Chapter 18
Constructing "Georgia": Love, Play, Work as a Central Theme in O'Keefee's Early and Late Memories

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Abstract The present case study of American painter Georgia O'Keeffe, adopts the notion of "narrative construction of self" as its psychobiography lens and explores its link to life themes identified in early and late autobiographical memories. O'Keeffe's three earliest memories, which literally constitute the beginning episodes of her autobiography published by her at age 89 underwent narrative thematic analysis. These were then compared with the three concluding episodes of the same autobiography revealing a life theme running across all memories. This theme had three intertwined aspects: "love, "play" and "work". In general, Georgia O'Keeffe constructed herself as having continuity and directionality ("play"/exploring, "work"/creating), but also change and development ("love"/relating). The last aspect ("love") appeared to reflect an enduring concern and became the subject of further analysis. Theme development in memories reflects a continuous effort for narratively constructing a self that makes satisfactory meaning. Further theoretical implications of findings are discussed in connection to positive psychology. Some clinical implications are suggested with emphasis placed in treating persons as "works in progress".

Keywords Georgia O'Keeffe · Psychobiography · Memories · Narrative analysis · Life themes

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18.1 Introduction

In the last few decades, psychobiography has moved away from its sole identification with psychoanalytic inquiry and toward the adoption of other psychobiography lenses (Ponterotto, 2014; Runyan, 2005; Schultz, 2005; see also Fouché, 2015). The narrative turn in psychology (Bruner, 1990; Sarbin, 1986; see also Monteagudo, 2011), and the renewed interest in the analysis of life stories (Kőváry, 2011) has encouraged some psychobiographers to associate their work with the wider field of narrative inquiry (e.g. Schultz, 2001, 2003) and some narrative researchers to become intrigued by the narrative study of famous lives (e.g. Josselson, 2007a). The present case study of American painter Georgia O'Keeffe, adopts Bruner's (1990, 2003, 2004) understanding of the "narrative construction of self" as its psychobiography lens. The study explores the link between narrative construction of self and life themes identified in autobiographical memories.

O'Keeffe's three earliest memories, which literally constitute the beginning episodes of her autobiography published by her at age 89 (she lived to be 98) (O'Keeffe, 1976), were compared with the three concluding episodes of the same autobiography revealing a life theme running across all memories. This theme had three intertwined aspects: "love, "play" and "work". In general, Georgia constructed herself as having continuity and directionality ("play"/exploring, "work"/creating), but also change and development ("love"/relating). The last aspect ("love") appeared to reflect an enduring concern.

18.2 Theoretical Background

18.2.1 Self-narratives as Autobiography

In Bruner's (2004) view, "self-narratives conform to a *tacit pacte autobiographique* governing what constitutes appropriate public self-telling" (pp. 4–5). This "self-making" is an important part in the human struggle for making meaning (see also Bruner, 2003; Gergen, 1994; McAdams & Janis, 2004; Sarbin, 1986). Self-narratives are constantly updated as they unfold (Bruner, 1990; Ochs and Capps, 1996; Smorti, 2011). As a person simultaneously places herself in the role of "author" and "reader" (or "audience"), anything written or said is edited and revised almost at the same time. This is possible because of human reflexivity, the capacity to alter the present in the light of the past or alter the past in the light of the present, and because of our capacity to envision alternatives (Gergen, 1994). Therefore, like it would happen in fiction, even chapters (life episodes) that have already been written are being continuously modified so that the various incidents fit well and the whole story makes better sense (see Bruner, 1990; Eakin, 1992). As a person re-edits early stories, later stories are also modified and updated, remaining consistent with her sense of who she is at the time or who she is becoming (see Polkinghorne, 1988).

