature and came to understand that this is an established concern amongst researchers. This concern is notably so in a feminist account of ethics (Jeannes, 2017). Edwards & Mauthner (2012) state that "ethics concerns the morality of human conduct. In relation to social research, it refers to the moral deliberation, choice and accountability on the part of the researcher throughout the research process" (p.14), so it is about conducting research responsibly and within a moral framework, inevitably raising questions about what constitutes morality and for whom. They draw on Hammersley's idea of 'ethicism' noting that there has been a concerning trend for

researchers to practice research as ethics, rather than to practice research ethically, for fear perhaps of litigation. Social justice does not have to be the object aim of research – ethicism – but it does have to be conducted ethically. They argue that "ethical decisions arise throughout the entire research process, from conceptualization and design, data gathering and analysis, and report…" (ibid., p.18).

For this research, I first had to consider whether it was appropriate to study not only my own organization in which I work, but also my peers; fellow directors. There were, nonetheless reasons for studying these phenomena. The position of the firm concerned me. We had been through numerous programmes of downsizing, our revenues continued to contract, and we were in danger of losing the core of the business – its reason for being. The strategy literature is replete with the necessity for strategy, how it is formulated, implemented and evaluated, but little in relation to the contemplation and comprehension of its absence; studying the void. This, for me, was an issue of care and of passion. The second reason for undertaking the nature of this study was that this research was carried out as part of a professional doctorate. Therefore, it had to have a practical concern. A feminist ethics advocates that researchers adopt a model of care and responsibility and that all ethical research should contemplate issues of personal experience, context and relationships involved (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012). These ethical values seemed relevant in my particular instance and to research others' texts, one should "step into the shoes of the person being studied" (Denzin, 1997, p.273) and imagine that experience, giving, I believe, a better sense of empathy; an approach I adopted in my interviewing technique when I assumed a Rogerian position of empathy and positive regard (Rogers, 1989; Kvale, 2009).

To empathize with and care for the participants in one's research, however, is not enough. The eight research participants are both peers and colleagues of mine and to determine to interview them in pursuit of my research interest and to analyse those interview texts in a particular approach, required, in my view, more justification than I was going to do so in a manner that was caring and empathic. It required, I believe, doing so because there was no other way to obtain this knowledge. That says something important about the knowledge that was to be gained from my approach and the manner

or method by which I gained it. I did not use any deception. I was clear that the interview texts would be analysed using a psychological method (my psychological training is a well-established fact with the organization, and my Freudian orientation is concomitant with that) and I did not offer to enjoin the participants in the latter process. But was this clear enough? One of the participants, when I requested the interview, asked whether I would be doing any 'psychological testing'. He was clearly anxious about it. This is interesting because testing is a well-established practice in work assessment, career management and promotion (Arnold et al., 2016) and, in some instances, quite routine. But, it is nonetheless, seen as a psychologically intrusive method for gaining knowledge, and consequently, it says something about psychological methods in general; they are about, when it comes down to it, 'getting peoples' thoughts'. There is something about power here, also. Though a peer, I, as the psychologist am gaining information and have 'power' as an expert. This confers responsibility and a duty to an authentic representation of participants' texts within the hermeneutic philosophical tradition.

Duty and responsibility to authenticity aside, this approach to my research subject is operating within a moral-theoretical frame. Though at a level of principle, I have taken the approach of being beneficent, insofar as I consider that the research will contribute to a beneficial understanding of organizational strategizing, and non-maleficent, in that I sought to avoid harm to my research participants and believe that I achieved this. It draws upon a separate philosophical meta-ethical theory of Utilitarianism, one of the "various theoretical positions and approaches taken by those who contemplate the meaning of ethics in social science research" (Strohm-Kitchener & Kitchener, 2009, p.1). Utilitarianism, as a philosophical-ethical theory, prevails most in research, whether researchers are aware of this or not. Moral ethicists, Strohm-Kitchener & Kitchener (2009) argue, probably lean more towards not causing harm to others as being more important than any overall good brought about by research, introducing an opposition in objectives between what such philosophers might advise, as against the necessity for research to take calculated risks to advance knowledge and the development of society.

The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) advise that "research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society and minimise risk and harm" (January 2016)

and, by their criteria, my research project falls within a 'minimal risk' category. The ESRC guidance is nonetheless also drawing on a Utilitarian ethic. While it is difficult to be prescriptive in providing guidelines in research, I believe that two fundamental principles were observed by me throughout the process – beneficence and non-maleficence. I intended and actively sought not to cause harm to the participants in my research. The participants, after all, are my peers and colleagues whom I care for and with whom I share the responsibility for running our organization.

Critical in my approach was an ethical awareness that "care must be taken not to analyse research subject's themselves, nor make therapeutic results a goal of the study" (Daiello, 2010, p.93) but rather to temporarily freeze the play of signifieds in order to "articulate the truth" (Atkinson, 2003, p. 192) of a particular discourse that speaks through the strategist at a particular temporal point. Accordingly, I did not psychoanalyze, nor present myself as 'psychoanalyzing' the research participants. Rather, psychoanalysis was the theoretical lens through which I tried to understand the unconscious elements of spoken discourse in my organization. Brown (2006) contemplates this point when she says "the danger that accompanies the importation of psychoanalytic concepts into social research is 'wild' or casual analysis of the other's psyche" (p.193), a stance that I was anxious to avoid.

Psychoanalysis as a social science method outside the clinic (Frosh & Emerson, 2005) has been used in organization and management research by researchers within their own organizations (Stapley, 1993) and has been recommended as a method by researchers for others to use in their organizations (Carr, 2002; Vansina-Cobbaert & Cobbaert, 2008; Van Eeden, 2010). Therefore, it is not an untried method in research, but it is however, one that should be used with care so as to avoid psychoanalyzing 'people' and instead to analyse discourse – their text productions. Moreover, I avoided pathologizing my participants and the organization itself, in contrast to other psychoanalytic approaches to organization theory (e.g., Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984; Kets de Vries, 2011).

12.3 Confidentiality and Insider-Research

Confidentiality and anonymity was also a consideration; I was keen to ensure that all participant's thoughts and opinions were confidential, notwithstanding that I am their peer, and colleague. Therefore, as part of my research interview protocol, I informed my colleagues that their views would remain confidential, save for anonymised comments that would prospectively appear in my thesis. While I did not anticipate any distress being brought about as a result of the subject matter that I intended to investigate, I did plan to offer the interviewee a 'de-brief' session, should it have been necessary. This was in keeping with my wish not to inflict any harm on my participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Equally, I am a member of the British Academy of Management and subscribe to their ethical principle "to enhance the learning of others and the effectiveness of organisations" (2013, p.4) and this thesis has been very much about learning; learning about the barriers to creating organizational strategy. To that end, my colleagues participated in this research project in order to bring about greater effectiveness to our organization and participated fully and freely, in the knowledge that their individual opinions were confidential and would not be disclosed within, or outside the firm.

