

Ghosts in our National Psyches

How CAT can help

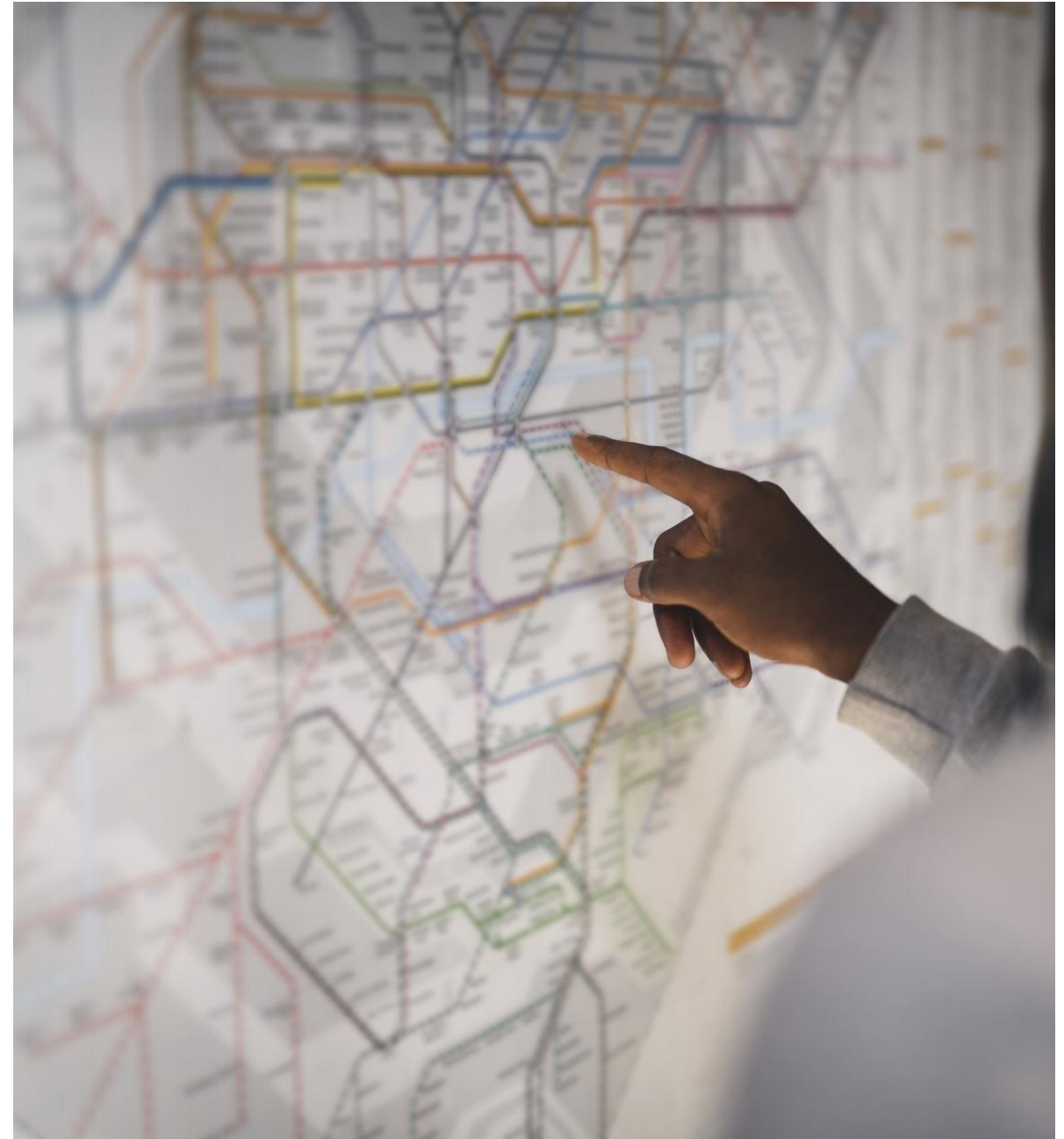
Elaine Martin – Ireland

Steve Potter – England



Touch points as seeds to the presentation

- Ghosts
- National Psyche
- Narratives and stories
- Loss of self to othering,
- The versatility of CAT tools
- Two examples



Ghost roles are the hidden and unformulated narratives that haunt our life stories

An active and formative inter-generational reciprocal role procedure in childhood which is

- Either a disowned voice in the making of the self - the unformulated **'Not Me'** that haunts us and our culture
- And/or is defended against by the narcissistically inflated **'This is Me'** voice that traps and reduces our sense of self into an overvalued identity solution. In a way this is another ghost narrative because sits on top of us hidden in plain sight.

