THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

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Abstract

In this study, former Reuters and BBC foreign correspondent Mark Brayne considers the personal experiences of journalists from the perspective of emotion, creativity and meaning. Now trained as a transpersonal psychotherapist, Brayne draws on his own 20-year correspondent career in Eastern Europe and China during the Cold War to seek an understanding of the link between performance and the legacy of childhood; what motivates the foreign correspondent; how correspondents experience the Self in their work; and the spiritual dimension to the journalistic craft.

Using a mainly Heuristic research approach (Moustakas, 1990), Brayne interviewed nine serving foreign correspondents in depth. He concludes that while journalists persuade themselves for most of the time – and teach others who follow on behind – that they are in the business of reporting facts soberly, dispassionately and fairly, most are in fact motivated by a complex cocktail of personal ambition, damaged self-esteem, childhood experiences, addictive patterns – but also by passion and idealism. And while most acknowledge an only limited awareness of the spiritual, almost all report experiences of inspiration beyond the rational when covering a major story or up against a deadline.

Limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are also explored.
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Acknowledgements

The following pages encapsulate a journey that began nearly 50 years ago on a Norfolk farm, taking me to all corners of the world, and deep into my own psyche. The conclusions are my own. But there are many who have accompanied me on the way. I acknowledge with gratitude the patience and faith of my BBC colleagues and bosses, who through the recent years of training and struggle – sometimes through gritted teeth – gave me space. In particular I wish to thank my brother Hugh and my mother Audrey – and Agnes as my muse. At the CCPE, this project would not have flown without the inspiration and dogged support of Angela, Sheila, Ian, Val and Kathy. Perhaps most important among my journalistic mentors, John has believed in me. Especially, however, I wish to dedicate this work to Kurt Schork of Reuters, died Sierra Leone, May 2000.

I confirm that this is my own work.
Introduction

It is the job of journalists to write about the events and the people they observe. On occasion, journalists write also about their profession. However, what journalists very rarely write or talk about is the impact on themselves, as vulnerable individuals, of the work they do. This study takes a tentative step into that void. It aims to use the author’s own experience of journalism, and of psychotherapy, as an instrument to help illuminate the largely unseen and unarticulated internal world of the foreign correspondent.

Western journalists are trained to stand back from the events they observe. The BBC’s Producer Guidelines for example stress objectivity and balance.

*Reporting should be dispassionate, wide-ranging and well-informed... A reporter may express a professional, journalistic judgement, but not a personal opinion... Audiences should not be able to gauge from BBC programmes the personal views of presenters and reporters. (BBC Producer Guidelines, 1996, p.16)*

At the same time, the wider emotional culture within English-language journalism is one of what might be termed macho self-sufficiency. Ricchiardi (1999) notes that reporters who have covered gruesome stories fear that admitting to any mental distress may be viewed as weakness. Knightley argues that the correspondent’s “sprint along the near edge of death” and his (or her) resultant emotional engagement with danger and excitement stands in the way of the truthful reporting of war (Knightley, 1999, p.69). Heifetz observes that journalists can be good at making allies and knowing people. But they are often isolated and “out on a limb,” experiencing what Heifetz terms an almost gratifying loneliness that confirms they must be doing something really important. (Heifetz, 1997, p.63).

The contrast with other fields of human endeavour is stark. In the training and the work of musicians, writers and artists for example, social convention has long allowed an open discussion of the personal and emotional. In modern management training
too, “emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1996) has become something of a mantra. (A recent article in the Harvard Business Review describing the link between emotional literacy and good leadership is said to have generated the greatest level of reader interest of any recent contribution. (Goleman, 1998, 1999).)

However, very little of this approach has, as yet, filtered through into either the education or the day-to-day professional awareness of most Western journalists. As Fields observes regarding post-traumatic stress,

...many journalists believe they are not supposed to be among the traumatised. Despite growing evidence and acceptance in the industry that traumatic stress is affecting journalists, the industry clings to images of valiant reporters unscathed by endless horrors and catastrophes. (Fields, 1999, p.16).

Johnson points out in the same issue of The Quill (Johnson, 1999, p.16) that, in the aftermath of violence, victims and rescue workers are likely to receive counselling. Journalists, he notes, are not – and are therefore less likely to deal with their own trauma. Even FBI agents, it seems, are more likely than journalists to be offered counselling after stressful experiences. (Neuffer, in Nieman Reports, 1999, p.24).

However, taboos in journalism are now being challenged. The University of Washington in Seattle (Ricchiardi, 1999) has established a Journalism and Trauma programme to investigate the impact on individuals of covering wars and disasters. There is a growing recognition that reporters need specialised training if they are to work in hostile environments (Ricchiardi, 1999; Walsh, 1999). Debate has been joined in the United Kingdom about the place of emotion in news reporting, triggered for example by the work of BBC correspondent Fergal Keane (1996) and arguments in favour of a “journalism of attachment” from former BBC war correspondent Martin Bell (Europe Media Forum, 1997).

It is against that background that this research sets out to investigate how correspondents experience the coming together in their lives of the personal and the
professional — and, with that, the extent to which other journalists invest, as I have done, the events they cover with personal significance.

I wished also to investigate the actual process of writing, and whether other journalists share my experience of entering at times into what Stevens calls an almost trance-like state in our creative work, in which we find ourselves serving as a kind of channel in touch with a deeper, indeed archetypal, awareness of what is unfolding (Stevens, 1996, p.286).

The initial intent had been to focus on the experience of Meaning (cf. Frankl, 1984) for foreign correspondents reporting the global events of the pre-Millennial decade. However, as I immersed myself more deeply in the issue — and guided by Moustakas’ warnings against subthemes that contain inherent assumptions (Moustakas, 1990, p.42) — I realised that I must not assume for other journalists any particular experience of meaning, nor indeed limit the stories covered to those of any particular period. Taking previous Heuristic research questions quoted by Moustakas as a model, I decided to take a more open approach, and ask quite simply:

“What is the personal experience of being a foreign correspondent?”

By highlighting the interest in personal experience, I wished to exclude too strong a focus on our journalistic craft as such. And by choosing foreign correspondents rather than reporters of domestic affairs, I was seeking subjects with careers comparable with my own. I chose therefore a qualitative and primarily Heuristic research methodology, allowing, as outlined by Braud & Anderson (1998) and Moustakas (1990), for the explicit use of my own experience as both research tool and filter for interpreting the data.

Central to my approach was the assumption that journalism is an important field of human activity. Carey argues, for example, that “the advent of mass communications represents the greatest change in human consciousness that has taken place in
recorded history” (Carey, 1989, p.xxxiv). If mass media are important to humanity’s understanding of itself, it could be argued that self-awareness on the part of the reporter is an essential component of a journalism that is able to reflect an authentic picture of human experience. In the language of psychotherapy, “projections change the world into the replica of one’s own unknown face” (Jung, 1983, p.92). Or in the simpler words of one prominent correspondent and former hostage in Lebanon Terry Anderson, to be a better journalist one needs to be a better person (Anderson, 1999).

It is my thesis that a journalist who is not self-aware risks misrepresenting what he or she observes. Re-reading my own reports from the past decade, notably my naively rose-tinted reporting of the Romanian revolution in December/January 1989/90 (Appendix 2; Brayne, 1995), I can for example see how a lack of consciousness around my own personal emotion at the time, and my investment in particular political outcomes, to some extent clouded my ability to understand what was really happening. Coverage of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations of 1989 in China offers a further example, when Western journalists otherwise committed to professional objectivity and impartiality found themselves swept up by the euphoria of the moment, dividing the players implicitly, if not in as many words in their reporting, into the Good (the students) and the Bad (the Communist authorities). (Gittings, 1994; Brayne, 1994).

But encouraging journalists, with their reluctance to delve too deeply into their own personalities, towards a greater self-awareness is not easy. This is reflected in a deep-seated scepticism among most in the profession towards psychotherapy and counselling. (Walsh, 1999). After nearly 30 years working in international news, and now with an additional formal training in transpersonal psychotherapy, I bring perhaps an unusual perspective to the analysis of journalism. I also bring what is even to me at times an uncomfortable intensity of personal engagement, as reflected in my own interview conducted as part of this project (Appendix 7).
With this research, I therefore hope for three things:

0 to help legitimise within the journalistic community a more open and honest discussion of the role of personality and emotion;

1 to make a modest contribution to a deeper appreciation of journalism among psychotherapists;

2 and in a more private sense to integrate more closely my own journalistic and psychotherapeutic personalities, both for myself and in the eyes of my colleagues in both professions.
Review of Literature

Introduction

Very little has been written yet about journalism from a psychotherapeutic, let alone a transpersonal, perspective. The following review looks therefore at three main categories of literature on the issue:

0 discussions in professional journalistic publications and the English-language press;

1 studies in psychological and psychotherapeutic periodicals;

2 and (briefly) published books, both by journalists themselves and by others, including psychotherapists, about issues of meaning and experience touched on in this survey.

The Old Paradigm

As outlined above, the archetypal journalist in the West has traditionally been expected to rise above his or her feelings.

Philip Jones Griffiths, described as one of the best photographers of the Vietnam war, noted that while it is impossible to avoid feelings of involvement, “you have to steel yourself and do your job, take your photographs. It’s what you’re there for.” Clare Hollingworth of the Daily Telegraph, one of the 20th century’s best known war reporters in the English language, records how, as a journalist in the Second World War, she was attracted by the tactical side of the fighting, adding “my emotions weren’t really involved.” Julian Pettifer of the BBC, similarly quoted in Knightly (1982, p.374), comments that “there is simply no point in arguing whether [a] war is right or wrong. You’re always left with the fact that it’s there and it’s your job to cover it.”
There can arise among journalists almost a cauterisation of emotion – caricatured in Edward Behr’s all-too-plausible story of the “unmistakably British TV reporter” in the Congo of 1960...

...leading his cameraman and sundry technicians like a platoon commander though hostile territory. At intervals he paused and shouted, in a stentorian but genteel BBC voice, ‘Anyone here been raped and speaks English?’ (Behr, 1981, p.136)

In the last decade of the 20th century, the image of the foreign correspondent became increasingly associated with war and disaster – to the extent that a recent cover story in the Radio Times (August 1999) depicted several of the BBC’s most prominent correspondents artfully arranged, central figure in a flak jacket, around one of the Corporation’s armoured reporters’ Land Rovers.

Although this is perhaps beginning to change, the existing paradigm does not yet encourage discussion of the emotional dimension of the journalist’s craft – let alone the spiritual. As Fields notes in a recent edition of the American journal on writing The Quill,

Perhaps journalism’s violent history and iron-willed stereotypes pervade the modern perception that good journalists are impervious to the emotional stresses of their profession.

Journalists, he quotes an American journalism professor as saying, have to keep the wolves at the door. “Because if we let them in, who knows what we’ll see.” (Fields, 1999, p.16.)

In one of a number of mainstream American training manuals about the journalist’s craft, McIntyre promises to challenge the journalism student “with solid, fundamental newswriting techniques, and crucial information about the world outside that student’s immediate environment”. But he neglects at any point, in a work that ranges from investigative reporting to military installations, to mention the issues of emotion or feeling. (McIntyre, 1991).
Fuller, in *News Values* (1996), acknowledges that journalists may develop strong feelings about subjects in which they become immersed. But beyond stressing the need for self-restraint, for intellectual honesty and for modesty of judgement about facts, he does not further investigate the role of the reporter’s personal response.

In a 210-page book explicitly dedicated to international news and foreign correspondents, Hess (1996) notes in the very last pages how some correspondents experience marital or family difficulties, and can find homecoming difficult after long years in the field. But again, the book leans towards feeding the cliché about the correspondent’s “romantic” and “glamorous” lifestyle (p.113), and does not delve deeper.

A more recent publication (Goff, 1999) devoted solely to coverage of the 1999 Kosovo conflict – possibly one of the most emotive stories for European journalists in recent years – elicited contributions from several leading foreign correspondents. Many were willing to venture strong views on the rights and wrongs of what had happened, but few spoke of their deeper personal feelings. Virginie Jouan and Mogens Schmidt from the Netherlands (p.261) note how the Kosovo war emphasised the need for fairness, a conscientious separation of news and comment, and a “dispassionate and therefore professional approach”. Romain Gubert of the French weekly *Le Point* (p.446) records how this conflict would remain “a very moving personal and professional experience.” Bill Neely of ITN (p.459) writes that being a supposedly experienced journalist does not protect from the shock of man’s inhumanity to man, nor from being caught up in the emotions of the moment. They do not elaborate, but go on, as journalists generally do, to observations about the story itself.

**The Shifting Debate**

There are those in the past decade who have at least begun to ask questions about the nature of news. Martyn Lewis (1993) – much derided (and misquoted) at the time by more traditionally-minded journalistic colleagues – noted how positive or “good” news
is systematically ignored by the journalistic profession. He urged that it was time for all in television news journalism...

... to change our thinking and judgements; [...] to remove the distortions in the mirror that we hold up to the world.

But the question of the reporter’s personal experience generally remains unaddressed. How have they coped emotionally? And what impact has that had on their professional output? Fergal Keane especially has been one of the first British journalists to “come out”, as it were, as a correspondent with normal human emotions, writing powerfully (1996) of the birth of his son in Hong Kong and how this put him in touch with his own childhood experiences with an alcoholic father. Keane has continued to use his own feeling response as a tool to convey the meaning of what he reports to his readers and viewers – and the response from much of the journalistic fraternity has been one of passionate denunciation for his supposed weepiness and tear-jerking (e.g. Vestey, 1999; Sexton, 2000).

Whatever some colleagues may think of this approach, Keane and other correspondents who on occasion allow their emotions to show have touched a public chord. Keane notes (1996, p.9) how, within minutes of the broadcast of his original Letter to Daniel ending, the From Our Own Correspondent office at the BBC was inundated with calls requesting transcripts and copies of the tape. It is a dynamic which I found constantly affirmed in my own work as foreign correspondent. The pieces of reporting which had the greatest impact on my listeners were those into which I injected an explicit element of personal experience – most notably with a report from Beijing in 1987 which used the birth of my daughter in Hong Kong and our subsequent ferrying into China of more than 800 disposable nappies (for these were unknown in China at the time) as a peg on which to hang a discussion of how the Chinese bring up their own children.
The reference to personal experience does not need to appear self-indulgent. Even critics of Keane’s approach were warm in their praise for a recent article by war reporter Maggie O’Kane (2000), who used a frightening encounter with a male stranger in the woods of Hampstead Heath while walking her new baby to convey how she had now truly understood, for the first time, the “pure, terrible fear of being unable to protect your child” of women whose suffering she had reported from Kosovo.

The former BBC war correspondent and now British MP Martin Bell – while no advocate of emotional indulgence – has raised the cry for a “journalism of attachment”, arguing that

You cannot be neutral between good and evil... You do not report the plight of refugees or what is now euphemistically called an “ethnic cleansing” or the killing of innocent people in the same tone and terms that you would a royal tour of a flower show or an exchange of parliamentary insults. You reflect the feelings as well as the facts. [...] It is not enough to be a detached outsider practising what I call “bystander’s journalism”. We share a responsibility for [the world]. (Bell, 1997, p.13).

Bell’s arguments, as with Martyn Lewis, have unleashed much debate. John Humphrys of the BBC’s Today programme, for example, responded with a sharp criticism of what he termed emotive reporting, and a call for the “old, cool, dispassionate style, now so out of fashion”.

The only imperative [in reporting news] is that we get the facts right. Nothing else matters as much. (Humphrys, 1999).

A debate has also begun in the United Kingdom and in the United States about what, also controversially, is becoming known as “peace journalism.” Jake Lynch of Sky News (1999) has, for example, powerfully questioned a journalism which believes in the exclusive sacredness of facts.

Reporters are supposed to report the facts, but experience at the newsface shows us that facts, far from being accomplished independently before we arrive to cover them, are increasingly created for us to cover, serving an agenda far removed from
Venturing a short distance into what might be termed the spiritual dimension of journalism, towards a more holistic and integrative approach, Lynch further questions dualistic Western understandings of news which divide the world into Left and Right, Black and White, Heaven and Hell, Mind and Matter, the inner and outer life — an appeal to what he calls “two-ishness” which mainstream Western consciousness takes for granted as common sense (Lynch, 1999, p.11).