The issue of confidentiality did not end with the collection of the research material; there were issues around the analysis of the material and the subsequent writing up of the final report – the thesis – of the research. While there were methodological issues to consider in relation to the analysis, which I have treated with in the Methodology Chapter, there is always a question and responsibility hovering over the researcher to retain integrity and practice authenticity when analysing the material. The analysis was of methodological necessity a private affair, carried out in the privacy and intimacy of my private environment surrounded by my notes, the research material and personal journals of my accounts of the research process. Here, in this environment, I had freedom to be faithful or unfaithful to the text; and responsibility. I however, followed a path of authenticity, as I hope and believe that the research approach, as detailed earlier, has shown. To behave and act with authenticity, I drew on Guba & Lincoln's (1989) principles of authenticity comprising fairness to the research participant, ontological authenticity in demonstrating a professional ability to bring out meanings in the texts that the

participants were not aware that they had, an educative and catalytic authenticity insofar as I believe that there is something to be learned from the research and that it can act as a means for change. Guba & Lincoln (1989) go further than this in their depiction of authenticity and explain that a researcher should practice "communitarian ethics, rather than accepting the Enlightenment meta-narrative of the autonomous individual possessing a pure, single, core identity" (p.163) and this is particularly apt in my instance where I have gathered the material from my peers and not as a detached impersonal author who has a separate 'gaze'.

Therefore, when analysing the material, I retained awareness of my own textual constructions and attempted to keep these faithful and close to the material; the original authors' textual productions, rather than imposing my own constructions. This is an ethical question, arising from authenticity, as much as it is a reflexive question. It was not always easy to do this, owing to the methodological approach, but there was an ethical obligation to do so.

I am a 'part' of the 'whole' studied and to the extent that I moved within a hermeneutic circle between part and whole in the research material, day to day I do this when I go to work and reflect back on the day's, week's or year's actions. Smyth & Holian (2008) describe insider-research as something quite daunting and risky, that "you would know the feeling when you defy gravity, lean back into the empty space parallel to the ground and step off a cliff face" (p.42), but ultimately the purpose of my research is not to expose or embarrass the organization but to assist it in its adaptation to the wider social world of which it is a deserving member and has something thoughtful to offer.

In terms of the interview setting, I ensured that there was a prefacing discussion about ensuring that the participant was as much at ease as possible and that their consent was freely given. I maintained an awareness on the part of myself as researcher to consider and reflected on how knowledge is constituted in the interview process. The social construction of knowledge in the interview setting cannot escape that there is a power asymmetry at work (Kvale, 2006), not in terms of our work roles, but in respect of the type of knowledge being created, which was outside enterprise of our work organization,

although in my instance at least one of the proposed interviewees is a workplace superior, the managing director, presenting another dimension to the asymmetry.

There is danger here, however. Mauthner et al. (2002) has argued that the warmth created by some researchers in qualitative interviewing is tantamount to instrumentalising human relationships and bringing about a 'faking' of care or interest in order to elicit private thoughts. Taking this into account, I tried to be clear, authentic and honest about what I was trying to understand through my research with the participants. But it is a valid point; I adopted a Rogerian stance when interviewing. I was trained in this method of psychotherapy whereby there is a considerable emphasis in the training upon acting congruently with one's beliefs and feelings, but to act this way without believing that this is the correct way to behave to gain access to someone's thoughts would indeed be inauthentic.

12.4 Reflexively Generated Knowledge

Coghlan & Brannick (2010) helpfully explain how knowledge is created in an insider-researcher process. They say that the knowledge developed by insider-researchers contributes to theorising about organizations but also to the 'lived experience' of the organization itself. Engaging with the organizational system, one both learns about it and changes it to a greater or lesser extent and that from the perspective of the researcher, there can be confusion about adding the researcher role to one's existing role and sometimes a sense of being overwhelmed. This was certainly the case for me. Adding the researcher role did not result in something additive, but rather a transformation of my existing role. An understanding about how strategizing is practiced in my organization and the likely explanations for the absence of a strategy for the organization has changed how I interact with my peers in the questions I ask, the arguments I initiate and both the public and private frustrations I have. Organizational dynamics are not straightforward and are not easily understood, but need to be communicated clearly. Diamond (2012) who works with organizations from a psychoanalytic orientation, advises that when he presents his findings to client organizations, he does so not with the theorizing language of psychoanalysis, but with language that is both accessible and illustrative of the

dynamics that are taking place, which can be readily comprehended, explaining a 'narrative truth' to the client organization.

So, in this work, there are constant iterations of interpretations, just as in the process of analysis that I worked through with the interview texts so as to represent them in a particular way. This is an interesting question to pose; what is the correct way to analyse and represent the material and its interpretation? Clarke et al. (2009) in their research about discursively constructed identities said that they could have conducted their research using psychodynamic theory (a development of psychoanalytic theory (McAuley et al., 2014)), and that this would have produced another perspective. This is well-said and indeed when I originally read their paper I privately wondered why they had not written up using psychoanalytic theory. This could easily be construed as an argument for relativism, but I prefer the argument that it is another perspective. Parker & Pavon-Cuellar (2014) caution that we should avoid 'colonizing' texts with psychoanalytic discourse. One might respectfully ask why ever not, if this brings about better understanding, but they are perhaps not so much referring to a beneficent outcome but instead to a psychologising vantage point whereby to possess a certain language of psychological criticality bestows a superiority to the researcher-author. That vantage point is to be avoided, clearly, but in choosing a perspective within which to view a subject does require boldness and a belief that, while it may not be the only perspective which could be held, it is the one that is privileged at a point in time and should be honestly and authentically argued for, because it is perceived as being better and prevailing above all other perspectives for explaining the phenomena concerned.

Therefore, it is within this spirit that I chose to investigate and scrutinize the absence of strategy in my organization. I hope that I have argued well for this perspective as being the one best placed to bring light to the concern. There is also a personal dimension to adopting this theoretical stance. I trained as a psychotherapist and practiced psychodynamic psychotherapy. I also hold a degree in psychology and have had an enduring interest in psychoanalysis for the last twenty years. This part of my thesis, however, is not about my personal 'journey' or epiphanies, but is rather about the interstices of the personal as they relate to the construction of knowledge and the

philosophical traditions that this relies on; for instance, the approach to interviewing, while unstructured, was based on a particular philosophical tradition, namely descriptive phenomenology deriving from the Husserlian method of bracketing, whereby my interests were set aside in order to listen to those of the interviewees, beyond that is, the research question posed. The analysis phase, however, draws on the Heideggerian tradition of interpretative phenomenology, which considers the analyst to be constitutive of the process (Sorsa et al., 2015).

