



Crossing the Distance: Can mapping dreams using reflective writing techniques facilitate the integration of the self?

An Account of a Heuristic Inquiry

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Abstract

This paper is an account of a self-heuristic enquiry into the experience of using artwork and reflective creative writing to map fragments of my dreams over a ten-week period in early 2020. During this time, I generated a series of dream maps and associated reflective creative writing, from which emerged themes of *orientation, perspective, journey, beasts, and body*. As a cross-art exercise in transforming ephemeral dream fragments into concrete maps, poems, dialogues, and other written forms, it was an extended journaling of personal metaphor that was both playful and deeply informative. I argue that the novel techniques I used in this project contributed to integration of my self and could similarly benefit others. My intention for this paper is to share personal discoveries I made through the work, and to offer practical guidance—in the form of a nine-step procedure—to other practitioners who would like to try this approach.

Keywords: dreams, map, metaphor, landscape, reflective creative writing

Introduction

In 2020, I undertook a heuristic enquiry (Moustakas, 1990; Etherington, 2004; Kenny, 2012; Haertl, 2014; Sultan, 2019) into the experience of visual and verbal dream-mapping as the research dissertation component of an MSc in creative writing for therapeutic purposes (CWTP).

For 10 weeks, I jotted recalled fragments of dreams into prepared templates of conceptual categories and sub-categories. At the end of each week during dedicated 3-hour sessions, I selected fragments to work with, and in combination with reflective writing techniques organised them into spatial arrangements from which I drew and painted maps. I then wrote further into these artworks.

I formed my research question in autumn 2019 and conducted my enquiry in the first six months of 2020, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic. I was fortunate that my physical health and that of my family and friends was not affected during this period, but the overall circumstances of the pandemic undoubtedly had a detrimental effect on my emotional and psychological wellbeing, and it is impossible to assess their influence on this study.

The scope of my dissertation limited examination of different cultural and historical views on the vast topics of dreams (beyond the rational), maps (with their associations of territories and land rights), and self (as essence or a social construct) brought together by my research question, and I was aware that I viewed them all through a Western white lens. It therefore felt particularly important to take a reflexive approach to the study (Etherington, 2004; Cousins, 2013; Sultan, 2019, p. 18), making myself present in it to reflect the view that 'research is always a work of interpretation and the researcher is always in the thick of the research process rather than distanced from it' (Cousins, 2013, p. 3).

Who am I, the researcher?

I had come to CWTP not as a therapist but as a teacher, teacher trainer, and educational author in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). Six years previously, I had discovered the benefits of CWTP after joining a safely held creative writing group. I enjoyed writing poetry and fiction, journalled regularly, and ran a small local community writing group.

I chose to do a piece of research that would be a creative experience for me, a dream-mapping project that would call my unconscious and conscious creativity into partnership. It would be part of a long therapeutic journey to explore and heal anxiety and feelings of detachment and dis-integration. A recurring pattern for me in relationships with others was to shift rapidly from a calm, relaxed, and happy state to one of extreme anxiety and insecurity. This happened both in groups of friends and in one-to-one relationships. I would feel panic—dry mouth, racing heart, a churning feeling in my gut—often accompanied by incomprehensible anger and a desire to be alone. This would be followed by feelings of shame, sometimes for not being assertive enough, other times for being too harsh and rigid. This led to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and low self-esteem, and I would often struggle with sleep.

I had had a recurring dream for years, in which I was lost in cities I had once known well. In my dreams, they had become fearful and overwhelming places, with no recognisable landmarks. I wondered how I might use creative writing to help me explore, map, and gain some control over these troubling dreamlands.

Integration of the Self

Not having a background in psychotherapy, I came to this research with a basic understanding of *self* as a fluid entity made up ‘parts of self’ (Rowan, 1993). In the poem below, a rudimentary map of self inspired by Perry’s exquisitely ornate and humorous *Map of Days* (2013), I identify social, cultural, and professional aspects of myself (white woman, mother, ELT facilitator, etc.) in relation to less visible parts of self. These archetypal figures (Myss, 2002) (Explorer, Saboteur, Artist, etc.) are accompanied by an inaccessible fortified building (Walled castle).

I was aware that when I was emotionally activated, parts of self would scatter into painful isolation, creating feelings of dis-integration. Field’s assertion that therapeutic writing ‘encourage[s] better integration of the personae ... that all of us wear during daily life’ and helps us ‘embrace and celebrate our complex and multiple selves whilst still feeling authentic, integrated and real’ (2010, p. 158) chimed with me. I wanted to invite my Dreaming Self, depicted by Bolton as ‘wiser, [with] a breathtaking sense of humour and [lacking] the inhibition of our socialised daily selves’ (1999, p. 81), to have an active role in the therapeutic writing process.

Apparent Parts of My Self	Less Apparent Parts of My Self	Unknown Parts of My Self
White woman	Wild Woman	
Mother	Lonely Child	
British	Explorer	
Middle-aged	Saboteur	
ELT author	Warrior Princess	
Middle-class	Artist	
Educator	Anxious Friend	
CWTP facilitator	Poet	
	Walled Castle	
	Curious Child	
	Dreaming Self	

My conviction that Dreaming Self had something important to contribute was supported by Perls's view of dreams as the source of metaphors for alienated parts of self that need to be re-integrated (Biophily2, 2016; O'Mahoney, 1993). As a linguist, I am aware of the central role played by metaphor in everyday life: 'as much a part of our functioning as our sense of touch, and as precious' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 239); as a poet I am grateful for how it helps me 'grasp the ungraspable' (Bolton, 2014, p. 105), serves as 'a container for feelings which are too overwhelming to be tolerated' (Cox & Theilgaard, 1997, p. 99), offers an 'oblique angle' on self (Hunt, 2000, p. 93), and is a means of access to deeply painful and problematic memories that are otherwise deeply hidden (Bolton et al., 2006, p. 15). It followed, then, that a cross-art form that combined artwork and reflective creative writing (RCW) would be a two-pronged approach to 'making manifest' and re-integrating alienated parts of myself that my Dreaming Self offered me as metaphors.