The spiritual dimension remains a taboo in most mainstream journalistic discourse, although Joan Konner, until recently Dean of the Columbia School of Journalism in New York, has written approvingly (Konner, 1998) of a retreat held in the US in 1998 bringing together senior media representatives to consider journalism and its practice from a spiritual perspective. The author of Emotional Intelligence Daniel Goleman, himself a journalist, has challenged the modern world’s continued, but in his view now evolutionarily inappropriate, fascination with “limbic news” — news of threats and tragedies which appeals to the ancient part of the savage brain that rules emotional life, and soothes it with “relief in the fact that it happened there, not here.” What is needed, suggests Goleman, is a contemplative journalism; an investigative mode, free of prior commitment to any point of view, which would tease out the “pattern that connects” events to a larger web of meaning. (Goleman, 1998, p.4).

If that summarises some of the current intellectual discourse around English-language journalism, there is some evidence, as noted in the Introduction, of a growing interest in the issue of the journalist’s personal experience. The BBC – prompted by the death of a number of journalists in service in the mid-1990s in the Balkans and South Asia – now has strict training requirements for staff entering into what are termed hostile environments, such as Kosovo, Sierra Leone or Chechnya. That training includes an introduction to the psychology of post-traumatic stress. The University of Washington in Seattle has established, as noted above, a programme looking into how individuals
experience war and disaster. The School of Journalism at Michigan State in the United States has what it calls a Victims and Media course to train students, instructors and working journalists to question notions “that feeling too much could get in the way of being objective.” (Ricchiardi, 1999). The magazine of the National Union of Journalists in the United Kingdom has also now come out vigorously in support of such training. (Iredale, 1999).

The Journalist’s Own View

Let us turn now to considering how journalists themselves process their personal experiences outside the day-to-day business of reporting.

Foreign correspondents are prolific writers of books. But only very rarely are they ready to delve deeply into their own emotional and spiritual response to what they experience on the road. Books by foreign correspondents might be broken down into three main categories – the outwardly factual and analytical; the personal; and the fictional. I will consider a very small selection as illustration.

The Outwardly Factual

Edgar Snow, a then young correspondent working for several American newspapers, is perhaps the archetypal reporter-become-historian. With his Red Star Over China in 1937, Snow alerted the Western world to Mao Tse-Tung’s Communists preparing for peasant revolution from their base at Yan’an. In long conversations through the night, Snow took down Mao’s story. He acknowledged that he was presenting this account from Mao’s partisan point of view, but stressed that his role was mainly that of scribe, “simply [writing] down what I was told by the extraordinary young men and women with whom it was my privilege to live at the age of thirty and from whom I learned (or had the chance to learn) a great deal.” (Snow, 1972, p.20-21).

In fact, it has been argued that Snow was far from dispassionate – and that his judgement of Chinese communism was, of course, profoundly influenced by his own
personality. Simon Leys (1974), in his damning critique of Mao and the Cultural Revolution, holds a naïve Snow partly responsible for the West’s failure for so many years to understand deeper truths about Mao.

An interesting pair of contrasts of journalists covering the same story involves one BBC correspondent present and one past. John Simpson’s accounts through the 1990s of the great global events of the past decade are powerful pieces of reportage and analysis, allowing for an element of personal response to what he has observed. In Despatches from the Barricades, covering the events of 1989 from Tiananmen Square to the demise of the Ceausescu regime in Romania, Simpson quite frequently notes his own emotional state – how he felt guilty (p.107) over ordering his camera team off Tiananmen Square as the People’s Liberation Army was closing in; how he was moved to flash a victory sign to Chinese student protesters as they prepared to face down the army; how angry he felt at the wanton destruction of the University Library in Bucharest (p.222). In The House of War, covering the Gulf conflict in 1991, Simpson inserts one brief psychological insight, noting (p.378) how governments (in this case, Kuwait’s), like individuals, “are liable to become what they fear.” However, there is little explicit discussion of how Simpson is responding emotionally to the stories he covers, or in particular how that might affect his analysis.

Misha Glenny, in contrast, has always been a more overtly emotive journalist. In 1992, he predicted in a piece for From Our Own Correspondent how Bosnia was heading towards terrible bloodshed. (Glenny, 1992). He was criticised within the BBC for being overly dramatic – but proved if anything to have understated his case. Glenny’s emotional understanding of the story comes across in his books about the Balkans, for example The Fall of Yugoslavia. He talks about his own “unswerving cowardice” (p.9, and again p.93), and explicitly acknowledges (p.170) the possibility of evil at work in the Balkans.
The Personal:

There appear to be very few books by journalists which go deeper into the writer’s emotion. But one such is *My War Gone By, I Miss it So* by another prominent British newspaper reporter on the Balkans, Antony Loyd. Loyd is brutally — and unusually — honest with the reader about his own experience of drug addiction, and how he handles his fear as he travels the war zones of Bosnia and Chechnya. An encounter with a pair of Dutch and Irish mercenaries prompts him to observe, speaking as much of himself as of those of whom he writes, that

> There was little real difference between them and anyone else who goes to war voluntarily. [...] Men and women who venture to someone else’s war through choice do so in a variety of guises. UN general, BBC correspondent, aid worker, mercenary: in the final analysis they all want the same thing, a hit off the action, a walk on the dark side. It’s just a question of how slick a cover you give yourself, and how far you want to go. (Loyd, 1999, p.54).

It is by no means a recipe for all journalism. But it could be argued that by being open about their own feeling responses, correspondents such as Glenny and Loyd — as indeed Keane — are able to convey to their readers and listeners an emotionally more authentic and insightful picture of the *lived* experiences about which they report.

The Novel:

For the sake of completeness, it should be recorded that the final genre of writing by foreign correspondents is the novel. But these tend, it seems, to be largely thrillers of greater or lesser quality aimed at airport bookstores, rather than pieces of profound literature. And however tempting, it is not my purpose here to consider the uses of fiction for journalists intent on processing their personal experience.

Let it be noted only briefly, therefore, how for example Tim Sebastian, former BBC correspondent in Warsaw and Moscow, has turned himself into a spy writer of some repute (Sebastian, 1988, 1989). Nik Gowing, at one time similarly correspondent in Poland, has turned his experiences into a rather more profound but still commercially
focused work of fiction in *The Wire.* (Gowing, 1989). And more famously, of course, Frederick Forsyth, like myself a former Reuter correspondent in East Berlin, proved himself a far better thriller writer than reporter with his series of novels beginning with *The Day of the Jackal.*

**Journalism and Psychotherapy**

Chuck Sudetic of The New York Times was one of America’s most respected reporters on the Bosnian war. But, as Hendrickson writes, with his middle class, Catholic American upbringing, Sudetic was unable to cry. He would return to his Belgrade flat from his reporting assignments on the killing in Bosnia, and could walk right past his wife and the big “Welcome Home Daddy” banner on the front door.

> Within a day or so he could smash dishes and slam doors and stare like a zombie at movie rentals before it was time to go back out on the road and into the war. But he couldn’t cry in these reprieves. Cry over all the guilt and stress and helplessness and frustration inside him. (Hendrickson, 1998).

Sudetic, as quoted by Hendrickson, describes Bosnia as a genocidal madness which was to him both addiction and mania, simplifying his life and giving it meaning.

Julian Borger is another correspondent profoundly affected by conflict - in Bosnia and before that in South Africa. The way he looks at it, Hendrickson quotes Borger as saying,

> is you sort of gather this human obligation. You accumulate it. You take this human obligation on your shoulders and do nothing with it except to write out your story. It may be a wonderful story but that doesn’t account for the personal portion of the cumulative obligation on your shoulders. You’re left with all this accumulated guilt. It’s like a crust you carry around. (OnLine text).

One early instance of open discussion of journalists’ personal experience of war was in 1994, when a group of foreign correspondents, mainly Americans and Europeans, reflected at a round table in Nairobi how their feelings of life had changed after
successive African assignments (Rosenblatt, 1994). Even before the Rwandan genocide, many had witnessed appalling slaughter, in Cambodia as well as Africa.

Rosenblatt observes three stages of emotional response. In the first, reporters respond to atrocities with shock and revulsion and perhaps a twinge of guilty excitement that they are seeing something others will never see – persuading themselves that the mere telling of the war story is valuable. In the second stage, the atrocities become familiar and repetitive. Embittered and spiteful, reporters get bogged down in the routineness of the suffering – and neither care nor believe that their reports will make any difference. In the third stage, argues Rosenblatt, journalists can move into despair and almost beyond redemption, flinging themselves into life-threatening situations; a stage which he describes as paradoxically sadder and wiser, worse but yet strangely better. (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Rosenblatt’s is a journalistic, philosophical approach, but in the literature of psychology or psychotherapy there is very little analysis of journalistic experience. An extensive database search found only a handful of articles, the one most close to the subject of this inquiry being an exploration of journalistic personality characteristics published in the United States in 1997 and based on a similarly small sample to that investigated for this paper. In a Grounded Theory study, Anne Overton Marshall conducted semi-structured interviews with eight journalists working for a variety of print and broadcast media outlets around San Francisco. She identified her subjects’ core personality as that of the outsider, naming other categories as: wanting to know; concerns about power and control; wanting to be seen (a key conclusion to emerge also from this study); and maintaining self-equilibrium. All her subjects showed evidence of having been marginalised in a familial, social or cultural sense – a conclusion that would apply to some of the co-researchers in this project, including myself. Interestingly, Marshall suggests as her concluding hypothesis that “journalism provided a safe environment in which journalists could develop in terms of relations
with other people while engaging in anticipatory socialisation preparatory to entering the mainstream.” (Marshall, 1995.) She was evidently not particularly impressed by the emotional maturity of those she interviewed.

A further explicitly psychiatric study of journalists was published 10 years earlier in Israel. (Yehoshua, 1985). This considered the relationship between anxiety and the ego of journalists, and concluded that there was an ideological contract between media and the public in which both colluded in a manipulation of reality.

My own survey, and indeed my own experience of journalism, confirms the physiologically addictive nature of our craft. This was underlined in a study of suicide and journalism in the United States (Pratte, 1992) which noted how the adrenaline flows generated when journalists are on deadline or in the grip of a big story work like an drug injection. A later article in the same journal, Editor & Publisher, confirms the physical effect of stress, noting that a test of 200 or so journalists showed that more than half had signs of what was termed repetitive stress syndrome, a condition in which medical stress has repeatedly narrowed a person’s blood vessels to below 30% of their original size, where they lose their ability to open back up. More than half of this group were on their way in the article’s words to experience emotional problems, mood swings, memory loss, changes in sleep patterns, and possibly even early death through stroke or heart attack. (Fitzgerald, 1995).

Kalter notes similarly how, with what is described as their hard-knock life of intense competition, long hours, deadline pressure, physical danger and raging ambition, journalists may be especially susceptible to psychological burnout, and he asks whether they have a strategy for coping.

Unfortunately, many journalists still won’t admit they’re burning out on the job [...]. The culture of bravado that fans the flames also discourages them from slowing down or seeking counselling. They must be seen as warhorses, impervious to trauma, fatigue and fear, leaping to answer the call. (Kalter, 1999, OnLine text).
A Canadian survey now in preparation (Feinstein, 2000), although psychiatric rather than psychotherapeutic in focus, will take what psychiatrist Anthony Feinstein terms war correspondents as its subject (and therefore be rather narrower than this survey.) But with plans to question up to 200 journalists and producers working in foreign news, this promises to generate a larger body of data on post-traumatic stress than any academic research project to date.

In terms of purely psychotherapeutic writing, it is worth recording three further areas of discourse: those of creative inspiration; the question whether there can be an objective truth; and the spiritual dimension of the human condition. Given that these are large topics, I shall allude only briefly to some of the published thinking relevant to the findings of this survey.

**The Muse and Performance**

The role of inspiration and the muse has been much described in mainstream literature as well as academic research. Writers, politicians, scientists and public figures through the centuries have recorded how their lives were influenced by the “prophetic voice”, the intervention of a “Higher Power”, at its most simple by the extraordinary coincidence. (Inglis, 1987). Mozart noted how his best musical ideas would flow when he was on his own, “Whence and how they come, I know not; nor can I force them.”

*A Course in Miracles* (1975), an extraordinary work of spiritual revelation, was taken down in inner dictation over a period of seven years by Helen Shucman, a professor of medical psychology in New York. In *Anna Karenina*, Leo Tolstoy describes Levin’s almost mystical experience of loss of self in the mowing of hay, where the less he thought about what he was doing, the better his work would go (Tolstoy, p.273). Athletes call this state of heightened awareness and attunement being “in the zone”. In psychotherapy, as indeed in Daoist teachings (Kapra, 1983, p.128), it has been called “flow”, (Ciskszentmihalyi, 2000) — a concept I have found useful in this research to
describe the journalistic experience of reporting a major story. Abraham Maslow (1968) describes such experiences of heightened awareness as “peak moments”.

The role of creative and emotional inspiration has been much researched in relation to artists, writers and musicians, for example by Lund and Kranz (1994). They registered how a musician’s emotional state depends on the performance. If it goes well, there will be a sense of exhilaration and excitement which can last days or even weeks. But after that period, and definitely if a performance is felt to have gone less well, a period of depletion and melancholy is often described.

Journalists also perform. However, psychology and psychotherapy journals in the English language appear not to have formally researched the issue of journalistic creativity at all. The American Journalism Review has given the question an anecdotal treatment based on a small unspecified number of individual interviews. Stepp draws parallels between the journalist’s experience and that of creative writers, in a way that finds echoes in many of the statements of correspondents interviewed for the current project.

Whatever they call it, writers recognise magic when it jolts them. The moment can be short and precise, an idea flashing into their heads as they stand in the shower, cruise along the freeway or flip through a notebook. Or it can last longer, a magical transportation into a creative zone where words and ideas pour smoothly into the patterns of literature, a writing frenzy that sets in unannounced and flees without warning in an exasperating poof. (Stepp, 1998, OnLine text.)

**Truth and the Storyteller**

The role of the journalist as story-teller in a transpersonal sense is also one that has to date received scant academic attention. Knightly (1975) subtitiles his still seminal book *The First Casualty* about foreign reporting with the words “The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth Maker”. But with his use of the word myth, he means falsehood, rather than an archetypal or psychological truth in any Jungian sense (Jung, 1978).
Dunwoody (1999), in her survey of the relationship between new science and journalism, notes that

...in a global culture that relies heavily on storytelling as an arbiter of what is important and what is not, the mass media reign as our principal storytellers.

However, her research does not delve into the personal role of the writer. Goodwin (1996) writes about what she terms ‘worldmaking’, noting that “the world consists of the stories that we tell about it”. But in her investigation of relationships between narrative arts and healing, she excludes journalists from the circle (six in number) of ‘narrative practitioners’ interviewed, consisting of a psychotherapist, teacher, writer, actor, story-teller and oral historian.

Goodwin does nonetheless raise a question also central to journalism, namely whether there is a Truth “out there”, in the style of the X-Files, waiting to be uncovered. “There is no such thing,” writes Goodwin, “as a single ‘true’ description, theory, belief, model or cause. Each of these can as easily be described as ‘the nearest amenable illuminating lie.”

Most journalists are still trained to believe – and on the evidence of this survey continue in large measure to hold – that their task is to uncover this elusive Truth with a capital T. The post-modern argument that truth is a social, perhaps even a personal, construct is as yet little discussed within the journalistic fraternity. And yet these ideas have been in the public domain at least since the late 1960s.

Although he did not focus specifically on the media, Foucault (1977) as one of the foremost philosophers of this new paradigm drew conclusions from Europe’s political turbulence in 1968 about the changing role of the intellectual. Where once that intellectual “spoke the truth to those who had yet to see it, in the name of those who were forbidden to speak the truth,” serving as “conscious, consciousness and eloquence,” the intellectual was now seen in Foucault’s view to be an agent for a
“system of power which blocks, prohibits, and invalidates” discourse and knowledge. (Foucault, 1977, p.207).

