

Paths with Heart: Transformative Journeys in the Imaginal Realm



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Instructions for living a life:

Pay attention.

Be astonished.

Tell about it.

Mary Oliver, extract from 'Sometimes'

Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated.

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Abstract

My inquiry is a hermeneutic investigation into the lived experience of, and interpersonal and intrapersonal processes involved in transformative learning in primarily affective and imaginal modes of being. Through the lens of an extended epistemology, my inquiry challenges assumptions that critical-thinking and conceptual-rational knowing should be central to the process of perspective change.

We experience, interpret, and know the world through the body, imagination and intellect, and yet the intellect is often privileged in the process of transformative learning. This inquiry seeks a more expansive understanding of the multiple ways in which perspective change might be achieved. It explores the notion that our affective and imaginal capabilities play a significant role in development because they are central to meaning-making.

My inquiry investigates the proposal that specific creative methods and methodologies can be employed intentionally to facilitate self-knowing and insights that can lead to change. It explores development *as* a creative process and *through* creative processes. An empathic approach of 'methodological believing' is employed to explore the roles of multiple modes of presence and ways of knowing in developmental learning.

Through my inquiry, we gain a more nuanced understanding about what it might mean to transform. My findings support the argument that critical self-reflection is not always necessary for transformative experience, and that symbolic and performative acts, when guided by intent, can result in the embodied integration of insights and realisations. However, often transformative experience marks the beginning of a much longer process of change, which cannot be guaranteed.

The contributions of the inquiry include development of the concept of the rite-of-passage as a useful metaphor for the process of development. Experiences of transformative journeys are synthesised into a rite-of-passage process network that illustrates the interpersonal and intrapersonal processes of transformative learning in affective and imaginal modes of presence.

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Introduction

A path with heart

As a child, I loved drawing and sculpting, and generally making art out of anything I could find. My father encouraged me to consider philosophical questions of the nature of existence, consciousness, perception, and knowledge. A contemplative child, I spent much of my time thinking, reading, and imagining, and communicating my felt knowing through artistic expression. I have always been an experiential learner, relishing the embodied knowing that my senses and my imagination provide. The family bookshelves of my childhood home were stuffed full of an eclectic mix of spiritual, metaphysical, esoteric, and psychological literature, along with an ever-expanding set of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Consequently, I developed interests in the mysteries of existence, and for the living systems of the Earth with their complex patterns and structures, and intricate webs of influence created in interconnecting systems.

As a teenager, I became fascinated by the writings of Carlos Castaneda (1968-2000), a student anthropologist accused of 'going native' whilst studying the cognitive system of a lineage of seers/shamans of Mexico. The unique teachings he recorded at the time and his subsequent years of struggle in trying to make sense of and apply what he'd learnt, moved me to the core. They continue to provide guidance in my life. As a result, when making life decisions I always follow the advice,

"Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you" (Castaneda, 1974, pp. 106-7).

Following a path with heart has not always been the easiest route to travel, but has led to many interesting life journeys, its rewards measured in terms of personal growth. I continue to live by that advice and it guided my decision to embark on my doctoral studies.

My education and training was in arts institutions that valued all ways of knowing, but privileged affective and imaginal knowing and embodied practice, emphasizing and affirming their importance in the creative process. As I became versed in the theory and literature of art and artists (Gombrich, 1995), symbol and metaphor (Jung, 1964/1978) (Hall, 2007) (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), and practiced in artful ways of knowing, they increased in potency as sources of self-knowing for me. Many modern artists, particularly the surrealists and expressionists, drew upon the interior realm of the psyche as a source of inspiration (for example, Frida Kahlo (Herrera, 1991), Leonora Carrington (Aberth, 2004), and Mark Rothko (Rothko, 2004)). Their fearless explorations of their own interior worlds led me to explore those realms in my own work.

I experienced the process of making as a form of 'thinking' unlike that of reasoning. I found that through experiential and imaginative means it was possible to work thematically with ideas and concepts (Allen & Thomas, 2011). My expanded visual literacy (Wilde & Wilde, 1991) (Cress & van Leeuwen, 1996) (Chandler, 2002) gave me an appreciation and repertoire of cultural and personal symbolic references with which to work.

Having developed the lens of a pluralistic world of multiple truths and realities as a consequence of my arts and design-based education and praxis as artist, designer, and teacher, I rejected positivist assumptions of an objectively observable world that is singularly knowable and quantifiable. Positivism appeared to me an attempt to simplify the complexity and richness of the world of experience. Interpretivist views, by contrast, assume that the reality we know is constructed intersubjectively through social, cultural and experiential processes (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011).

Motivation for my inquiry

I had been teaching visual arts courses in a thriving Further Education college for several years, and was course manager for Graphic Design. In my small section I practiced a participatory, co-creative style of leadership with staff and students, responding to feedback to grow my course into a more holistic one, working creatively in my interpretation of the curriculum to provide meaningful, stimulating and engaging learning experiences. I taught creative and critical thinking skills by engaging learners actively in creative process and observed that it facilitated the development of certain skills and attributes such as divergent thinking, creativity, cognitive flexibility, creative problem-solving, and self-leadership, endowing learners with self-efficacy and transferable skills they could apply in their lives and chosen career paths.

I noticed that engagement in the process also seemed to facilitate personal development in some students, as it had done for me. I became more interested in the transformative and developmental potential of engaging in creative process. The distinction between learning and development interested me greatly, and I became eager to inquire more deeply into the apparent ability of creative process to facilitate development. I wanted to know what it was that appeared to facilitate self-knowing and development in this context, seeking to better understand the experiences and processes of transformative learning through creative process.

I enjoyed my teaching and managing role at South Downs College (SDC), an institution that had allowed me autonomy in my role, and had been supportive of my professional development. SDC provided financial assistance to enable me to take a Masters level course in Design for Digital Media, which was stimulating, challenging, and transformative in the ways in which it empowered me to expand the horizons of my conceptual knowledge and arts practice. I excelled in every area of the course and gained fresh confidence in my abilities as a designer and scholar.

My newly-found confidence, burgeoning creative energy, and self-belief that I had more to contribute, prompted me to seek out a new creative and intellectual challenge in which I could further explore the interests that my teaching, creative practice, and recent academic studies and experience had fostered. I gained an EPSRC funded place on the HighWire Doctoral Training Centre at Lancaster University, which commenced in October 2010. HighWire was promoted as a transdisciplinary course, in which collaboration across disciplinary boundaries was encouraged. The course included a preliminary taught Master's degree in research in digital innovation, which I successfully completed in 2011.

Development of inquiry themes

Returning to my artistic roots, and to my interest in learning and development, I began research into the potential for processes, practices and methods from the arts to be applied in developing creativity, and in personal, organisational (Stockil, 2006) (Berthoin Antal, 2009), and leadership development (Nissley, 2010) (Darso, 2004), (Purg, 2010) (Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). I discovered that workshops involving elements of performance and storytelling produced meaningful, embodied experiences for participants, and were particularly relevant to leadership development (Biehl-Missal, 2010), and that engaging in collaborative creative process appeared to be useful in developing qualities such as cognitive flexibility, adaptability, and creative problem-solving skills (Siegel, 2012) (Austin & Devin, 2004), (Colakoglu & Littlefield, 2011) (Fredrickson, 2004). I looked more closely at what creativity means, the relationship between creativity and development, and of the moral implications of developing creativity.

Dimensions of creativity

There are many definitions and descriptions of what creativity is that vary across disciplines and contexts. A typical perspective of those concerned about the products of creativity is, "the capacity to produce things that are original and valuable" (Gaut, 2010, p. 1039). I find this description unsatisfying, wondering what he means by 'things', and if indeed 'things' are or should be the ultimate aim of creativity. It would not be helpful to provide the many variations of the definition, so I offer one which is an amalgamation and distillation of the most useful to me, which is: the application of energy and imagination, which results in a novel response to a stimulus by working with what is known and what can be imagined. This more inclusive definition lifts creativity out of the material realm and allows greater depth and breadth to the many processes and results of creativity. It enables the psychological and societal implications of creativity to be discussed.

Creativity and development

Learning theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky have linked creativity to development. Piaget (1951/2013), one of the founders of modern cognitive development theories,

considered children's creative play to be highly significant in their emotional and cognitive development. Vygotsky saw a link, not just in child's play, but in engagement with other symbolic, presentational forms. He saw engagement with symbolic forms as "a transformative activity where emotion, meaning, and cognitive symbols are synthesised" (Connery, John-Steiner, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010, p. 12). Vygotsky envisaged creativity as the synthesis of intellect and imagination to generate novel cultural forms, whether they be ideas, actions or artefacts (Lindqvist, 2003). He argued that these cultural forms led to the development of individuals and society: "Without new art there can be no new man" (Vygotsky in (Lindqvist, 2003, p. 248)). Creativity is, according to Vygotsky, a socially influenced and mediated process (Connery, John-Steiner, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010) because individuals shape, and are shaped by, their cultures.

This societal view of creativity is taken up by Sawyer et al. (2003), who describe creativity and development from a systems-thinking perspective, as "processes of emergence in complex systems" (2003, p. 5). Emergence is when unexpected, novel change arises in a complex system. It prevents a system from becoming stagnant, and provides the potential for change that can impact upon the whole system (Capra, 1996). From a cultural perspective, it can mean significant shifts as societies evolve into new forms. This 'evolution' does not necessarily mean progress or growth, but change. So, is there or should there be a moral dimension to creativity, especially in the teaching and practice of creativity, to ensure creative emergence is constructive to society?

Moral dimension of creativity

It cannot be assumed that creative thinking or action always has a positive effect upon individuals or society. Kampylis and Valtanen (2010) found that many definitions and collocations of creativity assumed that it is a neutral or positive phenomenon, and few discussed the negative aspects and consequences of creativity. In *The Dark Side of Creativity* (Cropley, Cropley, Kaufman, & Runco, 2010), the negative aspects of creativity are addressed in a series of essays looking at mental health, terrorism, criminality, technology, propaganda and the power of the state. They suggest that creativity needs accompanying wisdom, a combination of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal interests and actions, which implies that for creativity to be 'good' there needs to be a transpersonal element to those who wield it. Kampylis and Valtanen echo this by arguing for a shift towards a culture of "conscientious creativity" in which we should attempt to create things which are ethical and constructive for society. They insist that "creative thinking alone is not enough for personal growth and social progress" (2010, p. 209), and that holistic frameworks are needed in teaching creativity that balance personal and transpersonal interests.

Development of creativity, it seems, guarantees neither personal growth, nor 'good' development, so needs to be part of a more complex developmental process. My initial inquiry questions began to form around these themes. What distinguishes a learning experience from a developmental one? How does developmental learning

come about, what are the processes involved and what does it feel like to experience? With the assumption that transpersonal awareness is a potentially positive attribute, how does it come about, and can its development be facilitated? Can arts-based processes provide the kinds of holistic frameworks that Kampylis and Valtanen (2010) say help balance personal and transpersonal interests? How might arts-based practices provide opportunities for self-knowing to emerge, and what conditions encourage its emergence? Intuition is an aspect of the creative process, but what kind of knowing is it, can it be cultivated, and do certain practices or conditions promote its appearing?

The Inquiry

What began life as an inquiry into the development of creativity became a much deeper exploration of the roles of multiple modes of presence and ways of knowing in transformative experience and personal growth. The subject of my inquiry became the investigation of the lived experience, processes and conditions of transformative learning in primarily affective and imaginal modes of being.

Those terms will be unpacked and discussed in later chapters, but in short, by development I mean perspective change resulting from expanding one's frames of reference (Mezirow, 1978). I use John Heron's (1992) terms affective and imaginal¹, where 'affective' refers to the mode of psychological functioning active in the embodied experience of phenomena, and 'imaginal' refers to the mode of psychological functioning active in perception and almost every aspect of waking and dreaming life, including, of course, our visual impressions of phenomena. Experiential knowing arises from the affective mode, and presentational knowing refers to the ways in which we generate and express knowing prior to or instead of language to describe felt meaning and ineffable knowing. Presentational forms include the arts and storytelling and can be differentiated from 'propositional knowing'² and expression by their direct connection to the felt experience of embodiment and imaginal capacity (Heron, 1992).

The main themes of my inquiry, investigated from a broadly phenomenological perspective, are the links between adult development, embodied creative process, and multiple ways of knowing. My phenomenological perspective sees us as experiencing and interpreting the world through the body, the imagination and the intellect (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2005) (Gadamer, 1977) (Heron, 1992) (Jung,

¹ See Heron's extended epistemology, chapter 2.

² In brief, propositional knowing is 'knowing about' something in conceptual terms.

1964/1978), constructing stories and narratives that contribute to our sense and meaning-making, identities, and relationships to the world (Bruner, 1991).