Dreams as Spaces and Places

Neuroscience shows that dreaming allows the brain to process vast quantities of information, make creative associations, solve problems, generate new knowledge, and nurse our mental and emotional health by processing emotions in a safe, anxiety-free state (Walker, 2017). While appreciating this, I was also drawn to Jungian views of dreams as spaces—‘portals, entrances ... for the next step in consciousness’ (Estés, 2003, Track 1), ‘openings’ that provide ‘momentary glimpses of the dreamer’s total imaginative fabric’ (Rycroft in Alexander, 2014, p. 84), and also places—the ‘wild dreamland ... a fabled lost continent [which] rises out of our sleeping bodies ... to create a sheltering motherland ... the continent of our knowing ... the land of our Self’ (Estés, 1992, p. 458). Metzger argues that, along with ‘the private, particular, peculiar, the perspective of the feminine, ethnic, elderly, the child ... and the mysterious,’ dreams connect us to ‘wild territory of the self [,] a vast, unexplored, and prohibited geography’ (p. 42), from which we are separated by a culture that overvalues the ‘commercial and mainstream’. With appropriate methodology and ethical considerations in place, and a carefully devised approach to my explorations, I would find out what wild territories my dreamwork could open up for me.

Dream Elaborations, Verbal and Visual

My project would fall into a long tradition of ‘dream elaboration’ (Ihanus in Bolton et al., 2010, p. 36), a re-telling of my dreams by my waking mind, which Hedges (2005, p. 10) believes can be as healing as the dreams themselves. The RCW would be a re-telling, the maps a re-showing, ‘symbolic representation[s] of selected characteristics of a place ... drawn on a flat surface’ (National Geographic, 2019), where the characteristics were symbols from my dreams. They would draw on conventions of grid maps, the authoritative and dominant voice in mapping for the last several hundred years, but be more akin to traditional ‘story maps’ or ‘felt maps’ which represent places

as perceived by [individuals] or [cultures] moving through [them] ... are self-made [and] sensuous register the past, and acknowledge the way memory and landscape layer and interweave [,] are alert to a landscape’s changeability as well as its fixtures [and that] tell of the inches and tints of things. (Macfarlane, 2018, pp. 96–97)

Dream-mapping is not without precedent. Susan Hiller's 1974 dream-mapping experiment involved seven people sleeping in a meadow overnight, then mapping their dream experiences the next morning and collating them into a composite dream map (Hiller, 2012, pp. 52–59). Bulkeley's Dream Mapping Project (2019) used dream journalling and mapping amongst immigrants to explore themes of identity, borders, language, and nationality. Hiller describes dream maps as 'cognitive frameworks that help us to organise and interpret dream experiences' (2012, p. 33). She sees these 'two-dimensional attempts to convey three or more dimensions simultaneously,' which often resemble diagrams or architectural plans rather than maps and often disregard context and scale, as complex and as having a universal provenance. She refers to dream maps created by shamans and yogis, for example, and Australian Aboriginal painted maps of their dreamtime (Hiller, 2012, pp. 33–35)—felt maps that show perceptions of different states of consciousness or experiences outside the normal concept of time.

For my investigation into the ephemeral and personal, I needed a research methodology both robust and fluid. Heuristic methodology offered this, with its partnership of form and flexibility geared at conducting research 'on behalf of [a] phenomenon' (Dahlberg et al. in Sultan, 2019, p. 80).

Heuristic Enquiry

Heuristic enquiry values 'images, hunches, dreams, ideas that come between sleeping and waking, synchronicity, out-of-body and other exceptional experiences,' so the methodology aligned with my research question (Braud & Andersen in Etherington, 2004, p. 111). Its mutually supporting phases and processes (Moustakas, 1990) offered:

- a systematic framework (the phases) that could systematically contain a fluid and creative investigation into dreams, and
- a toolkit of discovery-oriented, experiential, imaginative, serendipitous, intuitive, creative, nonlinear, flexible, and potentially transformative techniques (the processes) (Sultan, 2019) that would balance the more precise and analytical aspects of my research.

As a *self*-heuristic enquiry, my study would lack the 'deeply collaborative spirit' and multidimensionality identified by Sultan (2019, p. 237) as core qualities of the methodology. I hoped, though, that it would

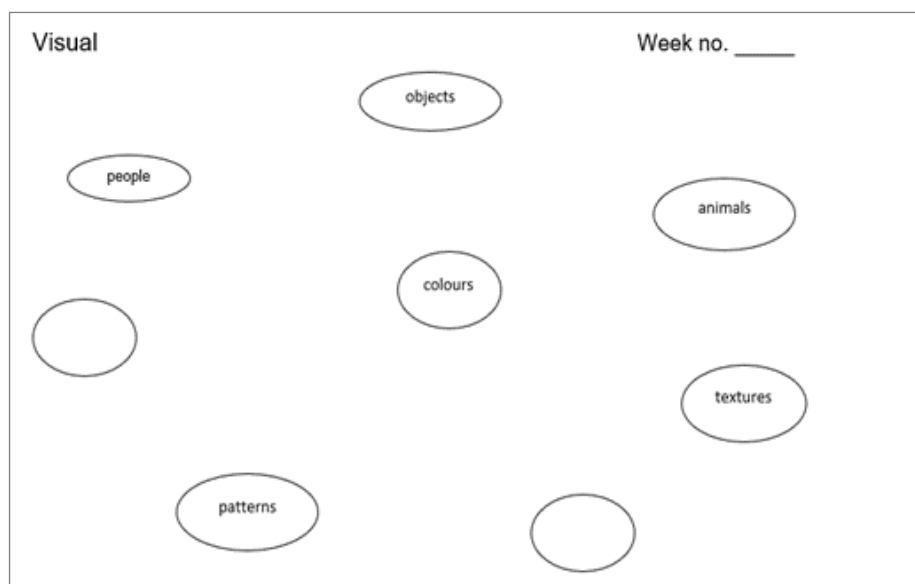
not 'lean toward the arrogant' (27), but instead be an exploration of the essential meaning of a living experience which might resonate with others. Heuristic enquiry has been criticised for lacking attention to culture, gender, and history (Etherington, 2004), so, again, it felt important to take a reflexive approach to the project (Etherington, 2004; Cousins, 2013).

The Dreamscape Templates

There is a long history of dream journalling, which usually involves writing narrative accounts of dreams (Rosiere in Hiller, 2012; Metzger, 1992; Brown, 2004; Alexander, 2014; Bolton, 2013; Pirjo, 2017). My dream journalling objective was not to capture whole individual dream narratives but to gather images and motifs—including 'narrative motifs' such as falling, flying, and being chased (Jung, 1974/2002)—from multiple dreams over multiple nights. To do this, I devised a series of dreamscape templates. These were A4 printed sheets, each with a topic heading, such as Spatial or Feelings, and a space for the week number. Some were tables (seven or eight rows and two to six columns), and others mind maps (eight to ten lozenges). All had conceptual or thematic subcategories marked in the table headings or lozenges, e. g., sky/space, bodies of water, forests, tunnels, caves, joy, disgust, anxiety, with space for me to annotate. Sometimes I left some sub-categories blank so I could add new ones as the week went on. Figure 1 below gives two examples:

Figure 1

Sample dreamscape templates.