Foucault also questions the role of the author (one might substitute here the term correspondent), of whom it used to be thought that he “is so different from all other men, and so transcendent with regard to all languages that, as soon as he speaks, meaning begins to proliferate.” In fact, suggests Foucault, the author is merely “a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses.” Foucault challenges head-on the not infrequently grandiose self-image of the journalist as purveyor of objective truth and insight.

The lesson of the post-modern argument, for psychotherapists as well as journalists, is one of humility. As Bader points out for practitioners of Transactional Analysis,

_We used to fool ourselves into thinking that our analytical neutrality and training gave us a clear lens through which to view the patient’s psychology; now we’re being forced to face the epistemological fact that our lens is distorted by our psyches and our theories._ (Bader, 1997).

For psychotherapists training in the late 20th century and early 21st, this is now core teaching. But if one were to substitute “story” or “political development” for “patient’s psychology” in the above excerpt, and present it to most journalists, most would probably still bridle at the implicit accusation of distortion.

**The Spiritual Dimension**

Among the themes that have exercised me in the years since I ceased being an active foreign correspondent has been what might be termed the spiritual dimension to our craft – the experience of good and evil and the search for transcendent meaning. Again, I have been able to find very little writing either by journalists or about them which embraces these issues. Most working journalists, on much anecdotal evidence as well as that emerging from this research, appear to be relative cynics where matters of faith or spirituality are concerned. And yet they exercise enormous responsibility for
the spiritual well-being of the planet. Keane (1999), Gutman (Hendrickson, 1998) and Glenny (1992A, 1992B), openly acknowledge the experience of evil. But they also recognise, as I found in my own career, how hard it is to convey this appropriately to one’s listeners or readers.

This brief survey of published thinking around journalism and the personal raises a number of issues. There is what might be termed the egotistical and selfish approach to journalism that leads to blindness through presumed but unattainable neutrality; or to the inclusion in reporting of inappropriate feelings and judgements. Alternatively, there is what I would argue is the more professional approach, using awareness of feeling to craft a reporting style that is appropriate both to the circumstance and the audience.

The question is also raised, where is the expression, or acknowledgement, of the spiritual in the reporting we generate and consume? And where is an awareness among journalists of the human will to meaning – described by Frankl (1984, p.121) as the primary motivational force in man? As Thomas Moore puts it in *Care of the Soul*,

*The stuff of the world is there to be made into images that become for us tabernacles of spirituality and containers of mystery.* (Moore, 1992, p.301)

It is my hope that this research might encourage journalist readers to an awareness of complexity in their craft that has become, as we have seen above, commonplace among writers and artists, as of course among psychotherapists.
Methodology

Principles

The underlying approach for this project has been Heuristic, as defined by Clark Moustakas to describe qualitative research based on “self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery” (Moustakas, 1990, p.11). I had in a sense been living this question, “What is the personal experience of being a foreign correspondent?” for many years before embarking on a path of conscious personal development. The Heuristic approach has allowed me both to categorise and make sense of this experience for myself, but also to compare and contrast it with the experiences of other, mainly broadcast, journalists.

In contrast to quantitative approaches to research, and also to most phenomenological forms of qualitative inquiry, as for example in Grounded Theory, my own presuppositions and biases as inquirer were not bracketed out. On the contrary. As Moustakas (1994) describes it:

The self of the researcher is present throughout the process, and while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge (p.17).

One of the main reasons for this choice of principal approach lay in the echoes I have experienced between Heuristics and the way I came to understand my own practice of journalism – in which the self of the reporter/researcher becomes as it were a sounding board, a channel or medium, for an intuitive understanding and appreciation of meaning in the stories being gathered and related. The Heuristic approach furthermore allows – and even, within bounds, encourages – the use of the pronoun “I” (Rose, 1998, p.106).

As Moustakas (1990) puts it:
In the Heuristic process, I am creating a story that portrays the qualities, meanings and essences of universally unique experiences. Through an unwavering and steady inward gaze and inner freedom to explore and accept what is, I am reaching into deeper and deeper regions of a human problem or experience and coming to know and understand its underlying dynamics and constituents more and more fully. The initial “data” is within me. (p.13).

Central to the Heuristic approach is the assumption that the researcher has had a “direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated” and that he/she is willing to demonstrate a “passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated or answered” (Moustakas, 1990, p.14-15). That in a sense was indeed my experience of reporting between 1974 and 1992, first for the Reuters news agency and then for the BBC, from the Soviet Union and former Communist Eastern Europe, from the Balkans, from China and finally as BBC World Service diplomatic correspondent.

But if Heuristics has been the foundation of my approach, I have also been guided by writers such as Clara Hill (quoted in McLeod, 1994, p.186) who describe their own research as ‘trans-theoretical’, drawing on a generally integrative approach respecting the relevance of all the major theoretical orientations. In particular I have also taken into account Braud and Anderson’s discussion of integral inquiry, in which the researcher begins with a question of burning interest and importance – an area of inquiry that is heartfelt and significant – and then seeks as complete an answer as possible

...using all relevant methods, approaches, information, and means of knowing, understanding, and expressing what has been learned. (Braud & Anderson, 1998, p. 58)

In my approach to the gathering of data, I drew on the suggestions of Kvale (1996) regarding the “semi-structured life world interview”, whose purpose he describes (p.5) as “to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.” I also drew on my own professional experience as both journalistic interviewer and therapist – noting Kvale’s
comment that “much is to be learned from journalists and novelists about conveying
the setting and mood of a conversation.” (p.133)

As my research progressed, and particular in the presentation of the data, I realised,
however, that I needed to stretch my definitions, and allow for more than an element
of bricolage (McLeod, 1996, p.313, quoting Denzin and Lincoln),

That is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a
problem in a concrete situation... If new tools have to be invented, or pieced
together, then the researcher will do this. The choice of which tools to use, which
research practices to employ, is not set in advance.

A purely Heuristic approach to creating the research manuscript would (Moustakas,
1990, p.53) have required individual and comprehensive depictions of the experience
as a whole, two or three exemplary individual portraits and a creative synthesis. I had
also considered analysing the data by means of phenomenological reduction along the
lines used by Marcandonatou (1998) in her study of silence. But I came to believe that
it would be more true to the material to let the experiences speak for themselves,
along the lines employed by Gifford-May and Thomson (1994) in their research into
deep states of meditation.

I have also brought to bear on this process lessons from innovative new forms of
programme-making on radio, illustrated in the BBC World Service’s year-long series of
five-minute daily interviews on individual experiences of the 20th century broadcast
throughout 1999 under the title My Century. Under this approach, the recorded and
personal experiences of individual interviewees are carefully edited and collated in
sound, but then presented to the listener with as little mediation as possible from a
presenter or producer. The input of the producer has of course been critical in the
selection, distillation, editing and ordering of the experiences. But the listener is able
to relate directly to the lived experience of the interviewee. It makes for compelling
radio, and as I worked on the interview transcripts for this research, the conviction
grew that a similar approach would most accurately convey to the reader an authentic
impression of my subjects’ experiences. Despite Kvale’s recommendation (1996, p.266) that quotes should not make up more than half the text in a chapter, my own comments have therefore been kept to a minimum.

Where the Heuristic approach was central was in the research design and actual data-gathering. In this context, Moustakas (1990, pp. 15-27) sets out six phases: initial engagement; immersion into the topic and question; incubation; illumination; explication; and creative synthesis.

In the first stage of initial engagement, Moustakas sees the researcher setting out to discover within him or herself the passionate concern, the critical interest or area of search, that is crying out for an answer. In the case of this research, this involved struggling for some months – in discussion with fellow students, in meditation, and in the writing of a journal – with various possible themes. However, as has been appropriately remarked (Hiles, 1999), it is in the end not so much a process of the researcher choosing the question, but the question choosing the researcher. After a number of false starts, it became clear that this research must serve to bring together my personal experience of journalism and of psychotherapy – rounding off a 10-year journey in which the two had so often seemed to be incompatible opposites.

The next phase, that of immersion, involved living the question “in waking, sleeping, and even dream states” (Moustakas, 1990, p.28). It was at this stage that I wrote my own Myth (Appendix 3), seeking to bring together my experience of journalism and personal growth and give it coherent meaning.

Intuition makes, in Moustakas’ words, immediate knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic and reasoning, requiring the researcher, as the project proceeds, to make shifts to methods and directions in the search for substance and meaning (Moustakas, 1990, p.23). I had initially intended to take a purely Heuristic approach, but as the research unfolded, I allowed intuition to dictate each next step –
the structure of the survey, the direction of questioning, and the approach to analysing the data. I found myself discarding plans for a group workshop, acknowledging the reluctance of most of those interviewed to speak of personal issues in a shared setting. I also resolved not to follow Moustakas in compiling composite depictions or indeed a creative synthesis of correspondents’ experience – believing that to do so would violate the uniqueness of each individual’s story. In a sense then, this research honours more the spirit than the letter of the Heuristic approach.

With the stage now set, illumination – described by Moustakas (1990, p.29) as the clustering of qualities into themes that help towards a new awareness – involved distilling down the reported experiences of the subjects. All interviews were transcribed by myself, an important part of what Moustakas calls focusing, namely homing in on the key and most relevant avenues of inquiry. This allowed underlying themes in the written material to coalesce and dance together until – with the help of computer software allowing me to cut, store, paste and edit essential paragraphs – they emerged to form a coherent and ordered account of what it can mean to be a foreign correspondent.

In what became the final phase, that of explication, the material was examined and experienced in order to draw out a comprehensive understanding of the dominant themes. As outlined by Moustakas, this involved the re-listening to, the re-reading and re-experiencing of the material – a process which one might also compare with that of alchemy, with the explication corresponding to sublimatio or a distilling of the essence.

**The Practical Steps**

Moustakas talks of those interviewed for an Heuristic enquiry as co-researchers, allowing for an intense involvement of each individual at all stages of the project as meaning and conclusions unfold. In fact, as I suspected would be the case, not all my
chosen participants wished or were able to devote that amount of time or commitment to the project.

Thirteen working correspondents were approached, by telephone and e-mail, and none turned down the offer to be interviewed. In the event, nine of these were questioned over a period of four months, in face-to-face semi-structured interviews each lasting between one and two hours. While it would have been quite possible to interview a greater number of journalists, I was guided amongst others by Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.160) that the success of a study is not in the least dependent on a large sample size, but that “10 interviews might provide as much valid information as several hundred responses to a structured opinion poll.”

Six of those interviewed were male and three were female – very roughly corresponding to the balance of gender within the English-speaking foreign correspondent community. Those interviewed ranged in age from early 30s to mid-50s – again, a fair representation of the general age range of English-language reporters of foreign news. All were drawn from an educational background in the British Isles.

As envisaged by McLeod (1996, p.311) when qualitative researchers draw on their own networks of acquaintances for interviewees, and given that English-language foreign correspondents are a compact and fairly tight-knit group, issues of confidentiality did arise. Furthermore, I was aware as I designed the project that I would be talking to some individuals who have a relatively high public profile in Britain, and whose personal thoughts might be of interest to the press. After an initial blunder in which one participant was inadvertently identified to another, I was careful to ensure that none of those involved were named in conversation, either with the correspondents themselves or with my supervisor or fellow students.

I also took pains to ensure that written documentation should not identify individuals too easily. At the very first stage of transcription, (cf. Kvale, 1996, p.172), I sought to
disguise biographical or professional details which would have too easily identified who was speaking. In the presentation of data, I have in some instances altered personal biographical details. As the project neared completion, I also decided not to include in the appendices transcripts of any of the interviews other than my own, aware how easy it would be for third parties, even with a masking of identifying detail, to recognise individuals with quite high public profiles.

Well before the interview, each participant was sent an explanatory letter (Appendix 4) and asked to sign a process consent form (Appendix 5), drawn up on the basis of the examples suggested by McLeod (1990), Moustakas (1990) and Braud & Anderson (1998). Each was also sent copies of two key documents to stimulate their engagement – one my own Myth, setting out the personal meaning that I had found in the work of a correspondent (Appendix 3), and the other the thoughtful contribution of Daniel Goleman (Appendix 8) to the debate about redefining news from a contemplative perspective.

I was aware that this sharing of my own perspective at such an early stage might be seen by more traditional academics as risking advance contamination of the evidence. However, guided again by Braud & Anderson (1998, p.21) and by Moustakas (1990), I trusted that this approach would set off resonances within my co-researchers that might facilitate a deeper shared understanding of the question. In the event, I sensed that individuals were not at all deflected from their own experience by knowing of mine, but rather the reverse.

In order to clarify my own perspective and the avenues I wished to explore, I spent some weeks before the interviews re-reading my own BBC reports from the 1980s and early 1990s, including from China and Romania, as well as on the fall of Communism in 1989, the Gulf War in 1991 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. I then immersed myself in my now extensive personal journal begun in 1992 as I ceased to be
a working correspondent and embarked on my exploration of psychotherapy and dreams.

The questions around which I resolved to structure the interviews emerged from a combination of this reading and in meditation, and were significantly revised (Appendix 6) in the light of a first pilot self-interview conducted with my supervisor (Appendix 7). In particular, the idea was drawn from this of starting each interview with simple questions about the interviewee’s childhood. Although the interviews were not intended to be therapy sessions, it was important that they did not become, as might easily have happened, a cerebral discussion of the journalistic craft. A very personal question at the outset helped set the context for deeper revelations than might otherwise have been achievable, with individuals who in their majority (five out of nine) had either no personal experience at all of psychotherapy, or at the most (two out of nine) a few sessions of couple counselling several years earlier. Two co-researchers had been in therapy for an extended period.

The conduct of the interviews was largely person-centred (Rogers, 1961), following rather than directing the interviewee into whatever experiences seemed most important for them – within the context of a loose structure of questions of particular interest to myself. As Kvale observes,

The more spontaneous the interview procedure, the more likely one is to obtain spontaneous, lively, and unexpected answers from the interviewees. (Kvale, 1996, p.129).

In transcribing the interviews, conventions were largely observed as laid down by Parker (1992). Since I had conducted the interviews, had clarified anything uncertain as the interview progressed, and was transcribing them myself, there was no need for round brackets to denote doubts about accuracy. Parker suggests using empty square brackets, thus [ ], to denote omitted material. However, my word processor would regularly break the line in the middle of such brackets, so I included three full stops [...]
where material had been left out. Square brackets were also used to indicate clarification of anything which might confuse the reader. On rare occasions where they were needed (broadcast journalists are conditioned not to speak across an interviewer or interviewee...) I used slashes (/hmm/, like this /yes/) to indicate noises and words of assent. Words or phrases particularly stressed by the speaker were underlined.

In the full transcripts, I included all hesitations and repetitions. In the selection of excerpts in the presentation of data, however, quotes have been tidied up where this seemed appropriate without interfering in the meaning, as suggested by Kvale (1996, p.267). In some instances, where deeper emotions were being touched and the individual was finding it difficult to articulate his or her feelings, I left these in their original form.

For verification and triangulation, copies of the transcripts – and of manuscript drafts at various stages – were sent to those co-researchers willing to offer their feedback as the project developed. Comments were incorporated and observations and quotes edited as appropriate. To help secure a perspective on the range of material, key aspects of each interview and interviewee were summarised in a table, for easy consultation. (Appendix 1).
The Data

Introduction

The experience of the journalistic craft among those interviewed was very varied, but a number of common themes did emerge, under four main headings:

0 Who Are We: Performance and the Legacy of Childhood;
1 Why Do We do It?
2 How Do We Experience the Self? and
3 The Spiritual Dimension.

As outlined in the chapter on Methodology, I have sought in the presentation of the data that follows to interfere as little as possible in the correspondents’ own portrayal of their experience.

Who are We?

Performance and the Legacy of Childhood

Of the 10 correspondents involved in this study, myself included, only three had actually set out to be journalists. Some had wanted to be writers or novelists; one had wanted to change the world as an aid worker; one could have been any kind of public performer.

With all co-researchers, childhood experiences had a determining impact on the kind of journalist each had become.

I have always been a sort of subversive I suppose, a rebel. A subversive at school, a subversive with our current organisation. I like to say that the emperor has no clothes. I can be quite bloody-minded, and I don’t like authority. Particularly when you can find authority with its pants down, there is a certain degree of Schadenfreude.