18.2.2 Memories and Self-construction

Constructing and re-constructing ourselves is necessary, in Bruner's (2004) opinion, as we need to meet the needs of various situations we come across. The narrative construction of self is achieved "with the guidance of our memories of the past, and our hopes and fears for the future" (p. 4). Autobiographical memory itself is a process of reconstruction rather than a faithful depiction of reality (Josselson, 2000, 2009). Singer and Salovey (1993) have pointed to the significance of specific early memories as "self-defining", a key component of narrative identity. These memories express intense emotion, they are vivid, they are often told repeatedly, and preserve enduring concerns or reveal unresolved conflicts (see Singer, Blagov, Berry, & Oost, 2013). Self-defining memories can be several, they can be positive or negative, and they suggest change and/or continuity. A self-defining memory has some similarity with a prototypical scene (Schultz, 2003), but this scene may or may not be an early memory. In its singularity, the prototypical scene reveals an important life theme that may help explain future events and choices of the person who narrates it. From a narrative construction perspective, early memories can be seen as early stories or beginning episodes in the current version of an autobiography or self-narrative which is continuously updated. This idea has been previously presented by us in connection to early memories of clients in a narrative-informed psychotherapy practice as discussed below (Androutsopoulou, 2013).

18.2.3 Constructing Memories Over Time

A number of studies indicate continuity in life themes in the telling of memories and past experiences (see Chafe, 1998; Josselson, 2000; Singer & Bonalume, 2010; Thorne, Cutting, & Skaw, 1998) even though different autobiographical memories may be chosen by participants in long-term studies (McAdams, Bauer, Sakeda, Anyidoho & Machado, 2006). In our own clinical practice and research with clients in long term narrative-informed psychotherapy, clients are asked to choose three early memories until the age of eight in the order they prefer (see Androutsopoulou, 2013, 2015). We treat these memories as three continuing episodes in their early life stories. Clients in middle phases of therapy or at the end of short-term contracts, usually revise the form of the life story they have previously narrated: the same memories, when re-told (or re-written), are often placed in a different order (one memory may be added or omitted) to present a positive last episode in the series of memories. In these re-tellings, clients often name emotions and emphasize relations previously left unmentioned. In later phases of psychotherapy, clients are often interested in presenting a different story, but do this not by interfering with the content of previously told memories, but by choosing to narrate different recollections.

18.3 Identifying Memory Themes

Narrative identity researchers believe that memories reveal important life themes (Singer et al., 2013; Singer & Bonalume, 2010) with agency versus communion, and redemption versus contamination being among the most widely studied (e.g., McAdams, 2015; McAdams & Janis, 2004). In our own clinical practice and research (Androutsopoulou, 2013, 2015), we can usually identify a life theme running across memories, which is ever developing in ways that are less restricting and more liberating for clients' lives. In fact, these same themes and their development can also be identified in other versions of self-narratives (self-characterizations, favourite fictions, and dreams) generated at different periods in time (see Androutsopoulou, 2001a, 2001b, 2011, 2013, 2015). In our clinical and research work, themes are identified through narrative thematic analysis, often done co-operatively with clients. They are therefore unique for every single person.

18.4 Studying Memory Themes in "Finished Lives"

Even though clients are a good source for generating and testing ideas, psychobiography studies can offer the perfect conditions to study "finished lives" in ways that even the best longitudinal studies or clinical case examples fail to do (Carlson, 1988). These conditions are more representative of the way persons would actually use memories to construct a self, compared to more conventional quantity or qualitative research, where the researcher would place the agenda by asking for a number of memories (e.g. Androutsopoulou, 2013; Josselson, 2009; Thorne et al., 1998). Georgia O'Keeffe is a good example of "finished life". She lived to be 98, and her autobiography begins with childhood memories. The following question arose in our minds: "Approaching ninety, how did Georgia construct herself?" "What role did memory themes play in this construction?" But first, let us take a look at her life (Benke, 2003; Cartwright, 2007, 2017; Corn, 2017; Drohojowska-Philip, 2004; Frezier, 1990; Greenough, 2011; Pollitzer, 1988).