Animals		Week no. _____	
Type	Archetype / archetypal associations?	Objects or people associated with them in the dream?	Feelings associated with them in the dream?

I kept several different templates near my bed each week, with a pen, so that I could fill them in soon after waking. At the beginning of each week, I had made a new selection, reusing some, adapting others.

The Weekly Mapping and Writing Sessions

Each three-hour Friday morning mapping session followed broadly the same plan:

1. An opening round of reflective journal writing (5 min).
2. A short focusing (Gendlin, 1978/2003; Sultan, 2019, p. 93) session followed by further reflective writing (20 min).
3. Copying the dream fragments from that week's templates onto slips of paper and organising some or all of them into an arrangement that felt pleasing (10 min).
4. Creating a dream map (drawing, painting, and/or collage) (75 min).
5. Coffee break and tidying up (10 min).
6. Reflective creative writing in response to the dream map (free-writing, poetry, dialogic writing, narrative, instructions for guided walks through the maps) (25 min).
7. A feedback statement (Thompson, 2011, pp. 34–39) on my RCW (e.g., When I read my RCW, I notice/feel/realise...) (5 min).
8. A closing round of reflective journal writing (10 min).

To create my elaborations, I reviewed the week's completed dreamscape sheets and sifted them for dream fragments to map. I used these fragments to create dream elaborations in the form of visual artworks (Maps 1–10) and RCW. For the maps, I took inspiration from the literary maps in *The Writer's Map* (Lewis-Jones, 2018), *Talking Maps*—an exhibition of maps ('grid' and 'felt') I visited at the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford in February 2020, and Metzger (1992) and Alexander's (2014) suggestions of dream collages. For the RCW, I had a predetermined pool of ideas from which I selected one or more each week. Some were my own, others were inspired by other CWTP practitioners' work, for example:

- Writing poetic-imaginary prose (Ihanus in Bolton et al., 2010)
- Writing about items from dreams as metaphors for anything that feels personally significant or therapeutic (Hunt, 2000; Bolton 2013)
- Developing dream narratives (Bolton, 1999)
- Distilling dreams into poems (Alexander, 2014)
- Writing and developing stories about characters from dreams (Metzger, 1992)
- Dialoguing with objects from dreams (Stoner in Bolton et al., 2010; Bolton, 2013) and symbols from dreams (Alexander, 2014)

Ethics

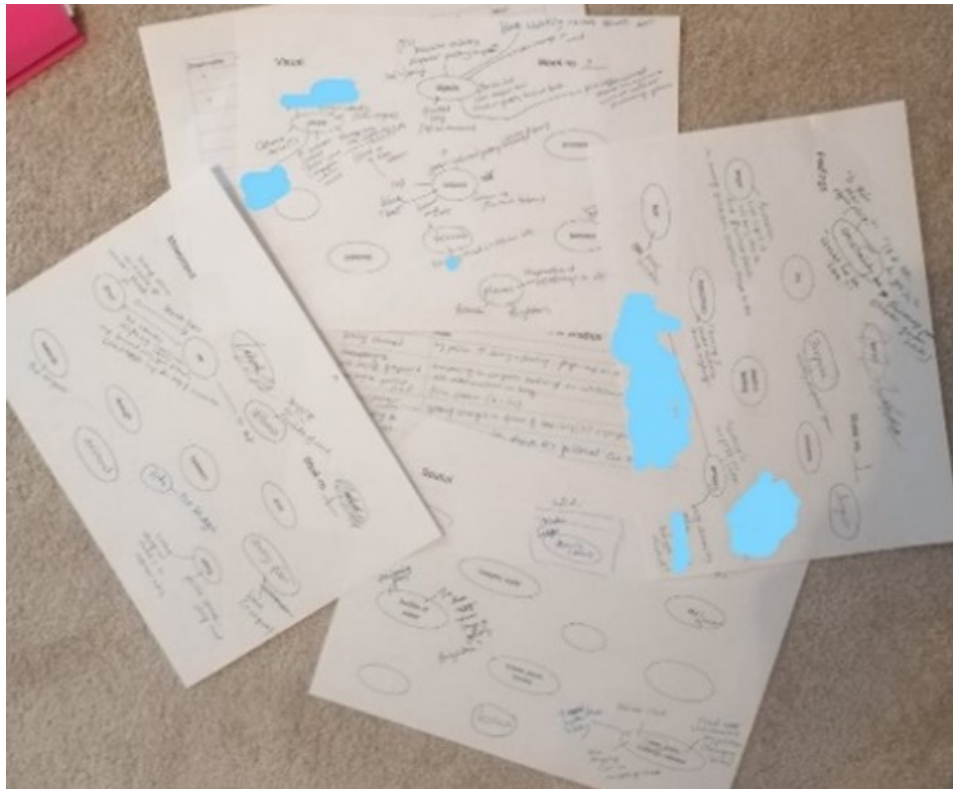
My two main ethical concerns centred around privacy and self-care. I allowed myself to map and write freely about anything and anyone as part of my dream elaborations, but I was careful not to share any information that might reveal the identity of anyone referenced in my work (ACA, 2014, p. 6), and to protect 'vulnerability to the self' (Tolich, 2010). Knowing that heuristic enquiry is 'an extremely demanding process' (Moustakas, 1990, p. 36), and suspecting that paying prolonged intense attention to messages from my unconscious mind might be destabilising, I ensured I had good self-care measures in place. I also took steps to treat myself well as the sole participant of my enquiry. I created a set of self-care guidelines for the mapping sessions and the whole research project. I always had a clear plan for each mapping session, which I adhered to with some flexibility, making sure I had a coffee break, allowing time for tidying up, and finishing the sessions on time. Finally, I informed my therapist and supervisor about the project, and they both offered their support.

Findings

As a solo endeavour, which drew on internally generated imagery and motifs for art and creative writing, the dream-mapping work was an extended and expanded cross-art form of journalling. Completing the dreamscape templates each morning over each of the 10 weeks was a quick and easy way to capture significant images, motifs, and feelings (Figure 2). Even if I did not recall any fragments on some nights, I always had enough to work with at the mapping sessions.

Figure 2

Completed dreamscape templates from Week 4.