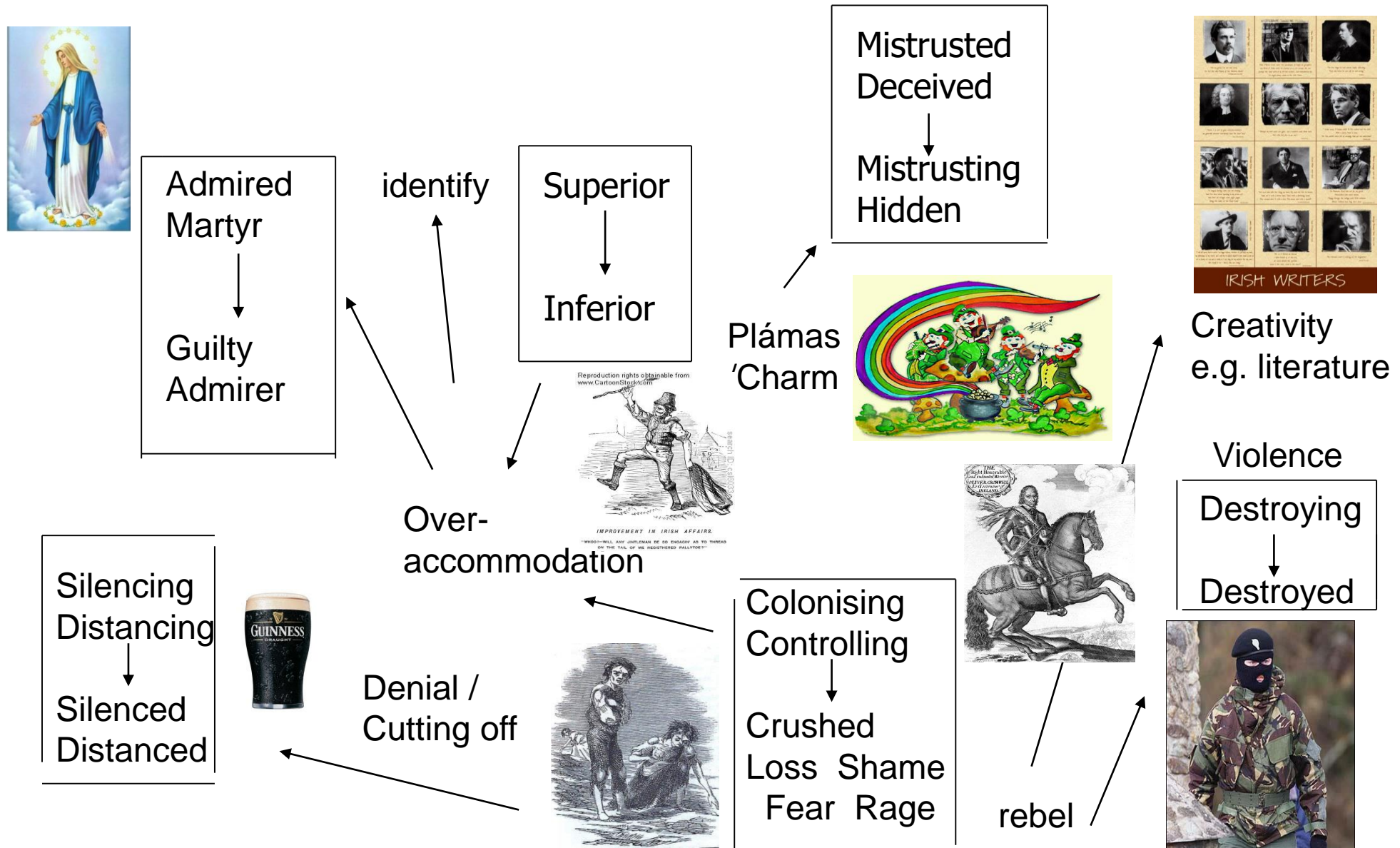
**“Without history there
can be no psychology”**

- Carl Jung

**Culturally-embedded
voices**



National Psyche: An Irish Map





CAT creates a therapeutic space between stories and narratives

From mapping and writing in session with clients, I have found a useful distinction between **telling a personal story** (the spontaneity and emotion of events, drama and people of a specific experience) and **drawing out narratives** (the patterns of **truth** we give, or were given, to the stories we tell).