My inquiry explores the notion that our affective and imaginal capabilities play a significant role in development because they are central to meaning-making. My thesis argues that some ways of engaging in creative process can generate self-knowing and facilitate transformative learning. My inquiry explores development *as* a creative process and *through* creative processes. My approach is influenced by creative practice and process, and hermeneutic and heuristic inquiry methodologies (Anderson, 2011) (Moustakas, 1990). I draw upon a variety of phenomenological texts from different realms, in a transdisciplinary inquiry encompassing embodied experience, the affective, imaginal, practical, and conceptual realms.

Structure and form of the thesis

As with all qualitative inquiries of considerable length, the process is often more convoluted than the resulting thesis may imply. In writing my first thesis draft, I attempted to mirror the journey of my inquiry exactly. My inquiry necessitated remaining in a state of uncertainty and not-knowing for much of the time. I continuously framed and then reframed processes in relation to wholes as I made sense of the accumulating data in different ways. Reviewing my first draft, I found that a chronologically faithful account left the reader as much in the 'wilderness' as I had been, and made the themes and threads of the inquiry difficult to follow.

In order to create a coherent narrative with which to more adequately guide the reader, keep them informed, and retain their interest, I made certain editorial decisions as any author does. I have also taken some liberties with the chronology of my inquiry in the thesis, which need explanation. I made the decision to situate my account and discussion of the Mythodrama programme of July 2013 (see chapter 5) before that of the Vision Fast, when in actuality I experienced it after the Vision Fast, which took place in April-May 2013 (see chapter 6). I do so for a number of reasons, which I explain in my introduction to chapters 4, 5, and 6 (pp. 71-72).

1. Methodology

Phenomenological approaches to inquiry

Starting point

Developing my methodology and methods entailed consideration of myself, as a first-person inquirer, my inquiry approach more generally, and the ways in which I would collect and interpret data. I began my initial research using the designerly approach I had been trained in, which begins with immersion in a topic, exploring media from a variety of cultural sources that relate to it. This is to inform and generate ideas for a specific area of focus. It is a conceptual and an affective and imaginal exercise, in which areas that spark interest or capture the imagination are noted and followed-up. Designerly approaches typically engage a variety of ways of knowing. Although divergent and eclectic at first, ideas are developed in a reflective and iterative way, until a convergence and synthesis of ideas and knowing results in a design outcome. The approach was adequate for my initial literature searching and topic-narrowing, but I needed to look to other phenomenological inquiry methodologies for greater guidance on conducting an inquiry into lived-experience.

Early influences

My early interest in 'artistic interventions' (arts-based projects with organisations and community groups) introduced me to the field of Organizational Aesthetics (Strati, 2000) (Gagliardi, 1996) (Taylor & Hansen, 2005), a transdisciplinary phenomenological approach to organisational research. OA's focus on embodied aesthetic experience: sense stimuli, data, and affective-imaginal responses and impacts, encouraged me to adopt aesthetic aspects of its "sensual methodologies" (Warren, 2008). OA tries to reveal what is present but often not explicit, making the invisible visible (Barry, 1994), and elicit and express the ineffable (Taylor S. , 2002). I admired the way OA research tried to balance psychological, social, and cultural concerns.

I gradually found my way to hermeneutic (interpretive) and heuristic (descriptive and interpretive) inquiry methodologies, which were a good fit with the research I had already undertaken, and would better equip me for my fieldwork studies. I felt pulled to the transpersonal methodology of Anderson's (2011) intuitive inquiry and to Moustakas' (1990) heuristic research. Both phenomenological approaches aim to provide structure, method, and rigour to the inquiry into lived-experience. They place the researcher's own experience at the heart of the research process and value intuition in inquiry.

The interpretive approach

Hermeneutics originated from the need to find methods for interpreting historical religious texts that enabled a rigorous, holistic understanding of the meanings in relation to the contexts in which the texts were written and the people they were written by and for (Gadamer H.-G. , 1977). Unlike Husserl, founder of the descriptive approach, who believed it was possible to 'bracket' off one's experiences,

psychological associations, assumptions, expectations, and cultural understandings of phenomena through a method he termed the 'epoché' (Zahavi, 2003)³, Gadamer doubted it was possible to escape one's historicity⁴ in this way. Gadamer examines how we are products of our personal and cultural histories and circumstances, bound to our present 'horizons' in innumerable ways, observing that "the knower's own present situation is already constitutively involved in any process of understanding" (1977, p. xiv).

Our 'prejudices' (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004) represent our individual ways of seeing the world. Merleau-Ponty (1978) would say they represent our 'style' of being in the world, and Husserl, that they are the result of our "substrate of habitualities" (Moran, 2011, p. 68). They are "the conditions whereby we experience something" (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004, p. 9). Gadamer saw the acknowledgement of our own 'prejudices' in the construction of understandings as a potentially productive ground of understanding rather than a hindrance (Gadamer H.-G. , 1977, pp. xiv-xv). Texts are products of their author's historicity, but when we engage with texts, our own historicity influences our interpretations. In opening up a conversation with the text we can try to understand it in relation to the author whilst also reflecting on our own part in the interpretive process as our prejudices are brought into awareness. As Wiercinski observes, "Interpretations are dependent upon the historical conditions in which they take place and on the particular context within which interpretation is happening⁵" (2009, p. 5). Consequently, there can be no absolute interpretations. Claims to definitive interpretations and 'truths' are considered unhelpful, and the hermeneutic position is that understanding is a never-ending process, always subject to further and alternative interpretations. The truth is not out there to be discovered but is constructed (Wiercinski, 2009).

Gadamer (2004) describes the hermeneutic cycle as an iterative process which begins with one's interest in the topic, followed by the study of texts, analysis, and reflection. Reflection results in an iterative return to the texts and so on, as the researcher develops an increasing resonance with and depth of understanding of the material. Gadamer intended the hermeneutic cycle to provide a means of an holistic comprehension of what is being studied that would at the same time further an understanding of the self and how one is situated in the world. To comprehend the

³ See Chapter 2 for discussion of philosophical phenomenology.

⁴ Historicity: one's "historically effected consciousness" (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004, p.336)

⁵ Example: One only has to read the interpretations of artefacts by Victorian anthropologists in the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford, to see that their interpretations reveal more about the Victorian authors than the artefacts they describe. Popularizing these definitive interpretations helped to establish and perpetrate racial and cultural stereotypes, which still exist in our cultural mindset today.

whole, he posited, we must immerse ourselves in the details of the parts and then harmonize the meanings of the parts with the whole (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004, p. 291). It is a view commensurate with systems thinking (Capra, 1996). Wiercinski summarizes Gadamer's vision for the hermeneutic understanding of human being as "an attempt to understand the human being in its complexity and totality without ever losing the perspective of the essential fragmentarity and incompleteness of any human insight and cognition" (2009, p. 13).

Heuristic Research: a foot in each camp

Those using Husserl's descriptive approach and method of phenomenological reduction focus on describing "essences": the essential features or invariable qualities of phenomena. Heuristic research tends toward attempting to describe essences, but not to the exclusion of interpretation. Moustakas draws from Husserl, but is flexible in his approach because he seeks to remain close to the individual stories of his research participants (Moustakas, 1994). Purists in the descriptive tradition (e.g. Giorgi (2006)) attempt to understand a phenomenon, for example, 'learning', whereas Moustakas would seek to understand 'the learning individual'. I think there is a danger in the descriptive approach, of removing the person from an experience, of losing the uniqueness of it to the individual. For this reason, I feel closer to Moustakas in my aims of understanding how even commonalities in the features of experience impact upon individuals differently.

Moustakas (1990) describes heuristic research as an internal search to discover the nature and meaning of experience and develop methods and procedures to further investigate and analyse it. Creative self-processes and self-discoveries are intrinsic aspects of the process. Moustakas likens it to "creating a story that portrays the qualities, meanings, and essences of universally unique experiences" (1990, p. 13), through deep, disciplined, and sustained immersion in the process. 'Indwelling' is essential to the heuristic research process: the process of devoting one's unwavering attention to exploring a facet of experience, to fully immerse in it, and follow all 'clues' and avenues that may afford deeper insights.

Moustakas (1990) describes the phases of heuristic research, illustrating how the core processes manifest in an inquiry journey (figure 1).

The phases of Heuristic Research (Moustakas 1990)
Initial engagement: The researcher selects a topic that speaks to their own direct experience, that they can become passionate about.
Immersion: The inquirer immerses herself fully in the topic and is open to examining and following anything related to the topic that might prove relevant to the inquiry, with alertness, concentration, and self-searching. It may include texts, dreams, images, synchronistic events, and any other phenomena that 'speaks' to the inquirer.
Incubation: A stepping back from the intense concentration of immersion, allowing tacit knowing and intuition to clarify and extend understanding, make connections, and see patterns.
Illumination: An opening to new awareness, sudden fresh insights into the facet of experience under investigation.
Explication: A re-examination of the data with new awareness, organisation and depiction of key themes.
Creative synthesis: After a period of contemplation and meditation, the inquirer synthesises the components and core themes, and finds appropriate forms of expression such as a narrative account, a report, a thesis, a poem, story, drawing, painting.
Validation: Validity is a question of meaning. The inquirer should pore over the data to check whether the synthesis presents comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience.

Figure 1. The phases of Heuristic Research (paraphrased) Moustakas (1990). R. Lovie 2017

The heuristic process mirrors that of design in many respects and so it felt familiar and immediately compatible with my usual way of inquiring.

Intuitive Inquiry

In intuitive inquiry (Anderson R. , 2011) (2000), the researcher's intuitive ways of knowing are made central to the inquiry process. Anderson intends the intuitive approach to balance aspects such as structure and flexibility, thinking and feeling, discernment and holism, rather than to replace critical, conceptual-rational thinking in research. She suggests that in "honouring the archetypal, symbolic, imaginal, and the possible latent in all human experience, the analysis and interpretations... tend towards wholeness and wellness" (2011, p. 17). Her transpersonal perspective and assumption is that methodologies valuing all ways of knowing have the potential to provide a broad range of interpretations, which contribute to a holistic understanding of human experience. Intuitive inquiry also seeks to speculate about possibilities implicit in the data, so there is potential for inductive theory-building. Anderson sees

this aspect as an opportunity to envisage new ways for people to be in the world, which speaks directly to my own values.

In intuitive inquiry, the researcher is free to roam the topic intuitively, indicating a fluidity and openness to the journey. This was important to me because I did not begin with very specific questions, but themes to explore. I sought a methodology that would provide a soft structure, and allow flexibility in the way I applied it. I wanted to allow the process, rather than the structure of a rigid plan, to inform and guide my inquiry's path. Appealing to my way of working is Anderson's (2000) description of Intuitive Inquiry process as one that enables "sympathetic resonance", which is the harmonic phenomenon that a vibratory body will respond to external vibrations to which it shares qualities with. She implies that the acute attention to the senses and intuitive ways of knowing in this way of inquiring enables one to feel dissonances and resonances that can guide and inform the inquiry, make patterns visible in the data, and aid synthesis and theory-building.

Intuition

Intuitive, or direct knowing is often described as the phenomenon of knowing something without knowing how (Sinclair, 2011) (Block, 1995). It implies the absence of conscious information processing. The Latin *intuitus* refers to the direct perception of knowledge (Anderson R. , 2011, p. 246). Meaning is thought to arise as an intuitive feeling (Mangan, 2001). There are differing ideas about the source of intuitive knowing; common is the localist view that the source of intuitive knowing is within us, whereas nonlocalists suggest the source of intuitive knowledge is outside of us (Sinclair, 2011).

Anderson (2011) draws from a range of conceptualisations of intuition, from Marie Louise von Franz's (1971) Jungian perspective of subliminal sense perception, to Taylor's (2006) neuropsychological view of intuition as, "primarily right-brain processes that mediate perception of imagery, gestalts, patterns, as opposed to left-brain processes of linear thinking, logic, reason, analysis" (Anderson R. , 2011, p. 246). She defines intuitive experience very broadly to include: novel ideas and thoughts; spontaneous creative expressions; and "insights derived from nonrational processes such as dream images, visions, kinesthetic impressions, a felt (proprioceptive) sense, an inner sense or taste accompanying contemplative practices" (2000, pp. 31-32).

Some view intuitive knowing as both experiential and cognitive. Dual process theories, for example, posit that we process information via two separate cognitive systems: nonconscious and conscious. The nonconscious system is thought to be associative, operating through spontaneous, holistic associations, while the conscious system operates in a more effortful, sequential, linear way (Dane, 2011, p. 218). An intuitive experience may then be seen as, "a realization of wholeness which is simultaneously internal and external, it is an event which is both experiential and cognitive" (Blanchard, 1993, p. 10) in (Lipson Lawrence, 2012, p. 5).

Bastick (1982) (in (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. 20)), believes there is an intrinsic relationship between intuition and creativity, and I feel this too. Sinclair forwards the link to creativity by suggesting intuition may be a creative form of memory processing, because it is non-linear, amalgamating fragments of experiential memory in novel ways. Intuitive creation, Sinclair argues, entails drawing on what is present with what is known to create something new. Although I recognise and relate to these descriptions from art and design practice, I am resistant to applying this view to all intuitive knowing, because I have experienced intuitive knowing beyond any of my prior memories or knowledge, such as remedying illness.

