



Attachment-based Psychoanalytic Supervision of Music Therapy: Ithaca as Secure Base

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In this paper I explore attachment-based psychoanalytic supervision of music therapy through the metaphor of Cavafy's *Ithaca*. The poem's invitation to travel "a long road"—to risk, to linger, to return changed—offers a rich frame for understanding the cyclical processes of supervision and therapy. Just as Odysseus's journey home involves repetition, loss, and rediscovery, so too does the therapist's ongoing movement between clinical encounter and reflective return.

Supervision is conceived here as an *Ithaca*: a secure base from which the therapist embarks and to which they return, strengthened by experience. Drawing on clinical work, I situate music therapy within multidisciplinary environments where it may be marginalised, highlighting supervision as a crucial holding environment that safeguards both therapeutic integrity and practitioner wellbeing. Within the supervisory dyad, repetitions of rupture, longing, and repair are not failures but vital materials for growth. They echo the client's own journey toward integration and trust.

Cavafy's *propemptikon*—a blessing for the traveller—evokes the supervisor's role: to wish safety and courage, to hold the therapist while encouraging curiosity and creative risk. Supervision, like music, unfolds through rhythm, silence, and resonance: a process of listening deeply—beyond words—to what returns and asks to be re-heard.

I will further explore how attachment processes manifest through the use of musical and material 'objects' in therapy—compositions, artworks, and personal artefacts—which function as symbolic extensions of the self. Such objects invite tenderness and vulnerability, offering both therapist and client a means of authentic connection. Within supervision, attention to these creative expressions supports the supervisee's capacity to recognise, tolerate, and transform emotional experiences that might otherwise remain unformulated or overwhelming.



Through this lens, supervision becomes both voyage and homecoming, a living enactment of repetition and return. Supervision, like *Ithaca* itself, invites the traveller to arrive transformed.

Keywords: Music therapy; clinical supervision; psychoanalytic approach; secure base; attachment theory; repetition and return.

Biography

Serena Jenks trained as an Attachment-based Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist at the Bowlby Centre (2002–2006). She works in private practice as a therapist, clinical supervisor, and with trainee psychotherapists. Previous experience within a multidisciplinary acute care team taught her a lasting appreciation of the shared aims across therapeutic modalities: to offer safe, transformative, even playful, therapy relationships.

In 2023, she began supervising music therapists and supervisors, following an invitation from a retiring practitioner who recognised that Serena’s attachment-based psychoanalytic approach could bring depth and containment to their supervisees’ reflective practice. This audacious leap into uncharted waters has proved exciting and rewarding for Serena – Cavafy’s “marvellous journey”.

Serena holds a Classics degree from the University of Cambridge, where her first-class thesis on Homer’s *Odyssey* explored Odysseus’ identity as shaped through relationship and return—an early expression of her enduring interest in relational journeys and homecoming.