We tell each other the stories of our lives in order to have moments of **narrative recovery, narrative awareness and narrative freedom** and to meet the possibility of changing the narratives or living with more than one as our own authors.



On the Traumatic Character of the Colonial Experience

**Not only were we
constructed as different
and other by those
regimes, but that they
had the power to make
us see and experience
ourselves as 'Other'**

- Hall citing Foucault



Othering
(Other)



Othered
(Self)



Othering
(Self)



Othered
(Self)

The CAT reflective capacity and relational awareness thesis

10

- **Reflective capacity** is key to mental health/therapy approaches and for CAT, it depends upon **relational awareness** - the ability to be simultaneously in touch with what is going on within, between and around me and my world
- Relational awareness is **damaged** by childhood trauma and or restrictive and binary social forces of racism, sexism and class or **enabled** by vital childhood experience and open and integrative social conditions
- Recovering, developing or healing our relational awareness (and thereby reflective capacity) is a shared, **conversational process** in CAT mediated by the co-creative, self-conscious use of therapeutic tools such as mapping, writing and voice work.
- It is also moderated and mediated by an understanding and use of the therapeutic relationship both as a positive and benign partnership (transference friendly) and as an enactment magnet for the transference and replay of compelling (and haunting) patterns of relating from the past, from the system and in the therapy lived and carried by the self as **'ghost' reciprocal roles and voices.**

Irish Travellers

- An indigenous minority
- Distinct culture, language and way of life
- Nomadism
- < 1% of the population





Othering
(Self)



Othered
(Other)

The Blind Spot in the Irish Psyche

The majority population in Ireland denigrates Irish Travellers in the same way as Irish people were othered throughout history; the shoe is merely on the other foot.



