VENTURING INTO THE ABYSS:
EXPLORING VICTIM IDENTITY THROUGH NUMINOUS EXPERIENCE

by

ELIZABETH CASSANOS

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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The Uses of Sorrow

(In my sleep I dreamed this poem)

Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness.

It took me years to understand that this, too, was a gift.

Mary Oliver
THIRST

Thirty spokes
Share one hub.
Make the nothing therein appropriate, and you will have the use of the cart. Knead clay in order to make a vessel. Make the nothing therein appropriate, and you will have the use of the clay vessel. Cut out doors and windows in order to make a room. Make the nothing therein appropriate, and you will have use of the room. Thus we gain by making it Something, but we have the use by making it Nothing.

Lao-Tzu
Tao Te Ching
ABSTRACT

VENTURING INTO THE ABYSS: 
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The Numinous breaks through consciousness as direct experience of that which is wholly other to normative reality. Evoking deeply affective experience of the “Other” in relation to trauma, this study explored the intersection of numinous experience and victim identity. The Research Problem asked: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? The hypothesis anticipated that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities. It departed from contemporary research by intentionally evoking the shadow dimension of archetypal experience within an altered-state of consciousness.

The literature review explores understandings of the numinous, parallel concepts, and their psychological application. It investigates the shadow and imagination, as the dimension and means through which this study accessed numinous experience. The final section examines trauma and victim identity, an aspect of trauma underlying individual suffering and social paralysis.
The study employed Imaginal Inquiry, a distinct research approach developed by Aftab Omer, situated in the participatory paradigm. Participants imagined into the archetypal dimension of trauma using guided visualization and shamanic journeying. Expression was written, verbal, artistic and dramatic. Interpretation was heuristic and integrative. Through its focus on the shadow side of the numinous in relation to trauma, this study explored methods to experientially work with victim identity.

The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization. This study produced six learnings which addressed: preconditions for evoking numinous experience; creating symbolic distance from victim identity; identifying the victim-bind as an expression of the good-evil split; the effectiveness of numinous experience to break through established defenses; the integrative role of courage and compassion; and how, through experience of the numen, core splits that form the basis of projection can be transcended. This study suggests that evoking numinous experience to work with complex issues, such as victim identity, is an area ripe for exploration.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................. v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ............................................... x

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ....................................................... 1
   Research Topic
   Relationship to the Topic
   Theory-In-Practice
   Research Problem and Hypothesis
   Methodology and Research Design
   Learnings
   Significance and Implications of the Study

2. LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................. 15
   Introduction
   Numinous Experience
   The Shadow
   Imagination
   Trauma
   Conclusion

3. METHODOLOGY .................................................... 91
   Introduction and Overview
Participants

Four Phases of Imaginal Inquiry

4. LEARNINGS .................................................. 112

Introduction and Overview

Cumulative Learning: Numinous Experience Seeds New Potentials

Learning One: Reverence and Awe Open the Doorway to the Numinous

Learning Two: Leave Victim Identity at the Door

Learning Three: Victim Identity and Personal Power Collide at the Crossroads to the Numinous

Learning Four: Super-Charge Me! High-Voltage Knowing Seeks Home In-Body

Learning Five: To Touch the Ground of Reality, Walk in the Shoes of the Wholly Other

Learning Six: Direct Revelation Points to a New Beginning

Conclusion

5. REFLECTIONS ................................................ 164

Introduction and Overview

Significance of the Learnings

Mythic and Archetypal Reflections

Personal Reflections

Implications of the Study

Appendix

1. ETHICS APPLICATION .................................. 193

2. CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE .............................. 204

3. CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE ........................ 206
4. INFORMED CONSENT ........................................ 209
5. DATA SUMMARY ........................................... 211
6. SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS ................................. 227
7. STORIES AND RELATED JOURNALING .................. 229
8. MYTHS AND RELATED JOURNALING .................... 233
9. ARTWORK .................................................. 240
10. RECRUITING MATERIALS – PARTICIPANT APPLICATION 245
11. RECRUITING ACTIVITIES – SCREENING INTERVIEW .... 248
12. MEETING ONE ORIENTATION AND INSTRUCTIONS ..... 250
13. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE ONE—SCRIPT ..... 252
14. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE ONE—QUESTIONS .... 254
15. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE TWO—SCRIPT ..... 255
16. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE TWO—QUESTIONS .... 259
17. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE THREE—SCRIPT ..... 261
18. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE THREE—QUESTIONS .... 263
19. EVOKING -EXPRESSING SEQUENCE FOUR—SCRIPT .... 264
20. EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE FOUR—QUESTIONS .... 266
21. GATHERING PRACTICE ONE .............................. 267
22. GATHERING PRACTICE TWO .............................. 268
23. GATHERING PRACTICE THREE ............................ 270
24. GATHERING PRACTICE AND CLOSING CIRCLE ......... 271
25. CO-RESEARCHER JOURNALING QUESTIONS ............ 272

NOTES ......................................................... 273

REFERENCES ............................................... 298
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures

Illustration 1. Olivia’s artwork depicting the transformative hearth from her journey .......................... 240

Illustration 2. Sophia’s artwork depicting elements from her journey to meet Trauma .......................... 241

Illustration 3. Ava’s artwork illustrating the whale’s eye with her inside it from her journey .................. 242

Illustration 4. Emma’s artwork capturing the images of the sun, cherries and the blue lady from her journey ........................................ 243

Illustration 5. Isabella’s artwork depicting events from her journey ............................... 244
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research Topic

“Ghost of the Future!” he exclaimed, “I fear you more than any spectre I have seen. But as I know your purpose is to do me good . . . Will you not speak to me?” For Ebenezer Scrooge transformation was not secured by the visits of the beneficent ghosts of Christmas Past or Present, but by the dark, frightful specter of the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Similarly, I propose that learning how to speak with the frightful specter holds the potential to transform core personality structures shaped by trauma. Charles Dickens described Scrooge’s encounter with this shadowy figure, writing: “It thrilled him with a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shroud, there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but a spectral hand and one great heap of black.”

What Dickens described, the thrill, horror, mystery, dread and the driving fascination inspired by this unworldly power, suggests that Ebenezer was gripped by the numinous, that mysterious direct experience of what Rudolph Otto terms the Wholly Other. The Ghost’s spectral hand points the way to dark boundaries of Scrooge’s narrow existence; to the places that due to previous disappointments and emotional injuries, Scrooge could not and would not venture; to the places where his heart had hardened to experience. In Imaginal Transformation Praxis (ITP), an integrative approach to personal and cultural transformation developed by Aftab Omer, these would be viewed as
Scrooge’s *imaginal structures*, the perceptual and cognitive boundaries that constrict, constrain and construct subjective experience.\(^4\) The Ghosts of Christmas Past and Present had illuminated Scrooge’s personal history, revisiting the places of his woundings. In the language of ITP, it could be said that Scrooge was introduced to *reflexivity*, the capacity to bring self-awareness to one’s experience and imaginal structures.\(^5\) For Scrooge, these memories elicited both joy and sorrow, and the guides themselves, while clearly otherworldly, were benign and even sympathetic. The final visitation, however, from the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come, was different. The phantom was dark, shrouded, concealed, deathlike. It was neither mean nor vindictive, but rather neutral and cold, illuminating the distressing potentials that Scrooge dare not consider or examine on his own. This image of a black-robed and hooded figure, with its outstretched arm and its skeletal finger ominously pointing to the unknown, captures the felt-sense of an encounter with the dark numinous.

The concept of *numinous experience*, the topic of this study, was first articulated by German theologian and religious historian, Rudolf Otto, who coined the term to describe the core feeling-sense that is irreducible to any other state of mind, and which gives rise to religious thought and exists as the mystery at the core of human experience.\(^6\) For Otto, the numinous represents a duality: it is at once a “daemonic-divine object” containing the absolute experiences of both “awefulness” and “graciousness;” it is at once “daunting” and “fascinating.”\(^7\) The *numen*, the object of the experience, is a distinct description of the “unknown something” that is, therefore, for Otto, a “primary and elementary datum.”\(^8\)

Pursuing a psychological understanding of this intense feeling-state, Carl G. Jung used the term numinous to describe the affectively-charged material that arises from the
unconscious and alters consciousness. For Jung, the numinous appears as milestones on the road to individuation, signifying where the personal and the archetypal meet.

Archetypes are universal forms or images that are common across cultures, appearing in myths, dreams and other images that form patterns for human experience.

This intense feeling-state is represented by other similar concepts. The first and most familiar is mystical experience, which Otto considers a subset of numinous experience, so that all mystical experience is numinous, but not all numinous experience is mystical. Mystical experience differs from numinous experience in that mystical experience is often sought through defined practices and is understood within a particular belief system. Psychologists have explored the intense feeling-states related to expanded consciousness using various terms and constructs. Wilfred R. Bion theorized the “O” as an absolute objective truth. For Bion, experience of the “O” is a transformational event. Another related concept is Abraham Maslow’s peak experience, a euphoric, expansive state of consciousness. At the other pole, Maslow identifies negative peak or nadir experience. Championing a value-free examination of the numinous is James Hillman, who argues for a dialectic understanding of the Dionysian and Apollonic forces of the numinous. Michael Washburn conceives of the numinous as the spiritual manifestation of the power of the Dynamic Ground, the energizer of all life processes and systems.

While used widely in Jungian circles, the term numinous has not been widely adapted in mainstream psychological literature. In addition to the concepts named above, other psychological and philosophical terms are used to capture the ineffable quality of the numinous such as: transcendent experience, third space, superconsciousness, sublime reality, and the Wholly Other. In ITP, Omer works with the concept of ecstatic states, an expansive experience of the human condition, freed from the constricted identification
with what Omer terms the *adaptive identity*, a formulaic response to experience. Core to Omer’s understanding of expansive states is his concept of the *transformative imperative*, which describes the psyche’s natural movement toward increasingly-expansive authentic experience.

These various terms will be used throughout this dissertation, both to consistently represent the theoreticians cited, as well as to most accurately reflect the aspect of this ineffable experience being discussed. The central concern of this study is to focus on the whole of numinous experience, and not just on the elevated, positive, or elated aspects. More specifically, by evoking the numinous in relation to trauma, this study seeks to explore the challenging aspect of numinous experience: the one we do not seek out, but which, instead, seeks us out.

**Relationship to the Topic**

My interest in the topic is deeply personal. The numinous has loomed large in my life. In fact, my connection to the imaginal and the numinous has always been very immediate; as though the veil between physical and alternative realities is thin and penetrating its cloak requires only a shift in focus. As an adult firmly planted in the secular, rationalist culture, I mostly dismissed many of the sensations and images that came to me, until a severe and persistent health crisis wore down my resistance. During this period, I experienced spontaneous journeys that closely paralleled classic near death experiences, except mine were multiple and not linked to the cessation of my heartbeat or brain waves. Over time, I taught myself how to travel to the light-filled realm at will. Exhausted from battling disease while maintaining a demanding career, my departures into this alternative reality gave me relief and hope. On one particular day, as I felt the
familiar pull lifting my awareness out of my body, I was conscious that this time I could leave and not return. The discussions that occurred on the other side, however, returned me to my body with such force that in the resulting jolt I slammed my jaws together, breaking a molar. For a period after this incident, I could no longer access this same welcoming space. Instead, a new equally rich world opened to me, as spontaneous teaching journeys began to unfold in my meditations, as I drifted between sleep and wakefulness, and at times, when spectral figures visited me in my full waking state. During this period, I often encountered major archetypal entities including The Buddha, Genesha and Shaman, along with another consistent form that was personal to me. This was a female figure who I identified as a symbol of the Self, a Jungian concept that describes the archetypal form that balances polarities and has a natural drive towards unity and integration. The capital “S” in Self indicates that I am referencing the archetypal Self, as opposed to the biographical self. I will use this convention where I directly reference the archetype as a proper noun.

This initial period lasted for more than five years during which I continued to function as a senior executive, first in a national financial services firm, and then in an international sales and marketing organization. I was hesitant to share this part of my life too freely. I feared that, in most circles, my experiences would be considered delusional, grandiose, or perhaps psychotic. And yet, these experiences issued in a series of significant life changes. My emotional world began to open to new possibilities, and slowly, my relationship with disease shifted and my symptoms abated. As I gained greater mastery in navigating these alternative worlds, I also became familiar with a dark archetypal figure. Up until this time, my experience had been predominantly with the bright and loving aspects of the numinous. This new dark figure appeared in several
guises, sometimes in relation to my personal story, at other times relating to the lives of others or the culture as a whole, and at still other times, to the flow of human history. Although I may be able to point to earlier incidents with this dark character, my recognition of it as a consistent and terrifyingly powerful figure and who emanated a sense of foreboding and malice, began about five years into what I have now come to realize was my spiritual awakening. At first, terrified, I hoped that its visitations were fleeting, but I was gripped by the acute affective reality of my experience, and I knew that, on some level of the psyche, it was real and enduring.

Slowly, and incrementally, I began to overcome my fear of this dark figure. By turning toward it, I sought to discern the dark cords that connected it to my personal history, my ancestry, and to the culture as the whole. I came to recognize it as a personification of trauma. I also began to understand that the ease with which I access numinous realms may be linked to my experiences of early childhood trauma.

Jerome S. Bernstein identifies trauma as one portal to the numinous. Studies of out-of-body and near death experiences suggest a high correlation with childhood abuse. Advancing an archetypal understanding of trauma, Donald Kalsched describes how, in trauma, the mind and body split: Spirit leaves and becomes “encapsulated in a kind of ‘somatic’ unconscious state” such that somatic sensations and excited mental states remain pre-symbolic, unintegrated and unavailable for meaning making. The internalized experience of trauma then takes on its own existence so that: “...the traumatized psyche is self-traumatizing.” This internalized persecutory agent is born of personal circumstance and opens to archetypal experience. Building on Kalsched’s foundation, John P. Wilson contributes the concept of the trauma archetype which, according to Wilson, “...comprises a psychological function of personal and spiritual
transformation in a journey of self-discovery in which there is confrontation with the
darkness of existence, followed by the return from the trauma encounter and the
processes of self-reconstruction, transformation, and healing.” 24 To summon the trauma
archetype is to invite the experience of the abyss, in which one may encounter what I
refer to as the dark numinous.

In my life, the numinous acts as a lightning flash that illuminates the mythic
landscape of human experience. It provides insight into eternal truths and illuminates
how they reverberate in my life story and this particular moment in history. The dark,
Dionysian aspect of the numinous is terrifyingly powerful, and yet, by coming into
relationship with it, my capacity to explore aspects of my personal shadow, as well as the
cultural shadow in which it is embedded, continues to expand. This experience has lead
to my conviction that greater understanding and exploration of the dark numinous holds
transformative potential significant to our times.

**Theory-In-Practice**

Imaginal Transformation Praxis (ITP), developed by Aftab Omer, guides this
exploration. Imaginal Psychology represents a deep reimagining of the vocation of
psychology. 25 A distinct psychological orientation in its own right, Imaginal Psychology
draws on other psychological orientations as well as on broad domains of knowledge
including: spiritual traditions, somatic practices, creative arts, mythology, indigenous
wisdom, deep ecology, literary and poetic imagination, mystical philosophy, cultural
history and social critique.

The word *imaginal* was coined by Henri Corbin to refer to the *Mundus
Imaginalis*, a Latin term meaning the world of the image — a level of reality perceived
by active imagination, and in which meaning has an autonomous existence. Corbin used the word imaginal to distinguish this concept from imaginary, which has connotations of either utopianism or fantasy. In psychological terms, imaginal refers to the function of imagination and the concept of the Self. As mentioned, Self refers to the archetypal dimension as distinguished from the subjective “I” which separates itself from objective reality. Omer clarifies that, in this way, imagination functions as its own line of development and as a capacity; for Omer, imagination integrates and transforms the cognitive, affective and somatic dimensions of experience.

ITP seeks to deepen our individual and collective embodiment and engagement with the mystery of the archetypal force Omer calls the Friend. Omer discusses the mystery of the Friend as an encompassing metaphor for the objective truth. The Friend can be seen as a personal representation of Plato’s concept of The Good, a metaphor for generative force at the source of all that is. Omer frames the soul in terms of its plural and passionate nature; it is impelled through life by a transformative imperative towards authentic, expansive experience. However, like the inhabitants of Plato’s Cave, our experience of the world is distorted. In the parable of The Cave, humans can only perceive shadows of reality, and knowing nothing more, they assume that what they experience is reality. In ITP, this distortion is expressed by Omer’s concept of imaginal structures: the affective, sensory, and cognitive aspects of experience constellated into images that both mediate and constitute experience. To expand these structures, a primary practice, reflexive participation, builds self-awareness so that one can identify imaginal structures at work and move beyond formulaic or compulsive behaviors to authentic expression and creative action by the means of transmuting affects into capacities.
Omer conceives of the soul’s nature as plural. This is conveyed in ITP’s use of the concept of multiplicity, which refers to the internal experience of multiple subjectivities within an individual and relates to the vast nature of the soul.\textsuperscript{37} Fluid access to multiple perspectives on subjective experience then represents a constructive dynamic, while identification with a singular or narrow range of subjectivities results in psychological distress. Access to multiplicity can be constricted by trauma, and identification with trauma can result in limiting one’s access to present experience. Omer further elaborates that victimization can become a disease when we identify with it.\textsuperscript{38}

Blocking access to expansive experience is the Gatekeeper, a particular imaginal structure that arises to limit or block new, creative, and/or unfamiliar experience where new learning might be possible.\textsuperscript{39} Omer discusses the effects of gatekeeping in terms of the I-factor, the common, often chronic experience of inadequacy, insecurity and failure that limit experience.\textsuperscript{40} The counter force to the gatekeeper is the Friend, a voice of “passionate objectivity” that mediates the experience and effects of gatekeeping.\textsuperscript{41}

**Research Problem and Hypothesis**

My Research Problem asked: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? My hypothesis anticipated that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities.

The concept of consciousness capacities can be understood as existing on a continuum, spanning from self-awareness through reflexive self-awareness, and continuing through higher levels where consciousness expands beyond the consideration
of subject-object to a transcendent inclusion of a unitive reality. While consciousness capacities might relate to the whole of consciousness — all that an individual is aware of in the moment — it might also refer to a specific object, sensation or thought. Consciousness capacities may also apply to other faculties, such as the capacities for empathy, compassion, and creative or moral imagination. ITP conceives of capacities developing over time and representing an integration of ability so that one’s overall level of functioning is representative of increased capacity. This study, therefore, focused upon the participants’ ability to tap into consciousness capacities as represented by a temporary extension of capacities, or conversely, in a diminishment of capacity, as represented by either an expansion or constriction of self-awareness. Another assessment of increased consciousness capacities employed by this research was framed in terms of multiplicity, as indicated by the participants’ increased ability to identify or empathize with aspects of experience of previously unknown or denied.

**Methodology and Research Design**

This study utilized Imaginal Inquiry, a distinct qualitative research methodology located within the *participatory research paradigm* in which subjective and objective dimensions of reality are understood to exist side-by-side, and the nature of knowledge is based on a critical subjectivity in participatory interaction with objective reality. Imaginal Inquiry focuses on generating practical knowledge, in which both the participants and the researcher are valid sources for generating new knowledge. The goal of Imaginal Inquiry is transformation, both personal and cultural. This knowledge is discovered and validated through a research model that utilizes four distinct phases in its
research design: evoking experience, expressing experience, interpreting experience and integrating experience.

The research design in this study sought to evoke a deeply affective experience of the “Other” in the trauma archetype. It used images, guided visualizations, and a shamanic journey to evoke this experience. Various modes of expression, including art, writing, dramatic interpretation, and dialogue provided the data. Interpretations considered expression of subjective states, imaginal structures, and experience by the participants as well as their reflections on their experience.

**Learnings**

The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization. Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated. Learning Two identifies the operation of *Creative Projection* to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. Learning Three illustrates the *victim bind*, an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.” Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting the cognitive, somatic, and affective
dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the body. Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the Wholly Other (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity. Learning Six proposes that numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an opportunity to reclaim projections.

Significance and Implications of the Study

In The Idea of The Numinous, Ann Casement and David Tacey write: “The idea of the numinous is often raised in psychoanalytic and psychodynamic contexts, but it is rarely itself subjected to close scrutiny.” This study explored a method of evoking and expressing numinous experience in order to work with trauma and victim identity, and it demonstrated the impact of this experience to provide a foundation for new growth. It departed from contemporary research through its use of ritual and shamanic techniques and by intentionally evoking the shadow dimension of archetypal experience within an altered-state of consciousness.

The subject of victim identity relates to the complicated personal and cultural dynamics involving the pervasive split between good and evil that dominates Western culture along with issues of power and powerlessness. At the personal level, these dynamics lock one in identification with the victim or perpetrator, perpetuating patterns of trauma. At the cultural level, these dynamics underlie polarized political conflicts where each side projects its shadow onto the other, demonizing its opponent, and in doing
so, making compromise untenable. Victim identity contributes to individual suffering and social paralysis. Through its focus on the shadow side of the numinous in relation to trauma, this study explored methods to experientially work with victim identity. These methods are flexible and adaptable to group and individual settings.

Additionally, the study expands the imaginal lexicon, with the concepts of creative projection, dynamic surrender, and the victim bind, all of which suggest areas for further research and refinement. In this way, it is my hope that this research adds a distinct and practical dimension to the literature on the numinous and the praxis of imaginal psychology.

The findings were viewed through three distinct mythic lenses. The first pursued a fresh take on the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur to provide insight into the victim position. The other two explored contemporary myths that capture the complexity of claiming personal power and overcoming identification as the victim as illustrated in the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling and *The Hunger Games* trilogy by Suzanne Collins. And although not a whole myth, this section concludes with an outline suggesting a new myth for our times. The reflections chapter concludes with personal reflections and suggestions regarding the cultural implications of the findings as viewed through the myths already introduced.

This research supports the argument that the study of numinous and mystical experience is a valid method of pursuing psychological knowledge and growth. It argues these value propositions: that the mystery and awe of the numinous is an intrinsically human experience that occurs in the service of healing and growth; that to diminish, dismiss or rationalize this experience limits one’s conscious engagement with the full
potentiality of humanity; and that through engagement with human potentiality, we grow in consciousness as a species.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines four areas of study that illuminate the context of the Research Problem: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? The literature is clustered around these broad topics: Numinous Experience, The Shadow, Imagination and Trauma.

The section on Numinous Experience explores the primary topic, providing historical background on the genesis of the word numinous along with its evolution into contemporary psychological usage. Central concerns of this section include: providing an expanded definition of the term as an affectively-charged experience of non-ordinary reality, including: the dual nature of the numinous as both terrifying and loving, dark and bright; similar concepts in psychology; and the related imaginal concept of ecstatic states. This section also considers shamanic views on the nature of reality as it relates to the direct experience of the Sacred and techniques to evoke the numinous. This is followed by a brief exploration of biological approaches to the study of mystical states and other experiences of non-ordinary reality.

The section entitled “The Shadow” relates to the primary topic, the numinous, in that it is the shadow dimensions of the numinous that this study explores. The section begins with definitions of the shadow and related concepts before engaging in an exploration of the shadow side of experience, particularly the split between good and
evil, and psychological perspectives on the value of working with shadow material.

The third section elaborates on the psychological significance and developmental origins of imagination as a function of the psyche and explores practices designed to evoke archetypal and numinous symbols. This section begins by examining the root of the word imaginal as a basis from which to explore the concept of the imagination as a function of the psyche. A review of the literature describing the functional aspect of imagination, as represented by several Jungian concepts, is pursued. This leads into a brief discussion of methods of engaging imagination via ritual, mythology and the arts. We conclude with a consideration of object relations theory, which provides a developmental perspective on the role of imagination in shaping experience.

The final section on Trauma provides a brief review of the evolution of trauma theories from Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud to contemporary theorists, who combine new knowledge of complex neurobiological interactions with intra-psychic, somatic and archetypal dimensions of experience. The conversation then narrows to focus on the cycle of trauma as viewed through theoretical perspectives on the trauma archetype and victimization. This section then turns to ancient wisdom and includes a shamanic perspective on traumatic wounding and its cure. Finally, the section concludes with an imaginal perspective on trauma.

Themes throughout these sections illustrate consistent threads that run through my research interest. The first theme explores a profound split in normative experience. I am referring here to the splits between: the sacred and the profane, rational and instinctive, good and evil, love and fear, victim and perpetrator, guilt and innocence. The effect of navigating these dualities of experiences, and the poles they represent, is a central concern of the Research Problem. A second thread running throughout these sections is
the transformative power of imagination. Imagination, in this way, shapes experience, and provides the bridge to more expansive experience. Yet another theme woven throughout is the continuum of consciousness and experience and what constitutes positive or negative functioning.

**Numinous Experience**

The first task of this section of the literature review is to excavate the history of the word numinous and its subsequent adaptation into psychology to provide a working definition for my research topic. This section leans heavily on the works of James, Otto and Jung, who were instrumental in the definition of the term and its subsequent application in psychology. It begins with William James, whose work inspired Rudolf Otto to coin the term numinous, describing the distinct affective reality of direct religious experience. Jung adapts the word numinous to psychology and, influenced by writers from other disciplines, connects it to archetypal experience and the unconscious. Similar concepts are framed by humanistic, transpersonal, and imaginal psychologists, who address direct religious experience as part of the full, healthy spectrum of human consciousness.

In the psychoanalytic tradition and elsewhere in psychology, religious, mystical and numinous experiences are often treated at best as anomalies, and often as psychopathology. This was reflected in Freud’s writings, in which he largely characterized religious experience as a regressive defense. Explaining the larger cultural rejection of Jung’s inclusion of the sacred and archetypal, Tacey suggests that while Freud challenged his culture’s mores with theories of repressed sexual urges, Jung went further, challenging secular humanism with a post-modern secular consciousness. Thus,
Jung’s use of complex and abstract concepts, which acknowledged larger forces at work beyond the control of the ego, challenged the academic illusion of conscious mastery in the form of secular rationalism.

**Defining the Ineffable**

The modern conversation concerning the numinous can be traced to William James’ publication of *The Varieties of Religious Experiences* in 1902. This work triggered a series of responses in the fields of philosophy, religious studies, anthropology and psychology. James’ exploration of religious experience argues for a scientific understanding and valuation of the transformative power of direct, subjective experience.

In 1917, German theologian and religious historian Rudolf Otto responded with his publication *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. Taking issue with part of James’ argument, Otto championed the non-rational basis of religion, and in doing so, coined the term numinous to describe the intense affectively-charged nature of direct religious experience.

While Otto took issue with James’ assessment that religious emotions originate from the same source as all other human emotions, they shared many views about the importance of direct experience. James attributed such experience with the power to change personality: “The personality is changed, the man is born anew.” James understood direct religious experience and mysticism to occur along a continuum of normal human experience. According to James: “. . . our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all
about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different.”

Sonu Shamdansani suggests that the subject of James’s study was really of the varieties of transformative states. In this way, James’ exploration of direct religious experience anticipates Jung’s appropriation of the numinous as a transformative symbol as well as the humanist and transpersonal conceptions of human consciousness that would be popularized later in the century.

James forcibly argued against a reductive approach to the study of religious experience. He accepted that the existential and ineffable nature of the subject defies generalization and that direct religious experience may appear as mental illness. In these discussions, James challenged a purely biological understanding of religious experience, arguing that while some form of physical abnormality may be associated with the experience, this in no way diminishes the reality or value of it. James voiced his concern that by seeking universal laws, the modern empirically-based scientist risks losing the very essence of religious experience, which by its very nature is subjective and mysterious. He also dismissed the reductionist tendencies within depth psychology that suggested that religious experience represents a substitute for some other impulse, instinct, or drive. For James, mystical experiences were convincing and experienced as “…genuine perceptions of the truth.” James recognized that rationalism could only explain a small part of human experience, arguing that the felt sense of knowing is a valid source of knowledge, writing: “Instinct leads, intelligence does but follow.”

James believed that mystical experiences were common and accessible. Arguing that man’s chief concern is happiness, James claimed that religious experience provides the best path to this end, not because of any doctrine, but because of the peace found in
union with something larger than oneself.\textsuperscript{13} He stated, “It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary. It might conceivably even be only a larger and more godlike self, of which the present self would then be but the mutilated expression, and the universe might conceivable be a collection of such selves, of different degrees of inclusiveness, with no absolute unity realized at all.”\textsuperscript{14} Here, James makes two important points for our discussion: first, he provides a basis for the concepts of Self and multiplicity which would later be expanded on by Jung, Kohut, Hillman and others; and second, he connects experience of the Self with the mystical and god-like.

In \textit{The Idea of the Holy}, Otto responded to James’ assertion that: “. . . there is no ground for assuming a simple abstract ‘religious emotion’ to exist as a distinct elementary mental affection by itself.”\textsuperscript{15} To describe the illusive qualities of direct religious experience, Otto sought a term that was not laden with pre-existing connotations or connections, and selected the term numinous, derived from the Latin word numen, which is often translated as “the presence of a god or goddess” or “the power or nod of a deity” and combined it with “omen,” as in “ominous.”\textsuperscript{16} Rejecting existing terminology, such as “holy” or “sacred” for their strong association with the idea of The Good, Otto uses numen as a distinct description of the “unknown something” that is experienced as an objective and independent force outside of the self and evokes an intense felt-sense, outside of ordinary experience.\textsuperscript{17} Donald Ratcliff clarifies that while Otto explores the numinous as a non-rational feeling sense, it is not irrational, but rather supra-rational.\textsuperscript{18} This supra-rational feeling sense is an essential quality of the numinous, which, according to Otto, is a “. . . special character we can \textit{feel}, without being able to give it clear conceptual expression.”\textsuperscript{19} For Otto, therefore, numinous experience is an “ideogram”
rather than a concrete concept because of its “absolute unapproachability” as the mystery at the core of experience.  

Otto’s consideration of the numinous traces the significance of the felt-state of experience which he described using the terms *mysterium tremendum* and *fascinans*, an awe-full and fascinating mystery. Mysterium is that which is “. . . hidden and esoteric, that which is beyond conception or understanding, extraordinary and unfamiliar.” Otto further reduces the concept of mysterium to the “Wholly Other.” Tremendum refers to the uncanny fear inherent in the experience of something wholly other. It includes elements of “awefulness,” “overpoweringness” and the sense of “urgency or energy.” This awefulness takes the form of demonic dread or fear of the wrathful god. The overpoweringness is related to the majesty, immensity, and unapproachability of the source of the experience: “Thus, in contrast to ‘the overpowering’ of which we are conscious as an object over against the self, there is the feeling of one’s own submergence, or being but ‘dust and ashes’ and nothingness.” The felt-sense experienced in the presence of the numen simultaneously includes a profound sense of abasement as well as a strong attraction. Otto identifies the sense of tremendum that signifies a kind of terror. Otto continues that the while the term tremendum is associated with fear, it refers to an experience more complex than fear because of its relationship to the holy, and with it, a sense of awe and dread. According to him numinous experience evokes a mystery.  

In addition to having the qualities of awe-fullness and majesty, Otto describes numinous experience as also “uniquely attractive and fascinating” so that: “These two qualities, the daunting and the fascinating, now combine in a strange harmony of
contrasts, and the resultant dual character of the numinous consciousness . . . is at once the strangest and most noteworthy phenomenon in the whole history of religion.”

Otto describes the dual character of the numinous using words such as: “rapture,” “bliss,” “salvation,” “absolute fascination,” and “over-abounding,” as well as “. . . evil, imposing, potent and strange, queer and marvelous, horrifying and fascinating, divine and daemonic and a source of energy.” Thus, the dual nature of the numinous ranges from extremes of "the annihilation of the self, and then as its complement, of the transcendent as the sole and entire reality." We will return to this duality of the numinous in our consideration of the archetypal theory of trauma.

According to Otto, this felt-state of experience, although always compelling and urgent, can manifest in a wide range of forms:

The feeling may at times come sweeping as a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship . . . continuing, as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away . . . It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul with spasms and convulsions, or lead to the strangest excitements, to intoxicated frenzy, to transport, and to ecstasy. It has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering.

James, Otto and Jung distinguish religious experience from conceptualizations about the source of the experience. For Otto, the numinous is not about any particular supernatural entity or being, but rather “. . . a particular ‘moment’ of consciousness, to wit, the stupor before something ‘wholly other,’ whether such an other be named ‘spirit’ or ‘daemon’ or ‘deva’, or be left with out any name.” For Jung, the numinous is connected with religious experience, an attitude of consciousness that has been altered by the experience of the numinous and the archetypes. Religion, in his worldview, is “a spontaneous expression of a certain predominant psychological condition,” or archetypes. This distinction is important, for in a Jungian worldview, religion relates to
a psychological experience, as opposed to a more traditional usage of the concept as a system of beliefs and practices, represented in common usage or in works by sociologists and anthropologists.

One of the founders of modern sociology, David Émile Durkheim, examined the role of religion in organizing society. While more interested in religion’s effects on society than the individual experience, Durkheim’s theories would influence psychologists, particularly the distinction between the sacred and the profane, the importance of totems and clan identity, and the ambiguous nature of the sacred, in that it simultaneously combines elements of good and evil. Tracing Durkheim’s influences on Jung, Ann Casement identifies Durkheim’s concepts of “collective representations and collective consciousness,” as formulated by Lévy-Bruhl in his 1910, work, The Mental Functions in Inferior Societies, as major influences. Casement aligns these concepts with Jung’s use of the concept participation mystique, in which psychic representations are shared unconsciously.

Religious historian Mircea Eliade responded to Otto by examining the sacred in its entirety, including its rational and irrational aspects, and viewing it in comparison to its opposite, the profane. Largely mirroring Durkheim’s theories, Eliade added the theory of Eternal Return, which recognizes that myths and rituals allowed ancient man to participate in the duality of the world, bridging the split between the sacred and profane. To discuss what is sacred, Eliade used similar terminology to Otto: “. . . the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural ‘profane’ world.” According to Eliade, the ancients sought to live near a sacred site or possess sanctified objects because they understood that ”. . . the sacred is equivalent to a power, and, in the last analysis, to
reality. The sacred is saturated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacy. The polarity of sacred-profane is often expressed as an opposition between real and unreal or pseudoreal.” He introduced the term *hierophany* to “designate the act of manifestation of the sacred.” The *hierophany* is both an object and a symbol, paradoxically both profane and sacred at once. Eliade described the symbol’s ability to bridge the sacred-profane split by easing transitions between life stages, introducing universal themes, and giving life meaning and form. Additionally, Eliade shared the views articulated separately by Jung that while modern man still has access to the unconscious and its symbols, he lacks the active mythology which lends the symbols their transcendent function.

**Psychology Appropriates the Numinous**

The term numinous entered psychological parlance through Jung who applied it to his discussion of material arising from the unconscious charged with strong affect that alters consciousness. According to Roderick Main, Jung starts using the term numinous in the late 1930s when Jung’s own model was well-established. Jung adapted the term to enrich his discussion of the unconscious and as “… one of the defining characteristics of the archetypes.” Murray Stein draws a clear distinction between Otto and Jung: whereas Otto was concerned with the study of religion and religious experience, Jung was concerned with healing and the psychological process. Therefore, for Jung, numinous experience becomes a pathway to individuation, a search for the God within, the *imago Dei*: “The goal of individuation, unlike that of the religious quest, is not union with the divine or salvation but rather integration and wholeness, the forging of the opposites inherent in the Self into an image of unity and integrating this into
Jung, like Otto, pursued the divide between the rational and non-rational observing that modern man, placing his confidence in rationalism, no longer has access to numinous symbols that allowed him to integrate instinctive concepts and thoughts arising from the unconscious.\textsuperscript{53} For Jung, the numinous arises from the unconscious and is linked to the archetypes, as well as mankind’s perceptions of “mana,” “daimon” or God.\textsuperscript{54} It is the feeling-tone of an image, or an archetype, that imbues it with meaning.\textsuperscript{55} Susan Rowland notes that Jung’s numinous is liminal; it bridges the conscious and the unconscious, body and mind, form and matter, because the numinous is neither inside nor outside of the psyche.\textsuperscript{56}

James Hillman equates the archetypes with the gods, and playing off of William James’ treatises, Hillman recognizes “... that psychology is a variety of religious experience.”\textsuperscript{57} Hillman advocates a polytheistic approach to the numinous to embrace the multiplicity of the soul, and encourages us to pursue it to its dark, mysterious, complex and paradoxical origins, particularly regarding the shadow side of the numinous.\textsuperscript{58} Hillman suggests that through personification of the archetypes that inhabit our inner landscapes, we engage in soul-making by deepening our experience of what it is to be human.\textsuperscript{59} Hillman’s praxis of personifying the mythic dimensions of experience harkens back to Eliade, who observed that the sacred and the profane are two ways of experiencing the world, and that for the primitive man more of life was infused with the sacred so that common acts included “communion with the sacred.”\textsuperscript{60} For Eliade, the consequence of losing this connection creates the existential terror that grips modern man.\textsuperscript{61} Seeking the solution in a psychology infused with the numinous, infused with divinity, Hillman suggests: “Psychology as religion implies imagining all psychological
events as effects of Gods in the soul, and all activities to do with soul, such as therapy, to be the operations of ritual in relation to these Gods.”

Lionel Corbett pursues a religious approach to psychology that considers the embodiment of psyche as one of its primary tenets. Corbett’s arguments build on many of the points already raised by Jungians, Otto and Eliade, that the sacred is “irreducible,” that the goal of the therapist is to “enhance the quality of sacredness of an archetypal experience,” and that the ancients had superior technologies to evoke the numinous through ritual and altered states of consciousness. Similar to ITP, Corbett’s religious approach to psychology places the psyche as its central concern. Corbett describes a deepening embodiment of the soul through engagement with spirit in the form of the numinous. It is, therefore, essential that both the light and dark aspects of the numinous are heeded, whether they seem to manifest as pathology or healing. Corbett describes this process:

Spirit is synonymous with archetype; it is the transpersonal principle that gives pattern, meaning, discrimination, and order to life. When spirit embodies, its effect is affect, often felt as part of a complex. This affective component of the archetype represents its channel into the body. This embodiment is the somatic pole of a process which we call soul, which at the same time produces intrapsychic imagery.

Marion Woodman aligns the capacity to be open to the numen with living in the now: “To enter the NOW of the soul is to perceive an image. To see, hear, smell, feel NOW. To enter that image is to stop dwelling in the past or the future and to enter the world of metaphor, the creative moment.”

Warren Colman distinguishes between being conscious and knowing that one is conscious to reconsider the origin of archetypes and the role of numinous experience in individuation. Colman considers the role of symbolic communication in expanding
self-reflexive consciousness, which, in turn, provides for a sense that one has a self. He equates self with being or the ground of being, including conscious and unconscious experience. Colman argues that the self is a psychosomatic unity and is the primary agent of action rather than conscious ego processes, such that being supersedes knowing in terms of agency and, through self-reflection, a new self emerges. Said another way, symbolic interaction allows aspects of being to come into knowing. To the extent that this awareness is integrated, it expands self-reflexive consciousness. This then expands one’s sense of self, increasing wholeness, which ultimately changes the self. In this way, he expands on traditional Jungian thought, suggesting that archetypes are not pre-existent, but rather represent “emergent phenomena of self-organizing systems,” in which archetypes operate as “a higher order form of symbolic representation.” For Colman, the self then represents a process of psychosomatic development that is at once personal and archetypal.

This process of development is further influenced by the familial, social, cultural and historical contexts such that the self-reflection needed to develop a sense of self filters through these various external sources, giving rise to the “symbolic templates,” and shaping how we construct our reality. For Colman, the self as process continually and spontaneously unfolds, influenced by environment and culture through the capacity of symbolic communication. Thus, numinous images of the self appear to assist the process of integration. These images require mediation and reflection to be incorporated into a new, more expansive sense of self.

Robert Sardello describes the power of the soul in terms of a deepening of conscious embodiment through the practice of virtues. The virtues, in this case, represent the subjective experience of objective truth, such as: “the power or operative influence
inherent in a supernatural or divine being,” or “an embodiment of such power, especially one of the orders of the celestial hierarchy,” or “the act of a divine being.” 72 This self-reflexive dialogue between spirit and soul is an active one, which brings the individual into harmony with the cosmos in an ever-deepening experience of consciousness. The virtues represent the potential power of the soul, and in their fullest expression, they comprise the “existential categories of being human.” 73 Sardello outlines a methodology to develop the soul’s potential by bringing the virtues into consciousness and into action. The key to this methodology is to transform the ego into a receptive container for the virtues, or the substance of the soul, such that: “...ego consciousness can metamorphose into soul consciousness that is open and receptive to spiritual worlds.” 74 In this way, Sardello’s approach to growing soul consciousness through a reflective engagement of the virtues, is similar to ITP’s practice of reflexive participation in which affects provide the material to grow capacities.

The Mysterious Other Emerges in the Psychoanalytic Tradition

Freud’s dismissal of religion cast a large shadow in the psychoanalytic tradition. Nonetheless, concepts relating the mysterious ground of being appeared in a variety of theories. Many such theorists went on to found their own distinct approaches to psychology. Dan Merkur explored the mystical tendencies of leading psychoanalytic thinkers and asserted that those theoreticians who had a deep mystical bent gave mystical experience more credibility by placing mystical experience within the context of developmental theory, rather than as anomalous experience.75 Merkur identified ten psychoanalytical theoreticians as mystics, including: Marion Milner, James Grotstein, Neville Symington, Michael Eigen, Erich Fromm, D. W. Winnicott, Otto Rank, Heinz
Kohut and Wilfred Bion. These theorists were open about their mystical bent to varying degrees. Merkur also included Hans Loewald in this group, although he acknowledges that the label mystical would have been a surprise given Loewald’s existential orientation. Merkur found fault with theories that based mystical experience in solipsistic unconscious experience, or utilized speculative and inconsistent conceptualizations of God. The notable exceptions were the views of Grotstein and Eigen, who worked closely with Otto’s conception of numinous experience. According to Merkur, regardless of the personal beliefs of the theorists, mystical experience is viewed as “as something apart from the rest of psychology that can safely be ignored for most practical purposes.”

Bion constructed elegant symbolic formulations to explain the ways in which the psychoanalytic process ascertains truth. In some ways, his use of mathematical symbols stands in contrast to his emphasis on affective experience, which he summarized: “Reason is emotion’s slave and exists to rationalize emotional experience.” His theory illuminates how “O,” absolute knowledge, transforms into $K$, the state of knowing. According to Bion, this is achieved through $\beta$-elements, or pre-cognitive felt sensations, and is marked along the way by variations of $T$, or transformation. These interactions occur in a space he described using the equation “$\text{container} \leftrightarrow \text{contained},$” which represents communication via projective identification with self, with an other, or with a group. Grotstein concluded that Bion’s $\text{container} \leftrightarrow \text{contained}$ provides the unconscious template for attachment, that when properly realized, results in trust in one’s objects.

Unraveling Bion’s theories, Grotstein points out that while Bion’s $\text{container} \leftrightarrow \text{contained}$ construction and its illumination of the healthy function of projective identification were widely received, the “transcendentalist Bion” has been
widely ignored. According to Grotstein, Bion’s more important contribution lay in his conception of “O” and his emphasis on its assimilation into consciousness, achieved through relationship, as expressed in container↔contained. In a self-revealing disclosure, Grotstein described his experience as Bion’s analysand: “With Bion, my pilgrimage was to acknowledge, with reverence and awe, the majesty and enormity of my mind and to recognize how cut-off I was from it—and how my anxieties and symptoms were but intimations of my inner “immortality” and infinite resources.” He identified awe as a capacity that develops out of the religious instinct during maturity. In his work, Grotstein went on to consider the subject of subjects and posited: “The Unconscious Subject seems to be an ever transcending and ever cohering Being or Intelligence, one that is numinous and ineffable and one that is ‘one with “O” (the “Real”).’

Heinz Kohut also acknowledges the radical transformative power of mystical experience to change the “nuclear self.” Kohut posits that many distinct and even contradictory selves exist within one individual. The nuclear self represents the whole psyche. According to Kohut: “The nuclear self is thus that unconscious, preconscious and conscious sector in Id, ego and superego which contains not only the individual’s most enduring values and ideals but also his most deeply anchored goals, purposes and ambitions.” Kohut’s nuclear self supposes multiplicity: “. . . the simultaneous existence of different and even contradictory selves in the same person, of selves with various degrees of stability and of various degrees of importance. There are conscious, preconscious, and unconscious selves; there are selves in the ego, the id, and the superego; and we may discover in some of our patients incompatible selves, side by side, in the same psychic agency.” Kohut describes the experience of the nuclear self in
similar ways to how the numinous is experienced as “marked by a shock-like recognition that is often experienced as revelation, i.e., as coming from outside.”

The Transpersonal Self – Expanding Conceptions of Consciousness

The numinous is taken up in humanistic and transpersonal psychologies as higher reaches of human consciousness. Maslow, who was a leading theoretician in both these schools of thought, conceived of human consciousness along a continuum, and worked with the concept of peak experiences, which represent human functioning at its highest levels of consciousness and integration. Similar to Otto and Jung, Maslow’s peak experience is an ecstatic, unifying and revelatory event in which normal orientation to time and space is transcended. Additionally, Maslow reports that most people have peak experiences, but that there is a general reticence in divulging such experiences due to a fear that these experiences are beyond culturally-accepted norms. However, Maslow’s focus on framing a hierarchical positive psychology leads him to focus almost exclusively on the positive, joyful forms of peak experiences as they relate to the highest levels of functioning. In his revised introduction to Religions, Values and Peak-Experiences, in 1970, Maslow allows that negative peak experiences and what he terms “plateau-experience” deserve further study.

Stanislav and Christina Grof conducted extensive research into altered states of consciousness, using the umbrella term of Spiritual Emergency to describe various states in which non-ordinary reality breaks through consciousness with profound psychological results. Like Otto, they recognize that these psychic events are at once frightful and mystical, and hold the potential for transformation. Under the category of “possession
states,” they describe the dark numinous as a “demonic archetype” and as a “gateway phenomenon.”

Ken Wilber defines multiple states and stages of direct spiritual and mystical experience. For Wilber it is a given that these experiences are valid and accessible to all. Providing an overview of the two dominant paradigms in transpersonal theory, Washburn places Wilber’s approach in the structural-hierarchical paradigm and compares this to the dynamic-dialectical paradigm, which includes his own theoretical framework, along with those of Jung and Grof. The structural-hierarchical paradigm presumes a level-by-level progression through developmental stages; each successive stage incorporates and reorganizes the structures of the preceding level. The end goal is to transcend the illusion of separateness and experience oneness with reality itself. This is a direct, forward motion and does not include regression in service of progression. In Wilber’s model, the ego and self are level-specific identifications of consciousness, rather than reality.

Washburn’s dynamic-dialectical paradigm is based on an unfolding of selfhood within a bi-polar system and follows the path of a spiral loop. In this paradigm, the ego regresses to come into contact with the Dynamic Ground from which it progresses to a higher level of integration and functioning. The ultimate goal in the dynamic-dialectical paradigm is to unite the two poles of self as an integrated whole. The two poles are discussed as spirit or Dynamic Ground and ego-subject. Washburn defines the Dynamic Ground as, “. . . the seat of the nonegoic pole of the psyche and the source of psychic energy. As such, it is a necessary basis of all psychic life.” For Washburn, the Dynamic Ground is an irreducible energizer of all psychic processes. The mental-ego
experiences contact with the power of the Ground as numinous, containing the dual qualities described by Otto.