During the 10-week period, I dreamt, mapped, and wrote of bodies of water and land (seas, rivers, waterfalls, tundra, desert, islands, sandbanks, skerries, cliffs, sand, parkland, a crater), cities, buildings (house, library, castle, cinema, pancake house, jetty, ancient buildings, church, churchlike building, hut, glass-walled house, tunnel), vegetation (forest, grass, flowers) as well as people (Pan, Iris, dancer, warrior, teacher, peacemaker, sage, wise woman), animals (wading birds, otters, cat, dragon, peacocks, snake, bear) and objects (model boat, map by my bed, kitchen table, game).

For the maps, I used a variety of media and supports, including collage, ink, acrylic paint, pen, plain paper, graph paper and primed card, and became deeply absorbed in their creation. Some examples follow (Figures 3–6):

Figure 3

Map 3: Map of a fairy tale.



Figure 4

Map 5: Map of Adventures for Girls.



Figure 5

Maps 6a and 6b: Pan, Iris and islands.

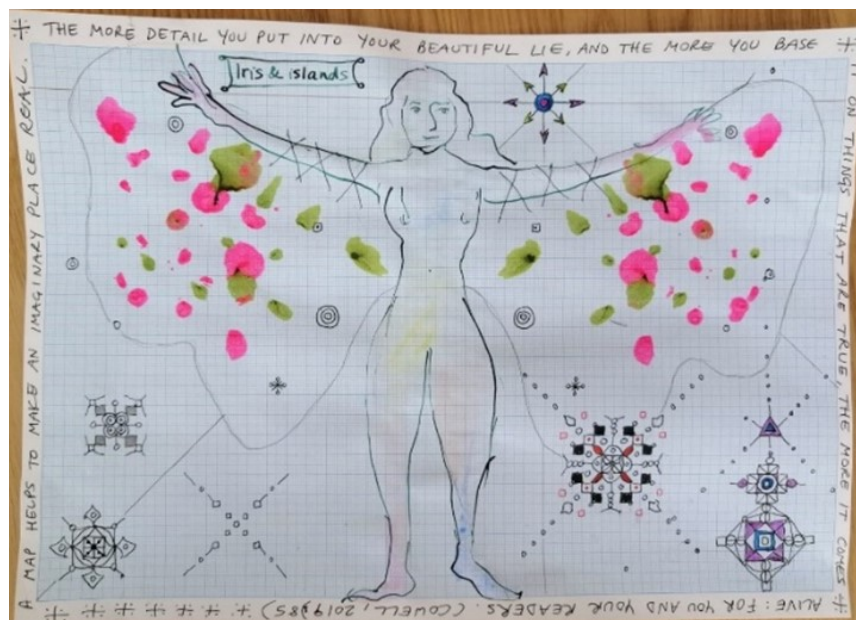
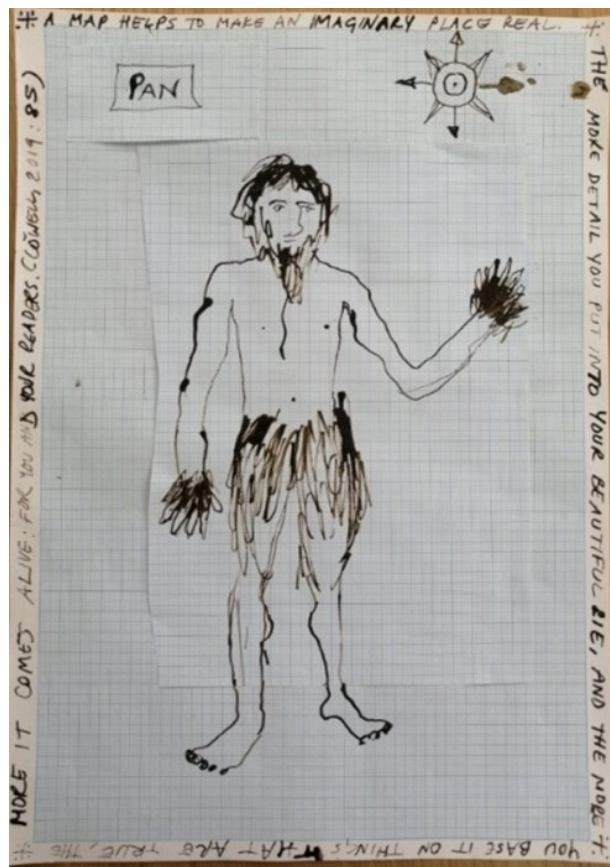
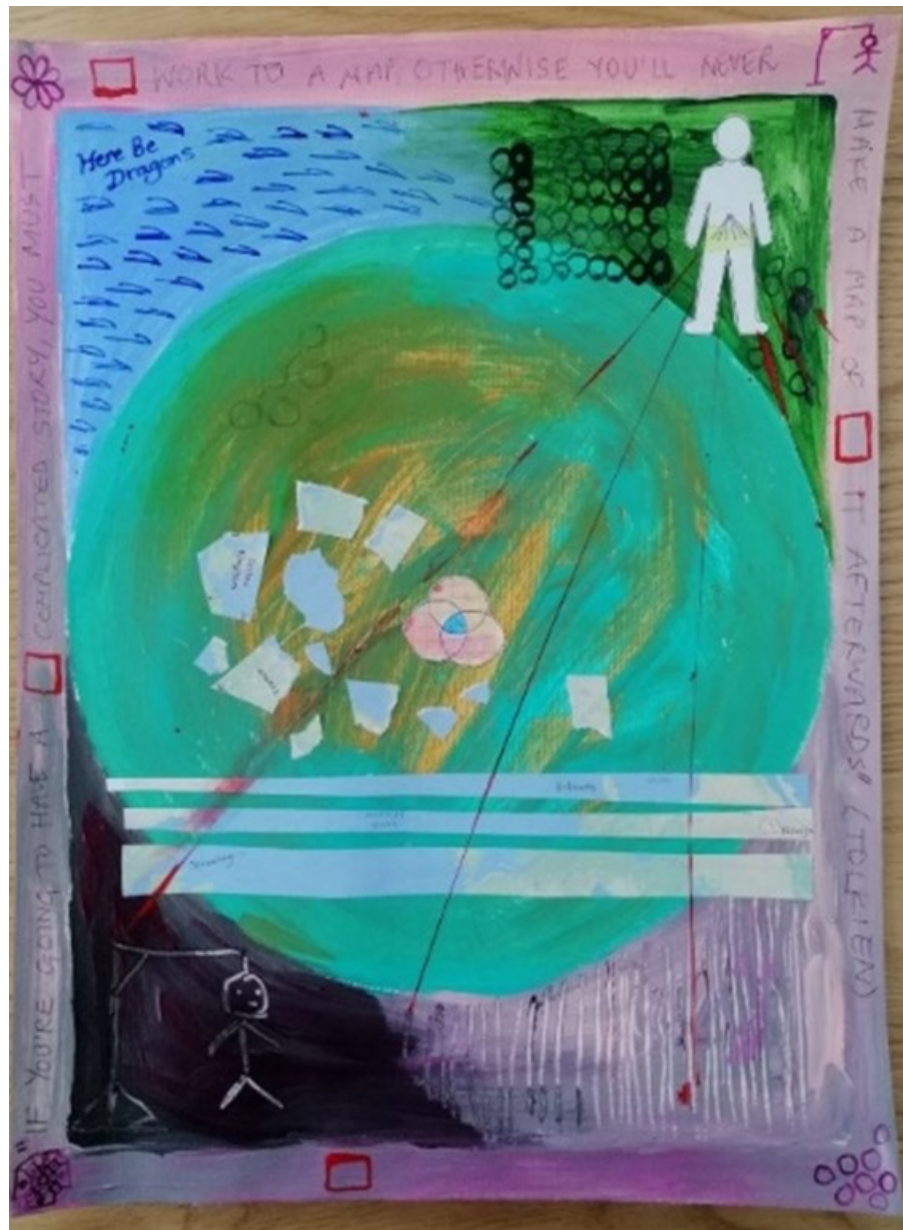