12.5 The First Person

I write in the first person in order to 'claim' what I am saying, to avoid distancing myself from it, and to prevent, by a trick of language, creating a false impression of neutrality and value-free writing. The research is not about me, although I have been changed by it, and I am *implicated* in it. This is part of the philosophical and methodological tradition of which I am part and have adopted. By tracing the contours and edges of the hermeneutic circle I have moved back and forth into the research material, surfacing prejudices, melting understandings, giving rise to newer, better understandings. There is something interesting here about the vassal possibilities of the researcher; in all research, even that which claims to be value-free, the material must be read, digested, analysed and interpreted, requiring a sensory process of vision and cognition, replete and saturated with history, tradition and emotion. There is not research material on the one hand and the final report on the other without a very human intermediation. In training to be a psychotherapist one is taught to view oneself as the instrument of change and the therapeutic relationship itself as being the process by which change is brought about. This is similar to the 'change agent' designate in the action research literature (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). One's own subjectivity is not a 'problem' to be surmounted and overcome in qualitative research, but is rather something to be drawn upon, relied on and to point both the researcher and reader towards a different way of understanding a problem, particularly where the researcher has engaged in reflection on his or her own motives for addressing the subject topic.

Parker (2005b, p.117) says:

"Subjectivity is viewed by psychoanalysis, as with much qualitative research, not as a problem but as a resource (and topic). To draw upon one's own subjectivity in the research process does not mean that one is not being 'objective', but that one actually comes closer to a truer account. In psychoanalytic terms, the 'investment' the researcher has in the material they are studying plays a major role in the interest that will eventually accrue from the research."

Moreover, Habermas (1968) argues "that we disavow reflection *is* positivism" (p.vii) emphasising the need for researchers to reflect on and disruptively challenge their own assumptions. Etherington (2004) adds that "reflexive methodologies seem to be close to the hearts and minds of practitioners who value using themselves in *all* areas of their practices" (p.15) and are influenced by feminist perspectives on research. Drawing on Moustakas (1975; 1990) Etherington says that the 'self' is a major tool in psychological research and that "reflexivity is a skill that we develop as counsellors; an ability to notice our responses to the world…To be reflexive we need to be *aware* of our personal responses…" (p.18-19). Noticing my own reactions to the research material in the analysis phase of the research project was important for bringing to light my own prejudices and what I was bringing to the analysis, as distinct from analysing what was there in the material itself. For instance, when analysing Harry's text, when he spoke about the mental space of a 'no-man's land', in writing up my notes in the second 'Address' stage I said:

> *It is a world of 'knowing more' about what's going on and unsettling things. It is the language of 'fuck you, we own this mental territory'. You, who have taken so much from us, that we don't know who we are.*

Clearly, I had empathy for what Harry was saying and when I was writing up this stage of the analysis, I identified with what he was saying. It would not be characteristic for Harry to use this language, and when I reflected on the note, I realised that this was my reaction to what Harry was speaking about, not his. Being reflexive "entails noticing, evaluating and being suspicious" (Johnson & Duberley, 2003, p.1279) and so, here, the process of being suspicious came later, at the stage when I was analysing the text and not just for the sake of the interpretation of the text, but rather to recognise a reaction and to

respond to it authentically. This is a kind of countertransference identified by Morgenroth (2010) which occurs during the interpretation process which is 'easier' to reflect on, and therefore more amenable to reflexive contemplation, as against countertransference occurring within the interview setting.

12.6 Countertransference

While it is said that reflexivity should be an interest among qualitative researchers (Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009), being reflexive, in the sense of using the self in research, has its counterpart in psychoanalytic theory as countertransference. This link between reflexivity in research and psychological reflexivity has been highlighted by Brown (2006), although Gough (2003) remarks "discussions of reflexivity rarely make reference to psychoanalytic theory, despite a long and rich tradition of writing on intersubjective dynamics" (p.26). "Freud coined the term 'countertransference' to designate the analyst's 'unconscious feelings' towards the patient" (Evans, 1996) which Lacan considered a 'resistance' in psychoanalytic treatment, in other words material to be worked with. Lacan considered countertransference to be "the sum of the prejudices, passions, perplexities" (Lacan, 1966, p.225) of the analyst in the treatment and this is a useful description of the nature of the feelings encountered in text analysis. If engaged with and reflected upon, resistances are fruitful avenues in the research. Such engagement results in a 'fusion of horizons' (Uggla, 2010) of which McLeod (2001) says "may represent a moment of insight and transformation for the interpreter, but, more crucially, it signifies an act of continuing and deepening or enriching, the cultural-historical tradition of which the interpreter is a member" (p.23) The research situation is one where countertransference, grounded in the psychoanalytic tradition, can be usefully engaged (McAuley, 1989; McAuley, 2004) such that countertransference can be "employed to emphasize the researcher's reflexivity as central to interpreting how the data are coproduced in particular ways" (Saville Young, 2011, p.46). Therefore, reaction to the text can be seen as a 'provocation', a resistance to be worked with to uncover an additional dimension to the research findings. Holmes (2014) nevertheless "argues that the straightforward mapping of the clinical concept of countertransference onto the research setting is misleading" (p.167) and this is undeniably a point well made.

Researchers are not neutral, as psychoanalysts are trained to be, as we usually come to the research question 'addressed' by a problem (Parker, 2010).

Recognising both the usefulness and limitations of utilising the countertransference concept when they say "in doing work of this kind, the person of the researcher is deeply implicated: if it is the case that psychological knowledge is constructed in the context of an interchange between 'researcher' and 'researched', then understanding the determining characteristics of that interaction – including what the researcher brings to it – is crucial for evaluating the significance of any research 'findings'" (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008, p.362), these researchers are acknowledging that the acquisition of knowledge is an involvement of multiple senses and an interactive and dialectical process between the researcher, the participant and the, in my case, textual productions from the encounter. The interview texts, therefore, were not neutral documents to be analysed in the remove of time and space from the interview setting, but instead inextricably linked to and emanating from the research question, to the interview and the analysis.

Johnson & Duberley (2003) say that "to make unexamined metatheoretical commitments, and remain unaware of their origins, amounts to an abdication of intellectual responsibility which results in poor…practices" (p.1280) and in this sense my commitment has been to be reflexive about the nature of the knowledge that I have generated in this research in a practice that turns back on itself (Hardy et al., 2001). My methodological approach to the research project has been a hermeneutic one and "in the hermeneutic sense of knowing, the researcher is immersed in, is an acknowledged part of the scene of study" (McAuley, 1985, p.293) and to "understand the objects of study not as instances of universal law but as a singular event" (ibid., p.295).

It is argued that the researcher's biography is important; that the researcher's beliefs and behaviours have an impact on the type of knowledge created in research (Harding, 1987; Johnson & Duberley, 2000). This gives rise to two forms of reflexivity – methodological and epistemological, (and later three – hyper-reflexivity (Johnson & Duberley, 2003)) the former being generally deployed within a positivist paradigm where the focus is on ensuring that the practice of research is improved and indeed, clear of the 'contamination' of the researcher's presence and opinions. Against this, to be

epistemically reflexive, "systematic attempts are made to relate research outcomes to the knowledge-constraining and -constructing impact of the researcher's own beliefs" (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.178) arising from one's own socio-historical position. This seems a good point at which to consider the theoretical position adopted.