Corbett takes issue with a key point made by Wilber. Wilber argues that Jung was incorrect in relating his concept of the archetypes with the transpersonal, that instead archetypes are collective and therefore not truly mystical. Corbett counters that Wilber misses Jung’s distinction between the image of the archetype, and the “unknowable” essence that generates the image. According to Corbett, the archetype operates at both the level of spirit and as an intrapsychic organizing principle.

Jerome S. Bernstein describes the emergence of a new consciousness, the *borderland phenomena*, in which an elastic ego boundary allows for direct communication with the collective unconscious. This communication has the feeling-sense of the numinous and is received as revealed truth. Bernstein’s observations are based on his clinical work, largely with trauma survivors, and are also influenced by his deep appreciation of Native American religious beliefs and practices. In the borderland personality, not to be confused with borderline personality disorder, access to the numinous includes direct access to the spiritual dimension of nature where everything is imbued with spirit and capable of communication. This emerging consciousness can be problematic as it is outside the cultural norms and can be experienced as either ego-syntonic or ego-dystonic. Nonetheless, Bernstein sees this development as a necessary evolutionary step towards healing of the mind-body split and restoring balance to the Self and Nature. The borderland phenomena integrates the transpersonal and the transrational. Bernstein states that this integration “holds the potential to contain the western ego construct and its self-destructive intoxication with its own technological prowess.”
According to Otto, self-induced experience of the numen, such as shamanic practices becomes “... a good in itself, even a way of salvation.” Central to Otto’s conception of the numinous is the idea that it cannot be reduced to words, but can only be known through direct experience. One method of direct experience is shamanism. Eliade offered a detailed description of Shamanism as a technique of ecstasy, in which the shaman enters a trance state that allows the soul to leave the body and travel to non-ordinary reality. The shaman uses imagination and myth where myth serves as an inner map to non-ordinary reality so that imagination becomes a means of intentional interaction within that reality.

Over the last 50 years, the practice of shamanism has gained popularity in modern western cultures. In 1969, Carlos Castaneda’s books on his initiation into Yaqui wisdom and practices were first published, gaining a large popular following. In 1979, Michael Harner founded the Center for Shamanic Studies, centralizing extensive resources dedicated to researching, teaching and preserving shamanic wisdom and practices. Harner researched, developed, and teaches core shamanism, a system that that incorporates the practices and wisdom common across indigenous groups and applies them to daily modern living.

Tom Cowan credits Harner with doing for Shamanism what D.T. Suzuki did for Zen Buddhism, making it accessible for mainstream Americans. For Cowen, one distinction between a shaman and a mystic or visionary is the practice of the shamanic journey. The journey is an intentional departure into the spirit world to access information, wisdom, and healing potentials.
Harner distinguishes between *Ordinary State of Consciousness (OSC)* and *Shamanic States of Consciousness (SSC)*.\(^\text{110}\) OSC comprises consensus reality, shaped by our physical experience of the world around us, whereas SSC operates on a spiritual and energetic dimension. The shaman moves between these states of consciousness to learn and effect change on physical, energetic and spiritual dimensions.

Hank Wesselman provides a compelling account of a spontaneous shamanic awakening and its unfolding in his autobiographical trilogy.\(^\text{111}\) Wesselman’s experience is particularly interesting in that it was spontaneous, not induced by drugs, ritual, or practice, and it has been enduring, expanding overtime to include broader dimensions of experience and knowledge. Wesselman learned to navigate alternative realities with the help of spirits, and later enrolled in study with Michael Harner’s group as well as being accepted into community by the Hawaiian kahuna mystics’ ancient wisdom holder.

Wesselman links states of consciousness with the levels of reality. Level One reality, which he describes as “. . . the objective physical level of the everyday world . . .” corresponds to OSC.\(^\text{112}\) Level Two is the subjective level of reality, which encompasses emotions and thoughts, as well as energy. This energy forms a vast matrix that connects all things. Wesselman correlates this energy to the scientific concept of *dark matter*—the invisible gravitational force that provides the framework around which the visible matter of the universe takes shape.\(^\text{113}\) It is through this energetic matrix that shamans communicate with nature and travel to Level Three reality. Level Three comprises the spiritual worlds, also known as *The Sacred*. According to Wesselman, the Sacred is characterized by unity, in which the known and knower are one, and time and space is transcended. Beyond Level Three, there are additional levels of reality, the exact number differs from tradition to tradition. One of note to Wesselman is *The Source*. Wesselman
provides cross-cultural references to describe this level of reality, explaining that it is what: “. . . Taoists call Tao; that Buddhists call Buddha-mind; that Hindus call Brahma; that Judeo-Christians call Yaweh, Jehovah, or God; that Muslims call Allah; that many Native Americans today refer to as The Great Spirit; that the Algonquins around the Great Lakes of North America call Gitchi Manitou; that Hawaiians call Keve or I’l or IAO . . .” 114 With these understandings of the dimensions of reality, the shaman connects to the Sacred via the energy web of Level Two to access Level Three, all of which is “powered” by The Source.

As the reader may recall, Eliade observed that ancient societies lived in proximity to sacred places and consecrated objects because of their connection to power. 115 Wesselman explains that power exists in all things, in all places. 116 Again, he relates this to the concepts from multiple cultures, including: “. . . the mana of the Polynesians, the chi of the Chinese, the ki of the Koreans and Japanese, the prana of the Hindus, the ashe of the Santeria, the num of the Kalahari bushmen, and the Force of Obi-wan Kenobi.” 117 As these examples suggest, shamans understand that power stems from the Sacred and carries life-force energy. Personal power is essential to shamanic practitioners. It allows them to access and navigate non-ordinary reality and to perform healing rites on the behalf of others. This power is accessible through the oversoul, the immortal aspect of self that connects to the human spirit, and beyond that The Source.

Another path of direct revelation is discussed by John Lamb Lash, who advocates a return to Gnosis, the concept of direct experiential knowing of the divine as a means to personal and cultural healing. 118 Lash describes humanity’s capacity for direct knowing as a numinous state of rapturous awe, a latent capacity which can be cultivated through directed mindfulness, a falling away of ego and a receptiveness to the forces of nature, of
which humankind is part. Lash conceives of Gnosticism as a practice that opens one to, “. . . psychosomatic illumination, the full-body rush of cognitive ecstasy and a direct sensorial reception of the vital intelligence of the earth.”

Harner, Cowen, and Wesselman and his wife, Jill Kuykendall, teach shamanic practices and find that most people are capable of entering a trance state through the sustained rhythmic influence of drumming or rattling. In a phenomenological study of the effects of shamanic drumming, Anette Kjellgren and Anders Eriksson found that drumming can be a useful addition to psychotherapy. The authors reviewed the literature on ritual drumming affirming that a steady rhythm of four to five beats per second can produce an altered state of consciousness that corresponds to Theta brain waves. Theta brain waves relate to dream states, lucid dreaming, and the states of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep. Michael Winkelman reviewed the effectiveness of shamanic drumming in treating additions and found that it induces synchronous brain activities that facilitate holistic modes of consciousness, produces feelings of well-being and connection to a higher power, boosts the immune system, accelerates healing, and promotes psychological integration.

Mark C. Kasprow and Bruce W. Scotton relate the psychological technique of guided imagery to shamanic journeys. This technique achieves an altered state of consciousness by directing the participant’s attention inward, while relaxing the rational control of the mind. Harry Hunt discusses “inner-worldly mysticism” as a relative of shamanism, in which direct experience of the numinous is achieved by turning inward first. Grof, who has investigated a wide range of techniques to achieve transpersonal states, validates the use of shamanic trance states as a means of experiencing archetypal imagery and accessing new information.
Robert Sardello, on the other hand, warns that “weekend shamanism” exists in a vacuum, devoid of the cultural anchors that gave the techniques both their substance and safety. For Sardello, such practices invite in “the double,” a sort of embodied, altered consciousness that acts from fear and is responsible for evil. To engage imagination, which for Sardello is to engage the soul, one must develop a practice that includes the recognition of fear as a powerful, undermining force. To do this, Sardello advocates developing a reflexive practice that develops soul capacities centered in a heart or love-based consciousness.

Another means of achieving altered states of consciousness involves the use of hallucinogens. Indigenous cultures have used hallucinogenic plants to foster altered states of consciousness in ritual settings for millennium. In the 1950s and 1960s, clinical experiments with hallucinogens were widespread, including studies focused on the alleviation of psychological suffering. Many of these studies were promising, indicating that mystical experience induced via psychotropic drugs produced lasting positive change. Perhaps most famous among these were the Good Friday experiments conducted at Harvard in 1962 by Walter Pahnke with his academic advisor Timothy Leary. Pahnke sought to demonstrate that mystical experiences could be facilitated through psilocybin, the active ingredient in magic mushrooms. Pahnke’s participants were theological seminary students and the psilocybin was administered in a church, prior to Good Friday services. The study found that psilocybin did facilitate mystical experience, and at a six-month follow up, Pahnke found that the effects were lasting. Pahnke died in 1971, and was therefore unable to pursue additional longitudinal studies with the original participants. However, Rick Doblin conducted a 25-year follow-up with 16 of the original 25 participants. They reported that their mystical experience as part of the Good Friday
Experiment had been a highlight in their spiritual lives and continued to influence their views of themselves and the world. Interestingly, in Doblin’s follow up interviews, he found a significant omission in Pahnke’s original report. Doblin’s interviews revealed that although the participants reported positive overall outcomes, the actual experience included a spiritual ordeal, including fears that they were loosing their minds or going to die. Pahnke’s dissertation did mention that two of the participants described their experience as a psychotic break. Doblin’s follow-up study suggests that psilocybin-induced mystical experience is an area for ongoing study.

Increasing recreational drug use in the 1960s and media sensationalism drew negative attention to the studies of hallucinogens. Access to the most popular hallucinogens for research was limited in 1970 when these drugs were listed as Schedule I controlled substances. Three decades later this research resumed. In April 2010, The New York Times reported on an international scientific conference exploring the therapeutic benefits of hallucinogens; it was the largest conference of its type held in the last four decades. These studies are testing clinical applications, exploring areas of cognition and perception, and mapping biological aspects of religious experience and consciousness. In proposing guidelines for hallucinogenic research, M. W. Johnson et al. borrowed from the ancients several general proscriptions, including the need for guidance and respect for the drug and experience, and that such use should be conducted in a structured (i.e. ritualized) environment.

As an example of the clinical studies, R.R. Griffiths, W. A. Richards, U. McCann and R. Jesse pursued a systematic study to confirm that psilocybin administered under supportive circumstances can produce profound mystical experiences along with lasting changes affecting one’s sense of personal meaning. The Multidisciplinary Association
for Psychedelic Studies, founded by Doblin, is pursuing a ten-year, $10 million study of 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), a substance similar to but purer than Ecstasy, for use in the treatment of PTSD. Preliminary studies have demonstrated MDMA’s effects to increase feelings of trust and compassion that, along with psychotherapy, can alleviate the symptoms of PTSD.

**Imaginal Psychology and the Numinous**

In Omer’s ITP, the numinous is understood in terms of ecstatic states, a natural expression of the vast nature of the soul achieved by surrendering self-control. It may be helpful to recall that Omer understands that the nature of the soul is immeasurable, greater than human. The soul pursues a natural unfolding to include increasingly expansive and authentic experience as described by the transformative imperative. The ecstatic imperative is a special case of this unfolding, understood to come about due to entelechy, a special type of telos characterized by life force energy, which facilitates transcending regular identity so that one may enter an ecstatic dimension. Here, one may either experience an integrative state where awareness is fluid and alert, or one may meet gatekeeping, which might result in a disintegrative ecstatic state, such as in a delusional trance state or disassociation. In this case, the terms integrative and disintegrative describe the state of consciousness. ITP conceives of consciousness along a continuum of functioning, with disintegrative, or psychotic, at the low end and integrative, optimal or awake, at a higher end of functioning.

Omer conceptualizes access to expanded consciousness as not only natural and healthy, but also as essential for growth. ITP’s primary practice, reflexive participation, develops the capacity to creatively engage dimensions of experience in order to respond
to the necessities, meanings and possibilities inherent in the present moment. One of these dimensions is the archetypal. By making the archetypal dimension of experience a central concern, Imaginal Psychology brings the consideration of numinous experience into focus as a therapeutic tool to help transcend limiting identities and habituated reactions with new, authentic and creative responses to the realities and potentials of present time. A somatically-based practice, ITP focuses on the affects, the hardwired biological components of emotions, as the primary indicator of experience. Thus, the feeling-state of the numinous, as simultaneously fascinating and daunting and outside the ordinary, signals entry into the ecstatic dimension with its potential for authentic expansive experience. Additionally, the imaginal approach to psychology emphasizes ritual and practice as means of accessing expanded states of consciousness, which will be further discussed in the section on Imagination.

**How the Brain Experiences the Divine**

Scientific researchers have offered explanations of direct religious experience from the perspectives of biology, neurology, and genetics. Early theories focused on similarities between epileptic seizures and religious revelations and formulated explanations of numinous experience in terms of biological pathology.

From a neurobiological perspective, Jeffrey Saver and John Rabin explained religious experience as a purely brain-based, abnormal phenomenon. They proposed that there is a limbic marker that influences the temporolimbic system to identify certain stimuli as “. . . depersonalized, derealized, crucially important, harmonious, and /or joyous, prompting comprehension of these experiences within a religious framework.”
In discussing extreme religious experience, Louis Cozolino suggests that stimulation of the amygdala, as evidenced in temporal lobe epilepsy, may distort experience, imparting greater meaning to an otherwise normal external event. Additionally, the high concentration of opioid receptors in the amygdala can increase feelings of attachment, as well as alterations in consciousness.

Taking a different stance, molecular geneticist Dean Hamer argues that spirituality is encoded in our genes and that some people demonstrate a greater capacity for spiritual experience due to their genetic inheritance. Hamer identified the gene VMAT2 with the capacity for transcendent experience. This gene controls the flow of neurochemicals that play a role in spiritual experience.

Kevin Nelson analyzed extensive studies to explain the brain mechanisms responsible for various experiences associated with mystical states. Nelson explores how complex physiological, biochemical, and neurological systems may interact to create aspects of spiritual experience. Nelson renews the line of questioning begun by William James, by asking: What if mystical consciousness is its own unique state of consciousness? He hypothesizes that during spiritual experience one’s explicit sense of self, the conscious “I” contracts, while the implicit self expands. Nelson proposes that spiritual experience combines explicit conscious thought with implicit unconscious awareness and dreaming, in his words, “a hybrid” and distinct form of consciousness. Importantly, Nelson is careful to avoid a reductionist understanding of religious experience, asserting that understanding the “how” does not explain the “why.” Nelson focuses his investigation on near-death experiences and references studies of various spiritual states to frame his theory of how mystical experience occurs. He links arousal and REM systems with out-of-body experiences, similar to the systems at work in
PTSD. REM consciousness activates the brain’s reward center, exciting the sense of rapture, while the arousal system activates the sense of fear. He explains the sensations reported as part of near-death experience in this way: low blood flow to the eyes results in a narrowing vision, creating the image of a tunnel; the bright light commonly described represents a combination of ambient light and REM visual activity; REM paralysis contributes to the feeling of being dead; the sense of leaving one’s body and floating results from temporoparietal REM deactivation; reviewing of life activities stems from the activation of the hippocampus and the arousal systems; the sense of ecstasy results from the activation of the reward system; and the narrative quality of the experience is generated from REM dreaming and the limbic system. Nelson is also interested in the role of serotonin in mystical experience, and particularly its effects on the amygdala and/or the hippocampus and its relationship to fear. Rather than assuming that the brain produces spiritual experience, Nelson seeks to shed light on how the human capacity for spiritual experience shapes the brain.

**Numinous Experience—Summary**

For those who approach numinous experience in a non-reductive manner, it is generally agreed that it arises from the unconscious as a symbol, is recognized as an acute affective experience containing awe, humility, fascination and a sense of debasement, or of being small in comparison to the whole, and is manifest by contact with archetypes, spirit, Dynamic Ground, or Source, dependent upon one’s orientation. It is a universal human experience that affects a majority of people at some point in their lives. Again, for those who value numinous or mystical experience, there is general agreement that it deepens the embodiment of the soul and conveys meaning of what it is to be essentially
human. The numinous aligns with the ITP concept of the transformative imperative and is represented by the concept of ecstatic states. Numinous experience is discussed using various terms, including peak experiences, “O,” transcendent experience, transpersonal experience, mystical experience, third space, and the Wholly Other, to name a few. Ancient and modern mystics recognize that although numinous experience is often spontaneous, it can also be facilitated either through the use of substances or through a steady rhythmic beat.

Biological perspectives on numinous experience vary according to the researcher’s core premise. Those who seek to explain the “how” describe religious experience in terms of dysfunction or pathology, while those who seek to understand the “why” view numinous experience as a faculty that developed in service of human evolution.

In psychological literature, the numinous is generally discussed in theoretical terms, in case studies, and in research reports involving psychotropics. The instances of direct research into peak experiences have not been mirrored with direct study of the shadow side of these experiences. And although numinous experience has the power to shape the soul’s trajectory, use of this term is largely marginalized as it challenges consensus reality, and particularly the dominant reductive emphasis of modern science.

**The Shadow**

In depth psychology, the concept of working with shadow aspects of the personality is considered essential to human growth and actualization. In order to investigate the shadow side of numinous experience, this section will explore principles and concepts related to the shadow at the personal, cultural, and archetypal dimensions of
experience. As part of this exploration, we will briefly turn our attention to shadow dynamics, including how the shadow is expressed through projection and splitting. The concept of splitting will be illustrated in a discussion of the dichotomization of good and evil, light and dark, and also in terms of the psychological consequences of these splits and their representation in mythology. Finally, we will touch on a small sampling of viewpoints regarding the value of working with the shadow.

We will begin with some broad definitions to ground our exploration. Shadow is a psychological concept that describes emotions, ideas, and beliefs that are repressed due to cultural or personal values as well as that which is simply unknown. The shadow lurks in our unconscious, a concept that was first clearly articulated by Freud, who defined it as in contrast to conscious thoughts or perceptions, as all that is unknown or forgotten. Freud linked the unconscious to repression and further, to early childhood experience. While the unconscious represents all that is unknown to an individual, the narrower sense in which Freud and others used it related to urges, fantasies, and impulses repressed by the civilizing demands of the ego and super ego. At the core of Freud’s theories is the idea that civilized man is always in conflict with his more base instincts and drives. Thus, the unconscious is where these more primitive thoughts and feelings are relegated through repression and denial. Freud observed that repressed impulses show up as fixations, neurosis, projections and as inadvertent slips of the tongue, humor, and wit. Melanie Klein added to Freud’s theories with her descriptions of splitting, a primal defense and an act of projection in which the destructive and threatening aspects of experience are projected onto an object or other, while the useful, loving aspects are internalized and identified with. Klein coined the term projective identification, an unconscious defensive projection of aspects of self onto external objects.
Jung expanded Freud’s use of the term Shadow to include the repressed experiences of the family and culture. Jung designated this broader inheritance the *Collective Unconscious*, a cultural level of forgetfulness or not knowing. In alignment with the Jungian principle that the self is self-healing, the personal shadow contains creative potential if its contents are brought to consciousness and developed, whereas the collective shadow is more consistently viewed as destructive and has been associated with absolute evil. In *Aion*, Jung discusses the difficulty in working with the shadow which is resisted by the ego and has its own sense of agency. Discussing the “inferiorities constituting the shadow,” Jung wrote, “. . . they have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, possessive quality . . .”

Applying his multi-dimensional understanding of the shadow to the concept of projection, Jung recognized that projections dominate our perception of reality. According to Marie-Louise von Franz, projections are “. . . unconscious, that is, unperceived and unintentional transfer of subjective psychic elements onto an outer object.” This understanding has much broader application than individual symptoms. It relates to how both individuals and groups perceive and interact with others and therefore, underlies most personal, social, and political conflict. On the flip side, projection also plays a positive role empowering the capacity of empathy, or the power to feel into another’s situation and emotions. Projection is central to how we experience reality; it plays the role of mirror, as in the concept of synchronicity, which is the mirroring of the unconscious in external material events.

Von Franz illuminates how projection works at a cultural level to create a *zeitgeist*, the cultural influence on the individual in which the collective feelings, opinions, and ideas of an historical period are unconsciously absorbed and projected.
This concept is important in determining the course of history, for within the ruling zeitgeist exist inherent splits or dualities that the self is attempting to unite. Von Franz echoes Jung in her concern that the profound split between good and evil underlying the modern mind may elude transformation, because modern man lacks the creative imagination needed to bridge the duality.

Moving on from these core concepts, we return to a contemplation of the shadow in its personal, cultural and archetypal dimensions. It is the intersection between the Shadow and evil to which we will now turn our attention.

**Good and Evil: The Split Archetype**

Under “Late Thoughts” in his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung revisits the subject of good and evil. Using Christianity as the guiding world myth, Jung traces three critical steps that result in a calcified split of good and evil in the psyche, or zeitgeist, of the modern world: first, the creation myth, in which an antagonist of God invites man to disobedience, and with it, the knowledge of good and evil; second, the fall of angels, who beget a race of giants, or in psychological terms, inflation, that threatens to devour man; and third is the incarnation of God on earth in the form of his son, Christ. Paradoxically, the incarnation of God brings the promise of psychic wholeness and also serves to rigidify the split between good and evil. Jung argues that this split has been acted out in the form of hubris, justifying evil acts because the perpetrator identifies with the good and projects the evil onto the other. For this reason, Jung declared that the doctrine of *Privatio Boni*, St. Augustine’s reformulation of the idea of evil as the absence of the good rather than as an *a priori* force, can no longer be considered operable. Jung argues that because our culture is embedded in the myth of
Christianity that the split between good and evil has become “a determinant reality.”

For Jung, this argument underlies his insistence on the necessity of integrating the shadow to bring unconscious material to consciousness and thereby heal the split archetype: “In practical terms, this means that good and evil are no longer so self-evident. We have to realize that each represents a judgment.” Lionel Corbett agrees with Jung’s appraisal and adds that “…the nature of the fundamental quality of evil is unknowable to us.”

Jung’s declaration that evil has become a determinant reality stands in opposition to much of Christian Theology. While determining the nature of good and evil or examining it from a theological perspective is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that John A. Sanford, a Christian Theologian and Jungian analyst, explored various perspectives on the nature of this split and its influence on our culture. In his attempt to reconcile Jungian thought regarding the shadow with a Christian understanding of good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of good as represented in the doctrine of Privatio Boni, Sanford continues a dualism: a worldview that splits good and evil into opposing and irreconcilable forces. Sanford acknowledges that there are alternatives to this view, as encapsulated in earlier mythologies. Greek mythology, with its multiplicity of gods who are neither wholly good nor wholly evil offers a different understanding of the archetypal nature of evil, as do the mythologies of Native Americans, Egyptians, and Norsemen.

Nonetheless, Sanford’s argument concerns Christian mythology, and his attempt at reconciliation focuses heavily on the personal level of shadow. He chastises Christianity for its exclusive focus on perfection and goodliness, suggesting that, in doing so, too much of the individual is cast into shadow: “This has not brought about a state of
light and perfection, but has increased evil by driving parts of the personality into a split-off state. The conventional Christian attitude must therefore turn itself about and see the necessity for the redemption of that which has fallen into the hands of evil, even though this involves a descent into the dangerous realm of the unconscious.”

Evil, for Sanford, is the absence of goodness and arises from the ego, particularly when the ego is operating in a narrow, self-identified way. While Sanford agreed with Jung’s emphasis on working with the personal shadow as a way to address evil, he continued to uphold the Christian concept of *privatio boni*, in which God is all-good, maintaining the split between good and evil at the archetypal level.

Alfred Plaut clearly stakes out a different view. He writes that the Shadow does not exist as a singular archetype but rather exists as a dynamic force within archetypes, as an amalgamate, part of a dynamic polarity that comprises the whole. He warns that to separate the archetype is dangerous, for splitting at this level of perception is what leads to black and white thinking, a splitting of pure good and pure evil. His words convey this pointedly: “...we shall be walking around in circles for as long as we regard God and the Devil as opposites, as antagonists. If the indivisible, albeit paradoxical unity of good and evil spirits that both dominate and reflect human nature is not fully acknowledged, we have no alternative other than to react by worshiping idols and destroying disbelievers first, then our fallen idols, and finally ourselves.”

Françoise O’Kane shares Plaunt’s view that the shadow is a paradoxical unity and considers the contrast between light and shadow as a value judgment stuck in a particular historical and cultural viewpoint. According to O’Kane, that which the personal ego designates as undesirable becomes shadow, whereas the archetypal dimension of Self is capable of holding the opposing ends of a complex polarity and therefore can transcend
the difference by uniting opposites.\textsuperscript{180} At the archetypal level, the negative pole of the Self does not correspond exactly to the negative pole of the ego. O’Kane argues that we cannot repress or normalize demonic aspects. Instead, we have to confront, integrate and accept them so they find a place in the totality of the personality and thus, can be transformed. O’Kane argues: “. . . through a modification of the relationship between the ego and the dark pole, negative energies could be deprived of some of their power.”\textsuperscript{181}

O’Kane’s detailed exploration on the shadow side of God outlines many key Jungian principles: First, the cultural shadow and the threat that it poses can only be alleviated through conscientious work beginning at the level of the personal shadow.\textsuperscript{182} O’Kane extends Jung’s argument, suggesting that the archetype of Self, the personal godhead, is better understood as a paradoxical unity: there must be shadow in order for there to be light.\textsuperscript{183} By banishing the shadow and evil to the unconscious, we provoke negative inflation, and the repression of the shadow reinforces its power and involves the risk that it will manifest in harmful ways.\textsuperscript{184} Further, man’s over-emphasis on rational thought imperils humanity, not only because it reinforces shadow aspects, but also because it excludes the completeness of the instinctive, sensual, feeling and direct intuitive nature of human perception. In place of this profound split, O’Kane echoes Jung in arguing for a new myth that contains the duality of the Self as its central image.

Susan Rowland viewed Jung through the perspective of cultural criticism.\textsuperscript{185} In her discussion of the shadow side of the numinous in Jung’s writing, Rowland asserts that the focus on the rational to the exclusion of the instinctive renders both the individual and the collective prisoner of its shadow aspects. Rowland connects Jung’s criticism of reason and objective science with his criticism of the hero myth as a dominant myth of modern culture. She argues that the hero myth is one of colonization, whereby the
conquering hero faces and destroys the devouring mother of the unconscious, capturing those parts of the feminine he can master and discarding the rest. Rationality, then, is the conquering hero, subjugating non-rational nature. Rowland concludes that we need more than one myth—that our need is for plurality—and she phrases the problem of a new myth poetically, writing: “So how, precisely, might the Earth-Mother be rescued—in a world in which the Sky-Father of rational consciousness is dying of loneliness?”

Sylvia Perera works with the Scapegoat Complex, which represents a denial of the shadow of both God and man. It involves a relationship in which the persona-ego of the complex carrier takes on the sins, or shadow, that others in the community, or family, cannot bear, and a priest-accuser, representing authority, banishes the scapegoat to the wilderness. Within the complex lies a paradox, that scapegoated individuals want absolution and yet their identities are tied up in the burden of guilt. Perera believes that the scapegoat functions as "a perverted form of the archetype." She argues that the irreparable split between good and evil in Western culture, along with our lack of connection to the transpersonal, devalues the healing role of the scapegoat in transmuting sin: "... we are too often unconscious of the ‘grand unifying pattern,’ the transpersonal matrix in which our actions are embedded." The concept of a transpersonal dimension is central to Perera's thesis, and refers to the connection with the spiritual forces in which the scapegoat archetype's meaning and benefit to the culture are enmeshed. The gift of the complex lies in scapegoated individual's ability to mediate transpersonal realms and make conscious the meaning and dynamics of shadow projection.

Bernstein discusses the shadow in terms of the spectrum of consciousness, where either the positive or negative pole represents a dangerous extreme. He frames this issue as a problem of inflation, clarifying that the shadow side of consciousness is not
unconsciousness, but rather hubris where consciousness is cut off from ethics and the transpersonal. This left-brain dominated consciousness seeks to resist anything that challenges its supremacy, and in particular, that which cannot be explained or rationalized, such as the irrational, transrational, and the unconscious. This results in what Bernstein labeled the *Fragmentation Complex*, in which the threat of ego disintegration or fragmentation posed by the irrational is perceived as a threat to the survival of the ego structure, even more so than a physical threat because it is beyond the ability of the ego structure to acknowledge or understand the source of the threat.¹⁹²

In Grotstein’s consideration of the numinous subject of the unconscious, he finds a paradox in which evil and good are different faces of the same Ultimate Reality.¹⁹³ He posits that the Unconscious Subject is at one with “O,” the Real, and that it contains a vast number of “I”s. Our conception of evil, as represented by the devil, is really a disowned projection presented by the Ultimate “I” for integration, such that: “The devil or malignant superegos, for instance, are according to this logic, not bad or evil themselves, but constitute semiotic signifiers of disavowed projective identifications that Ultimate ‘I’ presents to us for tolerance, repatriation, acceptance and understanding.”¹⁹⁴

Carlos Byington equates the good-evil split to the creative and defensive structuring capacities of consciousness.¹⁹⁵ Byington uses the term “*creative structuring*” to describe an expansive use of projective identification through which symbolic interaction with the object moves beyond constrictive identification with defensive structures.¹⁹⁶ It is this expansive dimension of bi-modal consciousness that allows for symbolic interaction and the potential for growth.
Embracing the Shadow

James Hillman, Jean Houston, Thomas Moore, and Rollo May are among those who advocate creative and imaginative ways to hold, understand, and illuminate our personal and cultural shadows. For example, Hillman draws on Greek mythology to retrieve the whole, un-split archetype. According to him: “The ‘Return to Greece’ is a psychological response to the challenge of breakdown; it offers a model of disintegrated integration.” The return to Greece references the use of myths which illuminate how human suffering is part of soul making and follows its own unfolding. In order to discover the meaning behind the symptom, we must descend into the darkness of the shadow. Describing that path, Hillman writes: “Fear, like love, can become a call into consciousness; one meets the unconscious, the unknown, the numinous, and uncontrollable by keeping in touch with fear, which elevates the blind instinctual panic of the sheep into the knowing, cunning, fearful awe of the shepherd.”

Houston recognizes that the healing energy contained within the shadow can be unleashed by simultaneously holding the reality of evil and the potential for the light. According to Houston, this requires “intellectual rigor and full-hearted seeing.” Moore examines the interconnection between shadow and innocence, which represent: “... opposite ends of a polarity that is destructive, not because of the quality of its components, but because of the distance between them.” Moore holds the shadow with loving kindness, understanding that knowledge of the soul comes from living close to it, close to the heart, and listening to our inner voices, especially our neurotic, depressed, envious, inner voices, in order to build tolerance for our own weakness.
In an open letter responding to Carl Rogers on the subject of evil, May asserts that humans are bundles of potentialities driven by a daimonic urge that is the source of both constructive and destructive energies. He clarifies that the daimonic is the motivational force in every being towards growth and affirmation. On one hand, it empowers creativity, and on the other, it can result in paranoia, compulsive behaviors and violence. In *The Courage to Create*, May places the dialectic between the Dionysian and Apollonian principles at the heart of this creative encounter. It is through the interaction of these two principles that we experience ecstasy, which, according to May, describes the intense state of consciousness involved in the creative act. May links creativity and courage, arguing that authentic creativity requires courage because it requires that we venture into the unknown, pushing limits and expanding consciousness.

In a separate work, May explores the existential nature of power and innocence, which revolve around the central dialectic between good and evil. May distinguishes between *authentic innocence*—a clear, creative state that includes the sense of awe and wonder—from *pseudoinnocence*—an idealized fantasy based on a simplistic and naïve sense of nostalgia. The concept of pseudoinnocence, a denial of the complexity of reality that shuns personal power and responsibility, will be further explored in relation to victim identity. May warns that to deny the shadow is a form of pseudoinnocence that leads to complicity with evil, violence, and destruction. May expresses this in the principle: “Innocence that cannot include the daimonic becomes evil.” He cautions that the greater the potential for good, the greater the potential for evil. According to May: “Life consists of achieving good not apart from evil but in spite of it.”

Sardello amplifies the concept of the Shadow, describing “The Double,” an embodied personification of unconscious evil. According to Sardello, fear pervades
our reality to the degree that it swoops in wherever there is unconsciousness, cutting off
access to imagination, creativity, and freedom.

Writing about the cycle of evil promulgated by trauma, Sue Grand sees good and
evil as co-dependent, co-creative forces: “Neither good nor evil exists in autonomous
pure forms, as the victorious in relation to the vanquished. Rather good and evil define
one another. Awesome in their powers, deriving meaning in their struggle for
ascendancy, and urgency from their contest with death, good and evil will always meet
one another to define the human condition.” 212

Lash relates the good-evil dichotomy to a falsehood that is perpetuated by
monotheistic religions in the Abrahamic tradition.213 Tracing the annihilation of Gnostic
practices and literature to the rise of salvationist religions, he describes how an
oppressive, paternalistic, linear, apocalyptic, human-centric and anti-nature introcession
of reality replaced the more maternalistic, reflective, co-emergent worldview of
Gnosticism. The supplanting monotheistic understanding rests in the dualism of good and
evil, perpetuating a victim-perpetrator bind that dominates cultural consciousness. This
victim-perpetrator bind is expressed by the Redeemer Complex.214 The Redeemer
Complex will be discussed further in the section on Trauma.

What Does the Shadow Know?

In the 1930s, American children eagerly sat by their family radios anxiously
awaiting these words of wisdom: "Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The
Shadow knows!" 215 Each week, this shady, nefarious character confronted evildoers and
brought their sinister plots to light. With cartoonish simplicity, this captures the challenge
of shadow work. As Robert Bly stresses, the shadow itself is neutral, yet it is often
assigned a negative connotation. Applying a Humanistic understanding to the shadow, Maslow also argues against perpetuating a dichotomy of consciousness, which, through the bias of language, assigns a lesser value to the unconscious, and therefore, the shadow. For Maslow, human intellect has the power to integrate experience by overcoming splitting and repression in order to build capacities.

In Meeting the Shadow, editors Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams organize 65 articles on the Shadow from writers various psychological orientations. The basic argument of these articles is that the shadow contains disowned power and potential, and by reclaiming and integrating its content, we enlarge our capacity to live a more authentic, harmonious and creative life. This positive understanding of the power of the shadow to transform impulses into capacities rests on the principle of Owning the Shadow, or coming into a Right Relationship with the Shadow. They argue that through the concept of shadow-work, "the conscious and intentional process of admitting to that which we have chosen to ignore or repress," we can master the paradoxical nature of the shadow as a container of darkness and a beacon of light.

This is a viewpoint shared by Wilber, who argues that people cannot move through successive levels of personal growth without taking ownership for their shadow projections. Wilber’s conception of shadow-work includes a reflexive approach that converts the experience of shadow as belonging to the third person, to the second person, and finally, into the first person. Put succinctly, Wilber writes: “Whereas healthy development converts I into me, unhealthy development converts I into it.” The ultimate goal in Wilber’s model is to achieve non-dual awareness, transcendent of shadow and ego.
In Washburn’s dynamic-dialectical model, encountering the shadow sets the stage for a “regression in service of transcendence.” This is essential for loosening the mental-ego’s hold on identity, which, left to its own, would maintain the repression of the shadow and access to the unconscious. The first step toward transcendence exposes the personal shadow, challenging the ego’s sense of identity, being and value. With identity challenged, the ego is destabilized and its supremacy over consciousness is challenged. This opens the way for contents from the prepersonal unconscious, or the instinctual-archetypal unconscious, to surface. Washburn describes the feeling-sense of these encounters as progressing from anxiety to dread, where dread signifies an encounter with the numinous Dynamic Ground. At this point, the ego is flooded by Ground, and is powerless to contain or control the intense feeling states and images that arise. Only when the ego submits to the power of Ground, does the process turn toward transcendence and “regeneration in spirit.” In Washburn’s definition of transcendence, spirit does not supplant ego, but rather, ego is at one with spirit.

Frederick Perls developed techniques to help discover and integrate material split off from consciousness. By bringing directed attention to the experience of splitting, Perls encouraged the practice of personifying and projecting aspects of the split onto external objects to help illuminate and ultimately integrate disowned projections.

This leads us to a consideration of the Shadow in Imaginal Psychology as developed by Omer and represented in ITP. Imaginal Psychology conceives of the Shadow similarly to the theories outlined above. As an embodied amplification of these theories, the shadow activities of splitting, repression and projection are personified in the imaginal structure of the Gatekeeper. Similar to the work of integrating one’s shadow, if met effectively, gatekeeping becomes part of the mystery of transformation. In ITP, the
gatekeeper guards the boundaries of an imaginal structure, thus keeping parts of oneself in the shadows. The way out of the structure, and past the gatekeeper, is reflexivity: the capacity to be aware of and engage the imaginal structures that shape and constitute experience. According to Omer, genuine transcendence is inclusive of previous experience, particularly, its shadow components.\textsuperscript{230}

Additionally, Omer understands shadow work via the Father Principle.\textsuperscript{231} The father represents the first “other” we encounter; similarly, the shadow is that part of ourselves we perceive as “other.” The Father Principle, at its best, is an ordering principle that combines love and authority. Together, these qualities contain the initiatory experience so that innocence is protected, but not at the expense of experience.

**The Shadow—Summary**

In personal experience, the shadow evolves from the natural tendency to repress or deny unpleasant and unwanted experiences. The shadow is experienced through projection, whereby unwelcome aspects of the self are cast onto others. As part of psychological growth, one must reclaim their projections and integrate the personal shadow. This is made more difficult by the dominant cultural paradigm, which splits the world into good and evil. Identification with these extreme polarities fosters inflation, limiting access to the wholeness of the psyche. The challenge to integrating shadow material is navigating this polarity. This requires the capacity to hold the complexity of reality and to accept personal power and responsibility.

This section showed that most theoretical descendants of Jung hold that good and evil are not separate archetypes, but rather, dynamic forces within archetypes. Monotheistic religions and writers using those paradigms tend to uphold the split between
good and evil at the level of spirit. In either case, as Jung wrote, this split has become a
determinant reality. The question, then, becomes: How do we move beyond the split to
integrate shadow material into a more complete image of self? Conscientious work to
acknowledge and integrate one’s splits and projections provides a foundation for shadow
work. Yet, Lash’s victim-perpetrator bind illustrates the difficulty of transcending the
ultimate split of good and evil. Washburn’s regression in service of transcendence points
to at least one way: When regression takes us to the Ground of Being, new opportunities
for creative regeneration and transcendence of the wound become possible.

The shadow is a well-explored concept. Its role in human development is also
well considered. However, I suggest that our understanding of how to productively
engage the dark pole of the numinous, particularly as it relates to victim identity and
personal power, is underdeveloped.

Imagination

The goal of this section is twofold: to elaborate on the psychological significance
and developmental origins of imagination as a function of the psyche and to explore
practices designed to evoke archetypal and numinous symbols. This section begins by
examining the root of the word imaginal. A review of literature espousing the functional
aspect of imagination, as represented by Jung’s conception of the transcendent function
and active imagination is then pursued. This leads to a brief overview of methods of
engaging imagination via ritual, mythology and the arts. We conclude with a
consideration of object relations theory, which provides a developmental perspective on
the role of imagination in shaping experience.
As already discussed, the word imaginal was coined by Henri Corbin to refer to the *Mundus Imaginalis*, a Latin term meaning: the world of the image or a level of reality perceived by “imaginative consciousness,” in which meaning has an autonomous existence. Corbin draws on the Sufi tradition, which refers to this level of reality as the “eighth climate,” where the cognitive function of imagination resides between the levels of the senses and pure intellect. Corbin argues that the knowledge gained through productive engagement with the imaginal is as real as knowledge from the senses or intellect. Knowledge perceived through imagination allows it to exist in symbolic interaction across dimensions of matter and spirit, mediating knowledge gained from the senses and the intellect. According to Corbin: “The Imagination is thus firmly balanced between two other cognitive functions: its own world symbolizes with the world to which the two other functions (sensory knowledge and intellectual knowledge) respectively correspond.” The word imaginal refers to the power of the symbol to convey new knowledge, as opposed to imaginary, which is related to fantasy or “madness.”

According to Corbin, the “ordinary consciousness” of physical reality and the “I” of identity are contained within the expanded consciousness of spiritual reality. Corbin describes levels of consciousness, so that more constricted levels of consciousness reside within more expansive levels of consciousness: “. . . it is the corporeal substance that resides in the spiritual substance; it is the soul that encloses and bears the body. This is why it is not possible to say where the spiritual place is situated; it is not situated, it is, rather, that which situates, it is situative.” Corbin relates the Mundus Imaginalis to Plato’s World of Forms, where archetypal precursors to physical reality shape experience.
From a different perspective, David Bohm explains a similar understanding about the nature of reality, arguing that postmechanistic physics demands a new understanding of order so that the whole is enfolded into the part, and by the same token, the part is enfolded into the whole. He suggests that “. . . if we can obtain an intuitive and imaginative feeling of the whole world as constituting an implicate order that is also enfolded in us, we will sense ourselves to be one with this world.” Bohm’s argument for a postmodern science could apply to psychology in that it, “. . . should not separate matter and consciousness and should therefore not separate facts, meaning, and value.”

These concepts have parallels to Jung’s cosmology of the Self. Jung’s Self represents an archetypal dimension of reality, as distinguished from the *persona*, the familiar egoic aspect of identity. Through the transcendent function, the archetypal and personal interact with the potential for ongoing integration. According to Joan Chodorow, Jung first used the term “transcendent function,” as well as several other terms including: “picture method,” “visioning,” “dialectical method,” “introspection,” and “technique of descent,” before introducing the term “active imagination” in his 1935 Tavistock Lectures. He used the term transcendent function as both a technique for working with the psyche, as well as an inherent “function of the psyche.” In this way, Jung arrives at his conception of the psyche as self-healing in that the transcendent function allows for the polarized opposites that form the basis of complexes to be united through the use of the imagination.

Jung’s technique to engage unconscious material, active imagination, grew out of his own experience. Following his break with Freud, Jung reported experiencing “a period of inner uncertainty . . . a state of disorientation,” during which he had profoundly moving dreams and was “seized by [an] overpowering vision.” Documenting his
experiences, he began a “voluntary confrontation with the unconscious.” Jung’s exploration introduced him to the living contents of his personal unconscious and the collective unconscious, and lead to his description of the archetypes.

Jung reduced active imagination to two simple steps: first, allow unconscious material to arise, and next, come to terms with it. In the first step, the ego is put aside, while in the second step, one consciously engages the material, asking questions of it and applying moral standards to integrate the messages and meanings of the image.

Chodorow provides a brief overview of the stages of active imagination as conceived by other Jungians, including von Franz, Robert Johnson and Janet Dallett. While their approaches vary somewhat, each follows the basic form of making oneself open to the unconscious by emptying the mind and relaxing the ego and then engaging the images that arise. The images are then given expression, which may include ritual. Finally, the meaning derived is integrated into everyday life.

Elaborating on Jung’s use of the term active imagination, Hillman clarifies that it is not a mystical, spiritual, artistic or curative endeavor, but rather, a means of deepening the process of individuation, via the maxim of “Know Thyself.” For Hillman, this is to engage in the never-ending story of what it is to be human by amplifying the multiplicity of the soul, and in doing so, to escape polarity through pluralism.

Engaging Imagination – Ritual, Myth, Art & Guided Imagery

In his work on primitive cultures, Eliade explored the role of ritual and myth in promulgating cultural values and facilitate life’s transitions. Myth and ritual go hand-in-hand, so that ritual represents a dynamic living out of the myth. Rituals enact the full lifecycle, from chaos and nothingness, through birth, life and return through death, with
the idea that “. . . life cannot be repaired, it can only be recreated.” According to Eliade, the ancients understood symbolic death as a necessary step for rebirth and healing; only by entering the chaos of the yet unformed can a person emerge reformed or reborn to new possibility. This initiatory death holds dangers as well, including the possible disintegration of personality.

Joseph Campbell proclaimed that myth is a roadmap to the potentialities of human life. In his interviews with Bill Moyers, Campbell clarified that myths are not just about making meaning, they are also about experiencing life. Here Campbell is reflecting on a higher level of experience achieved by turning inward and reflecting on the symbols of the myth to come into contact with the rapturous experience of being.

Exploring the role of myth, Jung and C. Kerényi describe mythological ideas as eternal forms that contain both light and dark. According to these authors, myths emanate from the deepest substrata of the collective unconscious and bridge polarities: life and death, joy and suffering, and so forth. These ideas act as buds or seeds of meaning. To discern the meaning of the myth, the initiate must engage in and experience its unfolding. The symbols of mythology in their most collective and universal forms give life or substance to the images of the self. Operating on the level of the collective unconscious, these symbols represent primordial ideas in the union of opposites. This places archetypes in an initiatory role connecting the past with future potentiality and links meaning to the present day.

Moore argues that psychology must concern itself with myth, ritual and the spiritual life. For Moore, a mythic lens on life brings into focus the universal and eternal themes active in our daily existence, while ritual helps lift the soul out of the material world to experience spiritual forms and values.
Hillman also cites the power of ritual to lift us out of the physical and literal, into the metaphysical and metaphoric. For Hillman, this is not the stuff of fantasy, but of soul making: “Ritual brings together action and idea into an enactment.” 261 For Hillman, creating a mythic narrative is one step for the soul to bring unconscious ideas into consciousness by personifying and subjectivizing them. 262

Houston discusses how ritual supports transformative practices by imbuing the practices with meaning and power. 263 She argues that creating the feel of the sacred through environment, sound, gesture, and rhythm aligns attention and intention with the goal of integration. Houston advocates the use of story to expand and amplify one’s personal myth, by finding connection to the world’s great myths, recognizing patterns at work and connecting to deeper, more expansive levels of the psyche. 264 She warns against exiling shadow characters from story; rather, her technique is to work with the shameful, painful, disavowed aspects of experience to “. . . expand and deepen the story, thus releasing the energy bound within it.” 265

Various methods have been explored to incorporate personal myth-making into praxis. Michael Meade focuses on the impact of story telling and connecting to core human experience. According to him: “Where mythic symbols and important events in a person’s life meet, strong emotions arise and release memories long held in the body.” 266 Stephen Larsen also promotes the use of mythic imagination to transcend rational thought and engage in archetypal dimensions of existence. 267 Larsen recognizes an inherent paradox in the idea of a personal myth, as myths are inherently transpersonal; yet it is only by entering into one’s collective role that one can individuate. 268

Joanna Macy lists many reasons that we avoid engagement with our full experience, all of which are rooted in pain and fear. 269 For Macy, it is necessary for us to
confront our fears and suffer the pains of existence to overcome the shadow aspects of ourselves and our culture. To do so, Macy provides guidelines for group explorations of painful and fear-inducing experiences. As an example, she describes The Despair Ritual, through which participants “touch bottom,” providing an opportunity to express and release the fears associated with their despair.  

Another form of imaginative expression is found in art therapy. An early pioneer of this field, Shaun McNiff, made the case that imagination is a valid “instrument of investigation” for psychological research. McNiff found that art provides expression of complex, seemingly contradictory understandings to surface through “. . . sustained reflection on phenomena.” Pat Allen discussed art as a way to “. . . go back to unfinished places in the soul.” Summarizing her more than 20 years of experience, Allen recognized that: images are universal and represent living truth, pictures of the past, present and future at once; that fear holds images captive, stealing needed vitality that allows the image to flow into something new; that intention and attention combine into a powerful transformative force; and that, “Images need a witness.”