18.5 The Life of Georgia O'Keeffe

Origin and Early Years Georgia O'Keeffe was born in November 15, 1887 in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, and died in March 6, 1986 in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Georgia was the second born child of seven children. The first born was a boy, "mother's favorite". Her mother encouraged her to take painting classes form an early age. Although their relationship was "strained" Georgia identified with her mother's self-confidence and superiority. She also identified with her father, however, who was capable of building and doing things with his hands.

Beginning of Career and Marriage Georgia was educated in various art schools and later taught art to make a living. Alon Bement introduced her to the work of Arthur Wesley Dow, with whom she studied in 1914. In 1916, the famous photographer, owner of the "291" gallery, New Yorker Alfred Stieglitz, saw some of her early charcoals, which her friend Anita Pollitzer brought to him without her knowing, and exhibited them in a group exhibition. A solo exhibition followed in 1917. Alfred and Georgia became lovers and were married in 1924, after he divorced his wife. He was nearly 24 years her senior.

Feminism Soon, Georgia regretted Alfred presenting her as a sensational woman in nude photographs, and fought against interpretations of her abstract work in Freudian terms. As a member of the National Woman's Party, a radical feminist organization, she was against interpreting women's work in gender terms. She also disliked Stieglitz's interference with her visions and decided to follow her own.

Troubles with Marriage and Health Georgia was hurt by Alfred's unwillingness to have children and flirting behavior. In 1927, she underwent breast surgery. In 1928 Stieglitz became involved with young, wealthy Dorothy Norman, an affair which lasted till his death. Georgia spent the summers of 1929–1931 painting in New Mexico and discovered it enhanced her creativity. In 1933, bitter by Stieglitz's affair and burdened by hard work, she was hospitalized for a nervous breakdown. Georgia never divorced Alfred. She rebounded from the breakdown within two years by developing a life away from New York.

Move to New Mexico Georgia settled in New Mexico, and visited Stieglitz a few months each year until his death in 1946. She had many important visitors, perhaps also lovers, stay over, but always cherished her loneliness. She continued developing a great career, known till then for her enormous flowers, by drawing views from her two Mexican houses, desert land-shapes and bones. She lived a simple life close to nature. Contemporary exhibitions depict her as an example of modernism. She chose minimalist furniture and wore minimalist clothes, many of which she made herself. Her black and white living choices were in sharp contrast to the colors of her paintings.

Late Years Almost a decade after Alfred's death, she began traveling around the world. In 1967, she ended a fifty-year friendship with Anita Pollitzer, when she refused to authorize her biography. Despite her strictness, she was kind to young artists who she thought talented. When she began losing her eyesight, she relied more on paid helpers. One of them, 26-year-old potter, Juan Hamilton, was employed in 1973, but became an intimate friend. Some of her friends, helpers and biographers believed this friendship included elements of romance, but, most probably, Juan became an informally adopted son. With his help, she completed her autobiography and in the following year she participated in a film about her life, directed by Adato (1977). Georgia and Juan continued to travel, teach each other, and promote each other's work in the years following the publication of her autobiography.

Death After she had a heart attack, Juan, who had become her heir, brought her to stay with his new family (wife and two children) in Santa Fe. Georgia lived with them in the last two years of her life. The informal adoption of Juan caused a lot of

turmoil, especially among nephews and close friends of Georgia's, who may have hoped to share her huge heritage or may have been afraid that Juan was dishonest.

18.6 Methodology

18.6.1 Narrative Inquiry

The present study adopts a narrative inquiry framework that offers a wide umbrella which covers "case studies, autobiographical approaches, psychobiography, life histories, content analysis of life narrative accounts, discourse analysis, ethnographies, and other approaches" that prefer to employ qualitative research (McAdams, Josselson, Lieblich, 2001, p. xi). Examples of using narrative inquiry to study famous artists and authors include Josselson (2007a), Schultz (2001, 2003) and Tamboukou (2010). In McLeod's view (2001), a narrative inquiry framework "combines a discursive emphasis on the construction of meaning through talk and language, alongside a humanistic image of the person as a self-aware agent striving to achieve meaning, control, and fulfilment in life" (p. 106) (see also Gergen, 2014).