It is argued by Walsh (1995, cited in McLeod, 2001) that a qualitative researcher should not simply apply a method but should work from with an approach. I have had clinical training in psychotherapy and this unquestionably has influenced my choice of methodology, and indeed the philosophical assumption from which it derives, namely phenomenology (McLeod, 2001). This metatheoretical position lays emphasis upon understanding reality as something that is apprehended by each of us in different ways, presenting an opportunity to understand it in a new way following reflection. Certainly, there are twists and turns in this story, and some might argue that psychoanalysis does not reside within the phenomenological tradition but following Kearney (1986) I believe that a line is traceable from Husserl. That debate aside, my being committed to psychoanalysis as a method of hermeneutics is by now clear and involves a certain attitude and behaviour in gathering and interpreting research material.

The entire process required an openness to the unconscious; to be grabbed by the aleatory of the unconscious, whether this arose in the course of the analysis, such as when an alternative meaning was brought to light in the interpretation, or during my own reflection on the material's significance for me. For me, as a researcher, the object of research would always be words; my interest in psychoanalysis came about through my interest in literature and the many interpretations possible in reading with this method: To quote Linstead (1994) "language is the central element in creating accounts which are constitutive of the world rather than revelatory of its essence" (p.1321). Clinical psychoanalysis is also a method of recovery of the unconscious through speech and language itself is unconscious, because of its many historical meanings, its polysemous uses and because it is a system of differences without positive consistency. Words always only refer to other words, not independent things. So, my research project would always be about words.

12.7 Translation of Words

Yet, here is the conundrum: To write about others' words and to attribute meaning to those spoken and later textual productions, is to do so using other words. This implies a circularity, but also a privileging of my voice as the hermeneutic researcher. McAuley (2004) approaches the question of vantage-point by saying "there are two ways in which there is a legitimation of the hermeneutic approach as a mode of reaching truth. One of these lies in the professionalization of the hermeneutic researcher; the other in the methodic processes through which hermeneutic work is conducted" (p.196). The training that I have undertaken to become a researcher in the doctoral programme addresses this point; there has been a process of socialization into being a researcher in training, requiring that I engage and debate with philosophical and methodological debates in the management research literature.

There is an additional dimension to the question of vantage-point. Lacan said that there was no 'meta-language', we can never get beyond language (McLeod, 2001) and this point is endorsed by Wozniak (2010) and Parker (2015a), and that therefore the researcher cannot escape the system of linguistic differences to describe a phenomenon 'better'. There is no 'pre-discursive reality' (Lacan, 1972-1973, p.32) through which knowledge can be separately accessed, a point echoed in Habermas' work when he said, "the circle in which epistemology inevitably ensnares itself is a reminder that the critique of knowledge does not possess the spontaneity of an origin" (Habermas, 1968, p.8). Parker (2005) says that at the end of a psychoanalysis a person should expect to be a "perfect Saussurean, such that they recognize that the language that bears them is made up only of differences" (p.168). In other words, they should be able to recognize those core narratives about themselves but also the limitations to their fixity, that they are challengeable and, if problematic, can be 'worked through', just as is the case in Senatus. The (unconscious) beliefs expressed by Senatus' senior team about their relationships with their clients are not immutable, timeless nor transcendental. They have come about because of social and environmental conditions, but the way of expressing that relationship is used in words that have ceased to be consciously recognisable and need to be recovered in the hermeneutic spirit so that their inherent difficulty and complexity

is rendered. My approach to research is grounded in my own social, environmental and historical locus. Knowledge does not unfold in any pre-ordained route (Johnson, 1995) but is instead the outcome of discursive struggles.

While I do not subscribe to a view that there is a theory-neutral language but rather support Bourdieu's perspective "that any science is embedded in, and conditioned by, an underlying socially derived collective unconsciousness that conditions what is taken to be warranted knowledge" (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p.179), I take epistemic reflexivity to have emancipatory potential (ibid., p.185) and that the researcher's role is to "aid actors in releasing the suppressed contents constituting their self-understandings" (Melucci, 1996, p.224, cited in Delanty, 1997). This is against the researcher having a privileged viewpoint, and rather, having learned a method of textual recovery, my role is to surface what is the 'unthought known' (Bollas, 1987) and to derive meaning from the encounter with participants and their texts. For McLeod (2001) "meaning emerges from qualitative text from the active engagement of the researcher with that text, from his or her drive to know and to understand" (p.141) and I would add 'to change something'. This drive to know is within a stance of verstehen (Johnson & Duberley, 2000) being the "interpretative understanding of the meaning" (p.34) of phenomena believing that "human action…has an internal subjective logic which is also intersubjective in the sense that it is created and reproduced through everyday human and social interaction" (Gill & Johnson, 2010, p. 149).

Psychoanalysis, however, notwithstanding that it is a reflexive discipline, shapes its own focus of inquiry. Parker (2015a) argues that psychoanalysis should not be taken to be a metanarrative. It is instead a method for the reflexive challenging of assumptions and research through inquiry. It is a discipline that is constituted by a socio-cultural and historical locus, finding expression in late capitalist society, not an immanent truth. Equally, however, he argues that psychoanalysis does allow us to interpret and bring about a form of subjectivity that suits oneself and enables one to hold the contradictory implications of reality in creative tension. The psychoanalytic method is famed for its curative effect through the very process of speaking, by allowing individuals, including those at Senatus, to think about themselves at the level of the Imaginary, without being

captivated by it, and to put into symbolized experience – words – what has been traumatic, unsymbolized experience from the Real. Perhaps most importantly, psychoanalysis allows the human subject to break from hegemonizing and essentializing discourses that attempt to bring fixity and positionality – or stuckness – by providing a means of doubting and questioning those discourses. I would argue that a critical philosophical and hermeneutic method is ideally placed to bring about that kind of questioning and to bring about different forms of knowing as a result. Parker (2015a) does well to remind one, though, that while this might be the case, psychoanalysis is a lure that bids an entanglement that whilst producing an effect, even a therapeutic one, is an effect that could be found because it has been looked for. To paraphrase that turn of phrase of Laclau & Mouffe's (1985), effects exist and there is a dimension of reality to the changes brought about by the recovery of meaning through the method used by me in the research, but it too arises out of a 'discursive condition of emergence', and the articulatory contingency by which the product of this research arose was the use of certain methods grounded in historical philosophical approaches which contradict the "Kantian transcendental notion that the mind can fully and completely grasp its essence through critical self-reflection" (Kellner & Lewis, 2007, p.409).

Reflexivity is "an attempt to move forward in our research through greater awareness of ourselves and the conditions of our theorizing and writing. Reflexivity here denotes the researcher actively situating their own social, political and ontological position in the course of analysis" (Dallyn, 2014, p.246) and I hope that I have set out both the reasons why I chose the method that I used together with the uncertainties that come with that final decision to select a methodological position. I have sought to take a considerable distance from "the often unstated assumption that the researcher can be some form of objective arbiter who simply observes and records social truths" (Dallyn, 2014, p.247) and I hope that this has been achieved.