Ellen and Stephen Levine extol the transformative power of expression through art. They state that transformative power rests in the ability to expand the range of play—the range of the possible. For the Levines, art opens the doorway to images that are greater than the individual, provides access to the archetypal, and particularly in trauma, has the capacity to “. . . bring back a capacity to shape and the hope that comes from being able to reshape our experience.” Working with children, Eric C. Green and others have documented the effectiveness of play and art therapy to tap into preverbal memories and create productive narratives out of childhood trauma.
Movement provides another means of engaging active imagination. Wendy Wyman-McGinty provides a detailed description of the psychological processes involved in authentic movement as a means to access to the unconscious. Movement allows the mover to connect somatically-stored memories in the form of affect and image and engage in symbolic meaning-making.

In a 2004 dissertation, Jaleh Fatemi studied creative writing as a method of provoking peak experiences. He found that 44% of participants asked to write about their happiest memories reported having a peak experience as a result of the writing project. Of these participants, 37% linked the source of their heightened experience to the aesthetic creative expression.

Active Imagination’s Basis in Childhood Development

Michael Fordham applied his focus on early child development to the possible developmental origins of active imagination. In order to explore this more thoroughly, we will take a brief detour into object relations theories that Fordham draws on and will continue that line of thought through several, additional theorists.

Freud first conceived of the psychological object as the means through which one’s inner experience, in the form of libidinal and ego forces, interacts with external aspects of experience, and which may take the form of a person, such as the mother, or objects, such as a body part or toy. Expanding on Freud’s theory, Klein took a different tact, framing drives as not just biological, but also as part of the inherent sense of self. From this premise, she concluded that the mind, from infancy, is fluid and subject to intense fear of utter annihilation and abandonment. To manage this unbearable tension, the infant splits its experience of the world into the “good breast” and the “bad
breast”—external representations of the internal experience of splitting. Herein lies the genesis of *projective identification*—where the bad is projected onto the other, where it can be more easily demonized and persecuted.

Other key contributions by Klein include the *paranoid-schizoid* and *depressive positions* and her conception of *envy*. These positions describe early developmental functioning, to which an individual may regress at later periods in life. In the paranoid-schizoid position, the infant fears annihilation and develops a worldview with a good-bad split, where all the bad is projected onto an object. In the depressive position, the child is more integrated and able to see both the good and bad as part of a single object. This is a more complicated and integrated worldview, but it still entails fear of rejection and abandonment. Klein described envy as arising from these positions when the infant ascribes all power to the external object and wishes to destroy that object for making it feel powerless, thus destroying its own hopeful and loving nature.

D. W. Winnicott introduced additional nuance to the infant’s relationship with the object. Winnicott conceived of a tripartite reality: the inner world, the outer world, and the “intermediate area of experiencing.” He introduced the concept of the *transitional object* as the symbol that connects inner experience with outer experience, or the subjective with the objective. Whereas Klein described the internal experience of the object, where omnipotent fantasy shapes perception, Winnicott’s use of the transitional object introduced a field of activity between the infant and caregiver, where play, creativity, and symbolic imagination create meaning. For Winnicott, it is how the infant interacts with the object that holds the potential for productive meaning-making. Using these ideas, Winnicott then conceptualized *cultural experience* such that: “The accent . . . is on experience. In using the word ‘culture’ I am thinking of the inherited
tradition. I am thinking of something that is in the common pool of humanity, into which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we may all draw if we have somewhere to put what we find.” Cultural experience is, then, the product of the individual experiencing the environment through the mechanism of play or imagination, and, significantly, it “transcends personal existence.”

Fordham applied Winnicott’s theories to conclude that active imagination, as experienced by an adult, develops from early object relations, and particularly, from the individual’s mastery of the transitional object as it exists within cultural experience. Fordham also argues that deintegration of the self can foster an inner creative life which results in further individuation, whereas disintegration represents an unsuccessful attempt at integration.

Departing from the traditional Freudian view of object relations, Michael Balint locates the “primary object” in a field influenced by two participants, rather than in the tripartite field of the Oedipal complex characterized by conflict and narcissism. He reframes the primitive source of the object in the search for “primary love . . . an all-embracing harmony with one’s environment, to be able to love in peace.” When the search for this primary object is thwarted, the individual encounters the Basic Fault, the core pre-verbal, pre-object, psychic wound to which one regresses and from which one may find a New Beginning. Balint concludes that the new beginning is a result of a productive regression based in the individual’s search for an object of love, which he describes as “regression for the sake of progression.” While the new beginning cannot undo the wound, it allows for new creative expression to emerge and for a more complex and spontaneous experience of reality.
Christopher Bollas also extends object relations theory, adapting the concept of transitional object into a transformational object.\(^{299}\) In his view, the mother, or the object of the infant’s attention, acts as a means of transformation and growth, and at subsequent growth opportunities, the individual will seek an object, “. . . for its function as a signifier of transformation. Thus, in adult life, the quest is not to possess the object; rather, the object is pursued in order to surrender to it as a medium that alters the self. . . .”\(^ {300}\) The transformational object represents an existential and ontological experience of the self that is capable of transforming the individual’s core wound.\(^ {301}\) Bollas argues that it is in aesthetic space that an individual can creatively access the memories and affective resources necessary to effect transformation.\(^ {302}\)

While coming from different perspectives, Eliade and the object relations theorists arrive at similar conclusions: it is necessary to return, or regress, to a formless, disorganized, egoless state in order to progress in a revitalized and creative way. What, in myth and ritual, is the Eternal Return to the creation story for the maintenance and renewal of culture, is in psychology, the periodic deintegration and reintegration of the self for the purpose of healing and growth.

Imagination’s Goal

According to Omer, imagination is its own line of development and, as such, it is both liminal and a capacity.\(^ {303}\) In authentic or creative ritual, imagination guides action by connecting into the mysterious core of being, and in doing so, it has the potential to release transformative possibilities.\(^ {304}\) ITP employs myth and ritual to create a container for experience that includes an archetypal dimension. According to Omer: “If we are able to cultivate a relationship with mythic figures, we are able to step through the doorway to
active imagination and creative action.” To do this, ritual plays a key role, allowing images to emerge and open new possibilities. Omer summarizes this approach writing: "Creative ritual is imagination in action, allowing us to tap into our indigenous knowing thereby releasing the transformative potentials of our collective life." The key to creative ritual is the power to express the plurality of the psyche. Exploring the plurality, or multiplicity, of the psyche is enhanced through the principle of The Four Dynamisms of Experience: diversifying experience, deepening experience, embodying experience and personalizing experience. The four dynamisms are a means to transmute affective experience into capacities.

Similar to the later object relations theorists, ITP recognizes the impulse toward expansive experience as the key drive that shapes a person, as opposed to drives for sex, satisfaction or avoidance of pain. The individual’s capacity for experience is founded on early childhood experiences that set the parameters of the potential space, or in ITP, an imaginal structure, both of which create a boundary for experience. Play is the equivalent of imagination, working symbolically to create new experience. Similar to Grotstein’s unconscious subject, ITP understands the self as comprised of many subjectivities. The praxis of Imaginal Psychology focuses on reflexively working with these subjectivities so that one might experience a productive deintegration leading to creative action, in which individuals step beyond the limits of their imaginal structures to respond to the potentiality of the moment; however, when gatekeeping is dominant, disintegration is more likely, so that individuals remains captive in an imaginal structure, reactively reliving scripts from their past.
Imagination—Summary

This section explored the concept of imagination to consider how one experiences and makes meaning from experience. It presented the ITP conception that imagination is both a capacity and a liminal function. Imagination connects matter and spirit and mediates senses and intellect. It opens one to the potential and meaning latent in the moment. It enlivens ritual and myth so that one comes into contact with an essential experience of being. Myths present symbols that unite opposites and provide a roadmap to converting potentials into capacities. The literature illuminates the challenge for this research to engage imaginative capacities in relation to shadow aspects of archetypal experience while fostering a creative deintegration, rather than a destructive disintegration of identity.

Trauma

This section provides an overview of the psychological understanding of trauma. It begins with a brief recap of the evolution of trauma theory from psychology’s founding fathers to introduce key concepts and principles. It then explores modern trauma theories, which have been greatly expanded due to scientific developments that allow for an understanding of the biological basis of trauma. These theories encompass several different scientific domains, including neuroscience, physiology, endocrinology and attachment theory. As an in-depth review of the scientific literature is beyond the scope of this study, I will attempt to provide a layman’s understanding of critical aspects of the biological response to trauma and to affirm psychodynamic treatment models, as well as to underscore the far-reaching impacts of early childhood abuse. We then turn our
consideration to the intrapsychic dynamics of trauma and the trauma archetype, which influences subjective and cultural experience. It is within this discussion that the concept of victimization in response to my Research Problem is considered. The section continues with a brief overview of the shamanic understanding of trauma and concludes with an Imaginal Psychology perspective on trauma.

Through keen observation, the founding fathers of modern psychology laid down the principles of trauma theory, many of which would later be supported by discoveries in neurobiology. Toward the end of the 19th Century, Jean Martin Charcot speculated that his hysterical patients were suffering from trauma; this speculation would later be amplified by two of his star pupils, Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud.312 As early as 1889, Janet theorized that the overwhelming emotion triggered by traumatic experience caused the memory of these events to be disassociated from consciousness, and instead, to be experienced as anxiety, panic or visual images in nightmares and flashbacks.313 He further observed that traumatized patients responded to startling stimuli as though they were in the original traumatic situation—regardless of the current environment—and that this state of perpetual alertness disconnected the patient from experience in the present time. Janet concluded that traumatized patients remain fixated on the past and experience present events with the same emotional intensity as the original trauma, even when the patient cannot attach any meaning to their responses.314 Similar to Janet, Freud thought trauma was biologically-based: that trauma-induced dreams indicated a physical fixation on trauma.315 Freud coined the term repetition compulsion to describe the phenomenon in which trauma sufferers were likely to unconsciously recreate situations similar to the original trauma.316 Based on his early clinical work, Freud hypothesized that childhood
sexual abuse was at the root of neurosis and hysteria, although he would later back away from these claims due to the controversy they engendered.317

Adding to the physiological understanding of trauma, Ivan Pavlov described how trauma results in lasting physiological changes with these core concepts: defensive reaction—the reflexive response to threat; conditional stimuli—something associated with the original traumatic event but not integral to the experience of trauma; and conditional response—the defensive reaction to the conditional stimuli that recreates the level of panic experienced in the original traumatic situation.318 Pavlov’s work is supported by recent neurological studies of the effects of fear and stress on the brain. Joseph LeDoux and his team of neural researchers at New York University have conducted extensive studies on how the brain processes fear and stress.319 Their research indicates that stressors unrelated to the original conditioning can activate weak or previously-extinguished fear responses, explaining the persistence of fear-related conditioned responses.320

Throughout history, the traumatic effect of war on returning soldiers has been noted, but it was not until after the First World War that Abraham Kardiner described these symptoms in psychological terms.321 Kardiner provided the first systematic assessment of the five central features of what would become known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which includes: a persistent startle response and irritability; a tendency to outbursts of anger and aggression; a fixation on the trauma; a diminished level of personal functioning; and intrusive dreams.322 Work with veterans, especially following the Vietnam War, spurred study of the psychological effects of trauma, and an official diagnosis of PTSD was added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) in 1980.323
In the 30 years since PTSD entered the DSM, trauma studies have flourished, adding valuable insight into the lasting effects and mechanisms of trauma. Distinct from studies of PTSD, significant strides in the understanding of early childhood trauma have also occurred in biological and psycho-social disciplines, creating a more integrated understanding of how developmental traumatic stress changes brain chemistry and structure, neuroendocrine functioning, and interpersonal relatedness.  

Led by Bessel A. van der Kolk and Robert S. Pynoos, a group of trauma researchers have proposed a new category for the DSM-V trials that, more specifically than PTSD, identifies the disorders caused by developmental trauma. In building the case for Developmental Trauma Disorder (DTD), these researchers draw on research from multiple disciplines to demonstrate that prolonged exposure to interpersonal trauma has far-reaching effects on children, causing dysregulation of affects, physiology, attention, behavior, identity and relationships, in addition to demonstrating symptoms of PTSD. These modern trauma studies transcend PTSD to what van der Kolk calls “the trauma spectrum” to include other trauma-induced disorders ranging from phobias and panic, to Borderline Personality Disorder and Dissociative Personality Disorder. In this way, the scope of modern trauma research has shifted from trauma induced by an identifiable event in adulthood to include the effects of ongoing emotional and physical trauma, which may not be remembered, such as in child abuse and incest.

Where Trauma Resides

A central premise in the understanding of trauma is that traumatic memory is stored in the body and emerges in the form of strong affective states, somatic sensations and visual images. Memory is effectively split off from the cognitive ability to make
meaning of it. In an overview of contemporary neuroscience, Margaret Wilkinson, describes the impact of dissociative defenses of the trauma on “. . . the emotional, intellectual and imaginative life of the individual and on the development of the self.”

She traces the literature, which describes how, in trauma, the release of hormones, changes in the brain, and reaction of skeletal muscles effect the whole psyche-soma. She illustrates how the trauma literature continuously reinforces this point with such titles as McDougall’s “Theater of the Body,” Sidoli’s “When the Body Speaks,” Rothschild’s “The Body Remembers,” and van der Kolk’s “The Body Keeps the Score.”

In *The Body Remembers*, Babette Rothschild focuses on working with traumatic memory stored somatically in the body. Simply stated, the body stores memories either explicitly or implicitly. Explicit memory is encoded in language and available for recall. Implicit memory harkens back to Pavlov’s discovery of conditioned responses, in that it triggers an automatic reaction to a stimulus, without the cognitive intervention of meaning-making. Two central structures in the recording, storing, and recalling of memory are the amygdala and the hippocampus. The amygdala is the first to process the highly-charged emotional memories, such as terror, but does not encode the memory in time or space. The hippocampus responds just milliseconds after the amygdala and provides a full narrative to an event, including providing an ending to the story. In a traumatic situation, the release of cortisol suppresses the functioning of the hippocampus, so that the memory processed by the amygdala is stored in the nonverbal portions of the brain, not available for conscious recall and without coding as to time, place, or ending of the traumatic event. This dynamic opens the floodgates to intrusive memories in the form of visual and somatic flashbacks and contributes to dissociation. Because the doorway to the memory never fully closes, the trauma sufferer lives in a state of chronic hyper-
arousal of the autonomic nervous system, which disrupts the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. This desensitizes the feedback loop that regulates the body’s hormonal response to stress, so that unresolved trauma results in a lower threshold for stressful stimuli, chronic hyperarousal, and a greater likelihood for developing PTSD.

Van der Kolk describes trauma as a “bi-phasic response,” which includes states of hyper-arousal and intrusions, as well as numbing and constriction. He explains trauma as primarily based in changes in the central nervous system (CNS), with secondary changes in identity and interpersonal relations. CNS changes include loss of neuro-modulation, numbing, hyper-reactivity, dissociative states and memory disturbances. Changes at the level of identity and interpersonal relations include depression, avoidance, amnesia and anhedonia. For van der Kolk, the goal of trauma therapy is to gain conscious control over unconscious re-experiences or re-enactments of the original trauma. In his clinical work, van der Kolk has validated the use of psychopharmacological treatments, verbal and alternative therapies ranging from individual and group psychotherapy, as well as yoga, neurofeedback, EMDR and theater in the treatment of trauma.

Daniel J. Siegel’s work integrates advances in the biological basis of memory, emotion, and attachment to understand trauma. Siegel’s theoretical approach utilizes complexity theory, which, among other things, emphasizes the flow between differentiation and integration. In terms of neurobiology, differentiation refers to the functional specialization of parts of the nervous system, while integration refers to how these parts combine to effectively create increasingly complex states. The system flows from stasis on one extreme, to chaos on the other, with optimal functioning occupying the medium as a kind of “harmony.” According to Siegel, in unresolved trauma, when an
unintegrated memory track, first created in the original traumatic event, is stimulated, the system swings to one side or the other and either freezes in a state of inaction or overreacts in a hyper-chaotic state. Recent neurobiological discoveries show that the brain continues to form new neuropathways over the course of a lifetime; therefore, through successful psychotherapy, these subconscious models, schemas, scripts, or structures can be exposed and deconstructed allowing for new and different patterns of behavior to be learned. These new patterns are literally new neuroconnections that reroute the brain circuitry, overcoming the patterns of trauma, and allowing for the development of greater integration and complexity. Trauma resolution, according to Siegel, requires cross-hemisphere neurointegration to assimilate stored memories from the nonverbal, sensory-oriented right brain with the verbal capacities of the left brain to create coherent narratives.

LeDoux views emotions as “biological functions of the nervous system.” With this understanding, LeDoux describes the “fear system” as a set of emotional behaviors that developed to respond to danger and from which trauma-related symptoms develop. Emotional systems operate unconsciously and more quickly than cognitive functions so that the same stimulus reaches the amygdala, the brain’s emotional processing center, within 10 to 12 milliseconds, whereas the same stimulus reaches the cortex, the cognitive processing center, in 250 to 300 milliseconds. Similar to other states of consciousness, emotions enter consciousness when the unconscious processes comes into awareness, but unlike other thoughts or perceptions, highly-charged emotions will dominate attention, supplanting ordinary thoughts. LeDoux argues that emotions dominate consciousness because the connections from the emotional systems to the cognitive systems are stronger than in the reverse. He frames memory as a feature of neurons, rather than as an
independent system. Memory is selective and imperfect, and these limitations are even more true of traumatic memory—in which the cognitive functions of the hippocampus are diminished, while the unconscious emotional functions of the amygdala are heightened. 347 Therapeutic interventions designed to extinguish traumatic memory really work to strengthen cortical control over the amygdala rather than to erase the memory, which can resurface with sufficient stress. The true hope for trauma treatment, suggests LeDoux, is the evolutionary project of increasing connectivity between the amygdala and the cortex to bring emotion and cognition into relationship. 348

**A Cycle of Violence and Victimization**

Van der Kolk states that trauma and its reenactment is the major cause of violence. 349 This is due to the complex web of biological and intrapsychic dynamics in which extreme psychological defenses are preferable to the reexperience of trauma. 350 Driving this behavior is the repetition compulsion, an intricate interaction of unconscious behaviors triggered by autonomic arousal of long-term augmented memory tracks laid down during the original trauma in which the trauma sufferer recreates aspects of the original traumatic experience. 351 Traumatic reenactment may take the form of harm to others, self-destructiveness or revictimization. 352 According to van der Kolk, trauma is addictive, in that one can become stuck in a cycle of repetition, both in conscious obsession with thoughts of the trauma and in unconscious reenactment of the traumatic encounter itself. 353 The repetition compulsion, then, reflects the activation of the trauma complex, which will be discussed later in this section.

Voicing similar views, Allan N. Schore illustrates how early childhood abuse can contribute to destructive behavior producing what he termed a “developmentally acquired
sociopathy.” 354 Emmett Early argues that trauma is pervasive in our culture and is responsible for much of what has been considered “aberrant behavior” in it. 355 Martin H. Teicher argues that early childhood trauma, in the form of emotional, physical or sexual abuse has lasting negative effects, leading to “a harvest of psychiatric disorders.” 356 According to Teicher, the costs to society are enormous—for both the impact on the health care system and the violence that the ongoing cycle of trauma engenders. Stepping from a medical to a political argument, Teicher denounces those who dismiss the “abuse excuses.” According to Teicher: “Childhood abuse isn’t something you ‘get over.’ It is an evil that we must acknowledge and confront if we aim to do anything about the unchecked cycle of violence in this country.” 357

Grand assessed the impact of trauma on individuals and the culture, drawing a direct connection between trauma and an ongoing cycle of evil. 358 She argues that those who suffer “malicious trauma,” abuse at the hands of another, suffer from a “memory of annihilation” which in turn creates a “catastrophic loneliness.” 359 Paradoxically, Grand recognizes that it is in search for a cure to this unbearable loneliness that perpetrators engage in evil: “Unlike all other forms of human interaction, evil alone bears witness to the contradictory claims of solitude and mutuality that haunt traumatic memory. The reproduction of evil is the survivor’s continual reentry into the moment of execution.” 360 Grand examines how this dynamic works on individual and cultural levels and names the cultural forgetfulness that contributes to and sustains the cycle of evil as “malignant dissociative contagion.” 361 According to Grand:

“. . . it is the shared cultural experience of trauma’s unknowability; as well as a shared attempt at metabolizing and redissociating overwhelming affects of hate, shame, despair, and fear. For this shared experience to occur, the perpetrator must solicit victim, bystander and culture to collude in the disavowal of evil.
Inevitably, the perpetrator finds her own denial mirrored, echoed, and calcified in others’ disavowal of inhuman events.”

Grand paints a dark and intricate picture of the innerworld of the victim. Viewing the personality as a system of selves in relationship, Grand uses concepts from object-relations along with understandings of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive modes to illustrate how innocence and guilt become internally confused and externally projected. Linkages between the self-states are broken, or fail to form, so that access to memory and the self that holds the memory is severed. With these linkages destroyed, the conviction of innocence becomes confused with guilt. These aspects of self, then, are without history or reference to a unifying sense of self: “Acts committed outside of the depressive mode may be said to exist outside of self-reflexive, discursive memory; they are neither forgotten nor repressed. In the autistic-contiguous mode, experience is sensory, prelinguistic, and devoid of agency.”

When choosing survival over ethical outrage, the victim makes a “bestial gesture of survival,” which, in effect, dehumanizes the innocent victim and gives power to the internalized persecutor. Through the bestial gesture, the “shadow of the object falls upon the ego,” a phrase Grand borrows from Freud, and perpetrator’s guilt is assimilated within the survivor. For Grand, forgiveness cannot happen at the price of forgetting: “If we understand the nucleus of evil as catastrophic loneliness, the forgiveness of evil will inevitable be lonely. And yet, ideally, authentic forgiveness should be an organic intersubjective process. It should be a lived dialogue between perpetrator, bystander, and victim; it should be a dialogue that both alleviates and confirms catastrophic loneliness.”

May offers an existential understanding of the origins of violence and the problem of victim identity, which he discusses in terms of powerlessness and pseudoinnocence.
For May, power and significance are intertwined, so that power is the objective experience and significance is the subjective experience of the same thing.\textsuperscript{368} Power experienced in an affirmative way gives rise to self-esteem, self-awareness and agency. The sense of powerlessness leads to aggression, and when that fails, aggression erupts in violence. May finds that violence is a given of the human condition, and it is tied up with innocence, a state of powerlessness. Our relationship with violence is further complicated by our “secret love of violence,” and its denial.\textsuperscript{369} This secret love is linked to the ecstatic component of violence, the feeling-sense that one is outside of oneself, involved in a cathartic act. Recognizing that innocence pulls for experience, May questions whether innocence is complicit in its own sacrifice. This need not be interpreted as condemning the victim, but rather as recognizing the complex internal dynamics of power and innocence. Referencing myths of dragons and the Sphinx devouring virgins, May suggests that the problem lies not in the beast as much as in our capacity to confront and integrate our own destructive urges.

Pursuing a somatic approach to treating trauma, Peter A. Levine seeks to release energy trapped in the body by emotions frozen in time by the traumatic incident.\textsuperscript{370} He identifies victimization as part of a traumatic thought-loop that keeps suffers trapped in helplessness and shame.\textsuperscript{371} Levine explains reenactment as an instinctual response, unsuccessfully attempting to release stuck energy. He contends that this repeated attempt at catharsis is an acting-out of the justice instinct, which he links to the cycle of violence that accompanies trauma.\textsuperscript{372} He identifies “two faces of trauma:” one of transformation and the other of abject fear and despondency.\textsuperscript{373} In order to “renegotiate” trauma, Levine outlines a process of cycling through the polarities of heaven and hell, to create a new non-literal memory.\textsuperscript{374} To do so, one needs to let go of victim identity and embrace a
more complex awareness that allows for both knowledge of suffering and acceptance of
goodness, joy and awe.  

Grotstein illuminates a psychoanalytic understanding of how trauma is
internalized. Tracing the concepts of projection, projective identification, splitting and
envy, from Klein through Bion, Grotstein describes the development of a “negative”
container, which is characterized by an “obstructive (internal) object.”  
In this
environment, a moralistic superego, without actual moral authenticity, represents an
envious destruction of good, acting as a “persecutory negative container” or “projection
in reverse.”  
This internalized moralistic superego works to block healthy ego
formation and acts as a “protective” agent in what Grotstein termed a “Faustian bargain
with the devil.”

Archetypal Dimensions of Trauma

Kalsched describes the subjective experience that gives birth to the cycle of
violence as part of the archetypal self-care system, in which an internal psychic structure
works to protect the self from unbearable overwhelming experience.  
In reaction to a
traumatic event, aspects of the psyche split off and become “encapsulated in a kind of
‘somatic’ unconscious state.”  
In the face of overwhelming affective experience, this
split-off psychic energy arises to defend its host from the perceived threat of annihilation.
Kalsched describes the power of these internalized persecutors to inflict continuing
trauma on their subject long after the cessation of the original traumatic event, such that:
“. . . the traumatized psyche is self-traumatizing.”  
Here, Kalsched illuminates how the
repetitive trauma cycle takes hold of its subject. He describes this inner tormentor as
“. . . far more sadistic and brutal than any outer perpetrator, indicating that we are dealing
here with a psychological factor set loose in the inner world by trauma—an archetypal
traumatogenic agency within the psyche itself.”

According to Kalsched, the archetypal
landscape that opens through the “abyss” of traumatic outer events is: “... a world
already waiting to be discovered. It is not ‘created’ by the ego in order to provide
necessary illusion (as Freud thought). It is placed in the service of ‘illusion’ in order to
defend the personal spirit, but these archetypal defenses are a kind of miracle in their own
right and provide for the organism’s survival.” For Kalsched, these forces are
numinous, and one of the goals of working with trauma sufferers is to develop an ego
strong enough to comprehend the whole archetype, both the light and the dark.

Wilson builds on Kalsched’s description of archetypal nature of the internalized
traumatic agent, applying positive psychology to the question of how a trauma sufferer
transforms from a victim into a whole, resilient, and spontaneous individual. Wilson
explores trauma at the archetypal level, noting that it is universal across all cultures, is
continually present in human history, and exists as “... active-living dispositions to
behaviors which influence thoughts, feelings and actions.” As an archetype, trauma
also has an associated complex that operates as internalized personifications of the
archetype. The trauma complex then develops from the abyss experience, a negative
peak experience characterized by dread, a sense of impending annihilation, and “... the
dark existential chasm” a “cosmic challenge of meaning” which can include “the
experience of God, a Higher Power, and the Numinous,” and holds the potential for
spiritual transformation and healing. Wilson describes the trauma complex as “... a
prototypical and mythological representation of reality, interweaving the images of the
demonic versus the transcendent.” Here, it might be useful to recall Otto’s description
of the numinous as a “daemonic-divine object.” Wilson describes the trauma
archetype as having a central role that can constellate other archetypes. He goes on to propose that peak experiences expand consciousness, thus creating possibilities for post-traumatic healing.\textsuperscript{391} Wilson places peak experiences and dissociative states along a continuum, each representing an exception to the usual integrative functions of consciousness, perception, memory and identity.\textsuperscript{392} He suggests that understanding how one navigates the psychological spectrum from disintegrative to optimal states of functioning in trauma may hold greater value than a description of the dynamics of PTSD.\textsuperscript{393}

Tanya Wilkinson applies social critique and approaches victim identity from a mythic perspective.\textsuperscript{394} According to Wilkinson, in the fluid world of myth, identities can transform, but in the politics of victimization, identities become fixed in either/or thinking. Wilkinson uses The Rape of Persephone as the central myth of victimization. In it, Persephone bridges the Upper and Lower worlds to transcend victim identity. Persephone, the maiden, represents the Divine Child—innocence betrayed. Demeter demonstrates the dynamic movement needed to overcome betrayal and lost innocence, moving from total absorption in grief to a ruthless rage and then to acceptance of a negotiated peace, which values the maintenance of connection. Hecate represents the ability to mediate and move between the conscious and the unconscious, to provide a safe holding container, and to bridge opposites. Here, we have the three faces of the Goddess: the maiden, the mother and the crone. Pitfalls in negotiating the return, or peace, are to get stuck in or repress the grief or anger, or to refuse to accept a renegotiated reality. Identification with the hero figures, Zeus and Hades, the light and dark side of the hero, respectively, leads to identification with the perpetrator and to remaining stuck in victim identity.
Wilkinson’s exploration of the victim identity includes a critique of modern culture and its denial of the value of working with the paradoxical nature of the shadow. She notes that the goal of ancient mystery cults was to descend into and return from the Underworld and in doing so, earn the mark of the initiated. In this way the very idea of initiation includes transmuting a wound into something of value. Instead, she links the politics of modern victim arguments to the Christian split between good and evil, in which suffering itself symbolizes that one is shameful, damned, and evil. Discussing the impact of this split, Wilkinson writes: “Our addiction to progress leaves us with a cultural shadow problem. Normal vulnerability is demonized, and the potential for change and rebirth that is seeded within vulnerability is lost.”

Taking a broader view of history, culture, religion and mythology, Lash views victim identity in terms of a victim-perpetrator bind which he links to the Redeemer Complex. According to him, this complex operates on a mass scale, justifying domination of the patriarchal power structure and exacting silent endorsement by the masses gripped by the complex. Holding the complex in place is “terror,” which Lash breaks down to the concept of “error spelt with a T.” He relates the “T” to the shape of the cross, a Roman symbol of torture and the Christian symbol of divine love. This “T” works through the redeemer complex to amplify normal error to inhumane proportions, through identification with a superhuman power. To move beyond the complex requires disidentification with the “divine victim.”

Examining one key aspect of trauma and victim identity, Sandra Prewitt Edelman introduces the Greek goddess of shame, Aidos. Aidos, as a concept, lived in the ancient Greek sensibility as a sense of duty that connected one to the community and to the Gods. Aidos reinforces a sense of nobility-of-being regardless of station in society. According
to Edelman, shame disconnects us from our inherent nobility and our connections to community and the divine.\textsuperscript{401} Perverted through the prism of the false self, shame inspires dread, fear of annihilation and fear of the wrath of God. Edelman uses the myth of Athene and the Gorgon to illustrate a way to come into right relationship with shame, so that one can tolerate both the positive and negative faces of God and Self.

**Trauma, Personal Power and Soul Loss**

A shamanic understanding of psychological distress and healing rests on the principles already discussed in previous sections. A key characteristic of illness is the loss of personal power, which originates at the level of spirit. In their teachings, Wesselman and Kuykendall reiterate ancient wisdom that true healing involves the body, mind and spirit, and that often distress begins at the level of spirit.\textsuperscript{402} According to Kuykendall, shamanic diagnoses progress from disharmony to fear, soul loss and illness intrusions. Among these, soul loss is the most serious and often results from trauma. Noting that Western medicine ignores this concept, Kuykendall describes it this way: “When the trauma is severe, this may result in a fragmentation of that person’s soul cluster, with the shattered soul parts dissociating, fleeing an intolerable situation. In overwhelming circumstances, these soul parts may not return.” \textsuperscript{403} The shamanic prescription for soul loss is soul retrieval, in which a shaman travels into non-ordinary reality to find and persuade severed soul parts to return.

Sandra Ingerman has found that in cultures around the world trauma is connected with soul loss.\textsuperscript{404} Ingerman perceives soul loss as losing part of one’s life essence or life force. Ingerman clarifies that this is a survival strategy, and therefore, operates for the benefit of the organism. However, in modern culture, our lack of understanding of the
spiritual dimension of being means that we often do not seek out that soul part, and it often becomes lost forever. She notes that this same phenomenon in psychology is called dissociation; the difference is that the shaman understands where the soul part goes and has the means to retrieve it. Ingerman also claims that within the shamanic perspective, soul retrieval restores harmony, one of the foundations of good health, and therefore, has a greater effect. She observes that as the concept of harmony is not a part of the modern mindset, it is often necessary after a soul retrieval to help individuals create new narratives and move away from identification with the trauma.

An Imaginal Understanding of Trauma

Imaginal Psychology utilizes the biological understanding of trauma while working with the personal, cultural and archetypal dimensions of traumatic experience. An imaginal approach conceives of trauma as a wounding. The wounding, in turn, holds initiatory potential, if one can transmute the vulnerabilities of the wound into capacities. Omer cautions that when one identifies with the wound, they will be unable to transmute it into a capacity. Omer expresses this in the principle that identification with victimization is itself a disease. This principle relates to the conceptual understanding that highly subjective states relate to states of madness. Madness represents a kind of trance state influenced by extreme gatekeeping—a narrowing of experience and consciousness. Instead, an imaginal approach to trauma cultivates an awareness of the multiplicity of experience, so that one may hold the victim identity as one among many.
Trauma—Summary

Regardless of the approach to trauma, there is agreement that traumatic memories are stored in unconscious states in the body, which, in turn, are experienced as intense affects, bodily sensations and images. These unconscious states feed a traumatic thought loop in which identification with either the victim or perpetrator distorts one’s experience of the world and perpetuates a cycle of retraumatization and violence. For those who embrace an archetypal understanding of trauma, it is understood that these strong affective states represent an opening to the numinous, the universal level of human experience. The shamanic practitioner understands that trauma results in loss of personal power and soul, and that to heal, one must travel to the level of spirit and retrieve what has been lost. Psychological treatment models include the use of psychopharmacological treatments to reduce reactivity and increase emotional stability, verbal therapies to expose and adjust outdated narratives, group psychotherapy to rebuild a sense of safety and connection, and alternative treatments including yoga, neurofeedback and EMDR to increase cross-hemispheric integration, and theater to involve the full psyche-soma in healing.

This study explores the intersection between trauma and the numinous through the lenses of victim identity and personal power. Whereas studies using hallucinogens have also looked at the impact of mystical experience on PTSD, these studies sought to evoke unitive experiences and feelings of peace and calm. This study departed from those models in that it explored the shadow dynamics of victim identity by evoking the terrifying aspect of the numinous as personified in the trauma archetype.
Conclusion

This literature review addressed the Research Problem: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relationship to victim identity? It took a broad perspective on this question, including literature addressing the topics of Numinous Experience, The Shadow, Imagination and Trauma to reflect the personal, cultural, and archetypal dimensions of the problem. The study’s hypothesis stated that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities. For the purposes of this research, expansion of consciousness capacities might be expressed as a shift in an imaginal structure or increased access to multiplicity.

In the literature review, among those who accept the concept of numinous experience, it is generally accepted that such experience holds the potential for growth. Numinous experience is often cited in anecdotal reports or case studies; however, the numinous is largely marginalized as an area of investigation. Direct study of peak experiences have received attention, but these experiences are conceived of more broadly than the numinous, relate to an optimal level of functioning and have not extended to the shadow or nadir experiences and their potential for growth. The use of hallucinogens to induce mystical experiences more closely parallels numinous experience, and this area of study has demonstrated promising outcomes for the treatment of trauma. This project explores new territory, using non-pharmaceutical techniques to investigate the shadow side of numinous experience and its relationship to victim identity.
Power, while not explored as a stand-alone topic, was explored in the writing of May, Eliade, Wesselman, and Washburn. None of these authors address the confluence of the numinous, victim identity and power. May comes the closest to examining this intersection, and the learnings reflect his theoretical perspectives. Kalsched, Wilson, and Bernstein explicitly connect trauma with numinous experience. Each, in different ways, point to the numinosus as holding healing potential for trauma. Again, however, the intersection of numinous experience and its impact on personal power and victim identity has not been addressed.

Based on the literature review, the Research Problem appears to pose a unique question by investigating the intersection between numinous experience, victim identity and personal power. Viewed through the lens of ITP, this study will examine the convergence of these topics in relation to ritual, myth and imagination adding a distinct and praxis-oriented perspective on the research question.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

The literature review revealed that numinous experience has the potential to inspire deep and lasting changes in the personality, despite its infrequent appearance as the topic of direct research. The literature also discussed the challenge of evoking numinous experience in relation to the shadow in order to foster a productive deintegration of identity, rather than a destructive disintegration. This was accomplished, however, through the research methodology, which employed ritual to create a safe-enough container for experience.

This methodology utilized Imaginal Inquiry—a distinct qualitative research methodology developed by Omer, the founder of Meridian University. Imaginal Inquiry is located within the participatory research paradigm in which subjective and objective dimensions of reality are understood to exist side-by-side so that there is a given cosmos and a subjective mind that interacts with that cosmos or reality. The nature of knowledge, then, is based on a critical subjectivity in participatory interaction with the cosmos. The research design sought to evoke a deeply affective experience of the “Other” in the trauma archetype. It used images, guided visualizations and a shamanic journey to evoke this experience. Various modes of expression, including art, writing and dramatic representation provided the data. Interpretations considered expression of subjective
states and imaginal structures by the participants as well as shifts in their ability to express expanded access to multiplicity.

**Research Problem, Hypotheses, and Design**

The research design was developed to address this Research Problem: How does Numinous Experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to the victim identity? The hypothesis stated that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities.

The thesis suggests that by confronting the trauma archetype as an objective reality, individuals may gain a larger perspective on their personal experience, empowering them to disidentify from victim identity. The core experience the design sought to evoke was an intense affective experience of the numinous via the trauma archetype.

The trauma archetype provides a link to the dark pole of the numinous without indicating a specific form or myth that it should take; for, as Wilson has theorized, Trauma is interrelated with the shadow side of other archetypal forms. Approaching nadir experience, however, is challenging. Thus, the methodology employed was meant to offer great enough structure to guide participants in, and most importantly, out of their experience of the dark pole of the numinous. The process was ritualized to provide the safety of containment and the proper reverence for the power and depth of the experience evoked.
The majority of the data collection occurred on the first day, and a second shorter session provided an opportunity for integration and reflection, as well as additional data collection. On the first day, there were a total of four evoking-expressing sequences. Two sequences focused on the core experience: one as the primary evoking experience and the other to deepen, diversify, embody and personalize experience. Preceding and following the sequences evoking the core experience, were two evoking-expressing sequences designed to explore the participants’ imaginal structures related to trauma and victimization. The research design drew on Omer’s concept of the four dynamisms of experience: diversifying, deepening, embodying and personalizing experience. The design accomplished this by holding space for the participants to move between personal and archetypal dimensions of experience, which, in turn, teased apart fused-subjectivities, so that greater complexity and fluidity could emerge, opening the possibility to disidentify from victimization and to hold a slightly more complete and integrated understanding of trauma.

The second session was originally designed to include a structured evoking-expressing sequence; however, participant feedback indicating that the first day was perhaps too structured without enough time for discussion, resulted in a change in the design for the second session. The written journaling was eliminated, and instead, participants were guided in a discussion allowing for a greater range of expression.

The core experience of the numinous or experience of the archetypal was evoked via a guided visualization and a shamanic-style journey to engage the trauma archetype. This portion of the design had two significant challenges: first, it needed to evoke an experience of the numinous or archetypal, which, in itself, is unpredictable. Second, it needed to adequately contain the experience so that the participants experienced a
productive de-integration of identity, rather than an unproductive disintegration. To facilitate evoking the numinous, participants were screened for their familiarity with techniques of active imagination and shamanic journeying. All but one had experience with journeywork, and all expressed comfort with actively engaging imagery. Addressing the second challenge, three elements of the journey were designed specifically to provide participants enough support to promote a productive deintegration. They were: constructing an imaginary safety line that connected the participant to normative reality, inviting the Friend on the journey and balancing inquiry into the personal and archetypal dimensions to prevent participants from experiencing a reenactment of trauma. Additionally, the ritualized container, beginning with introductions and maintained through the day, was designed to provide a sense of safety and containment for the participants.

To assess the success of evoking numinous and archetypal imagery, participants expressed themselves in art and writing designed to capture both the feeling-tone of the experience and the participants’ direct report of their experience. This expression also served to deepen and diversify the experience. The journaling addressed specific aspects of the journey with a particular focus on the feeling-tone of the experience, the participants’ sense of traveling outside of normative reality, and the information gathered through direct communication with the archetype.

This core experience was further elaborated on through embodied expression of four aspects of the archetype. Following a second evocation of the numinous through a meditative revisiting of the feelings and images from the primary journey, the participants were asked to express the trauma archetype. The structured form invited participants to move between and express from four positions: Trauma, Victim,
Bystander, and Friend. The expression was designed to further the deepening and embodying of the experience and to tease apart multiplicity.

The primary data from these sequences related to testing the validity of the experience evoked in the form of the deeply affective nature of the numinous. It was the goal of the research design to evoke the numinous in the journey, as this would provide for greater expression throughout both of the sequences. However, the design also recognized that reports of numinous experience from the second of these core-evoking sequences, the guided visualization, would be sufficient to meet the validity criteria for this project. In this way, the research design allowed for the ineffable nature of the numinous, which might be experienced in one sudden awe-inspiring moment or flow gently into consciousness.\(^3\)

Surrounding the evoking-expressing of the core experience were two sequences focused on the individual’s imaginal structures related to trauma and victimization. The first of these was designed to provide a starting point against which the second was viewed to indicate potential shifts in the structures. The participants recorded this information in their own words via storytelling, writing of a myth and answering a series of questions. An exercise inspired by Ellen and Stephen Levine was used to evoke imaginal structures at the beginning of the day.\(^4\) This exercise involved presenting strong images to which the participants responded by imagining into the image and writing a short story of their experience from inside the image. Subsequent writing gathered more specific information about the imaginal structures at work. At the end of the first day, the same images, along with artwork produced by the participants, were displayed as an evoking device. The participants were asked to write a short myth concerning the trauma archetype and then to respond, in writing, to prewritten questions. In this case, the story
and myth served to diversify, deepen and personalize the participants’ engagement with the images, eliciting mythic themes and potentially indicating aspects of self-identification, while the journaling provided additional data to gauge potential impact on imaginal structures.

As stated earlier, the evoking-expressing sequence on the final day of the research was amended. The original design provided for the reading of a short myth, representing a combination of the key themes from the expressive portions of day one, to evoke experience. The participants would then be asked to journal about their overall experience from this research project, again capturing information about their imaginal structures. This would have been followed by an invitation to move and offer a gesture. In recognition of the participants’ expressions of fatigue from the structure of the first day and their need to be witnessed, these plans were amended to allow for greater dialogue. The adapted second day began with a guided meditation as planned, and then a check-in and discussion about what had happened for the participants between sessions. The participants were then given typed renditions of their short story and myth and asked to review them—highlighting the images they found most moving. They each then shared their stories and then their myths. Following each reading, the other participants offered appreciations. The participants were then invited to close their eyes, and guided by the researcher’s voice, to recall the events of the day. This was followed by a discussion of key moments from the first research day. In dialogue, the researcher presented the key moments identified by herself and her co-researcher. Following further discussion, the researcher revealed the research topic, Research Problem and hypothesis.

Integration activities were woven into the first day as part of building the container, maintaining attention in the present moment, grounding the participants in
their bodies. As noted above, the second meeting focused on integration activities by inviting the participants to reflect on, share, and discuss their thoughts regarding their experience, key moments and learnings from the first day.

The original research design included enlisting the assistance of four co-researchers and conducting the research in one large group. However, difficulty recruiting and scheduling participants lead to the research being conducted in two small groups. Given both the size of the groups and scheduling issues, one group was conducted with one co-researcher and one group without a co-researcher. My co-researcher for the first group was Elizabeth Fisher-McKinnon, a member of my cohort at Meridian University who was familiar with my research goals and design and who has extensive clinical experience. Not having a co-researcher for the second group presented both a challenge and a gift. The challenge was the obvious lack of support and reflection gained in having a co-researcher; the unexpected gift came in the form of Learning Three, which will be explored in the next chapter.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

The core experience of this research was the central limitation to the research design. First, given that the core experience was potentially destabilizing, my research was limited to participants who demonstrated psychological balance. I sought individuals who described themselves as mostly stable, resilient, reflexive and capacitated. This limitation suggested that my methodology would not be directly applicable to a less stable population—at least, not in the form of a stand-alone practice. The second limitation was that this was an evoked experience of the numinous in a controlled situation, as opposed to a spontaneously arising experience. My learnings, therefore,
apply directly to conditions where numinous experience is intentionally evoked and worked with, and secondarily, provide insight into spontaneously-arising numinous experience. As already noted, a third and central limitation rested in the challenge of evoking numinous or archetypal imagery. Without this core experience, my research design would not have adequately addressed the Research Problem.

The intense nature of the core experience in this study also set limits to the research. The research design attempted to engage enough of the participant’s personal story to be evocative but not so much as to promote overwhelming experience and reactivate trauma symptoms. The goal of this, as discussed above, was to support a healthy deintegration and to avoid a disintegration of identity. The risk was that the participants would not dip deeply enough into their experience and that the resulting experience might have operated at the level of fantasy rather than imagination.

Although numinous experience brings one into contact with objective reality, it is nonetheless a highly subjective experience. For this reason, interpretation of data for validity relied on the direct reports of the participants. To determine if the numinous was evoked, the participants’ self-reported experience was collected in answers to prewritten questions assessing their affective state and asking if, in the journey, they encountered non-ordinary reality. Shifts in the felt sense of power were also captured in the participants’ own words and reflected in creative and embodied expression. Expanded consciousness capacities were assessed in terms of the ability to bring expanded awareness to experience, particularly as it related to aspects of self or experience previously unknown or denied. This was evaluated in terms of expanded access to multiplicity, disidentification with the victim, and increased complexity in the description of trauma from the beginning of the day to the end of the day.
Participants

The original goal was to conduct the research in one group with ten participants and have seven participants complete the project, allowing for the possibility that some participants might not experience the numinous or that some might become reactive and need to withdraw. Instead, I ran two smaller groups with a total of six participants, all of whom self-reported having experience outside of the ordinary and fitting the qualifications of the numinous.

To meet the recruiting criteria, participants needed to be 35 years of age or older, to have worked with childhood trauma in a depth therapy environment for at least two years, to have been in therapy at the time of the project or have access to a trusted therapist that they had worked with in the past and to have had previous experience of the numinous. Preference was given to individuals who had experience with shamanic journeywork; had an ongoing gathering practice, such as meditation or yoga; were comfortable in their expressive abilities; and who demonstrated a genuine interest in working with the archetypal dimension of experience.

Recruiting was challenging. Recruiting assistance was sought from graduate psychology programs, professional therapists, community counseling centers and groups, mediation and shamanic teachers, churches, bodyworkers, holistic healers, and friends and colleagues. This was done primarily in the form of an email request with an attached flyer. Where possible, I also met with individuals who might be able to recommend participants. Additionally, a website with information on the research and an information sheet for potential participants was produced. In all, I screened 20 potential participants
and ruled out seven based on qualifications. Of the other 13, three lacked motivation to carry through and three were unable to schedule a date before 2012.

There were no gender limitations nor limitations regarding ethnic or cultural backgrounds. A written questionnaire and a phone interview were used to ascertain if potential participants met the study’s criteria. This marked a slight deviation from my plan in that I had thought I could conduct in-person interviews. This proved to be impractical, and instead, I spoke with the participants, completing the questionnaire with them on the phone and conducting the interview in one call. My clinical experience proved helpful in conducting the interview and assessment. I inquired about their traumatic experiences, current symptoms, coping skills and defenses to assess for emotional stability—much as I would in a clinical intake. I revealed enough about the research to honestly disclose the depth of experience I hoped to evoke, without revealing the actual topic and questions the research was designed to investigate. The potential participants were told that the study focused on the trauma archetype and that the experience evoked might be disturbing or frightening. I suggested that the potential benefit of participating in this research might be a deeper understanding of the archetypal dimension of trauma, which, in turn, might help the participant in their ongoing personal work regarding trauma.