Through all there ran a streak of determination.

Mark Brayne, The Personal Experience of the Foreign Correspondent
There are different things that I tap but I’ve always consciously tapped, or found myself tapping, I think, that self-confidence, but also a stubbornness, maybe bloody-mindedness is too strong a word, but in that you have to be fairly stubborn to get to the bottom of things.

One correspondent who had thoroughly disliked as a child being ordered about by a bossy elder brother remains well into middle age cheerfully resistant to management efforts to regulate his hours, or make him work shifts.

I would regard it as being on an extended student vacation really. That’s roughly how I’ve always felt that work is. It’s very much what I did when I was a student. Stuck my nose into things that interested me and did it when it suited me and didn’t take too much notice of what other people thought was the appropriate or the right way of doing so. Does that come out of the childhood or are all childhoods a bit like that? I suspect all childhoods are a bit like that.

Six correspondents had struggled in childhood with issues of self-esteem, balanced in most by what became a burning determination to succeed.

I’m very careerist, very ambitious. That’s another of my memories as a boy, wanting to be Prime Minister and absolutely confident that I was going to be Prime Minister. [...] I’m quite easily upset. But at the same time I’ve got quite a steely nerve where I’ll just do it, even if it angers [my wife]. Which isn’t that often. But if it does, I’ll still do it.

Another correspondent had grown up with alcoholic parents and with constantly changing emotional boundaries. It left her with,

...I think, a genuine sense of anger at injustice, and people who tell lies. You know, public figures who tell lies. I mean, a real anger at that, which is obviously rooted in childhood, you know, and the sense of empathy with people who don’t... not so much that they don’t have a voice, but who aren’t heard, you know. There’s a clear link.

Parental attitudes, and the pressure to perform as a child, clearly played an important part in several correspondents’ development.

Dad was very focused on academic achievement. I was under a lot of pressure and never seemed to be able to evoke his satisfaction with any of my homework or my grades, or my school reports or anything. I resented that, and I found it frustrating that nothing I did ever seemed to actually evoke pleasure, congratulations, praise,
even satisfaction. After his death, I think I internalised the pressure to achieve and do better.

But one correspondent was driven into a period of delayed rebellion even by a “good” father, who insisted that his son choose a career in the church:

_He was a changed man on a Sunday. He was great, but on a Sunday he was terrible. You know, he would come and drag us all out of bed and berate us, and we weren’t allowed to play football, we weren’t allowed to watch TV. It was very odd. He was a fantastic guy most of the time, and he, he gave us a lot, and encouraged us to go to the library and all that stuff. But it resulted in quite a rebellious period._

One female correspondent had been brought up as a child to argue and hold her own ground – not easy, as she saw it, in a world where children are treated without respect. She had been relieved when childhood was over and she “could get on with being an adult.” I remarked as we talked that she was playing with a ring on her finger. It turned out to have been the engagement ring of her now deceased mother.

_I’m well aware that there’s a lot that I needed to fulfil, or wanted to fulfil, [...] of her [my mother’s] ambitions. She would never say what were her ambitions for me, because she wouldn’t do that, because she would say that we should do whatever we wanted to do. But one could tell that that kind of thing was what she was interested in._

In this case, this living out of what the mother would have wanted for herself had meant three things: travel, writing, and not getting married.

**Why Do We Do It?**

**Making Sense**

Almost all of those questioned found special satisfaction in the foreign correspondent’s calling to make _sense_ of the world.

_I think there’s a great feeling of satisfaction, like solving a complex mathematical problem. It’s a feeling that you have received and decoded and interpreted a kind of message from outer space as it were, and made it available to the world. It’s a kind of feeling of unmasking, or revealing, or discovering._
A competitive streak was, interestingly, evident in perhaps fewer of the group than outsiders might expect, and was not related to gender: one female correspondent was for example highly competitive. But another was not.

*I’m not interested in being first. I’m not interested in embarrassing somebody. I’m interested in understanding what is happening, the bigger patterns.*

**To Seek the Truth**

Journalists are trained to believe in their role as seekers of truth. And most appear to believe that their work can make a difference to the world.

*It gives you a sense of a place, you know, in the pattern of world events, a place in contemporary civilisation, and I think an important place. [...] So I think that’s what gives me as a journalist my, you know, that, sort of, incentive to get up out of bed and go to work. I think I’ve always managed to maintain that feeling that this was something worth doing, you know, through thick and thin. And so to that extent I’ve invested my soul in it, because if, you know, if I hadn’t, then I wouldn’t do it and I wouldn’t get out of bed and go to work.*

It is the feeling, said another,

*...that you are the world’s witness at major historical events, and that from your analysis or reporting of that event, you know, comes ultimately the world’s understanding of it, and that bounces back onto the events themselves and that can influence those events itself.*

The question was discussed in the literature review above whether there is a truth “out there” waiting to be uncovered by journalists. Most of this inquiry group believed so.

*I believe in trying to, you know, report the truth as best one can. And I believe there is an objective truth out there which you get to by complex methods, and it’s important to do that.*

Another phrased it this way.

*My view of what we should be doing is that we have an instrument for telling the truth, for giving people access to the truth, to news that matters, and it’s a very clean, easy, pure instrument.*
One correspondent was clear, however, that truth is relative.

*There is no such thing as absolute objectivity. It depends where you come from. So wherever I’m registering things, I’m reporting on things as a white, middle-aged, middle-class well-educated woman from Western Europe, with whatever values I come with.*

**Personal Growth and the Desire to be Seen**

But if a mission to influence the world was an unspoken part of at least some participants’ agenda, most of the group saw the correspondent’s work more as a platform for personal intellectual enrichment.

*I don’t think I have a kind of missionary streak in me the way some journalists do, where they have to tell the world urgently about terrors and horrors that are happening. I think more I want to clarify for myself, and thereby clarify for others.*

What was it, I asked another, that drove the journalist? It was, she said, a question of... 

*...wanting to keep learning new things, wanting to find out new things, and be more informed and to be, I suppose, improving myself. I don’t think I care too much about only wanting to learn things that I can then relate in my reports. I wouldn’t be in the business if that was true. Because you don’t relate everything, there’s not room.*

Hers was a motive shared by men and women in the group. One male correspondent commented:

*It’s a very private thing. I don’t have to tell my friends about it. I don’t have to have anybody tell me that I’m doing well, but I know what’s happened in my personal development. It’s part of the business of learning and developing, and being able to say to yourself, “I didn’t use to be able to do that.”*

There was also the motive among most of seeking recognition from others. One participant had grown up with a sense of being the underdog, believing that he could right wrongs if he went into journalism. But

*...the other [motive] was a desire to be noticed, to be seen, to get validity from people, seeing what I did and telling me I was brilliant. Very, you know, very deep rooted.*
There were, however, gender differences in the group in the experience of external validation.

*One reason why I’ve stuck to foreign news is because it tends to be serious. I like the feeling about what I’m engaged in, and what other people see when they see me, and know that what I do is something which is serious. Maybe it’s to do with being a woman. I don’t want to be discounted.*

Another female correspondent commented:

*I’m quite competitive as a journalist, and that’s partly to do with being a woman. I’m much, much more competitive with men than I am with other women. I’m perfectly happy if other women get the story first. I’m not happy if a man gets the story first. […] I think it goes back to the experience of being a child, and the intense irritation of not being taken seriously because I was a child.*

One of the drawbacks of this research was, when compared to the process of therapy, the very short time available for each interview, and the fact that few of our number were used to talking in depth about emotionally intimate issues. But two participants, one man and one woman, were strikingly blunt about a balance in their work between professional and very personal gratification.

*It’s never the stories themselves, you know. A story or an instant might be significant to me only inasmuch as it’s enabled me to get on air or whatever, not the actual story itself. I do remain pretty much detached from my stories. I deal with them in a fairly clinical and analytical sort of way. The stories are a vehicle for that, kind of, achievement and recognition package.*

The second observed that while it would be good to say there was a public service mission and that a great service was being done to the world, and great injustices revealed, that was not really true. In honesty, it was a question of ambition and career.

*I don’t particularly care about [the stories’] global significance. I care about their significance to me, a) my career and b) my family. I suppose I see them as commodities in a way now, which isn’t to say I’m not moved and affected by things when I get there. But principally I see them and I remember them in terms of what they’ve done either for my career, or for me and my family, positively and negatively.*
Ego and the Addictive Buzz

These comments shade into what some participants realised can be the addictive nature of the craft, or the “buzz” created by a job well done, by the achievement of external recognition, or by the combination of both. One noted the gratification of being seen as superhuman, defying others’ expectations of how many hours could be endured without sleep, numbers of stories filed in half an hour, “you know, causing people to stop and stare in amazement.”

I need stimulation at a fairly high level and fairly continuously. So I suppose that what is driving me is a combination of a need to achieve, a need to have that achievement recognised by others, and also the need for that buzz from danger, mental stimulation, the kind of stimulation you get from the unfamiliar, the new.

One participant with experience of therapy saw foreign correspondents as a “bunch of neurotic bastards,” a “sea of people tormented by emotions”, who covered what was essentially personal ambition and a need for escape with either a mission to save the world, or to beat the opposition. This was, he said,

...the capacity to live in what is essentially an unreal world, or a world that is not true to your own needs, your own needs as a human being. I mean, you want the fucking hit, and the excitement and the buzz, but you don’t need it. Only the addict in you needs it. Triple A – alcohol, adrenaline, approbation. There’s nothing like a firefight to take you out of yourself, you know, nothing.

Identity

Closely linked to the adrenaline rush of danger and reporting under pressure is the question of personal identity. Correspondents, as outlined in the literature review, tend to be consumed by their work, even at the expense of health and personal relationships. But there is a pay-off.

I often say, and people have said this to me as well, maybe I’m not quite sure who I am. In some ways I’ve got a strong personality, I know where I’m coming from. But in other ways I’m, kind of, a bit lost. [...] I think that to an extent the job and particularly [my present posting] is a crucial part of my identity, my persona, and I think I would have some kind of identity crisis if I weren’t to be doing it. [...] So maybe it’s something I hide behind to a certain extent.
Another put it thus.

> Perhaps this whole journey has been a proof to me that I do exist. And that... these memories, however ephemeral and however difficult it is for me to express them sometimes or to write about them or to put them into print or onto the air... that it is a search for myself.

How do We Experience the Self?

The Experience of Emotion

Traditionally, journalists are trained to set their emotions to one side in their work. Perhaps that is one reason why Fergal Keane has aroused such discomfort among many of his working colleagues about his open discussion of emotional experience.

> I’m slightly careful on this territory, said one, because I am an anti-Fergal Keane reporter. I do not believe that it is good to show one’s own emotion in reporting a story. I think that my job is to report other people’s emotion. Now there may be an emotional content to what I do [...]. But I would not for a moment dream of writing or broadcasting what I happen to feel, because I think that that is insulting.

Another, acknowledging some awkwardness around acknowledging the journalist’s interest in reporting distress, volunteered the comment that he was not a heart-on-sleeve reporter.

> I do write a bit of that sometimes, because I am sometimes moved. Maybe it’s when I think about things I’ve seen more I am moved by them. But I suppose principally it’s... Well, what I say to people is, to be honest, I’m busy, kind of, getting the story and worrying about the logistics, and getting better pictures. And it’s... You know, bad news is good news. And so you sort of... When you’re seeing something ghastly, you’re thinking in our sick sort of way, “God this is brilliant pictures! And this is a brilliant story!”

I take it as axiomatic that correspondents are normal sentient beings, and do, of course, experience feelings in full measure. The question is not whether they have feelings. It is what they do with them. Again, the evidence suggests journalists find very different ways of coping.

> I think I’m very third person in reporting. I don’t personally engage. I don’t put myself there. I’m not the person in the story. I’m the person outside watching it. [...] I think
that part of this is that when things are very difficult, or very emotional, I’m actually trying to keep myself out of it, because I don’t want to be in there. I don’t want to carry away those emotions. I find them too painful and too difficult.

This disengagement was echoed by a correspondent with experience of working in the Middle East and of covering the Iraqi poison gas attack on Kurds at Halabja.

I think [my feelings] were somehow subsumed into, you know, feelings of, sort of, a kind of, professional feelings. I think this is the way a lot of journalists deal with this. The emotions that they feel about an event they, kind of, manage to suppress them by converting them into journalistic energy.

The implication here is that emotions appropriately experienced and processed can be an important element of the correspondent’s work.

If you don’t have any kind of emotional response, said another, how can you understand or identify with, even if it’s only for five minutes, these people you’re reporting on? If you don’t have any, if you cannot enter their skin at all. But I also think it’s important after I do that to pull back.

A further correspondent with experience of covering the Bosnian war and the siege of Sarajevo had tried to get into the Serbian psyche.

I think you can get closer to a story if you’re emotionally involved in it. These aren’t scorpions in a jar that one is watching from the outside. I think if you want to know what people think you have to get in the jar with them and not screw the lid down. The disadvantage is that it’s a strain to go back afterwards, and write it objectively.

Distancing

One of the striking common themes of this research was how those interviewed dealt with the tension between finding themselves involved in stories and trying to stay at a distance. One television reporter drew on a metaphor used by a number within the group to describe memories of childhood, as if viewing a movie.

I go on stories and feel they’re a bit like a film set sometimes, where, you know, it looks great on TV and you’re filming it. And 99 per cent of the time that’s fine. You film it, but the contradiction is that the better the film set, the more chance it is that you’ll be embroiled in it. And, you know, I almost feel like it’s a, I don’t know, like a bit of paper scenery. And suddenly you burst through it. And there’s guns going off
and everything, and that looks great until one of them hits you. So you sort of feel like you’re distant from it, and yet you’re involved in it.

The same correspondent articulated a fear – and a guilt - that if he allowed himself to be drawn personally into the human dramas he was witnessing, he would be unable to keep working. He had been among those who reported the mass deaths among refugees fleeing Rwanda in 1994. And while he had watched other journalists intervening to help cases of individual suffering, he had had to hold back.

*I didn’t want to be, sort of, interrupted [in my work]. I didn’t want to stop and sort of, I mean... Because once you start stopping then you never stop stopping, if you know what I mean. But when somebody does do that, you feel, I think, “That should have been me really. It should have been me feeling that, kind of, strength of emotion, that I just want to just stop working and get on with saving somebody’s life...”*

In a pattern that is familiar in therapy when clients are uncomfortable with acknowledging the truth of their feelings, many of the correspondents in this survey sought unconsciously, with the use of the pronoun you, to imply in the interview that their experiences were universal, as one put it in when talking about a massacre of Palestinians in Lebanon. (To illustrate this point more clearly, some of the surrounding dialogue is included.)

*Always, you know, as I mention with that particular event, your feelings about what’s happening are somehow mixed up with fears for your own safety, but also concerns about how you’re going to do your job about how you’re going to portray it, and how you’re going to present it.*

Q. I just notice you’re using the word you....

A. *Although it’s an experience common to others too...*

Another example involved a correspondent who had covered the fall of Communism in Central Europe.

*By the end of the communist period, to know that you’d done a good report often meant that everyone disliked you. It meant that the authorities disliked you, and it meant also that the democratic opposition sometimes disliked you because they expected you to side with them against the wicked totalitarian state. But you didn’t*
do that. You tried to not steer between them evenly, which is another form of
distortion. You tried to look them in the eye and find out who was telling the truth.

Q. I notice you’re using you again.

A. Sorry... it’s a turn of phrase. Yes, it is a distancing. These are quite hard things to
talk about.

Q. Yes, these are quite hard things. What are you feeling at the moment?

A. I’m feeling quite emotional about this.

Tears

Despite the dislike of some for any emotional style of reporting, of the 10 subjects of
this survey, only three said they had never cried in relation to a story. These were
anxious not to let tears interfere with the work.

I think, you know, in a way it comes back to this business of saying, look, it’s my job
to tell the story, not to get in the way of the story. There would be nothing wrong
with crying, but then usually you’ve got to get from A to B, you’ve got filing to worry
about... I’ve certainly been very moved, I’ve been choked I’m sure, I mean,
interviewing people who’ve had terrible stories to tell.

Another correspondent who had no memory of crying related this to his upbringing.