12.8 Reflections on the Thesis

The development of business strategy is a process that requires creativity and the ability of an organization's strategists to perceive the opportunities and threats in their environment clearly. There is both formal, explicit knowledge available to strategists to consider in the form of publicly available documents, their own tools of analyses, know-how and cognitive ability. Nevertheless, as I believe this research demonstrates, there is also other knowledge available as a resource to strategists, arguably more fundamental knowledge, but that it requires different processes for its recovery. This knowledge speaks to the strategist's perceptions of their identity as a strategist, the identity of the firm and the business activities it determines to engage in, the nature of the structure of its relationships with its clients and their ability to articulate a clear, unambiguous vision for its future. In this respect, unconscious knowledge needs to be 'worked through', or as Freud formulated it, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working Through': "These three concepts Freud mentions form a dialectical triad: they designate the three phases of the analytical process, and resistance intervenes in every passage from one phase to the next" (Zizek, 2017, p.vii). In this case, there has been the remembering of difficult material, its repetition in the form of symptoms such as downsizing, and in a sense, working through has just begun, but more is required.

In this research project, I had set out to understand a particular problem, the absence of a strategy and formal strategizing in the Senatus organization, and to understand how strategizing can be understood differently from how it is conventionally comprehended. Certainly, the lens through which I have looked at these problematics is perspectival (Alvesson & Sklodberg, 2009) and there are doubtless other perspectives on them that could have been used. For instance, one could argue that the reason why Senatus has failed to formally adopt a strategy or engage formally in cycles of strategy is that it is a traditional professional service firm that has failed or has struggled to adapt to changing circumstances. This is probably partly correct, but I would argue this argument has an 'illusion of explanatory depth' (Rozenblit & Keil, 2002) insofar as the people who make up that traditional professional service have their own reasons for failing to set the business'

strategy, some of which have been made cogently in their interview texts, and others which are unconscious to them because they are articulated through the unconsciousness of language. Therefore, to make this argument as the sole reason for Senatus' failure to formulate a strategy would of course make sense but would not provide any further rationale for why this is so.

One might also argue that the reason why Senatus has failed to strategize is because its autonomy has been destroyed by managerialism (Kirkpatrick et al., 1996) and again, there is truth to this. It does not explain however, how managerialist practices have impacted upon the senior team at Senatus. Managerialism describes well some of the practices adopted by Senatus' clients in their engagements with them but how this is understood and processed by Senatus' senior team in an *other*, unconscious discourse is not explained by this concept. Rather, the experience of managerialism for this group of executives is beyond symbolised experience.

Instead, I have tried to originally conceptualize the unconscious experience of Senatus and to provide an explanation for the absence of strategy. The approach to the research was to study the 'not there' by surfacing through a critical philosophical hermeneutic method what was a separate discourse at work which was preventing the articulation of a strategic intent (Hamel & Prahalad, 1989). I used psychoanalytic theory to explicate this discourse, not to colonize it, but rather to use a theory which focuses on the not immediately present, and to recover what has been repressed from conscious awareness.

12.9 Research Aims and the 'Learning Window'

My original aims for the research were:

- To contribute to our understanding of strategic organizational discourse by showing how the unconscious is present in same.
- To investigate whether strategizing can be understood better by using psychoanalytic-based approaches.

- To assess whether a fuller form of speech and organizational discourse can lead to a greater range of strategic alternatives available to its strategists.

At this point in time, in the Reflection, it is useful to reflect on these aims and to evaluate whether I have been successful in these. To partly assist in this reflective process, I will use York's (2010) 'learning window', adapted from the JoHari Window (Luft, 1961), and used as a tool of action research to assess one's initial and subsequent understandings of an organization.

I completed the first learning window in December 2014, towards the close of the first year of the Doctor of Business Administration programme at the University. This is set out below:

Learning *Think about how to research the 'unconscious'*	**What I know and how I know it** That the organization has no formal strategy and that there has been a number of downsizing programmes No growth strategy Management/ quality issues in some parts of the business	**What I think I know and what I need to discover in order to know it** Believe that there are unconscious issues around inertia and loss, because senior people just didn't know what to do Possible defence against anxiety is to 'deny reality'
	What I know I do not know Reason(s) why the business is not growing and why revenues are reducing No explanation for no growth strategy	**Must be open to what I do not expect** Possible that the only reason is 'politics' and the MD just wants it 'his way'
	Discovering ***Continue reading and think about methodology***	

Figure 4. The 'Learning Window' as at December 2014

(Adapted by Lyle Yorks, Teacher's College, Columbia University, in Coghlan & Brannick, 2010)

As I look back on this, two things strike me. The first is that the organization had reduced considerably in size and that there were no plans to reverse this. That seems really quite

odd and uncanny now. The second was that while I had a 'hunch' that there were unconscious psychological factors at work, because of my pre-understanding of this type of knowledge, I had inserted in the lower right-hand quadrant that I needed to be open to the possibility that the MD, Harry, was simply so strong-willed that he only wanted things done in his way, and so closed down any discussion about strategy.

I completed another learning window in early 2016, another in the Autumn of 2016, again in late 2016, and then a final one when I completed the analysis of the research material in the early Autumn of 2017. My understanding of the situation had changed considerably since the first window and made me think about how I could have carried out the research. I could have looked at the situation in Senatus through a leadership lens and perhaps have approached the research using ethnographic methods to see how the culture was manipulated, maybe, by one person. In a way, I always left that possibility open and in awareness by identifying an explanation that I had not even considered. I, however, wanted to examine the position at Senatus by looking at the team as a whole and the unconscious dimension of the senior team in their collective leadership role at the firm. I believe that the approach I ultimately took has allowed me to be better informed about the situation. The final window was completed in Autumn 2017 as follows:

Figure 5. The Learning Window as at Autumn 2017

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Learning
The team need to engage with the research to find a strategy</td><td>What I know and how I know it
There is no business strategy for the firm, some directors have concerns about the future of the firm and its leadership
Uncertainty as to the organization's 'place' in the future
A dependency on the client (Other)
A belief that the Other has taken something away
A belief that the organization 'owes' a symbolic debt
There is an avoidance of choice and strategy</td><td>What I think I know and what I need to discover in order to know it
The 'place' that the organization has; this requires a collective reflection on the themes that have surfaced from the research</td></tr>
<tr><td>What I know I do not know
The future strategy of the business; there is a collective effort required by the senior team</td><td>Must be open to what I do not expect
That identity-subjectivity is critical to the development of business strategy</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Discovering
Further reflection on the analyses</td></tr>
</table>

It is fair to say that the type of knowledge generated even at the point at which the last window was completed was very different from that known at the outset of the project. In terms of the things that I did not know about the field of strategizing at Senatus, I could say that I knew that it was important for the senior team at Senatus to engage with the kind of material that was the substance of the research findings. In terms of what I was open to, and what took me by surprise, was that the idea that identity was extremely important to strategizing, and while a part of the research findings here, could be on its own a significant and rich vein of further research.