The study was described as being conducted within the participatory paradigm, and within Imaginal Psychology, in particular. The concept of confidentiality was introduced in the initial conversation and was further detailed in the “Informed Consent” form signed by all participants and the research assistant (Appendix 4). This document was distributed prior to the first meeting along with the acceptance letter, giving the participants an opportunity to read it thoroughly before making their commitment to the
project. Prior to opening the circle on day one, the forms were reviewed with each participant in person to make sure they understood and agreed to its terms and to give them an opportunity to ask questions. Real names were used during the research project, and all names have been changed for this publication.

The research was conducted with two groups. The primary research day was held for the first group of two participants on Saturday, October 8, 2011, and for the second group of four participants on Sunday, October 30, 2011. The second day of research was conducted for the first group on Saturday, November 12, 2011 and for the second group on Sunday, November 13, 2011. Research was conducted in the Group Room at the Lomi Psychotherapy Clinic in Santa Rosa, California.

The participants ranged in age from 40 to 65 and all were White women. Participants had experienced a range of childhood traumas. Three participants had experienced ongoing physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as children. Two participants reported attachment wounding, one of which was linked to severe childhood illness. One participant described intergenerational trauma, which had been experienced in the form of intrusive traumatic memories, as well as in attachment wounding.

**Four Phases of Imaginal Inquiry**

The goal of Imaginal Inquiry is transformation, both personal and cultural. The methodology focuses on practical knowledge, which is discovered and validated through a research model that utilizes four distinct phases in its research design: evoking experience, expressing experience, interpreting experience and integrating experience.

The first phase is designed to evoke the experience being studied. The core experience of the research project must come alive among the research participants. This
includes the shadow side of the topic as well, and so great care must be taken in the
design to achieve the desired results of evoking the experience, while at the same time
providing for the safety of the participants. In the next phase that experience is expressed.
In Imaginal Inquiry, expression may take the form of art, story telling, interviews,
journaling, gestures or movement. This phase generates the data of the research.
Providing for a range of expression allows the researcher to gather the participant’s
immediate response to the verbal and non-verbal aspects of experience. The third phase,
interpreting experience, relies on skills and capacities including reflexivity,
collaboratively, empathy and responsibility. This phase includes four steps: 1) Identify
the key moments; 2) Respond to the key moments utilizing the techniques of reflexive
participation; 3) Explore convergences and divergences between the responses; and 4)
Contextualize the data within theoretical and mythic context. Identifying the key
moments may be done in three ways: intuitively, by seeing what points in the data leap
out for your attention; narrative review, examine the story lines that emerge to identify
significant shifts, or metaphorical references that emerge; identify similarities or
recurrent themes, as well as outlying ideas. These approaches may be used independently
or in combination. The concept of responding to the moments is a core part of ITP, and
requires reflexive participation by the researchers to develop an inter-subjective
understanding of the data. Step three invites a dialogue with the participants, to elicit their
experience and meaning making, adding depth to the data. The fourth step examines the
data generated against the existing body of knowledge and theory in the field of
psychology, as well as in mythology. Mythology conveys the universal experience of
mankind and holds the code to the transformative process. Understanding research in
terms of myth then aligns it with the transformative process. The final phase, integrating
experience, provides the research participants an opportunity to integrate their experience, as well as requiring the researcher to assess how their learnings may be brought forth into the world.

**Evoking Experience**

The primary goal of this research design was to evoke a deeply affective state that related to the participants’ experience or deep imagining of the numinous as it relates to trauma. The techniques drew on the practices of active imagination and core shamanism, and included guided meditation and visualization, a shamanic journey and viewing of images. The entire research project was ritualized, adding to the sense of reverence. The décor, tapped music, and live drumming were designed to support the evoking of deeply embodied experience.

Entering the first evoking sequence of the day, participants were relaxed and eager, following the ceremonial opening of the circle with meditation, introductions and the building of an altar. They were then shown three images from the art world suggestive of trauma: Francisco Goya’s painting “Saturn Devouring His Son,” Edvard Munch’s painting “The Scream” and detail from Hieronymus Bosch’s triptych “The Garden of Delights.” They were instructed to imagine themselves in the image, to feel into the image, and to imagine its story unfolding. For the first group, Philip Glass’ Etudes for Piano played softly in the background, deepening the experience. A participant in the second group asked for silence; the group honored her request and they wrote in silence.

For the second evoking sequence, the participants were told to prepare for a guided visualization and shamanic journey. Several chose to lie on mats on the floor, one
selected the couch, and two remained in their seats. With the participants in place, the lead researcher began to drum softly and led each of the groups through a guided visualization. Beginning with a focus on their breath, participants were brought slowly into a meditative state in which they imagined into their heart consciousness. From there, they summoned the Friend to join them. With the help of their Friend, they imagined and constructed a safety line that would allow them to return from the journey at any time. They then imagined the entry to the archetypal as a pulsing orb in the middle of the room. While still in the guided visualization, they received instructions for their journey to meet the trauma archetype: they were warned that they might meet a Gatekeeper, an entity that might try to prevent them from meeting the archetype, and they were asked to learn as much as they could about the archetype including if it had anything that belonged to them. With the end of instructions, the drumbeat intensified, and the participants went on a twenty-minute journey to meet and learn from the trauma archetype.

The third evoking activity of the day began with a guided meditation, in which the participants revisited the feeling-sense of their journey and remembered vivid images or thought-forms they encountered. The participants were asked to feel and imagine into being all the parts of their journey and specifically: themselves, the Gatekeeper, Trauma and the Friend.

The final evoking activity of day one involved the three pieces of artwork from the first sequence and the participants’ artwork created to express their journey to the trauma archetype. With all of the images in front of them, the participants were asked to imagine into the universal story of Trauma in preparation for writing the myth of Trauma. They were told that their myth might take any form—that it might sound like a fairytale
or an epic poem, or that it might be just one episode from Trauma’s life. They were encouraged to let Trauma tell its story through their pens.

The final evoking-expressing sequence designed for the second day of research was changed in response to the participants’ feedback. Instead of using the mythic themes expressed by the participants on the first day of research to compose a short myth to evoke the felt-sense of the journey, the participants read their own stories and myths. Discussion also served to evoke the feeling-sense of the day, and this was further deepened by a guided meditation in which the activities of the first day were reviewed.

**Expressing Experience**

An expression phase followed each evoking phase of the research, comprising a complete evoking-expressing sequence. The expressing portion served to further the evoking, drawing the participants deeper into their experience and the dynamics of the field. Expression took the forms of writing short stories, performing authentic movement, answering prewritten journaling questions, speaking from different subjectivities, writing short myths, and participating in dialogue. The writing of the story and myth bookended the day. These, along with journaling questions designed to gauge imaginal structures and identification with various subjectivities, provided indications of movement over the course of the day.

Expression of the experience of numinous was captured with artwork, in answers to prewritten questions, and later, in discussion. Prior to beginning the second sequence, art supplies, consisting of: paper, oil pastels and charcoal, along with pre-printed journals and pens, were placed next to each participant, so each could make notes without disturbing her neighbors. The artwork allowed for an immediate expression of the
journey, drawing on non-verbal imagery to integrate and record the affective resonance of the evoking experience. After 20 minutes, participants were asked to shift their attention to prewritten questions about the journey experience. The use of prewritten questions was used throughout this design to avoid the insertion of an external voice interrupting the participants’ flow of thought and affect. Data collected from this segment included the artwork, journaling and videotapes of the discussions. This segment of the research design tested for validity by asking the participants a number of questions designed to assess if the numinous was evoked, including the direct question: “In the journey, did it feel like you traveled outside of the ordinary? If so, how was your experience different from ordinary experience?” Additionally the affective experience identified by participants in the journaling were key measures of the validity of evoking numinous or archetypal experience.

The second sequence focusing on the numinous included written and verbal expression in response to the felt-sense generated during the journey to meet Trauma. The participants were asked to write and share a few sentences expressing the felt-sense of encountering Trauma. They were then encouraged to add a sound, expressive of the feeling-tone of the experience. Following this expression of experience, the participants were invited to physically move between and express from the positions of: Trauma, Victim, Bystander and Friend. Directions were designed to encourage movement between the positions in order to achieve greater diversification of experience and full expression including gesture, sound, and words. This expression was meant to further the deepening and embodying of the experience and to amplify multiplicity. Data from this sequence was collected from videorecordings of the sessions as well as note-taking by researchers.
Data to assess the impact of numinous experience on the participants’ imaginal structures were gathered in two evoking-expressing sequences on either side of the sequences focusing on the numinous. In both these sequences, participants engaged in creative writing and then answered prewritten journaling questions. The first sequence utilized the artwork to inspire a story as if written from within the image. This sequence also included authentic movement to illuminate the participants’ internal experience in the moment. The final sequence drew on the days’ activities, utilizing both the images from early in the day and the participants’ own artwork, as a gateway into the myth of Trauma. The primary data from this sequence were the story, myth and journaling. The prewritten journaling questions were designed to identify the participants’ imaginal structures and cultural constructs related to trauma. Comparison of the story and the myth, along with the journaled responses, were used to assess any impact on these structures.

At the end of the first day, as part of an integration sequence, the participants were invited to discuss their perceptions of the day. This provided additional data about the imaginal structures that arose as part of the evoking-expressing sequences, and how participants were affected by them. One of the chief complaints was that there was insufficient time for group discussion. This contributed to the changes made to the second day of research.

The original plan for day two was to have the participants answer prewritten questions. Instead, the questions were addressed as part of a discussion and data was gathered on videotape. This change responded to the participants’ request and generated a rich discussion. Participants were asked: how they had been affected by the first day of research; if any vivid images, dreams, sensations, or new meanings had emerged; and
what they identified as key moments in the research. The participants read their stories and myths to the group and commented on each other’s writing.

The researchers’ experience was also documented, noting in particular, affectively-charged images or thoughts, active gatekeeping or awareness of other imaginal structures evoked during the research. On the first day, Beth and I kept notes through the day. We each completed prewritten journaling questions and then discussed our impressions from the day. On the second day, I kept notes, answered the same questions, and spent additional time journaling in order to capture my imaginal structures, gatekeeping, and other strong affects.

To summarize, there were two distinct sets of data generated by the participants: one assessing the activation of a numinous or archetypal experience, and the other, describing and assessing imaginal structures. The data was in the form of artwork, creative writing, journaling, verbal expression, movement and gesture. The verbal and physical expression was captured by videotape and in notes from the researchers. Additionally, the researchers’ observations and subjective experiences were recorded in journals and on videotape during the discussion at the end of the day.

**Interpreting Experience**

The interpretation phase included four steps: 1) Identifying the key moments; 2) Using the techniques of reflexive participation to respond to the key moments; 3) Exploring convergences and divergences between the responses; and 4) Contextualizing the data within a theoretical and mythic context. The primary theoretical lens employed was Imaginal Transformation Praxis.
The key moments identified, collaboratively, by the participants and researchers during the discussion provided a foundation for the learnings. Five distinct events and three general aspects of the day were identified as the key moments. The highest-ranked event was the shamanic journey and the subsequent artwork of evoking-expressing sequence two. The second most frequently-named activity was expressing from the positions, as part of evoking-expressing sequence three. The opening ritual and the introductions were the next most-named activity. The fourth spot was tied between sequence one, with the art images and story writing as the primary activities, the general activity of writing throughout the day, and the general activity of sharing or dialogue.

Two activities were identified by a single person. I identified a palpable intensification of energy that started in the introductions and continued through the morning as part of the flow of the day, and one participant linked this to her ranking of the opening ritual. The other activity identified by one person was the writing of the myth. By combining some of these general categories such that writing is considered as one event and ritual another, the key moments rank as: 1) Journey and artwork; 2) Speaking from the four positions; 3) Introductions/ritual; 4) Writing; and 5) Sharing/dialogue.

The written expression was first reviewed on an individual level by participant and then by looking at the writings as a whole. The written data reviewed included the story, the myth and the journaling. The stories and myths were assessed for universal and idiosyncratic themes and references, storyline, affective content, and strong images. The journaling captured information regarding the participants’ experiences, as well as answers to questions which assessed imaginal structures, experiences of multiplicity and affective states. This written data was then considered alongside the expression from the four positions and from transcripts of dialogue on both days.
This investigation of the data was then reflected upon in relation to the key moments. Through this process, the substance of the learnings organically emerged. The core premises that emerged from the data were then compared to the theoretical constructs from ITP and other key theories to identify and/or confirm that the learnings represented something new or presented a clarification to existing theory. It was only after reflexively engaging the data and formulating the learnings that the mythic and archetypal themes were identified to further elaborate on the research. The mythic themes used included the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, the Harry Potter stories, and *The Hunger Games* trilogy.

**Integrating Experience**

The final phase of Imaginal Inquiry is integrating experience. Transformation is at the heart of Imaginal Inquiry, and this phase provides research participants an opportunity to integrate their experience and to, in a way that is empowering, experience the findings they helped create. In this project, integration was provided for in the discussions at the end of day one and on the second day. An additional phase will occur after the acceptance of this dissertation, when a summary of the learnings will be shared with the participants.

The integrating of experience occurred in small ways throughout the primary research day. Participants reached small epiphanies as they moved through the sequences, and the expressive phases helped them integrate these thoughts and feelings into embodied awareness. The primary integration activity of day one occurred at the end of the day, when as part of a ritual closing, the participants had the opportunity to discuss
their experience, be witnessed and witness each other. These were profoundly moving exchanges.

The second day of research was primarily focused on integrating activities. The discussion began with a check-in, which allowed participants to share their experience, the meanings they had made, or ask fresh questions that had arisen since the first day of research. The sharing of their stories and myths served to both evoke a sense of the first day, and to integrate the experience. The appreciations of the stories and myths provided reflection of feelings and meanings, validating the participants’ senses of self and their overall experiences. By identifying key moments, the participants reflected on and made meaning of what was most important for them and why, providing an additional opportunity for reflection and integration. Sharing my co-researcher’s and my own key moments also provided a sense of witnessing and validation for the participants. The day closed with a brief ritual, creating a sense of belonging, accomplishment, and closure for the participants.

As this was a one-time research project, it did not provide the opportunity for ongoing monitoring which might yield additional information about the long-term impact of numinous experience on victim identity. These limitations of the research design, and what they suggest for additional study, will be addressed in the Reflections Chapter.
CHAPTER 4

LEARNINGS

Introduction and Overview

Based in Imaginal Inquiry, this study explored the experiences of six participants to address the Research Problem: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? The hypothesis guiding the data collection anticipated that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities. The data was gathered from the participants’ own words, images, and gestures as recorded in writing, artwork, and on videotape. The experiences of my co-researcher and myself provided additional data. The learnings emerged from key moments in the research process as identified by the participants, my co-researcher, and myself.

The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization. Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated. Learning Two identifies the operation of Creative Projection to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the
intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. Learning Three illustrates the victim bind, an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.” Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the body. Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the Wholly Other (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity. Learning Six proposes that numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an opportunity to reclaim projections.

In this chapter and in the Appendices, each participant has been given a pseudonym to protect their privacy. Additionally, personal details that might identify any individual have been excluded from the transcripts. For additional data and partial transcripts, please refer to the Data Summary and Appendices.

**Cumulative Learning: Numinous Experience Seeds New Potentials**

The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization.
A threshold question posed by this research project involved the evocation of the numinous using a rhythmic technique in a non-religious setting. Five out of six participants reported meeting the trauma archetype, and the sixth participant reported a feeling-sense consistent with numinous experience. This corroborates perspectives that the numinous, though ineffable, can be purposefully and intentionally evoked, without the use of hallucinogens. This point clarifies a discrepancy in the literature regarding the nature of numinous experience as being purely spontaneous and confirms working with ritually-evoked numinous experience as a source of inquiry and therapy. This finding also supports many ITP principles about working with the archetypal dimension of experience to diversify and deepen experience.

The cumulative learning draws on each of the learnings and is in alignment with the hypothesis. The Research Problem was narrower and is addressed through the cumulative learning and more directly in Learnings One, Two and Three. In relation to the Research Problem, the data indicates that evoking and expressing the numinous in relation to the trauma archetype, at least temporarily, decreased identification with victimization and increased a sense of personal power.

**Learning One: Reverence and Awe Open the Doorway to the Numinous**

Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated.
What Happened

The room was set in a way to make it comfortable and containing: chairs were arranged in a circle, and an altar cloth was spread on the floor in the center. On a small table to my side, another altar cloth provided a home for the Tibetan bells used to chime the circle open and closed, and signifying transition in activities. A sense of ritual containment was maintained through the day with music, drumming, chiming between activities, the tone and cadence of the researcher’s voice and the research activities themselves. The depth of experience was reflected in displays of affect and behavior. Tears welled up in eyes, hands rested over heart spaces and heads nodded in recognition and acceptance. Interactions were conducted with care to not to interrupt, to pause between sharings, and to inquire about needs. The silence and focus of the participants generated a sense of heightened attention, respect, and anticipation.

Isabella (pseudonym) connected the opening ritual to the rest of the day noting that it opened an “... energy flow... the opening ritual opened up a huge amount of energy. I felt safe, and it grew here into this bubble in this room... and the drumming really helped me because it seems that it brings out some ancient feeling that it stirs really deep stuff up and out.”

Ava (pseudonym) related her experience of the guided visualization and the ritualized flow of the day to changes in the state of her psyche-soma: “From the beginning of the first guided visualization... I felt my nervous system find regulation out of the chronic dysregulation that is often there...” In her journaling at the end of the day, Ava commented: “I liked the process end of it. I felt great support and increased resource to connect so viscerally with a felt sense of divinity/my self behind the creating
of trauma. I felt delivered, carried, flowed into oneness/light/goodness/alignment.”

Olivia (pseudonym) also commented on the ritualualization of the research writing, “I am being held in the most sacred and compassionate way possible.”

In addition to the “huge amount of energy” Isabella commented on, an increased sense of power was noted by other participants at various junctures during the day.

Sophia (pseudonym) commented on the journey and artwork saying, “. . . it facilitated my moving toward power.” Reflecting on expressing from the four positions, Sophia said: "It empowered me. It empowered me a lot.” Additional comments regarding feelings of empowerment arising from the ritualized activities of the day will be found in the subsequent learnings and in the Data Summary on page 210.

**How I Was Affected**

My notes during the research included this about the opening ritual: “Everyone was moved to tears; a feeling-sense of expectation, love, being seen, witnessed, and held was present. This set a collaborative tone for whole day which switched the researcher-researchee roles into a truly participatory event.” As the research progressed, the sense of the sacred penetrated the room. I felt this as increased trust in the flow of events and in my capacity to respond and improvise as needed. I was aware of my gatekeeping voice, but rather than feeling the shame and fear it attempted to instill, I simply registered its complaints and continued shepherding the process forward. The feeling-sense of the sacred anchored my awareness in the present moment, enhancing my capacity to be fully receptive and responsive. Time moved slowly, and each moment felt full.
Imaginal Structures in Use

The imaginal structure of the “Researcher” emerged in the opening ritual. It was a faint voice of a gatekeeper who believed that research requires an authoritative, unemotional, analytical approach. However, this voice did not have much power. Instead what might be understood as a counter-structure emerged, that of the “Priestess.” The High Priestess is a tarot symbol that represents the principles of intuition, independence, trust in self, and resourcefulness. The Priestess is a figure of my innerworld who has visited me in dreams and symbols before.

At times, particularly during the writing of this learning, the Researcher gained sway, insinuating that nothing I said was new or noteworthy. I felt its presence as discord between my rational self and my symbolic self, questioning if what I experienced was real. However, the High Priestess balances the receptive, intuitive qualities of the Feminine with the assertive, reasoning qualities of the Masculine. With my inner-Priestess activated, I relaxed into the ritual flow and allowed myself to be carried into the unfolding of the day. While writing the learnings, connecting with the Priestess helped me counter my gatekeepers.

The imaginal structures related to this learning rely more on the positive influence of the High Priestess rather than the gatekeeping role of the Researcher. The Priestess values balance, independence, and good judgment. Where the Researcher is rigid and conventional, she is expansive and creative. The Researcher in me challenges the validity of using immeasurable feeling-tones to frame a learning. It suggests that it is hubris to presume that I created these conditions through my research design. The Priestess however knows better and assures me that reverence and awe are universal feelings
accessible to anyone who conscientiously seeks self-knowledge and growth. I did not create this feeling sense; it was the product of a group, intently focused on a serious quest to encounter Truth.

**Theoretical Concepts upon Which Interpretations Are Based**

In Omer’s ITP, ritual and imagination play a central role in transformation. Ritual serves as a powerful transformative agent. Authentic ritual involves surrender; in turn, surrender provides a link to authentic power. In creative or authentic ritual, imagination guides action by connecting to the mysterious core of being, and in doing so, it has the potential to release transformative possibilities.

The ITP formulation of ritual is supported by Eliade’s fieldwork in anthropology, which recognizes that myth and ritual allowed the ancients to participate in the duality of the world, bridging the split between the sacred and profane. Eliade and modern shamans connect experience of the sacred with power. Here it is also helpful to recall May’s understanding of power, where power and significance are intertwined so that power is the objective experience and significance is the subjective experience of the same thing.

The feeling tones of reverence and awe were referred to by several authors included in the literature review. First and foremost is Otto, for whom the numinous is an object of awe, and one that inspires deep feelings of reverence. Houston argues that creating the feel of the sacred through environment, sound, gesture, rhythms, and intentions, aligns attention and intention with the goal of integration, and imbues the practices with power. Grotstein referenced these feelings as part of his experience as Bion’s analysand, and identified awe as a capacity that develops in maturity. Lash also
described contact with the numinous as a state of rapturous awe.8 Nelson described a hybrid form of consciousness in which REM systems and activation of the amygdala, hippocampus, and arousal systems work together to explain altered perceptions and heightened feeling-states involved in mystical experiences.9 Winkelman’s studies on shamanic drumming found that drumming facilitates holistic modes of consciousness.10

**Interpretation**

Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated.

This learning makes explicit the connection between the felt-sense of reverence and awe, personal power, and evocation of the numinous in a psychological context using non-pharmaceutical techniques. The felt-sense of the sacred corresponds to a heightened affective state, which, in its positive form, may be experienced as personal power. This can be understood by extending May’s concept of power to apply to aspects of the container. Doing so, we can infer that feeling-tones of reverence and awe increase the perceived significance of the event, so that the subjective experience is one of increased personal power. Through the lens of indigenous wisdom, the sacred is equated with power; therefore, evoking the feeling-tone of the sacred evokes power. Thus the felt-sense of the sacred, experienced as personal power, represents an increase in affective charge, propelling the individual further along the spectrum of experience toward the intense affective charge of numinous experience. Essentially, the felt sense of reverence and awe primes the pump for numinous experience.
Validity Consideration

The participants linked the ritualization of the research and the introductions, making these the third most mentioned key moment. This linkage can be understood in that the opening sequence introduced the sense of ritual and set the tone for the entire day. Isabella made this connection explicit in her comments about the ritualization of the day; “The opening ritual opened up a huge amount of energy I felt safe and it grew here..."

The ritualization of the research process is consistent with ITP principles, that authentic ritual involves surrender, through which one accesses power. The methodology was explicitly designed to introduce the feeling-sense of the sacred: balancing a sense of containment, safety, and directed attention with the concomitant senses of wonder and fear, attraction and dread inherent in engaging the Wholly Other, as personified in experience of the trauma archetype. This feeling-state at once contains and focuses conscious reflection on experience and provides access to the inchoate unconscious dimensions of Self. This learning supposes that the felt-sense of reverence and awe engages neurological systems involved in non-ordinary states of consciousness, similar to those involved in Nelson’s hybrid consciousness, creating preconditions for evoking the numinous.

Learning Two: Leave Victim Identity at the Door

Learning Two identifies the operation of Creative Projection to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from
aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. Creative projection is proposed here to describe a phenomenon employed in ITP and builds on concepts from other psychology orientations. It is framed as the intentional use of a symbolic object to carry aspects of identity so that one may experience other aspects of self.

**What Happened**

After the opening meditation, participants were invited to introduce themselves using an object that represented their relationship with trauma. In the silence following each introduction, the object was carefully placed on the altar cloth in the center of the circle, where it remained throughout the day. Sophia commented on her experience of sharing her object: "To me, it was like a release—an acknowledgement of something so horrific, it was a relief to share it without anyone necessarily knowing what it means to me. I can give it form, a representation, a symbol that I can relate to . . .”

Emily (pseudonym), reflected on how the idea of relating to trauma was new for her saying: “. . . thinking about your request for me to bring . . . something that reflected my relationship with my trauma . . . was even just a new framing. There’s the trauma, and then there’s me, and I got interested in ‘What’s my relationship?’ I hadn’t really thought of that before.”

The objects themselves were not unusual, although each one was handled as a precious talisman. Isabella brought a crystallized rock and explained: “. . . when you look at this side, it just looks like an ugly rock, you wouldn’t see anything beautiful there. But it’s really strong and it’s hard . . . inside is this beautiful crystal. I relate to this because I believe that we are all born beautiful, but things happen to us, and we put these shells of
protection like this rock did, kind of hiding its beauty. But once you get past that and you look inside, even though this has been traumatized with a slice, it’s still pure and beautiful, and strong and solid.”

Emma (pseudonym) took out a set of nesting balls and opened each one until she was holding the inner-most ball, explaining: “A friend gave it to me years ago . . . I love the layers. For me, the idea of going through all the layers of all the trauma, which has been my experience of where I think I am and then I move another layer, and there’s the essence of the trauma.”

How I Was Affected

The participants’ stories about their objects and trauma deeply moved me. During the introductions with the second group, my eyes teared, and in response to the group’s inquiry, I acknowledged that I was affected by their stories and the sincerity and depth of their sharing. I was also moved by the symbolic richness and power of the chosen objects, and how each object related to the participants’ adult experiences with trauma.

Imaginal Structures in Use

The imaginal structures of the “Researcher” and “Priestess” that emerged in Learning One were also active in Learning Two. The Researcher’s paranoid lack of trust in my process made it difficult for me to separate these two learnings, which began as one. Neither, in its estimation, were good enough to stand alone. Teasing apart the learnings symbolized a teasing apart of a merged gatekeeper-child structure, in which nothing I do is good enough or worthy of serious consideration.
Theoretical Concepts upon Which Interpretations Are Based

This learning represents a blending of ideas articulated in the literature. It leans on Omer’s conceptualizations of multiplicity, I-factor and transformative practices. Multiplicity is the internal experience of multiple subjective experiences, the plurality of the soul. The I-factor represents a narrowing of experience and a block to multiplicity. According to Omer, genuine transformative practices provide a bridge between limited identity and expansive ecstatic states.

This learning also builds on Klein’s conceptions of splitting and projection, in which denied aspects of experience are unconsciously split-off and projected onto the other. The transformative power of the object has been illuminated by multiple theorists, including: Perls’ technique of working with splitting by projecting aspects of experience into an object, or empty chair, in order to clarify the split; Bion’s positive understanding of the role of projection; Byington’s exploration of creative structuring, which represents an expansive dimension of dual consciousness that allows for symbolic interaction; and Bollas’ conception of the transformational object, an experience of the Self that is capable of transforming an individual’s core wound. Bollas describes how, in coming into deep relationship with an object, one enters an experience of “being,” as opposed to experience of “mind,” which represents contact with the “unknown thought.” The reader may wish to recall Eliade’s concept of the hierophany, a symbolic transformative object that links the sacred and profane.
**Interpretation**

Learning Two identifies the operation of *Creative Projection* to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self.

Introducing an object to symbolize their relationship with Trauma provided participants an opportunity to think symbolically about their personal experience and to separate from their trauma-identified subjectivity. Through this act of introducing oneself via a symbolic object, the participants safely deposited an aspect of their trauma-fused identity—in each case, victim identity—into the object and then reverentially placed that part of themselves on the altar. This act of creative projection created symbolic distance between the totality of the subject and the victim-identified I-factor. Metaphorically, the victim-identified subjectivity merged with the sacred, preparing it for sacrifice.

Creative projection is proposed here to describe a phenomenon employed in ITP and builds on concepts from other psychology orientations. It is framed as the intentional use of a symbolic object to carry aspects of identity so that one may experience other aspects of self. Creative projection can be employed as a technique to bridge from limited identity to more expansive experience. This bridge can help serve as a portal to the numinous “Other,” so that disowned aspects of Self can then be experienced, reflected upon and over time, integrated.
Validity Considerations

Sophia’s reflections on the power of the object supports the claim that the object both represents and provides distance from the negative identification with trauma: "To me it was like a release . . . it was a relief to share it without anyone necessarily knowing what it means to me. I can give it form, a representation, a symbol that I can relate to."

Emily’s experience of using an object to symbolize her experience provides another illustration of the concept of creative projection. She stated that introducing the object provided a “new framing,” and noted the separation: “. . . there’s the trauma, and then there’s me . . .”

The concept of creative projection links the principles enumerated by Klein, Bion, Perls, Byington and Bollas with Omer’s principle that genuine transformative practices provide a bridge between limited identity and expansive ecstatic states. Creative projection defines a technique in use in imaginal praxis, where the intentional use of a symbolic object engages previously unthought imaginative possibilities. With this understanding, we return to the ancient wisdom explored by Eliade, and still alive in the great spiritual traditions, regarding the role of ritual objects in bridging polarities.

Learning Three: Victim Identity and Personal Power Collide at the Crossroads to the Numinous

Learning Three illustrates the victim bind, an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.”

This learning contrasts two conflicting sets of experience that emerged around the journey to the trauma archetype. The first dominant experience of the group supports the
premise that approaching the numinous activates imaginal structures, which can be temporarily transcended through an increase in personal power. The second experience, of one participant, illustrates how the activation of these imaginal structures can constrict experience, representing a decrease in personal power.

What Happened

The approach to the trauma archetype included a guided visualization and then a shamanic journey to meet Trauma. Sophia described her feeling-sense entering the journey: “The pit of my stomach was activated with dread and fear” and later, commented that the journey, “. . . facilitated my moving toward power.” Isabella reported having mixed feelings going into the journey but coming out more empowered. In her journaling she described feeling: “A little trepidation and apprehension. In the end I felt empowered...” Ava reported first feeling constricted: “I felt, at first, the frozen/contracted energies that could be in the way of me meeting trauma, and as soon as I brought attention/awareness to these energies . . . they quivered/shivered out of my body and I felt at ease.” She later reported that the journey, “. . . was probably one of the more powerful mystical experiences of my life.”

Emily had a different experience. As the drumming picked up in intensity for the journey to meet Trauma, she signaled me and whispered that the drumming was too much for her, she needed to journey in silence, and she asked me to stop drumming. As the other participants had already entered the journey, I felt that it was not advisable to interrupt their experience. As a solution, I suggested that Emily journey in the next room and then rejoin the group. She later reported that at first this made sense to her, but alone in the room, she experienced feeling exiled and became reactive. After the journey, while
the other participants worked on their art, she and I sat outside and processed her reaction sufficiently until so that she felt she could rejoin the group. During this discussion, I gave her the option to withdraw from the project, but she was determined to continue. The following illustrates Emily’s struggle in her own words:

The relentlessness of the sound of the drum was really invasive for my body . . . so I was in this little trap that I can’t do this . . . because I’m over-stimulated and I’m frightened and I’m triggered in my body . . . I had the double experience of the adult-child: I felt this little gut kick in my vulnerable little self, and then in my adult self I thought ‘Yeah this is ok’ . . . But when I got to the other room . . . I felt . . . exiled, out of safety, because I couldn’t get the accommodation I needed to participate. So I had a hot trigger place for me that someone else’s structural agenda is more important than my vulnerable human need . . . And so the fact that you met me with tenderness, and … you let yourself be in your own body about it . . . you know, it was very powerfully helpful, and it was a great victory for me to negotiate all the way through it and come back into circle.

Emily had evidenced both an increased sense of personal power due to her choice to participate and strong identification with victimization. She expressed her power in her pride in making it to the research, in her authentic movement when she embraced a large tree in the courtyard, and at the end of the day in her surprise in her own ability to recover and continue participating after the breach. Her victim identity was also evident throughout the day. In disclosing her traumatic history, her consistent use of superlatives suggested that her experience of trauma was “the worst.” In her journaling, she defined an “authentic victim” as “a less powerful person hurt by a person, group or system more powerful than himself.” She added a definition for an “inauthentic victim” as “a label people throw onto those whose feelings overwhelm the label-thower.” Through the research day, Emily continually sought small accommodations, enlisting group support to meet her personal needs.
Between sessions, another incident with a transference/countertransference element arose involving Emily. As I attempted to schedule the second session, Emily reacted to the emails, expressing her fear that she was being exiled from the group. I attempted to contact her by phone, and two days passed before she responded to my messages. In the meantime, she sent several emotionally reactive emails suggesting that I was purposefully excluding her from the group. In our conversation, I attempted to process her reaction with her, reflecting her feelings and pointing out that no decision about the second meeting had yet been made. Her fear of exile, however, had given rise to a feeling-state that made it feel as though she had already been exiled: in her mind I was doing this to her. During this conversation, I again raised the option for her to withdraw or for me to ask her to withdraw from the project. She resisted these suggestions. In the end, she was able to shift her plans on the day the rest of the group was available, and I asked the rest of the group to meet later in the day to accommodate her schedule.

How I Was Affected

Overall, I was thrilled that the participants were able to journey to the trauma archetype and reported the sense of the numinous. The interactions with Emily triggered mixed feelings. At the moment of her request, I was surprised and confused. I was uncertain as to what to do in the moment that would be best for all involved to maintain the container and research design. I was anxious that this would undermine the ritual container for the other participants, and I was concerned for Emily’s well being. After I offered Emily the option of journeying in the room next door, my drumming helped me regain my focus. I again felt assured, relaxed and focused. In the conversation with Emily
outside, I was present and embodied. From this place, I felt compassion, curiosity and concern. As I processed it in writing during the research, gatekeeping began to rise and I felt anxiety, shame and self-condemnation. Between sessions, as Emily became increasingly reactive, my gatekeeping became stronger, and I felt exhaustion, impatience, self-righteousness, anger and fear. I was frustrated that Emily had not disclosed her sensitivities to sound prior to the research knowing that a shamanic journey was part of the day. I was angry that the lines between research and therapy were difficult to navigate, and that I could not directly reach Emily to negotiate a resolution. I felt sorrow for the pain Emily experienced and for my own suffering as part of this breach. I was also hurt by Emily’s accusations that I was trying to break up the group and that I was not honoring her experience. My vulnerable child felt the unsteadiness of the container as threatening, triggering fear that I was in the wrong. My inner child feared punishment.

**Imaginal Structures in Use**

The structure here involves the split between good and evil; right and wrong. For me, it lives in a deeply-seated belief that there is a right and a wrong way to do anything, and whoever is wrong will be mightily punished. It is my victim structure in which a fused child-gatekeeper dynamic operates on fear and paranoia. In its mild forms, it generates self-doubt and anxiety; at its worst, I feel it as paranoid self-righteousness that at the same time undermines my confidence and generates a sense of doom. While this structure still lives in me, it is no longer protected by darkness. I am aware of it, and through reflexivity, I can identify its affect on me. One advantage to being aware of this structure is that I am sensitive to the presence of this type of fused child-gatekeeper in others.
The Friend, not an imaginal structure but rather its antidote, has grown in strength since entering the research phase of this dissertation. This incident tested that new connection, introducing paranoid fear, which was countered by the steady voice of the Friend arguing for patience, reflection, presence and trust.

In addition to discussing the fused child-gatekeeper structures at work, I will identify this structure in terms of the Researcher versus the Therapist. My Researcher is in alignment with the gatekeeper as a strict, authoritarian exaggeration of the positivist paradigm at work. My Therapist structure offers a more empathetic, intuitive worldview with the shadow-side of wanting to “fix” the pain and suffering of others. These structures have parallels to other structures identified in these learnings, representing a strong split in masculine and feminine attributes and the cultural values associated with each.

**Theoretical Concepts upon Which Interpretations Are Based**

This learning draws on psychodynamic trauma theories as they relate to the internal and mythic landscapes of the victim, victim identity, traumatic reenactment, and aspects of object relations theories, as expressed by Klein and Balint. Core concepts include the ITP tenets related to these topics, particularly the concepts of imaginal structures, gatekeeping, victimization, creative action, and the Friend.

Pursuing a psychodynamic understanding of the repetition compulsion, Grand explores the victim’s “memory of annihilation” which, in turn, creates a “catastrophic loneliness,” contributing to a cycle of trauma and evil.\textsuperscript{17} Grand finds that trauma victims are continually drawn into interactions where contradictory forces of isolation and mutuality recreate the emotional experience of annihilation, where the split between good
and evil define experience. May’s conceptions of power, powerlessness and pseudoinnocence play out in this interpretation as well. He linked powerlessness to aggression and violence, and pseudoinnocence to denial of responsibility and complexity.

Kalsched described an archetypal traumatogenic agency within the psyche. Kalsched’s self-traumatizing psyche is similar to Bion’s understanding of the persecutory negative container, where projection is directed inward and outward by a super-ego acting as an internal protective agent.

Concepts from object relations also apply, including Klein’s definitions of splitting, projection, projective identification and envy. These describe how individuals manage unbearable tension by splitting experience into good and bad and projecting the bad onto the other. Klein’s descriptions of how one learns to work with this primal split, as conceived in the paranoid-schizoid and defensive positions, and envy also support this learning. Balint’s Basic Fault, the core pre-verbal, pre-object psychic wound to which one regresses and from which one may find a “New Beginning” in the search for an object of Love also informs this learning.

The imaginal concepts and principles anchoring this learning draw on many of the ideas expressed above, and extend into the multidimensional understanding of ITP. The repetition compulsion aligns with an activated imaginal structure that limits present experience to a reenactment of past experience. The internalized persecutor is a gatekeeper who guards the boundaries of the imaginal structure keeping individuals captive in reenactments of their past. Victim identity is a special case of gatekeeping. This represents a highly-reactive state where the purified “I” disavows experience that
challenges its conception of self. The psychic functions of splitting and projection underlie these dynamics.

**Interpretation**

Learning Three illustrates the *victim bind*, an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.”

In the reports from Sophia, Isabella and Ava, the fear of approaching the trauma archetype is acknowledged and managed, resulting in an increased sense of empowerment. Emily, in contrast, experienced overwhelm, which triggered a reactive reenactment of her trauma. It is through the lens of Emily’s experience that the learning can most clearly be illustrated.

Emily’s experience pivots on a clash between her sense of empowerment and her identification with victimization. In Emily’s requests for accommodation during the day, we see the activation of Balint’s Basic Fault. As long as her needs were met, she maintained her illusion of power, which in fact, was a disempowering alliance with her fused child-gatekeeper subjectivity. In this case, her inner-child suffered from pseudoinnocence, relying on the illusion that her requests represented power over her situation. In her description of the breach, Emily expressed her need; it was not met, and this was intolerable. As she expressed it: “. . . But when I got to the other room . . . I felt . . . exiled, out of safety, because I couldn’t get the accommodation I needed to participate.” Here, we can sense an imaginal structure in which the victimized child had dictatorial powers that, when unmet, unleashed the full power of the gatekeeper. Emily’s gatekeeper persecuted her, telling her to flee the situation and to abandon hope for repair.
Part of Emily’s challenge in this situation lay in the fact that her fused inner-child-gatekeeper subjectivity was dominating her experience as she prepared to approach the numinous, and she was unable to rise above the narcissistic needs of the basic fault. For the victim-identified inner-child, the task of confronting the trauma archetype was too great, and it regressed to old defenses—disempowering the adult Emily through panic and dissociation.

Emily also exhibited self-reflexive and self-aware capacities: “I had the double experience of the adult-child.” However, she could not muster the voice of the Friend she needed to reconcile these sensations. Instead her imaginal structures related to victimization took over. When met with embodied compassion, a representation of the Friend in the form of the researcher’s therapeutic presence, she rallied, regaining personal power: “And so the fact that you met me . . . you know it was very powerfully helpful, and it was a great victory for me to negotiate all the way through it and come back into circle.” From this place she was able to participate in the project and complete the day.

Between sessions, out of proximity to the group, she regressed to the paranoid-schizoid position. Operating from the deep split of her traumatic wounding, she projected her fears and denied-harmful intents outward, reading into group emails motives and facts that were not present. In Emily’s fear that the researcher would abandon her, in her definition of inauthentic victim, and in her increasing paranoia between sessions, we see how her imaginal structure traps her in the role of the innocent powerless victim and makes the other, whoever they might be, the all-powerful perpetrator. Emily’s denial of the complexity of the situation and her own responsibility in choosing to participate was a display of pseudoinnocence. Through its denial of personal power pseudoinnocence binds one to victimization. In this way, the victim bind represents a potential cross roads, if the
individual can access the Friend in order to transcend the imaginal structure and claim the personal power necessary to respond in the moment.

Validity Considerations

In Emily’s experience, we can see the repetition compulsion at work. In a circumstance where her traumatic memories were triggered, her imaginal structures constricted her experience, so that she experienced a reliving of trauma’s panic, isolation, and exile. Her internalized-persecutor can be felt in her tale of needing to flee and her fearful voice revealed the fused child-gatekeeper subjectivity. In her sharing, she disclosed her fear of annihilation and feelings of exile, which Grand identifies at the core of the human condition where good and evil define each other. In Emily’s definitions of the authentic and inauthentic victim, personal power is externalized and demonized. We see this clearly in her definition of the inauthentic victim, expressed as a defensive hostility toward her own subjective state and its expression. Emily’s authentic victim represents the depressive position, while her inauthentic victim is more primitive, representing the paranoid-schizoid position.

In my experience of these events, I felt the swing in my own personal power, between the Friend and gatekeeper fighting for dominance. When Emily first asked me to stop drumming, I felt confused and anxious; perhaps I merged slightly into Emily’s field feeling disowned aspects of her experience, and given my imaginal structures, Emily’s request gave my gatekeeper increased access to my consciousness, for a moment destabilizing my presence and capacity for reflection. Then, while drumming the journey I felt myself regain focus and confidence; the Friend was again present and dominant. This continued when processing with Emily. I was firmly in my body, aware and
responsive. I had access to the Friend and my gatekeepers were hushed. That reversed however when I began to journal and my gatekeeper surfaced in criticism of how I handled Emily’s request. My gatekeeper played off of the split I experience between researcher and therapist. It identified with Emily’s victim and undermined my sense of personal power with fear, doubt and shame. Here we get a sense of how personal power rises and falls with the entrance of the Friend and gatekeeper respectively: when one is ascendant the other declines.

The interpretations regarding Emily’s experience of the fused child-gatekeeper subjectivity rest on a universal level of traumatic experience, applicable to Emily given her extensive traumatic history. This is a structure that I share and both my sensitivity to it during the day, and my later reactivity to it between sessions, expressed the activation of the structure. The question of assessing levels of personal power is more subtle. I make the leap that Emily’s frequent requests for accommodation represent a false claim to power, a form of pseudoinnocence. Here again, I rely on my own experience with victim identity and the fused child-gatekeeper alliance to complete the interpretation. At the heart of this alliance is the fear of reentering the memory of annihilation and the existential alienation that defines the inner world of trauma. These are the contradictory forces of mutuality and isolation that Grand described, and that create a bind for the victim-identified sufferer. Intolerable fear splits the inner world into good and bad, victims and perpetrators. To maintain this split it is essential to cling to the illusion that the victim is all good but powerless and the perpetrator is all bad and powerful. This divide denies complexity and complicity and, perhaps even more harmful, it cuts off access to the personal power required to assert oneself and to transcend the split. The victim finds herself in a bind; her innocence rests in her powerlessness and traps her in
isolation; she yearns for connection but cannot trust in the other, on whom she has
projected all power and responsibility for evil.

**Learning Four: Super-Charge Me! High-Voltage Knowing Seeks Home In-Body**

Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed
nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting
the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its
wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the
body.

**What Happened**

The opening ritual and the first evoking-expressing sequence set the stage for the
evocation of the numinous. Moving deliberately, the participants spread out mats, or
found comfortable spots on the couch or in chairs, in preparation for their journey to meet
Trauma. I began to softly drum, leading a guided visualization in which instructions were
given to create safety for the journey. I gave the final instructions and quickened the
drumbeat marking the beginning of the journey. They were off, without verbal cues, to
find their way to the trauma archetype, to learn from it, and most importantly to return.
About twenty minutes later, the final drumbeats signaled the end of the journey, and
quietness filled the room.

Later describing her experience of the journey, Ava reported finding her own
trauma blocking her way to the archetype and how moving beyond that she “lost the
oppressor.” Olivia credited the journey and artwork with giving her “more insight into
what was going on internally.” Emily reported to have “a different experience of acceptance.”

Here is a portion of what Sophia shared in circle about her journey:

I found Trauma hiding under a blanket, a thinly veiled blanket of light . . . And Trauma had no face, no form, it was darkness, black, menacing. But it had a voice and it spoke to me. And one of the things that struck me was that it was matter of fact, nonchalant. Its job . . . was to suppress and hold back . . . I left feeling that I had a chance of conquering trauma. That I felt Trauma was not overwhelming in my life although it was there. Because I did meet Trauma I was able to deal with trauma better, even though it didn’t have a face, it had a voice. Therefore I felt more powerful when I left than when I was searching for Trauma. And I left feeling satisfied that I had finally met Trauma.

In her journaling, Sophia reported that Trauma exists, “To prevent expansion of oneself and to isolate. To keep me away from the light of self love so I will not grow.”

Isabella described meeting a gatekeeper, and then evil that lived on floating pieces of earth (Illustrated in Appendix 9). Here are her words about the journey:

. . . when I approached there was a gatekeeper, a very dark, black evil mass. But when I became the gatekeeper I realized he was living on fear and his fear was what pushed him to be mean and scary . . . And when I became those different evil things, I felt they were just like a bully living on fear and anger and lack of self worth, and I felt sorry for them. So that made my fear dissipate, and I felt stronger . . . I realized I don’t need to fear these things; that I have the power in me to forgive and realize that they are nothing but fear and that’s not power.

Isabella brought back a wealth of information from her encounter with Trauma. She learned that it comes from “Fear. Not being loved and accepted.” It exists because “People who are ruled by their own fears inflict pain, physical and emotional, on others causing distrust in themselves and others.” From her journey she learned; “I am lucky. I found my way from Trauma to Strength to Love.”

In her journey, Emily encountered Trauma in an image of muscle flooded with feeling and sensation. Journaling about the sensations of her journey, she noted (emphasis
Happiness, recognition, relief and joy, because the power was taken out of Trauma . . .” Emily shared the following with the group:

My journey today had a decent into the underworld and then coming back up. I had to traverse some moat or challenge. It was really painful—a right of passage almost . . . I have a sense of gratitude and good feeling about myself that I was able to make the traverse down and under and up . . . My journey itself was just awesome, profound . . . I felt actually happy when I came into contact with my Trauma. I felt ‘oh my gosh’ that’s what it is . . . It was very hope giving and very orienting and very healing. I actually feel set on a new path from my encounter with what I saw as the archetype.

In her writing, Emily described trauma as coming from: “Higher Consciousness trying to cope with living on the material plane of reality in bodies–flesh and blood . . . bodies . . .” In answer to “Did Trauma have something of yours?” Emily found: “Trauma is holding my adult life hostage until it gets its needs met.”