I suppose I’m... I do feel I’m a very classic English public school, stiff upper lip, take
quite a lot to make me cry in a personal, you know, sense. ...At funerals, not that I’ve
been to very many, I can suddenly feel myself welling up, and then, sort of, fight it.
Um, but I don’t, you know, it’s quite, it doesn’t come easy to me, you know, emotion I
don’t think... probably... never has.

But this was by no means a universal pattern. Another correspondent acknowledged
crying often over his work.

I cried when a man was telling me at 3 o’clock in the morning in his flat what had
happened during the demonstration. I cried out of some sense of pride that he was
risking his life to tell me the story. [...] I cried all the time during the Bosnian war. [...] I
try and hide the tears during an interview because it’s quite embarrassing to weep
during an interview, but I think I’m quite an emotional person and I find that quite a
strain.
It is not always the obvious that brings tears to the correspondent’s eye, but rather the experience that somehow touches the individual’s personal drama. One former Moscow correspondent recalled visiting the Baltic republics. Her account is worth quoting at some length for its illustration of both the distancing mechanisms described above and of how professional and personal can intertwine for a reporter in unexpected ways.

We were talking to all sorts of different people, and there was one little old man who only had one leg, and they were making soup out of potato skins, and it was all very touching stuff and good package material, and you’re in that professional mode where you think, ‘that’ll make a good soundbite and a good strip line and I’ll get them to peel potatoes and so on.’ And we were out on the street and this woman came up to me. She had white hair died bright orange the way quite a lot of Soviet women used to, and she just told me her story. She was Jewish. Her entire family had been killed [in the war]. She had been brought up speaking Yiddish but was sent to live with an uncle. She had to speak Ukrainian and when the war ended they were all shipped off to Siberia and she had to speak Russian. When they finally got back from Siberia, she married, I think, a Belarus boy, and they went to live in Minsk. And she had to learn Belarussian. And he was in the army, so they had moved to Estonia. He had died and she was left and now, Goddam it! she had to learn Estonian, and she was weeping by this point. It was just awful and there was nothing I could do to help her, I couldn’t make her life better. But I could have been her.

Delayed Emotion

A number of participants spoke of experiencing emotion some time after the actual witnessing of violence.

What upset me was hearing this 15-year-old boy wailing like an animal because he had been [there] and found some of his brothers’ corpses [...]. And the distress, animal-like wailing of this boy got into my head. And I cried, not because of the massacre, but because of the agony, pain, and distress of this person. I mean, the wailing really kind of got inside my head. I couldn’t get it out of my head, and that was what made me cry.

Another had this story.

I don’t feel I’m a cold, unemotional person at all, actually. And I do get emotional about things. I mean, I did the […] rail crash, and I didn’t see any of the bodies there because we were kept away. But I was there every day, and I saw the relatives coming, and that didn’t particularly move me. And yet, I was driving along on the
radio, and heard a phone interview with, I think it was a priest or somebody. And it just, kind of, sent shivers down my spine. And I suddenly felt like quivering with emotion about the whole thing.

Rwanda was for many correspondents a deeply disturbing experience.

I remember coming back from Rwanda, said one. Somebody got me a present of Gorecki’s Third Symphony which I hadn’t been able to listen to before I went away, and I put it on in the sitting room, and I just sat there and wept. Wept.

“Flow”

One of the key conclusions of this research is for me the parallel between what might be termed creative flow among journalists and that experienced – and far more widely reported – by artists, writers and scientists. Most of those interviewed for this survey recorded experiences of inspiration when reporting major stories. It is from this point in the consideration of the material brought up by my research that I sense the conclusions are beginning to move into the realms of the transpersonal. I will present these experiences unmediated, as they tell their own persuasive story. Each of the following quotes is from a different individual.

We were the first outside journalists to be there, and there was deadline pressure, and there was logistical pressure and there was communications pressure, and all these things. And I felt that somehow the event itself flowed through me onto the page. Whereas at other times on much more insignificant and banal stories I’ve stared at the computer keyboard for a long time without really being able to write anything about it at all.

I don’t quite know what’s going on (struggles for words.) No that’s right. But mostly what happens is that once I get going, that’s alright, and the thing has its own structure.

If I feel I’m writing well, it just comes out, you know. And I sort of feel, “Where did that come from?” And I’m sometimes slightly surprised or even amazed that I can just put it together. And that if I analyse it too much it would probably stop.

I suppose when it’s at its best it’s just, sort of, coming out really. It’s just, sort of... You’re not very conscious, just a sort of funnel really. It’s almost like somebody else speaking and it’s just coming out onto the page.

It’s sort of organic, in that I’m quite often aware that all sorts of things are going on in my head particularly when I’m stuck. I mean, I quite often get stuck at the
beginning. But there is actually something going on while I’m stuck, I know that, and I have to get the beginning right. Um, and, I mean, it’s slightly difficult to talk about it...

The ego disappears, because you are just the pure messenger, and you’re a vessel, and so your own doubts or ego are no longer in the way. Normally everything is filtered through your self, so there’s a certain amount of reinterpretation or selection that goes on in what you do. At those moments the self retreats, and you are like a clear pane of glass between one thing and another, just goes through.[...]. Like surfing a wave.[...] You’re so aware, and thinking so clearly and so fast.

**The Spiritual Dimension**

**Personal Transformation**

Journalism, and my coverage over the years of Eastern Europe, China, and of Communism’s end, appear to me now, looking back after nearly a decade of involvement in psychotherapy, to have been an increasingly explicit journey of healing and spiritual growth. (Appendix 7). But do other correspondents experience the craft at all similarly? Clearly, much depends on the inclinations of each individual. Journalists, like farmers, bricklayers, politicians or shopkeepers, are a varied group. This was borne out in this research. Did this group see our profession in any way as a healing experience? One was emphatic in her response.

_No /very firmly/, not at all. No. It’s something to do, it’s something I quite like doing, because it’s intellectually stimulating. But, no, there’s a lot of healing that needs to be done, but journalism ain’t going to do it for me._

Another participant, with experience of the Rwandan genocide, was asked if journalism had changed her.

_Yes, of course, but then life would have changed me. Even if I’d been a professional flower arranger, that probably would have changed me too, wouldn’t it? But I do think that I have seen the worst of the world and I do think that I have seen the worst of human beings. And that, that, that clearly has to change you in a quite profound way. Or clearly has changed me in a profound way. But it has not turned me into a miserable nervous wreck, and I don’t quite understand why not._

For one correspondent, journalism had indeed been a personal journey.
The journey I’ve made was the journey I had to make. There was no other journey for me. And it forced me to confront myself. The extremes of being a foreign correspondent did force me, they pushed me further into myself than anything else I could have done, conceivably have done. I might have lived a quiet life on a suburban estate drinking myself to death, and convincing myself that it was all alright really. I wasn’t able to do that. I had to confront my emotions, I really did. War forced me to really confront my own emotions. It allowed me to escape from them for a long time, but in the end I had to confront them.

A number in the group, notably the women, felt that the correspondent’s career had given them a personal certainty which they had previously lacked.

If I think of the person who [first] went to Moscow and I think of what I’m like now, it is all summed up by one word which is confidence. I think I had very, quite low self-esteem. [...] I think that having been a foreign correspondent has transformed me in a way that I would never have become if I hadn’t done that job. Very deeply and fundamentally. Quite scarily actually. And what I wonder is, would I have, would I have been transformed if I hadn’t done this, would I have known, would I have gained that self-knowledge if I hadn’t had this job.

The Transcendent

To what extent, then, had those interviewed drawn conclusions from their work and life experience which they would recognise as spiritual? All were asked directly whether they saw themselves as spiritual in any way. Only three explicitly answered yes. Two saw themselves as more rational than spiritual, although even among those resistant to these concepts there was a love for example of religious music and, in two cases, for Orthodox church ritual. One participant described himself as superstitious, needing for example to take very particular routes and to touch very particular things – “three park benches and a little sign” – on his daily jog. Another –with the same interest in cycling as myself - saw himself as spiritual but not in a conventional way.

I do like to think that I have a moral dimension. I’m not always guided by it, but there are things I want from life that are spiritual things. My interest in cycling is an almost spiritual thing at times, you know, I’m quite happy to go away on my own. And that is a very reviving experience.
Just as journalism had moved one interviewee from an idealistic youthful desire to “destroy the Yankee imperialist plot” to middle-aged cynicism, another had found the reserve of his youth if anything confirmed by his career.

Certainly in my case it has made me even more of a relativist than I was before. Though I think I was always a bit of a relativist. It’s made me very sceptical of ideologies and systems of belief and religions, even more sceptical than I was to start out with.

As outlined in the literature review, the public and indeed self-image of journalists assumes a deep scepticism towards issues of spirituality and faith. This was borne out in this research. Only one participant, one of the two (besides myself) with experience of deep therapy, saw a higher, spiritual power as central to his life.

I have lost the illusion, or have surrendered, the illusion that I can control what happens as a result of the choices I make. Before, I was on fucking autopilot. I wasn’t making choices, I was just rampaging, trying to control. I can’t live like that now.

Although perhaps less forcefully expressed, that has been my experience of being a foreign correspondent. But from this sample, those engaged on an explicit spiritual path are in a minority.
Summary, Implications and Outcomes

As this dissertation was being completed in late May 2000, news came from Sierra Leone of the death of one of the greatest war correspondents of the past decade, Kurt Schork of Reuters. Schork, an American, came to journalism late, aged 40. He made his name in Bosnia, working there longer than any other war reporter, and then in war zones around the world. News of his death, in a military ambush, shocked the foreign correspondent community as much as any journalistic killing of recent years, and prompted questions of the kind that that have been raised in this study – why do people do this?

Julian Borger, himself a veteran of many conflicts, recalled (Borger, 2000) that if it was the extremes that drew Schork to Kurdistan and Bosnia, it was the human and moral imperatives which made him stay. Maggie O’Kane recalled in a companion article a colleague’s comment some years earlier following the death of the Irish crime reporter Veronica Guerin: “We are driven by ego, insecurity and sometimes a desire to do some bit of good.” (O’Kane, 2000).

In a sense, it is a comment which summarises the conclusions of this research. Like Western journalists in general, foreign correspondents persuade themselves for most of the time – and teach others who follow on behind – that they are in the business of reporting facts. Soberly, dispassionately, fairly. Behind that well-intentioned and undoubtedly honest façade, my own suspicion, confirmed by this survey, was that most are in fact motivated by a complex cocktail of personal ambition, damaged self-esteem, childhood trauma, addictive patterns – but, to be fair, also by passion and idealism.

The Integrity of the Data

In concluding this research, I considered how to discuss and summarise its findings. In a Heuristic sense, the more I immersed myself in this dilemma, the more reluctant I
became to draw up any general hypothesis beyond that last sentence above. I sensed the importance of allowing the participants to speak with their own distinctive voices – stressing that dialogical aspect of qualitative research emphasised by Stiles of conveying the “sense that the participants have been actively engaged in the research process,” and that “their voices can be heard clearly.” (Stiles, 1993).

Although the focus was different and the methodology more journalistic, the underlying pattern does echo that noted by Marshall (1995) in her Grounded Theory investigation of the journalistic personality – finding in the journalist an outsider concerned with power and control, wanting to be seen, but also bringing an experience of being marginalised in some way in his or her family, society or culture. I have found some of my expectations confirmed – notably in the area of “flow” and inspiration. Other assumptions, especially those of a transpersonal nature around spirituality and meaning, proved to be rather less universal, although many of those interviewed found the correspondent’s career in some sense to have been a journey of personal growth.

However, given that self-analysis is not yet part of the journalistic paradigm, I did not feel it would be appropriate to push conclusions too far. The parallel here is with the early stages of therapy, when it is still so important for the therapist to remain open to the client’s experience and to avoid reaching or, above all, voicing a firm view of what that means. At this stage of working with the correspondent’s psyche and self-view, I believe that it would in fact be counter-productive to go beyond the tentative conclusions articulated above.

**Limitations**

That decision not to interpret the findings further, described by Wolcott (1994) as the third goal of qualitative data analysis (after description and analysis), is one of the limitations of the present research. Another limitation lay in the choice of co-researchers – all of them from an English-language educational and ethnic
background. Furthermore, with my very personal perspective on this research question, I was aware of the risk of projecting my own expectations and understandings onto the experience of others – in itself, one of the limitations of the Heuristic research approach. (Moustakas, 1990). It is partly for that reason, and out of respect for the participants in this research and their data, that I decided to bring a good deal less of my own experience into the presentation than I had planned. The reader is referred to Appendix 7 for my own self-interview for an insight into how journalism became for me a form of spiritual journey towards self-discovery.

I became acutely aware as the project progressed how little time was available for each interview – and how, with only nine correspondents taking part, this was a very small sample. To most of those who worked with me, these were issues they had never before discussed, and there is a limit to how deep one can go in just 90 minutes from a standing start.

**Catalytic Validity and the Way Forward**

All of my co-researchers appeared to find their interview enlightening, and, reading the transcript, in some cases even surprising. As one commented, “I get the impression that we are all more alike than we might have thought.” Another remembered feeling quite drained afterwards, “perhaps because I had never tried to create a narrative of my own emotional life like that before.” Another was surprised – and pleased - that all seem to share such common reactions or experiences. She wondered if these common threads came from being forged by the same experience of being correspondents, or because all came from essentially from similar backgrounds. A further co-researcher commented: “Above all, thank you for doing this. For me, the value of what you have written is that it helps to heal the divide, between myself as a journalist, and myself as a real (ordinary, cowardly, brave) person.” To know that even one other person has doubts about journalism, and tries to formulate them and draw conclusions from
them, was, he wrote, soothing, and participation in the research had helped him be reconciled with what was a quite lonely profession. (Appendix 1).

Stiles (1993) talks of catalytic validity as a way of testing whether research has helped or empowered the participants – giving them a voice to reflect on the experience of being a participant and what that has meant for them. The feedback quoted above suggests that this has been an important aspect of this research, and that doors have perhaps been opened that would allow this kind of investigation to be taken forward. For example, this might involve individual therapeutic case studies over a longer period, or ideally a group study of shared experiences. There remains much to be discovered about the personal experience of the journalist and how that impacts on his or her writing.

There is also much work to be done on building journalistic awareness of the link between psychology and international politics, notably in the role of the individual in a position of leadership. Alice Miller (1990) has written powerfully of this from a psychotherapist’s perspective. But the work of most foreign correspondents still tends to focus on the symptoms rather than the causes of conflict, as rooted in the psyche of individuals and societies. Perhaps, echoing Fields quoted above, journalists might be wary of tackling these issues for fear of what they might discover about themselves.

The personality of foreign correspondents, and, in a transpersonal sense, the qualities they manifest in their work, is also an area that needs further study. It would have been useful to ask the subjects of this research to complete a Myers-Briggs style questionnaire as to their Jungian type. Using my experience as a practising psychotherapist, I sensed that most were for example Introverts, probably with Thinking as their dominant function. But I was obviously not able to confirm this with the certainty needed in formal research.
Other possible areas of associated investigation that came to mind include the role of the journalist as myth-maker and story-teller; journalism as community-building; the listener’s, viewer’s or reader’s response to emotionally explicit reporting; the role of emotional intelligence in journalistic training; parallels between journalism and therapy; the role of the Feminine in the psyche of the reporter; the differing experiences of correspondents from different social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

**Conclusion**

Perhaps, like psychotherapists 50 years ago, most journalists at the beginning of a new century still appear to see their profession more as a pursuit of the objective and rational than as an art form. And yet, Anthony Storr’s definition of a successful relationship between therapist and patient/client could apply equally to the work of a good correspondent’s relationship with his story.

*The therapist has to walk a tightrope between over and under-identification with his patient. If he so over-identifies with him as to lose his power to criticise, he will not be able to see how the patient should change. If he remains as critically detached as if he was performing a scientific experiment, he will not be able to understand his patient as a person or appreciate the difficulties which he faces. It is because of this that the practice of psychotherapy will always remain more of an art than a science.* (Storr, 1990, p.68).