Returning to the research aims, I believe that these were met. In the first instance, I believe that I can say that by using the hermeneutic-psychoanalytic method, I have shown that the unconscious is present in strategic discourse at Senatus.

Secondly, I set out to investigate whether strategizing could be understood better using psychoanalytic approaches. Again, I believe that this aim has been met, as I have uncovered something of the unconscious concerns that have been inhibiting the development of strategy at Senatus. These unconscious concerns are what have been manifest in the themes, and which appear as an 'absence of strategy'.

Thirdly, I investigated 'whether a fuller form of speech and organizational discourse can lead to a greater range of strategic alternatives'; in one sense, the analysed research material goes beyond what was originally said by the interviewees. What they said was 'opened up'. This is a fuller form of speech and organizational discourse, as all discourses, hidden and unbidden, are brought to awareness and invite the speakers to engage with them. Is it fair to say that this could lead to a greater range of alternatives for the organization? It *is* fair to say that such engagement would lead to creativity. Engagement with the themes means to participate in, bring to awareness, dismiss, entertain, and to bring something new forth. As difficult as this is to say, it might not necessarily be better, but it is likely a more beneficial way to address the anxieties of existential worry for the individuals concerned.

Of course, there is also the question of desire-in-identity. Engagement with the themes, including identity, would be beneficial for those concerned. The loss of identity has to be consciously considered in order for Senatus to find a new one and a strategic path.

12.10 Contribution to Knowledge

By approaching the question of the absence of strategy using a critical philosophical hermeneutic method, I believe that I have made an original contribution to knowledge. There have been no empirical research studies into strategizing using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. In this respect, I believe that I have added to our understanding of the 'sensing' aspect of strategizing (e.g., Teece, 2007) by uncovering some of the unconscious processes at work in senior executives which influence their attendance to and comprehension of environment changes, and indeed conceptualizing the failure to set strategy as rooted in an unconscious dimension.

If this research were carried out on another organization, using the same methodology, I am certain that the results would be different. There is a uniqueness to the circumstance of Senatus which is not graspable by conventional methods of study, hence the subjectivist and interpretivist approach. It would, however, be possible to apply the method in the same way and the unconsciousness of language would uncover other concerns which would reveal the absence of development in a given area of the studied firm.

One of the contributions, therefore, has been to study the absence of strategic development at Senatus, but the approach could also be used to study a different issue at another firm. I consider that my contribution to knowledge is in respect of applying a Lacanian psychoanalytic lens to understand strategizing. Where psychological aspects of strategizing have been considered in the literature, they are done so within the respective frameworks of cognitive psychology or (the outward display of) emotions. These latter psychological aspects are valuable, but they do not include an understanding of the unconscious and, moreover, the *epistemic value* of the unconscious in attempting to

make sense of social phenomena; the choices we make, the motivations for those choices.

Lacanian psychoanalysis places the unconscious in spoken discourse. Therefore, to study spoken strategic discourse is to study the operation of the unconscious; organizational signifiers occlude an unconscious, other discourse which make itself known in discursive failures, discontinuities and gaps. According to the psychoanalytic lens, this is where truth is spoken, or more practically, this is where there is potential for an alternative reading, a creative space for re-inscription.

In this part of the Chapter, I set out what I believe are the contributions to knowledge developed from this research.

12.10.1 Strategy Absence

Inkpen & Choudhury (1995) set out to develop what they considered to be an aspect of strategy research that had not previously been identified: Strategy absence. In their view, the absence of strategy arose for three reasons: the failure of management, a transitional phase in a firm's history and a deliberate decision to leave the strategy of the firm open. It is not pejorative to say that the absence of strategy at Senatus is due to a failure of management.

Inkpen & Choudhury (1995) were right to set the phenomenon of the absence of strategy apart from strategic inertia, a situation arising from an organization's unwillingness to recognize a need to change, or management being unable to initiate change when the need is recognized. To align the absence of strategy to inertia is to do it a disservice. There is, however, a challenge to studying absence as it is the study of the 'not there' and drawing inferences from research material as to why this might be the case. It is also valid to ask whether strategy absence should be studied as part of the strategy paradigm. Studying strategy is studying its presence, or how it comes into effect. Studying its absence could be argued as being not a study of strategy at all.

Yet, insofar as the premise of this thesis is that a strategy is a *good thing*, one should wonder and enquire into its absence. The question is especially pertinent when related to an organization that has seen destructive environmental conditions over the last eight years, but which has failed to set a medium to long-term plan to counter these effects. A failure of strategy would have been to set a strategy that did not work, but the failure to set a strategy is, paradoxically evidence of its absence.

Strategy absence as a concept has not been subsequently developed in the literature. Rodwell & Shadur (2007) showed how a certain category of firm, which they described as 'drifters', could be said to be absent of strategy, but there has been little further development beyond this. I argue that my research findings add significantly to the concept of strategy absence as they go beyond the description of 'failure' to provide richer descriptions for the phenomenon. The original scholars of this concept did not attempt to explain why such 'failures' occur. What has been spoken about at Senatus as a substitute for strategic discourse are unconscious concerns regarding the loss of identity, the disruption of identity, the nature of their relationship with their clients and their desire to transcend their dependency on them, together with more existential concerns of guilt. These are the matters that wish to be *spoken of* prior to strategizing. They are not the concerns that other firms will have, but it is averred that in the absence of an organization's strategy, there is an unconscious discourse at work preventing its articulation: In the absence of strategy, the unconscious is present. For this reason, I argue that I have contributed significantly to the theorization of the concept of strategy absence.

12.10.2 Identity

This research was not an investigation into identity at an individual or corporate level. Nonetheless, identity did surface as a theme in the project. Existing literature on strategy and identity (e.g., Laine & Vaara, 2007) conceptualizes identity as a resource, available to individuals and the organization, identity as a lens through which ideas about the firm are encapsulated and as work, where there is reciprocity at the level of the individual about how personal identity influences and is influenced by the organization. Strategy

discourse can also be used as a resource by individuals who seek to shape their position within organizations.

The theme arising from the research here is of a different strain, however, and offers a different insight into strategizing. When asked to reflect on their business' environment and the conditions within it, the participants elected to speak of their own identity, particularly the 'higher-level' identity (Oliver, 2015) of professional identity and how they experienced this as respectively lost, disrupted or challenged. This creates a link between individual identity and strategy. This is a known component of strategizing. What has been a hitherto unknown component of identity and strategizing is that the working out of desire-in-identity is taking place unconsciously while conscious reflection on strategic issues is taking place.

12.10.3 Bridging the 'Firm' and Individual Levels

Regner (2008) writes "that while dynamic capabilities work emphasizes organizational-level capabilities, the strategy-as-practice approach has important characteristics that might be of help in advancing the analysis of processes and activities that underpin those capabilities" (p.567). This involves moving the level of analysis from that of the firm, and in the dynamic capabilities literature this is underpinned by a micro-economic perspective, to the level of the individual, the 'who' of strategizing. Teece (2007; 2009; 2012) introduces the idea of 'sensing', being the ability of an organization's management to perceive opportunities and threats in their environment and to retrospectively engage in sensemaking to understand them. This is with a view to taking action: mobilizing capabilities to reconfigure resources, tangible and intangible, to ensure the profitability and sustainability of the firm.