Olivia described the feeling sense of her encounter with trauma using the words: wonder, awe, reverence, compassion, and peace. Olivia used her artwork to share her journey (Appendix 9) and described her encounter with the archetype as a visit to a ritualistic hearth where Trauma is in a state of constant processing and transformation.

Here’s an excerpt from her sharing in circle:

That is Trauma in the middle of the circle; it’s a hearth. That’s what I arrive to and I described it in my journaling as deep in the psychic jungle of the collective unconsciousness or collective consciousness . . . I went into the forest it was a tropical forest somewhere and there was like a ritualistic shaman-mystic field around the whole thing, and basically what it turned out to be is a place where all trauma is processed, and there’s a constant vigil-ritual going on there. And there are guardians there that are committed to making sure that all trauma is processed . . . And witnessing it and drawing it felt really awesome and really good, and there’s a sense of it’s being taken care of for others and myself . . . I think one of the most significant things, it was always moving always processing, it wasn’t stuck somewhere, and that was key . . . It’s an image that will definitely stay with me.

Olivia discovered that Trauma exists as: “The disconnect between our vulnerable and loving selves.” Trauma took from Olivia: “. . . the connection between my loving
adult self and scared little girl, yet in this hearth, I’m able to process and rewire pathways to establish the connection.”

At the second session, Ava shared that the journey had profound repercussions, which continued to unfold in the weeks that followed the initial session. Describing the many sensations and images that came to her in the journey, she said: “One was an experience of light—it was extraordinary. I don’t know how to put it into words. I feel tearful. It was probably one of the more powerful mystical experiences of my life; it was really amazing.” Writing about vivid images from her journey, Ava journaled: “When Liz guided us to go into our hearts and to see as our heart sees, to be the eye of our heart, a whale’s eye came so strongly into my sense of my heart. I felt the intense depth, wisdom and ancient knowing of this being and of my heart.” Writing about why Trauma exists and why it came into her life, Ava reported:

What came to me was that trauma was given to us to help us consciously remember that we are the divine/God/Goddess. We separated from our selves to have a deeper knowing of our selves and to make conscious who we are so we could have ourselves; we could experience our selves as God. Trauma helps us see what is not this union of our true essence. It teaches us when we’re out of alignment with our true self and also helps us to modulate how we bring all the pieces back together . . .

When asked if Trauma had something of hers, Ava found: “It just had a part of me that I was projecting outside of myself. I was not fully accepting the parts that feel bad to me in the effects of the trauma within me . . .”

Emma was the one participant who did not rank the journey and artwork among her key moments. In answer to the question, “Did you meet Trauma? If not what did you encounter?” Emma wrote: “I had a hard time conceptualizing Trauma as an external identity. First I experienced a bright sun, then some cherries. Just as I was heading back to the orb in the room an image of a lovely woman—blue, young, friendly—appeared in my
eyelid–with rays of blue emanating from her face. Then there was a shift and she was scary looking–that was only a flash moment–then image was gone.” In her journaling, Emma indicated the feeling states of: holy, approachable, fear-provoking, demonic, calming, gracious, and comforting.

**How I Was Affected**

This is what I wrote shortly after the journey: “I felt a profound sense of reverence alive in the room. As part of this feeling sense, I felt admiration for the depth of process the participants brought, their seriousness and engagement, and I was aware of the soul’s capacity to experience both horror and beauty – the full range of capacity moving through me. This was a deeply grounded felt sense of both joy and sorrow together, breathing deeply and breathlessness.”

Entering the journey phase of the research was anxiety producing. I felt fear and excitement: fear that the research might not work or that I asked too much from my participants; excitement about what the participants might learn. The drumming and my own paced words calmed me. I felt myself stand taller, more grounded, more assured. Leading the journey I entered a mild trance state, characterized by focused yet fluid attention. Merged in the field with my participants, I relaxed into trust and curiosity. My felt-sense of the field was that everyone was safe and that all would be well. As we moved more deeply into the process, the deep sense of reverence and awe described above settled in, and I was simultaneously moved almost to tears and to shouts of glee. A particular sense of spaciousness allowed room for joy and sorrow, wonder, awe, and terror to all coexist. As I worked with the images and sensations reported by the participants I continued to be affected, sitting in a place of reverence, wonder and
appreciation. At times, I also felt anxious, confused, and overwhelmed. Outside of the ritual container it was more difficult to simultaneously hold the conflicting emotions as whole, as if they retreated into their respective opposing corners.

**Imaginal Structures in Use**

As someone who has experienced developmental trauma, a primal split runs through my experience. This core imaginal structure seeks to find the divide between right and wrong, good and bad, worthy and unworthy. This sense gave rise to two levels of imaginal structures: a familiar good-bad split operating at the surface of experience that was easier to identify and transcend; and a second deeper structure that relates directly to my experience of the numen.

I experienced the good-bad split as the “good researcher,” which presumes the “bad researcher.” This split infiltrated how I approached the data; I felt competent and capable in my first flurry of activity organizing information into charts and typing up transcripts. This sense of competence rested in older structures of how one researches in a positivist paradigm. It was the way my imaginal structures and gatekeepers understand research. To move more deeply into the learnings, I needed to feel my uncertainty and trust it to lead me; to do as I asked my participants, to enter the unknown, follow my fear and let it inform me.

The second level of structures had to do with perception of reality and knowledge represented in the structure of The Priestess introduced in Learning One. My priestess is a deep imaginal structure who does not often surface in the light of day. She has emerged in dreams and visions in my times of need; a numinous figure of my internal landscape, she values direct revelation as the path to knowledge. Prior to conducting my research, I
participated in an art therapy workshop where the Priestess energy informed a series of images. Asked to retrieve an image that represented the solution to my difficulties recruiting participants, an image of a tower blasted by lighting bolts played out in my imagination. The image of the tower had appeared to me in a dream years earlier. The dream occurred on the campus of a major research university, where I climbed to the topmost floor to meet with the department chair. There we debated research methodologies: he championing conventional positivistic approaches and me arguing for an embodied heuristic path of direct knowing. My arguments were repeated back to me several days later in my cohort’s first class in Imaginal Inquiry. The tower relates to my rigid conceptions of what is right in academia, the proverbial ivory tower. In the new image at the workshop, the tower was devastated by lightning bolts—the numinous. Similar to the High Priestess, the Tower also can be understood in terms of the symbolism of the Tarot where it signifies change and awakening that dismantles that which is false, inauthentic or conditioned. These two structures, the High Priestess and the Tower have appeared to me at other times, in different guises, in dreams and visions that informed the topic of this dissertation and my coming to terms with how Trauma shapes my experience.

**Theoretical Concepts upon Which Interpretations Are Based**

This learning pivots on the ITP conceptions of imaginal structures and ecstatic states. Imaginal structures, as the reader may recall, filter experience based on previous experience shaping both perception and reaction to any given stimulus. Where imaginal structures constrain experience, ecstatic states represent an opening of experience to the plurality of the psyche. In an ecstatic state one may either enter an integrative ecstatic
dimension or a disintegrative ecstatic state. Omer has stated that there is no transformation without Eros, the passion of the soul.\textsuperscript{25} This is a longing for expansive, authentic experience.

Contingent to the concept of imaginal structures is the understanding of how traumatic memories are processed and stored. As discussed previously in the section “Where Trauma Resides,” in a traumatic situation, the release of stress-responsive neurohormones have multiple effects, including how memory is processed and stored. The highly-charged emotions of fear and panic leave lasting marks in the psyche-soma, so that one can become stuck in a cycle of traumatic repetition, or in ITP terms, stuck in an imaginal structure.

The numinous, as defined by Otto and later elaborated on in Jungian literature, is a highly affectively-charged symbolically-packed experience. The numinous and ecstatic states spring from common ground in that they represent falling away of personal identity and the experience of the mystery of mysteries known as the sacred, the objective truth, the wholly other, or any number of terms used through the centuries. Otto identified the numinous as a daemonic-divine object. His definition of the term associates a broad range of emotional experience with the numen; the key qualifier is that it is outside of the ordinary, an encounter with the Wholly Other, and that it combines the contradictory feelings of terror and fascination. Otto, James, Jung, and those who followed agreed that experience of the numen alters personality and holds the potential to form the basis of lasting change. Corbett described the affective charge of numinous experience as the channel spirit follows into the body, to embody as soul.

The Jungian understanding of the Shadow as a paradoxical unity is also at work in this learning. Briefly, this understanding includes the principle that the archetypal
dimension of Self is capable of holding the opposing ends of a complex polarity and therefore can transcend the difference by uniting opposites.

This learning also builds on the transpersonal nature of the object which entered object relations theory via Winnicott and his consideration of cultural experience. Bion’s conceptions of O, absolute knowledge, K the state of knowing, β-elements, pre-cognitive felt sensations, the variations of T, Transformation, and the relational dimension of the container↔contained, relate to this learning in that they also connect object relations theory with the mystical territory of Absolute Reality, or the numinous. Similarly, Bollas’ conception of the Transformational Object, which formulates transformation as occurring through interaction with an existential and ontological representation of the Self in aesthetic space, contributes to this interpretation.

The relationship between trauma theory and shamanic wisdom also illuminates this learning. According to Kalsched, in trauma a part of the soul becomes encapsulated or leaves the body. In shamanic traditions this is understood as the concept of soul loss. To retrieve the lost soul part, the shaman enters non-ordinary reality to seek out the missing part to return the part to its whole. Central to shamanic understanding of health is the concept of personal power, which can be augmented through interaction with the spiritual dimensions of reality. Here it is helpful to recall May’s understanding of power, where power and significance are intertwined so that power is the objective experience and significance is the subjective experience of the same thing.

**My Interpretations of What Happened**

Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting
the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the body.

Drawing on my image of the tower rocked by lightening, this learning likens the numinous to the lightening and the imaginal structure to the tower. In this way, the numinous delivers an affective, somatic, and cognitive charge capable of shaking the foundation of imaginal structures. This can be understood in terms of imaginal structures and traumatic memory, both of which are reinforced through the intensity of affective experience. The numen then, can be understood as holding the counter-charge providing the affective and symbolic power necessary to challenge deeply entrenched structures. Understood from an object relations perspective, experience of the divine-demonic object as represented in the numen is the ultimate transformational object, providing access to O, Reality. This experience opens one to the vast nature of the soul, multiplicity, and in doing so challenges limited identification as represented in victim identity. The symbolic power of numinous experience provides for increased complexity of experience and meaning making providing the “material” with which to expand the structure itself. Returning to the image of the Tower, the numen is the lightning flash that both illuminates the truth and destroys the false tower.

Validity Considerations

The participants’ words illustrate the expansive nature of direct-revelatory experience. Tapping into universal wisdom through profoundly personal experience, the participants encountered a deep knowing of the inverse relationship between love and fear, where love is expansive and fear constrictive. They learned that Trauma represents
stuck energy, whereas health is based in energy that flows. And they discerned that the self is vast and aspects thought lost can be retrieved. Additionally, the participants sense of surprise, awe, what might be called the “aha” factor, suggests that the lessons they each learned on their journeys found a home in their being, in Winnicott’s sense, “a place to stick.”

Several participants, not familiar with ITP terminology, described imaginal structures and gatekeeping at work, citing how these distort reality and constrict experience. They also discovered that the power of love, in ITP terms Eros, has emancipatory powers, freeing them from the delusions of Trauma. Sophia’s writing about why trauma exists describes the effects of an imaginal structure: “To prevent expansion of oneself and to isolate. To keep me away from the light of self love so I will not grow.” She also recognized how Trauma cuts her off from Eros, saying it shows “... me what love isn’t.” Isabella described how an imaginal structure creates distortions in perception and experience: “I thought Trauma stole my life, my heart, my goodness. But when I realized I still had all that inside me, Trauma grew weak and disappeared.” Olivia’s journey illuminates how the gatekeeper, Trauma, gains power, and how one might retrieve that power. She described Trauma as: “The disconnect between our vulnerable and loving selves.” She discovered that she held the power to restore connection to the innocent part of herself lost to Trauma: “... in this hearth, I’m able to process and rewire pathways to establish the connection.”

Ava described having a significant mystical experience that was reflected in the unitive nature of her journey, which offers a transcendent view of the role of trauma: “The trauma archetype came to me as a midwife sent from God/Goddess to help birth humanity into being conscious responsible caretakers of life ... that trauma is one of the
energies in this cosmic dance that shows us when we are at the extreme polarities of disconnection.” She related what Trauma had taken from her to the concepts connected to victim identity, illuminating the role of projection in her defenses: “It just had a part of me that I was projecting outside of myself. I was not fully accepting the parts that feel bad to me in the effects of the trauma with in me . . .”

In their own words, the participants describe an increased sense of personal power. Sophia commented that journey and artwork saying, “. . . it facilitated my moving toward power.” In discussing her journey, Isabella reported, “In the end, I felt empowered.” For Emily, “. . . the power was taken out of Trauma . . .” This increase in personal power can be understood in terms of May’s concepts, as well as in the form of shamanic wisdom.

Learning Five: To Touch the Ground of Reality, Walk in the Shoes of the Wholly Other

Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the Wholly Other (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity.

This learning expands on the understanding of the role of expression as integral to the process of integration, specifically addressing the role of courage and compassion in relation to personal power and victim identity.

What Happened

Following lunch, the participants were guided in a meditative revisiting of their journey to meet Trauma. With the journey fresh in their memories, the participants were
then invited to stand and speak from the positions of: Victim, Trauma, Bystander, and Friend. The smaller group moved deliberately from one subjectivity to the next. In the larger group, the expressions began slowly, punctuated by silence; then the pace quickened and the expressions flowed, one to another, with faster changing of positions. The participants were asked to end from the Friend, but new expressions particularly from the Trauma position continued to emerge until silence indicated a point of completion. Speaking from the position of Trauma, Ava said: “I’m here because you created me you sent me I am part of the divine, I am power, I am here to teach you about true power and true power of a human, this is the shadow face of it but this is the way you know it, this is the way you want it. You are in on this creation.” Journaling about their experience speaking as Trauma, the participants expressed a range of emotions including, sadness, intensity, compassion and divinity. Asked how it felt to imagine into the role of Trauma, Isabelle wrote: “Sad. I felt Trauma was sad and trying to find friends. Like a bully tries to force people to be nice to him or else.” Emily wrote she felt deep compassion for Trauma.

Imagining into the Friend, Isabella reported that she felt “strong.” Emma wrote that she felt “fearless.” Emily associated the Friend with feelings of “love, spacious joy, tenderness, presence, protectiveness . . .” Emma noticed that where she had trouble speaking from and where she resonated was an important insight for her. Emily brought a chair into the victim position, and sat there with a pillow over her face shaking her head “no.” She reported that that moment was particularly empowering for her. Sophia said: "For me to find that place and to speak from that place, it empowered me. It empowered me a lot. And I was so proud of myself for being able to do that and not hold back. I
found that extremely cathartic and empowering to be able to be in that space and to come from that place."

Please see the Summary of Data for more information including the expressions from each position.

**How I Was Affected**

In the first smaller group, the slowed and deliberate pace gave rise to a feeling of solemnity, as if I were witnessing a very private, sacred act. I felt love toward the participants and deep reverence for their process and courage. In the larger group, when the pace picked up and the group began to move between positions more randomly, I felt an energetic shift in the room that I experienced as excitement and interest. In both groups, I was fascinated by their expressions. I was conscious that though my gatekeeper attempted to assert itself, it had little sway or power to squelch the rising tide of positive affect. Instead, I felt grounded in my body, secure in the process, and happy with the expressions: I felt pride. My notes from the second session read: “The form started strong and deepened into an authentic embodied expression from the four positions, in which both subjective and objective experience of the position was expressed, opening a flow of expression between the personal and the archetypal.”

**Imaginal Structures in Use**

The imaginal structure alive in this learning plays the role of shadow to my Priestess, a figure that I have named the “Persecutory Priest.” I have experienced the persecutory priest, as a false prophet; it has been active in my dream life, shamanic journeywork, and at times as vivid images during waking reality. I experienced it as the
shadow end of a polarity that focuses on knowledge, knowing, belief, faith, experience, truth and voice. My reference here to Priestess and Priest do not exactly represent opposite poles of the same structure; they are different, yet related imaginal structures. In the way I experience them, they mirror the split between the disowned Feminine and the corrupted Masculine. In relation to the nature of knowledge and knowing, the Feminine Priestess relates to intuitive, sensual, direct knowing, while the Masculine corresponds to deductive, rational, interpretive knowing. The Persecutory Priest represents the shadow of the masculine; it tries to control access to knowledge and knowing; it rejects that direct revelation is accessible to all but a few of its choosing; and it values the ways of the masculine over the feminine.

Awareness of my imaginal structures, particularly as it relates to the nature of knowledge and knowing underscored the validity of the field dynamic. My false priest stands at the ready to dismiss direct knowing as beyond the capacity of the normal human. His warnings however did not hold power during the forms, nor did they later when I reviewed the videotapes and felt into the reality of the moment. The expressions felt alive and authentic. There was depth and variety of feeling present in the participants, and the ritual container continued to hold our experience with a sense of reverence and awe. My Priestess structure, which believes in direct knowing and expression, infused me with confidence.

**Theoretical Concepts upon Which Interpretations Are Based**

This learning builds on Omer’s principle The Four Dynamisms of Experience, and concepts concerning ritual and ritual trust, particularly the power of ritual to open to authentic expression of archetypal experience. It also leans on Omer’s understanding of
ecstatic states in which normative identity falls away allowing expression of the plurality of the soul, the axiom that authentic imagination is archetypal, and the principle that transformation requires Eros.

As the reader may recall, the experience of Self as numinous was explored in the literature review in relation to several theorists. For the purposes of this interpretation, it is helpful to recall Grotstein’s conception of the nature of the Subject, as the ineffable numinous subject of the unconscious, and his conception of evil as a disowned projection presented by the Ultimate “I” for integration. According to Bion and Grotstein, we touch the ground of reality with the experience of O, the Real, the numinous. Washburn equated the numinous with power relating it to the spiritual manifestation of the power of the Dynamic Ground, the energizer of all life processes and systems. May equated ecstatic states with the intensity of consciousness that accompanies an authentically creative act. He further linked creativity with courage, so that courage undergirds all capacities. Winnicott’s concepts of potential space, cultural experience and play, where play is an essential creative act also support this interpretation.

My Interpretations of What Happened

Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the Wholly Other, (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity.

This learning expands on the understanding of role of expression as integral to the process of integration, specifically addressing the role of courage and compassion in relation to personal power and victim identity. It observes that expressing the disowned voice, as represented by Trauma, requires courage and compassion, and that this act
further augments personal power. Courage empowers the creative exploration and expression of aspects of experience previously demonized, and compassion provides tolerance for experience of various aspects of self thus avoiding dissociation. Teasing apart fused identities redistributes awareness disempowering identification with the victim and further augmenting personal power. The expansive feeling state of empowerment provides newly-explored consciousness capacities a grounding line into embodied knowing.

Validity Considerations

The participants’ expressions teased apart subtlety and nuance in each position. The victim expressed outrage and hurt, as well as shame, fear, and senses of powerlessness and power. Trauma was both powerful and powerless; it was cruel and suffering; it disregarded needs of others and yearned for its needs to be met. The Bystander incorporated a wide diversity of experience from expressing the curiosity of an interested passerby, to plaintive denials of a fearful and complicit spectator. The Friend emerged as the consistent character, a strong voice of loving compassion, loyalty, steadfastness, fearlessness, and wisdom. Standing in each position, the participants spoke from both their personal-historical knowing and their newly accessed expanded knowing from the journey, deepening experience. The affective reality of the expressions was palpable. The participants remarked on the form’s impact on their experience of self and other.

Expressing multiple subjective aspects of experience in a participatory space validated the reality of the vast nature of the psyche so that the experience of the journey to the trauma archetype could anchor in awareness. The capacity of courage is essential
for intentionally accessing the trauma archetype. Approaching the trauma archetype represents a generative act of will in choosing to assert one’s being in the face of the perceived threat of annihilation. To unfold this experience requires the capacity of compassion, to tolerate and express ego-dystonic aspects of self. Compassion in turn is linked to Eros, the generative energy that undergirds transformation. Additionally, through creative expression in a peer group, tolerance for the affective dimension of spiritual experience was brought into real time and space, the now of creative reality, where opportunities for integration exist. This learning illustrates how Omer’s Four Dynamisms work across horizontal and vertical planes, or physical and spiritual dimensions of experience, to embed embodied subjective knowing of objective truth. Here we also see Winnicott’s conceptions of potential space and cultural experience at work. In this case, the potential space was both inter- and intra-personal. The interpersonal is represented by the peer relationships of ritual container, while the intrapersonal runs along the self-ego axis. Interpreted this way, Winnicott’s conception of cultural experience opens to a transpersonal highway, where the whole of human experience is accessible to anyone with the capacities of consciousness to hold it. Said more poetically, simply touching the Ground of Reality, the numinous, does not necessarily result in change. Instead, change comes from walking in shoes of the Wholly Other, those disowned aspects of self, to deepen and personalize the experience so it can find a place to stick.

**Learning Six: Direct Revelation Points to a New Beginning**

Learning Six proposes that numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating
an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an
opportunity to reclaim projections.

Based in the creative writing that began and ended the day, this learning examines
shifts in the participants’ conceptualizations regarding trauma and victim identity to
suggest that the experience of the trauma archetype expanded the participant’s
perspective on their personal experience, loosening identifications with victimization,
increasing empowerment and, for some, creating an opportunity to reclaim projections of
evil onto an externalized other. Due to space constraints only a sampling of the stories
and myths appears below. Please refer to Appendices 7 and 8, which include each
participants story and myth along with related journaling questions.

What Happened

In the first and last evoking-expressing sequences the participants wrote a short
story and a myth, respectively. The writing was referenced as a key moment both as an
overall category and specifically as it related to the myth. Following these creative
writing exercises the participants answered questions to describe imaginal structures
active in their writing. On the second day, participants reread their work and had the
opportunity to read their stories and myths to the group. All commented on the power of
the writing. After reading her own story and myth, Sophia commented: “I’m moved by
reading this—who wrote this?” Isabella said: "The writing is really helpful and really
powerful." In discussing her myth Emily said she, “... felt deep relief and satisfaction—
esteem.”

Sophia wrote her story to Munch’s The Scream and titled it, My Silent Scream.
Written as a poem, the narrative voice reveals the experience of pain and fear; lists the
perpetrators and witnesses to pain and fear; and then places itself in the experience of pain and fear; where it remains stuck in isolation. It ends with these lines:

My scream is loud
but no one can hear me
The louder I scream
the quieter I am.
No one hears me
No one knows
I just scream and scream
and no one hears me.

In Sophia’s myth, *Slowed as Molasses*, Trauma describes itself as syrup, “I come ready made like a jar of syrup.” A packaged good, victims pick the package of Trauma to suit themselves. Sometimes it is even on sale, but “one thing is for certain I ALWAYS POUR OUT . . . I keep pouring and pouring into you, filling up every crevice and nook of yourself.” Trauma’s gooey presence makes it “. . . hard to move and harder yet to find the good parts of yourself in the sticky liquid of fear . . . I am so good, that I am bad, every last squishy drop of me.” Filled with the syrup, life becomes constricted: “You move with a snail’s pace, slow as molasses and burdened with my presence.” The myth concludes with the syrup asking: “What washes away my syrupy self? . . . I’ll wait and watch to see what you will do otherwise I’ll just keep filling up every part of you until you find a way to say . . . Stop.”

Written to The Scream, Emma’s story is short enough to be included here in its entirety. She titled it, “The Moment Before Annihilation.”

Sound and color merged, sucking out my breath. Yes, there is a scream, but it has no sound. In an instant there will be nothing left. The shadow of my former self walks away, perhaps it will find another home. It’s as if nothing ever existed; too much is sometimes perceived the same as not at all. Here in this instant—the line between too much and nothing is caught.
In Emma’s myth, Trauma happens upon a peaceful village, saying: “I could see that the people while good-hearted did not know their potential . . .” So Trauma “. . . breathed upon them a horrible sickness and soon they were in chaos.” The villagers responded differently, and the story focuses on a young woman who sat with her last remaining family member, holding her hand as she died. “Why have you come upon us, Trauma?” she asked. “What have we done to deserve such pain?” Trauma answered: “It may be hard to understand right now, but I serve a purpose – without which you would not know the depth of your own soul. From your anger, shall rise deeper truths.” A tear shed from the woman’s eye as she replied: “I do not understand.”

Olivia also chose The Scream for her story, “The Lost Wanderer.” Written in the first-person, it describes the loneliness of the image, the sense of being alone in an empty landscape “. . . dangling out in space . . .” She questions if she is to blame for her situation, and if she will always be this way.

Olivia’s myth, Ancestral Links, begins when a village takes “a long winter’s nap.” All is well, until “. . . an invisible energy crept into their homes, slipping under doors, through chimneys and windows and even up through the earth and in between cracks in the floors.” This energy “. . . brought feelings of anger, sadness, fear, frustration, anxiety, loneliness and depression.” A mother affected by this energy cannot care for her son, and after trying to rouse his mother “. . . the links of energy moved down through his mother’s feet, across the floor, under the door and up through the boy’s body . . . He braced his body and locked the energetic chain in place, preparing it to be passed to someone else who crossed his path. And so trauma was born and passed in such ways from generation to generation.” The myth ends with “Fortunately . . .” suggesting the possibility of a plot-twist ahead.
Ava also selected The Scream as the image for her story, *Death Alone Lives On*. In it the protagonist is hiding, wet and cold, under the bridge. She describes the world:

“There is blackness and terribleness everywhere. There is no safe harbor, nothing good, nothing right.” Nothing is as it “should” be. The heroine freezes, unable to move or respond, or even to scream; “…while there is a freaky, unbelievable scream of screams inside, it does not come out, all is dead, all is frozen … to survive this I must die.”

Ava’s myth, *The Long And Windy Road Back Home*, begins from the perspective of a subjective self, and then morphs into objective observer of subjective self. A narrative voice tells of the heroine’s disconnection from others during childhood, and how she began to feel the “other” within herself, as well as the “other” that was alien to her. The narrator recounts a dream in which dark angels drop the heroine three times into the ocean, and with each fall the water teaches her how to turn the formless into form so she can rise up and walk on the water. Trauma taught her, through other life events, that she had a hand in creating her trauma as a way of coming into existence, to develop more consciously and fully the whole self, but that she experienced that whole self as too big and powerful, and so she split herself into parts that lost connection with each other. Her myth ends with the wisdom: “Om mistake yassin, ‘all my relations,’ was the teaching that she was trying to learn and that she was teaching.”

Emily choose the Bosch image to inspire her story, *How I Escaped Unrelenting Trauma Hell, Inside & Out*. She identifies herself in the picture as dismembered parts, resting on a dismembered mother, in a hellish and perverse setting: “I am the pink tender heart in the center; I rest on my white hollow mother. All around me is a living hell of torture, chaos and unrelenting terror, harm and suffering. My mother smiles.” Survival comes at the cost of having a sense of self—wholeness destroyed: “I am unable to
construct the internal architecture of a self that I need, that I need in order to live as a whole, real, safe person.”

Emily’s myth was written in an illustrative manner, using all capital letters and underlining to emphasize some phrases and drawings of tear drops and a doorway. Rather than a narrative, it followed the feeling sense Trauma as it flows through the perpetrator, into the victim, and at times it was narrated by an observer-voice. Emily shared that she encountered the image of Trauma as a huge muscle, and the myth begins: “Out of the hot, fiery, erupting volcano of feeling and sensation – flooded muscles…” And so we are introduced to the idea that unbearable flooding sensations lead to traumatizing actions acted out by the more powerful on the less powerful. The less powerful victim then experiences the unbearable flooding sensations that lead to annihilation - no existence anywhere: “…and OUT!!!! she goes – blacks right out; ceases to exist—GONE DADDY GONE, is she …. the TERRIBLE NOTHING BLACK of NO LIFE, NO EXISTENCE…” The “little sea shell body” however survives, and it holds the key to healing - but healing requires one to pass again through “THE DOORWAY BACK”, which is marked “Trauma: the feelings and the sensations.” Thus the way back to a whole self, “…to GET BACK to her self, to GET HERSELF BACK, she has to re-enter the literal muscle tissue of her own dear and precious body – somehow tolerate and survive, feel oneness, and express without harming herself or others.” And this is the key, to not hurt others, for that is how Grace is earned: “The myth ends with these lines: For it is in OUR heroes’ journeys that the collective vulnerability of these mysterious human bodies, housing, down in the SACRED GROUND BELOW the DNA, the atoms, the quarks, the strings, the Ineffable, Timeless, Love/Creative REALITY of All being, is redeemed and recreated and bloomed. Through the door of the body goes the Soul back to the Soul. As the soul and the body re-unite, love blooms. As love blooms, the world is more and more saved.
As the world is more and more saved, one Body-Soul at a time, there is less and less trauma and more and more joy and thriving and whole, good Reality.

**How I Was Affected**

As the researcher, I found the stories and myths rich in their feeling tone, imagery, and narratives. Reading them following the research I was excited by apparent shifts in perspective and tone that might back up my hypothesis. As I sat with them longer I was moved into deeper contemplation about the nature of trauma as revealed by the participants. I entered into a state of ecstatic participation with these writings, feeling awe, wonder, grief, joy, reverence, and a sense of mystery. I felt the sacred move through these pieces of paper; I felt the archetypal alive in my presence.

**Imaginal Structures in Use**

The structures at work in this learning are based in the victim structure discussed in Learning Two, where the split between good and bad gives birth to a fused child-gatekeeper subjectivity. In relation to this learning it was active as a faint voice, a barely discernible bias that sought to reject the “easy” solution, to darken the Light contained in these writings, to extinguish hope. In its twisted logic, it is better not to trust and hope than to be disappointed. It warns against believing in the wholeness felt in the numinous, suggesting that it is better to be comfortable in the shattered familiarity of despair. This surfaced as critical assessment of the stories and myth that emphasized Light and Wholeness, looking for a spiritual bypass that avoids the reality that someone is to blame and that we are all ultimately broken.
Theoretical Concepts upon Which Interpretations Are Based

Central to this learning are the concepts of splitting, projection and imagination. All have been explored in previous learnings. It is useful to recall that authentic imagination, according to Omer, is central to transformation and is archetypal in nature.27

The literature review also discussed various ways that working with personal story and myth brings a deeper level of consciousness to experience, both expanding personal meaning and moving individuals into deeper connection with what it is to be fundamentally human. As an example Hillman discussed creating a mythic narrative as one step for the soul to bring unconscious ideas into consciousness.28 This interpretation also draws on the concepts and principles outlined in the section on evil in the literature review. A concept repeated by many theorists, including Jung, Hillman, Moore, and Houston is that engaging the shadow allows one to retrieve the hidden treasures of creative, imaginative, and healing potentialities. This idea had a frequent companion warning, that denying or repressing shadow content is the source of dangerous inflation, making the shadow contents more powerful.

My Interpretations of What Happened

Learning Six proposes that numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an opportunity to reclaim projections.

Imagining into the Other within the trauma archetype increased access to multiplicity accessing a vantage point that transcends the level of Kleinian splitting,
providing fresh perspective on the core splits that form the basis of projection, and with it the potential for a new experience of the split itself. This learning also illuminates the impact of numinous experience on the narrative of trauma.

Validity Considerations

The experiences of the day culminated in the writing of the myth, which gave creative expression to the expanded sense of consciousness the participants experienced in relation to the trauma archetype. For each participant there was movement from the beginning of the day to the end that suggested a greater sense of personal power, wholeness, and/or meaning. The movement is seen through the arch of the whole story and myth, in their images, the clarity of voice that delivered it, and in the journaling that accompanied these sequences. It is borne witness to in the participants own words about their writing and that of their peers. It resounds in Sophia’s “Stop;” in Ava’s heroine becoming both teacher and student; in Emma’s “whole good reality;” and in the humanity of Emma’s “I do not understand.” Identification with trauma becomes more complicated and nuanced by the end of the day. In the myths, Trauma is juxtaposed with innocence; it feeds on fear and steals souls and power. Trauma is also a teacher; it brings a deeper truth; the Self creates it as a reminder, and it functions as a sacred wound. Notably, trauma is an illusion.

By tapping into the archetypal dimension of trauma, participants connected to authentic imagination, which by definition is archetypal and represents a higher level of conscious functioning than that of the I-factor. The focus on the trauma archetype engaged shadow aspects of experience, particularly as it relates to the split between good and evil. This facilitated an expansion in the participants’ capacity to imagine into the
Other within the trauma archetype, representing increased access to multiplicity. We can understand this vantage point to transcend the level of Kleinian splitting, in that splitting occurs at the level of the constrictive I-factor. In the arch of the stories and myths, we see added complexity and nuance, suggesting that the core splits that form the basis of projection were, at least temporarily, suspended. Creative expression of this experience functions to facilitate this movement by providing the means to expand beyond personal experience and connect with the larger human story.

Conclusion

My Research Problem asked: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? The study’s hypothesis anticipated that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities.

The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization. Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated. Learning Two identifies the operation of Creative Projection to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. Learning Three illustrates the victim bind,
an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.” Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the body. Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the Wholly Other (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity. Learning Six proposes that numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an opportunity to reclaim projections.

These learnings build on ITP principles related to ritual, imagination and the nature of the self. The significance and implications of these learnings will be discussed further in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS

Introduction and Overview

This chapter reflects on the significance and implications of the learnings and provides a springboard into future work. It begins with an assessment of the learnings in relation to the Research Problem and hypothesis. The learnings will be further teased apart and reflected upon using theoretical lenses to situate the learnings in the field of psychology. We will then journey into the land of myth and archetype to explore universal symbols that relate to the potentialities contained in the learnings. Finally, we will examine what these learnings portend for the future, in terms of theory, practice, and future study.

The research addressed the question: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? The data was gathered in two separate meetings, of two groups, with a total of six participants, and include observations from my co-researcher and myself. The data was rich, and like the topic, highly subjective. Therefore, in interpreting the data, I emphasized the participants’ own words in describing their experience. Where appropriate, I borrowed from my own experience of victim identity, and identified it as such. My bias in working with the data was largely synthetic, as opposed to analytic.
The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization. Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated. Learning Two identifies the operation of *Creative Projection* to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. Learning Three illustrates the *victim bind*, an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.” Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the body. Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the *Wholly Other* (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity. Learning Six proposes that numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an opportunity to reclaim projections.
The learnings, as a whole, support the hypothesis that by engaging the dark numinous in a ritualized container, there might be enough experience of separation from personal victim identity to increase awareness of multiplicity, thereby opening a gateway to previously untapped consciousness capacities. This is illustrated in Learnings Two, Four, Five and Six. Consciousness capacities here can be understood as the ability to bring awareness to experience, particularly as it relates to aspects of self or experience previously unknown or denied. In this research, consciousness capacities have been framed in terms of multiplicity, and can also be understood in terms of an easing of ego-identification that allows for expanded identity, empathy, relationship and/or Eros. In Learning Two, this included easing of ego-identification achieved through the symbolic use of an object. In Learning Four, these untapped capacities were expressed in the participants’ expansive experience and their ability to bring awareness to the “Other” in their journey. In Learning Five, the data suggests that these previously untapped capacities began to find a home in embodied awareness, representing a shift from abstract spiritual experience to an embodied, soulful knowing that impacts one’s sense of personal power and victim identity. In the data supporting Learning Six, we begin to see how tapping into expanded consciousness capacities can impact the trauma narrative, challenging core splits that form the basis of projection. Over the arc of these learnings, we can trace the expansive effect of the numinous in creating an opening for disowned aspects of experience to find a home in consciousness.

Compared to the learnings, the Research Problem was much narrower in scope: How does numinous experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity? Learning Three, which resulted partially from a breach in the research design, most directly addressed this question. It found that approaching the numinous summons
both the friend and gatekeeper, or in this context, personal power and victim identity. The successful approach to the numinous rests on personal power overriding victim identity. When victim identity prevails, the numinous is inaccessible or is viewed through a corrupted prism, such that it might result in either grandiose or paranoid delusions. The learning illustrates how personal power and victim identity exist in inverse relationship, such that when the influence of one is dominate the other retreats. Data from the other learnings also support the finding that numinous experience holds the potential to increase one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity. This can be seen in the reports on the journeys in Learning Four, in the diversity of expression in Learning Five and in the power of the myths in Learning Six.

**Significance of the Learnings**

This research demonstrates an effective drug-free method of evoking and expressing numinous experience to work with trauma and victim identity. As discussed in the Literature Review, research by R.R. Griffiths, Doblin and others, have established protocols for producing mystical experience using hallucinogens, resulting in long-lasting positive effects. Doblin’s group has indicated that use of MDMA helps mitigate the symptoms of PTSD. The research design of this study departed from these models in two significant ways: first, by evoking the numinous using ritual and shamanic techniques; and second, by working with the shadow dimension of the numinous. The success of evoking the numinous through ritualization and shamanic journeywork validates a drug-free technique adaptable for clinical and other settings. Approaching the trauma archetype introduced the shadow components of experience by evoking fear and repressed or denied aspects of experience. This combination of the power of the
numinous and exploration of the shadow held the potential to generate a disintegrative experience. Instead, with one temporary exception, the experience was overall positive and empowering for the participants. This exception can be understood through ITP’s conception of ecstatic states, in which the activation of a gatekeeper is understood to produce a disintegrative state, which represents a lower level of functioning in the continuum of consciousness. While it was not the goal of this research to produce a disintegrative state of consciousness, this lapse did produce significant insight into the experience of victim identity. This supports Wilson’s suggestion that understanding the spectrum between disintegrative and optimal states of consciousness in trauma may hold more value than describing the dynamics of PTSD.²

The research design was limited by the consideration of the Research Problem. For a therapeutic program that involves evoking the numinous in the treatment of trauma, I recommend an expanded approach, which would build psychological resources, including the development of journeying skills and reflexive capacities, and establishing a relationship with the Friend for a period of time prior to engaging the trauma archetype. Engaging the shadow would then be a later stage of an overall treatment strategy that involved evoking numinous experience.

A distinguishing aspect of this research is that it addressed the frightful and disowned aspects of the numinous, the shadow. The research explored ways in which working with the shadow side of the numinous holds the potential to illuminate projections that limit one’s identity and experience. This opens consideration to working with splitting and projection symbolically and experientially. As Learning Four suggests, the numinous packs a charge that holds the power to override well-established defenses, impacting the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses. Numinous
experience introduces direct experience that challenges previously established patterns of beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors, on multiple levels of experience. Evoking the numinous provides individuals with direct knowing of more expansive alternatives to their preexisting worldviews.

Learnings One and Two relate to ritual practices that make space for and contain numinous experience. These learnings build on established ideas and relate them to the conditions necessary to evoke the numinous. Learning One emphasizes the feeling tone of the environment. This concept lives in imaginal praxis and is echoed in the writings of Hillman, Moore and Houston. Houston argues that creating the feeling of the sacred helps align attention and intention toward the goal of integration, and introduces a sense of power. ³ Learning One builds on these ideas, relates them directly to the evocation of the numinous and focuses on the capacity of awe in relationship to expansive experience.

Learning Two describes the dynamic of creative projection, the intentional use of an object to symbolize disowned aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with self. Creative projection builds on Omer’s principle that genuine transformative practices provide a bridge between limited identity and expansive ecstatic states. It also builds on ideas expressed in object relations by Klein, Perls, Byington, and Bion, and extends these concepts to the ritual container. It also mirrors Eliade’s understanding of the role of the object in ancient society. This research suggests that the act of creative projection engages imaginative capacities to entertain previously unthought imaginative possibilities. Creative projection facilitates the process through which the ego may disidentify from constrictive I-factors and open to the possibility of ecstatic surrender. It is not that the ego goes away, as its capacities of will and
discernment are required for the journey into the shadow, but rather, that through creative projection, the elements of I-factor that would normally prohibit access to shadow material are safely contained to reduce constrictive reactivity.

A key theme running through the learnings is that of imagination. As stated earlier, Omer conceives of imagination as its own line of development, and as such, it is both liminal and a capacity. Imagination plays a central role in these learnings: it provides the bridge from limited identity to expanded consciousness capacities, and back into embodied awareness; and it is the capacity through which personality structures are challenged and altered. In Learning Three, we see how the activation of imaginal structures represents a failure of imagination. In Learning Four, we observe the liminal power of imagination to deliver the transformative image. In Learning Five, we witness imagination’s integrative function. Finally, in Learning Six, we glimpse the potential that imaginative engagement with the numinous possesses in changing the trauma narrative.

Another central theme running through the learnings and related to the Research Problem involves the relationship between victim identity and personal power. Learning Three explores this theme in depth, and asserts that there is an inverse relationship between personal power and victim identity. This learning combines May’s concept of pseudoinnocence with the ideas represented by Kalsched’s internal persecutor and Bion’s persecutory negative container, to reflect the internal dynamic through which pseudoinnocence binds an individual to victimization. In this victim bind, one traps oneself in the good-evil split, clinging to an outdated, simplistic naïveté, and in doing so, abdicating personal power that would allow self-assertion and potential remedy. This state of pseudoinnocence mirrors the conditions of Bion’s persecutory negative container,
such that the perceived evil is projected both inward and outward, making the victim feel forever inadequate, and all others forever responsible.

Conversely, the research design also illustrated methods that augment personal power. The sense of reverence and awe generated by the ritualization of the day opened, in Isabella’s words, “... a huge amount of energy ...” This energy can be connected to the Pacific Islander concept of Mana, a mystical energy thought to flow through and enliven all things. The intention to evoke the numinous, the ritual container and the attitudes of reverence and awe all invoked Mana. We witness the power of the numinous in Learning Four where experience of the divine-demonic object provides the counter-charge to imaginal structures. Here, direct experience of the numinous includes contact with the spiritual, which, according to the shamanic perspective, is the source of power. In Washburn’s terms, this can be explained as access to the dynamic ground of being, the energizer of all life processes and systems. The participants reported that the journey increased their sense of empowerment. In addition to coming into contact with the sacred, I also connected this expansion in personal power to the imaginative acts of courage and assertiveness required to approach and address Trauma, consistent with May’s conceptions of power. I went on to claim that experience of the numen opens one to the vast nature of the soul, and in doing so, challenges limited identification, as represented in victim identity. This is consistent with the ITP understanding of ecstatic states, which provides for a falling away of personal identity and the experience of multiplicity.

This feeling sense of increased personal power found embodiment through creative expression. In Learning Five, Sophia summed up the power of speaking from the four positions saying: "For me to find that place and to speak from that place, it empowered me. It empowered me a lot." Finally, in the myths, the victim becomes more
powerful and expressive, and Trauma is humanized. I credited this shift to expanded access to multiplicity, and with it, increased awareness of the Other, as represented by Trauma.

Applying a shamanic lens to the research methodology, the participants participated in a *symbolic soul retrieval*. First, the ritualization of the day provided for an augmentation in personal power through symbolic contact with the Sacred. The participants then entered Wesselman’s Level 3 reality, the level of spirit, to encounter Trauma, the force that held a part of their soul captive. The journey to Trauma brought the participants into contact with energetic aspects of the self that had been lost in the original trauma. Here, I draw a distinction between traditional soul retrieval—where a shaman journeys on behalf of an individual to interact with spiritual entities and retrieve a soul part—and what I am calling a symbolic soul retrieval, in that the individuals themselves journey to retrieve images of self, that they then process to promote integration. Traditional soul retrieval operates within a larger belief system that understands that a soul part can be lost, retrieved and integrated through the actions of a shamanic healer. Symbolic soul retrieval operates in a psychological model, which does not necessitate an expanded belief system, but instead operates through individual initiative and the use of imagination.

In addition to May’s conceptions of power, these learnings draw on Washburn’s discussion of the power of the dynamic ground and the shamanic perspectives shared by Wesselman and Harner. Understood in this way, personal power is connected to Mana, numinous energy from the ground of being. Authentic personal power as life force energy, and not to be confused with political power or aggression, represents a capacity to connect with and carry the expansive energy of Spirit. This suggests that by tapping
into multiplicity and archetypal imagination, we tap into reservoirs of power. These learnings illustrate two sides of a singular coin: on one side, how, through projection, we disown not only aspects of self but also the personal power that goes with it; and on its flip side, how recollecting projections through contact with the numinous Other, we can retrieve personal power.

In relation to the numinous, personal power exists as a paradox as it depends on an act of surrender and a state of receptivity. Marion Woodman explores this paradox in the Crone, who embodies a distinctly feminine style of power, one that Woodman describes as free of the power complex. The Crone grows out of the Virgin’s full ripeness of possibility grounded in embodied Being. It represents the wisdom of embodied knowing that flows through images. These images, according to Woodman, provide access to the Truth, while embodiment makes these truths profoundly personal. Woodman portrays the Crone as emerging from the integrated and initiated feminine—from the unconscious. For this to happen, the masculine also needs to be highly developed, so that the powers of discernment can cultivate and protect the space for the emerging images. My research suggests that to tap into these archetypal images requires a practice of dynamic surrender, in which the capacities of receptivity and trust are developed. Dynamic surrender (my concept) is an act of will in which one allows normative identity to slip away and tolerates the vulnerability and fear of facing forces greater than the personal self. In the case of encountering the numinous, dynamic surrender is essential due to the potential enormity of the experience.

This research project asked participants to go to the heart of their fears and confront Trauma. It was risky, holding the potential to unleash disintegrative forces too great to contain. However, as described above, the strength of a ritual container, practices
to help individuals distance themselves from victim identity and create safety, and augmentation of personal power all contributed to releasing positive self-actualizing tendencies rather than destructive, repressive forces. By engaging the numinous, the participants came into contact with disowned projections presented by the psyche for integration. Through this experience, the clear split between good and evil became more nuanced and previously projected material became available for integration.

Negotiating the split between good and evil to integrate the personal shadow and, in doing so, to devolve its cultural counterpart, is a central challenge in all psychological healing. The challenge in negotiating this split, according to Jungians, is that the modern mind lacks the active mythology and creative imagination needed to bridge the duality. The quest, then, is to find a new myth.

**Mythic and Archetypal Reflections**

Wilson placed trauma at the hub of the archetypal wheel and hypothesized that when activated the trauma archetype can constellate all archetypes. Similarly, the numinous, as the feeling tone associated with the archetypal and sacred, is intrinsic to all myths. Thus, the learnings from this research could be represented by many myths or mythological symbols, such as Zeus’ lightening bolt, Persephone’s return to the land of the living, or Morpheus’ role as the bringer of dreams. Several mythic themes and images emerged directly from the data, including: Trauma as an illusion, similar to the bardo states of the Tibetan Book of the Dead or the Buddhist conception of Maya; Trauma as an abyss, a deep dark place away from light and hope, such as the Greeks’ Tartarus; or the image of fire as an agent of transformation. In this section, we will narrow our attention
to three myths as potential vehicles for this study, beginning with the tale of Theseus and
the Minotaur.

Pursuing a fresh take on Theseus and the Minotaur provides insight into the
victim position. The Minotaur was a monster born of shame to King Minos of Crete’s
wife, Pasiphaë. King Minos broke his promise to slaughter a bull in Poseidon’s honor,
and Poseidon, in revenge, bewitched Pasiphaë, who through her own deception,
conceived a child with the beautiful bull. The resulting child was half-human and half-
beast, and was confined to live in a Labyrinth beneath the palace of Knossos. Every
seven years, Athens, defeated in war by Minos, sent seven girls and seven boys as tribute
to be fed to this dreaded monster, the Minotaur. The young hero, Theseus, volunteered to
go to Crete as a tribute and to kill the Minotaur. Aboard ship on the way to Crete, Minos
and Theseus clashed, and each proved that they were born of divine parentage—Minos,
son of Zeus, and Theseus, son of Poseidon. The night before the sacrifice, Minos’
daughter, Ariadne, fell in love with Theseus and offered to help him escape the Labyrinth
if he, in turn, would marry her and take her away from her father’s island. The next
morning, she helped him by giving him a string to guide him out of the Labyrinth.
Theseus slayed the Minotaur, escaped the Labyrinth, and fled with Ariadne.