Petitmengin-Peugeot (1999) describes intuition as an experience of “immediate” or direct knowledge, which “surges forth” and cannot be reached through reasoning. It is characterised by a mode of attention which breaks our usual manner of looking at the world, “liberating an interior condition” conducive to intuitive experience. Although unpredictable, intuitive experience can, she insists, be encouraged by, “a very meticulous interior preparation” consisting of “emptying out, in giving up our habits of representation, of categorization, and of abstraction. This casting off enables us to find spontaneity, the real immediacy of our relation to the world” (1999, p. 77). In other words, by seeing, or perceiving differently, with attention on the body and focus on the present moment. Sinclair corroborates this, saying it is thought intuitive experience may be achieved by means of “passionate attention” (2011, pp. 6-7), as does Dane, who argues that the ability to “capture” intuitive feeling is more likely when attention is focused in the present moment, as in mindfulness practice (Dane, 2011, p. 217).

Interested in the idea that intuitive experience may be a matter of attention and perception, I decided to adopt Petitmengin-Peugeot’s (1999) model to try to track my own intuitive experiences during my inquiry, should the opportunity arise. Her study, with participants who regularly practiced achieving intuitive knowing, concluded there was a general structure to intuitive experience made up of a succession of “interior gestures” (1999, p. 50):

1. Letting go: a process of calming the self, marked by a slowing of mental activity (1999, p. 59). She clarifies these terms as meaning a quality of attention achieved by breaking from habitual ways of thinking and shifting attention from mental processes to the body, with the awareness being completely in the present moment.
2. Connection: an intention to make an energetic connection with the object of one’s intuitive inquiry, which sometimes took the form of visualisation or of otherwise placing one’s attention on it (1999, p. 64).
3. Listening: a quality of attention that is both “panoramic and very discriminating” (1999, p. 59). Participants described an inner sense of presence and attentiveness to subtle phenomena; and their attention as expansive, of achieving a state of receptivity where knowing is not grasped at but accepted (1999, p. 68).
4. Intuition: An experience of direct knowing without knowing how one knows, accompanied by a sense of certitude, and coherence (1999, p. 70). Several participants had developed strategies in which they managed to hold the intuition without trying to pin it down until it condensed into a form they were able to communicate (1999, p. 72).

These 'gestures' were all aspects I recognized, although I recalled my own intuitive experiences as being rather more haphazard and impromptu than this. Petitmengin-Peugeot's participants engaged in regular practices to stimulate intuitive experience. Many had their own specific methods, such as ways of standing, breathing, or directing their attention. The experiences of these specialist intuitive practitioners then, may not be representative of those whose intuitive experiences occur spontaneously in everyday life. I reasoned that even if I could not track my intuitive experience in the moment, I would be able to retrospectively compare my experience with the four 'gestures'.

Petitmengin-Peugeot forwards a provocative assertion that intuition is the basis for all thought. This captured my attention because I have often wondered whether intuition is a rare occurrence, or if it happens all the time, felt in the body but remaining outside of conceptual awareness. John Heron's (1992) theory of personhood proposes that a participatory awareness is the ground of being, suggesting that pre-conceptual awareness is the basis of all knowing. It would explain why intuitive experience necessitates 'seeing' differently. These ideas gain traction in my inquiry as I explore the notion of participatory and individuating aspects of being (see chapters 2 and 6).

The Five Cycles of Intuitive Inquiry

Anderson (2011) recommends journeying through five iterative cycles of inquiry to form a complete hermeneutic circle of interpretation. Analysis and interpretation pivot around researcher's intuition. She places stock in imaginative processes and creative expression, the aim being to transform the researcher's understanding of their topic. Each cycle is meant to be intuitive and analytic. Anderson insists the most important feature in interpretation is the intuitive breakthrough, similar to Moustakas' notion of 'illumination', and very familiar to me in design process.

In intuitive inquiry, the hermeneutic cycle is realised in "forward-and-return-arcs" (Packer & Addison, 1989). A forward arc is the researcher's understanding of the topic prior to close examination of and reflection upon texts. A return arc is their transformed understanding. Cycles 1 and 2 represent the forward arc: identifying the topic and clarifying pre-understanding. Cycles 3,4, and 5 represent the return arc in the process of transforming pre-understanding via the understandings of others. In my inquiry, the transformation of my understanding also occurred through my own embodied experience. Anderson's cycles provided a useful framework for structuring my thesis. In reality, my inquiry was not nearly as neatly structured and compartmentalised, illustrating the difference between the 'cleanliness' of theory over the 'messiness' of life, and the unique needs of every qualitative inquiry journey.

Cycle 1: Clarification of the research topic by broadly identifying themes and engaging with texts⁶ that have interested researcher in the topic (Anderson R. , 2011).

Cycle 2: Reflection upon one's own understanding of the topic and the scoping of appropriate interpretive lenses for the inquiry based upon what is known at that stage. The pre-existing lenses expose one's assumptions about the topic. Anderson defines 'lenses' in this cycle as the specific phenomena or aspects of lived-experience within the chosen topic that will be focused upon (2011), defined through engagement with a variety of texts relating to the topic which the inquirer forms a more conceptual and intellectual relationship with than in Cycle 1.

Lenses can be the 'natural' ways in which we see the world, including our prior conceptual and received knowledge and experience (Anderson refers to these as pre-existing lenses); theoretical frameworks and philosophical approaches used to determine how data will be gathered, analysed, and understood (which, for the sake of clarity I call primary lenses); themes and foci for inquiry, and inquiry arguments or questions (which I refer to as thematic lenses). Our lenses determine that which we attend to and notice, as well as how we choose to view phenomena.

In my thesis introduction, I set out my pre-existing lenses: my assumptions and prejudices (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004), and how the sense and meaning I made of them drew me to my inquiry. My initial research themes were: extrarational ways of knowing, embodiment, storytelling (internal and external narratives), creativity, and their relationship to development. My cycle 2 thematic lenses were not as specific as Anderson suggests because I wanted to investigate an entire process: the lived experience and process of transformative learning in affective and imaginal modes. I did not want to pre-empt aspects of process or experience prior to gathering data, and envisaged the data bringing features of experience to light that would capture my attention as the inquiry proceeded.

To clarify the interpretive lenses of my inquiry, I engaged with a range of texts from philosophical phenomenology, psychology, and learning theory, to provide a theoretical foundation for, and understanding of my pre-existing lenses, and the thematic lenses I had chosen. This clarified how I would gather, view, and interpret the empirical data I collected. During this phase, what had previously been for me an eclectic amalgamation of knowing and feeling, coalesced into a coherent understanding of my position in relation to theory and practice in these areas. I gained a more comprehensive frame of reference for inquiry through the process of

⁶ In the Semiotic sense of being any media that reveal symbolic, sociocultural, historic, or psychological meanings.

clarifying my own ontological and epistemological perspectives, which simultaneously revealed my 'prejudices' (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004).

Philosophical phenomenology focuses on the structure of perception and human experience. It examines how we form our ways of knowing, and being in the world, and the importance of language in the process of identity formation, but not of the imaginal aspects of being. Psychological perspectives, Jungian in particular, examine the rich, symbolic, imaginal realm of being and knowing. Heron's (1992) ways of being and knowing became my primary lens because his theory encompasses all those realms, thus providing me with a consistent framework for viewing and analysing data in my inquiry.

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) (Mezirow, 1978) (2009) became my lens for viewing the process of transformative learning because it provides a clear definition of transformative learning as developmental learning. It enabled me to take the perspective that identity is the form that transforms in TL, and provided a conceptual-rational perspective on the process of TL, as well as a variety of perspectives on extrarational ways of knowing that might affect the process.

My further inquiry questions were shaped by these primary lenses, for example: how does the process of TL transpire when undertaken predominantly in affective and imaginal modes? Are the phases of TL as identified by Mezirow experienced differently when in affective and imaginal modes (Heron, 1992)? Is TL possible without critical self-reflection, and if so how is it experienced? How might the structure, content, and facilitation of programmes facilitate or hinder the TL process? How might the predominance of individuating or participatory aspects of modes of being (Heron, 1992) affect the experience of TL?

Cycle 2, characterised by engagement with theoretical and practitioner-scholar texts to establish my primary lenses, is represented in this chapter, and in chapters 2 and 3.

Anderson's Cycles 3, 4, and 5:

Cycle 3: Data gathering and presentation in descriptive form that represents the voices in the texts and invites reader to come to their own conclusion about the data. Personal understandings are challenged or corroborated in the light of experience of others. Appropriate data is presented in a descriptive analysis that represents the voices of the participants. Interpretations should be limited at this stage, to allow the data to speak for itself (Anderson R. , 2011, p. 254).

Cycle 4: The original lenses are re-presented, transformed by engagement with the fresh data, and compared with the pre-knowledge of cycle 2, to reflect a more nuanced understanding of the topic (Anderson R. , 2011).

Cycle 5: Integration with empirical and theoretical literature. Discussion of the implications of the findings, reflecting the transformative and imaginative dimensions of the method in its presentation (Anderson R. , 2011).

Cycles 3, and 4 are represented in chapters 4, 5, and 6. I participated in three creative and developmental programmes, gathered data from other participants, analysed and reflected upon the data, and referred to a variety of texts to help bring insight and sensemaking to the experiences. I creatively diverged from Anderson's methodology at this point. Anderson encourages a largely descriptive approach for cycle 3, calling for the most appropriate data to be included, and core themes to be identified, but to refrain from analysis. I found this to be problematic, because in choosing which parts of the experience to include, how I described them, what I saw as core themes: all were interpretive choices that can affect how the data is seen by the reader (Fink, 2000).

In each programme, I kept a detailed field journal of experiences and immediate reflections, and typed up my notes as soon as possible following the events, in the form of descriptive and reflective narratives. At the same time, my descriptions included in the thesis also reflect the numerous interactions and conversations I had with my fellow participants during the experiences. These social interactions inevitably influenced my experience, and so my experiences were not solely my own construction. Anderson encourages the inclusion of verbatim transcripts of conversations, a technique I use when presenting interview data and analysis. During the experiences, I did not record conversations with other participants, seeking not to interrupt the flow of experience or cause participants to feel self-conscious about what they discussed with me. These individual and group conversations, however, resulted in an amount of collective sensemaking, which influenced my continuing experience of the programmes. I do not suggest that my descriptions of experience speak for other participants, but acknowledge that the voices of others were present and influenced my descriptions.

Anderson leaves reflective and analytical engagement with the data to Cycle 4. The problem with this is that the process of embodied experience immediately transformed the theoretical concepts of my chosen interpretive lenses. These insights were often an embodied kind of reflexivity in response to experience, not reflective self-narrative, and they influenced the proceeding experience as it unfolded.

I dealt with what I saw as the problematic issue of separating Cycles 3 and 4 by combining them, providing descriptions of my experience along with personal reflections. Some reflections are the voicing of insights occurring during experiences, which I made a note of immediately following the experience. Others are the result of much purposeful contemplation over the weeks and months following an experience, once I had digested and made sense of the data. This format prevented me having to constantly refer the reader back to sections of description, and meant that I could deal with elements and themes as they arose, which structurally felt more natural to me and remained truer to the processes of TL under investigation.

Elements of Cycle 5 were present because following each of the programmes I returned to familiar texts and sought out new texts that challenged or supported my initial sensemaking of experience and helped bring insight and further sensemaking.

1.Methodology

Each programme helped to clarify themes and features of experience and process as my analysis revealed (or constructed) patterns in the data. Each programme informed and transformed my understanding of the texts explored in chapters 2 and 3, and brought to light new aspects of the TL process and conditions for further inquiry. I discuss the new lenses and perspectives within the relevant chapters, as my interpretations changed with the deepening of my understanding of the process of TL in those contexts.

In the last phase of my inquiry, I reviewed and further contemplated the totality of my data and findings, and returned to the literature pertaining to my primary lenses discussed in chapters two and three. Cycle 5 is most fully represented in chapter 7, in which I synthesise the learning and findings of my inquiry. In figure 2, I set out the structure of my thesis in visual form, which corresponds roughly with my inquiry process, and illustrates its correlation with Anderson's intuitive inquiry methodology.