Figure 6

Map 7: Circles.



The RCW each week was as follows:

1. Free-writing about journeys I would like to make around the map; a poem from the free-write.
2. A dialogue between me and the map.
3. A fairy tale.
4. Nine dream fragments speak to me; I reply to each with one line.

5. Poem about locations on the map using key words from the map's border.
6. Free-writing about journeys I would like to make around the map; two poems from the free-write.
7. Four guided walks around the map.
8. A narrative of a journey through the map.
9. Free-writing about what map: a pantoum from the free-write.
10. Letters between me and the map.

The most powerful pieces of RCW were those in which the writing interacted directly with the map instead of being about it. These activities involved dialoguing with the map, letting features on the map speak, or roving over and into the map so deeply that the journeys took in features like the compass rose, rhumb lines, and border as well as the land and water. The work led to profound discoveries about my inner selves, especially Playful Child, Wounded and Fearful Child, and a new Maternal Archetype.

Below, I focus on

- Five themes that emerged from the data and their personal significance.
- How dream-mapping contributed to integration of my self.
- Other discoveries I made.
- The potential applications of this journalling process.
- Practical guidance on dream-mapping.

Analysis and Discussion

I made my last map on the Friday before the UK went into its first COVID-19 lockdown, at which point I entered a three-month period of heuristic 'incubation' (Moustakas, 1990). During that time, I was preoccupied with my physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing and that of my family (my children were now homeschooling, while my husband and I both continued to work from home), as well as the broader social implications of the pandemic.

Emerging from incubation and lockdown, it then took me from May until November to process the experience of my investigation, analyse and gain insights from my data, and reflect on my discoveries. I used the

heuristic phases and processes to connect with, reflect on, organise, and gain insight into my findings. I wrote poems, doodled, journaled, and self-dialogued about them to clarify my holistic, macro, intuitive, and embodied responses to them, while on a micro level, I conducted a rigorous and systematic thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Sultan, 2019) of the RCW. I coded 678 nouns, motifs, and concepts, organised them into thematic groups, and created Table 1 below to their source within the data.

Table 1. Five Themes

Theme	Where the Five Themes Appear									
	= Map only			= RCW only			= Both			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
i Perspective										
ii Orientation										
iii Journeys										
iv Beasts										
v Body										

The Five Themes

Liberating dream fragments from their original dream contexts and organising them into new juxtapositions gave me a fresh perspective on some of my life stories. Mapping involved ‘zooming out’ and seeing personal motifs presented as bodies of land and water. Unexpected connections were revealed in these fresh spatial arrangements, generating feelings of joy and hope in my writing: ‘Here is the bird’s eye view ..., swooping, exciting’ (RCW 1).

Orientation came from references to mapping conventions in my artwork and RCW, which served as prompts for exploration into security and insecurity in relationships. Compass roses represented guiding figures. Some are confusing: ‘I am in the middle. / Caught between two compasses.’ (RCW2), while others ‘show true north’ (RCW6). The decorative borders were boundaries that contained my creative work and formed part of my written explorations. In mapping session (MS)5, I took words from the Macfarlane quote about maps in the map’s border (knowledge, supposition, astonishment, love, memory, fear) as prompts for RCW5. In MS7, I wrote instructions for four Guided Walks around Map 7, some of which took the reader/walker into the border. In RCW10, the triple borders of Map 10 had a different role, offering security: ‘I ... love your

multiple borders, Map 10. They swaddle me, and make me feel safe.’ (RCW10)

Journeys was a prominent theme in the data. They were imagined, offered, thwarted, regretted, and encouraged: ‘I will journey up/... and over that water, through wild virgin forest/... and cross the snowy tundra/ towards the city of colour’ (RCW1); ‘I would sail around him’ (RCW6); ‘the thicket [trapped] her back in the grounds of the Castle’ (RCW 3); ‘Walk 2 The Corners: Start at the reeded glass’ (RCW 6); ‘The barbed wire stopped us’ (RCW8); ‘I am the sunken city. ... There is more than one way to my centre. You can choose the path you take.’ (RCW4); ‘Why do not you take the tide and the wind and ... make a journey through your map?’ (RCW10)

In MS2, I engaged in a dialogue with the map, complaining about the unfinished journeys from my dreams I had marked on her. It was at this point that Map formed as a maternal archetype. She surprised me by responding, ‘Where would you like to go?’ When I replied she gave this invitation: ‘You can draw Journeys 1–6 on me if you want.’ As a result, I took a blue pencil and added lines to show ‘Journeys I’d like to make’ on her. I felt that Mother Map gave me ‘security and freedom’ which allowed me to take ‘baby steps’ and make ‘little journeys.’ (RJ, 17.01.20).

In MS5, about half-way through the 10 weeks, I marked several routes on the map, but wrote of no journeys through it. Labelled ‘A Map of Adventures for Girls,’ this was a map of stuckness. It was during this session, along with the two before and after it, that I met Beasts, my fourth theme.