18.6.2 O'Keeffe's Autobiography Text

The text, titled "Georgia O'Keeffe" (1976), comprises 205 pages, half of which are illustrations of her paintings that match her narrations. No page numbers are used. The story begins with her first childhood memory and the narration continues in chronological order, reaching that present moment at age 89. A possible sub-title would be: "How I became an artist". This is her prologue:

> Where I was born and where and how I lived is unimportant. It is what I have done with where I have been that should be of interest.

18.6.3 Ethical and Validity Issues

In conducting the present study, we took into account a number of best practices and ethical guidelines (Ponterotto, 2014; Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017). These cover a wide range of topics including the use of methodologies and data triangulation, alternative interpretations and accounting for historical and cultural issues. Perhaps the most important topic is the stance that the psychobiographer should adopt toward the person under study. Ponterotto emphasizes the need to avoid both "pathography" (emphasis on diagnostic labels and pathology) and "hagiography" (overidealization). From a narrative analysis perspective, Josselson (2007b) marks that

what ultimately gives the analysis its meaning and value, is that "the researcher endeavours to obtain data from a deeply human, genuine, empathic, and respectful relationship to the participant about significant and meaningful aspects of the participant's life" (p. 539). We believe that this relationship can also develop through an empathic study of one's life through texts and other printed materials, as in the case of psychobiography.

18.7 Researchers

Initially, we spent time studying Georgia's biographies, art, and life style. On the occasion of the centenary from her first exhibition, we travelled to see the temporary exhibition of her work in Tate Modern, London, where paintings and photographic portraits gathered from museums and collections around the world (Tate Gallery, 2016). We also read reports on temporary exhibitions in other parts of the world (e.g., Brooklyn Museum, New York; see Corn, 2017) and read analyses of her work published in newspapers and blogs, including blogs of the O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico (e.g. Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, 2017). Working on the principles of team based research described by McLeod (2010), brainstorming meetings followed our real and virtual trips. Data was first analyzed separately, then in pairs. Eventually, we came together as a team to compare findings and achieve consensus. This process was repeated several times. On numerous occasions, we received useful feedback from colleagues.

18.8 The Present Analysis

Presented here is a narrative analysis of Georgia O'Keeffe's three earliest memories, which literally constitute the beginning episodes of her autobiography. These memories were then compared with the three concluding episodes of the same autobiography. Additional material was drawn from the rest of her autobiography to answer specific questions that arose from the initial analysis.

According to Riessman (2008), thematic narrative analysis "is the usual approach to letters, diaries, auto/biographies" and any type of archival document (p. 63). Following Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach, & Zilber's (1998) guidelines, we chose two primary "markers of significance" (see Alexander, 1988, for a whole list): frequency of mention (repeated words, phrases, stories that were identical, synonymous, or similar in content), and uniqueness (what stands out as an exception). Based on these markers, several questions were formulated:

- What are some repeated elements in the early recollections (repeated words, phrases, stories that were identical, synonymous, or similar in content)?
- What may be seen as a common theme between these early recollections?

- Is there something different between these early recollections despite the common theme?
- What similarities or differences can one see between early recollections and later recollections and among later recollections?

18.9 Findings

18.9.1 Childhood (early) memories/beginning episodes

Love: Relating to my Mother and Aunt Winnie from a Distance In this first memory, Georgia is a little baby. Her mother and aunt Winnie do not appear to interact with her. She focuses on the detailed observation of textures, colors and patterns, including red stars and blue flowers, as well as descriptions of figures and postures.