In this myth, the numinous forces of the Gods contained in Zeus and Poseidon,
and reflected in their offspring, Minos and Theseus, are complex characters. Neither is all
good nor all bad. They display arrogance, deception and brutality, as well as acceptance,
bravery, and loyalty. Through Minos’ line, we can trace the transmission of trauma.
Minos’ birth came about after Zeus took the form of a white bull and abducted his
mother, Europa. After killing his brother, Minos beseeched Poseidon to acknowledge his
accession to the throne, and Poseidon sent him a beautiful white bull as a symbol of his
approval. When Minos greedily kept the bull and sacrificed another in its place, he earned Poseidon’s wrath. Poseidon enchanted Pasiphaë, who devised a plot to mate with the bull. Knowing full well that he played a role in his wife’s shame, Minos tolerated Pasiphaë’s bestial act. According to Joseph Campbell, Minos rejected his sacred role as king when he chose not to slaughter the bull in Poseidon’s honor. Campbe[l notes that this act of sacrilege cuts the ties that bind culture and world-order together. What should have been the proper governing authority of the king became a corrupted and corrupting force let loose on the family and the world. The Minotaur represents the sins of the parents visited on the child, the family, and the community.

Viewing this as a myth about trauma and victim identity, the Minotaur represents the result of the noble parent rejecting the sacred rite of initiation. Through no fault of its own, the victim is born a monster, destined to be alienated from its family and the world. In the Minotaur, we get a sense of the victim’s powerlessness in the making of its circumstance, which repeats and amplifies an existing family pattern. Isolated in a labyrinth of suffering, the Minotaur’s appetites grow to inhumane proportions. The labyrinth symbolizes the victim’s inner world, a subterranean prison with no adequate humanizing presence to contain the longings and fears that fester and breed there. Similar to the abandoned Minotaur, the victim’s needs take on inhumane proportion, simply because there was no humanizing presence to contain them at the appropriate developmental stage. This is similar to Lash’s redeemer complex, in which terror and identification with the divine victim hold the complex in place. In the image of the Minotaur captive in his Labyrinth, the isolation and despair of Klein’s depressive position takes on added dimension. Here we can feel into the torment of Kalsched’s internalized persecutor and Bion’s persecutory negative container. For the victim of childhood abuse,
the monster of trauma operates in their extreme longing for and simultaneous rejection of dependence, their inability to regulate emotions that take on demonic proportions, their all-too-real fear of betrayal, and their hopeless despair that they will remain forever trapped in a labyrinth constructed by their family of origin. In current cultural dialogue, we hear this in the demonization of the victim as a shrill and horrific reminder of the cultural transgressions we have already repressed and choose to ignore.

While this myth illustrates the victim’s experience, it fails to offer a satisfying resolution. The hero slays the monster rather than redeeming the beast. The relationship between Theseus and the Minotaur is inadequate to frame as the mature self taming the uncivilized cravings of the monster. Instead, it represents the rational conscious ego splitting off its undesirable animal urges and projecting them onto the unfortunate Minotaur. The slaying of the Minotaur illustrates the repression of the shadow, not its integration. On another level, the slaying of the Minotaur is an act of retribution. It is Theseus acting as a son of Athens and Poseidon punishing Minos, the father, for his impiety. It is a metaphor for familial and cultural perpetuation of trauma, in which the sins of the parent are visited on the child.

As an alternative myth, I propose looking at the victim-turned-hero, represented by Harry Potter, in the popular books by J. K. Rowling. For the reader not familiar with this story, on his 11th birthday, Harry Potter discovers that he is a wizard, as were his deceased parents, which earns him enrollment at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. At Hogwarts, Harry begins to unravel his personal history and his connection to the Dark Lord Voldemort. Their story begins the night that Voldemort kills Harry’s parents and attempts to kill Harry when he is just a child. Something goes terribly wrong for Voldemort that night. His curse rebounds off of Harry and on to him, rendering the
Dark Lord incorporeal and barely alive. The curse marks Harry with a lightning bolt scar that connects him to Voldemort’s thoughts and feelings. In each book, Harry and Voldemort confront each other. Voldemort gains power and strength, finding a new body and rebuilding his army of Death Eaters. Harry builds strong, loving relationships that sustain him through his trials. One of Harry’s key relationships is with Hogwarts’ sage headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, the only wizard Voldemort ever feared.

It is the relationship between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort that relates to this research. As foretold by prophecy, Harry’s powers are linked directly to the Dark Lord Voldemort. “The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches . . . The Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not . . .” The scar marks Harry as Voldemort’s equal, connecting to Harry some of Voldemort’s power. The power that Harry has, and of which the Dark Lord knows not, is Love. It is not just any love, but the love imparted to him by his mother, who sacrifices herself for him. Dumbledore explained this to Harry, saying: “Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love . . . to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever. It is in your very skin.” We also learn that before becoming Voldemort, the young Tom Riddle was abandoned to an orphanage. The difference between these two orphaned wizards and the roads they choose has to do with that precious gift of motherly love, enjoyed by Harry and unknown to Tom. In Harry’s case, unlike Tom’s or the Minotaur’s, there is an appropriate sacrifice by a parent, and the world order, though challenged by evil, ultimately endures.

Harry’s mother’s love “lived in his very skin,” suggesting that he has internalized the Mother. According to Carl Kerény, the experience of the archetypal mother removes
the fear of death through connection to the whole of humanity. For Harry, this is an important source of strength as he battles evil, in the form of Voldemort. Harry also encounters the Father in the form of Dumbledore. In this role, Dumbledore protects the initiatory process, providing safe containment and structure, while he teaches the concepts of intentionality and moral authority.

Harry’s scar symbolizes his trauma. It is a sacred wound, which entails great suffering, and bestows the potential for great gifts. The challenge for Harry, and for all who carry a sacred wound, is how to transmute the wound into the gift? At Hogwarts, Harry lives in a state of magical enchantment, where imagination knows few limits. It is a numinous world, where both light and shadow are visible to those who look. At numerous turns in the novels, Harry engages aspects of himself previously unknown to him, each providing him an opportunity to grow more fully into his whole self and emergent identity. In this way, Harry practices a form of dynamic surrender, where he willingly enters the unknown, tolerates the vulnerability and fear of facing forces greater than himself, and operates in the eternal now of possibility.

Harry’s capacity of imagination supports him in his journey. His ability to imagine into the feelings of safety and love his childhood lacked allows him to hold hope for his future and trust in relationship. His imagination also provides the bridge into Voldemort’s dark desires, pulling Harry into feelings and thoughts he would prefer to ignore. In this way, Voldemort acts as Kalsched’s internalized persecutor, operating in Harry’s psyche. As Voldemort dispatches his enemies, Harry feels the Dark Lord’s obsessive hatred and destructive anger course through his body. Through Voldemort, Harry feels into what May described as the ecstatic component of violence. These feelings give rise to the victim’s confusion of guilt and innocence described by Grand.
This confusion leads Harry to his own dark night of the soul, as he questions whether it is worth living with the unbearable pain of Voldemort’s presence in his life, mind, and body.

It is this connection between Harry and Voldemort that keeps Harry from being naïve or falsely innocent. He is forced into relationship with the complexity of good and evil, where neither is wholly separate of the other. In Harry, we see May’s understanding of authentic innocence at work, a clear, creative state that includes the sense of awe and wonder. Harry’s capacity for authentic innocence allows him to participate in the expansive mystery of life without denying its complexity. For Harry, authentic innocence becomes a source of renewal and power. This capacity empowers Harry’s imagination, allowing it to extend into both the bright, hopeful speculations about his parents and Dumbledore’s goodness, as well as into the potential evils of Voldemort and his perceived archenemy Professor Snape. Over the course of the books, Harry’s understanding of the world evolves to include an increasingly mature and complex understanding of human nature. This is illustrated in the final book in Harry’s acceptance of his beloved Dumbledore as a great wizard who also has tragic flaws, and Professor Snape as ultimately a brave and sympathetic hero, playing a tragic role in a great drama.

These realizations ensue through Harry’s capacity to confront the dark side of reality while simultaneously maintaining love and hope through connection to others. He comes to know evil directly through the Dark Lord’s thoughts and feelings that flow through his being. He maintains connection to others through a courageous innocence, that holds to what is good, while learning to accept that which is flawed. Harry’s confrontations with the shadow prepare him to meet the evil that is Voldemort and defeat it. Harry and Voldemort are one. Whether Voldemort is within Harry or outside of him
does not matter: the choice for Harry—for all victims—is the same: to recognize and name that which is evil, to choose to renounce it, and to take steps to end it.

How does Harry avoid becoming identified as a victim? The key to Harry’s identity lies in his capacities of innocence, imagination, courage, and love. The wonder of innocence protects from overwhelming fear and acts as a prism through which the questioning mind can engage complexity. Imagination provides the playground in which alternative choices and the ethical implications of these choices can be envisioned, weighed and tested. Courage, according to May, is the foundational value upon which all other virtues are built. Courage is to move forward authentically from the center of being, from the heart. Courage and love, or Eros, share the same organ, the heart, as their center of operation. Both are generative forces that propel Harry forward. Love underpins Harry’s courage, providing the relational environment in which complexity can be tolerated, processed, and integrated. By blending these capacities, Harry integrates both the archetypal Mother and Father, and emerges as a balanced hero, neither purely masculine nor feminine. Drawing on these capacities empowers Harry to open the door for creative action, even as the Dark Lord attempts to lock Harry into a compulsive repetition of the past.

An exchange between Harry and Dumbledore in the final book illustrates the power of imagination to inspire creative action. In this scene, Harry meets Voldemort on the field of battle, accepts the necessity of his own death, and allows Voldemort to deliver a fatal curse: an act of dynamic surrender. Harry awakes in the dream aspect of Kings Cross Station, where he may choose between returning to life or moving on to death. Here, Harry meets the dead Dumbledore, and after an illuminating exchange, Harry asks: “Is this real? Or has it been happening inside my head?” Dumbledore replies,
“Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?” The wise Dumbledore understands that imagination is real, and that a larger reality is accessible to those who willing to travel in their minds.

The Harry Potter myth suggests that a path to healing victim identity involves confronting the internalized figure of trauma, our personal Lord Voldemort. Stories such as Harry Potter invite us to enter the battle of good and evil, to tolerate and engage its complexity, and to allow our hearts to guide action. As illustrated in the Harry Potter tales, transmuting the sacred wound into a gift is an act of magic: magic within our reach if we have the courage to open ourselves to the power and awe of numinous imagination.

Another contemporary myth that captures the complexity of claiming personal power and overcoming victim identity can be found in The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins. In these stories, a young heroine, Katniss Everdeen, emerges as a symbol of courage and rebellion against the corrupt Capitol. The story is set in a dystopic future on the North American continent. Commanding this new order is the Capitol, which emerged from a cataclysmic civil war and now rules over 12 outlying districts. In contrivance for their rebellion, the districts must pay annual tribute in the form of one girl and one boy child to compete in the annual Hunger Games. Rather than being fed to the Minotaur, these tributes fight to the death in a high-tech version of the labyrinth. In the story, the Hunger Games are a televised production designed to fortify the narcissistic superiority of the denizens of the Capital, while simultaneously maintaining fear and repression in the outlying districts. Katniss volunteers for the ordeal in order to save her sister. Her fellow tribute from her district is Peeta, who has secretly harbored a crush on Katniss since childhood.
Through her cunning, bravery, and heart Katniss achieves the unprecedented, and she and Peeta survive the games. Her sacrifice by taking her sister’s place, her compassion for the weak in the games, and her defiance that ends up saving both her and Peeta fuel the flames of rebellion throughout the land. This sets her in opposition to the President, Snow, who then calls a special Hunger Games in which prior champions return to the Capital to fight again. The only female champion from her district, Katniss is destined to return and Snow is determined eliminate the threat she represents. This time with external intervention, Katniss survives the games and escapes to a distant district thought destroyed in the war. Here, she learns that a new civil war is underway and she is their symbolic heroine. The story climaxes when Katniss is given the honor of executing the defeated President Snow and instead turns her weapon on the new leader.

Katniss and all the citizens of the outlying districts represent victims, but, so too, do the deluded residents of the Capital who are consumed with their addiction to conspicuous consumption and ostentatious display. The contrast between the people of the Capital and the districts is suggestive of the inner world of trauma, where narcissistic defenses maintain a convincing-enough external façade, while the underlying shame, fear, and self-loathing of the victim shape the dominant experience. The perpetrator is a system, represented in President Snow and later in the new leader President Coin, that represses its people, hides the truth, and perpetuates ritualistic violence in the name of preserving peace. Katniss is driven by basic survival needs but never allows these to override her inherent sense of goodness. She combines feminine and masculine principles, staying close to her instincts and valuing interdependence and compassion, while also using her sharp analytical skills, employing discipline, and thinking independently. She manages the complexity of reality, attempting to discern good and
evil without drawing hard and fast lines that trap her in the past. Here lies another key to transcending victim identity. It entails the capacity to discern between good and evil in the present. This aligns with the ITP concept of creative action in which action is based on the potentials inherent in the present moment. Katniss’ great heroic act represents her capacity to rise above her personal pursuit of vengeance to meet the greater need of the moment by protecting the emergent nation. In Katniss, we see how it is necessary to rise above of the constraints of victim identity for the possibility of creative action.

The Hunger Games myth reveals dynamics at both the personal and the cultural levels of trauma. On the personal level, we trace Katniss’ family’s struggle to survive, her valiant sacrifice, and the brutality of the games and the system that she then confronts. On the cultural level, the Capitol’s repression, denial, and violence maintain a brutal order where a privileged few live in blissful ignorance about the reality of the majority whose labor supplies the Capitol’s voracious appetites. As is true with most dystopian literature, these dynamics reflect the current culture. They can be found in policies that undermine families and abandon children; that turn a blind eye to the causes of violence, domestic abuse, and addiction; and privilege the few over the many. The arguments supporting these policies often rest on simplistic worldviews that draw a fixed line between good and evil, casting the victim as an evil perpetrator who is alone responsible for his/her plight. A more complex understanding of these dynamics reveal that perpetrator and victim are inexorably linked, and the association of good and evil linked to these roles is often one of perspective.

The solutions to these problems are complicated and beyond the scope of this thesis, yet some have been illuminated through these myths. One rests on the role of the initiatory sacrifice. King Minos’ failure to make the appropriate sacrifice gave birth to a
monster and continued suffering. Harry Potter’s mother’s sacrifice protected her child and lead to the defeat of the evil Lord Voldemort. Katniss Everdeen’s sacrifice to save her sister seeded the ferment that would overthrow a corrupt regime. These myths suggest that trauma is initiation gone wrong, whereas appropriate initiation involves a trauma made sacred.

These myths also suggest that the capacities of innocence, imagination, courage and love play a significant role in the transcendence of victim identity. Innocence entails open curiosity, which invites new experience and growth. The path of innocence allows for awe and the experience of the mysterious other. The capacity of imagination creates spaciousness, allowing us to engage, contemplate and experiment with the potentiality of existence. Courage is the active force that quells fear so that forward movement is possible. And Love relates to the capacities developed through dependence and mutuality to tolerate, internalize and process experience. It contains the power of Eros to bring about transformation and propel us along the transformative path.

In Harry Potter and *The Hunger Games* trilogy, we can sense a new myth emerging: one where a balance of the Mother and Father—Feminine and Masculine—inform the hero’s adventures. This new myth might include a heroine who, like the classic hero, answers the call and endures the ordeals of individuation. She, too, travels into a dark, mysterious world where she must confront a monster. Our heroine, however, recognizes the monster and finds herself within it. This is where the new myth deviates from the old script. Rather than slaying those parts of the monster the heroine finds Other, she comes into relationship with them and integrates that which is timely and useful. In her wisdom, the heroine understands that the parts she could not integrate at this time may have value on a future quest and she respectfully departs, wishing the
Monster-turned-ally farewell. Where the hero of old represented the ego conquering the instinctual and unconscious, the new heroine brings her mature ego into alignment with the instincts, harnessing the primal power contained within them, and developing new capacities needed to explore the fathomless depths of the unconscious.

**Personal Reflections**

This study grew out of my personal experience of the numinous and my confrontation with the trauma archetype as it had been constellated in my internal landscape. Beginning this project, I did not fully appreciate the limiting effects of victim-identity, nor for that matter, how the victim and perpetrator are different expressions of the same underlying dynamic. I did not fully comprehend these aspects of self as representations of powerlessness. What I did know was that my personal encounters with Spirit had awakened in me power and capacities that allowed me to discern the boundaries of my own victim identity and brought me into contact with my internalized perpetrator. This project arose as a response to these experiences; it is my attempt to understand the role of numinous experience in my healing; and it represents my hope that my experience can help others on their healing path.

I was blessed that, through a spontaneous spiritual awakening, I came into contact with Spirit. My early encounters were truly numinous, containing Otto’s sense of “mysterium tremendum et fascinans.” 21 For the most part, these early excursions into the numinous were bright, optimistic, loving and hopeful, and yet they also contained the sense of being overpowered and swept away by forces greater than myself. These experiences with the numinous empowered me, expanding my understanding of the nature of reality and imparting feelings of joy and love. It was later that my internalized
persecutor came to the forefront. My supraconscious self deemed that it was time to confront and integrate deep splits that remained from childhood traumas. It was time to integrate my victim/perpetrator. Integration has been an ongoing task. Once I managed my initial terror and repulsion, the power of the internalized persecutor diminished; it was no longer possessed the mysterium tremendum but rather, came to signify the activation of my very human failings.

The course of this project has not been smooth. During this period of my life, I was caring for my ailing mother, traveling across country to be with her as her health declined and she eventually died. This provided a constant source of material for the consideration of victim identity, at times activating my own inner victim and dragging me into the abyss, and at other times opening me to new levels of compassion and forgiveness. My frustration with this process brought me into contact with my internal perpetrator who was at the ready with thoughts of retribution and punishment for the Terrible Mother. Fortunately, during this period, my access to the voice of the Friend grew, compensating for both the victim and perpetrator, and offering me a middle way through these difficult emotions.

It is my hope that this study provides yet another argument in support of the power of numinous experience to inspire transformative change. I plan to pursue this line of study working in a clinical setting and in groups in a variety of settings to further explore the practical application of evoking and expressing the numinous in service to psychological growth and healing. Many cited in my literature review have laid the groundwork for this, and I hope to be able to contribute to an expanded understanding of the full spectrum of normal and healthy human experience, which includes numinous and spiritual dimensions of experience. This expanded understanding of the numinous
includes these value propositions: that the mystery and awe of the numinous is an intrinsically human experience that occurs in the service of healing and growth; that to diminish, dismiss or rationalize this experience limits one’s conscious engagement with the full potentiality of humanity; and that through engagement with human potentiality, we grow in consciousness as a species.

**Implications of the Study**

The study of numinous experience takes us into highly subjective territory, often uncomfortable for traditional scholarly endeavors. Yet, I argue that studying numinous experience is the study of the objective dimension of subjective experience. It is the psychological exploration of the Real. The fact that the Real is illusive, ineffable and ultimately unknowable does not mean that our quest to study it is in vein, but rather, that it is eternal and ever-unfolding. Thus, if we accept that we can tap into the Real, even in a limited way, the question becomes: How do we capture the experience so that it continues to unfold and to expand our consciousness? How do we make the Real real to our limited consciousness? How do we convince our ego-identified selves that there is more, so much more, to this “I”?

These learnings suggest that one can begin by intentionally evoking the numinous and exploring its images in a praxis of embodied expression. This expression gives us the opportunity to ground the mystery of mysteries in a deep felt-sense of knowing. Through the numinous, we have the opportunity to come into relationship with disowned aspects of “I” in order to experience an expanded perception of self and reality. And this, in turn, presents opportunities for tolerance, reparation, acceptance, healing and growth.
I believe that these learnings and practices have implications for survivors of trauma and for most individuals seeking personal growth. The path of direct revelation suggests a path of deep personal knowing. This research followed that path into the dark recesses of experience to come into contact with the shadow. This contact can reveal hidden fears, needs, feelings and impulses that split our experience of self. Retrieving these lost aspects of self brings us into deeper relationship with what it is to be fully human. It allows us to own our good and evil impulses, and by doing so, to act from a place of greater authenticity and knowing.

For Imaginal Psychology, this research builds on ITP principles related to ritual, imagination, ecstatic states, and the nature of the self. It validates techniques and expands on current theory. The success of the research design to evoke the numinous confirmed the ancient use of ritual and drumming as a method to evoke ecstatic states in a psychologically oriented praxis. It demonstrated that the affective and somatic charge of numinous experience has the power to shift imaginal structures. This suggests that the study of ecstatic states and the numinous should be of particular interest in Imaginal Psychology.

This study contributed several concepts to the imaginal lexicon: first, the concept of creative projection, which describes a practice that supports the bridge between limited identity and expansive ecstatic states. Creative projection is the intentional use of an object to symbolize disowned aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. While the use of objects in this way predates this study, the naming of the phenomenon clarifies the processes that support imaginal praxis.

This research also proposed the concept of dynamic surrender. Dynamic surrender is intended to address the passive connotations of the word surrender, reframing it as an
intentional act of will that opens one to forces greater than the self. Developing a praxis of dynamic surrender to cultivate the capacities of trust and receptivity is an area deserving of further study and development.

Finally, this study identified the victim bind, which connects the concepts of pseudoinnocence, victimization and power to describe a dilemma inherent in victim identity. This bind illuminates the challenge of overcoming victim identity and is therefore an area of clinical significance worthy of further investigation.

The intersection of the numinous and trauma seems an area ripe with transformative potential and open for exploration. The popularity of *The Hunger Games* and the Harry Potter series have captured the imagination of a generation—and some of their parents—suggesting a deep desire to explore the shadow. The numinous provides a way of exploring the shadow that imparts a deeply-embodied knowing which bypasses standard defenses designed to keep the personal shadow protected from exposure.

The cultural dynamics of *The Hunger Games* is only a mild exaggeration of our current culture. It mirrors the deep divides between fundamentalists on both the political left and right, and between the haves and have-nots. Both sides perceive the world in terms of good and evil, and both identify as victims when it suits their ends. The ritualized spectacle of American politics uses invented truths to manipulate public opinion as effectively as the producer of the Hunger Games used genetically cloned monsters to thrill its audience. And for the most part, the modern public seems happy with its diet of fast facts and unsubstantiated opinion. It would seem that we are deep in an experiential exploration of our cultural shadow, the danger of which is all too obvious. This exploration is occurring without the benefit of conscious reflection and accountability. It has the potential to breach the dark recesses of the modern labyrinth
freeing monsters capable of mass destruction. And it perpetuates the cycle of victimization that keeps so many suffering and powerless.

The popularity of Harry Potter and *The Hunger Games* also suggest a hunger for transformation. Both hero myths are set in exceptionally dark worlds, where the hero and heroine are greatly out-powered. They overcome these circumstances by drawing from resources deep within and greater than the Self. They demonstrate a capacity to tap into the numinous and retrieve the power, wisdom and creative imagination needed in the moment. Bringing the power of numinous experience into the transformative environments of psychotherapy, education and community-building opens new potentials for working with the personal and cultural shadow. It suggests a way above and beyond where we are stuck in outdated models of behavior and reactivity. It holds the hope for a new myth that transcends the split between good and evil.
APPENDIX
APPENDIX I

ETHICS APPLICATION

Population

I will recruit ten participants with the goal of having a minimum of seven complete the project. They must have experienced interpersonal trauma before the age of 20. I will seek mature participants, age 35 or older, with the goal of working with individuals who have had the opportunity to process their traumatic reactions. To this end, they must have worked with their experience of trauma in a depth therapy environment for at least two years and self-report as emotionally resilient. As an additional precaution, participants must either be in therapy at the time of the research, or have access to a therapist that they have worked with in the past. The participants must report previous experience of both poles of the numinous. This may take the form of a serious depression and some form of a transcendent experience. Preference will be given to individuals who have experience with shamanic journeywork, have an ongoing gathering practice, such as meditation or yoga, are comfortable in their expressive abilities and who demonstrate a genuine interest in working with the archetypal dimension of experience. Gender and ethnicity are not factors in the research. Additionally, I will screen out any potential participant who appears to have a particularly challenging personality, as this might have a negative impact on the group dynamic, or on my ability to focus on the group as a whole.
Procedures Involving Research Participants

Recruiting Participants: I will seek participants in the general San Francisco Bay area. I will target the populations of various transformative learning centers, such as The Foundation of the Sacred Stream (http://www.sacredstream.org/), Spirit Rock (http://www.spiritrock.org/), The Holos Institute (http://www.holosinstitute.net), and from there, branch out to include regular meditation and transformative practice groups. I will first appropriate contact person, and share with them the materials I would like to use in recruiting members. If the majority of my research participants come from a single center, I may also investigate renting a room at that site to further enhance the sense of safety and belonging for the group. Additionally, a website will contain the same content as well as a downloadable questionnaire.

Screening Participants: Potential participants who respond to one of the recruiting tools and complete the questionnaire referenced above will be contacted by phone to schedule a screening interview. When scheduling permits, the interviews will be conducted in person, and if a mutually convenient time cannot be scheduled, then they will be conducted by phone. Interviews will be take place in a private office, the location of which is to be determined. Leading into the interview, I will briefly describe the intent of the research and the time commitment required. I will request permission to record the call or interview, and then, with permission, will restate the request and record the granting of permission. At the end of the interview, I will review the research dates, the participants’ availability and interest, and inform the candidates that they will be contacted in two weeks regarding their qualification for the project. In addition, I will comment on the possible psychological risks involved in participating.
Confirmation and Reminders: Acceptance and rejection will be communicated in writing. The acceptance mailing will include the Informed Consent Form, general instructions for the day regarding personal comfort, dress, food, directions and so forth. In addition to the acceptance letter reference above, an email reminder, with an RSVP request will be sent at least two weeks prior to the research. Anyone who does not respond to this will be contacted by phone to assess commitment to the project.

Arrival: When the participants arrive, I will welcome each one individually to review and collect the consent forms.

Orientation and Introductions: At 9:15 a.m., we will gather in a circle and begin with a brief meditation. I will ring a bell to end the meditation and begin by thanking the participants for their participation and introduce my co-researchers and myself. I will then provide information regarding restroom locations, exits and the schedule, in terms of breaks, lunch, and refreshments. We will review confidentiality, and I will communicate safety and self-care guidelines, provide information regarding the subject matter in preparation for the morning activities, and transition into the group introductions. As a way of introductions, participants will place an object on an altar that represents the meaning of the trauma archetype and their relationship to the archetype. The chiming, meditation and altar are meant to establish a sense of the sacred. The tone of the morning and the set up will all be maintained to establish a sense of safety.

Evoking-Expressing Sequence One: This segment is designed to evoke and express the personal and cultural dimensions of trauma to bring the experience into the room sufficiently, without causing an activation of traumatic symptoms. During the break, the researcher and coresearchers will place art materials and journaling supplies in front of each participant’s position. Chimes will be used to signal the transition from one
phase of the sequence to another. As I give direction for the next activity, two of the co-researchers will reveal each of the three selected images, walking them around the room so they are visible to all. I will instruct the participants to select one image and to write a few paragraphs placing themselves in the image and speaking from their experience of trauma. At the completion of the writing, I will invite the participants to embody their response to the images by standing and moving. I will then direct the participants to respond to the prewritten questions regarding the archetypal, cultural and personal dimensions of their response to the image. This portion will be followed by a 15-minute break, during which the participants will be asked to remain in a contemplative state.

*Evoking-Expressing Sequence Two:* This section is designed to evoke the numinous through a deep imagining of and direct encounter with the trauma archetype. The journey is potentially the most evocative part of the research design, and therefore, a number of safety designs have been built into it, as described below.

Chimes will again be used to move the participants in and out of different experiences, and drumming will accompany the visualization and journey. I will lead the visualization in which the participants will be introduced to two safety features: they will imagine meeting their friend and inviting the friend on the journey with them; and they will create and test a safety line back to normative reality. The participants will then be instructed to direct their attention to the middle of the room where they will imagine a pulsating orb that represents the gateway into the archetypal home of Trauma. This is where they are to go, find and engage the archetype to explore the answers to the questions. This orb represents another protective device, as it is a clear demarcation between the numinous energies within and waking reality without. With these instructions, the drumming will intensify to a journey rhythm, and the participants will be
lead up to the entry into the archetypal. A change in drum beat and verbal instruction will indicate that it is time to return. I will ask the participants to sit up as a signal that they are back. If someone does not sit up, the researcher or coresearcher will approach the individual and help them return by first whispering in their ear. If this does not get a response, a gentle touch to the shoulders will be applied, and should it be necessary, intervention will escalate from there, as described in the consent forms. The concern at this point is if an individual become overwhelmed by their experience. Should this happen, a coresearcher will help the person out of the circle and inquire whether they wish to continue. They will be reminded that participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw.

Upon their return from the journey, I will invite the participants to express their experience in artwork. At 15 minutes, the participants will be told that they have five more minutes left and to begin to conclude their art, and at 20 minutes, I will instruct the participants to respond to the prepared journaling questions in the booklets in front of them. Fifteen minutes will be allotted to the journaling.

*Expressing and Evoking Sequence Three:* This sequence serves to diversify and deepen the experience. Participants will begin with a guided meditation that invites them to feel into the experience of their encounter with Trauma from the previous journey. They will then be instructed to write a couple of sentences expressing the felt-tone of their experience. They will share those sentences with the group, along with a sound and a gesture. This is designed to bring the feeling-sense of the previous journey back into the forefront of the participants’ experiences. Co-researchers will then indicate four positions around the room: Trauma, Victim, Bystander and Friend. The participants will be directed to move between the positions, expressing the voice of each position. Again, the
researcher and coresearchers will observe for signs of overwhelm, and should a participant need to withdraw from the group, to remind them that participation is voluntary, and they can stop or reenter at their will. Following this sequence, the participants will have a 15-minute break.

*Evoking-Expressing Sequence Four:* This segment transitions from the archetypal to the personal to illuminate imaginal structures. During the break, the co-researchers will assist in placing the images from Sequence One, as well as the participants’ artwork, in the room so that they are easily visible. After chiming in, the participants will be invited to walk around and view the images. They each will then be instructed to write a short myth about the trauma archetype; they will have 30 minutes for this portion of the sequence. Following the writing, they will be asked to respond to prewritten journaling questions. Each participant will then be given two minutes to express from the voice of the Archetype. This will lead directly into the gathering practice in which the voice of the Friend will be introduced.

*Gathering Practice:* The first day of research will end with a moving meditation in which the participants will be invited to bring in the voice of the Friend. They will then be invited to move and vocalize, feeling the Friend move through them. In the final closing, each participant will be invited to bring forth the encouragement of the Friend. This is designed to close the container with a supportive internalized voice to ease the participants’ transition out of the research project.

Between the first and second meeting, a reminder email is sent to the participants. The second meeting day begins with a similar sequence of events: the participants are greeted at the door and welcomed with a brief orientation to the day. The day’s activities
then start with a Gathering Practice, which is comprised of a heart-based mediation, reintroducing the concept of the Friend.

*Evoking-Expressing Sequence Five:* Based on the short myths written by the research participants, I will construct a short myth of Trauma between the sessions, and read it out loud to the participants in order to evoke the experience of the previous session. The participants will then be asked to answer prewritten journaling questions regarding their experience. When the time has elapsed, I will ring a chime and invite the participants to move, expressing their experience, and then to offer a gesture. This sequence is designed to bring the participants back into the experience of the first day and to gather additional information regarding their experience.

*Integrating Sequence One:* The first of two integrating sequences will focus on the experience of the participants. In a facilitated discussion, they will be asked to identify key moments and discuss why they were significant.

*Integrating Sequence Two:* The second integrating session will bring forth the research team’s key moments and a summary of our learnings for discussion with the research participants. These will be offered verbally, and notes of the participants’ comments will be kept to further refine my final dissertation submission.

The goal in having two integration sequences is to, first, empower participants to engage in the process without biasing their responses, and second, to offer the researcher’s findings to participants for their informed consideration. The final goal of this process is to generate learnings, which reflect the experience of the participants as well as the researchers, and to allow the inclusion of material not immediately present in the first day of research.
Gathering and Closing: The final activity will be a closing meditation in which the voice of the Friend is reintroduced and vocalized in a closing circle in order to ground the participants prior to sending them home. This practice is also designed to help meet any gatekeeping voices activated by the day’s events.

Consent Process

Two copies of the Informed Consent Form will be sent with the acceptance letter for the participants’ review prior to the first meeting. During the check-in process, prior to beginning the first session, I will review the Informed Consent form with each participant. I will remind them that the intent of the study is an exploration of archetypal dimension of trauma, and that, as such, we will be working with sensitive issues. I will also remind them that I will be collecting data in the form of tape recording, digital video, and participant writing, journaling and artwork, as well as note-taking by the co-researchers. I will ask if they have any questions or concerns, and we will both sign the forms, so that they may keep one copy and one copy will go into my research files.

Risks: The participants will be asked to imagine into and express aspects of their inner guidance, and their personal and the archetypal experience of trauma. This necessitates that participants have developed capacities for working with authentic imagination and are comfortable expressing themselves through a variety of mediums and in a group setting. Moreover, participants will need the capacity for introspection and reflection in order to discern, acknowledge, express and work with challenging affects such as fear, shame, guilt, anxiety, and anger. The experience of these challenging affects, along with a risk of feeling exposed, may result in the participant feeling unsafe, with the potential of triggering traumatic reactions, such as panic or dissociation. The
consequence of such a reaction could be withdrawal from the study, or the inability to reach the desired affective state of numinous experience. Another potential consequence is that the reaction occurs subsequent to the research project, and may be experienced as either depressive or anxiety symptoms. Core wounds from childhood may be activated in unpredictable ways that an individual might have previously thought to be resolved.

*Safeguards:* Safeguards begin with the screening process, are raised as part of the Informed Consent process, continue through careful attention during the entire research process and are reinforced through confidentiality. The screening process is designed to select individuals with strong enough transformative practices and reflective capacities to engage in this highly affective state without negative consequences. Additionally, participants are required to either be in therapy, or have access to a therapist to process material raised through their experience in the research. The Informed Consent provides participants with information that will help them self determine their sense of safety entering the research, including but not limited to: information regarding the subject matter and methods to be used and emphasis on the need to have therapeutic support, confidentiality and the option to withdraw. During the research, my co-researchers and I will be attuned to maintaining the safety of the field. This will be achieved by the creation of a ritual space, paced and comforting delivery of instructions, and the holding of participants through our own posture, expressions and appropriate gaze. Additionally, by assigning four co-research roles, I have provided adequate support should a participant require additional support in the immediate moment.

The design of the research also builds in safeguards by reviewing confidentiality and self-care instructions, introducing the Friend, creating an anchor and a safety line into normative reality, and in gathering practices at the end of each day.
The co-researchers provide an important safeguard in their presence, which will balance a professional demeanor with warmth and accessibility through eye contact, compassionate and attuned responses, and a general stance of providing both acceptance and structure. Additionally, the researchers’ own reflexivity would serve to diminish potential projections, which is very important because projections could trigger reactivity on the part of the participants.

**Benefits:** The benefits of this study would first affect those who participate. Access to the numinous may reinforce a sense of personal power and deep connection with the mystery of being, which, in turn, may facilitate a movement toward greater integration and wholeness. There also exists the potential to diversify the individual’s experience of trauma, which may generate an increased sense of spaciousness with a corresponding reduction in an alignment with the victim identity. This could result in greater, or more frequent, feelings of peace, forgiveness of self and others, compassion or other positive emotional states yet to be determined.

As a study, this research holds the potential to invigorate fresh interest in direct mystical experience as a means of psychological growth and healing, in relation to the shadow dynamics of the numinous, which is often more challenging, and therefore, less studied. It will test and propose a method of evoking numinous experience in the service of transformation, a tool that may have wider applications in both individual and group settings. It will also add to the understanding of how to work with numinous symbols, and particularly those that may, at first, inspire fear and repression, and yet, in fact, may hold transformative potential. Additionally, it further elaborates on the growing body of literature related to Imaginal Psychology and its techniques and practical implications.
After the Study: The primary focus of the second day of research is on working with the participants to understand their key moments and learnings. This is designed to help the participants integrate their experience. The researchers key moments and learnings will also be shared at this time and discussion facilitated. Following the completion and acceptance of the dissertation, a letter to participants will inform them that the research is complete, and will describe the key learnings in a direct, accessible manner.
APPENDIX 2

CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE

A. Evoking Experience
   1. Meeting One
      a) Guided meditations
      b) Showing of images
      c) Guided journey
   2. Meeting Two
      a) Meditative revisiting of the activities of the day
      b) Reading of the myths and stories.

B. Expressing Experience
   1. Meeting One
      a) Verbal expression
      b) Reflexive journaling
      c) Movement and gesture
      d) Artwork
      e) Speaking from the positions of: Trauma, Victim, Bystander and Friend
      f) Writing a short myth
   2. Meeting Two
      a) Discussion

C. Interpreting Experience
   1. Meeting One
      a) Meeting with co-researcher at end of meeting to debrief key moments
   2. Between Sessions
      a) Review and work with all data
   3. Meeting Two
      a) Participants reflect on and discuss impact of participating
      b) Responding to myths and stories
      c) Identifying key moments

D. Integrating Experience
   1. Meeting One
      a) Guided meditation
      b) Movement with music
2. Meeting Two
   a) Meditation
   b) Discussion of experience
   c) Discussion of key moments and learnings
   d) Closing meditation
   e) Closing ritual, voice of the Friend
MEETING ONE

I. Informed Consent and Orientation (9–9:25) (25 minutes)
   A. Obtain each participant’s signed Informed Consent form (15 minutes)
      1. Welcome each participant at the door.
      2. Indicate locations of restrooms and refreshments and inform about start-time of 9:15.
      3. Review confidentiality guidelines and obtain signed consent form.
   B. Orientation (10 minutes)
      1. Thank participants for their participation
      2. Review space–bathrooms, refreshments, exit locations, and so forth
      3. Include information regarding schedule of breaks and lunch.
      4. Remind participants that at all times participation is voluntary.
      5. Review confidentiality again.
      6. Confidentiality applies to researchers and participants.
      7. Introduce co-researchers.
      10. Transition to first activity by saying we will start with a meditation and then have introductions.

II. Introductions (9:25–10:15) (50 minutes)
    A. Brief meditation (10 minutes)
    B. Introductions (25 minutes)
    C. Break (15 minutes)

III. Evoking-Expressing Sequence One (10:15–11:00) (45 minutes)
    A. Evoking: Display images (5 minutes)
    B. Expressing: Story-writing (10 minutes)
    C. Expressing: Authentic movement and sound (4 minutes)
    D. Expressing: Journaling (20 minutes)
    E. Break (6 minutes)

IV. Evoking-Expressing Sequence Two (11:00–12:20) (80 minutes)
    A. Evoking: Guided Visualization and Journey: (40 minutes)
    B. Expressing: Artwork (20 minutes)
    C. Expressing: Journaling (20 minutes)

V. Lunch Break (12:20–1:30)

VI. Gathering Practice (1:30–1:35)
    A. Re-open circle
B. Brief Grounding Meditation

VII. Evoking-Expressing Sequence Three (1:35–2:40) (65 minutes)
A. Evoking: Guided meditation to feel into trauma archetype (5 minutes)
B. Expressing: Write and share (25 minutes)
C. Expressing: Participants will express from the archetypal positions of Trauma, Victim, Friend, Bystander (25 minutes)
D. Break (10 minutes)

VIII. Evoking-Expressing Sequence Four (2:40–3:55) (90 minutes rounded up)
A. Evoking: Viewing of images. (Set up during break) (3 minutes)
B. Expressing: Myth writing. (30 minutes).
C. Expressing: Journaling (20 minutes)
D. Expressing: Voice of the trauma archetype (20 minutes)

IX. Gathering Practice (3:55–4:15) (20 minutes)
A. Guided moving meditation (5 minutes)
B. Sounds of feeling state (5 minutes)
C. Voice of the Friend (5 minutes)

X. Administrative (4:15–5:15)
A. Gather researchers’ key moments.
B. Process key moments through reflexive dialogue with researchers.

MEETING TWO

I. Welcome and Orientation
A. Greet participants
B. Welcome each participant at the door.
C. Indicate locations of rest rooms and refreshments
   1. Provide orientation for the day
   2. Thank them again for participating
   3. Review space–bathrooms, refreshments, exit locations, and so forth
   4. Include information regarding schedule of breaks and lunch.
   5. Remind participants that at all times participation is voluntary.
   6. Review confidentiality, which applies to researchers and participants.
   7. Introduce co-researchers.
   9. Open circle–Chime in.

II. Gathering Practice:
A. Heart meditation (10 minutes)

III. Integrating Sequence One
A. Discussion of participation

IV. Evoking-Expressing Sequence Five
A. Reading of stories and myths
B. Discussion

V. Evoking Sequence Six
A. Meditative revisiting of the day

VI. Integrating Sequence Two
A. Ask participants to share and identify key moments
B. Invite discussion
VII. Integrating Sequence Three
   A. Share researchers’ key moments and preliminary learnings
   B. Invite discussion
   C. Indicate that the final key moments and learnings will reflect today’s discussion.

VIII. Gathering
   A. Heart meditation – bring in voice of the friend. (5 minutes)
   B. Closing circle (10 minutes)

IX. Administrative
   A. Gather researchers’ additional insights.
   B. Process key moments through reflexive dialogue with researchers.
APPENDIX 4

INFORMED CONSENT

To the Participant in this research:

You are invited to participate in a study on the trauma archetype. The study’s purpose is to generate new understandings of trauma’s complex and multidimensional expression in the lives of individuals and our culture.

As a research participant, you will be invited to take part in guided meditations and visualizations, an imaginal journey to meet the archetype, and to creatively express your experience in art and writing, and verbally in dialogue and a structured dramatic interpretation. As a participant, you agree to attend two meetings: a full day of research on (date) at (place); and a half-day in which experience will be discussed and learnings explored, on (date) at (place). The meetings will be recorded with audio and video and will later be transcribed.

In order to foster an environment of trust and safety, both participants and researchers must respect the confidentiality of information shared and experience expressed as part of the research project. This means that what is said in the group should not be repeated to others, nor should the identities of the group participants be revealed to others outside the group. Video and audiotapes, and their transcripts, will be kept confidential, and participants’ identities will be protected. In the reporting of information in published material, any information that might identify you will be altered to ensure anonymity.

The study is designed to generate research findings, rather than to serve as a therapeutic activity, and it may, therefore, offer no direct benefit to you. The published findings, however, may be useful to individuals and groups who have suffered trauma and are attempting to heal from their experience. The study may also illuminate various dimensions of traumatic healing, which will support a more thorough consideration of therapeutic techniques for both individuals and groups.

This study is designed to minimize potential risk to you as a participant. However, some of the activities such as, the guided visualization and journey, as well as the expression of your experience, may evoke strong emotions. These emotions may potentially include, but are not limited to: fear, shame, anger and grief. If at any time during the research these emotions result in extreme distress, one of my co-researchers or I will make every effort to discuss these with you. As researchers, we cannot provide psychotherapy. Research participants are required to, either, be in therapy or have access to a trusted therapist. You are encouraged to discuss your experience as a participant with your
psychotherapist, as that relationship is confidential and your participation may give you new material to work with in your therapy. If you require additional referrals to a psychotherapist, I can offer you a list of therapists in the area.

If you decide not to participate in this research, you may withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time, for any reason. Please note, as well, that I, the researcher, may need to terminate your participation from the study at any point, and for any reason.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may call me at (###) ###-####, or you may contact the Dissertation Director at Meridian University, 47 Sixth Street, Petaluma, CA. 94952, telephone: (707) 765-1836. Meridian University assumes no responsibility for any psychological or physical injury resulting from this research.

I, the undersigned, consent to participate in the study of the trauma archetype. I have had this study explained to me by Elizabeth Cassanos. My questions have been answered, and I have received a copy of this consent form. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary.

__________________________________________
Research Participant Printed Name

__________________________________________ Date: _______
Research Participant Signature

__________________________________________ Date: _______
Primary Researcher Signature (Elizabeth Cassanos)
APPENDIX 5

DATA SUMMARY

The Data Summary includes a consideration of the study’s validity criteria, along with an exploration of the key moments of research. The participants’ own words are used to exemplify each key moment. Their words were either transcribed from the videotape, or collected in written form as part of the journaling or story- and myth-writing. The stories and myths are included in their entirety in Appendix 7 and 8 and Appendix 9 contains the participants’ artwork.

Validity

The principal validity consideration for the research was the evocation of the numinous as an intense affective experience of the trauma archetype. The primary evoking experience was the guided visualization and shamanic journey to the archetype as part of Evoking-Expressing Sequence Two, with a secondary evocation in a guided meditation as part of Sequence Three. Two measures were included in the journaling questions to assess whether the numinous was evoked. One question directly asked: “In the journey, did it feel like you traveled outside of the ordinary? If so, how was your experience different from ordinary experience?” The other provided a list of feeling-states to describe the experience. The journaling questions also solicited additional information regarding the journey, including the feeling sense, strong images, and information accessed via the archetype.

All the participants answered, “Yes” to the question, “. . . did it feel like you traveled outside of the ordinary?” This self-report affirms that the numinous was evoked. Sophia reported: “Yes, I traveled outside the ordinary. I ‘floated,’ and was unconcerned about surroundings and my safety. I also felt free and self-assured.” Ava, who has extensive shamanic experience, wrote: “Yes. Even though I have lots of openings to an embodied sense of flow/aliveness, I’m usually more constricted by the freeze response, but this was like having an epic/spiritual dialogue with all of this, and feeling the energetic presence of the force underneath or behind these polarities (of death/shutdown/freeze/trauma and life/aliveness/flow/sensuality). There was a such a sense of well being light and perfection to all parts (I’m usually more polarized into one side of the other).” Emily wrote (emphasis hers): “Yes, absolutely. I was fascinated to discover that the orb, the door to the symbolic/Greater Reality/numinous/archetypal/spiritual and genetic memory LEADS TO SOMEPLACE MORE REAL, while I then perceived ‘normal reality’ to be the cloudy dream.”
Five of the six participants reported meeting the trauma archetype. The participant who did not meet the archetype was also the one participant who did not have previous experience with journeywork. She reported having a more kinesthetic experience. She answered the question “Did you meet Trauma? If not, what did you encounter?” in this way: “I had a hard time conceptualizing Trauma as an external identity. First, I experienced a bright sun, then some cherries. Just as I was heading back to the orb in the room an image of a lovely woman–blue, young, friendly–appeared in my eyelids–with rays of blue emanating from her face. Then there was a shift and she was scary looking–that was only a flash moment–then image was gone.” In her journaling, this participant indicated the feeling states of: holy, approachable, fear-provoking, demonic, calming, gracious and comforting.