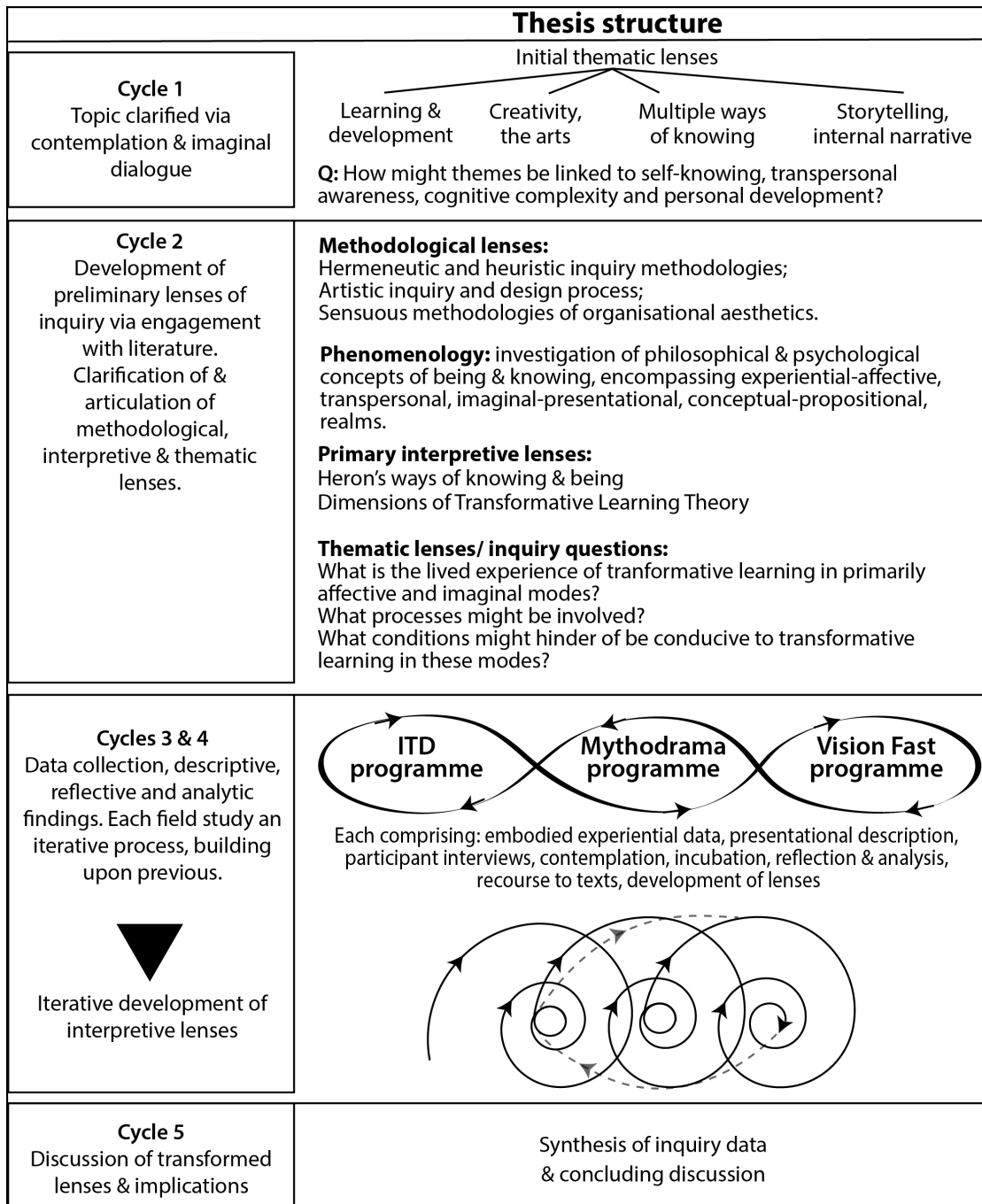


Figure 2. Thesis structure

Empathic inquiry

Although I value critical thinking, I have spent much of my personal and professional life utilising and relying upon intuitive knowing in order to do creative work, so cannot dispute its value or validity. The ability to reflect deeply and to question and test knowing, whatever its source is crucial to rigorous inquiry, and yet a critical approach to doing this was not wholly suitable to my needs because it assumes a position of doubt from the outset. It would have been inappropriate and

unproductive to approach my fieldwork, the three immersive programme experiences of my inquiry, in such a way.

Being asked to take part in a ritual or take on an unfamiliar sensemaking system (see chapters 5 and 6), for instance, requires suspension of disbelief and a willingness to engage openly and fully with the experience unfolding before one. Belenky et al.'s (1986) concept of 'connected knowing' denotes an attitude to, as well as a way of knowing, that relies on empathic connection with others. With 'connected knowing' the listener empathises with the other and accepts, for the moment, the validity of the other's knowing, the truth of it for them. Instead of jumping in with doubt and critique, all judgements are suspended. It entails, as Elbow (2008) puts it, playing "the believing game" instead of "the doubting game".

Belenky terms connected knowing as a kind of uncritical thinking. It is a willingness to 'try on' another's truth in the belief that something of value may be learned from doing so, while at the same time enabling a deeper connection and understanding of the other to develop. Experiences of this kind should remain open to reflection and critical appraisal *after* the event, but rely on uncritical immersion in the moment. I resolved to maintain Elbow's attitude of 'methodological believing' in my inquiry and balance it with rigorous reflection.

I developed an empathic attitude to inquiry, characterised by: openness, willingness, non-judgement, awareness of my physical, intuitive and imaginal senses, being fully present, and reflexive. As well as empathy toward others I practiced self-empathy which, according to philosopher Edith Stein (1989), is the ability to observe what and how the self is experiencing whilst remaining fully immersed in an experience. It is like a dual consciousness of being and observing the experience from inside it, which, Smaling (2007) argues, offers a form of objectivity. Similarly, Action Researcher Judi Marshall's notion of "inner and outer arcs of attention" (1999, p. 433) describes holding multiple layers of attention, a kind of meticulous noticing, where multiple processes are sensed and connections made between different modes and ways of knowing (Marshall, 2001).

Van Manen advocates "the attentive practice of thoughtfulness" (1990, p. 24). The phenomenological attitude has also been described as "the process of retaining an empathic wonderment in the face of the world" (Finlay, 2009, p. 12). On a practical level, Wertz (2011, pp. 132-133) advises we reflect on the relevance of each moment of the experience and ask what is revealed about the phenomenon; explicate implicit meanings that are not clear; distinguish the constituents of an experience; thematise recurrent modes of experience, meanings, and motifs; and verify, modify, and reformulate findings after returning to data.

Interviewing

Approach

In the 1980s, Anne Oakley (1981) contributed to the feminist influence on qualitative research by challenging the male dominated, positivist social science model of interviewing. Oakley questioned the concern with objectivity and detachment from interview participants, suggesting the predominance of a "masculine mechanistic attitude which treated the interview's character as social interaction as an inconvenient obstacle to the generation of 'facts'" (2016, p. 196). She helped establish new methodological approaches in social science research that recognised and honoured the emotional and relational complexity of research participants.

An important concept and way of framing interviewing is 'the gift', (Mauss, 1954). It is the concept of mutual exchange that builds relationships, and it has been adopted as a way of framing the relationship of the researcher and research subject in social science research (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick, & Grace, 1996). When a person agrees to be interviewed, it can be seen as a gift by them to the researcher, akin to a donation (Oakley, 2016). I think this concept, if respected, can create a relational field, an equality between the researcher and interviewee, because there is dignity in the act of giving. Although reciprocity is not a condition of gift-giving, the interview process can be reciprocal in that sensemaking can be a shared activity between researcher and participant, and talking to an interested party can sometimes be therapeutic (Peel, Parry, M., & Lawton, 2006), or at the least, interesting and perhaps useful in some way to the participant.

I set out to make my interviews, which I preferred to think of as 'learning conversations', a co-creative, joint sense-making endeavour. It felt to me as if my interview participants were co-inquirers because we had shared an experience. I felt that because I had been a full participant in the programmes in every way (fully present, authentic, allowed myself to be vulnerable, shared intimate and difficult details of my life, etc.) it was unlikely that the participants would perceive me as being in a position of power or allow me to overly influence their answers. During the programmes, the participants I later interviewed did not appear to have any difficulty or reticence about expressing their personal opinions or feelings, and I did not find our recorded conversations were any different.

The interviews I conducted were by invitation, which I explicitly framed as a joint learning and sense-making conversation that would be recorded, and may be used in my doctoral inquiry and thesis. Several interview participants said they would like to talk about their experiences for their own benefit, to try to make more sense of the felt meanings of their experiences. I hoped that the interviews with my fellow participants would be of benefit to each of us.

I considered myself as potentially different from my interview participants in two respects; it was possible that I had considered the experience in more ways or on more levels than some of them had done. I doubt I would have thought about the

experience in so many ways had I not been conducting an inquiry, and I may have focused solely on the insights I gained into my own self-knowing. The other was that I had instigated these follow-up conversations and had the benefit of speaking with more of the participants about their experiences than each of them did as individuals.

Rather than manipulate my interviewees (Oakley, 1981), I sought to direct their attention to aspects of their experience that I hoped they would elucidate. I tried to ask questions that, although were coloured by my own perceptions of the experience, were open enough to let the participant answer in their own way with their own narrative thread (Collins, 1998). I noticed in several instances with different participants, that a word or phrase I had used was taken up and repeated by them. I worried a little that I had influenced their answers in this way, but I think that perhaps it was simply that the word or phrase I had used (having contemplated the experience at length) usefully encompassed a concept or meaning for them which they appropriated in their desire to express themselves. I was confident this was the case when a participant repeated my word or phrase in a considering way or commented upon it before appropriating it, but at other times it seemed unconscious, in the way that we unconsciously mirror people's speech and mannerisms, an act that builds rapport (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). Todres and Galvin put it rather nicely, "New words or rearranged old words ... are offered as potentially applicable and transferable to others for their own hospitality so that they can make temporary 'homes' for such understanding" (2008, p. 573).

Interview analysis

Specifics of each set of interviews are detailed in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Thematic analysis is a widely-used method for analysing data in qualitative research, engaged to identify "thematizing meanings" (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and I used it as a foundation for analysing interview data. One of its appeals is that there is no consensus agreement on how to do it, and it is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006), so I felt relatively unconstrained and able to apply the spirit of Intuitive Inquiry to the process. Van Manen describes the interpretation of meaning as a process of "insightful invention, discovery or disclosure-grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule bound process but a free act of "seeing" meaning" (1990, p. 79).

My primary lenses, Heron's modes and ways of knowing, Jungian thought, and TLT, informed my analysis (see chapters 2 and 3). I also drew loosely from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is "descriptive because it is concerned with how things appear and letting things speak for themselves, and interpretative because it recognizes there is no such thing as an uninterpreted phenomenon" (Pietkiewicz, 2014, p. 8). A hermeneutic method with a psychological bias, IPA seeks to understand how people make sense of experience. In the presentation of analysis, participants' own words are used to illustrate themes, which is a device I adopted in the thesis.

I had personal insight into the participants from our informal interactions and the intimate disclosures shared by them during their personal inquiries in the programmes. I inevitably drew from my impressionistic knowledge (my sense of their identity, struggles, motivations, intentions etc.) in my interpretations of the interview data but nevertheless tried to remain true to their actual words. In many instances during the interviews participants alluded to experiences or qualities of experience based on an assumption of shared understanding from our mutual experience of the programmes and activities therein, so some extrapolation and explication of meaning was required by me for the phrase to be made full sense of for analytical purposes.

Mindful of the need for epistemological reflexivity, I often asked questions about activities so as not to impose my own themes on the participants. This was sometimes difficult, because my embodied experience was, in all cases, my primary data set (recorded in my field journals), and I inevitably created structures and themes in sense-making of my lived-experience of the programmes. Conversations with others during my experience were intimately bound up with my own experience because they influenced my own meaning and sensemaking at the time. These, therefore, cannot be separated entirely from my primary data sets, because in a relational approach data is understood to be co-created in embodied encounters with others (Finlay, 2009, p. 13).

Themes did not simply emerge from the data by themselves, and I acknowledge my active role in the process. My primary data demanded that I provisionally identify themes, structures, and processes, and so, contrary to recommendations (Braun & Clarke, 2006), my interview questions were influenced to some extent by this. In the Imitating the Dog workshop (chapter 4), my interview questions, though open, were thematised largely around participant experiences of specific activities. In the Mythodrama interviews (chapter 5) I gave free reign to participants, but this unstructured method resulted in much superfluous data. My Vision Fast (chapter 6) interview questions were more specific, though still very open, and came about after many months of contemplation and discussions with a small group of fellow participants, in which commonalities of experience and themes had been identified.

I listened to the interview recordings repeatedly, asking: what statements or phrases appear to be essential or revealing about the experience being described? (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Understanding involves empathy, and, says van Manen, is the "capacity to grasp the inner realities of the human world" (1977, p. 214). I re-immersed myself in the conversations, recalling, as vividly as possible, the felt atmosphere, participants' gestures, expressions etc. In the content I looked for what was being said, including the use of analogy, metaphor and symbol; and how it was expressed in cadence, tone, pauses, stumbles and so on. I noted activities, descriptions of experience, feeling, emotion, instances of knowing, internal tensions and conflicts (Smaling, 2007).

Using a "selective approach" (van Manen, 1990), I highlighted sections of text, rather than pull phrases or sentences out of the transcripts so as not to lose their context (Giorgi, 2006) and placed them under provisional headings that suggested themes of

experience and process. I compared the highlighted groupings and adjusted the categorisations I had made, sometimes splitting the highlighted phrases if more than one experience was identified within them. Themes came out of clusters of experience that shared a meaning or point.