If this research has contributed in a small way to stretching that broader awareness of the correspondent’s art, it will not have been in vain.
References


### Appendix 1 – The Table

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<th>I’view number</th>
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<th>Set out wanting to be journalist?</th>
<th>Why became journalist</th>
<th>Key childhood influences</th>
<th>Experience of crying in relation to story?</th>
<th>Spiritual, in own terms?</th>
<th>Experience of therapy</th>
<th>Feedback?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 (self)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. But interested in radio production</td>
<td>Love of languages. But as understood in retrospect: Meaning; Communication; Soul connection</td>
<td>Moving farm aged three; Distant father; Overbearing mother; Parents’ divorce</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. Wanted to be novelist</td>
<td>Rebellion against authority.</td>
<td>Working class. Born at home and stable family. Close student day friendships.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Above all, thank you for doing this. For me, the value of what you have written is that it helps to heal the divide, between myself as a journalist, and myself as a real (ordinary, cowardly, brave) person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. Stumbled into journalism. Wanted to write.</td>
<td>Putting words together to make sense. Facilitating the world’s understanding of itself.</td>
<td>Powerful and competitive mother. Penetrating grown-up talk.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No problem with script. Found it fascinating. Ought to be written as a book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'view number</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Set out wanting to be journalist?</td>
<td>Why became journalist</td>
<td>Key childhood influences</td>
<td>Experience of crying in relation to story?</td>
<td>Spiritual, in own terms?</td>
<td>Experience of therapy</td>
<td>Feedback?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>No. Had not believed would be taken on as journalist.</td>
<td>Wanting to learn and be taken seriously. Connecting bigger patterns.</td>
<td>Parents academics. Began as “special”, but then one of many children</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, within limits</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Surprised - and pleased - that all seem to share such common reactions/experiences. Recalled being shaken out of self denial by therapist friend who observed, “You know you've been quite traumatised by what you've experienced and you don't realise it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Curiosity. To impose an order on random events.</td>
<td>Poverty. Bossy elder brother Indulgent, laid back father.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Agreed that good summary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Achievement; Recognition; Career advancement; Making sense.</td>
<td>Father very pressurising, and never satisfied.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Detailed and helpful editing of transcript. Importance of masking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>No. Former aid worker.</td>
<td>Curiosity. Connecting with strangers. Respect</td>
<td>Unspoken mother’s ambition. Brought up</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“I get the impression that we are all more alike than we might have thought..”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’view number</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Set out wanting to be journalist?</td>
<td>Why became journalist</td>
<td>Key childhood influences</td>
<td>Experience of crying in relation to story?</td>
<td>Spiritual, in own terms?</td>
<td>Experience of therapy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>as a woman.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to argue.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>No. Could have been lawyer just as easily.</td>
<td>Buzz from performance. Career and ego.</td>
<td>Large house in countryside, and rather lonely, work-focused childhood.</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>“It’s all really fascinating stuff, and I’m flattered to see you find my thoughts interesting enough to put in – I always think I’m a bit dull. Nothing I would add or subtract.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Be noticed. Right wrongs.</td>
<td>Violence, alcoholism, lack of emotional boundaries.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Anger at failure of colleagues to understand importance of emotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2 – Romania FOOC

Despatch N  Monday  17:15  Jan 1, 1990

Hdline: Romania's revolution

Cue : We begin with Romania, and a revolution that will go down as one of the turning points of Europe's history. 1989 saw the most fundamental changes in Europe since the second world war, as communist regimes one after the other dissolved in the face of people's power. The last of the dictatorships to crumble, that of the Ceausescus in Romania, did so with horrifying violence – but with a new government in Romania now pledged to hold free elections in three months time, the new decade begins possibly with greater hope than any the continent has ever seen. Mark Brayne, diplomatic corr of the BBC's world service, saw in 1989 the eruption of people power in China, crushed; six months later he witnessed the victory of the Romanian people. This is his report.

For someone like me brought up in the cosy liberal traditions of post-war British consensus, it's difficult to conceive of absolute right or absolute wrong. There are after all two sides to every argument. Or are there? As the door closes on forty years of communism in Eastern Europe, I'm not so sure. For what the people of Romania have just experienced has been to my mind a confrontation between the power of good and that of absolute, indeed biblical evil. What Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife Elena unleashed on their people has few precedents in history – the impoverishment of a nation and finally the slaughter by machine-gun of thousands of innocents, a killing far greater in scale than that even of Tiananmen Square in China last June. Even for someone who doesn't believe in political violence, it's difficult not to share the view of so many Romanians that Ceausescu was evil -- and that with his security police still fighting the people to free him, there was, last Christmas Day, no alternative to his execution. The choice for Romania was absolute-- and at the start of the new decade, the people of this extraordinary, brave nation have taken a stand as few before them, for decency and justice and against an odious dictatorship. Europe both East and West may consider itself in Romania's debt.
As you recover from your peaceful British Christmas and New Year with family and friends, that may all sound a trifle emotional, perhaps a little over the top. But to have been with the people of Romania these past 10 days as they have stood, and died, as one, has been the most powerful experience in many lives here. A few particularly uplifting incidents stand out. Dinner with new friends for example on Christmas night as it was announced that the Ceausescus had been executed -- my hosts stood to toast the end of the nightmare. In the Romanian tradition we first tipped a little of our wine onto the floor -- to remember the dead. It was an intensely emotional moment. On New Year's eve, as midnight approached, the radio and television of now free Romania fell silent for one minute, remembering the martyrs of Timisoara, Bucharest, Sibiu and so many other cities. At one of the many, many parties of celebration in Bucharest, men and women alike were convulsed with sobs as they hugged and kissed to welcome the new decade. Another new friend, a waiter here at my hotel, was insistent that I visit his family and meet the son and the daughter of whom he was so terribly proud. Never before had he dared invite a foreigner to his home; the Securitate secret police would have interrogated him and stripped him of work. Once again, as we toasted Romania's new freedom, it was all we could do to hold back the tears.

I tell these stories because what Romania has experienced is something more fundamental even than the revolutions of the last months in Czechoslovakia, in East Germany, in Poland. Here with the overthrow of the Ceausescus, one of the most vicious dictatorships the modern world has known, Communism is, in a word, dead. There are no compromises to be made in Romania with an apparatus resisting the loss of its power and privilege. There is no party to be renamed; that has been completely destroyed. Romania can in other words set about building a genuine liberal democracy with concessions to no one. In the economy too, the prospects for Romania look possibly more promising than for any other nation in Eastern Europe. Obsessed with independence, the dead dictator starved the people but he paid back all debts to the West. Unlike for Poland and Hungary and even for East Germany, there will be few reservations in the West about credit for Romania. And for all the horror of the Ceausescu years, this country has natural resources, and scenery, and fertile agricultural soil that could make it a land of great richness.
The people of Romania, flushed with the victory of their revolution, certainly seem determined to make that happen. For the speed with which the veneer of totalitarianism has been stripped away is difficult to believe -- but it's revealed a mature, cantankerous no doubt, but self-aware society ready and determined to assume responsibility for its own destiny. There'll be problems of course -- the exercise of democracy and freedom, as so many Romanians have been telling us, cannot be learned overnight. And there are strains already very plain between the ordinary people who have suffered so terribly and those, mostly decent men and women, who made their compromises with the old regime. But ultimately, the emperor Ceausescu was seen to have no clothes -- and the instant the people in their desperation were willing like the little boy in the fairy tale to stand up and say so, and not to flinch even when gunned down and crushed by the armoured might of the Securitate, the nightmare was over. In Romania the people, with the help of their army, have been victorious -- in China last spring, after the comparable euphoria of Tiananmen Square in May, the army sided with the oppressors. From Pyongyang and Peking to the capitals of Africa and Latin America, the message of Romania's revolution should make dictators around the world sleep a little less easy in their beds.
Appendix 3 - A Child of the Cold War

Once upon a time – which is not how myths start, but this is part myth, part fairy-tale – there was born in London a child of the century. The year was 1950 – exactly half way through that century. It was a time of transformation – of watershed between an old world of hot wars for colonial domination, and a new world of cold war for global ideological supremacy. Looking back, the end of old empires. Looking ahead, the prospect of decades of struggle between Communism and the ideals of individual liberty.

Our child of the century was born with – like Kay in the fairy tale of the Ice Queen – a shard of ideological glass bedded deep in his heart. His mission, although it took him many years to understand this, was to be the healing of his own divided soul mirrored in the healing of a divided Europe.

It seemed that Fate had chosen Mark for this journey. For it was the case that both Mark’s parents were themselves children of the imperial past. His mother born to a senior colonial administrator in India. His father the son of a messianic English civil servant in that same country, whose vision was the enlightenment of the Indian countryside. Mark’s father and mother never made a happy marriage, their own childhoods too torn by the emotional ravages of exile, one to a lonely boarding school in England at six, the other to Australia in wartime evacuation.

So those parents retreated deep into the English countryside to tend the land, and Mark grew to be a troubled boy – longing for healing but unknowing how to find it.

It came to pass that Mark’s parents separated, and Mark was sent away to a lonely boarding school. He did not know how, but his deepest wish was to communicate, to learn and speak the truth he was seeking. And so he came to study modern languages, and to visit and love Germany. Thus were the European seeds nurtured that might one day bring healing to his soul within the healing of Europe. Mark learned to speak German, and Russian, and to love the shadow half of Europe – the East Germans, the Russians, the Hungarians; longing for the light to shine across and through the continent’s divisions.
Mark studied in Moscow. He became a journalist, not knowing at this time of the meaning of this calling to communicate. He worked in East Germany, in Moscow, in Yugoslavia, in Hungary, in Korea, in China – seeking to tell the world of the deeper truths of peoples whom the West bundled together as communists. But within him, that shard of glass pierced ever more painfully, as Mark sought without knowing it the Gerda of the fairy tale, the feminine principle which would bind his wounds and open his heart. He was told that his reporting was powerful and that it touched his listeners’ lives. Without knowing why, he recognised and understood the meaning of the stories he was covering of division and alienation – stories that echoed his own unspoken drama within.

And so it came to pass that in 1989, Mark witnessed the explosion of joy and popular power that preceded the terrible carnage of Tiananmen Square in China. He travelled to Romania to cover the revolution there. From London he covered the fall of the wall, and the end of communism from Berlin to Sofia. And as the divisions of Europe came crashing down, and later as the West went to war in the Gulf, it seemed as if complexes which the Cold War had suppressed deep in the global psyche began to heave to the surface and into conscious awareness – perhaps with the journalist as unwitting therapist to the listener.

And so in those days was also the veil rent which had so long covered over the wounds in Mark’s heart. He found himself turning to the church and, in time, to meditation. He began to study psychotherapy, and just as Europe itself began the long and painful process of working through and rendering conscious the pain of the Cold War past, Mark dreamed of divided cities and of countries rent by the agonies of communism and the transition to freedom.

He dreamed of a divided Korea, in which he found himself struggling to find his way to the capital of the south, Seoul (Soul..) He dreamed of the crashing down of glass and steel towers in East Berlin – symbols of a dying ideology and the tearing apart of his own soul. He dreamed of churches being built in a Moscow messily freed from communism. In his sleep, he wept deeply as he watched Orthodox priests in Lenin’s tomb sanctifying the body of the atheist founder of the Soviet state. He learned, slowly, to experience his own emotions and to recognise and honour the feelings of others.
These were not easy years. As Europe battled with the remnants of the old system in Yugoslavia, so did Mark battle for meaning and purpose – in his work, in his relationships. And so it came to pass, at the end of the decade, that in Kosovo, Europe took a deep breath and faced up to the evil that persisted at its heart – journeying back to the province where the cycle of violence had begun as the ice of the cold war had begun to melt. It was a journey echoed, again and uncannily, in the completion for Mark of a cycle of relationship, as the seeds of separation planted exactly 10 years before in Romania produced their long-ripening fruit in the ending of a marriage.

At the threshold of 50 years and of a new millennium, the challenge now became one of knitting together the threads of inner turmoil and outward change – a bringing together of journalism and personal meaning. Journalism, it seemed, had after all been more a spiritual quest than a mere career.
Appendix 4 - Master Letter

Dear xxx

First of all, thankyou once again warmly for being willing, as we have discussed, to take part as co-researcher in my psychotherapy MA project – and may I now come back to you with some more written detail?

Included with this letter is some initial explanatory paperwork, with some questions, ideas and thoughts, and also a letter – called a participation-release form – which explains the ground rules about confidentiality and so on, and lays down my own commitments to consult and check back with you at all stages.

To recap: the Masters I’m pursuing is in Transpersonal Psychotherapy, at the Centre for Counselling and Psychotherapy Education (CCPE) in West London. The question I want to investigate is summarised roughly thus:

“What has been the experience of personal meaning for foreign correspondents covering the global events of the pre-Millennial decade?”

It’s a very broad question allowing for a whole range of experiences to emerge, depending on what the process of reporting has meant for you over the past 10 years. Indeed, I fully expect the question itself to mature and change as the research unfolds. If you know anything about academic methods, the approach I’m taking goes under the title Heuristic Research – which allows the researcher the indulgence of using the personal pronoun and his/her own life experience. Useful for bishops and hacks....

Can I at this point confirm again the absolute confidentiality of this research? I am keeping all my computer files password protected, and all contributions under lock and key at home. I will be very careful not to divulge to anyone, either those involved in the project or my supervisor and fellow MA students, the identity of any of my co-researchers. In the final write-up, identities and stories will be fully disguised, and I plan to make sure you have every opportunity as we go along to check that you’re comfortable with how that side of the project is being handled.

I would like to stress that if at any point you feel uncomfortable about your continued participation, I will entirely understand if you wish to pull out. I would then return to you or destroy all taped, transcribed or written-up material relating to your part.
So, how do I expect the research to unfold? At the core of the gathering of information I would like to ask you to join me for an interview/discussion of between one and two hours, which – as I think I explained on the phone - I would like to ask your permission to tape record. I will transcribe the interviews myself, and use them and other research data in compiling the final dissertation by early July 2000.

I also need to stress, as you will realise, that the interviews will not be constructed in any way as therapy sessions. Nor are they intended to focus on the kind of traumatic stress issues which come up on hostile environment training courses. I view them rather as opportunities for exploration and discovery. However, it is possible that difficult or challenging issues might arise, and if anything does emerge which you might wish to explore further, I shall of course be happy to make suggestions how you might do this, and facilitate any introductions which you feel might be useful.

I will be in touch by telephone/email shortly to find a time that is convenient, and would like to complete interviews if possible by Christmas. My suggestion at the moment would be to meet at the CCPE itself, which is easy to find near Little Venice just north of Paddington Station.

It would be helpful to me if you could at this early stage think about how you have experienced being a correspondent at as deep a level as you feel comfortable with. Obviously, the more profound and in a sense more personal the exploration, the more valuable will be the data that emerges. (Forgive please my use of research jargon, but a copy of this letter will need to be appended to the final project, and it’s important as I am discovering to play by the rules of academic research, language, literature references and all…)

As a stimulant to thought, and for background, I’m enclosing with this letter three documents. The blue one explains the content of the course on which I have been embarked these past four years at the CCPE. The second is a paper entitled Reinventing the News by the author of the book Emotional Intelligence Daniel Goleman – a former journalist himself with whom I’ve spoken about this project.

I also enclose a piece which I wrote earlier in 1999 for my course, in the form of a myth about my own personal journey, and how my involvement in psychotherapy has flowed from the experiences a career as a foreign correspondent. It is, as you will see, quite raw and frank – and in the spirit of the approach to research which I am taking, I hope it might trigger some reflections for you before we meet, on the different ways journalism and meaning intertwine for you. Indeed, if you feel moved to do so, I would be delighted if you felt able to contribute a written myth of your own.
Myth or no, it would also be very helpful if, before we meet, you could think of a story or development you have covered as a journalist which touched you at deep level, and in what way. Perhaps you can recall some dreams which illustrate that? If you have any entries in a private journal, or poems or drawings or any other form of expression which encapsulate in some way your experience of being a correspondent during this past extraordinary decade please do feel free to bring these to the project.

Many thanks once again for being willing to take part in this. I hope that you will find it as interesting and rewarding as I certainly expect it to be. From my research of published literature so far, I have come across very little, if any, writing which goes into the deeper personal experience of the correspondent beyond the usual anecdotal “what was it like...?” So I hope there may be something of broader value that might emerge.