Overall, the terms most identified with the journey represent the type of extreme and contradictory experience described by Otto, including: approachable, calming, relieving, fascinating, powerful, comforting, breathless, awesome, holy, expansive, awe-full, sacred and blissful. Three participants added their own words to the list, including: neutral, empowering, massive, contained, beautiful, breathtaking, inspirational, constructive, saving, guiding, brilliant, life-changing, hopeful, tender, deeply precious, loveable, sacred, sensual, alive, energetically pulsing, palpable and presence. Sophia used the word neutral, which is consistent with her description of Trauma as, “. . . a very matter-of-fact voice who dwelled in darkness.” She went on to describe the feeling-sense of the archetype, writing: “I was struck with the nonchalant manner of trauma. ‘Nothing personal’–in fact, it said so.”

One criterion for validity was not met: having seven participants complete the research. After reviewing the data from the two groups, particularly given the change in the format of day two which allowed the participants greater freedom in expressing their experience, I determined that the data gathered with six participants was sufficient to address the Research Problem: How does Numinous Experience affect one’s sense of personal power in relation to victim identity?

Key Moments

Five distinct events and three general aspects of the day were identified by the participants, my co-researcher and myself as the key moments. The most-often-named event was the shamanic journey and the subsequent artwork of Evoking-Expressing Sequence Two. It received a weighted score of 18. The next most-frequently-named activity was expressing from the positions, as part of Evoking-Expressing Sequence Three. It received a weighted score of 12. The opening ritual and introductions were the next-most-named activity, with a weighted score of 7.5. The fourth spot was tied between Sequence One, with the art images and story-writing as the primary activities, and the general activity of writing throughout the day, and the general activity of sharing or dialogue. Two activities were identified by individuals. I identified an intensification of energy that started in the introductions and continued through the morning as part of the flow of the day that was palpable to me, and one participant linked this to her ranking of the opening ritual. And the other activity identified by one person was the myth-writing. It is possible to combine some of these general categories, so that writing is a
category, and ritual, beginning with the opening ritual, is another. This would raise the weighted score of ritual to nine and of writing to five, which would make the overall ranking: 1) journey and art, 2) speaking from the four position, 3) introductions/ritual 4) writing, and 5) sharing/dialogue.

**Key Moment One: Journey, Artwork**

The journey and the artwork were named by all but one participant as a key moment. Several of the participants discussed the sense of empowerment in traveling to meet the trauma archetype. Ava described finding her own trauma blocking her way to the archetype, and how, moving beyond that, she “lost the oppressor.” Sophia commented on the journey and artwork: “. . . it facilitated my moving toward power.” While Olivia credited the journey and artwork with giving her “more insight into what was going on internally,” Emily reported having “a different experience of acceptance.”

Sophia described her feeling-sense in the journey, writing: “Pit of my stomach was activated with dread and fear. I also felt angry for a short time and had started to demand better explanations from Trauma about its role and reason to exist.” Describing vivid images from her journey, she wrote: “The pulsating orb was black with a white, sparkling ring of light around it, like a moon-eclipse. As I travelled to locate Trauma, I passed thru dark tunnels. I saw colors of different objects but all the colors were always “dirty.” Here is a portion of what she shared about her journey:

. . . when I found Trauma hiding under a blanket, a thinly veiled blanket of light . . . I said, ‘Aha! That’s where you’re hiding,’ trying to look like something else. And trauma had no face, no form, it was darkness, black, menacing. But it had a voice and it spoke to me. And one of the things that struck me was that it was matter of fact, nonchalant. Its job, what it was there to do, was to suppress and hold back. If that meant pain, well OK. So be it. So it could not expand so you could not expand and show all my true self. One of the things I found it had taken from me—that it was holding from me—was my preciousness, and I was very angry about that. I kept demanding more explanations from Trauma to let me know more about what it was. Why did it want to affect me this way? Why did it want to affect anyone this way? It was like a big sole of a shoe coming down to pin me down to prevent me from moving forward so I can show and feel my own preciousness and be there for me and others in a better way. I left feeling that I had a chance of conquering trauma. That I felt Trauma was not overwhelming in my life although it was there. Because I did meet Trauma, I was able to deal with trauma better; even though it didn’t have a face, it had a voice. Therefore, I felt more powerful when I left than when I was searching for Trauma. And I left feeling satisfied that I had finally met Trauma.

In the journaling, Sophia reported that Trauma comes from, “beneath,” from the “deep recesses of existence, from the world of holding down and holding back, from the world pain and suffering.” It exists “To prevent expansion of oneself and to isolate. To keep me away from the light of self love so I will not grow.” It entered her life “to show me what love isn’t. To show me what hurt is.” When Sophia asked Trauma if it had a
message for her, it answered: “It’s just my job. Don’t take it personally.” Sophia added to these comments: “But it could also be my opportunity to grow stronger, i.e. Disease that infects and the body builds better antibodies; weather destroys homes, humans build stronger ones.” In answer to the question: “What message, if any, did it have for mankind?” Sophia learned: “If mankind wants to expand with the ever expanding universe it must learn to rise up from all its pain and link together (bond together) to be a stronger force into the future.” Expanding on the idea that Trauma had taken her “preciousness,” she explained, “It held my most beautiful aspect of myself. It’s a thief!”

Isabella reported having mixed feelings going into the journey, but coming out more empowered. In her journaling, she described feeling: “A little trepidation and apprehension. In the end I felt empowered . . . I felt gratitude for the power that Trauma gave me.” In her journey, she described meeting a gatekeeper, and then evil that lived on floating pieces of earth (Appendix 9). Here are her words about the journey:

. . . when I approached there was a gatekeeper, a very dark, black evil mass. But when I became the gatekeeper I realized he was living on fear and his fear was what pushed him to be mean and scary. And so when I saw that I thought well you’re not anything to fear and you can’t hurt me and behind him were all this big strong pillars and heavy strong things he had stolen over all these years; and as I passed them I saw they were just cardboard, they weren’t real. So I ignored them and I walked on and I saw evil lurking, hanging on the air on a piece of earth so he could swoop down and steal my innocence or self worth. And when I became those different evil things, I felt they were just like a bully living on fear and anger and lack of self worth, and I felt sorry for them. So that made my fear dissipate, and I felt stronger, and then I came across something that was very scary it was like a giant ogre that would hurt me. I felt my little warrior inside of me stand up and say you don’t need to be afraid, it may be big and scary but you can walk underneath or around it you don’t need to be afraid. So I did. And when I saw that the ogre turned around and I felt sad and more forgiveness, and when I did that I realized I don’t need to fear these things; that I have the power in me to forgive and realize that they are nothing but fear and that’s not power. And so with my angles with me and my brother with me, I just felt very calm and centered and . . . I knew I didn’t have to fear anything . . .

Isabella brought back a wealth of information from her encounter with Trauma. She learned that it comes from: “Fear. Not being loved and accepted.” It exists because, “People who are ruled by their own fears inflict pain, physical and emotional, on others causing distrust in themselves and others.” From her visit she learned: “I am lucky. I found my way from Trauma to Strength to Love.” And Trauma delivered a message through her for mankind: “If we want to make our world a better place and everyone says this is so, then we need to become better people—we have to make a choice to be loving and to have a loving world—or spread Trauma from one generation to the next. It needs to start with us.” When asked if Trauma had something of hers, Isabella answered: “I thought Trauma stole my life, my heart, my goodness. But when I realized I still had all that inside me, Trauma grew weak and disappeared.”
On her journey, Isabella encountered her younger brother who had died, two angels with whom she is familiar and an “inner warrior of peace.” Their roles: “My guides remind me what is real or what is imagined. My warrior reminds me that I am safe. My brother reminds me that I am loved.”

In her journey, Emily encountered Trauma in an image of muscle flooded with feeling and sensation. In her myth, this muscle represented the embodied experience of trauma, from the perspectives of both victim and perpetrator. After the journey, she wrote: “I literally saw a large, vivid, pulsating image of muscle tissue!!! Wow. I saw the universal vulnerability of all of us human beings to producing trauma (for others) and so many . . . of us to receiving trauma.” Journaling about the sensations of her journey, she noted (emphasis hers): “Happiness, recognition, relief and joy, because the power was taken out of Trauma by me recognizing so clearly for the first vivid, utterly simple, cogent time what it actually is. And in this recognition, tremendous hope for my own recovery and healing.” Emily shared the following with the group:

My journey today had a descent into the underworld and then coming back up. I had to traverse some moat or challenge. It was really painful – a rite of passage almost . . . I have a sense of gratitude and good feeling about myself that I was able to make the traverse down and under and up. That was a big deal, especially around this kind of material. My journey itself was just awesome, profound . . . I felt actually happy when I came into contact with my Trauma. I felt ‘Oh my gosh: That’s what it is.’ I feel so good about this journey. It was very hope giving and very orienting and very healing. I actually feel set on a new path from my encounter with what I saw as the archetype.

Emily described trauma as coming from: “Higher Consciousness trying to cope with living on the material plane of reality in bodies–flesh and blood . . . bodies. We are enormously vulnerable to trauma, both creating and receiving it, because our species is so so so incredibly new and young.” She continued this line of thought, explaining why Trauma exists: “Because we have only barely begun to have accurate knowledge of how we are built developmentally and therefore, by extension, have only barely begun to have accurate knowledge of how to interact correctly, healthily, optimally with our progeny.” The messages that Trauma held for Emily were twofold: “Our Higher Power (Jesus) can heal me because He is God and the experience of being me!” and “I need to express myself!!!!” In answer to “Did Trauma have something of yours?” Emily found: “Trauma is holding my adult life hostage until it gets its needs met.” On her journey, Emily encountered familiar guardians including Jesus, Mary, Bear, White Deer? and Hawk. Their purpose was, “. . . to save me from the inevitable duality and impossible challenge of being a SOUL in a HUMAN BODY, and to heal me and my life in Wholeness, and to help me share that healing with others.”

Olivia described the feeling-sense of her encounter with trauma, using the words: Wonder, awe, reverence, compassion and peace. Olivia used her artwork to share her journey (Appendix 9) and described her encounter with the archetype as a visit to a ritualistic hearth where trauma is in a state of constant processing and transformation;
Olivia later expressed: “If it’s moving all is good.” Here’s an excerpt from her sharing in the circle:

My drawing is really significant—that is trauma in the middle of the circle; it’s a hearth. That’s what I arrive to and I described it in my journaling as deep in the psychic jungle of the collective unconsciousness or collective consciousness. As I was walking there, I was getting a bit of a feeling from the poster, The Scream—a little bit of the same feeling from that of being lonely, nobody around, emptiness. . . But then pretty quickly, I went into the forest. It was a tropical forest somewhere, and it was like a ritualistic a shaman-mystic field around the whole thing, and basically, what it turned out to be is a place where all trauma is processed, and there’s a constant vigil-ritual going on there. And there are guardians there that are committed to making sure that all trauma is processed—all trauma in the world in the collective consciousness. And witnessing it and drawing it felt really awesome and really good, and there’s a sense of it’s being taken care of for others and myself. And even the trauma itself looked beautiful, it was all this blue and orange and red and fire and wind and shifting images . . . I think one of the most significant things: it was always moving always processing; it wasn’t stuck somewhere, and that was key . . . There’s a shaman there too—the Trauma Shaman—just there, like: “This is my commitment here on the planet is to process trauma . . .” It’s an image that will definitely stay with me. That’s really neat; I find it really healing and growth-full when images come and stay as part of my healing-transformation process, and it will be utilized as part of my transformational process.

Olivia discovered that Trauma exists as: “. . . the disconnect between our vulnerable and loving selves.” She did not have an answer for why Trauma entered her life, but it did hold a message for her: “I am being taken care of. I am in a sacred temple, deep in a jungle of the collective consciousness. I am being contained, held, processed and guarded with compassion, wisdom, acceptance and forgiveness.” For mankind, Olivia retrieved this message: “There is a place and a way that trauma can be healed.” Trauma took from Olivia: “. . . the connection between my loving adult self and scared little girl. Yet in this hearth, I’m able to process and rewire pathways to establish the connection.”

Ava reported that during the visualization and journey: “I felt at first the frozen/contracted energies that could be in the way of me meeting trauma, and as soon as I brought attention/awareness to these energies . . . they quivered/shivered out of my body, and I felt at ease. Then, very strong sensations/energetic feelings of good feeling/aliveness/energetic flow and movement/measure/alignment.” Writing about vivid images from her journey, Ava journaled: “When Liz guided us to go into our hearts and to see as our heart sees, to be the eye of our heart, a whale’s eye came so strongly into my sense of my heart. I felt the intense depth, wisdom and ancient knowing of this being and of my heart. Also had strong images of memories of three big dreams in my life and also of an exquisite, bright light that came to me, especially filled my middle section and out from there.”
At the second session, Ava shared that the journey had profound after effects, which continued to unfold in the weeks that followed the initial session. Describing the many sensations and images that came to her in the journey she said: “One was an experience of light—it was extraordinary; I don’t know how to put it into words. I feel tearful. It was probably one of the more powerful mystical experiences of my life; it was really amazing . . . I had such a strong visitation of light; I don’t know how to describe it. It was this profound visitation of light and it’s, kind of, repeated several times since that time.” In her writing after the journey, Ava explained:

It came to me in this journey that Trauma comes from us. We are the creators of our universe, of our lives, of our reality and we created trauma to help us know the divine will. Trauma confronts our ego senses of will when we’re not remembering the larger will/divine soul. It puts the small will in check, humbles us, pins us down and teaches us the lessons of surrender, of witnessing what is and in the seeing of what is with our ability to not act out our separate ego selves, we can see the truth of divine nature and the sacredness of all life (with us as the caretakers of this inheritance which is us!)

Writing about why Trauma exists and why it came into her life, Ava reported:

What came to me was that trauma was given to us to help us consciously remember that we are the divine/God/Goddess. We separated from our selves to have a deeper knowing of ourselves and to make conscious who we are so we could have ourselves; we could experience ourselves as God. Trauma helps us see what is not this union of our true essence. It teaches us when we’re out of alignment with our true self and also helps us to modulate how we bring all the pieces back together. It titrates our ability to handle the largeness and epicness of wholeness . . . Trauma entered my life to help me learn about power/the divine will . . . thy will and to help me see the ways I have acted in a small, ego power over way, mind over matter way, masculine suppressing/opposing/repressing the feminine way and in witnessing these parts of myself (taking back these projections onto the world) I have been able to feel into the power beyond all of this, the true power that is who we are and that is healing . . . (true power is healing).

Ava also received a message from Trauma:

That we are divine, the world is divine, everything is perfect as it is; all things have a reason and a gift. My personal will has been arrested in order for me to receive the divine will/nature. There is a deep connection between sensuality/embodiment/the divine feminine and the heart and the working through the resurrection or the salvation of trauma.

And the message she retrieved for mankind was:

The trauma archetype came to me as a midwife sent from God/Goddess to help birth humanity into being conscious responsible caretakers of life. It showed me
that God/dess separated from God/dess in order to help us to consciously own who we are (God/dess), and that trauma is one of the energies in this cosmic dance that shows us when we are at the extreme polarities of disconnection. The bad feelings of trauma tell us that we are not in the flow of life.

Ava found that trauma had . . .

. . . It just had a part of me that I was projecting outside of myself. I was not fully accepting the parts that feel bad to me in the effects of the trauma with in me (i.e. the freeze and shut down parts). I saw that I/me as a part of the divine, created these freeze etc. energies to help me metabolize and titrate the epicness, hugeness and potentially very overwhelming aspects of having all the parts of me come together. The freeze energies block me from feeling too much;, they protect me from the largeness of it all. They help me manage how much I can let back in of myself . . . .so what I have projected outside of myself as it comes back, can come back in manageable pieces as I move ever and ever more deeply into the wholeness of who I/we are.

Emma was the one participant who did not rank the journey and artwork as among her key moments. In her journaling, she wrote: “I had a hard time conceptualizing Trauma as an external identity. First I experienced a bright sun, then some cherries. Just as I was heading back to the orb in the room an image of a lovely woman–blue, young, friendly—appeared in my eyelid—with rays of blue emanating from her face. Then there was a shift and she was scary looking—that was only a flash moment–then the image was gone.”

My co-researcher, Beth, felt the pull of the archetypal, writing: “During the shamanic journey, when they went through the orb until they came back, I felt a deepening, and it was hard not to go into a trance state . . . Images kept coming.” During the journey she drew an image of sharp teeth and wrote: “The idea of light coming through teeth–like a laser. It can cut. It can heal. I get the physical sensation of hissing at someone . . . The fire of transformation–Let it burn. Burning embers of love.” And below the image: “Love is Destruction–To protect what’s pure and undefiled . . . If I was a superhero maybe I could shoot lasers through my teeth.” Later, in answer to questions to capture the day, she explained that, “Trauma stole my sharp teeth.”

My own comments on the journey were: “. . . I felt a profound sense of reverence alive in the room. As part of this feeling sense, I felt admiration for the depth of process the participants brought, their seriousness and engagement, and I was aware of the soul’s capacity to experience both horror and beauty—the full range of capacity moving through me. This was a deeply-grounded felt sense of both joy and sorrow together, breathing deeply and breathlessness.”
Key Moment Two: Speaking from the Positions of Trauma, Victim, Bystander and Friend

Evoking-Expressing Sequence Three, which included speaking from the positions of Trauma, Victim, Bystander and Friend was the second-most-cited moment. Sophia said: "For me to find that place and to speak from that place—it empowered me. It empowered me a lot. And I was so proud of myself for being able to do that and not hold back. I found that extremely cathartic and empowering to be able to be in that space and to come from that place."

Emily brought a chair into the victim position, and sat there with a pillow over her face, shaking her head “No.” She said that moment was particularly empowering for her. Emma remarked that where she had trouble speaking from and where she resonated was an important insight for her.

Beth described her urge to intervene and hold one of the participants based on the level of vulnerability and pain expressed in the form. My notes read: “The form started strong and deepened into an authentic, embodied expression from the four positions, in which both subjective and objective experience of the position was expressed, opening a flow of expression between the personal and the archetypal.”

Below are expressions from the various positions:

Trauma

• Help me! Help Me! Help me!
• I am the flooded unbearable feelings of the vulnerability of being in a human body. And I am the flooded anguish and rage of being unable to meet the needs of this human body . . . because it feels so intolerable. And again, I say: I scream out. I need help.
• (Big arm motions outward and up in circles with fingers extended and open) . . . I am your God-self. Don’t you remember? You’re part of this creation. You created this. This is your way to remember all of who you are. This is your way to come into full contact with your whole self . . . Don’t you remember? Don’t you remember? You are part of—this is part of your creation. You created this. This is your way to remember all of who you are to come into full, conscious contact with your whole self. I tell you when you’re out of alignment. You feel it; you can’t even function I am so strong. I let you know when you’re not in Thy will and your small will is pushing, pushing, pushing. This is my gift for you. This is what you created me for. I am part of the whole.
• I am a bastard. I wouldn’t suggest you become that friendly with me. I will hold you back.
• Nothing. It’s not real. It’s what you make of it.
• (Moving gracefully, gently dancing) As long as I keep moving, it’s all good. Just keep moving, I’m just something passed down—our ancestral lineage just passing through people, through people, through people. I’m just an energy. No one is actually doing it. I’m just an energy passing
through, passing through. Just keep it moving; find the exit. It’s just energy. It’s just about energy. It just needs space. It needs to be able to move.

- I just need to express myself. Don’t (want to) hurt anyone. I just need to express myself . . . express myself.
- (Arms bent at waist height, hands motion in and out like forming a ball.) I’m here because you created me. You sent me. I am part of the divine. I am power. I am here to teach you about true power and true power of a human. This is the shadow face of it, but this is the way you know it. This is the way you want it. You are in on this creation.

**Victim**

- I feel small. (Body curled up on the floor).
- (On knees with hands in prayer position) Sometimes I feel bummed that this happened to me and not everyone else. I suffer more than other people.
- (Goes down on floor with check and shoulders pressed down and arms gesturing) Oh my God. Get your boot off of me. Fuck, God, God I’m pinned. Stop it! Oh fucking let me go! God, oh my god—this is like a nightmare. Oh my God, there’s no help, there’s no help . . .
- (Pillow in front of face, sitting, shaking head “No” and trembling, making hushed crying sounds. Lowers pillow)
- Stay away from me. I don’t need to be this.

**Bystander**

- (Turns back to others) I might notice trauma, but I’m really so scared of it—so unable to meet my own needs that I’m busy baking. I hear trauma. I’m busy baking.
- Wow, I’ve never seen anything like this. This is so cool—like this whole process and this thing called trauma, and this person called trauma, and this person who feels like a victim . . . This is mind-blowing, ground-breaking—whole new level. So neat to have happened to have walked by and seen all this.
- I am feeling into all the bystanders who stood by while my ancestors were slaughtered, and stood by while I was scapegoated in my graduate school. I can feel the sense of helplessness and fear in this position that I just want to go undetected and I want to get out of the loop of what feels unsafe. I’m just laying low and watching without really, really watching, I’m going to just going to be kind of invisible. I don’t have the courage or something. I’m scared. I don’t understand it . . .
- I stand witnessing, non-judgmental. I watch.
- I am watching trauma, trying to be something.

**Friend**

- Everything is perfect; there is really no problem. You are all of the different parts. Just try to remember yourself . . . it’s all OK . . .
• I am so happy and excited to be with you . . . more . . . really psyched to be on this journey with you.
• I know it’s hard, but I’ll be here for you.
• I have the spaciousness to move into your suffering, and to be with you in it and to love your suffering and to love you. And to transmute this experience. It’s effortless to me, and I am holding you in all the places of your human life and experience. I’m right here.
• I am here for you. I will support you. I love you.
• I will always be here for you.
• I feel you. You’re never alone. We’re all connected. What you experience. I feel my conscious sentient presence is in all things and my care and my love is stitched throughout all things. Even in places where it seems the opposite—those things are just there to remind you of the connection.
• Hi, it’s me again. I’m back. Remember I said I’d always come back? I’d always be with you by your side in this journey. So honored, so grateful. You know what they say: just call on me and I’ll always be there, and I’ll say more loving and supportive things. Whenever you’d like me to, just ask.
• I’m just feeling my spaciousness and my goodness and my everything-ness. I am always with you and I am always within you. Every one of you is spoken to by me in a different way. You will hear me and feel me and name me in all your different ways. I am the ground of your being everyone and all the different faces and names that you know me—always loving you. I’m always helping you. I can move with vulnerability and empowerment in whatever measure you need. You just let me know. I’m right here.
• (Moving up and down from knees deeply embodied) I forgot to say I really appreciated that speaking of the ground of being and I just want to say that I don’t even know if the words are there. It’s something about an energetic presence in our world right now—energetic direct experience. Sensuality is really a royal highway to this contact and connection with a deeper sense of presence and the human heart and you can trust it.

The written questions that followed this expression captured a similar range of experience. When asked how it felt to imagine into the role of Trauma, participants answered:

• Sad. I felt Trauma was sad and trying to find friends. Like a bully tries to force people to be nice to him—“or else.”
• Menacing, dark extra-ordinary.
• Intense, but I feel OK because there is movement, and I am being held in the most sacred and compassionate way possible.
• I feel deep compassion for Trauma. It is a red-muscle-flooded agony scream of needing help.
• I liked remembering the divinity that I profoundly and directly felt sense/embodied energetic experience when I communed with the trauma
archetype and, really, the Godhead that is behind all of the archetypes, all of the parts.

And when asked about imagining into the Friend, they wrote:

- Strong. I felt the friend stood firmly inside themselves. Very sure of their own strength.
- Connected and linked, compassionate.
- Light, fearless.
- Feel happy and excited to support my friend on her pilgrimage to meet trauma.
- Total love, spacious joy, tenderness, presence. Protectiveness, compassion and absolute ability to help and to save.
- From the beginning of the first guided visualization with someone who knew us well and unconditionally loved us, would always be there, etc., I felt my nervous system find regulation out of the chronic dysregulation that is often there as I envisioned my therapist who literally did accompany me on my journey of meeting trauma and coming back from this.

**Key Moment Three: Introductions and Ritual**

The ritualized introductions and the overall sense of ritual was the third-most-mentioned key moment. After reviewing informed consent, confidentiality and logistics for the day, I rang chimes to symbolize the opening of the circle. I then led the groups in a short grounding meditation to bring the participants more fully present in their bodies and in the moment. For the introductions, each participant was asked to bring an object that represented their relationship with trauma. After introducing themselves and saying something about their object, the participants placed the objects on an altar cloth located in the center of the circle.

Sophia commented on her sharing: "To me it was like a release, an acknowledgement of something so horrific. It was a relief to share it without anyone necessarily knowing what it means to me. I can give it form, a representation, a symbol that I can relate to.” Isabella connected the opening ritual to the rest of the day, noting that it opened an “. . . energy flow—the opening ritual opened up a huge amount of energy. I felt safe and it grew here—and the drumming really helped me, because it seems that it brings out some ancient feeling that it stirs really deep stuff up and out.” I listed the opening as a key moment on both days. On the second day of research, I wrote: “Everyone was moved to tears; a feeling sense of expectation, love, being seen witnessed and held was present. This set a collaborative tone for whole day which switched the researcher-researchee roles–into a truly participatory event.”

Here is a sampling of what was shared:

Isabella brought a rock which contained a crystal and explained: “. . . when you look at this side it just looks like an ugly rock, you wouldn’t see anything
beautiful there. But it’s really strong and it’s hard to get anything . . . but it’s sliced open, and inside is this beautiful crystal and I relate to this because I believe that we are all born beautiful. But things happen to us and we put these shells of protection like this rock did—kind of hiding its beauty. But once you get past that, and you look inside—even though this has been traumatized with a slice—it’s still pure and beautiful and strong and solid.”

Sophia expressed herself as follows: “. . . I had no trouble deciding what I would bring. It’s a very old hanger actually . . . The hanger itself doesn’t represent or allude to my trauma, but it does represent where it started. The most vivid or iconic representation of my trauma is a small little 2x3 or 2x4 closet that I had in my room as a child where the culmination of all my beatings were from my mother . . . all my life I have, and up to the present day, I hadn’t put it together that I felt always cornered and imprisoned with not only with my feelings, but with what I do in my life. So, again, the closet plays an important part in how I viewed my life, and how I conducted my life . . .”

Emma took out a set of nesting balls and opened each one until she was holding the inner most ball, explaining: “A friend gave it to me years ago, and then it was in a bag, and somebody stomped on the bag, and so, it was all cracked and came apart. So I glued it because I liked it so much. I love just the layers. For me, the idea of going through all the layers of all the trauma, which has been my experience of where I think I am and then I move another layer, and there’s the essence of the trauma.”

Olivia forgot her object, and offered an image to the group. “I think if I had an object, it would just be a picture of me as a child or, since we’re imagining, why not just a nice little clay figure of me as a child? That really is, for me, so much of the work; it is about connecting that child and building that attachment that wasn’t there.”

Ava brought several items: a picture of Mother Mary, a Native American pot that had been broken and repaired and some dirt from her back yard. Her sharing focused largely on her personal story and how passionate she felt about the work she anticipated we were going to do during the day.

Emily brought a three-dimensional image of Jesus, which she likened to the experience of trauma being frozen in Amber. Her sharing involved telling her recent history, which included a battle with cancer.

During the sharing of the introductions, the participants and researchers were visibly affected. Tears welled up in eyes, hands rested over heart-spaces, heads nodded in recognition and acceptance. This openness to feeling and showing emotion then carried through the day along with a feeling sense of deep respect, as indicated in how everyone interacted—being careful not to cut off anyone’s words, to pause between sharings and to inquire about needs. There was also a focus, seriousness and depth that was evident in
everyone’s involvement. When writing, doing art and in the forms, the sense of deep engagement was palpable.

Key Moment Four: Writing

The writing was referenced as a key moment, both as an overall category and specifically, as it related to the myth. Isabella said: "The writing is really helpful and really powerful, no matter what we wrote. It put me in the state that I really looked at what happened in the past. It’s always affecting me in how I see the world and how I react to the world." In discussing writing her myth Emily said she, “... felt deep relief and satisfaction—esteem.”

The two longest pieces of writing occurred in the first and last evoking-expressing sequences when the participants wrote a short story and a myth, respectively. Entering the first evoking sequence of the day, participants were then shown three well-known images: Francisco Goya’s painting “Saturn Devouring His Son;” Edvard Munch’s painting “The Scream;” and the Hell scene from Hieronymus Bosch’s triptych “The Garden of Delights.” They were instructed to imagine themselves in the image, to feel into the image, and imagine its story unfolding. For the first group, Philip Glass’ Etudes for Piano played softly in the background, deepening the experience. A participant in the second group asked for silence, and the group honored her request. The final evoking-expressing activity of day one, involved the participants’ artwork expressing their experience of the journey to the trauma archetype and the three pieces of art from the first sequence. With all the images in front of them, the participants were asked to imagine into the universal story of Trauma in preparation for writing the myth of Trauma. They were told that their myth may take any form—that it may sound like a fairytale or an epic poem, for example, or that it may be just one episode from Trauma’s life. They were encouraged to let Trauma tell its story through their pens.

On the second day, when participants reread their work and shared it with the group, they all commented on the power of their own writing and of each other’s. There was a sense of surprise and satisfaction in rediscovering what they had written on the first day. After reading her own story and myth, Sophia commented: “I’m moved by reading this—Who wrote this?!”

The participants also shared appreciations with each other, often finding their experience in someone else’s writing. Olivia, commenting on Emily’s myth, said: “It reflects our experience, as well, to whatever degree, and that’s why I’m so moved and touched by it. I sometimes pretend to not be moved and touched so easily; it takes something really powerful to move me, and I’m blown away by your story ... One of the moments I get to take away from your story, and I felt it imprinting in my brain ... is when you said that she has to go back to this place again, and again, and again ... (tears up). I have that experience strongly and I get frustrated ...” Commenting on Ava’s myth, Emily said: “For me as a witness, it was so vivid ... It felt very big and profound; I could see it and feel it. I felt actually helped by seeing and hearing and feeling that story.”
After hearing three of the four myths, Emily asserted: “I would love to see these stories in a book and it would be great if you gathered a hundred more . . . These are deeply life transmuting; I feel that way listening tonight—the brilliance of the images.”

The full stories and myths appear by participant in Appendix 7 and 8.

**Key Moment Five: Sharing**

My co-researcher and I were both moved by the personal stories and depth of emotion shared, and we both listed those as key moments. We were aware of how these activated our own imaginal structures and how we felt pulled to offer support or comfort. Although the participants did not list these as moments, their desire for more sharing, and less journaling was expressed during the first day and again at the second day. This was a major consideration in my revising the plan for day two to allow for more direct sharing among the participants.

**Outlying Moments/Events:**

Ava also named the authentic movement as being powerful for her, explaining that she had connected to deep grief in this embodied expression. During the authentic movement, she and one other participant moved close to the floor. Ava remained still: her body curled tightly, hands over her head.

Additionally, there was a series of events involving transference and counter-transference with Emily that bears noting. During Evoking-Expressing Sequence Two, after the journey had begun, Emily signaled me and whispered to me as I continued to drum the journey—that she needed to journey in silence. As the other participants had already entered the imaginal, I felt that it was not advisable to interrupt their experience. As a solution, I suggested that Emily journey in the next room and then rejoin the group. She later reported that, at first, this made sense to her, but alone in the room, she experienced feeling exiled and felt profoundly reactivated. While the other participants worked on their art, she and I processed her reaction sufficiently so that she felt she could rejoin the group. During this discussion, I held out the option for her to withdraw, but she was intent on continuing. Emily rejoined the group and journeyed in silence. She did not complete the artwork but did complete the journaling as part of this segment. At the end of the day, Emily shared her experience with the group. Explaining her recovery from her sense of exile she credited our interaction, saying: “. . . the fact that you met me with tenderness, and with kindness and compassion, and you let yourself be in your own body about it, in your own sorrow, but you still held your own—you know—it was very powerful. And that you could tell how hard it was for me to say this to you . . . the fact that you took in my request meant a lot to me . . . to be met there was a huge victory.”

While the participants answered the journaling questions, I took the opportunity to process this event, writing:

The wounding Emily felt, I felt in the moment and didn’t have a creative solution – I was stuck in my imaginal structure about doing something the ‘right’ way.
Speaking her hurt, she was clear that she needed me to respond to her—her honesty and accountability in this was palpable. She needed to be met and I failed. I came up with solutions that did not involve responding in the moment. I may have done what was necessary for the research, but it was not therapeutically sound.

Between sessions, another incident with a transference/countertransference element arose. I was attempting to find a date and time that worked for the whole group for the second session. Emily became highly reactive to the emails, and felt exiled again, although no final decision regarding the meeting time and date had been reached. I attempted to contact her by phone, and two days went by before she responded to my messages. In the meantime, she sent several emotionally reactive emails. In our conversation, I attempted to process her reaction with her, pointing out that no decision about the second meeting had yet been made. Her fear of exile, however, had given rise to a feeling-state that made it seem as though she had already been exiled, and in her mind, I was doing this to her. During this conversation, I again raised the option for her to withdraw or for me to ask her to withdraw from the project. This was not her choice, although she did threaten to do so if her need to be with the whole group could not be accommodated. It ended up that she was able to shift her plans for the day that the rest of the group was available, and I asked the rest of the group to meet later in the day to accommodate her schedule.
APPENDIX 6

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS

The cumulative learning of this study claims that intentionally evoking and expressing numinous experience provides an expanded experience of self, at least temporarily, that can augment personal power and decrease identification with victimization. Learning One contends that the felt sense of reverence and awe predisposes one to experience the numinous by increasing one’s sense of personal power so that the intense affective charge of the numinous can be tolerated. Learning Two identifies the operation of *Creative Projection* to establish symbolic distance from victim identity in order to expand subjective experience. Creative projection (my term) is the intentional use of an object to symbolize and separate from aspects of experience as a means of coming into relationship with Self. Learning Three illustrates the *victim bind*, an enactment of the split between good and evil, where in order to identify as the “good victim” one cedes power to the “evil other.” Learning Four contends that the intense affective charge and symbolically packed nature of numinous experience can break through well-established defenses, impacting the cognitive, somatic, and affective dimensions of these defenses and leaving in its wake, however briefly, a gripping sense of knowing such that truth reverberates in the body. Learning Five recognizes that the transformative potential inherent in contact with the *Wholly Other* (i.e. numinous experience) finds embodiment through expanded access to the capacities of courage and compassion, which loosen the binds of victim identity. Learning Six proposes that
numinous experience engages imaginative capacities at a higher level of consciousness than that which forms the basis of projection, creating an experience, however temporary, of transcending this basis and with this experience, an opportunity to reclaim projections.
APPENDIX 7

STORIES AND RELATED JOURNALING

Isabella
Written about image #3 – Bosch.
If you were to name the image you choose, what would you call it? Separation by Traumas
What feelings do you associate with the image? Violence, fear, anger, sadness, strength

Soulless Creatures Who Feed Upon Innocence.

Demon arrive in the dark night, like marauders, sneaking into steal my Light, my innocence, my childhood.

I am cut into segments. I separated disappear into the falling snow of apple blossom petals as I look up an away from my attackers knowing that the petal, like falling snow will save me–as I am now saving my little brother.

Life in darkness–striving to fight my way out to sunlight. I see it. It’s there just out of reach. I drift around in my mind trying to find my road back to my innocent happy life.

Anger, fear, and self-disgust bring out my warrior who takes over for me and fights my battles–protecting me from others who may invade my soul with the purpose of harm.

My broken soul bleeds out into the dry desert of life that soaks up my spilled blood like thirsty soulless creatures that feed on the gullibility and naïveté of my childlike spirit.

Sadness and grief for my loss. But new determination to learn, gain strength and use my losses to help others find their strength. Though I have suffered these traumas and lived in separations–I am the whole of each separate self.

Sophia
Written to the Scream
If you were to name the image you choose, what would you call it? The Scream
What feelings do you associate with the image? Pain, Fear, Isolation, Abandonment

My Silent Scream

My scream of pain and fear.
My mother—creator of my pain and fear.
My brother—creator of some of my pain and fear.
My sister who left me with my pain and fear, she died.
My father who abandoned me and left me with this pain and fear.
To my relatives who knew nothing of my pain and fear.
To my friends who I would not share my pain and fear.
To myself that had to endure my pain and fear, in silence.

My scream is loud
but no one can hear me
The louder I scream
the quieter I am.
No one hears me
No one knows

I just scream and scream
and no one hears me.

Emma

Picture #2–The Scream
What would you name the image? I think Munch got it: “the scream”
What feelings do you associate with the image? Overwhelm, horror, tears, anguish

The Moment Before Annihilation

Sound and color merged, sucking out my breath. Yes, there is a scream, but it has no sound. In an instant there will be nothing left. The shadow of my former self walks away, perhaps it will find another home. It’s as if nothing ever existed; too much is sometimes perceived the same as not at all. Here in this instant—the line between too much and nothing is caught.

Olivia

Picture #2–The Scream
What would you name the image? The haunting abyss
What feelings do you associate with the image? Fear, loneliness, sadness, grief, depression

The Lost Wanderer

I am here so lonely, lonely inside, scared to be alone. No one is around and will there ever be? I’m even here on this pier on this ocean, a beach, and the sea is so empty, no one around, so haunting, dangling out in space, the sun going down, a time when others should be around, so I must Have done something wrong if they’re not. I’m supposed to make it happen. Will they ever come!? Will it always be this way? I fear it will, but still, I do see some streaming lights of possibilities.
Ava
On Picture #2–The Scream
What would you name the image? Horror
What feelings do you associate with the image? Malaise, panic, terror, frozenness, grief, shock, horror, overwhelm

Death Alone Lives On.

I’m hiding under the bridge and I’m cold, wet, tired, hungry and so deeply troubled. There is blackness and terribleness everywhere. There is no safe harbor, nothing good, nothing right. Everything is fucked up. How life should obviously be (loving, caring, connected) is completely missing from this picture. Some people are being marched across the bridge and down the seashore on a death journey. Some are being brutally killed along the way. Some people are being thrown off the bridge. There is a lot of blood on the street, the bridge, and the water and sky are filled with the red pain of bloodshed. I feel so frozen I don’t even know who is around me, there’s just this deep freeze and trying to shout out this unbearable atrocity. I’m huddled in a fetal position with my hands around me and like the future in the picture while there is a freaky, unbelievable scream of screams inside, it does not come out, all is dead, all is frozen . . . to survive this I must die.

Emily
On picture #3 Bosch
What would you name the image? Unrelenting Trauma Hell, Inside & Out
What feelings do you associate with the image? The feelings of hell: inescapability, chaos, torture, absolutely overwhelming, unrelenting suffering. Terror, despair, utter aloneness. An inability to protect or defend myself. The barely achieved preservation of myself, with an intact, vulnerable core and the necessary devastation of survival-shards of self around me inside.

How I escaped Unrelenting Trauma Hell, Inside & Out

I am the pink tender heart in the center; I rest on my white hollow mother. All around me is a living hell of torture, chaos and unrelenting terror, harm and suffering. My mother smiles.

My ears nearby the center of me are skewered. They are split by a simple knife, creating utter and total silence. This knife has been driven in from the outside and it pokes toward my simple heart, the heart of me, small and quiet, pulsing with invisible need and pent up terror. My ears can hear nothing of the chaos and harm charging forward out of people’s bodies all around me. I am in a silent movie.

I am surviving, one day at a time, but not without great cost. The chaos and danger are so great all around me, and the normal help with them so absent, that I am unable to construct the internal architecture of a self that I need, that I need in order to live as a
whole, real, safe person. My existence is so constantly assaulted and threatened that the
chaos and harm and inescapable despair pressing in on me actually, finally, enter into me,
becoming the landscape of my insides.
APPENDIX 8

MYTHS AND RELATED JOURNALING

Isabella
If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be? Trauma has no power.

“The Evil Mass Named Trauma”

Once upon a time there was a dark Evil mass who would lure innocent children into its lair and feed on their innocence.

One day a young girl came upon him as she walked through the meadow.

“I’ve heard about you,” said the girl. “Why do you hurt little children?”

“I don’t hurt them at all,” said Trauma. “I love children. But you see, I was left here all alone and I have no one to love me. I’m just looking for a friend.”

“Why doesn’t anyone want to be your friend?” asked the little girl.

“Well, they think I am evil but it’s really the Light that’s evil,” said Trauma.

“How can you say that? The Light is so beautiful,” said the girl.

“That’s just a show light puts on. If Light was so nice why does it hurt my eyes and burn my skin?” asked Trauma. “See, I really am nice. Come in and be my friend. I’m so lonely,” said Trauma.

So the little girl, feeling sorry for Trauma gave her hand to Trauma and began to comfort him. When suddenly Trauma roared and snarled and said, “Aha! I am going to eat your soul!!”

“Well, I can’t get away because you have trapped me so I guess you better go ahead,” said the girl.

But when she said this Trauma began to get angry because he was all talk and had no teeth in which to bite and chew her. He roared and bellowed and being nothing more than a mass he had no way to hold on to her. When he realized he had been found out to be a fake he began to cry, trying to play on her emotions.
The mass fed on emotions and little girls had the tastiest emotions ever.

“Your crying and bellowing don’t frighten me or make me feel sorry for you. You are nothing more than a sad blob. You can’t hurt me,” she said and turned her back on Trauma and began to walk away.

She began to feel sorry for such a sad creature and turned back to look at him only to see him disappear.

Since Trauma didn’t get fed, he vanished and no longer had any power to scare the little girl.

The girl decided never to be afraid of things that really have no power and walked happily away into the light.

Sophia
If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be? Slowed as Molasses

I come ready made
Like a jar of syrup
I am available, on the shelf
When someone wants to purchase me
Sometimes I have fancy labels on my jar, or beautiful ones, or crazy looking ones.
Whatever my label looks like to you, appeals to you, speaks to you is the one you will pick for yourself.

Sometimes I am on sale. Sometimes I am bundled for a special price but one thing is for certain: I ALWAYS POUR OUT. Slowly, surely and with a surprisingly bitter taste for syrup! I keep pouring and pouring into you, filling up every crevice and nook of yourself. I find all your secret hide-outs and keep pouring—and filling up so that every ounce of you is saturated with my gooey presence.

You soon find that it is hard to move and harder yet to find the good parts of yourself in the sticky liquid of fear I am filling you with—I am so good, that I am bad, every last squishy drop of me.

Pretty soon you are full of me and you cannot move, go anywhere, say anything but with great effort you might have thought you were carefree but I have taken care of that! You move with a snail’s pace, slow as molasses and burdened with my presence.

How are you going to move in your world? How are you going to join with others when you are so full of me . . . so full of it?

What washes away my syrupy self? Soap and water? Anti-syrup cleaner? I’ll wait and watch to see what you will do otherwise I’ll just keep filling up every part of you until you find a way to say . . . Stop.
Emma
If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be? no answer

One day I came upon a peaceful village. I could see that the people while good-hearted did not know their potential—it’s easy to be productive and connected when not challenged. I breathed upon them a horrible sickness and soon they were in chaos. Some stepped up to tend to the sick, even when sick themselves. Others tried to leave the village or blame the sick people. I was partial to no-one and in each of their own way, the people suffered. One day, a young woman, who had lost most of her family to the illness, sat with her only remaining sister and held her hand. Her sister had oozing pus wounds, even on the hand she held. “Why have you come upon us, Trauma?” she asked. “What have we done to deserve such pain?” I looked at her. I can see she was angry but not afraid. I took her hand. It may be hard to understand right now, but I serve a purpose—with out which you would not know the depth of your own soul. From your anger shall rise deeper truths.” A tear shed from her eye—as her sister took her last breath. “I do not understand,” she says.

Olivia
If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be? Ancestral Links

A long, long time ago, a little village slumbered down for a long winter’s nap. All was well. As the villagers slept, an invisible energy crept into their homes, slipping under doors, through chimneys and windows and even up through the earth and in between cracks in the floors. It had been sent by the ancestral lineage of these people, from the realm where they now dwell. Upon a closer look, one could actually see links in the energy that together, formed chains that reached back into the ancestral realm. These links of energy brought feelings of anger, sadness, fear, frustration, anxiety and even loneliness and depression in to the minds and bodies of the adult villagers. The next morning, one of the mothers felt too sad and heavy to get out of bed. Her son also woke up feeling sad and heavy to get out of bed. Her son also woke up feeling sad and so he knocked on mom’s door. She did not answer. As the boy stood there, the links of energy moved down through his mother’s feet, across the floor, under the door and up through the boy’s body. The chain was heavy and the boy felt a sinking feeling, called for Mom again, but to no avail. He prepared his breakfast alone and tears welled in his eyes. He heard voices telling him to lift his chin up, that he shouldn’t feel any feelings and that he definitely should not cry. He braced his body and locked the energetic chain in place, preparing it to be passed to someone else who crossed his path. And so trauma was born and passed in such ways from generation to generation. Fortunately . . .

Ava
If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be? The Long And Windy Road Back Home.
I don’t want this. I don’t want what’s happening. I don’t like this. I don’t choose this. I hate this. I don’t want to write right now, I’ve done all this huge work today. This is like turning me into an accordion. Back and forth and back and forth, in and out, man I have all these capacities to go in and out of this big work, but I want you to get what you’re asking of me—I need more integration and downtime. And so trauma expressed herself as she went to write the story or myth of her life . . . and so trauma bemoaned her fate as she felt pushed beyond her recognition of herself to do something directed by someone seemingly outside of herself.

She felt this way as a child (not feeling the intimate (?) others around her were able to be connected with her and her experience, but rather asking her to meet them in their requests (experience) and she continued through adolescence and adulthood to feel this sense of disconnection with Other and that which she thought of as herself.

She had big life events along the way that spoke to her of this sense that she actually was these things that felt so alien and foreign to her (the holy Other). For instance, when she was going through one of the biggest traumatic enactments/times in her life, (being scapegoated at the Institute of Imaginal Studies—her mystery graduate school), she dreamt of several dark angels holding her high above the sea and throwing her 3 times head first into the cold and seemingly cement like water below, each time going a little higher. She couldn’t understand why they were doing this to her (as she hit the ground her body crushed like a can being crushed by a big boot) and especially why they were doing this if they were angels (albeit she saw the were dark angels and wondered what the hell a dark angel was).

Then each time she landed the water seemed to extrapolate how she could create hand holds to hold out and pull herself up and out of cemented contraction. By the third time, she had understood the teachings of turning the formless into form, harnessing molecules out of emptiness and using them to support her. She pulled herself up and began to walk on the water as the sun flowed an epic light on her journey.

There were other big life events along the way for trauma that kept trying to teach her and show her that what she didn’t want in her life was actually something she had created, something she had a say in coming into existence in her experience so that she could develop more consciously and fully into her own self. She kept trying to keep at bay this full sense of herself because it was overwhelming for her to be so big, so powerful so she split herself into parts that were seemingly unaware of their connection to one another. Om mitaka yassin, “all my relations,” was the teaching that she was trying to learn and that she was teaching.

**Emily**

If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be? I am a complete fucking Stud Muffin”—lol. OK, let’s see, really . . . I want to bring this title next time, post prayer and percolation.
Out of the hot, fiery, erupting volcano of feeling and sensation – flooded muscles – CONTRACTING! SCREAMING! AGONY-TERROR-RAGE-STAGGERING, UNMEETABLE GRIEF uncomfortable . . . itching . . . bothersome . . . hot, hot . . . HOTTER . . . INTOLERABLE! . . . FULLY FLOODED ^^^^^^^^^ BREAK!!!

Of the membrane of constraint (inner and outer) that holds and guides behavior . . . TRAUMATIZING ACTIONS

GET ACTED OUT BY THE FEELING AND NEED – flooded more powerful person ONTO the less powerful person . . .
And . . .