Questions I used to determine groupings were: what experience was being described (e.g. experience, activity, etc), and what was the person trying to communicate? What were the components of the experience e.g. feeling and emotion, knowing generated? Was learning indicated by how participants spoke of their experience? What internal processes appeared to be at work? Did I have a sense of meaning that the person was perhaps less aware of, or existed in the larger context of their life that was not spoken of directly?

I regularly returned to my different data sources, testing my interpretations by shifting back and forth between the data and my sense-making. In the case of the Vision Fast, I was able to discuss the themes of experience and process I had identified with some of the participants. In many instances, I looked to theoretical and other texts to further my conceptual understanding of the experiential themes.

Guiding my process, was my relational approach and attitude of empathic attention, as I attempted to understand others through our shared "intercorporeity" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2005) (1968), which Merleau-Ponty describes as mutual being together, of feeling each other's mutual energetic interconnection, reminding me of Buber's descriptions in "I and thou" (1937). Smaling describes empathy as "the ability of placing oneself imaginatively in another's experiential world while feeling into her or his experiences ... with the aim of comprehending these experiences" (Smaling, 2007, p. 333), while philosopher Edith Stein (1989) thought of empathy as a way of perceiving. I concur, conceptualising empathy as beginning with a way of attending, being present in the moment in relation with someone, out of which, a spontaneously affective-imaginal (Heron, 1992) phenomenon of mutual understanding arises.

Ethical considerations

The standard procedures for involving human participants in research were followed, and the various stages of my inquiry involving people were approved by Lancaster University's Ethics committee.

I had built a good rapport with all of those who participated in recorded conversations, as a fellow participant in the programmes. The manner in which our relationships developed was significant when it came to interviews because there were not the usual concerns regarding power imbalance in favour of the researcher (Oakley, 1981). Participants were made aware at the beginnings of the programmes that I was conducting an inquiry and of its nature, so there was transparency from the outset.

Interview participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and were informed of the nature of my study (see appendix 1) and that they could withdraw within a specific time period (I set a cut-off limit in order to ensure myself some certainty in writing-up), and if so, their data would be destroyed. Those who initially expressed an interest but did not respond to an initial email were not followed-up further to avoid them feeling pressured into participating.

All participants were offered anonymity, and while many said I could use their first names, I decided to use pseudonyms for all to better protect their identities, given the intimate nature of some of their narratives, and that the programmes they spoke about could be identified. Emerald North, the principal Vision Fast guide on the programme I attended, gave me permission to use her full name. School of Lost Borders approved use of their name, and I offered to send them my chapter 6 draft to check for accuracy of information pertaining to the organisation.

All participants were offered full access to their data, both the audio recordings of our conversations and transcripts, when these were made. Participants were invited to amend or exclude anything from the recordings that they were not comfortable with having disclosed. Because I had added some information and made interpretations that were not explicit in their narratives, I was careful to check with participants that I had not made errors and that any interpretations I had made were acceptable to the individual participants concerned. The Vision Fast participants were sent my chapter 6.2 draft (containing extracts of interview transcripts, and my interpretations), and the Mythodrama participants were given the individual transcript extracts and interpretations I proposed including. Due to my proposed use of Richard Olivier's and the Mythodrama name (his trademarked methodology and business name), his permission was obtained and he was also sent my chapter 5 draft for approval. These measures contributed both to the ethical practice of my inquiry and validity of my inquiry findings.

Concluding thoughts

Heuristic and Hermeneutic inquiry approaches provided a methodological lens and structure appropriate to my inquiry aim of researching lived-experience. Most phenomenological approaches draw selectively from different aspects of phenomenology, interpreting philosophical theory differently (Wertz, 2011). This knowledge gave me the confidence to creatively adapt Moustakas' and Anderson's methodologies, knowing there was no single 'right' way of conducting a phenomenological inquiry, and that it was not a failure on my part as a researcher, to bring my subjective self and my 'prejudices' to the inquiry. My unique perspective and way of being meant that the findings of my inquiry, providing I conducted it with diligence, would add to the body of knowledge and understanding of the complexity of human experience.

1.Methodology

I have presented my inquiry approach here, prior to presenting the other lenses of my inquiry, to provide a clear depiction of the phenomenological stance and structure of my inquiry and thesis. In the following two chapters, I discuss how I came to the ontological and epistemological lenses that clarify how I identified and analysed being, knowing, and learning, from the data gathered in the immersive, embodied experiences of this inquiry (in chapters 4, 5, and 6).

2. Modes of presence and dimensions of knowing

Introduction

In this chapter I explore and develop the lenses of my inquiry to clarify my approach to knowing, and to expose my epistemological assumptions. I begin with the strand of phenomenological philosophy first developed by Husserl and later by others, including Merleau-Ponty, which provides an interpretive, antipositivist perspective for understanding lived experience. I examine conceptual arguments for language being the basis of sensemaking, meaning-making, and even thought itself. I explore the tensions and contradictions in that view and look to those who argue that our imaginal faculty contributes more than language to the richness and complexity of human experience, helping to shape reality itself.

Philosophical phenomenology provides a conceptual construct of the structure of experience and perception and highlights the link between language and ego development. Phenomenological psychologists such as Heron (1992), Jung (1956/1967) (1966) (1976) and post-Jungians (Hillman, 1992) (Corbin, 1972) offer more imaginative conceptualisations of the affective, imaginal, and transpersonal dimensions of experience. John Heron (1992), with his conception of the psychological modes and the ways of knowing arising from those modes provides a useful epistemological tool for embodied inquiry, giving me a consistent framework for analysis and reflection of all realms of being and knowing.

Much, though not all of my discussion of these lenses represents my understanding of these texts prior to my collection of experiential data, because much of my in-depth reading took place in the first year or so of my doctoral studies, prior to my participation in Mythodrama and the Vision Fast (chapters 5 and 6). Although I had established my approach to inquiry, my empathic, but still somewhat naïve participation in the theatre workshop, documented in chapter 4, made me realise that I was still ill-equipped as an inquirer, in terms of how I would identify and adequately analyse the ways of being, knowing, and learning I encountered. I engaged with these texts intellectually and through imaginal dialogue and image-making, an example of which I include. Many of the concepts discussed here are explored and developed in later chapters as experiential data and reflection transforms my understanding in the process of inquiry.

The Phenomenological lens

Embodiment

Husserl argued that as embodied beings the only way we can know the world is through our senses (Zahavi, 2003), because they embed us in the world and are our primary connection with it and with other living beings and phenomena (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/2004) (1978). We are, through the fact of embodiment, bound together with the world in a participatory relationship with it, and our bodies have knowledge

of the world prior to any thought about it we may have. Merleau-Ponty argued for the 'primacy of perception' over reflective and analytic thought. We perceive the world because our bodies already know the world and are attuned to it (Baldwin, et al., 2007). Our bodies encounter the world, providing a variety of data which we learn to make meaning and sense of. To phenomenologists there can be no distinction between the imaginal (internal) and real (external); we respond to and interact with phenomena, whatever the source, experientially with our senses and generatively with imagination (Woodruff Smith & McIntyre, 1984).

Attention and intention

Husserl argued that every act of consciousness has intentionality behind it because perception is always directed towards something (Bernet, Welton, & Zavota, 2005). It is thought that we may perceive much but only notice what captures our attention, which narrows our focus. Neuroscientist philosopher, Varela (1993) maintained that we cognitively process only a fraction of the available data at the time of experiencing it, depending on what we have chosen to attend to or prioritize, but absorb much more. I think of this as being like sight, we home in on detail when we focus on something but have a less detailed awareness of much more in our peripheral vision. Two important implications of this are that what we attend to determines how we experience phenomena, and that more data can be made available to us at a later time if we choose to refocus our attention upon the peripheral data of an experience.

The act of perception transforms what is apprehended from its 'essential' state to an identified 'thing' as we attempt to place phenomena into our existing frames of reference (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2005). Marshall (2008) describes attention as creating a field, a "kind of movement of the consciousness from the indeterminate to the determinate through the creation of a new context that in turn transforms what is perceived" (2008, p. 87). Perception then, is as much an act of the imagination as it is of the senses as we transform phenomena into the 'known'.

Habitualities

Merleau-Ponty's (1962/2005, p. 213) concept of 'style' of being in the world describes the individualised way in which we attend to phenomena, and it is constituted by what Husserl would call 'habitualities' (Ricoeur P., 1996): abilities and dispositions reinforced by habitual practice, both conscious and unconscious. Merleau-Ponty (1978) thought it may fulfil an inherent need in us for coherence, continuity, and definition of self. Husserl referred to the ego as a 'substrate of habitualities', formed and stabilised by layers of habit, and he saw it as a "constituting structure and principle...at work not just in the constitution of our personal, social and cultural worlds, but also in the very manner in which nature appears" (Moran, 2011, p. 68). In other words, how we see the world is shaped by our personal psychological and cultural habitualities (social and cultural norms, values, mores, and practices) (Zahavi, 2003). Sensemaking, too, is a selective process as well as an interpretive one (Cuncliffe & Coupland, 2012), and the social construction of our interpretation system is highly influential in shaping how we interact with the world (Shutz, 1967). Gadamer (1977)

(2004) uses the term 'prejudices' to describe both the personal and sociocultural factors that influence our interpretations of phenomena.

The narrative, storied self

Kerby⁷ (1991) argues that it is the development of language which brings with it the sense of self, quoting Benevise (1971, p. 224): "It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of 'ego'". Ego then, according to Benevise is a psychological construction that can be attributed to the development of language. Language, Heron (1992) concurs, causes the subject-object split. The implication is that prior to language acquisition, we perceive differently and do not distinguish between the self (subject) and other (object),"The subject thus set up by the use of language is quickly solidified by the process of socialization, which builds into it conventional role behaviours and the norms, values and beliefs of the prevailing culture." (Heron J. , 1992, p. 77).

What is this ego-self then, aside from a construct formed out of our 'substrate of habitualities'? Social Phenomenologist, Alfred Schütz (1967), like some philosophers and psychologists (see e.g. Barthes (1966), Ricoeur (1991/2003), and Bruner (1991)), theorised that we imaginatively construct storied selves. He argued that self-understanding necessitates seeing causality operating in our lives, which creates a story structure. He divided human motivation into two aspects: "because of" and "in order to", suggesting that without the meaning conferred by these two statements we have only a chronicle of events, a narrative not a story. "Because of" refers to a past experience that impacts upon the anticipation of and construction of the future. "In order to" is an intention to manifest something in the world and determines actions and behaviours in the present and future. I am not suggesting that there is any ultimate truth in notions of cause and effect per se, or that 'because of' and 'in order to' are the underlying reasons why we act; however, we do tend to justify our intended actions, as well as our past behaviours and actions in this way, to rationalise them and maintain our sense of continuity, fitting experiences into our existing frames of reference and established beliefs and assumptions. Kerby puts it thus, "We understand human events by seeking a beginning, middle, end structure, a story {mythos} that discloses, for example, motives and outcomes for actions" (Kerby A. P., 1988, p. 236).

Narrative theorist Paul Ricoeur says, "It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell about ourselves" (1985, p. 214). Not only that, those stories are told and retold, being constantly revised and embellished, at once bolstering, yet also transforming the self through

⁷ Contemporary philosopher who focuses on the narrative construction of identity. Also see (Kerby A. , 1986) (Kerby A. P., 1988)

personal reflection and social interactions. Bruner suggests that the story structure of narratives produces a compelling tale that provokes empathy in the listener, implying that by drawing on the narrative genres of our culture we use story as a tool for achieving social acceptance (Nicolopoulou, 2008). Ricoeur speculated that, "we never cease to reinterpret the narrative identity that constitutes us, in the light of the narratives proposed to us by our culture". He adds, "It is in this way that we learn to become the narrator and the hero of our own story, without actually becoming the author of our own life" (1991/2003, p. 32), implying that we are largely products of the narrative constructions of our cultures. If this is so, what might facilitate self-awareness of these pervasive pressures so we may become self-authors of our lives? I address this in chapter three, in my exploration of the dimensions of Transformative Learning.

Is the narrative self simply a construction, albeit a powerful and prominent one, that imbues us with a 'sense' of self but does not represent the whole Self⁸, or even the entirety of the conscious self? Even Kerby, who argues for the narrative self as central to identity, questions the concept's validity. Experience, he says,

"has an ever unfolding richness before our reflective grasp. ...There is a sense in which it is correct to say that we are this richness, this expanse. It is perhaps this insight that especially makes us question a narratological view of the self. ... Apart from language usage, we also have a vivid pictorial and emotional life - surely, one might say, this is more ourselves than the mere story about this life" (Kerby A. , 1986, p. 213).

I think, therefore...