I greatly look forward to exploring the question with you.

With warm regards

Mark Brayne
Appendix 5 - Participant Release Agreement

I agree to participate in a research study of “What has been the experience of personal meaning for foreign correspondents covering the global events of the pre-Millennial decade?” I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing an MA dissertation and in any future publications.

I understand that all information about my person and the details of my particular experiences will be appropriately disguised in order to ensure complete confidentiality; that all recorded or written contributions will be kept either in password-protected computer files or under lock and key as appropriate; and that they will be either destroyed or returned to me at the end of project. I further understand that I may withdraw from this research at any time and that any materials I have contributed will similarly be either destroyed or returned to me without being used in any way in the project.

I agree to meet for an initial interview of between one and two hours at a time and place to be agreed. If necessary and agreed, I will endeavour to be available for an additional interview. I grant permission that for note-taking purposes the interview(s) will be tape-recorded.

___________________________                  _______________________
Research Participant / Date                  Mark Brayne / Date

Mark Brayne, The Personal Experience of the Foreign Correspondent
Appendix 6 - Questions

Background:

- First memory. How, briefly, would you characterise your memories of early childhood.
- Family background, parents together/separated, at what age, siblings and where positioned in family.
- In what way do these connect forward to your becoming a journalist.

Deeper questions:

- Do you have a sense of what drives you as a correspondent?
- What do you see as your personal goals/mission, if any, in being a foreign correspondent.
- Have you had experiences during your work over the past decade - either being present at a story or writing about it afterwards - which seemed either at the time or in retrospect imbued with particular personal meaning for you?
- Examples? One or two? With follow-up question in what way these were significant experiences.
- Has journalism changed you. How deeply? And in what way?
- Would you describe yourself as spiritual in any way? Is there a connection there with your journalism.
- Have you ever cried in association with a story? When and why?
- Have you had dreams that relate to your work or the stories you cover? If so, could you describe them?
- Have you ever experienced in your writing and reporting work something beyond you which seems to speaking through you?
• Intuition. Have there been occasions – please describe – when you have somehow known intuitively the meaning of a development or story which you have witnessed.

• Have you experienced a sense of evil and/or good, something transcendent which surprised you yet seemed incontrovertible? Have you felt able or safe to reflect that in your reporting?

• Has the work of the foreign correspondent for you been in any way a healing experience – and if so, how.

• Poems/drawings/journal entries?

• Willingness to take part in a group workshop?

Mark Brayne  30 October 1999
Appendix 7 – Self Interview with Supervisor

Q. I wonder if could tell me something about your childhood experience, early childhood experience, first memory.

A. My very first memory? /Pauses/. Is walking down the lane outside the farmhouse in north Norfolk where we lived for about three years in the early 50s and longing for my father who’d gone off to the local market town. I was toddling down the lane hoping to find him. It was a happy memory.

Q. What age?

A. This would have been two-and-a-half and three, and there are memories there of wallowing in mud in the farm, yes happy memories, safe memories. But longing for father.

Q. So where was he?

A. He was out on the farm most of the time. /Laughs./ And in later years he was out on the farm all of the time. It was a drama that came to be enacted much more vividly later in childhood, but it is interesting that my very first memory is of my father not being there.

Q. Where would Mum have been?

A. Mum was looking after the pigs. Doing the washing, feeding the chickens, just safely there. /Grunts/. She’s told me since that we used to wander round – my brother was born at the farm - without nappies or trousers, just shitting wherever the mood took us. Also we were at one with the animals. It was a very earthed existence.

Q. That brother, was he younger, older?

A. Younger. I’m the oldest. [...] After we moved to the next farm, my first memory at the next farm is one of extreme unhappiness, so there was a substantial change, a huge shift in my emotional well being between the two farms and with the arrival of the third child.

Q. Can you say some more about that? What the change was?
A. The change was my father disappeared out of my life, became obsessed with the farm. He disappeared out of my mother’s life. I don’t want to say too much about that because it will come in later on. But I’m very aware that relevant to the meaning of journalism, very relevant, is this sense of being lost, this traumatic move at three-and-a-half, coinciding with the move to a big echoing cold empty farmhouse in the bleak North Norfolk countryside, the loss of my father out of my life almost completely, the arrival of another brother competing for my mother’s attention. My mother becoming desperately unhappy at my father failing to acknowledge her as a woman, and this desperate loneliness in this echoing farmhouse. So the contrast between those two farms was very significant.

Q. Are they still together?

A. No, they divorced when I was 11. Hmm, interesting. That echoes in with the search for meaning in journalism, the search to make sense of the world. And the reason perhaps that I became a journalist was to investigate, to find out how things worked and to find that safety, that clarity that I absolutely lost at the age of three, four.

Q. I know you’ve been in therapy a lot, do you want to say that at this point, you’ve done a lot of work on this, it’s evident, how it’s helped the meaning-making process? If it has.

A. Oh it has hugely. Yes. [...] I went into therapy after coming off the road. I came off the road as a correspondent in 1992. All my co-researchers are still on the road, so they still are correspondents. But I came off the road, stopped being a foreign correspondent, came back to work in the UK for four years before coming off the road as a correspondent because I wanted to put down roots, to provide roots for my children, to provide stability for my children. I wanted to put them into day school because I had been sent away to boarding school and hadn’t had stability. That’s why I stopped being a correspondent, because being a correspondent in many ways perpetuated this rootlessness that had to do with, I guess, the move between the those two farms and the breakdown of my parents’ relationship. So in my journalism I was never satisfied with just telling the story in two dimensions, I always wanted to go deeper into the story to work out what the story meant for the people involved in it, the players, the ordinary people. I had a passion for talking to ordinary people, and I guess that search for meaning reflected my own search for personal meaning. And when I train journalists, and when I talk to fellow journalists, I’m passionate about journalism that goes beyond the reporting and seeks to convey the deeper meaning of what’s happening to the listener and to really communicate, connect in with the listener.
Q. Want to try and touch them?

A. To move them, very much so. Where I have been most effective as a journalist and also perhaps at my most dangerous in terms of losing emotional balance — and it’s a very fine line between the two — is where I have been deeply touched by a story, either by the drama of the story itself or by the awareness of what this meant for the individuals whose lives it was touching, whether it was the Romanian revolution or travelling around China talking to peasants out in the sandy wastes of the Northern provinces living in caves. I was always very moved, very moved by the personal connection with the people I was talking to. And I think that perhaps where I was effective as a journalist was in that connection that I was able to make, that soul connection I was able to make, both with the people I was interviewing and reporting about and in a sense in the way I wrote and then worked up the stories and communicated that with the listener. The soul connection on the one side with the players but also on the other side with my audience. That was where my journalism came alive, that was where my journalism had meaning for me as well...

Q. You’ve mentioned soul quite a bit. It picks up a spiritual element, a flavour about what you do. Can you say more?

A. Yes one thing I am becoming aware of is that I can’t limit this to the last decade, looking at the whole process of becoming and being a journalist, so I’ll have to change the question... Soul.... And spiritual awareness in my journalistic work. /Ponders/.

I became aware, I joined the Church of England, in 1992 after I came off the road. That was the big and explicit and conscious move off the road into a spirituality that I owned publicly by going to church, becoming a member of the church choir, by stopping being a correspondent, chasing from press conference to press conference. But before that I was very aware of spirituality, which I couldn’t have put a name to in my work, for example reporting Tiananmen Square, Tiananmen Square and the demonstrations and upsurge of popular sentiment in Beijing before the tanks went in. There was something about the collective unconscious of Chinese people being expressed on the streets, and a sense of yearning, longing for change. It was a very intense spiritual experience, I now realise, looking back.

[...] Covering Tiananmen Square and indeed covering the Romanian revolution at the end of that year were for me intensely spiritual experiences. And I was very aware of that spirituality even if, as I said, I couldn’t put a name to it.
That naming process, where have you got to with that, is it more firmed up?

A. It’s not firmed up in the sense that I could put my beliefs or my understanding of spirituality in a box with a particular dogmatic label on it. But I’m acutely aware of divinity. I’m acutely aware of purpose in life, and I see that purpose being worked out, worked through in global events. [...] If you compare the world now with where it was 20 years ago, I believe that we are witnessing a much higher level of global consciousness. And journalists in general and I in my own way have been very much part of that rendering conscious of darknesses, of dark corners, of planetary neurosis. It’s a long-term process.

Q. Do you have any sense of where it’s going?

Of where it’s going? Yes, actually, I do believe that we’re moving towards ultimately a kind of shared planetary consciousness, which doesn’t exclude, in fact absolutely embraces the necessity of, conflict, but ultimately it might allow for the working through of conflict in new ways which exclude violence, because of the level of conscious awareness, and of alternatives, and I think we’ve seen that in Western Europe. I think in a way the trauma, the catharsis of World War Two and the stasis of the Cold War were workings through of a kind of planetary consciousness. [...] And journalists I see [...] as workers at that coalface of planetary consciousness.

Q. Reflecting on something you said there about tension – my word, not yours - between where you are coming from in these things and where just how much you can or can’t say. I wonder what’s that’s like. When you say careful about just how much you say, frame it up.

A. Hmmm. Sometimes very difficult, sometimes being aware of good and evil, or elemental forces at work and knowing that I cannot reflect that in my journalism. For two reasons; one because it’s against BBC guidelines, because we don’t express an opinion about things being good or bad. But secondly, and much more importantly, because it would be counterproductive. Because it’s a bit like in therapy. You can’t tell in the therapy what’s going on for the client. The client has to find out him or herself, and understand it from within. And it’s in a sense – it’s interesting this, I’ve never thought of this before – in a sense with our audiences, as journalists of consciousness, if we tell the audiences explicitly “This is Good. This is Evil”, it is in fact profoundly counterproductive, because they will agree or disagree with what you’re saying according to their own relatively lower level of
consciousness. I say that without being judgmental about where people are, but it would set up resistances.

For instance, I believe that in Yugoslavia there have been forces of good and evil at work. It was the same in Rwanda. Chechnya is a little bit more messy, but there are forces for good and evil in these conflicts, which are working themselves through. But to have labelled Milosevic, whom I interviewed in 1990 and whom I experienced as a profoundly evil man, to have labelled him evil on air would have not done the cause, if it is a cause, any good at all. In fact one of my colleagues did start talking very explicitly on air about the terrible things that were going on and what was likely to happen next. And in effect his employment with the BBC came to an end, because it was felt that he was going over the top. And although in fact everything he said turned out to be an understatement – it was actually much worse than he predicted – the planet, the BBC, our audiences, or editors, the organisation, we were not ready to hear that at that stage, so it was actually counterproductive. So it can be very frustrating, knowing something and not being able or not feeling it appropriate to say it.

Q. Having to sit with it?

A. To sit with it.

Q. Like the silence that is therapy.

A. Yes, like the process, absolutely, sit with the knowledge of what’s going on for the client, and to sit. This is very interesting. I think I said at the end [of my myth], journalists as therapists to the wider community. You can’t do the work for people, for your audiences, but what you can do is create a container, give them the tools to reach their own wisdom, and I do believe that there is a deeper shared wisdom that everybody is tapping into, so I have a kind of internal optimism that if I do my job as a journalist, or facilitate the job of journalists in a way that has integrity, honesty, openness, fairness, that this will of itself produce /giggles/ progress. Progress of consciousness, a stretching of consciousness, with very strong therapeutic parallels. [...] 

Q. And also a link, really, talking about.. You mention the elemental forces, that you’ve been touched by what you witnessed, for me casts me back to where we came in with the farmyard, yes, I guess that had an elemental feel to it, wandering around without a nappy on, very grounded in touch with the weather, nature farming. A theme.
A. Yes there is a theme here. Being a son of the soil as well as a son of the century, I’m very much a son of the soil, of earth and water, of mud, and I have a certainty about the goodness of creation, the fertility of creation, growing up on a farm, sowing seeds, the cycle of the seasons, the harvest. I used to adore taking part in the harvest, driving tractors, wallowing in the grain as it came out of the combine harvester into the trailer. I used to adore that, running grain through my hands as a child. It’s given me a deep sense of internal security, which I think was a kind of point of reference in my journalism which I never doubted. [...] 

Q. It sounds as if it can almost be an embodied experience? In your guts.

A. [...] There were many points through my journalistic career where I felt in touch with a kind of mystic truth. It’s one of the reasons I came off the road, because I couldn’t express that truth in just daily reporting, although it’s so important for journalists to be in touch with that truth so that their reporting should be authentic and right for where the planet needs to go in terms of the responsibility that they have. Certainly that BBC journalists have or I believe have.

/Long silence./

Q. I get a very clear sense that your sort of passion about what you do, that it stirs and moves you and disturbs you, perhaps could say some more about that, and the effect it’s had on your career as a journalist.

A. The ultimate effect that it had on my career as a journalist is that it stopped me being one, and took me off the road. Which was so awe-inspiring and nothing could compare with that after that. But journalism...

Q. What happened in Romania?

A. Well what happened in Romania...... /thinks/ It was at the end of that extraordinary year that had seen the wall come down in Berlin, which had seen the velvet revolution in Czechoslovakia, the fall of Zhivkov in Bulgaria, that advent of non-communist governments in Poland and Hungary, and I’d been declared persona non grata in Romania several years earlier for some reporting I did on Ceausescu. Whom I also experienced as evil, although I couldn’t have a put a name to it in 1982, which was the last time before 1989 that I had visited Romania. But I’d had a sense in Romania of incredible richness, of incredible depth, of countryside, of colour, a sense of history, a sense of Europe, crammed, all of the competing parts of Europe, the split parts of Europe crammed into one country, Romania as a microcosm of Europe. It’s got Protestants and Orthodox, it’s got Slav
and Hungarian and Romance, some Serbian speakers, it’s got the Danube, the
great European waterway. It’s got mountains, it’s got plains. It’s got the Black Sea.
It’s got a Roman history. It’s got deep connections with the East that didn’t go
through the Enlightenment. It’s right on the cusp of East and West, in terms of its
people, in terms of its geography, its topography, its countryside, its colours, its
mineral wealth, its weather. The whole of Europe is in Romania.

And I experienced in Romania when I went there those first times in 1981 and
1982, I experienced it as a country of enormous wealth and depth. I felt inspired by
Romania and the Romanians I had met. And then by the end of 1989 I had not
been to cover any of the Revolutions. I’d not been there at the Berlin Wall; I’d not
been there when the tanks moved onto Tiananmen Square because I’d left a few
days earlier. I’d not been in Hungary. I’d not been on the streets of Prague when
they were toppling the communist party there. So Romania was the first of the big
changes in 1989 [in Eastern Europe] which I experienced personally. Add to that
the intensity of my previous experience of Romania – and Romania as a country
(this is interesting), Romania is a society, a country on the edge, almost on the
edge of existence. People were desperately suppressed. There was very little in the
shops. It was a struggle for existence at a physical, food, but also at a spiritual level,
because they were boxed in, so listened to, made small by the petty-mindedness of
the dictatorship they lived under. And I realise actually just talking about this that
I’m a person of the edge. I’m a person of the soil, but I’m also a person of the edge.
Growing up in North Norfolk, on the coast, on the land, the cusp between the town
and the country, between land and sea, between water and earth...

Q. Elemental...

A. Between air and fire. I am a person absolutely of the edge. I’m always
investigating the edge. I’m not a comfortable person. I’m not comfortable with the
status quo. I’m always struggling to make sense of things, and Romania is that sort
of country. It’s that sort of place where you feel on the edge. It’s a country of raw
extremes. So to experience the revolution, which was a revolution of extremes,
because it was the first in Europe at which serious violence was unleashed, large
numbers of people were killed, I thought it was several 10s of thousands to start
with, it turned out only to be thousand or so altogether. But I saw dead bodies, I
was shot at, I experienced dramatic fire fights, the National Library going up in
flames in central Bucharest, and my reporting was infused with a sense of [...] inspiration. Extraordinary.