> My first memory is of the brightness of light - light all around. I was sitting among pillows on a quilt on the ground – very large white pillows. The quilt was a cotton patchwork of two different kinds of material – white with very small red stars spotted over it quite close together, and black with a red and white flower on it. I was probably eight or nine months old. […] My mother sat on a bench beside a long table, her back turned to me. A friend called Aunt Winnie stood at the end of the table in profile. I don't remember what my mother looked like - probably because she was familiar to me. Aunt Winnie had goldish hair done high on top of her hair- a big twist of blond hair and lots of curly bangs. My mother was dark with straight hair and I had never seen a blond person. Aunt Winnie's dress was thin white material, a little blue flower and a spring of green patterned over it. […] Years later I told my mother that I could remember something that I saw before I could walk. She laughed and said it was impossible. So I described that scene […] She was much surprised and finally- a bit unwillingly-acknowledged that I must be right […].

Play: Exploring the Lawn Around my House In this second memory, she has set off to explore the surroundings, and has immersed herself in soft soil that appears yummy! The sun is bright! Her mother comes to her reluctant rescue, snatches her and holds her in an uncomfortable way.

> My next memory must be of the following summer - the first memory of pleasure in something seen with my eye and touched with my hand. There was a good-sized lawn all around our house. There was a long entrance drive with a high arborvitae hedge. I don't remember walking across the grass but I remember arriving at the road with great pleasure. The colour of the dust was bright in the sunlight. It looked so soft I wanted to get to it quickly. It was warm, full of smooth little ridges made by buggy wheels. I was sitting in it, enjoying it very much – probably eating it. It was the same feeling I have had later when I 've wanted to eat a fine pile of paint just squeezed out of a tube. My mother came and snatched me up – her arm around my middle – my head and feet hanging down. I was most uncomfortable and I didn't like it. But I remember the strange expression on her face – something not exactly annoyance with me. I suppose she was frightened because I was in a perfect place to be run down by a horse or vehicle coming around the corner of the high hedge.

Work: Creating Figures and Clothes from Scratch and Having Fun In this third memory from childhood, she describes her solitary efforts to draw a man figure, making a dollhouse and some clothes for her dolls. She tried to turn a female doll into a man but failed to create a lean figure so she pretended the man doll was around even though he was not. All this was fun!

> The first thing I can remember drawing was a picture of a man lying on his back with his feet up in the air. He was about two inches long, carefully outlined with black lead pencil – a line made very dark by wetting the pencil in my mouth and pressing very hard on a tan paper bag. His nose and eyes were worked out in profile – a bit too big for the rest of him. […] I worked at it intensely- probably as hard as I ever worked at anything in my life. […] When I had the man with his legs only bent at the hips, he just wasn't balance right. I turned the paper bag around and saw that he did look right as a man lying on his back with his feet straight up in the air. […] after all my effort gave me a feeling of real achievement to have made something – even if it wasn't what I had intended. I kept this little drawing for a long time. The idea of drawing a man may have been connected with my dolls […] I had a whole family of small china dolls […] They had little-girl bodies and long golden hair. I sewed unusually well and made wonderful dresses for them like dresses I found in pictures or like some that were made in the house. In time I made a house for the dolls. Making things for the dolls and the house is the principal amusement that I remember from my childhood. […] It was the idea that they should go boating on the lake that made me think that I should have a man doll […] I cut and sewed and sewed, trying to make [one doll] a pair of long trousers […] The best man I could fix was so fat that I didn't like him. My father was lean […] So the man was given up. I just played he was always around but we never saw him.

18.9.2 Old Age (Late) Memories/Concluding Episodes

Work: Creating Paintings from Scratch and Enjoying In this first recent memory from her old age, she describes how her painting with clouds and the horizon was inspired, and describes in detail how she constructed the frame herself and painted it, and how it glowed in the sunset light creating a wonderful feeling. Some help was received on practical matters.