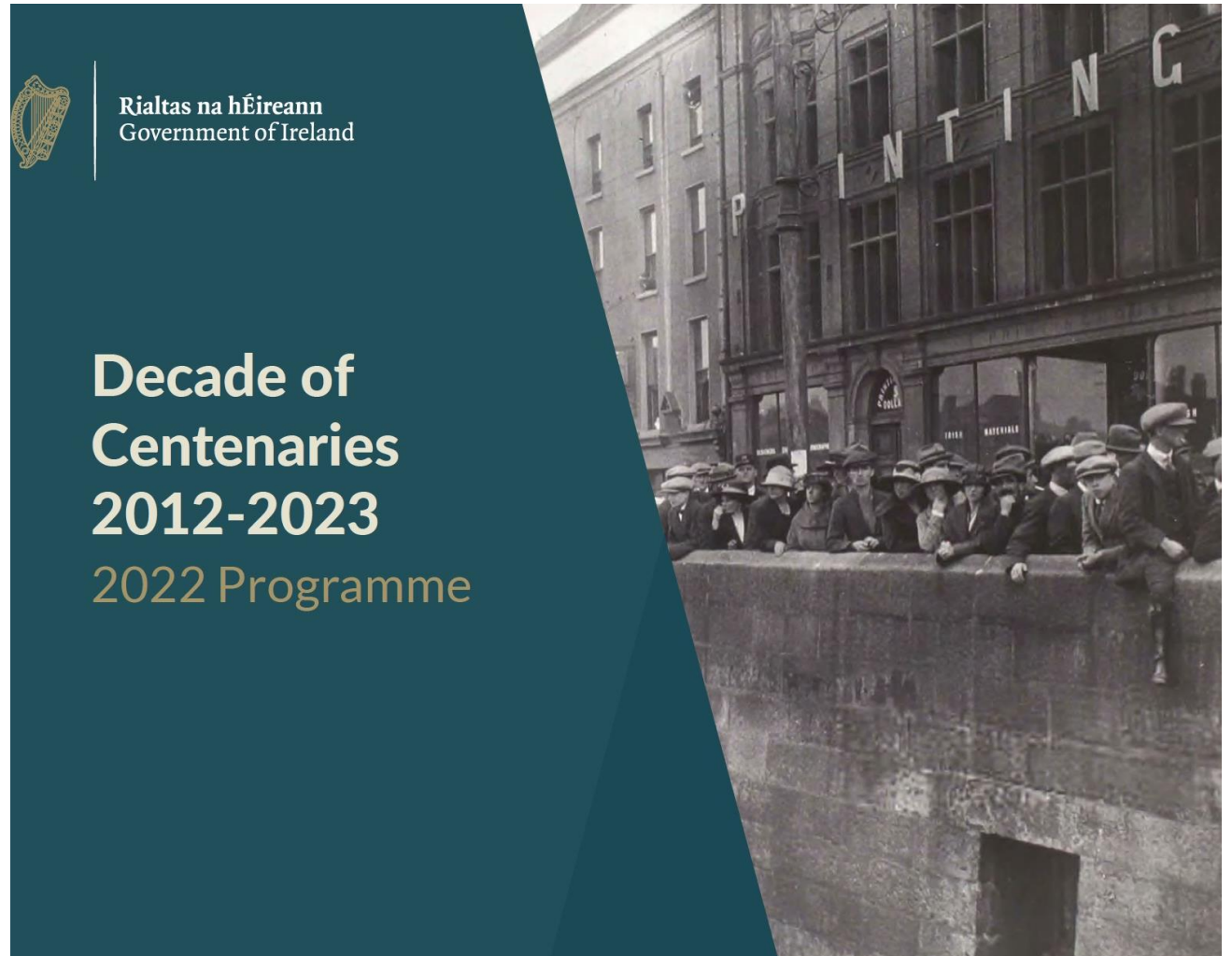
Legacy

- Suicide accounts for 11% of deaths
- only 1 in 100 Travellers is aged > 65 years
- 1 in 10 in paid employment
- 13% of girls have completed secondary school



What did we do?

- Shared a trauma-informed perspective and made links between current problems in Irish society and the experience of cultural trauma
- Demonstrated how the State pursued the development of its new identity in a way that significantly damaged Travellers
- Secured government support for the conference 'Irish Travellers/Mincéirs & the State, 1922-2022' which was part of the Decade of Centenaries programme



My ghost narrative at the heart of working class, male English national psyche Band of Brothers - Henry 5th (The king to his men the night before the battle) Shakespeare:

“This story shall the good man teach his son; from this day to the ending of the world, but we in it shall be remembered; we few, we happy few, we band of brothers; for he to-day that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother and gentlemen in England now a-bed shall think themselves accursed they were not here and hold their manhood’s cheap.”

The Pals battalions (full of Henry's speech)

- The **Pals battalions** of [World War I](#) were specially constituted [battalions](#) of the [British Army](#) comprising men who had enlisted together in local recruiting drives, with the promise that they would be able to serve alongside their friends, neighbours and colleagues, rather than being arbitrarily allocated to battalions.^[1]
- Many of these locally raised battalions suffered heavy casualties during the [Somme offensives](#) of 1916.
- A notable example was the 11th (Service) Battalion (Accrington), [East Lancashire Regiment](#), better known as the [Accrington Pals](#).
- Of an estimated **700 Accrington Pals** who took part in the attack, **235 were killed and 350 wounded** within the space of **twenty minutes**.^[6]

I have not thought like this for sixty years or more but still it is ghost role for men like me across the generations - rekindled as needed by the English King as and when



The Kremlin wants 'real men' to prove themselves by joining the fight in Ukraine

The ad comes as Moscow prepares for a counteroffensive expected to be launched by Ukraine this spring, having seen its own winter push falter.

🔊 TAP TO UNMUTE

Russian military encourages 'real men' to step forward in recruitment video

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The commercial ends with the slogan, "You're a real man. Be one." As the defense ministry emblem appears it says, "Serve by contract. Monthly wages from 204,000 roubles." (\$2,500)





Ukraine's 'band of brothers': The war stories of five friends from Lviv

They signed up for the military when Russia invaded in February. Now just two are still fighting