Husserl was fascinated to know what would happen to the sense of self if one ceased to think in terms of language, but though he believed it was possible, he apparently never managed to attain the inner quietude necessary to find out. If we stopped thinking, he wondered, would the ego-self dissolve (Baldwin, et al., 2007)? I question whether the sense of self would dissolve along with the ego, or if we would instead transcend the boundary of separateness the ego establishes. Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism have long held that the idea of the (ego) self is an illusion that can be dispelled if the mind can be stilled. Eastern philosophers seem less perturbed by the notion of ceasing conceptual thought than Western philosophers such as Descartes did, illustrated by his remark, "I am, I exist – that is certain; but for how long

⁸ I use Jung's convention of capitalising Self to mean the entirety of the self and not just the conscious ego and persona aspects of self.

do I exist? For as long as I think, for it might perhaps happen, if I totally ceased thinking, that I would at the same time totally cease to be." (1637/1960, p. 84)⁹.

Descartes set up an anxiety about ceasing to think that seems to have been adopted by the Western mind (Tarnas, 1991). It could be seen as an expression of his ego fretting that if he ceased his internal narrative, or as Buddhists call it, 'the monkey mind', he would cease to exist. Perhaps he would cease to exist in the way he was familiar and comfortable with. That he could not conceive of any other way of existing is challenged by Eastern philosophies such as Taoism and Buddhism. Castaneda (1984), writing from an alternative Western perspective of Mexican shamanism, insisted that if one stops thinking for long enough then one can effectively 'stop the world'. One does not cease to exist but instead a new and different world is assembled by a mind free of its habitual assumptions and beliefs. This implies that alternative interpretations of phenomena to our habitual ones may be possible, accompanied by different meaning and sensemaking of them.

So, some philosophers maintain that thought is not possible without language, but I find this idea problematic. Surely, as Husserl and Merleau-Ponty maintain, as an embodied being I gained understandings of the world before I developed language. If all I had was a pre-narrative understanding of the world, Kerby (1991) argues it would be nebulous, undifferentiated, and meaningless, but I would argue that experiences held meaning for me before I learned words to name them. As a baby, how did I experience the world and begin to make sense of it? It is interesting that we cannot recall much from those early days and I wonder if it is because we have no language to form a storied memory in which the ego-self is the central character. If perception itself is spontaneous, but the way we perceive is the result of sociocultural convention, then perhaps we experienced phenomena then in ways unlimited by those conventions. I could learn before I had language, so it follows that I could find meaning in and make sense of the world in some way. The fear of loss of self expressed by those that are afraid to stop thinking only makes sense if they assume the narrative construction of the self represents our totality.

Non-linguaged thought

Language is a symbolic system of expression and communication, but is not the only one. Philosopher Susan Langer points out two basic assumptions inherent in a perspective that sees "only discursive symbolism as a bearer of ideas" (1954, p. 71). These are, "that language is the only means of articulating thought, and (2) that everything which is not speakable thought, is feeling". (1954, p. 70). She argues that

⁹ This is one translation, and the sentence differs in other translations, transmitting a slightly different meaning, that if he ceased to think, he would have no reason to believe he existed. He concludes that as a human his whole essence consists only in thinking.

other symbolic systems are equally capable of articulation (“complex combination” (1954, p. 75)), and are not limited by the constraints of discursive language. Visual forms, for example, present all their elements simultaneously, unlike the successive nature of language. An artwork, can be apprehended in an instant as a whole, unlike a thread of language that needs to be followed from start to finish. Logician, Frege (Lotter, n.d.) posited that it was not language specifically, but symbolic forms in general that were instrumental in human thought. He saw language as problematic in that he recognised its usefulness in ordering thought, but was also concerned that it might constrain thought, implying that symbolic forms may offer more expansive possibilities to thought than language.

Shifting from philosophy to psychology, Jung was convinced that symbols are the language of the psyche (Jung C. , 1960). He thought that some symbols are more than simply signs, that they are irreducible and embody their own essence or meaning, which imbues them with power because they are equivalent to their meaning (Philipson, 1963/1994). He was convinced that, “true symbols... should be understood as an expression of an intuitive idea that cannot yet be formatted in any other or better way” (Jung C. G., 1966, p. para 105). He posited that if we conscientiously attend to the soul (psyche) we can harness the energy inherent in symbols to transform us (Jung C. , 1960, p. para 88). They can release inner creative energy, helping to create shifts in our outer lives (Jung C. , 1971, p. para 443), because a symbol contains a greater truth that can “withstand attempts by the critical intellect to break it down” (Jung C. , 1976, p. 568).¹⁰ Jung’s explanation caused an image of a sprouting seed to enter my mind. The seed contains the blueprint, elements and energy necessary to bring a whole new plant of its kind into being. It is this kind of transformative potential, I think, that Jung alludes to.

Interlude for Imaginal Dialogue

To demonstrate one of my methods of inquiry, I include an image I created during imaginal contemplation (Anderson R. , 2000) (Anderson R. , 2011) of the connection between memory, continuity of self, and narrative identity (see figure 3, view in landscape format). My method consisted of immersing myself as an imaginal inquirer, in the images and feelings arising from my reading of philosophical texts. I began to browse and compile images from my personal digital library of illustrations, artwork, and photographs generated over the years, into a composition expressing some of

¹⁰ At this stage of my inquiry, although intellectually I understood the idea of the power of symbols, I did not have an embodied sense of their transformative power. I was granted experiential insight into this during the Vision Fast, and discuss the transformation of my understanding in Chapter 6.

the feelings and questions that surfaced as I worked. As I worked with the imagery, conceptual thought quieted, and I entered a flow state¹¹ (Csikszentmihaly, 2002). I felt a calm, yet excited (not agitated) attention and presence. I attempt below, to convey the kind of stream-of-consciousness thought that ensued:

Memories, dreams, hopes, and fears merge together with accumulated knowledge and cultural references to shape and transform the stories of our selves. Examined too closely, the 'me' I think I am fractures into multiple selves, all intimately close and yet somehow remote, existing at different points in time and space. Memory is in some ways linear in that I have a timeline from past to present, yet non-linear in the way I randomly access specific, vivid moments. Never quite fixed, it changes in the reliving-retelling, sometimes bringing new meanings to the consciousness of my now-self. Am I then, anything more than the sum of my memories? Who would I be without them? What connects me to the selves of my past, a biological process of neurological connections or something deeper and more mysterious? Are my memories 'real', or my sense of self an illusion? Am 'I', in reality, an ever-becoming-transforming conglomeration of self-aware energy and matter? Does my self-image liberate or 'fix' me in place, limiting my horizons?

This way of working causes me to question the assumptions I bring when beginning to explore any theme (Runco, 2015), and opens a conversation with the topic of inquiry. It raises more questions than it gives answers, and the uncertainty presents avenues for further exploration. Thoughts and questions come as felt meanings, insights, and queries, not 'spoken' in the way they are worded here.

In the mode of imaginal inquiry, I contemplated the image as a whole, finding further meaning in the formal elements and relationships between the constituent parts of the image. It did not feel like a wholly conceptual activity, although it engaged my subject knowledge of composition, symbol, semiotics, etc., as I deliberately looked for connections, relationships, and meanings, actively involved in the interpretation process. This could be described as an analytical process involving the overlaying of conceptual thought onto the felt meanings generated in the making and

¹¹ Positive psychologist Csikszentmihaly (2002/1992) identified a state of awareness he termed 'flow'. It typically occurs in people when they are actively engaged in a task they find compelling and enjoyable. It is marked by supreme focus, concentration, and involvement in the task at hand, where attention is completely 'in the moment' rather than on 'thinking about' the experience. Flow is disrupted by any attempt to reflect upon or analyse the experience while it is happening.

contemplating process. I wrote a description of the composition in metaphorical and symbolic terms.

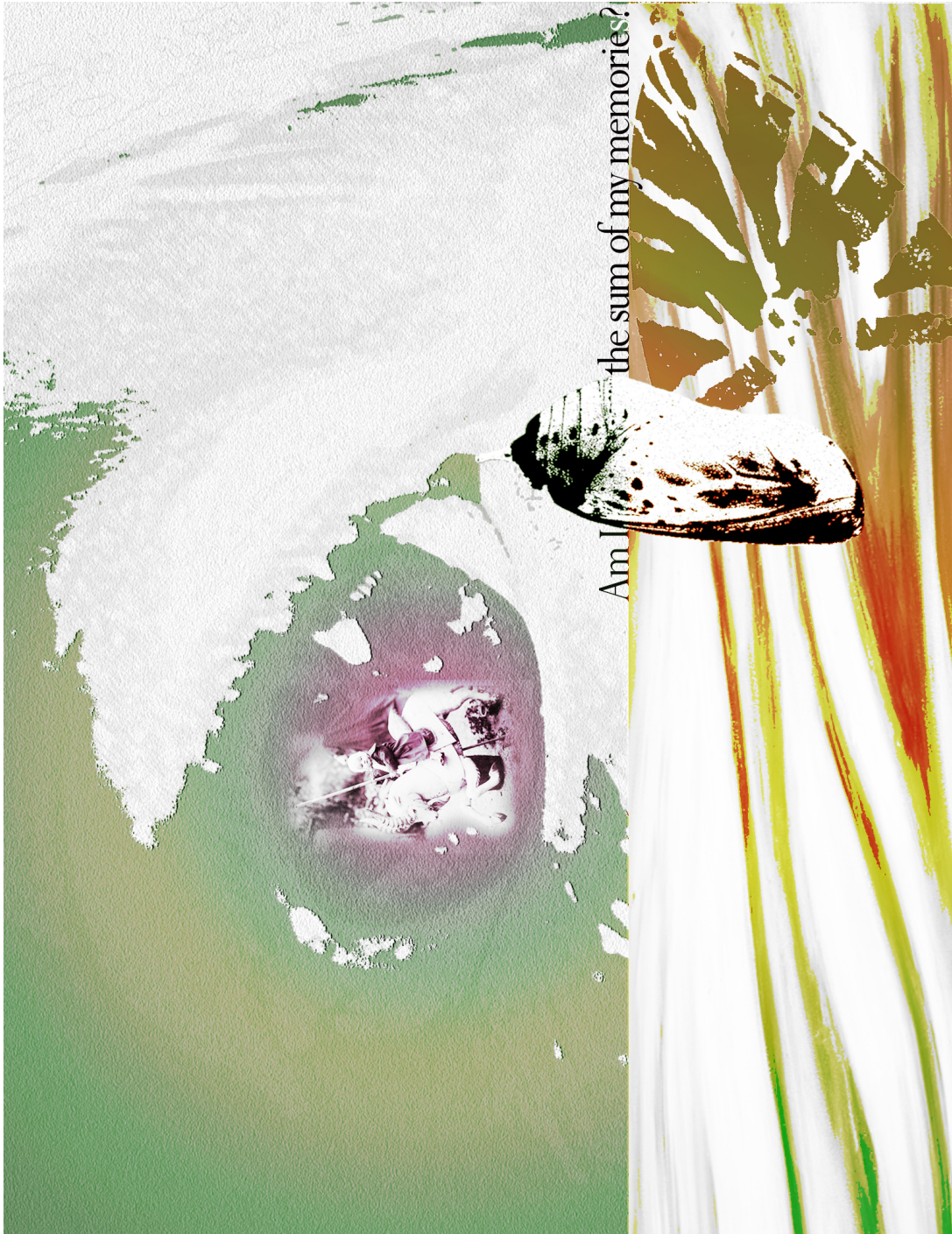


Figure 3. The Sum of Memory, R. Lovie 2012. Landscape.

Am I the sum of my memories?

The image shows a surreal landscape (representing our four-dimensional experience of space and time). On the horizontal plane undulating lines or streams (of association, consciousness, neural pathways?) flow from left to right (the Western

cultural norm for reading texts¹²). Standing on this plane is a figure, perhaps cloaked, gazing back across the landscape toward a focal point in the hazy 'sky'. On closer inspection, this focal point is an eye (window of the soul), and within it is reflected (as the world we construct is a reflection of our imaginal processes) an image of a child (innocence, openness, playfulness) on a fantastical fairground goat-horse (imagination, mystery, the unconscious). The image appears to be vintage (the past, the unreliability of memory). Is the scene real or imagined; whose memory is it, and why does it evoke familiar feelings in me? The cloaked figure on the horizontal plane is in fact a chrysalis (gestation, promise of transformation, a protective shield, a prison?), and yet the 'shadow' (the unidentified-with self, the hidden or possible self) it casts upon the landscape is a moth (harbinger of knowledge) or butterfly (transformation, fleeting, fragile), hinting at the possibility of transformation and inner knowledge. A line of text sits upon the horizon (perhaps the horizon of one's current knowing) and asks, "Am I the sum of my memories?" The composition provides multiple points of focus, with implied, invisible lines of connection between the elements. The viewer's eye is drawn towards the figure; we see the implied line of the figure's gaze toward the eye, the tenuous connection between the figure and its 'shadow', and ultimately we are pulled inexorably to a point of convergence outside of the picture frame to the right, into the unknown future, where perhaps the answer to the question lies.

Propositional (Heron J. , 1992) text is problematic because it tends to fix meanings. Other presentational forms such as poetry are more able to resist the fixing of meanings, and I think this is one of the advantages of Moustakas' (1990) method of 'creative synthesis' to convey essential qualities of experience and themes. I attempt to express, in another presentational form, the qualities of felt meaning the image holds for me:

Sum of memory

Gazing across the river of time to a distant shore
I glimpse another me
dreaming of who she might become.
Reflections of self, refract and splinter like sunlight glancing off waves.
Memory, a tenuous and unreliable anchor, tethers me
As my restless shadow whispers secret promises
borne upon the wind.