Beasts (Alexander, 2014, pp. 66–81) were painful themes that emerged in the middle five weeks of the dream mapping. They appeared in my writing as entrapment, injury, not being seen, a fearful preoccupation with death, deception, and betrayal; a fear of inability to protect myself; and fear and uncertainty in relation to the male body: ‘the thicket snaked around her and smashed down in front of her’ (RCW3); ‘I fear not being able to get away’ (RCW5); ‘And she ran back to the Castle, terrified and with her forearms and face all slashed and bleeding’ (RCW3); ‘I fear invasion’ (RCW5); ‘“Mama! Mama! ... I need you to wake up I need your attention. I need you to look at me. Mama! Mama! Wake up!”’ (RCW4); ‘the hanged man’ (RCW 4 and 7); ‘the burial pit’; ‘the obituary’ (RCW4); ‘the corpses in the garage’ (RCW5); ‘the orphan’ (RCW7); ‘I do feel betrayed’ (RCW5); ‘two beautiful lies’ (RCW6); ‘I fear being passive’ (RCW5); ‘I fear

those icy hands' (RCW5); 'I am nervous of his darker places. ... I do not know what his strength is.' (RCW6).

Body was an unexpected theme which emerged in the middle five weeks and penultimate dream-mapping session. In RCW3, a fairy tale, the narrative arc of the story is reflected in references to the princess's body: Beginning: 'She gazed and sighed ... and very occasionally tapped her foot a little impatiently'; Middle: 'her forearms and face all slashed and bleeding': End: 'And so we will finish this story, on the beach, sitting around the fire with her friends, the flames warming her face, a blanket around her shoulders, the sand beneath her and the stars twinkling above her head.'

In RCW4, 5, and 6, many of the body references relate to Beasts: 'these bags are sealed, so you cannot put your fingers inside us' (RCW4), 'icy hands' (RCW5), 'hairy hands' (RCW6). By RCW9, however, the body references were much more positive, relating to my experience of parenthood: 'Blue and yellow play on my skin. / Hand of a mother, hand of a daughter, ... Colours that make green for the heart.' Finally, in RCW10, I write to Map 10 as a spiritual body, recognising her chakra colours: 'I see spiritual energy – in the lilac border – and base energy in the red. Empowerment in the yellow.'

How Dream-Mapping Contributed to Integration of My Self

I had set out to see if mapping dreams using reflective writing techniques could facilitate integration of the self and found that it could, in the following ways:

- A closer relationship developed between my Dreaming and Waking Selves. Dreaming Self felt heard and seen by Waking Self; Waking Self acknowledged and appreciated the metaphors offered up by Dreaming Self.
- Artist and Writer Selves worked collaboratively and productively, where I had previously held them quite separately.
- Parent/CWTP Facilitator Self offered an exciting and carefully devised programme of work and a wide selection of materials to work with, and firm but flexible boundaries, to which Cartographer, Artist, Poet, and Explorer responded with enthusiasm and appreciation.
- I found a Mother in Map who was robust and responsive in her interactions with me, held Wounded Child safely, and gave Curious Child the confidence and freedom to roam.

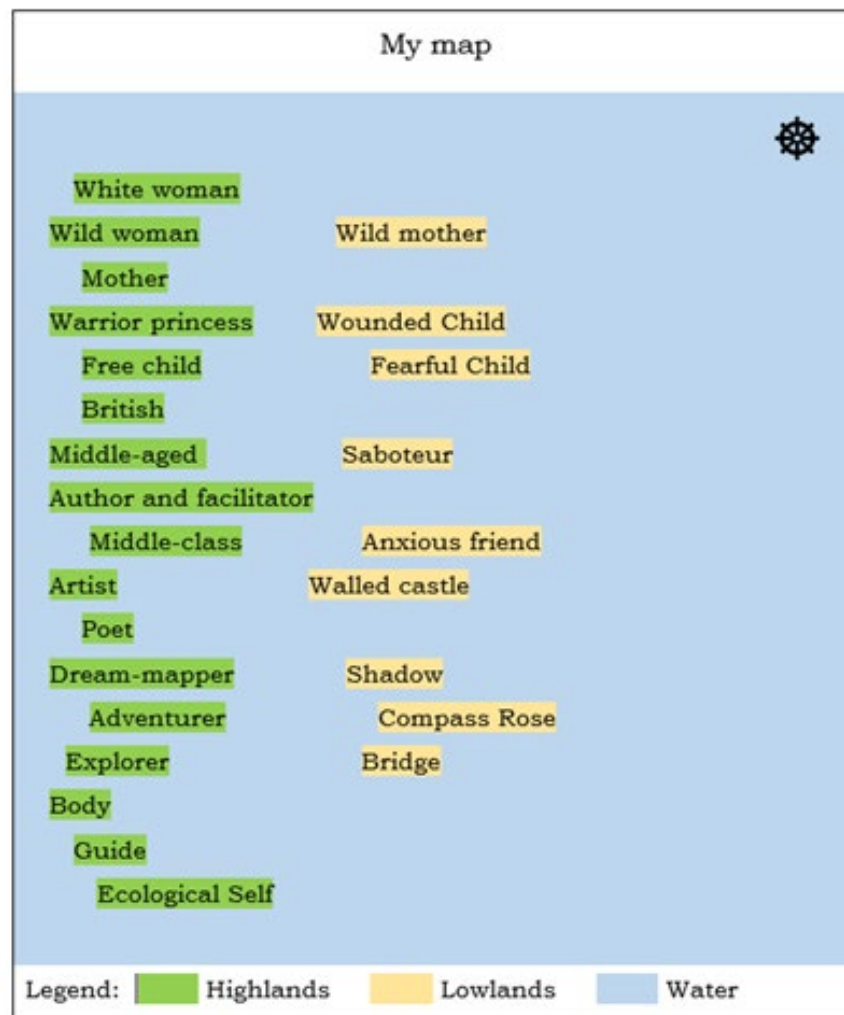
- Explorer, Author, and Poet travelled together, forging new connections between sites on the map and parts of myself.
- Encountering 'Beasts' was uncomfortable, but not overwhelming, and contributed to integrating my previously alienated Wounded Child.
- Overall, although the work was internally focused, mapping dream images and parts of self as bodies of land and water strengthened my sense of my self as a physical body in a physical landscape. This facilitated the next stage of my therapeutic journey, working with a body therapist, work that has helped me develop better form and flexibility in my relationships with others.
- By the end of the project, I was able to update my earlier map of self. Parts of self are now landforms linked by water (Figure 7).

I conclude that the above outcomes stem from more than one factor. Firstly, each map was a composite map—a single contained unit made up of multiple images from multiple dreams from multiple nights. If dreams themselves have a dialogic, cooperative, and reorganising function (Metzger, 1992), and if maps of single dreams 'help us to organise and interpret dream experiences' (Hiller, 2012, p. 33), then it follows that maps of multiple dreams, or composite dream maps, have the potential to help us organise and understand dream experiences on a bigger scale, offering new perspectives and insights. In turn, consciously combining dream-mapping with RCW activities that encourage interaction with the maps can support and enhance the dialogic and cooperative nature of dreaming.