Irish Times

Traps, dilemmas, snags and states



- **Traps** = narrow **'only if'** thinking that creates a vicious circle. Want to bond as brothers and be in the good group but only if we join the band and sing the song
- **Dilemmas** = **Either/or** this or that behaviour options as a reciprocal role that are binary orchestrations and lock us in 'pinball style'.
 - Either 'die in the arms of buddies for king and country' or live as traitor with no mates. Either **'red** or dead'.
 - **Snags** = **'yes but'** deep conflicts triggered on the threshold of fulfilling **but** something within self or from society disallows, spoils, or negates. An unconscious assumption – a ghost role that haunts us and kicks in when wishes and needs are partly met. (1848, 1968, Arab Spring, Climate crisis)

BRITONS

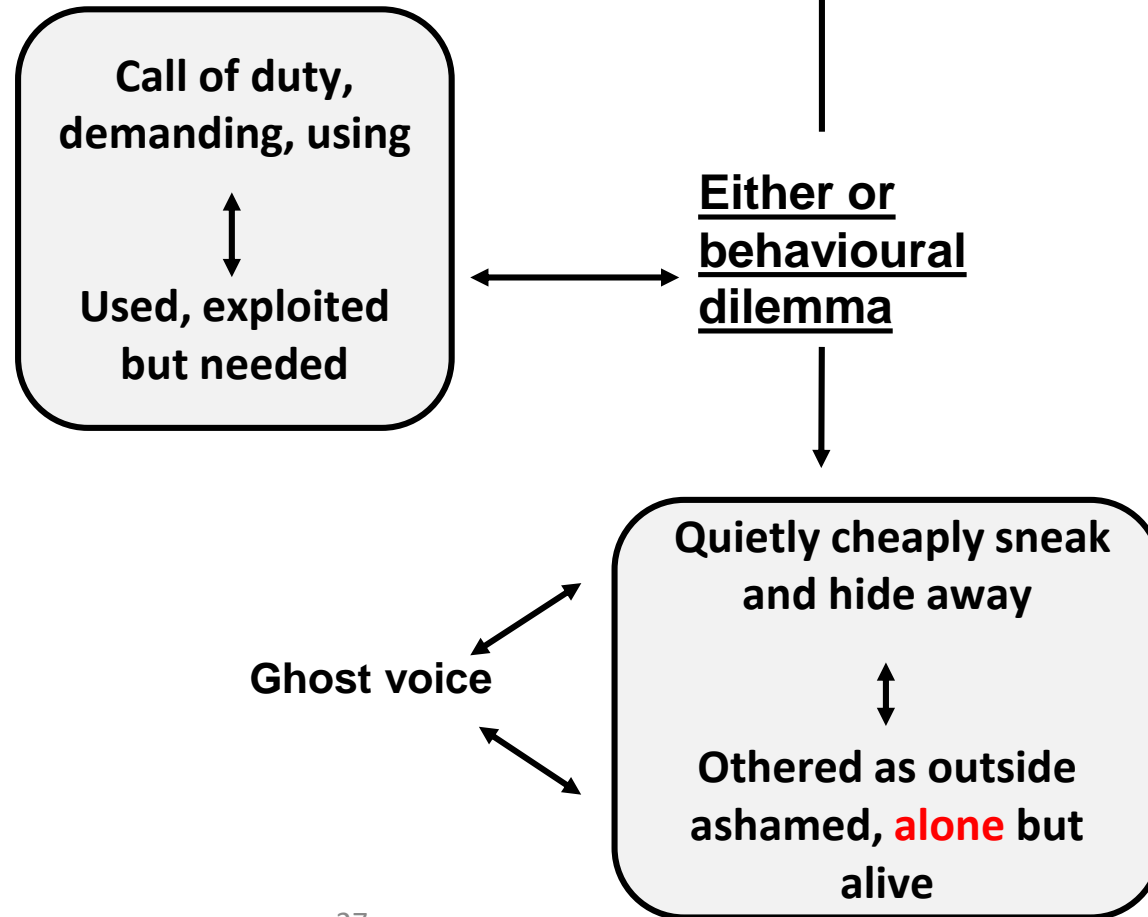


Trap: the adolescent yearning to belong is hijacked by a narcissistically inflated narrative