> One day when I was flying back to New Mexico, the sky below was a most beautiful solid white. It looked so secure that I thought I could walk right out on it to the horizon if the door opened. The sky beyond was a light clear blue. It was so wonderful that I couldn't wait to be home to paint it. I couldn't find a canvas the right size so it was painted on one I had – one that was too high and not wide enough. The next time I went to New York I bought the canvas and asked LeBrun, the framer, about the stretcher. […] He made it sound so simple that when I returned to New Mexico I thought I could stretch it myself if I had a pair of strong hands to help me. So I started at it with Frank, who […] does odd jobs for me. The canvas was rough and coarse and to rub the glue and paint into it was hard work. I was up every morning at six and at work immediately – and I didn't have my brushes washed until about nine in the evening. A little girl from Abiqui fed me and took care of me her way as I didn't have time to teach her mine. As I worked I could walk back long distances out onto the plain behind the garage to look at what I was doing. There is a short time at sunset when the whole world has a warm glow – and at that time the big painting with its cool light looked quite wonderful from almost any distance – even from a quarter of a mile […].

Play: Exploring the Country of New Mexico In this second recent memory from her old age, she admires the black rocks and the dry soil of New Mexico with its sand and sun. Nature is presented as adorable, something to love.

> The black rocks from the road to the Glen canyon dam seem to have become a symbol to me- of the wideness and wonder of the sky and the world. They have lain there for a long time with the sun and wind and the blowing sand making them into something that is precious to the eye and hand – to find with excitement, to treasure, and love.

Love: Relating to and Being Closely Guided by Young Potter Juan. In this third recent memory from her old age, she describes how Juan teaches her to make pots and encourages her to keep on. Help is welcome. However, Juan is simply referred to as a "young potter".

> A young potter came to the Ranch and as I watched him work with the clay I saw that he could make it speak. […] I hadn't thought much about pottery but now I thought that maybe I could make a pot, too – maybe a beautiful pot – it could become still another language for me. I rolled the clay and coiled it – rolled and coiled it. I tried to smooth it and I made very bad pots. He said to me, "Keep on, keep on – you have to work at it – the clay has a mind of its own." He helped me with this and that and I finally have several pots that are not too bad, but I cannot yet make the clay speak- so I must keep on.

18.10 Summary of Findings

Early and late memories are very similar in the theme aspects that refer to "work" (creating) and "play" (exploring), supporting the notion of stability in the construction of self. However, early and late memories appear to have some differences in the third theme aspect, that of "love" (relating), supporting the notion of change in the construction of self (Table 18.1). In describing her early memories, Georgia constructs herself as a baby who lacks close emotional connection to her mother, and resents her help when she rescues her by grabbing her without her will. Also, Georgia is interested in proving her mother wrong when her mother doubts her ability to remember. Her father is mentioned only in connection to his external appearance, but a doll father is mentioned as missing, even though everyone behaves as if he were there. Positive emotions are linked to achievement and adoring nature. The only negative emotion (fear) is thought to be felt by her mum in the incidence of her rescue, whereas her own feeling is "discomfort". In late memories, practical help is more welcome: Frank helps with his strong hands, a little girl from the village is allowed to cook for her while Georgia is working hard. Lessons and help received by Juan are not resented, but welcome. She does not appear concerned with proving anyone wrong. However, close emotional connection is still not evident, and emotions are still expressed in regard to achievement and nature.

Table 18.1 Comparison of memories

	Early memories/childhood	Late memories/old age
"Love"	Relating to my mother and aunt Winnie from a distance	Relating to and being closely guided by young potter Juan
"Play"	Exploring the lawn around my house	Exploring the country of New Mexico
"Work"	Creating figures and clothes from scratch and having fun	Creating paintings from scratch and enjoying

18.11 Triangulation of Data

We wished to triangulate our finding regarding the development and change in the aspect of "love". Based on our previous analysis, we identified three sub-aspects: (i) resentment of help, (ii) proving others wrong, and (iii) difficulty in emotional connection. We studied the rest of her autobiography, isolating all references to persons in her life and her interactions with them. We placed all relevant extracts in chronological order and noticed the sequence, using the same markers of significance, frequency and uniqueness. This is a shorter version of our original sequence analysis:

- [My paintings] were framed by my mother and hung on the wall. They were never satisfactory to me, because I could always see where teachers had worked on them.
- [The Art teacher] had beautiful large dark eyes and very white lovely hands, but she always felt a bit hot and stuffy to me. I felt like shrinking away from her.
- [The same Art teacher] said I had drawn the hand too small and my lines were all too black. […] I was so embarrassed that it was difficult not to cry.
- I didn't like [another] the teacher. […] But maybe she started me looking at things-looking very carefully at details.
- […] a boy would criticize my drawings […] I noticed later that my drawings got better marks […].
- I looked forward to [John Vanderpoel's] lectures. They helped me with the drawing of casts and with the Life Class.
- "It doesn't matter what you do", an older student said. "I'm going to be a great painter and you will probably end up teaching painting in some girls' school."
- [Another student] took my painting and began painting on it to show me. […] I thought he had spoiled my painting.
- I had won a price with a painting in the Chase Still Life Class.
- I decided to start anew- to strip away what I had been taught. […] no one to say anything about it one way or another.
- […] Stieglitz had seen my drawings and kept them, telling the person who had taken them to him that he intended to show them.
- I went immediately to "291" and asked Stieglitz to take the drawings down […]. Stieglitz and I argued […]

- […] when I arrived at "291", Stieglitz had taken my show down, but he put it back on the wall for me.
- The only thing I remember from Stieglitz from that trip is his black Loden cape. It was a cold, windy day and it was put around me.
- In later years Bement always felt he didn't get proper credit […]. I think he didn't know the many ways he helped me.
- If I must be honest, I am also interested in what anybody else has to say.
- I was more interested in what Stieglitz thought […]
- Of course, I was told that it was an impossible idea- even the men hadn't done too well with [painting New York]. […] my large "New York" was sold the first afternoon. No one ever objected to my painting New York after that.
- It was in the time when the men didn't think much of what I was doing.
- I make up my own mind about it-how good or bad or indifferent it is. After that the critics can write what they please.
- In my next show the "Shanty" (1922) went up. The men seemed to approve of it. […]
- I'll make it an American painting. They will not think it great […]- but they will notice it.
- You can be much colder from the ground than the air so Maria kept a fire burning all the next day to warm the earth where we intended to sleep [and I intended to paint].
- I heard [a man] remark, "They must be of rivers seen from the air." I was pleased that someone had seen what I saw and remembered it my way.

18.11.1 Summary of Findings on the Aspect of "Love"

Georgia constructed herself as a person who managed to change from resenting help and experiencing comments on her work as violation and criticism, to a person who:

- Receives guidance even impersonally (e.g. from lectures rather than the teacher).
- Admits guidance was offered to her in the past even if unacknowledged.
- Receives practical help as assistance to her current creative plans.
- Receives practical help and guidance to learn new things without resentment but with gratitude, as evident in the last memory with Juan.

She also constructs herself as a person who gradually moved away from wanting to prove others wrong when feeling diminished, and being able to:

- Admit others' opinion matters, mostly Stieglitz's.
- Be more interested in her own evaluation of her work.
- Be able to hear comments of approval, some of which even matched her own understanding of her work.

Nevertheless, Georgia did not construct herself as a person who gradually became more emotionally connected to others. Throughout her autobiography, she continued

to emphasize persons' outer characteristics, rather than inner. She avoided naming emotions in relation to others and avoided naming persons very close to her. We know from her letters that indeed Georgia perceived emotionality as something to be avoided. In her late twenties, she had written to her closest friend, Anita Pollitzer:

> Self-control is a wonderful thing — I think we must even keep ourselves from feeling too much - often - if we are going to keep sane and see with a clear unprejudiced vision.

In her early seventies, when she rejected Anita's biography and broke their fifty-year friendship, she wrote to her (see Giboire, 1990, for both letters):

> You have written your dream picture of me — and that is what it is. It is a very sentimental way you like to imagine me — and I am not that way at all.