The perception of the environment is not clear, however. The outside observer might reach conclusions different to those explicated in this thesis. It is therefore argued that 'sensing' and 'sensemaking' are complicated processes requiring very clear 'thinking' unencumbered by complicated concerns about identity and other matters. If the sensing and sensemaking processes are not operating optimally, strategic issues will not be

perceived and understood correctly. It is therefore argued that the sensing process, while intuitively comprehensible, is not well theorized owing to the fact that it is theorized at the level of the firm and not the individual strategist. Organizations do not 'perceive' and make sense of things, but individuals do. In this respect, this research contributes to the Strategy-As-Practice perspective by explaining how the sensing process can be improved, firstly by locating it as a practice carried out by individuals and then through attention to all aspects of strategic discourse.

12.10.4 Lacanian Psychoanalysis

There have, to date, been no empirical studies of strategizing using Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Butler (2017) has used a mainly Zizekian approach to critique the Strategy-As-Practice perspective in strategy research, considering the approach tautological and representative of that elusive 'object' that can never be attained. While staying in a Lacanian 'key', I have approached researching strategy using psychoanalysis to explore lack, loss and desire in the discourse of strategy. From a psychoanalytic point of view, there is anything but an absence in the strategy discourse at Senatus. The speech of its members and the interview texts that they created are full of interesting, diverting and fascinating insights. Psychoanalysis creates from the past and present with an eye to change in the future. The unconscious, present in the talk at Senatus, drives behaviour but is epistemically valuable for securing the sustainability of the organization. To ignore and to continue to suppress what are valid concerns for its members is to abdicate the full engagement of sensing to create strategies for the future.

The use of psychoanalysis in the study of organizations has been extensive. In this regard, by using Lacanian theory with respect to strategizing, I have made a contribution to the strategy literature, but I have also made a contribution to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. Lacanian theory has been used in organization studies from a critical perspective. I have not shied away from a critical approach here in this thesis, but I wish to develop the practice of strategic management, rather than simply developing a critique of an existing field of knowledge: Existing studies using Lacanian theory in organization studies have tended to adopt a critical position on management practices. I wish to both acknowledge

the value of this work but also to move beyond it, building reflexive practices in management, based in this tradition.

12.11 Contribution to Management Practice

Regarding management practice, the contribution lies in two areas; firstly, that by examining strategic discourse in the way that the methodology pointed me to, I have started the process of developing a fuller form of speech and strategic discourse. Secondly, arising from the last completed learning window, I said that it was possible, from this point on, for the strategy at Senatus to be developed, beyond a minimal one. Three inter-linked ideas may be termed 'Fuller Speech', 'Developing Strategic Reflections', and 'Finding Strategy through Identity'. These are the basis of an organizational intervention for strategizing.

12.11.1 Fuller Speech

Honneth (2017) has said "a kind of second-order pathology seems to make institutional conditions appear as mere givens, as being 'reified' and thus immune to any efforts to change them" (p.3) and that they have become like 'things', immutable and unchanging. In Senatus' senior team, there is a simultaneous acceptance and dissatisfaction with 'how things are'. Part of the explanation for the absence of strategy at Senatus has arisen because the discourse of strategy at Senatus is partly unconscious. This is because of the unconsciousness of language itself. As Senatus' members describe the conditions and strategic issues facing them, a simultaneous story, hidden in the words, is created. What if this story was heard?

Psychoanalysis favours neither conscious speech nor 'unconscious speech', but rather seeks to ensure that both are in awareness. This is not so much an alternative story as the other side to the story. Senatus' strategic story is not a full story. The hermeneutic methodology has brought forward other elements that have not been heard, which do not appear to belong in the story, but which have been brought into the narrative. This is what Caputo (1987) calls restoring words to their original difficulty. It is not so that we understand them fully, but so that they can claim their place in the narrative and, yes,

make it more difficult to generate a clear narrative. For Senatus, a clear narrative would be for the team to identify as claims processors and to build a strategy around this. This is what the predominant discourse 'calls' for. But, Senatus *do not want to give up their desire*.

Restoring difficulty to the story as given by Senatus is to present a fuller story. Restoring difficulty makes it difficult for its members to abdicate their desire and follow the thrall and seduction of hegemonic norms. Some members already feel guilt for having given up on desire, so one must presume that this is not necessarily what the senior team wishes. Filling out the story involves admitting and encompassing previously disavowed ideas that are nonetheless important to the strategic development of the organization. Disavowed ideas are present in the absence of strategy.

The first part of the intervention for the manager or consultant in the situation of strategy absence is to assist the team tasked with strategy development to tell their story. In its telling, the manager or consultant should:

- Be attentive to dominant or privileged signifiers in the account of the strategic issues facing the firm and to note these.
- Note the signifiers that support or qualify these privileged signifiers, paying attention to metaphor, metonymy and poetic phrasing.
- Reflect on these, sift through them, identify contradictions, 'play' with the metaphoric combinations, paying particular attention to how these signifiers interact with the privileged signifiers.
- Present the plurality of meanings, contradictions and doubts to the team.
- Seek engagement and repeat the cycle until a fuller story emerges for the team to reflect on.

Having filled out that absence, with other discourse, it is now possible for the strategy team to reflect on the themes arising, engage with them and to begin to formulate a strategy.

12.11.2 Developing Strategic Reflections

I argued at the outset to the thesis that the application of tools and frameworks to produce strategies is less complicated than contemplating the absence of strategy. The intervention suggested is a different type of work with a team, more akin to 'process consulting' (Schein, 1987).

The 'sensing' and 'sensemaking' process of those tasked with developing strategy requires first being attentive to 'weak signals' (Ansoff, 1975) in the internal or external environments of the organization and second 'making sense' of these. Appropriate sensemaking is predicated on the ability to sense or perceive. This research has shown that 'sensing' as a process is under-theorized and needs to be located at the level of the individual. Moreover, however, sensing is only worthwhile as long as the ability to perceive strategic issues is in place. If one was to approach an intervention concerning strategy absence with an assumption that perception and thereby sensing was a straightforward and uncomplicated proposition, one would be mistaken. Doubtlessly, no two individuals and no two organizations are the same and the reasons for strategy absence in one would not be same as another, but the absence of strategy is more than mere 'management failure'. Moreover, the prescription for resolving this absence cannot revolve around cognitively effortful processing using conventional strategy frameworks and tools.

Therefore reflection, as a prelude to sensing and sensemaking has to take place. This is a process of learning: When strategic discourse has been 'filled out' the team needs to reflect on these themes and to compare them against their previous frames of reflection and reference. The suggestion here is that prior to sensing and sensemaking, one needs to understand how one perceives. The argument in this thesis has been that the perception of strategic issues is intimately associated with the signifiers in use in the discourse concerning strategy in the organization and that these signifiers have been condensed into *points de capiton* that both temporarily fix meaning, but also constrain and limit both meaning and understanding.