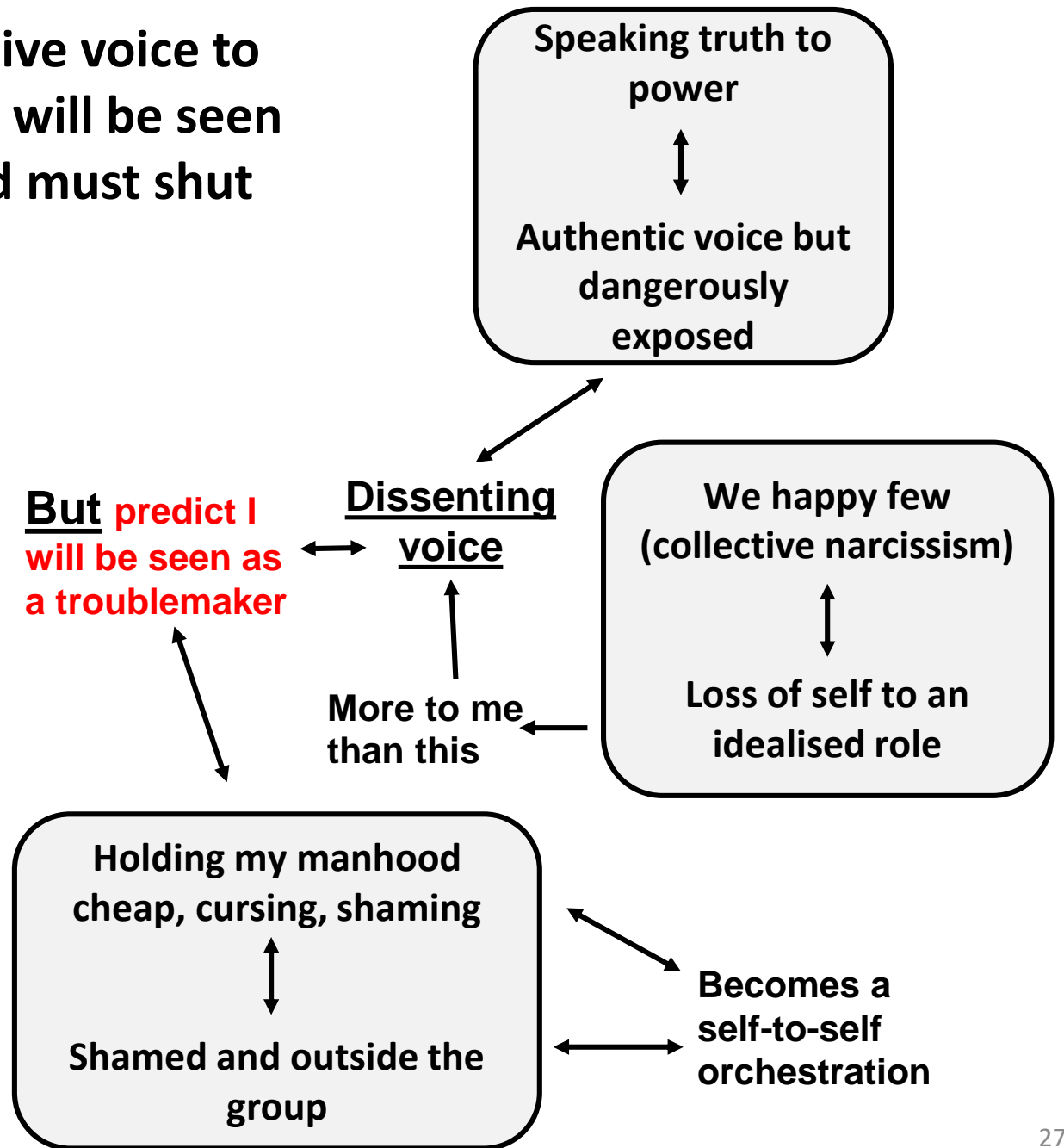
Dilemma: Either all in and merged or all out and empty, unloved and alone but alive (the behaviour becomes the state)

We few, we happy few





Snag: If I give voice to the truth I will be seen as bad and must shut up



Mapping opens a space of freedom to change the narrative

- Uncovering and being in dialogue with the ghost roles and procedures offers room for a freer narrative competence and narrative choice.
- Doing this work has changed my narrative about my Englishness
- A more secure and open attachment and set of identity solutions

<https://www.internationalcat.org/journals>

Nationalism is the ghost that haunts the country where we negotiate our communal and societal lives