¹² I use 'texts' in the broadest Semiotic (Saussure, 1959) sense to denote any text, image, or cultural artifact that can be 'read', i.e. from which cultural and psychological meanings can be gleaned and interpreted.

The Imaginal Realm

Mundus imaginalis

Philosophical phenomenology provides adequate structural concepts of the worlds of the senses and the intellect, but not, to my mind, of the imagination. As an inquirer into the role and processes of the imagination in transformative learning, I looked to philosophies treating imagination as an active and central aspect of being. A paper by comparative phenomenologist Henry Corbin captured my attention, because in referring to the writings of Sufi philosopher Sohrawardi, he provides a conceptualisation of reality that divides human existence into three realms: the physical world; the world of the image: the *mundus imaginalis*; and the world of the angels: mind or pure thought. We perceive each of these worlds in a different way: the physical world through the senses, the mundus imaginalis through the imagination, and the realm of mind through the intellect.

The Sufi construct of three worlds accords feeling and imagination the same status and reality as the worlds of the senses and intellect. It is odd how we rarely question the validity of intellectual knowledge, even though it is as immaterial as the imagination. Science is based upon empirical evidence and yet what we perceive is subject to both what we look for and the interpretive process of perception. The mundus imaginalis is considered by Sufi philosophers to be more 'real' in fact, than the world perceived by our senses, because it is apprehended directly by the image-making faculty. Corbin stresses,

"Its reality is more irrefutable and more coherent than that of the empirical world, where reality is perceived by the senses. This world is hidden behind the very act of sense perception and has to be sought underneath its apparent objective certainty" (1972, p. 11).

The faculty of imagination Corbin discusses is not the kind of fantasy that is the product of the ego's fears or desires, but that of visionary imagination with depth and reach beyond the mundane. It is one of intuitive insight, symbolic understanding, and vision. It is imaginal, not imaginary. The three worlds are thought to correspond with body, soul, and mind. That the mundus imaginalis is the realm of the soul tells us that it is accorded special status. It not only acts as a mediator between the material and intellectual realms, but plays a crucial role in development. This is because when activated in specific ways, the imagination gives us access to a different way of seeing which expands the consciousness. Examples of these different ways of seeing are explored and illustrated in later chapters.

The active imagination, Corbin says, borrowing from Jung, produces a "movement" that transmutes ordinary reality in a "topographical inversion" (1972, p. 11), by way of an inner (spiritual) state that manifests a different reality. Voss clarifies, "So-called external reality becomes the reflection of the internal state of the individual, and will therefore change in relation to his or her ability to penetrate to ever deeper levels of insight" (Voss, 2013). The active imagination holds up a mirror to the psyche enabling otherwise inaccessible internal truths to emerge and manifest themselves to

the conscious self. The depth of insight and awareness is dependent on the mode of presence of the individual. This kind of experience of self-knowing is illustrated and explored in chapter 6.

Tom Cheetham refers to Heidegger when discussing the idea of modes of presence, saying "The analysis of space and time must not begin by regarding them as given, but rather by investigating the mode of presence by means of which they themselves are revealed" (Cheetham, 2003, p. 6). The notion of modes of presence is highly relevant to my inquiry, because in order to investigate transformative learning in affective and imaginal modes, I needed the tools to access, explore and understand the modes of presence I would be working in and observing others in. I found such a tool in John Heron's (1992) theoretical framework of modes of the psyche (see Chapter 2.4.).

Jung

The rich, complex interior realm of the self governing our interactions with the world, is referred to in psychology as the psyche (Freud, 1923/2010) (Jung C. , 1960). Detailed knowledge and exposition of entire psychic constructs are beyond my expertise and the scope of my inquiry, so I limit my discussion to some basic Jungian concepts that contribute to my sensemaking, particularly that of the experiential data in my inquiry. In Chapter 2.3. I discuss aspects of Heron's (1992) construct in more detail, and in Chapter 6 I introduce the Four Shields (Foster & Little, 1999) framework.

Jung saw the primary function of the psyche as generating reality as we know it, in a continually creative process, the psyche clothes the world with imagery. It unifies the inner and outer worlds by taking what is given in the external world and generating a feeling-image of that world that reflects our inner state. To Jung, psychic 'images' are always meaning-laden, so he did not separate intuitive feeling and emotion from imagery. Everything we do and think, Jung thought, is intertwined with the creative activity of the psyche.

"The psyche creates reality every day. The only expression I can use for this activity is fantasy. Fantasy is just as much feeling as thinking; as much intuition as sensation. There is no psychic function that, through fantasy, is not inextricably bound up with the other psychic functions. ...Fantasy, therefore, seems to me the clearest expression of the specific activity of the psyche. ...the inner and outer worlds are joined together in union". (Jung C. , 1971, pp. 88, para 78)

Jung, conceived the psyche as being split into conscious and unconscious aspects comprised of various structures or patterns he called complexes (Jung C. , 1964/1978). The conscious is all within awareness: the known, and the unconscious is that which remains hidden from our conscious awareness: the unknown. Our conscious awareness is dominated by a subjective and self-serving complex known as the ego.

Jung believed that at one time humans had a more fluent and fluid connection with the unconscious, which resulted in a more participatory mindset than today. Jung

(1973) and others (e.g. see (Romanyshyn, 1989) (Miller, 2004) (Sabini, 2008) (Tarnas, 1998)) speculate that while modernity has in many respects emancipated the ego, enabling us to engage in clear conceptual-rational thought, the project of Enlightenment and consequent predominance of the Cartesian mind-body duality mindset in the West have promoted individualism to the extent that the ego now overly dominates the consciousness. Sabini describes it as a “rupture of the link with the unconscious and our submission to the tyranny of words”, its disadvantage being, “the conscious mind becomes more and more the victim of its own discriminating activity... and the original feeling of unity, which we integrally connected with the unconscious psyche, is lost” (2008, p. 72).

Unless we achieve a productive relationship with the unconscious, Jung argued we cannot attain our potentials or live in harmonious relationship with each other or the Earth. The unconscious communicates solely in the language of the symbolic, and so imagery, feeling and dream content are all ‘messages’ from the unconscious. The conscious self is concerned with the needs and desires of the ego, but Jung envisaged the unconscious as an autonomous intelligence not subject to the ego. There is a tension, then, between the subjectivity of the conscious and the relative objectivity of the unconscious because, “Though ego consciousness demands separation between opposites, psyche does not. It is in the autonomous images/fantasies of psyche that opposites co-exist peacefully without explanation” (Miller, 2004, p. 101). This implies that unconscious material can be trusted to be objective (to the individual) in a way that conscious material cannot because it is undistorted by the ego’s limited horizon.

Jung thought that a mechanism and process within the unconscious (the transcendent function (Miller, 2004)), urges and guides us towards unifying the apparently irreconcilable duality experienced by the ego in its perception of subject and object, and the undifferentiated wholeness of the unconscious. “The tendency to separate reality into pairs of opposites is pervasive in the human experience. ...The essence of the transcendent function is the bridging and uniting of them” (Miller, 2004, pp. 99-100). The transcendent function creates a bridge between the worlds, where material from the unconscious, facilitated by the creative power of the imaginal capacity, can emerge into consciousness.

Jung envisaged the process of ‘individuation’ as the lifelong task of bringing this material into consciousness, processing and assimilating it, thereby evolving the consciousness through reconciliation and expansion (Jung C. , 1964/1978). A key aspect of individuation is the unification of opposites, which expands the consciousness and re-establishes the open linkage between the conscious and unconscious.

The Collective Unconscious

Jung noticed that many of his patients reported seeing similar meaningful motifs in their dreams and from this and his investigations into symbolic motifs present in the esoteric teachings of many other cultures, he became convinced of the existence of a

symbolic realm of human experience (Jung C. , 1964/1978). He envisaged it as an innate, structural aspect of being human, much as all human bodies share a common inheritance, so does the psyche. As well as an individual personal unconscious then, we have access to an impersonal or transpersonal unconscious common to all humanity, the collective unconscious. The meanings of some of the archaic symbols in the collective unconscious have been lost, explaining why the conscious sometimes struggles to interpret symbolic imagery (Jung C. , 1964/1978).

The collective unconscious contains specific patterns or configurations which Jung named archetypes, that represent the gamut of all possible human experience. Not everyone will embody all of them during a lifetime, but they exist almost as blueprints, energetic configurations available for embodiment. Because they can only be spoken of in metaphors, they are often portrayed in popular culture as rather stereotyped characters, shown in an extreme version of only one of their many possible aspects. This enables us to see the consequences of over-identification with an archetype (Hill, 1992). One of the functions of stories is to provide the opportunity to embody archetypes at a safe distance from "reality", which can sometimes inspire us, or help us come to terms with our shadow: the unrecognised or rejected aspects of our personality (Estes, 1996).

Joseph Cambrey (2009) provides a dispassionate conceptualisation of the archetypes, which I think is valuable, because there is a danger of conceptualising them as characters with their own personalities. Cambrey (2009), echoing Jung (1990) describes them as,

"Virtual, empty forms in themselves, they're imagined as structuring all psychic life; when constellated, as through a matching of environmental and internal cues, they tend to manifest in archetypal imagery" (2009, p. 34)."

This implies that archetypes are, by themselves, merely structural configurations, and it is only when they are constellated within a human consciousness that they manifest as individualised, yet universally recognised traits. Archetypes are ambiguous, not only because they embody their opposites (Jung C. , 1971) but because the shape of the individual psyche influences how they are embodied (Jung C. , 1990). This also infers that as an individual embodies an archetype in their unique way, it expands the very configuration of the archetype, adding another possibility of expression to the collective. I envisage the collective unconscious as growing in complexity and depth with every generation of humanity.

One of the most significant things, for me, about the idea of a collective unconscious, is the implication that all humans share a deep connection. We have the ability to connect and empathise with the conditions and experiences of others far beyond that of our individual realms of experience. The collective unconscious has the potential to be a source of inspiration, creativity, and resourcefulness. The archetypal configurations constitute a map of moral and developmental lessons when explored through story, which is why stories serve a potentially developmental purpose.

Modes of Presence and Ways of Knowing

Heron's Extended Epistemology

Heron's extended epistemology attempts to encompass our multiple ways of being in, and knowing the world, and so provided me with a single framework that I could use in my inquiry to analyse and discuss modes of presence and ways of knowing, especially those that occurred in the field experiences.

In developing an extended epistemology, psychologist John Heron (1992) attempts to move beyond what he and many others (Polanyi, 1946) (Langer S. , 1957) (Bateson, 1972/2000) (Moustakas, 1994) (Gardner, 1995) (Tarnas, 1998) (Anderson & Braud, 2011) (Gallese & Di Dio, 2009) (Ferrer, 2002) (Seeley & Reason, 2008) (Pink, 2011) consider to be the limitations of the positivist, rational, intellectual kind of knowing that enlightenment values privilege, to a more holistic representation of how we know and what kinds of knowing have validity.

Heron uses 'knowing' not to describe objective truth, for the very notion of 'objective' is questionable (Kuhn, 1970), but to impart the essential reality of knowing generated by the individual. It is important to remember that to phenomenologists there is no distinction between 'real' and 'imagined' phenomena. Heron sets out what he terms an up-hierarchy of four ways of knowing: experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical.

Experiential knowing

At the base is experiential knowing, because in phenomenological terms it is the foundation of all knowing for us as embodied, sensing, perceiving beings (Zahavi, 2003) (Merleau-Ponty, 1978). It describes both the direct experience of phenomena and our imaging of the world. Experiential knowing is the felt knowing of embodiment. It encompasses the knowledge gained through our immediate encounters with phenomena. Heron describes this participatory process as,

"knowing through participative, empathic resonance ... It is also the creative shaping of a world through the transaction of imaging it. ... Experiential knowing thus articulates reality through inner resonance with what there is" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281).

Presentational Knowing

Experiential knowing provides the foundation for presentational knowing, which Heron describes as being expressed in symbolic forms such as gesture, image, and story - forms that embody our intuitive understanding of and resonance with our encounters. Presentational knowing consists of expressions and manifestations of experiential knowing in ways free from conceptual-rational dominance, which include the visual arts, music, poetry, drama, and dance. Any expression of knowing through symbol or metaphor is a communication of this tacit knowledge (Langer S. K., 1954). It is not only a means of communicating experiential knowing, but of working with it to make further sense and explore meanings, and can help bring that knowing into

2. Modes of presence and dimensions of knowing

conscious awareness (McNiff, 2011). Presentational forms are versatile because they provide the means for working with and expressing experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing.

