

My epiphany...

This exercise has stayed with me throughout the week. Not just because I knew I had to complete a piece of writing about it, but also because its meaning has shifted for me over this time.

The story of my chosen and most powerful epiphany is as follows: I remember walking through a line of armed Russian soldiers in the snow at Moscow airport in April of 1980. I was nearly eight years old. What I remember isn't actually walking, but the image of the line of guards standing there in the snow – with their big woolly hats and long bayoneted rifles.

It wasn't until I was about 14yrs old that I came to recognise this image as a real lived experience. As something that had actually happened to me. It really was a revelation to me – that I had experienced this. My mum confirmed it to me in the midst of another conversation. Up until this point I had convinced myself that this image in my memory bank was a false memory. An implant. A symbolic image I had created to accompany my grand adventure narrative about moving from England to Australia as a child.

Last week, I at first held the meaning of this 14yr old epiphany to be about realising that I had access to an outer world, a culturally different world, a world that looked and felt different. And I can remember feeling excited about that possibility at the time. It was like a window into the possibility that amazing and genuinely global experiences would be available to me and that I would again be a traveller and journeyer, no matter where I physically travelled.

But now – the meaning has shifted for me. Or rather, has revealed another layer to me. Now it feels to me that the meaning about my 14yr old epiphany about a memory from my childhood is about the play and unreliability of memory.

I had assumed that a "real" memory was a fake – because so many other's of mine also were. Growing up on the other side of the globe from my family et al, many of my family-related memories are keenly reliant upon photographs and stories. My epiphany thus was to realise that I should trust my own memory-images as valid. And precious.

Eleanor