Secondly, the project benefited from being spread over a number of weeks, as this allowed time to gather an abundance of dream fragments. Similarly, the weekly 3-hour sessions felt unrushed. Although the whole dream-mapping process was demanding, it was an act of self-kindness; after MS1, I journalled of the experience as 'a three-hour creativity allowance [that was] precious & wonderful. I do not want this time to get taken away from me. This creative space & freedom ... is a gift!' Working with the 'colour, movement, magic ... possibilities ... layers of meaning, stories and secrets' of dreams (Alexander, 2014, p. 291) and '[playing] spontaneously with ideas, colors, shapes, relationships, [juggling] elements into impossible juxtapositions, [and expressing] the ridiculous' (Rogers, 1961/67, p. 355) was pleasurable, and I became immersed in the richness and fulfilment of creative living (Winnicott, 1971/2005, p. 93).

Figure 7

My map.



The containing elements of the work were also vital to its positive outcomes, enabling me to embark on explorations in freshly shaped and mapped inner landscapes without fear of getting lost, overwhelmed, or destabilised. Containing elements were as follows:

- Adhering broadly to the planned schedule in each mapping session,
- Repeating more or less the same format each week, and
- Regularly referring to my self-care guidelines.

The physical maps themselves offered a different kind of containment, as the edge of each one was a boundary that held the dream fragments I had selected to map that week. Containment allowed me to ‘pay serious

attention to [my] inner [world] of dream ... and find significance in thoughts and images that would previously have been dismissed as absurd or illogical' (Storr in Hedges, 2005, p. 10). It was an intense and demanding process and required commitment and an openness to whatever my dreams presented, plus a degree of courage. Crucially, the work was supported by my ongoing one-to-one therapy. It also enhanced it.

Finally, the entire project was underpinned by a willingness to play extensively with metaphor, which increased as time went on. Items on the maps, and sometimes the maps themselves, represented other things, becoming 'containers for feelings ... too overwhelming to be tolerated' (Cox & Theilgaard, 1997, p. 99). Imagining journeys around the maps and their dream-sourced sites allowed me to layer metaphor upon metaphor, freeing me from 'sense [and] reason, to deliberately deconstruct the world of grammar and thoughtful orderliness, ... to destroy the world as we know it and allow something new to emerge' (Metzger, 1992, p. 25). This was a loosening process which allowed me to access some deeply hidden painful and problematic memories (Bolton et al., 2006, p. 15) and also find joy and delight.

Other Discoveries

I was pleased to discover that I shared Ihanus (Bolton et al., 2010) and Alexander's (2014) experience of a symbiotic relationship between dreams and creativity. The content of my dreams evolved and became richer, which in turn fed my waking creativity.

I cannot claim that the work cured my insomnia, but my sleeping patterns improved when doing the dream-mapping and have largely stayed improved. It seems that bringing recalled dream images to mind when wakeful in the night can help me back to sleep.

The work increased my confidence as a CWTP facilitator, specifically my ability to devise and sequence effective materials and tasks, and to take care of myself as a participant with firm but flexible stages and timings. I learnt that there is value to be had in repeating techniques and processes in CWTP, as I used the same basic format for 10 weeks with highly varied outcomes. However, I did begin to tire of the dream-mapping process in the final two sessions, suggesting that 8 weeks would be enough.

Finally, I experienced 'wonder' (Wertz in Sultan, 2019, p. 5) as I got to know part of the vast inner territory of my wild dreamland (Estés, 1992, p. 458) and its 'prohibited geography' (Metzger, 1992, p. 42). I marvelled at

the healing power of sleep and dreams (Walker, 2017), at the wise, funny, creative, and uninhibited offerings of my Dreaming Self (Bolton, 1999, p. 81), and at the simple fact of my waking and sleeping body living in dynamic relationship with other people and the actual and beautiful world of land and water.

Evaluating the Project

Taking Lincoln and Guba's evaluation criteria for 'rigour and trustworthiness' in qualitative research (Sultan, 2014, p. 180), I consider the four points below.

Credibility

I have adequately described my research design, and I had a prolonged engagement with the study process and content. I have used a clear professional structure and voice to promote transparency about my inquiry and employed thick description and reflexivity.

Dependability

My choice of heuristic enquiry as a methodology was informed by the nature of my study (Sultan, 2019, p. 181), and my data collection process and findings harmonized with it, being qualitative, phenomenologically aligned, autobiographical, exploratory, serendipitous, discovery-oriented, process- and content-focused, intuitive, introspective, reflexive, experiential, embodied, holistic, existential, humanistic, authentic, participatory, imaginative, creative, non-linear, fluid, flexible, and with a focus on living rather than lived experience (Sultan, 2019).

Confirmability

I have been open about my role as primary researcher and have included reflexive excerpts from my research journal as evidence of how I made links between findings and the assertions I make about them.

I am aware that my investigation has remained very self-focussed, and I can identify the following biases:

- Pre-existing interest and belief in the value of things that are 'not commercial and mainstream ... the private, particular, peculiar, the perspective of the feminine, ethnic, elderly, the child, the dream world, ... and the mysterious' (Metzger, 1992, p. 42) to the

research, which may have predisposed me to find value in the work.

- Pre-existing awareness of some of my inner selves and their inter-relationships through previous and ongoing therapeutic work.
- An enthusiasm about heuristic methodology, which meant that I brought a heuristic mindset and techniques to the data collection phase itself (for example, by using focusing and self-dialoguing in my opening rounds), which may have enhanced the benefit I gained from the work.
- My privilege in being able to afford private one-to-one therapy before, during, and after the data collection phase, and having access to space, time, and good-quality art materials for the mapping work.

Other factors whose influence on the work I cannot judge objectively are

- How much my concerns about COVID-19 during the research period (January – March 2020) may have increased my preoccupation with physical health and the body when dream-mapping, and
- How the shock, sadness, anger, disorientation, and emotional flashbacks I experienced during March to May 2020—when the UK was in its first COVID-19 lockdown and I was in my main heuristic phase—may have affected how I perceived my data when I returned to it.

Transferability

I am wary of attempts to generalize my findings to the point of suggesting that they represent a single truth that would apply for all others, but in the next section I suggest how dream-mapping could be used by others in the field (Guba in Sultan, 2014), along with suggestions for further research.