12.11.3 Finding Strategy through Identity

Identity and strategy are linked, but not only in the ways that have been shown through previous research. Understanding the confusion of the loss and disruption of identity, particularly professional identity is argued to be a key idea to be brought over from the research to professional practice. While provocative, it is argued to also be restorative and generative to ask in a strategy absence intervention the following:

- What profession did I train for?
- What learning did this involve?
- Why did I train for this profession?
- What does this profession mean in the environment today?
- What place does this profession have today?
- What have I learned about change and the profession?

These are the never-asked questions at Senatus. They are provocative questions because they stir up other questions that have not been surfaced but which are present in the speech of its members. They are restorative because they require a reflection on routines and practice forcing an examination of what the members believe to be of value and what is not considered to belong to their sense of professional identity. Finally, they are generative because they stimulate new ideas because they challenge the prevailing discourse. This type of identity questioning in strategy absence, I argue, is the development of a new capability and resource for a management team, an essential element in the creation of strategy.

This model of intervention is represented in the following:

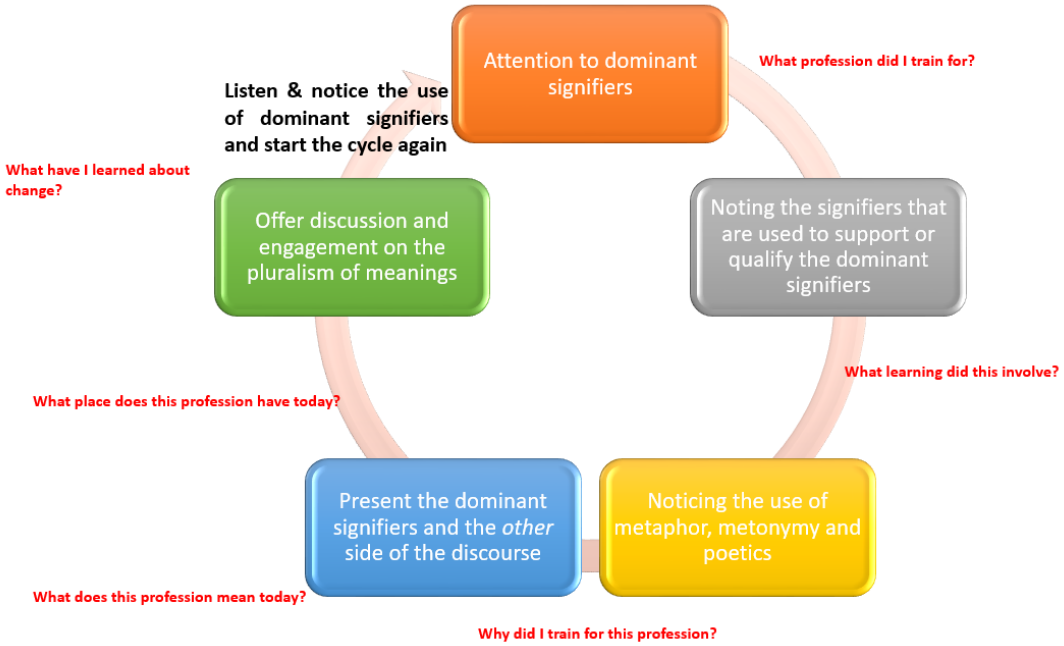

Figure 6. The Strategy Absence Intervention Model

12.12 The Close of the Story

In developing these original approaches to knowledge and management practice, I have particularly drawn on organization theory literature, suggesting ultimately that more reflexive forms of managing (McAuley et al., 2014) will lead to sustainable management practices and hence organizations. This reflexive form of organizing is psychoanalytic in its origin wherein the organization is seen as a 'holding environment' (McAuley et al., 2014) for its members affecting their 'dependence' (Stapley, 1993) and potential to be creative. Psychoanalysis as an idea, concept and theory was used considerably in this thesis. This was of necessity as the principal object of inquiry was the absence of something, and psychoanalysis has much to say about lack. It is also a method for investigating unconscious processes. Not all thought and behaviour in organizations is conscious or rational.

The investigation of the absence of strategy was an inquiry into textual traces; the other side of words spoken in interviews, the indeterminacy of meaning, albeit to a point. In developing a methodology, I relied upon philosophical hermeneutics, indeed the latterly

critical tradition of same, to guide a framework for the study of texts. Critical philosophical hermeneutic methodology falls within a subjectivist-interpretivist paradigm of sociology and management research (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Johnson & Duberley, 2000) pointing up the way in which I have come to understand the social world as a researcher in training. Having used this methodology to develop a method to work through the interpretation of the interview texts, I drew conclusions in the form of themes that had emerged from the material. These themes were helpful ways to understand the material, not 'real' or reified outcomes, and some were stronger than others. I then further analysed these themes using psychoanalytic theory to explore the implications of the research material for the subject organization.

The trajectory of Senatus has pulsed with periods of growth and periods of loss and contraction, neither of which have been guided by a formal, communicated strategy. It is the latter period of loss that has been the main focus of this project as this period was contemporaneous with the collection of the research material. The challenges that Senatus face are ones of adaptation, development and learning. Having lost so much, for Senatus, to learn is to lose again (Stapley, 1993). Learning is risky and can provoke immature defensive reactions to anxiety, but Senatus now needs to re-learn its purpose and its relationship to its clients.

Words: 78,255

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide

Interview Guide	
Question One	'Can you tell me something of your understanding about what's happening in our firm's environment?' Or, 'Can you tell me about what you believe are the strategic issues facing our organization?' Prompt & Explore (if required) 1. External environment: Clients, brokers, policyholders, regulator, industry bodies, professional associations, markets, services 2. Internal environment: Structure, skillsets, qualifications, quality, any cultural issues
Question Two	'What do you think that means for us?' Or, 'What do you believe are the implications of that for us?' Or, 'What kind of response do you believe we should have to address them?' Prompt & Explore (if required) 1. New markets, services 2. Staff, management development 3. Discontinuation of service lines 4. Exploration of non-aligned services 5. Customers 6. Methods of working 7. Geographical location 8. Professional associations 9. Alliancing

Appendix B

University Ethics Approval

Marc Sweeney

From: Bennehan, Claire <C.Bennehan@shu.ac.uk>
Sent: Monday 16 May 2016 16:19
To: Marc Sweeney
Cc: Crone, Michael
Subject: SBS Ethics Application Ref SBS-89

Please find below the feedback from your application to the SBS Research Ethics Committee on 4 May 2016

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEWER'S FEEDBACK FORM (SHUREC3)

Principal investigator : Marc Sweeney **Reference number: SBS-89**

Title of project: How can psychoanalysis contribute towards our understanding of strategizing?

he Committee agreed the application should be (tick one box):

☐ Approved

We confirm that we do not have a conflict of interest with the project application.

Signature : John Nicholson Date : 16/5/16

On behalf of SBS Research Ethics Committee

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