I would sit in front of my typewriter and watch the story write itself. It was quite
awe-inspiring, and quite frightening at times. And it was some of the best
journalism I’ve done, ever. I’ve read those stories again. It was very raw, it stripped away the covers of my soul, it exposed me. I felt exposed and somehow seen at the same time. And able to convey that experience of the revolution and this extraordinary sense of liberation and exhilaration that the Romanians had at losing Ceausescu and finding their own truth. I felt able to communicate that to my listeners with [...] inspiration, inspired writing [...]. Tremendous speed, under tremendous pressure, right on the edge, of time pressures, on my own too without a big BBC team, operating on my own where I feel most comfortable.

It just stripped the scabs off my broken heart. It opened my heart, it really opened my heart at the end of ‘89, and I’ve used the analogy of the fairy tale of Kay and Gerda, the ice shard, which had penetrated my heart. And my whole journey had been trying to heal that broken heart. And it so happened that as I left Bucharest after two weeks as the revolution had won, it was beginning to get a little bit messy and ambiguous, and I was losing interest fast, I have to say, in the messy politics of it all. Because the rawness was past. The raw elemental forces that had been at work to overthrow Ceausescu were giving way to a much nastier infighting, political, in the new political arena. The old communists were trying to come back to power through the National Salvation Front. It was getting quite messy. But on the train out of Bucharest on to Budapest... /changes tack/

Now Budapest, Hungary is a country that means... something I still don’t understand. Its language is unlike anything else anywhere on earth, a completely different set of rules, and I adore the language, absolutely adore the language. I’ve studied it, learning to communicate, trying to learn to communicate in a language I don’t understand, which was Hungarian then and which was also the language of authentic emotion in myself, of relationship, I wasn’t able to do it. What came together on that train was the love of Hungarian, the yearning to communicate in a language that I was trying to learn, both Hungarian and my soul language, the longing for my heart to open and the sense of exhilaration being on the edge, observing and reporting on this clash of elemental forces, almost Faustian in its... On the Brocken watching Walpurgisnacht...

And I met a girl. A Romanian Hungarian in whom I fell [...] in love. She was my Gerda. So everything came together suddenly. [...] So the journalism, the personal journey, they came together from different directions in this extraordinary emotional explosion which I continue to work through, and this is very nearly 10 years ago.

[...] That has been my journalistic journey, but it has also been my personal journey, me as a child of the 20th century, of the post-colonial era, and absolutely a child of the Cold War, which marked me and which also expressed my own deepest
truth. The melting of the ice, the ice shard in my heart being the equivalent of the falling of the Berlin Wall. [...] I’m driven to make sense of this, just as I was driven to make sense of that move between the two farms at the beginning of the 1950s. I don’t know if that makes sense. It certainly makes sense for me. I’ve never put all of these things together quite in this way.

Q. Sounds very much as if the struggle continues, yes, to make sense of all this.

A. Yes, of which this project is a very important part, because I want to see how the journalism fits in with this. Now, would I have experienced the same if I had been a nuclear physicist, or a bricklayer? Would bricklaying have had this profound meaning for me? Is it because of who I am – it obviously is because of who I am – but does journalism, does what we are called to do in the context of planetary consciousness, is our craft challenging each one of us to ask ourselves these deep questions to find meaning, not just meaning of international relations, the environment, or ethnic rivalries in Rwanda, but our own personal meaning? Are we being propelled as journalists, have we gone into journalism because we are seeking this meaning, however unconsciously, and then are we propelled by what we witness and the reporting that we do deeper into that journey, back into ourselves, in the sense that do we as journalists come out from a place of struggle with meaning, become journalists at some level in order to answer those questions? And having found some kind of answer out there through the journalism, are we then called to circle back into ourselves, to integrate those truths, insights we’ve gained in the outer world, to integrate them into our own healing, and to become who we are meant to become with journalism as a tool, and journalism which is in itself the seeking, responsible journalism of the BBC kind, which however implicitly is also seeking to help the world because of what the world needs to become?

And that underlies our BBC journalism, that we do believe in truth and justice, a kind of overarching sense of truth and justice, and fairness and equality, and fair dealing. And that’s not because it’s written down in our charter, or because it’s written down in the manifesto of any particular political party, but because it reflects some kind of deeper creative truth, some kind of deeper spirituality, although most journalists wouldn’t want to label it spirituality. But I believe it is a spiritual quest, it is a spiritual calling. [...]

Q. What about crying then?

A. I cried in Romania. It was on Christmas day. I’d heard the church bells, been to church. I was not an explicit church goer. I’d also heard the song of Romanians
Awake being broadcast on the radio, and this was the anthem of the revolution. I came back and reported this. I got London to play in some sound, and I knew that I was going to burst into tears when I heard this sound being played in from London, so I slapped my cheeks, washed water on my face, to try and stop myself from crying, and when the music came from London, I just managed to get to the end of the despatch, wound the volume down as quickly as I could so that I wouldn’t cry on air, and then howled, and sobbed and sobbed for about five minutes.
Appendix 8 – Goleman, Reinventing the News

Daniel Goleman is a psychologist who has reported on the behavioral and brain sciences for the New York Times since 1984: He has been a senior editor at Psychology Today and taught at Harvard University Dr. Goleman’s newest book, Emotional Intelligence (Bantam Books, September, 1995) argues that human competencies like self-discipline, persistence, and empathy are of greater consequence in most of life than IQ and that we ignore the national decline in these competencies at our peril.

Other recent books include Mind Body Medicine (Consumer Reports/St. Martin’s Press), The Creative Spirit (Dutton), Vital Lies, Simple Truths: The Psychology of Self-Deception (Simon and Schuster), and The Meditative Mind (Tarcher).

Born in Stockton, California, Dr. Goleman attended Amherst College, where he was an Alfred P. Sloan Scholar, and graduated Magna Cum Laude. His graduate education was at Harvard, where he received his M.A. and Ph.D. in clinical psychology and personality development. Dr. Goleman now lives in the Berkshires in Massachusetts with his wife Tara Bennett-Goleman, a psychotherapist. He has two grown sons.

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The Contemplative Mind: Reinventing the News

Daniel Goleman

Just what do we mean by the term "contemplative mind?"

We originally turned to the phrase as a more culturally palatable stand-in for "meditation." In retrospect, I think that the choice is salutary, opening up the scope for our deliberation.

In its original, literal sense in the Latin, the roots "con" + "templum" indicated the act of thoughtful observation involved in marking out the grounds for a temple; in its deepest sense it connotes an awareness directed toward a sacred end. Contemplation sacralizes the ordinary divining its deepest dimensions.

In classical Western thought - from Philo and the Greek Fathers of the early Church, through Aristotle and St. Augustine -- the contemplative life has been contrasted with the active life. But the Oxford English Dictionary notes a 14th-century work urging, "Meld the works of active life with the works of contemplative life," a stance much in the integrative spirit of our current mission.

My understanding is that "contemplative" refers to a spectrum that spans thoughtful reflection, pondering and consideration, and outright meditative states that transcend all thought. This span might begin with perceptions and reflections that are more "spacious" than is ordinarily the case, relatively free of limiting psychological coordinates such as role, culture, or political leanings. It includes prayer in the deepest sense -- seeking surrender to or a union with a larger presence - but not in the mundane sense of asking for something worldly, as in prayers of petition. It also covers the many meditative modes, such as mindful observation of the flow of experience from a neutral stance in awareness; rapt attention, absorption, and one-pointed concentration; immersion in utter inner silence and stillness. And its fruition
is in bring these modes or their after-effects into daily life, integrating the contemplative and the active.

**What Does Psychology Know About the Contemplative Mind?**

Most of the relevant research has been on meditation, particularly Transcendental Meditation, Zen, Vipassana, and, increasingly, Tibetan Buddhist practices. The bulk of meditation research has focused on two kinds of changes: state effects, which occur during the practice itself, and trait effects, changes that persist well beyond the meditation session, transforming the meditator.

Among the most general, well-documented state effects are a "hypometabolic" state of physiological relaxation and slowed metabolism, a heightened self-awareness, and feelings of calm. Among the main trait effects are improved concentration, empathy and perceptual acuity, a drop in anxiety and stress symptoms, an overall improvement in psychological and physical health or alleviation of many symptoms in the chronically ill, and more effective performance in a broad range of domains from sports and academic test-taking to creativity. The results of a meditation technique depend to some degree on the specifics of attentional strategy or other methods employed; for example, studies of Tibetan tumo, a method that focuses on the self-regulation of internal energy patterns, find resulting changes like a rise in metabolism and core body temperature.

Some meditation findings are tentative, with smoldering methodological debates challenging them - most recently in a skeptical report on exceptional performance prepared for the military. But a meta-analysis of meditation findings published recently in the *American Psychologist* concluded that it produces a significant improvement in many of these dimensions.

These questions of method aside, the findings are for meditation *per se*, which is only one band of the contemplative mind as defined here. There has been virtually no research on related questions, such as the benefits of solitude and retreats, or the nature and effects of semi-meditative states such as spacious reflection, introspection, prayer or contemplation of a text. And the question of what such a contemplative mode might bring to life’s activities is virgin territory for scientific research. If that were to be pursued, though, some basic questions might be tackled at the outset.
Contemplation as a Domain of Skill

One question for exploration might be, what makes someone able or adept at contemplation? Put differently, what elements need be taught to help people become more contemplative?

Seeking too mechanistic an answer to the question may seem somewhat antithetical to the contemplative spirit itself, but many classical sources give matter-of-fact accounts of the key elements. For example, the core contemplative "skills," according to the *Visuddhimagga* (a 5th-century meditation text with which I have familiarity) include:

1. mindfulness, bringing a careful, ongoing awareness to the present moment;
2. the ability to detach from normal modes of cognition and perception - to suspend ordinary trains of thought - and sustain this mindful attention;
3. concentration, being able to become absorbed and let go of distracting thought;
4. equanimity, an evenness in place of normal reactivity;
5. energy, zest and pleasure in this endeavor.

Other questions might include a catalog of ways to enter contemplative states and a mapping of the contemplative mind; its consequences for health and well-being, performance, relationships, etc.; and pathologies of the contemplative path or the effects of its lack.

Over the last few years there has been a gathering initiative to investigate and foster what might be called "emotional intelligence," effective emotional habits and harmonious social relationships. It has advanced on several levels: studies of the neuroscientific underpinnings of emotional life; pinpointing the key emotional skills (self-awareness, self-control, empathy, expressiveness, peacemaking, etc.); and identifying how deficiencies in these core skills play a role, in a range of problems, such as rising rates of teen depression and...
divorce (now two in three for newlyweds), addictions, and violence. Finally, the
initiative is promoting a full kindergarten to high school curriculum in
emotional literacy as a primary prevention effort.

Could there be a parallel research strategy and social initiative for the
contemplative mind? Can the core contemplative abilities be identified and
inculcated? Can more opportunities for experiencing a contemplative mode be
made available or encouraged? What difference would it make?

Reinventing the News

A telling question is how a contemplative mode might transform a given
endeavor. As a case in point, consider what the contemplative mind might
offer journalism.

"The function of news is to s function of truth is to signalize an event," Walter
Lippman once observed. "The function of truth is to bring to light the hidden
facts to set them into relation to each other and to make a picture of reality.”
In this sense, I propose that a contemplative mode could move news closer to
the truth.

What’s considered Big News - the front-page-headline and evening-network
lead stories that galvanize attention, that everyone sees - is essentially what is
of burning interest to the limbic system, the ancient part of the brain that
rules emotional life. As a thoughtful TV producer put it, "News is what’s
dangerous to people" - even if the danger is by proxy. The limbic system scans
whatever happens for signs of danger; a looming threat triggers an "orienting"
response, arousing rapt attention - but the potential threat registers only long
enough to ensure that it is of little importance. Once the potential threat is
safely understood as nothing of immediate alarm, the brain habituates to it,
tuning it out. The limbic brain is ready to fixate on the next potential threat.
The reality depicted in this way is a continuous stream of threats faced and
avoided.

This fascination with limbic news has a potent evolutionary history; it aids
survival by warning of danger. But it means that the single largest category
of stories in the news are of threats and tragedies near and far - a formula
that, paradoxically, is soothing to the savage brain, which finds relief in the
fact that it happened there, not here. Once reassured that there is no
immediate personal risk, the limbic brain turns away.
The major headlines follow much the same dynamic: as each crisis dominates the news it grabs huge amounts of print and air space - then, once the crisis’s half-life has expired, fades away, to be replaced by the next. Ethnic war in Bosnia gives way, to ethnic slaughter in Rwanda, followed by nuclear weapons in North Korea, which is followed by tyranny in Haiti, which is overtaken by the refugee flood from Cuba....

Limbic news conveys an endless string of disconnected incidents in isolation from context - and so devoid of meaning. As it is now, the nightly litany of sub-Saharan famines, ethnic hatreds ripened into civil war, children shooting children, and so on, add little or nothing to our understanding. They are bits of information without meaning, data points removed from the larger, hidden patterns that give them context. A contemplative journalism might reflect on the conditions that underlie those incidents, teasing out what Gregory Bateson called “the pattern that connects” the event to a larger web of meaning.

Consider an investigative mode that might be called “the position of no position”; a completely open, spacious inquiry into a state of affairs, free of prior commitment to any point of view - a contemplative mind. Such a deeply reflective look at events could produce a very different version of “news.” The contemplative journalist might notice key relationships and changes that are typically beneath our everyday threshold for perception. One example of this mode is Rachel Carson’s 1962 New Yorker articles which became The Silent Spring; by observing closely the changes in a single pond, she sounded a warning on global environmental calamities.

Joan Konner, now dean of the Columbia School of Journalism, once proposed an entirely original kind of news show, one much more in keeping with this wider perspective. She envisioned a “preventive journalism,” one that “searches in advance for the hidden forces of change so that society can protect itself from the ambushes of history.”

A contemplative news would stretch the assumptions of the conventional "beats" of journalism, and add several entirely new ones. Among the beats that are missing from our daily news:

- **Values and meaning.** For example, the Dalai Lama speaks of the four billion souls who hold to no traditional faith; what values guide this mass - where do they find meaning?

- **Ideas, imagination, the creative spirit.** A medley of new ways of thinking, seeing, doing; visions of the possible.
The planet. A chronicle of the slow processes that are transforming the earth, and the human activities that foster them.

-Our collective social and emotional economy. For example, instead of the normal business report, a deeper look at how trends and events, like recessions or a wave of mergers and cutbacks, affect the well-being of the people they touch.

-Human connectedness. Our relationships - family, work, community, gender, generations - and the forces at work to change them.

-News of the spirit and soul. Not about religious events, but about the spiritual impulses that animate them. "Care of the Soul" might be a daily column.

-Daily life dissected. This would uncover the invisible links between how each of us lives and the vast consequences of these collective decisions when repeated by millions, - e.g., the negative impact an the planet of our habits of consumption.

Besides adding a wider range of beats, the form of the news might change, Right now the closest approximation of contemplative news is in "back-of-the-book" essays and some feature stories; contemplative news would feature more such reportage - more thoughtful, at that - and give it prominence rather than relegating it to the back pages. Beyond that, the "news" might blend with the arts -- visual, dance, poetry, song -to the extent that these forms explore and articulate our collective condition. And, in its substance, the news might merge with disciplines like history and political science, philosophy and ethics, sociology and psychology, anthropology and evolutionary biology - wherever the deeper understanding of events is to be found.

Some Related Questions To Ponder

-in what others ways might a contemplative mode reinvent the news, or the media in general?

-How can the contemplative mode get better press?

Mainstream American culture is more apt to view the lone pilgrim as isolated and lonely, rather than as seeking the splendors of solitude; to see time spent in contemplative pursuits as "wasted" or "unproductive;" to see retreats as frivolous or eccentric. What role might media play in altering this image?
What might the contemplative mind bring to other professions? How would it transform teaching, business, medicine, law, grantmaking?

Where are contemplative role models in our culture? While Eastern cultures and Western mystical and monastic traditions offer ample exemplars of the contemplative mind, they are scarce in lay society in the West. The seeker alone in nature is one archetype, exemplified by Thoreau at Walden Pond; if there is a root text for considering the contemplative mind in American society, it might be Thoreau’s *Walden*. One historical lineage for this tradition would certainly hark back to Emerson, Thoreau, and the Transcendentalists. Where are others to be found, and who are they?