18.12 Conclusions

The present case study used Bruner's (1990, 2003, 2004) understanding of the narrative construction of self as a psychobiography lens, and explored the link between narrative construction of self and life themes identified in autobiographical memories. The narrative thematic analysis of the early and late memories of Georgia O'Keeffe revealed a common life theme running across her beginning and concluding life episodes. Early and late memories were narrated as if to explain her life's directionality, and particularly her artistic career. As Bruner (1990) states, one's summary of childhood is also prophecy.

The identified life theme had three aspects: "love, play, work" or, in other words, "relating, exploring, creating". Even though each memory pointed to one aspect of this theme more than others, all aspects were intertwined. Georgia constructed herself as having continuity and directionality ("play"/exploring, "work"/creating), but also change and development ("love"/relating), especially in two sub-aspects of love/relating: resenting help and wanting to prove others wrong. The emotional connection to others, as a third sub-aspect of "love", remained largely unchanged, indicating an enduring concern.

18.13 Recommendations for Theory and Practice

18.13.1 Theory

The narrated memories are told and re-told to support a developing life theme, unique for each person. Developments in this theme occur throughout one's life and match the present understanding of "who one was", "who one is", and "who one is becoming". Theme development is reflected in continuity, directionality and change, in a continuous effort for narratively constructing a self that makes satisfactory meaning

(see also Androutsopoulou, 2013; Fivush, Booker, & Graci, 2017; Fivush, & Haden, 2003; McLean, Pasupathi & Pals, 2007). Despite talk of continuity in theme development, we do not perceive the self as a unified entity. According to Bruner (2004), "no autobiography is free from questions about which self [the] autobiography is about, composed from what perspective, for whom" (p. 8). There can be numerous versions of an autobiography, told from different perspectives, with different purposes in mind, and for different audiences, all of them equally valid, all of them serving the making of meaning (see Pillemer, 1998; see also Hermans, 1999; Hermans & Gieser, 2014).

According to Fivush et al. (2017), the many ways persons create meaning from the events in their lives has important implications not just for identity, but also for well-being across the life span (see also Carlsen, 1995; Singer et al., 2013). These are core issues in positive psychology, adopted recently as another psychobiography lens (e.g. Mayer, 2017). Georgia's "work, play, love" theme summarizes the concerns of positive psychology and positive aging (Schlossberg, 2017). If one were to examine Georgia's life from the psychobiography lens of positive psychology as summarized by Peterson (2006), she would find that Georgia's life satisfies all virtues (and character strengths contained): wisdom and knowledge (creativity, open mindedness, love of learning), courage (bravery, persistence), humanity (kindness), justice (fairness), temperance (forgiveness) and transcendence (appreciation of beauty, hope, humor). O'Keeffe's personality also fits Ryff & Singer's (2008) model of well-being, including dimensions of "self-acceptance", "personal growth", "purpose in life", "environmental mastery", and "autonomy". The final dimension, "positive relations to others", similar to Peterson's "humanity", is a dimension Georgia was working on, but in a way which did not fit conventions; it fitted her own needs, for instance she worked on resolving emotional issues with men by "adopting" Juan in the years following the writing of her autobiography. In our view, it is important not to judge any virtues or dimensions in conventional ways, but to value persons' continuing effort to create and re-create themselves in parallel with the struggle to create and re-create meaning.

18.13.2 Practice

Because psychobiography is essentially a case study, it has the potential of strengthening clinical work (Schultz & Lawrence, 2017). Clinical implications include working with client recollections to help construct a more optimistic—yet realistic - self, where work, play, and love, in the sense of creating, exploring and relating, are given equal value. Regarding "love", therapists need to help clients develop positive affects toward the self and others, but should take into account characteristics of attachment style (Holmes, 2001). In other words, they should respect the limits of personal effort and ability to change. In our own clinical practice, clients come to see their selves as continuously constructed, as "works in progress". A useful notion is that of "becoming". They are encouraged to use the phrase: "I am becoming a person who…" The

way they finish this phrase each time encapsulates any work in progress, and gives us an idea of the direction that their narrative construction of self is taking.

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