Implications for Practice

Others could benefit from creating composite dream maps and combining them with RCW techniques as an extended and expanded form of journalling, as the work has the potential to:

- Allow people to find personal meaning in and new insights from their dreams.
- Help people bring their inner selves into closer relationship.

- Enhance a longer therapeutic journey or deepen other therapeutic work.
- Fuel a condition of ‘wonder’ and ‘wondering’ at such an everyday (every night) phenomenon as dreaming.

In broader terms, it could also:

- Help people mine the deep reserves of their intuitive creativity (visual and verbal). As an extended wellbeing-focused creative project that can be done independently at home, the work has the potential to benefit people experiencing isolation and loneliness, whether due to COVID-19 or other reasons (Artswork, 2020; Evans, 2020; McMahon, 2020; Orr, 2020; Thompson, 2020).
- Encourage people to re-evaluate their relationship to sleep and thus improve health and wellbeing. Insomnia affects around one in six people in the UK. According to a study by Southampton University, during the first UK COVID-19 lockdown (March–June 2020) this figure rose from one in four, with mothers, key workers, and people from minority ethnic backgrounds the worst affected (Campbell, 2020). Having enough sleep is essential for mental and physical wellbeing (Mental Health Foundation, 2011), and dreams play a vital role in this (Walker, 2017).

How can others use dream-mapping? Nine Steps

The work could be used by anyone who

- Has an interest in dreamwork;
- Is interested in exploring a different way of journalling, whether they have worked with their dreams before or not;
- Wants to explore their inner selves; and/or
- Has an interest in connecting to a more spontaneous, playful, and intuitive part of self.

The visual techniques and materials I used can be simplified, and there is flexibility in how the work is approached and what timings are used, but I suggest this overall format:

1. Do an opening round of reflective journal writing:
How am I feeling today? How am I feeling about dream-mapping today? Is there anything I want to leave in my journal before I begin?

2. Copy the dream fragments from that week's templates onto slips of paper and organise some or all of them into an arrangement that feels pleasing.
3. Close your eyes and take a few steady breaths. Tune in to any embodied feelings you have in response to the dream fragments before you. Write about what you notice. (You may like to formalise this as focusing activity (Gendlin, 1978/2003; Sultan, 2019, p. 93).)
4. Make any final changes to the arrangement of your dream map fragments.
5. Create a dream map on a support such as paper or card. This could be a simple drawing, or a more colourful piece of artwork. Possible techniques:
 - Drawing with pencil, biro, or pen and ink on plain or graph paper
 - Painting
 - Collage
 - Mixed mediaConsider including a compass rose, borders, a legend/key, rhumb lines, and a title.
6. Have a break and tidy up.
7. Set yourself time (e. g., between about 5 and 25 minutes) to do reflective creative writing in response to the dream map. Possible activities:
 - Free-write into the map
 - Write a poem about the map
 - Write a dialogue between yourself and the map
 - Allow locations, paths, or other features on your map to speak to you
 - Plan a journey (or journeys) around or across your map and write about it—as a narrative, a plan, or as instructions for a guided walk
 - Plan a journey that also takes in features of your map such as the compass rose, the borders, the title, and write about it.

8. A feedback statement (Thompson, 2011, pp. 34–39) on the RCW:
When I read the RCW I did today, I notice/feel/realise...
9. A closing round of reflective journal writing:
How am I feeling at the end of this session? What categories do I want on the next set of dreamscape templates? What do I need for myself right now, as I move away from this dreamwork?

As a caveat, the work has the potential to ‘go deep’; I strongly recommend preparing tailored self-care guidelines for yourself or your participants, to be referred to regularly. Additional therapeutic support might also be valuable for some people during dream-mapping; for those working in a group, this could be discussed with the facilitator. Given that the work did not noticeably ease mine, I would suggest that this work should be approached with caution by anyone suffering from anxiety. Finally, the dialogic RCW activities are not recommended for use by people who experience psychotic episodes.

Summary and Conclusion

An interest in metaphors, visual art, the unconscious, and maps and an ongoing quest for self-integration led me to undertake this heuristic enquiry, which brought together my unconscious and conscious creativity and led to insights about some of my past and present experiences and relationships. It was an expanded and extended form of journalling, from which emerged themes of personal significance that allowed me to connect and engage productively with parts of self that had felt out of reach to me. By repeating the same approach to dream-mapping over a period of 10 weeks, making small adjustments to the stages and varying the visual and verbal actual activities I used each week, I was able to formulate a nine-step procedure that is transferable for others to use.

My 10 weeks of dream-mapping (see Figure 8) came to an end just as COVID-19 was escalating in the UK. At the end of 2020, the Mental Health Foundation reported a significant increase in the number of British adults experiencing loneliness. Given the growing awareness of the benefits of creative activity for social and emotional wellbeing, any research into activities that people can do independently and at home is extremely valuable, both during this global health crisis and beyond it.

Further research could be done into how dream-mapping might

- help improve people's sleep,
- support women during menopause,
- be used in groups—face-to-face and online,
- be used by people who do not dream visually,
- be used in conjunction with body psychotherapy,
- contribute to a wider use of reflective writing for mapping the self,
- be used in exploration of the intersection of culture, geography and psyche,
- be a gateway technique for writers wanting to glean personal metaphors from their unconscious.

As a final point, I acknowledge my good fortune in having had the time, materials, training, and access to private personal therapy to be able to undertake this creative experiment. I hope that the nine-step resource I have developed from it will be used to positive effect by others interested in mining the deep reserves of intuitive creativity held in the body to chart the landscapes of their own wild dreamlands.

Figure 8

Creative
synthesis:
Map of a heuristic
adventure,
Somerset, UK,
2020.



Together,
Waking Self and Curious Child
print out nets and leave them by my bed.
Dreaming Self, encouraged, fills them,
night after night, with bounty.
We heave the nets to the kitchen,
spill the haul onto the table, and there
create territories from the slippery catch, which,
together, Cartographer and Artist map.
In these landscapes, we find Compass Rose.
Map becomes Mother Map.
Explorer, Guide, and Writer
plot routes and other stories through her,
while her boundaries
contain, inspire, and protect.
Warrior Princess finds the courage to relax her guard
and gives audience to the Beasts.
Their hairy forms shift, revealing
a narrow entrance to the Walled Castle.
Poet enters, discovers a labyrinth,
and follows her feet in meditation.
This is the end, middle, and beginning of a heuristic adventure:
In and out of the castle,
I keep moving,
paths twisting and turning
through shadow and light.
Mosaic, flint, and turf underfoot,
mist and seashells in my hair,
I find my content, edges, flexibility, and form
alone, and with others.

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