- We need nationalism to justify colonialism and racism
- We need nationalism to liberate ourselves from colonial oppression but in the process we internalise and reproduce its binary dynamic
- We need nationalism to justify patriarchy and sexism
- We need nationalism to justify or obscure class inequality and injustice and excuse ourselves from the Climate and Ecology crisis
- We need nationalism to be able to inflate our world and deflate and disorganise your world and make it ours
- **We don't need nationalism to love our land and locality, its peoples and its place in the world**



The chaos procedure at the heart of post truth fascism

One truth, one voice

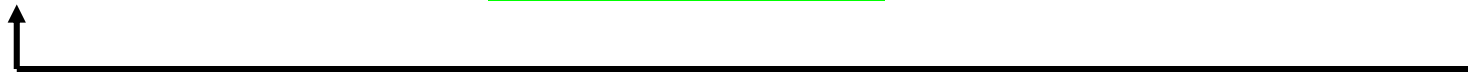
- Closed and finished
- Certain, authoritative and given
- One narrative
- fixed roles and ideas
- Then, and then
- Resisting dialogue
- Epic and monological

Many truths, novel voices

- Open and unfinished
- Uncertain, to be discovered
- Many narratives
- Contextual and creative
- Here and there
- Inviting dialogue
- Novelistic and dialogic

No truth, chaotic voices

- Teasing and deceiving
- Disorganising attachment
- No narrative
- Fragmenting
- Everywhere is nowhere
- Faking dialogue
- Cacophony of noise





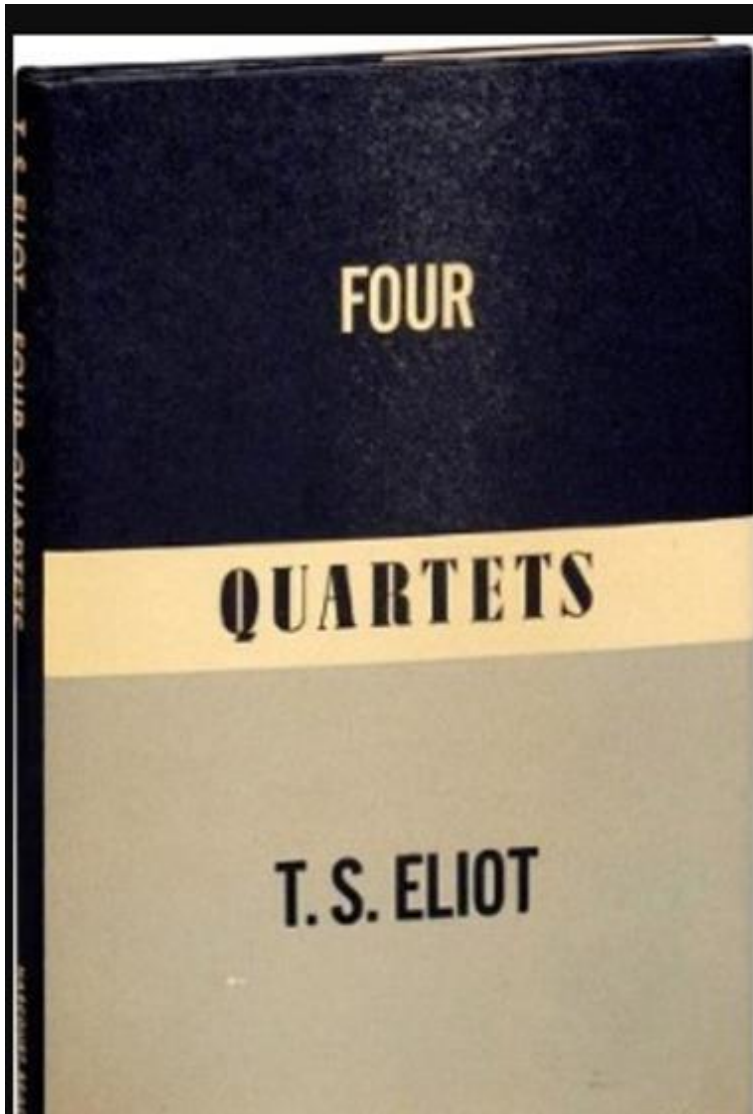
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The counter narrative: a community of voices



Searching for a working class, male English psyche - it is everywhere and nowhere



Little Gidding (1) T.S.Eliot (1943)

- If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid. And prayer is more
Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind, or the sound of the voice
praying.....

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment
Is England and nowhere. Never and always.