Oh god, oh god oh god: it’s such a RELIEF !!!! (for the perpetrator)

Oh God Oh god Oh GOD! It also sometimes brings pleasure (for the perpetrator). (tear drops indicated) but for the victim . . .

ALL THAT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT HOT TERRIBLE SUFFERING FEELING AND SENSATION HAS NOW BEEN DUMPED INTO HER OFFLOADED ONTO AND INTO HER LET LOOSE OF ONTO AND INTO HER LITTLE BODY . . . and now she is flooded with AGONY, TERROR, RAGE, DESPAIR, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL PAIN, REALLY TORTURE IS THE ONLY WORD FOR THE FLOOD of feelings and sensations now savaging her little body like the Colorado River being FORCED SUDDENLY THROUGH a garden hose . . .
and OUT!!!! she goes–blacks right out; ceases to exist—GONE DADDY GONE, is she . . . quiet quiet quiet black black black (no the lovely soft warm beautiful black of skin) but the TERRIBLE NOTHING BLACK of NO LIFE, NO EXISTENCE . . . yes she is GONE. Gone without a trace, her precious little body abandoned like a seashell on the shore of a great swell of evil, evil bad hot boiling water . . .
She’s not on the ceiling; she doesn’t exist—in space, in time. She’s gone. BUT!!!

UNFORTUNATELY, her little sea shell body is still their on the terrible gritty broken glassy sand of reality, of aliveness, ABSORBING ALL the pain, the feelings, the sensations of the person who is hurting her,

who is USING AND EXPLOITING her. This is a terrible tragedy because as it turns out, that little girl (or boy) IF she (or he) survives, (which a lot of us don’t) is still going to grow up and find herself STILL CUT OFF

FROM HUMAN LIFE, FROM HER OWN LIFE, FROM HER OWN ALIVE REALITY, FROM HER SELF. And she is going to start searching in anguish, in DESPERATION AND IN DESPAIR, and sometimes in the RAGE, the CORRECT RAGE of the sane one who has had her WHOLE REAL SELF, HER WHOLE REAL ALIVENESS AND THE REAL LIFE that it might produce, UTTERLY AND NEARLY-
IRREDEEMABLY STOLEN FROM HER . . . and she is going to search and search and search and quest and travel and traverse lands of chasms and deep waters and outlying regions and also dragons (with all their terrible, rotting, stinking FIRE) and FINALLY discover, to her grief, shock, terror and horror that

THE DOORWAY BACK

To her real whole self and aliveness and life is marked:

(This copy illustrated as if written on a door)
Trauma: the feelings and the sensations
!!!OMG!!!

And that to get back to the soft green thriving fierce growing glorious landscape of HER REAL SELF (and thus her aliveness and her life) she is going to have to FEEL and EXPRESS, finally, for the FIRST TIME EVER all the feelings and sensations of the original SELF-EXPELLING SELF-EXCOMMUNICATING torture. Only idiots, only morons (and there are many, but none who have traversed this Ultimate Hero’s Journey) say, “You’ve already lived through it, therefore, by logic, you can again.”

No we have not already lived through it. Our bodies have lived through it WITHOUT US.

Consciousness Surgically Excised Away From the Body: this is Trauma.

So now she is faced with the really impossible—feeling: to GET BACK to her self, to GET HERSELF BACK, she has to re-enter the literal muscle tissue of her own dear and precious body—somehow tolerate and survive, feel oneness, and express without harming herself or others.

And she has to do it again and again and again . . . walk into and STAND in and CALL OUT from and MOVE CONTAIN-ED-LY, IN THIS FIRE, this UNIMAGINABLE tormenting fire.

(And eventually she does realize that those who hurt her did so to AVOID their OWN intolerable fires. And AGAIN she feels the staggering miraculous GRACE that this acting out of the fire onto another HAS NOT LIVED IN HER.)

So!!!

For those of us who traverse this holy arc, for the saving of our precious selves, and the saving also of our wholly precious species of humankind, the designation, SISTER TO THE CREATOR is not too strong a naming.

For it is in OUR heroes’ journeys that the collective vulnerability of these mysterious human bodies, housing, down in the SACRED GROUND BELOW the DNA, the atoms,
the quarks, the strings, the Ineffable, Timeless, Love/Creative REALITY of All being, is redeemed and recreated and bloomed.

Through the door of the body goes the Soul back to the Soul.

As the soul and the body re-unite, love blooms.

As love blooms, the world is more and more saved.

As the world is more and more saved, one Body-Soul at a time, there is less and less trauma and more and more joy and thriving and whole, good Reality
APPENDIX 9

ARTWORK

Illustration 1. Olivia’s artwork depicting the transformative hearth from her journey.
Illustration 2. Sophia’s artwork depicting elements from her journey to meet Trauma.
Illustration 3. Ava’s artwork illustrating the whale’s eye with her inside it from her journey.
Illustration 4. Emma’s artwork capturing the images of the sun, cherries and the blue lady from her journey.
Illustration 5. Isabella’s artwork depicting events from her journey.
APPENDIX 10

RECRUITING MATERIALS – PARTICIPANT APPLICATION

Research Participant Application

Name: _____________________________________________________________
Your Age: ______________________________________________________________________
Street Address: ______________________________________________________________________
City: ____________________________ Zip: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________

Daytime Phone: __________________ Is it OK to leave a message here? ___ Yes ___ No
Evening Phone: __________________ Is it OK to leave a message here? ___ Yes ___ No

Preferred times to be contacted:
Daytime phone: ______________________________________________________________________
Evening phone: ______________________________________________________________________

For the purposes of these questions, Trauma may be interpreted as an event, or events, which resulted in emotional and/or physical injury and resulted in changes in behavior, emotional stability and thought patterns. Indications of trauma may include, but not be limited to: night terrors, seemingly irrational fear and doubt, an elevated tendency to be wary, easily startled, a tendency to lose periods of time or experience a lack of emotional engagement.

1. Have you personally suffered a trauma before the age of 20? ___ Yes ___ No

2. If so, please check the box, or boxes which best describe the trauma:
   ___ Accident: such as a car, bike, fall, airplane or animal attack
   ___ Personal Violence: an act of violence committed by another person against you.
   ___ Emotional Neglect
   ___ Sexual Assault
   ___ Uncertain: early childhood trauma in which memory is imprecise.

3. Have you sought psychological help for your trauma? ___ Yes ___ No
   What type of therapy did you participate in?
   ___ Individual ___ Group ___ Other
   Approximately when and for how long was your therapy?
Do you know what orientation your therapist was/is? Such as Cognitive Behavioral, Psychodynamic, Gestalt, or other….

Are you currently in therapy? ___ Yes ___ No
If no, do you have access to a therapist if you were to want to talk to one?
___ Yes ___ No

4. Do you have any sustaining practices? These may be spiritual or physical, such as meditation, prayer, yoga, gardening . . . Please describe.

5. Because our conception of mythic themes is influenced by our cultural heritage, please describe any spiritual beliefs or practices that may inform your perception of mythic images. This information is helpful for the interpretation of data and is not a criteria for participation.

6. Have you ever done a guided meditation, guided visualization or journeywork?
___ Yes ___ No
If yes, approximately how much experience do you have?
If no, are you interested in learning more about these techniques? ___ Yes ___ No

7. Do you have any diagnosed psychological conditions?
___ Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please provide information:

8. Are you on any medications?
___ Yes ___ No ___ If yes, please provide information:
9. Do you consider yourself to be emotionally resilient? ___ Yes ___ No

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out. Please email the form to traumaarchetype@gmail.com and I will respond within 5 business days.

If you have other questions, please contact me via email.
APPENDIX 11

RECRUITING ACTIVITIES – SCREENING INTERVIEW

Rather than a precise script, this is an overview of key message points and questions, as the exact conversation will vary according to the information gathered on the questionnaire and the responses and questions of the potential participant.

Purpose of Research: This research seeks to better understand the trauma archetype. Archetypes are the universal forms or images that are common across cultures, appearing in myths, dreams and artwork, which form patterns for human experience.

Researcher Background: I am a doctoral candidate in psychology. I have completed my course work and am currently in practice as a psychology intern. This research will be the basis of my dissertation.

Nature of Research: The research is experiential, which means that I am interested in your subjective experience. We will use a variety of techniques including mediation, guided visualization, arts and vocal expression. (Ask the interview subject if they are familiar with these methods. How comfortable are they? Gauge ability to participate.)

Question Clusters:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interested in research on trauma?
- What are you comfortable telling me about your experience of trauma?
- Do you ever suffer from reactivation of your trauma? Do you experience flashbacks? Nightmares? Unexplained panic? Are you startled easily? Do you experience anxiety that you can’t explain? If yes to any of the above, ask: How often? When was the last experience?
- Are you comfortable working with trauma? Have you worked with it in therapy? What are you comfortable
telling me about that process and how you feel about
yourself now?
  o Have you ever felt the force of something greater than
you in your life? What can you tell me about that? Or:
Have you ever felt the presence of an all-powerful force
or entity in your life? Have you ever felt the presence of
something evil, dark or sinister in your life? What can
you tell me about that?
  o Tell me about what practices you use to calm yourself.
How often do you engage in your practice?
  o Do you consider yourself resilient? What does that
mean to you?
  o We will be using guided visualization and journeying
techniques in this research. Are you familiar with
these? Tell me about your experience . . .
  o Does the idea of a trauma archetype have any meaning
to you? And, if so, what is it?
  o Have you ever participated in a group before? What can
you tell me about it? How do you tend to behave in
groups?
  o Are you currently experiencing any crisis in your life?
Do you feel stable? Are you willing to engage the
subject of trauma in a group setting?

Benefit of Participating: This research is designed to help participants develop a
deeper understanding of trauma at both a personal level,
and at the collective levels of culture and myth. This
understanding may help participants make more sense of
their personal experience, and thus, contribute to healing
and wholeness.

Basic Information: Dates, Place, Hours, Food, Dress.

Research Approach: This research will be conducted in the participatory
paradigm, in which knowledge is explored via critical,
subjective interaction with objective reality. This research
design utilizes various modes of expression, including art,
writing, and dramatic expression. It will be conducted in a
small group. The research project will require one full day
and a second half-day of the participants’ time.

Research Particulars: Give dates and place.
APPENDIX 12

MEETING ONE–ORIENTATION AND INTRODUCTIONS

Orientation–Basic script.

Lead Researcher: Thank participants for their participation. Review space–bathrooms, refreshments, exit locations, and so forth. Introduce co-researchers using both their ritual titles and names. Include information regarding schedule of breaks and lunch. Remind participants that—at all times—participation is voluntary. Review confidentiality as a group—have participants and co-researchers read out loud, each person taking one point until the whole sheet is reviewed. Explicitly state that confidentiality applies to researchers and participants. Communicate safety and self-care guidelines. Transition to first activity by saying we will start with a meditation and then have introductions.

Chime.

We’re going to conduct a short meditation to bring ourselves fully into this experience. If you can close your eyes, and pay attention to your breath, allow whatever thoughts arise to be. Simply observe them. Now direct your attention into your body. Feel yourself in the seat (or on the floor). Feel your back and your thighs pressed into the chair. Feel your feet on the floor. Feel through your body—are you holding tension? Do you feel anxious or excited? You can just observe these feelings and let them flow through you, bringing your attention back to your breath. (allow for silence–after about 8 minutes . . .)

Now if you can bring your attention here, into this moment, into this room, notice how you are feeling in your body. Are you tense or relaxed? Hot or cold? Slowly open your eyes, and when you’re ready, look around the room and make eye contact with those around you.
I’m going to have you each introduce yourselves using the objects you brought. You’ll notice in the center of the room, there is a (table/cloth). This is where you can place your object. Tell us your name, why you are interested in participating in this research, and how the object you brought relates to your experience of trauma. You’ll each have approximately two minutes for your introduction – and if you run over, I’ll signal you by placing my hands together like this (demonstrate a prayer position in front of your heart and a nod).

Allow for introductions.

Chime.

You have a short break. Please be back at 10:15.
APPENDIX 13

EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE ONE—SCRIPT

Activities and Script: Activity indicated in italics. Script in regular type.

During Break:
Researcher and coresearcher will place art materials and journaling supplies in front of each participant’s position. The images will be numbered: #1 Francisco Goya’s painting, “Saturn Devouring His Son;” #2 Edvard Munch’s painting, “The Scream” and #3 detail from Hieronymus Bosch’s painting, “The Tree of Life.”

Reopen Circle:
Chime.
If everyone would please take their seats.
Chime.

Researcher reveals each image so each participant sees it up close and places the images in view of the participants.

Lead Researcher: From these images, select the one that speaks to you about your feelings relating to your past trauma. Feel into the image. Imagine yourself entering the image. What do you feel? What are your thoughts? Does this evoke fear? Look for the fear in the image. What is it you fear?

After images in place:

Lead Researcher: Now imagine yourself entering the image. You may close your eyes, if you wish, and the image can change as though you are now inside of it, inside of its story. It’s alive right now for you. Feel into your experience. How does this image relate to your experience of Trauma? Who else, if anyone, is there with you? How do you feel? Is there a story here for you? Let the story unfold, and ask it to bring you into relation with your experience of trauma. If fear comes up, that’s OK; remember you are safe in this room and you are following a story. Follow your fear and engage the image in your mind’s eye. What story unfolds for you? As you imagine yourself entering the image, begin to
journal the story that comes to you. The journaling materials are in front of you. This doesn’t have to be a complete story—just capture how you see yourself in the image. What do you feel? Who do you meet? What happens to you? You’ll have about 10 minutes to write, so just let your thoughts flow onto the paper—allow the images to unfold and take you deep into the world of this picture.

*Allow 8 minutes to pass.*

It’s time to transition. Take a couple of more minutes to finish your writing.

*Allow 2 minutes to pass*

*Chime.*

Now it’s time to put down the story . . .

Authentic Movement: . . . and I invite you to get up and move. Move as though you are still inside the image, inside the story you were writing. Embody the feeling-sense you have from the story. How does this feeling live in you? What does it drive you to do? Does it have sounds? If so, go ahead and make the sounds.

*Drumming in background – 4 minutes of movement.*

*Chime.*

Now slowly find your way back to your places. Find your journaling packet, and answer the questions in the packet.

*Allow 20 minutes*

*Chime* You may now take a brief break. Please stay in a contemplative mood. And be back at 11:00.
APPENDIX 14

EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE ONE–QUESTIONS

1. Which picture did you write about?
   _____ #1
   _____ #2
   _____ #3

2. How does this image relate to your experience of Trauma?

3. What feelings do you associate with the image?

4. What aspects, if any, of the story you wrote relates to your personal history? What can you tell us about that history in just a few sentences?

5. Does anyone from your life come to mind as you imagined yourself in the image? If so, who, and what was your relationship to them?

6. Does the image have any cultural meaning to you? Does it relate to something beyond your personal experience?

7. If you were to name the image you chose, what would you call it?

8. If you were to give your story a name, what would it be?

9. In one or two sentences, how does trauma shape your life?

10. In one or two sentences, how does trauma shape our culture?

11. What does the word victim mean to you?
APPENDIX 15

EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE TWO – SCRIPT

During Break—researchers distribute art supplies and journaling packet #2.

Lead Researcher: We are going to do a guided visualization and journey now, so please make yourselves comfortable.

Drumming begins very softly.

Lead Researcher: Before we begin the journey, we are going to prepare by summoning a Friend and allies to help you on your quest. I will then give you instructions for the journey, and then you will go on your own, with your Friend and allies, into the journey.

(Read very slowly–pausing between thoughts)

Allow yourself to enter a meditative state. Be mindful of your breath. Observe its flow: in, out, in, out, in, out. Slowly, bring your attention to your heart. Let your attention rest there. Feel your heart beating. Imagine that in your heart is an eye. See through that eye. See the world as a heart sees the world. See the world with a loving eye. Imagine that resting in your heart with you is a Friend. This Friend is someone who knows you to your core. They know all of your history, all of your strengths, all of you weaknesses, and they love you unconditionally. They are your advocate, your guide, your fiercest ally. They are always present. Always attached to you, always caring about you. This Friend travels with you everywhere you go, and is always there to give you courage, strength, and support. Ask this friend to accompany you today as you journey to meet Trauma.

Before we begin the journey, you and your friend are going to construct a safety line. Imagine behind you there is an anchor. A big anchor. One that nothing can move. Now imagine that your friend gives you a safety line that is attached to the anchor on one end, and has a harness on the other. Put on the harness. Test the safety line and make
sure it’s attached firmly to the anchor. Notice that this safety line expands to let you reach as far as you want to go, and if you pull on it, it gently retracts pulling you to the safety of your anchor.

Now you are almost ready to begin the journey. First, you are going to see the entrance to the Archetypal, the Mythic, the land of gods and demons. Before entering this dimension, you are going to feel the difference between that dimension of reality and this reality. Then, I am going to give you some instructions for your journey, and then you will enter the archetypal to meet Trauma.

Direct your attention to the center of the room. Notice that in the center of the room, there is a pulsating orb. The orb is the entrance to the archetypal, the mythic landscape that you will traverse to find Trauma and interview it. Once you pass through this veil, you will be on the other side, where you will encounter forces wholly other than those you know here. Before you journey there, imagine just reaching out and touching the orb. Feel its edge. Remember the feeling of its boundary. You will pass through it on your journey, and you will pass through it again when you return. When it is time to return, you can imagine this boundary and enter it, it will bring you back to this room. You will return from the journey when the drum beat signals the return like this—

*Drumming becomes fast—and loud. Then it returns to normal.*

When you hear that change in drumming, you will return. If you are having a hard time returning, pull on your safety line. As a precaution, your friend will be able to help your return. In your imagination, ask your friend to accompany you on your journey and to make sure that you return safely. Ask now.

When the drum beat changes, you will enter the orb. The orb is the gateway into the archetypal. Your task is to find the trauma archetype and to learn what you can from it. Where does it come from? Why does it exist? Why did it enter your life? What message does it have for you? For mankind? As you journey to find Trauma, note what kind of landscape it lives in. What do you feel in its presence? Make a note of everything you experience—any smells, sounds, sensations. Note the feeling-sense of your encounter with the archetype.
On your journey, you may encounter a gatekeeper—a guardian of the territory you must enter. If so, ask it why it is there. What is it trying to prevent you from seeing? What is it trying to prevent you from feeling? What is it trying to prevent you from learning? Do not let it block you from meeting Trauma. If it tries to, ask your friend to take on the gatekeeper, and you keep going.

Your mission is to find Trauma, and learn from it: Where does it come from? Why does it exist? Why did it enter your life? What message does it have for you? What message does it have for mankind? If you have time, ask more questions—get all the information you can from it.

Now prepare yourselves, and with this change in drumbeat—approach the orb with your friend at your side, enter the archetypal, find Trauma and learn what you can about Trauma.

*Drumbeat changes and then maintains a journey beat for 16 minutes; at 16, signal the return and give verbal instructions to return.*

It is time to return, retrace your steps out of the archetypal, to the edge of the orb and step through. Remember that your Friend can help you or you can pull on your safety line if you need help.

*Drum for 4 more minutes. Then wrap up journey.*

When you are back, sit up and express your journey in art. Your art may be of an image from your journey, or just the feeling sense. As you work with your image, allow it to speak to you. You may want to enter a dialogue with it—which you can write on one of the extra pieces of paper at your station.

*Allow 20 minutes Soft drumming/Duchamps music continues in background.*

Now it is time to end your artwork and turn to the journals in front of you. Please answer the questions, and feel free to make other notes in the blank pages in the back of the journals.

*Chime after 20 minutes.*
Before leaving for lunch, can you please put your initials on the back of your image and your dialogue? Thank you.

Lunch will be in the staff lounge. Please be back at 1 pm.

Chime out.
Researchers gather art and make sure it is labeled with the participants’ numbers. Numbers are attached to any extra materials—such as the dialogue, left at the participants’ spots.
APPENDIX 16

EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE TWO–QUESTIONS

1. Did you meet Trauma? If not, what did you encounter?

2. Describe the feeling-sense of the encounter with Trauma. If you did not find the archetype, describe the feeling-sense of your journey.

3. Describe any vivid sensations.

4. Describe any vivid images.

5. Where does Trauma come from?

6. Why does Trauma exist?

7. Why did Trauma enter your life?

8. What message, if any, did Trauma have for you?

9. What message, if any, did it have for mankind?

10. Check any/all of the following describe your encounter with Trauma. They may contradict each other:

__awesome __awe-full __commonplace __extraordinary
__frightening __relieving __joyful __distressing
__daunting __fascinating __gracious __powerful
__weak __small __insignificant __ominous
__holy __demonic __sacred __profane
__approachable __unapproachable __overpowering __underwhelming
__fear provoking __calming __blissful __comforting
__ecstatic __frenetic __tranquil __breathless
__expansive __constrictive __hot __cold

Other – please list: _____________________________________________________
11. In the journey, did it feel like you traveled outside of the ordinary? If so, how was your experience different from ordinary experience?

12. Did you meet a guardian on your journey to meet Trauma?

13. If so, what was its purpose?

Any other notes or comments you want to make:
Prior to returning from the lunch break, journaling packets are left in front of each participant’s seat.

The circle reopens by chiming the bells and a short meditation (See Appendix 22 Gathering Practice). Sequence Three begins as part of the meditation. These lines are delivered slowly, with long pauses allowing the participants to explore what is evoked.

Lead Researcher:

Shift your attention back into this room, into the last journey. Remember into the felt sense of approaching Trauma. Feel into what that journey evoked for you and see the images of the journey in your mind’s eye. Remember what Trauma looked liked. Remember what Trauma said or conveyed to you. If you did not meet Trauma, remember into what you did encounter. Feel into your journey with your whole body, your whole being. Imagine being all the parts of your journey. Imagine being you. Imagine being the gatekeeper or guardian. Imagine being Trauma. Imagine being the Friend. Imagine into being anyone else who was present or felt to be there. Now, slowly, bring your attention back to this room. And in the journal in front of you, record a few lines of how it felt to imagine into these roles. There are words there to prompt you—and feel free to add any other notes you would like.

How did it feel to imagine into the roles of:
List roles
Re-list felt senses from previous journal—add some, like hot, cold, expansive, constricted . . .

Allow 5 minutes for Journaling.
I invite you to share, in just a few sentences, what your experience of meeting Trauma was like, and to add to that a sound and if you’d like a gesture to express the felt-sense of your encounter.

Allow 20 minutes for sharing

At the end of the sharing, the researcher and/or coresearcher arrange four positions around the periphery of the circle in this way: Trauma—opposite Victim, Friend—opposite Bystander.

Lead Researcher: As you can see, there are four positions around the circle; they are the positions of Trauma, Victim, Friend, Bystander. In just a moment, I’m going to ask you to move between these positions and express from each one. To give you room to move, as you stand, slide your chair back to the walls, and then go to the position that first calls to you. I will demonstrate.

Researcher demonstrates

Lead Researcher: Your expressions may be a full sentence or just a sound – keep moving through the positions and feeling into what might be said from each.

Give direction as needed. Allow 20 minutes.
Chime out.

Break. We’ll take a short break. Please be back at 2:40.
APPENDIX 18

EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE THREE–QUESTIONS

How did it feel to imagine into the roles of:

1. The Gatekeeper or Guardian
2. Trauma
3. The Friend
4. Anyone else (please name this character)

11. Check any/all of the following describe your encounter with Trauma. They may contradict each other:

- awesome
- frightening
- daunting
- weak
- holy
- approachable
- fear provoking
- ecstatic
- expansive

- awe-full
- relieving
- fascinating
- small
- demonic
- unapproachable
- calming
- frenetic
- constrictive

- commonplace
- joyful
- gracious
- insignificant
- sacred
- overpowering
- blissful
- tranquil
- hot

- extraordinary
- distressing
- powerful
- menacing
- majestic
- underwhelming
- comforting
- breathless
- cold

Other – please list: ______________________________________________________________
During the break, the participants’ artwork and the original three images are arranged in the center of the room. The chairs are rearranged and the position signs put away. Journal books are placed at each participant’s chair.

Chime in the circle.

Lead Researcher: Let’s take a couple of minutes to take in these images. Stand and walk around the circle looking at each image.

Researcher or Coresearcher leads participants in walking around circle observing the images. Depending on room set up

Now take your seats. Close your eyes, and again, feel into the Archetype of Trauma. Today, you journeyed to meet Trauma. You spoke from the position of Trauma and of the others involved in its story. Now, I am asking you to imagine into the universal story of Trauma. Myths and fairytales describe archetypal experience—they describe the passions, drives and feelings of the forces that shape our lives. If Trauma had a myth, a storyline that described it, what would it be?

In a moment, I’m going to ask you to open your journals and write a short myth about Trauma. You can approach this in any way that comes to mind. It might be a full narrative, or just bullet points outlining the key points of the myth. It may sound like a fairytale or child’s story, or have the feeling of an epic poem. Allow it to flow through you without judging its form; pretend you are the scribe and that Trauma is telling you its story. It may tell you how it came into being: if it has parents, if it lives alone or with others, where it lives, if it has an enemy or nemesis. It may just tell you about one episode that was critical in its development. Allow Trauma to speak through your pen.

Myths and fairytales do not have to follow the laws of reality—let your imagination, informed by your experience
of Trauma today, shape the myth. Let Trauma speak through you to tell its story.

When you are ready, pick up your journals and write the Myth of Trauma. You will have approximately 30 minutes to write.

*At 25 minutes, give a warning.*

*At 28 minutes, tell participants to begin wrapping up.*

*At 30 minutes, ring the chime*

Lead Researcher: It’s time to put down your myth, and pick up the journaling packet in front of you. You’ll have 20 minutes to answer these questions.

*Allow 20 minutes. Chime*

Lead Researcher: Let’s all move a little.

(Coresearcher leads in movement) OK—let’s take a few minutes and hear what Trauma had to say. Speaking as Trauma, tell us a few key things about yourself. Everyone gets 2 minutes—feel free to use the space in the middle of the room to move and gesture to express the archetype.
APPENDIX 20

EVOKING-EXPRESSING SEQUENCE FOUR—QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe how imagining into the archetypal dimension of Trauma impacted you.

2. Are there aspects of your myth that relate to your personal experience of trauma? If so, what are they?

3. Does your myth about Trauma give you any additional insights into your experience of Trauma?

4. In your myth, can you identify any of the characters or events as descriptive of the broader culture?

5. Did expressing from the positions of Trauma, Victim, Bystander and Friend give you any new insights, or deeper meaning around your experience of trauma? If so, what are they?

6. With your myth in mind, write a short sentence as though expressing from each of these positions:
   Trauma:
   Victim:
   Bystander:
   Friend:

7. If you were to give your myth/fairytale a title, what would it be?

8. In one or two sentences, sum up how trauma shapes your life.

9. In one or two sentences, sum up how trauma shapes our culture.

10. Define Trauma.

11. Define Victim.

12. Did imagining into the archetypal dimension of Trauma affect how you think about your own experience of Trauma?
APPENDIX 21

GATHERING PRACTICE ONE

Following the Lunch Break and immediately preceding Evoking-Expressing Sequence Three.

Lead Researcher  *Invites participants back to their seats. Chimes in circle.*

We will open our circle with a brief meditation. Close your eyes and feel yourself sitting in your chair. Feel your feet on the floor, your thighs pressing into the chair, your back against the seat back. Imagine invisible cords connecting you to the center of the earth. Imagine the cords beginning at the base of your spine, and from the arch of each foot, imagine it dropping, effortlessly, through the earth’s surface, deeper through the mantle, and going deeper all the way to the core of the earth where there is a spot especially for you to connect to. Let your cords firmly anchor you to your earth. Now imagine that warm, refreshing, grounding earth energy is traveling up your cords, filling your feet with its warmth, flowing into your ankles, your calves, filling your knees with energy. It continues up, flowing into your thighs, filling the inside and outside, the top and the bottom of your thighs, and when those are filled, it flows into the base of your spine, where it joins with the energy from that grounding cord. Together, these energies move gently up your body, connecting you to the earth. Slowly filling your buttocks, and your lower belly, flowing up into your abdomen and the small of your back, into your diaphragm, and onto your ribs, your lungs, your heart. Let your heart calm with this energy; feel it move into your shoulders and your neck. Let it travel down your arms and out your hands. And let it continue up, into your head, filling your jaw, your cheeks, your ears, let it bathe the back of your head all the way to the crown of your head.

*(Long pause—pick up with Evoking-Expressing Sequence Three, Appendix 17)*
APPENDIX 22

GATHERING PRACTICE TWO

End of Day One

Picking up from the expression of Trauma in a focal space.

Lead Researcher: Let’s shift now, and see if you can bring the expression of the Friend into the room. First, let’s just be still for a moment. Enter your heart space again. Feel into the Friend—the one who is always with you, always watching over you—the one who has your best interests at heart. Let the Friend fill you. Feel it in your feet, your legs, your hips. Let the Friend gently move you as it continues to fill you—filling your stomach, your rib cage and lungs, greeting your heart and flowing into your shoulders and arms. Feel your friend in your neck and open your mind to the loving thoughts of your friend. Let the friend move you now, gently around the circle. And as you move, if words or sounds come, let them flow through you. Express the friend.

Allow movement and expression for 5 minutes.

Chime

Gather in a circle.

Lead researcher: We’re bringing our circle to a close soon. First, I invite any words or sounds to express your experience today. We are looking for just one or two words here. And we can go around the circle popcorn style.

Allow expression

And now, I invite you to bring in the voice of the Friend. Can each of you give us a short thought from the voice of your friend to help carry you home this evening?

Allow expression.
Thank you all for participating. I am grateful for your courage and openness with such a difficult subject. When we meet here again on [date], I will have preliminary learnings from our work together today to share with you, and I hope to get your input about your experience and learning here today to help shape my final report.

Please take care of yourselves in the meantime, be gentle, and allow the voice of the friend to support you.

Chime out.
APPENDIX 23

GATHERING PRACTICE THREE

Chime in circle

Lead Researcher: We’re going to begin with a brief meditation. Settle into your chairs. Feel into your bodies. Feel your connection to the earth. Be mindful of your breath. Observe its flow: in, out, in, out, in, out. Slowly, bring your attention to your heart. Let your attention rest there. Feel into your heart consciousness. Allow yourself to simply rest comfortably here. While sitting in your heart, call to your Friend to join you. This is the Friend who knows you to your core. They know all of your history, all of your strengths, all of your weaknesses, and they love you unconditionally. They are your advocate, your guide, your fiercest ally. They are always present, always attached to you, always caring about you. This Friend travels with you everywhere you go, and is always there to give you courage, strength and support. Invite your Friend to join us here in the circle.

Now slowly bring your attention back into the room, and when you’re ready, open your eyes.
APPENDIX 24

GATHERING PRACTICE FOUR AND CLOSING CIRCLE

Lead Researcher: We’re going to close out our circle with a heart-based meditation to invite in the Friend. Before we do that, I invite everyone to offer one or two words that describes how you’re feeling right now.

Go around the circle for the expression.
Read slowly with pauses between thoughts.

If you can now settle in for a brief meditation, close your eyes, and bring your attention to your breath. Let your breath inform you of how you are in this moment. Is it shallow or deep? Just let it be, and let your awareness settle more deeply into your body. Let any thoughts that arise float through your consciousness. Rather than following them, just observe. And slowly, bring your attention to your heart. Let your attention rest there. Feel your heart beating. Imagine that you are sitting in the consciousness of your heart—that you see the world as a heart sees the world. See the world with a loving eye. Imagine that resting in your heart with you is your Friend. This is the Friend who knows you to your core. They know all of your history, all of your strengths, all of your weaknesses, and they love you unconditionally. They are your advocate, your guide, your fiercest ally. They are always present, always attached to you, always caring about you. This Friend travels with you everywhere you go, and is always there to give you courage, strength, and support. Ask this friend to accompany you today as you leave this room and travel to your next adventure. Invite this friend to give you its loving guidance and support. In a moment, I am going to ring the chimes. When I do, I invite you to speak a word or two from your friend to carry you home, and to close this circle.

Chime. Allow for voices of the Friend. Chime out the circle.
APPENDIX 25

CO-RESEARCHER JOURNALING QUESTIONS

1. What were the key moments you noticed and why?

2. Please rank the key moments in order of importance for you.

3. Did you notice any of your imaginal structures activated during the research? Please describe and connect to the phase of research as appropriate.

4. Did you notice any gatekeeping? If so, please describe. Also indicate what may have triggered the gatekeeping or what phase of the research it related to.

5. What affects did you experience and to what part of the research did they relate?

6. Do you think the numinous was evoked? Explain why you do or don’t.

7. What did you learn today?

8. Were your imaginal structures related to trauma affected? If so, how?
NOTES

Chapter 1


2. Ibid.


4. Aftab Omer, “Gatekeeping and the Transformative Process,” *Intercohort Lecture*, author’s notes, July 24, 2006. Here, I draw on Omer’s description of ITP and Imaginal Structures. ITP concepts and principles introduced in these first few paragraphs will be further unpacked in the Theory in Practice Section.

5. Aftab Omer, cited by Courtney Lubell, *Imaginal Process II*, author’s notes, December 19, 2005. This principle and the supporting concepts have been explored in multiple lectures and in coursework.


8. Ibid., 5-7.


10. Ibid., 6, 108, 112.

11. Ibid., 63-64.


17. I constructed the definition of ecstatic based on coursework at Meridian University, particularly: Courtney Lubell, email correspondence quoting Aftab Omer’s definitions October 2, 2009, and Lisa Herman, Ecstatic States and Culture, author’s notes July 25, 2007. The description of adaptive identity was constructed based on course work, including Imaginal Process I, Fall 2005-2006.


22. Donald Kalsched, The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003), 66-67. Quotations marks are the author’s.

23. Ibid., 4-5. Italics are Kalsched’s.


25. For this section, I draw on discussions in many classes, including History of Psychology with Lucus Plumb and Aftab Omer, as well as on Meridian University’s website http://meridianuniversity.edu.


30. Aftab Omer, Peer Lecture, April 21, 2007, author’s notes. Here I draw on Omer’s discussion of the mystery of the Friend as representing the good, but at the same time being complex enough to contain the shadow: “The mystery of the friend is an effort to name, the good stuff in a way that can include the bad stuff. The mystery of goodness is complex enough to include the bad. It’s in the nature of goodness to entail evil. Just like we can’t understand the nature of hate without understanding the nature of attachment, dependence.”


33. Plato, The Republic, Book VII.

35. Omer, cited by Lubell, *Imaginal Process II*, author’s notes, December 19, 2005. This principle and the supporting concepts have been explored in multiple lectures and in coursework.

36. Expanding on Silvan Tomkins’ work on affect theory, Donald Nathanson defines affects as the biological aspect of emotion hardwired into our genetic code. Affects trigger what Nathanson referred to as scripts, a similar concept to ITP’s imaginal structures. Additionally, affects are archetypal, part of universal human experience. As archetypal expressions of human experience, affects align us with the mythic journey, which describes the unfolding of human capabilities. For more detail, see: Donald L. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 49, 244.


44. Ibid.


Chapter 2


5. Ibid., 236.

6. Ibid., 379.

8. William James, Writings 1902-1910, ed. Bruce Kuklick. (New York: Library of America: 1996) in “The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature” 17-21. Please note that this source is different than the earlier references to James and therefore the page numbers are dependent on the volume cited. I will therefore note the 1902 version when it is being cited.


11. Ibid., 72.

12. Ibid., 73.

13. Ibid., 8, 71, 468.


15. Ibid., 33.


20. Ibid., 20.

21. Ibid., 12-31, 59. (Italics are Otto’s.)

22. Ibid., 13.

23. Ibid., 25.


25. Ibid., 20.

26. Ibid., 31.

27. Ibid., 13-16.

28. Ibid., 14.

29. Ibid., 15-16.

30. Ibid., 31. (Italics are the authors.)

32. Ibid., 21.
33. Ibid., 12.
35. Ibid., 27. Italics and quotations are the authors. Otto introduced the idea of stupor on the previous page writing: "Stupor is plainly a different thing from tremor; it signifies blank wonder, an astonishment that strikes us dumb, amazement absolute." 26.
37. Ibid., 108, 112.
40. Ibid., 29.
42. Ibid., 10, 12, 90-99.
43. Ibid., 11. Quotations are the authors.
45. Ibid., 11 -13.
46. Ibid., 12. (Italics are the authors.)
47. Ibid., 209-213.
48. Ibid., 212-213.
52. Ibid., 43.
55. Ibid., 98-99.


58. Hillman, Pan, 37.

59. Ibid., xx, 2-3.

60. Eliade, Sacred, 14.

61. Ibid., 107.


64. Ibid., 81.

65. Ibid., 15-17, 73.

66. Ibid., 149.


69. Ibid., 352, 360. Italics are used in a consistent form with Colman’s use to preserve clarity of his thought.

70. Ibid., 354.

71. Ibid., 359-360


73. Ibid., xv.

74. Ibid., xvii


76. Ibid., 2.


78. Ibid., 5-6.


81. Ibid., 37-38.

82. Ibid., 39.

83. Ibid., 211.


86. Ibid., 10-11.

88. Ibid., 19.


92. Ibid., 121-133.

93. Ibid., 122. and Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences, xiv.*


95. Ibid., 25.


98. Ibid., 121.


102. Ibid., 122.

103. Ibid., 122.


105. Ibid., 33-34.


109. Ibid., 10, 41.


113. Ibid., 43-57.

114. Ibid., 55-56.


116. Wesselman, Spirit Medicine, 149-151.

117. Ibid., 150. (Italics are the authors.)


119. Ibid., 332.


121. Ibid.


127. Ibid., 154-161.


131. Ibid.


139. Ibid.

140. Aftab Omer via email correspondence with Courtney Lubell October 2, 2009.


144. Ibid.


147. Ibid.


149. Ibid., 63.

150. Ibid., 58

151. Ibid., 259.

152. Ibid., 205-213

153. Ibid., 10.


159. Ibid., iv.


162. Ibid., 3.


165. Ibid., 190-193.

166. von Franz, *Archetypal Dimensions of the Psyche,* 2, 261,263.


170. Ibid., 329. Italics are Jung’s.


173. Ibid., 18.

174. Ibid., 18-22

175. Ibid., 154.


178. Ibid., 8.


180. Ibid., 17-18.

181. Ibid., 22.

182. Ibid., 23.

183. Ibid., 31.

184. Ibid., 34-37.

186. Ibid. 102.


188. Ibid., 24.

189. Ibid., 8.

190. Ibid., 108.


192. Ibid., 35-37.


194. Ibid., 64.


197. Hillman, *Pan and the Nightmare*.

198. Ibid., 2. (Quotes and capitalization are Hillman’s.)

199. Ibid., 50.

200. Ibid., 37.


202. Ibid., 50.


205. Ibid., 46-48. Of note, May outlines the creative process as follows: 1) It begins with the unconscious breaking through to the conscious to destroy an existing belief/understanding/image of reality. This involves a struggle and dynamic expansion of awareness; 2) “Ecstasy – the uniting of unconscious experience with consciousness ... dynamic, immediate fusion.” Ecstasy is a state of heightened consciousness; 3) “Insight never comes hit or miss, but in accordance with a pattern of which one essential element is our own commitment... the “call that was answered by the unconscious.” 4) “The insight comes
at a moment of transition between work and relaxation.” As a result of the relaxing of the conscious tension. 60-62.


208. Ibid., 48-50

209. Ibid., 50.

210. Ibid., 260. Italics are the author’s.

211. Sardello, Freeing the Soul from Fear, vii, 47, 145-166.


213. Lash, Not in His Image. The first two sentences of this paragraph draw on Lash’s overall theory presented in the book.

214. Ibid., 16, 66-70.


219. Ibid., xxv.

220. Ibid., xxiv-xxv, 239.


222. Ibid., 18, 204.

223. Ibid., 127.

224. Washburn, Dynamic Ground, 171-188.

225. Ibid., 188-202.

226. Ibid., 201.

227. Ibid., 129.

229. Omer, “Gatekeeping and The Transformative Imperative,” author’s notes, July 24, 2006. Unless otherwise specified, the ideas discussed in this paragraph are sourced from this lecture.


231. Aftab Omer, “Authority with Love, Engaging the Father Principle with Love,” *Integrative Seminar Ib*, author’s notes, January 20, 2006. The ideas referenced in this paragraph are all sourced from this lecture.

232. Corbin, “Mundus Imaginalis.”

233. Ibid.

234. Ibid.

235. Ibid. Italics are the authors.

236. Ibid.

237. Ibid.


239. Ibid., 67

240. Ibid., 60.


242. Ibid., 226.


244. Ibid., 5.


246. Ibid., 178.

247. Ibid., 173.


249. Ibid., 11-12.

250. Ibid., 11-12.


253. Ibid., 82.

254. Ibid., 77-85.


256. Ibid., 5.


258. Ibid., 2-4, 22,109.

259. Ibid., 92-95.


262. Ibid., 140-141.


264. Ibid., 92-93.

265. Ibid., 99. Italics are the authors.


268. Ibid.


270. Ibid., 105.


272. Ibid., 47.


274. Ibid., 197-199.
275. Ellen and Stephen Levine, Seminar “Imagining the Enemy – Aesthetic Responsibility & Social Change,” (Santa Rosa, CA: Meridian University February 16, 2008). This paragraph is drawn from this day-long experiential seminar.

276. Ibid.


279. Jaleh Fatemi, An Exploratory Study of Peak Experience and Other Positive Human Experiences and Writing, (Texas A&M University, Educational Psychology, 2004).

280. Ibid.


285. Mitchell, Freud and Beyond, 94.


287. Ibid.


289. Ibid.

290. Ibid., xvi, 43.

291. Ibid., 133. Italics are Winnicott’s.

292. Ibid., 133-135.

293. Michael Fordham, “Active Imagination”

294. Ibid., 26, 183.


296. Ibid., 25-26, 131-137.

297. Ibid., 131-132.
298. Ibid., 131.
300. Ibid., 14.
301. Ibid., 16-19.
302. Ibid., 29-29.
307. Ibid., 30-33.
310. Ibid.
311. Ibid.
314. Ibid.
315. Ibid.
318. Ibid.
320. Ibid., 246-247.


323. Bessel A. van der Kolk et al., "Proposal to Include a Developmental Trauma Disorder Diagnosis for Children and Adolescents in DSM-V (published online at http://www.traumacenter.org/products/publications.php, published February 1, 2009)


325. Bessel A. van der Kolk et al., "Proposal to Include a Developmental Trauma Disorder . . . “

326. Kolk, Biological Response.


329. Ibid., 242.

330. Rothschild, The Body Remembers. 30-33. This reference indicates the source for this paragraph except where otherwise noted.


333. van der Kolk, Biological Response.

334. van der Kolk, “The Body Keeps the Score.”


338. Ibid., 1-5.

339. Ibid., 5.
340. Ibid., 52-53.
341. Ibid., 14-15.
343. Ibid., 127-129.
345. Ibid., 267-299.
346. Ibid., 284.
347. Ibid., 239-247.
348. Ibid., 266, 303.
349. van der Kolk, “The Compulsion to Repeat.”
351. van der Kolk, “The Compulsion to Repeat.”
352. Ibid.
353. Ibid.
357. Ibid.
359. Ibid., 3-4
360. Ibid., 5.
361. Ibid., 16.
362. Ibid., 16 Italics are the authors.
363. Ibid., 65-67
364. Ibid., 70.
365. Ibid., 89-91.
366. Ibid., 93.
367. Ibid.152.
368. Ibid., 35-36.
371. Ibid., 168-180.
372. Ibid., 178-179.
373. Ibid., 194-197.
374. Ibid., 208-220.
375. Ibid., 216-218.
377. Ibid., 153.
378. Ibid., 154.
379. Kalsched, *The Inner World of Trauma*, 12. Italics are Kalsched’s.
380. Ibid., 66-67. Quotations marks are the author’s.
381. Ibid., 4-5. Italics are Kalsched’s.
382. Ibid., 4.
383. Ibid., 163. Italics, quotes and parenthetical note are Kalsched’s.
384. Ibid., 208.
387. Ibid., 51-52
388. Ibid., 54-59.


392. Ibid., 248-249.


395. Ibid., 220–226.

396. Ibid., 224.

397. Lash, *Not in His Image*, 16, 66-70. The four components of the complex are: “creation of the world by a father god independent of a female counterpart; the trial and testing (conceived as a historical drama) of the righteous few of “Chosen People”; the mission of the Creator god’s son (the messiah) to save the world; and the final, apocalyptic judgment delivered by the father and son upon humanity.”

398. Ibid., 298.

399. Ibid., 298-299.


401. Ibid., 122-123.


403. Ibid., 86.


407. Ibid.

Chapter 3

1. Omer, cited by Karen Jaenke, Research Methods I, author’s notes, Fall Quarter 2006.


5. This section draws on my writing for Meridian graduation requirements.


7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

Chapter 4

1. As the reader may recall, the term Gatekeeper was introduced on page 9 of the introduction and was defined as a particular imaginal structure that arises to limit experience associated with unsatisfactory outcomes in the past.


3. This paragraph draws on sources cited in the section on imagination, including Aftab Omer, “The Spacious Center, Leadership and the Creative Transformation of Culture,” Shift: At The Frontiers of Consciousness, 6 (March-May 2005) 30-33 and Omer, “Gatekeeping and the Transformative Imperative,” July 24, 2007


5. May, Power and Innocence, 35-36.


7. Grotstein, A Beam of Intense Darkness, 39, 211.

8. Lash, Not in His Image, 332.


11. The concept of projecting aspects of self onto an object is integral to Gestalt Therapy,
developed by Frederick Perls. See Frederick S. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy, Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (Gouldsboro, ME: The Gestalt Journal Press, Inc. 1994). While utilizing Gestalt techniques, the primary goal of creative projection is to temporarily disengage from aspects of identity, to create separation and distance.


16. This is what I journaled regarding the event with Emily during the journey: “The wounding Emily felt, I felt in the moment and didn’t have a creative solution – I was stuck in my imaginal structure about doing something the ‘right’ way. Speaking her hurt she was clear that she needed me to respond to her – her honesty and accountability in this was palpable. She needed to be met and I failed. I came up with solutions that did not involve responding in the moment. I may have done what was necessary for the research, but it was not what was therapeutically needed.”


18. Ibid., 169.


20. Ibid., 4.


26. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 133. Here I am referencing Winnicott’s definition of cultural experience, “…the common pool of humanity, into which individuals and groups of people may contribute, and from which we may all draw if we have somewhere to put what we find.” Italics are Winnicott’s.


**Chapter 5**

2. Wilson, *The Post Traumatic Self*, 248-249


5. May, *Power and Innocence*.


8. For the purpose of telling this myth, unless otherwise noted, I draw from *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Myths and Culture*, (London: Quantum Publishing, 2004), 78-82.


13. Ibid., 15-16.


Appendix

1. Scores were rated by awarding three points to the first choice, two points to the second and one point to the third choice. Some participants blended aspects of the day into one key moment, such as the opening ritual and ritual overall. For the first ranking, these were assigned half the points awarded to that position. For the second ranking they were combined. Both ranking systems clearly identified the same leading three key moments. The combined categories reflect less of a moment in the research than the impact of an activity or an aspect of design. Both methods of consideration will be incorporated into the learnings.
REFERENCES


Fatemi, Jaleh. *An Exploratory Study of Peak Experience and Other Positive Human Experiences and Writing*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University, Educational Psychology, 2004.


Houston, Jean. The Search for the Beloved: Journeys in Mythology and Sacred Psychology. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam. 1987


Oliver, Mary. *THIRST*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006