Propositional knowing is knowing about something, having a conceptual grasp of it. It is demonstrated in the ability to explain or describe a concept verbally or in written form, and can also be understanding that arises through speaking. It is, “knowledge by description... that come with the mastery of concepts and classes that language bestows. Propositions themselves are carried by presentational forms - the sounds or visual shapes of the spoken or written word” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281). Although Heron does not tightly define this, I interpret his explanation as meaning that language and mathematics are symbolic, presentational forms and can be employed as vehicles to convey abstract and propositional knowing.

Practical knowing is the living embodiment and expression of all three other forms of knowing. It is not just knowing how to do something, but it, “presupposes a conceptual grasp of principles and standards of practice, presentational elegance, and experiential grounding in the situation within which the action occurs” (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281). It is the bringing of the other three ways of knowing to fruition in “purposive deeds” (ibid). Practical knowing is embodied by consummate professionals in their vocational praxis.

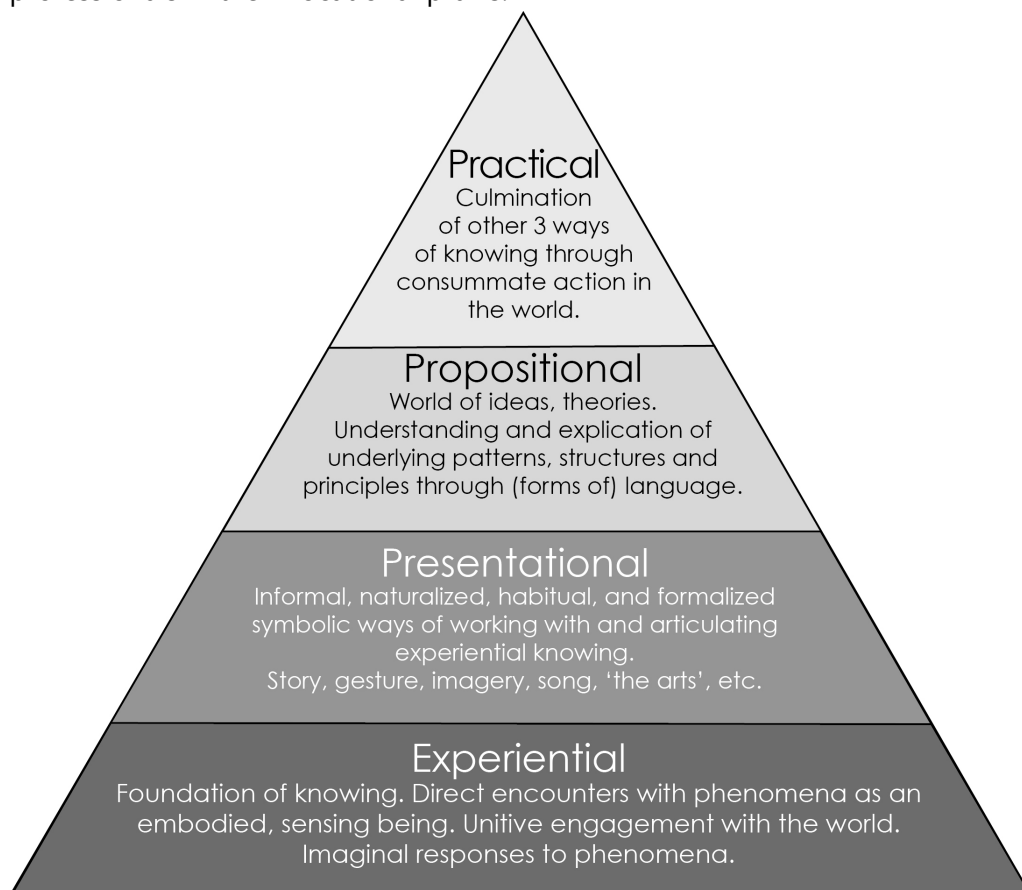


Figure 4. Heron's up-hierarchy of ways of knowing, adapted from (Heron J. , *Feeling and Personhood: Psychology in Another Key*, 1992, p. 174)

In figure 4, I adapted Heron's model by adding short descriptions of each way of knowing. I explored the model through an imaginal dialogue with the concepts. My first thoughts regarding this up-hierarchy caused me to question the order, and if a hierarchy is a helpful construct. I could see how all other forms of knowing would stem from the ground of experiential knowing, given that mental phenomena are included, such as spontaneous day dreams, visions, melodies etc., which appear to have no immediate external source or trigger. I wondered though, if the order of appearance of other forms of knowing is always as processional as the hierarchy depicts.

The phenomenological perspective stemming from the ideas of Husserl (Zahavi, 2003) argues that we quickly interpret perceptions into narrative form as we try to name and make sense of them by fitting them into our known frames of reference. This suggests a rapid movement to propositional knowing from experiential knowing. But on closer inspection, the nature of those initial narratives constructed about our encounters is not propositional knowing. The kind of provisional, interim 'knowing about' which is subject to change once more data is gathered is transitional, more fantasy and conjecture than systematic conceptual reasoning, more a metaphor for what a phenomenon *appears* to be as we try to grasp its meaning (Moran, 2011). These are not theories but stories, so are presentational forms of sensemaking. They may be socially influenced by how others make sense of the experience, at the time and later in their telling and retelling.

Although Heron and Reason discuss presentational forms with emphasis on the arts, at its fundamental level, presentational knowing,

"clothes our experiential knowing of the world in the metaphors of aesthetic creation, in expressive spatiotemporal forms of imagery. These forms symbolize both our felt attunement with the world and the primary meaning embedded in our enactment of its appearing" (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281).

Such thinking implies that presentational forms are employed to grasp the meanings of phenomena as well as to express and communicate felt knowing. By deliberately and systematically working with presentational forms, I think it is possible to explore experiential knowing, to expand on and clarify, to reach a greater understanding, to be able to give form to felt meaning (see Interlude for Imaginal Dialogue). Presentational forms can provide a way of working with unconscious symbolic material, or material that cannot be brought into consciousness in any other way (Jung C. G., 1966). It is a way of bringing sensemaking to felt meaning, in contrast to the notion that meaning comes through sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

It is possible to acquire presentational knowing through enactment and practice, but could that lead directly to practical knowing, bypassing propositional knowing? It is almost impossible to experience anything without having conceptual thoughts about it at some point, but I think one can have conceptual thoughts about a thing without acquiring the explicit 'knowing about' indicated by the term propositional knowing.

Propositional knowledge is especially useful if one is trying to explain underlying principles or theory to others, although I question whether it is always the ground to practical knowing.

Heron and Reason (2008) infer that practical knowing is about gaining a practical expertise grounded in the other three ways of knowing; however, I have met practitioners in various fields who have masterful skills based on an intuitive grasp and many years of practice, and seemingly little theoretical knowledge about what they do so well. These practitioners could show someone what they do, but not tell them how they do it. While their practice may be further enhanced by propositional knowledge of their craft, I remain unconvinced that it is necessary to practical competence. Polanyi (1946) (1958) discusses this concept in his discussion of tacit knowing, as do others (Strati A. , 1999) (Strati A. , 2000) (Gagliardi, 1990) who observe skilled craftspeople able to demonstrate embodied knowing without being able to articulate that knowing in theoretical terms. Heron (1992), referencing philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949), goes on to expand conceptual knowing to be not only 'knowing about' but 'knowing that'. This addition sits more easily with me because it allows for the conceptual knowing of a master craftsman to fit within propositional knowing, because a craftsman will 'know that' if something is done in a certain way it will or won't work. The example illustrates how there are no clear boundaries between ways of knowing in practical terms, because each integrates, and as the up-hierarchy is ascended, exists in relationship with the others.

Modes of the Psyche

Although Jung (1971) had a theory of psychological types, I find his construct unsatisfactory and reject the binary notion of extraversion and introversion, believing it to be overly simplistic as the basis of the theory. The ways in which we sense, intuit, feel and think, according to Jung, are all determined by the basic attitude of introversion or extroversion. I find this very limiting because no-one is entirely either outward or inward-facing, objectively or subjectively informed. Heron (1992), by contrast, provides a theoretical framework that resonates with me. He sets out a model of the psyche to which he attributes four modes of functioning in the world: the affective, imaginal, conceptual, and the practical. These, according to Heron, lay the ground for how we then come to generate knowledge. He distinguishes these four modes not as something fixed and absolute, but as a useful way to look at the interplay between the different ways we have of functioning, knowing, learning, developing, and creating in waking life.

Each mode, according to Heron, has an individuating and a participatory aspect: the first "makes for experience of individual distinctness; the latter for experience of unitive interaction with a whole field of being" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 15). Heron uses the term 'individuation' differently to Jung (1964/1978), although both share the aim of unification. Heron speaks of it as being our sense of distinctiveness as individuals, and is careful to stress that by 'distinctiveness' he does not mean separateness. Individuation is a life journey to fully realize the difference between distinction and

separation. We begin life, he says, with an undifferentiated consciousness, individuating as we develop the awareness of self and other. Due to the prevailing positivist paradigm, we begin to see our distinctiveness as separateness from everything else. The journey of individuation then, is the path back to realizing the participatory ground of being; to live in connection and relation with the world whilst retaining our distinctiveness within it.

The binary aspects of each mode are described by Heron as polarities that are always in interaction with each other and imply, he says, a dominance, rather than exclusion of one over the other at any one time. "The participatory modes include the individuating ones, and the individuating ones presuppose the participatory" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 18). He seems to be saying that the ground of being and knowing is in our participatory relationship with the world, and so the participatory aspects of the modes are ever-present. The individuating aspects arise out of this participatory ground of being in the differentiation of the self as an agentic¹³ (Bandura, 2001) being with a unique perspective and capacity to act accordingly.

The affective mode is to do with emotion on an individual level, and feeling on a participatory one. Emotion and feeling are often used interchangeably with each other, but Heron differentiates them in this sense by defining emotions as expressions of met or unmet needs, as "an intense, localized affect that centres around the fulfilment or frustration of individual needs or interests" (1992, p. 119). Feeling, although in relationship with emotion, transcends the individual's emotional wants and needs. He defines feeling as resonance with being stemming from the participatory act of experiencing, which occurs prior to perception (1992, p. 93). He speaks of it as "the capacity of the psyche... to know its own distinctness while unified with the differentiated other. This is the domain of empathy, indwelling, participation, presence, resonance, and such like" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 16). In figure 5, I set out the modes and their corresponding participatory and individuating aspects in a table, which clearly illustrates their relationships.

¹³ A perspective of social cognitive theory of human agency – the capacity to exert control over one's life, acknowledging that we do so within a network of sociocultural influences; "people are producers as well as products of social systems" (Bandura, 2001, p.1). Aspects include intentionality, forethought, self-regulation, self-reflectiveness.

2. Modes of presence and dimensions of knowing

MODES	PARTICIPATORY ASPECT	INDIVIDUATING ASPECT
AFFECTIVE <i>Relating to Experiential knowing</i>	Feeling Prior to perception. Unity & distinction. Interpenetration, attuning – felt acquaintance. Empathy, resonance.	Emotion Intense, localized: continuum of met or unmet needs & desires, linked with/stemming from our underlying feeling of connection.
IMAGINAL <i>Relating to presentational knowing</i>	Intuition Immediate, intuitive, comprehensive grasp of field, system, pattern, hierarchy – making connections. Metaphorical insight, holistic cognition.	Imagery Capacity of psyche to generate individual viewpoint. Perceptual imagery. Our image-making ability, imagination.
CONCEPTUAL <i>Relating to propositional knowing</i>	Reflection Process of thinking about experience. Use of concepts to deal with relations between classes, make models, generalisations, theories.	Discrimination Ability to categorise, define, differentiate, distinguish classes, inventory, filter (according to individual needs & preferences).
PRACTICAL <i>Relating to practical knowing</i>	Intention Purposes behind actions relating to a wider context. Plan, design, policy etc. Intention is consummated in action.	Action Intentional, performed behaviours. Will, personal responsibility.

Figure 5. Individuating and Participatory Modes of the Psyche, constructed and paraphrased from Heron’s descriptions (Heron J. , 1992, pp. 15-18), R. Lovie 2017

When discussing how to gauge the validity of knowing in the experiential mode, Heron speaks of the necessity to be compresent with the essential qualities of phenomena, which sounds similar in some ways to Husserl’s ideal of the epoché (Zahavi, 2003). Heron’s is not an intellectual take on the process. He focuses on one’s ability to be completely present and open to phenomena. Heron gives neither a wholly descriptive or interpretive view, but indicates that the ‘shape’ of one’s mind will affect what is apprehended, inferring that our ‘style’ of being in the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2005) impacts upon the participatory experience of ‘meeting’ phenomena.

In the individuating aspect, he defines the imaginal mode as our capacity to creatively generate our individual ways of seeing the world through imagery “in sense perception, memory, anticipation, dreams, visions, imagination, extrasensory perception” (Heron J. , 1992, pp. 16-17), and in the participatory aspect as our ability to see patterns and grasp wholes: “the domain of intuitive grasp, holistic cognition, totalistic comprehension, metaphorical insight, immediate gnosis” (Heron J. , 1992, p. 17). My understanding is that the imaginal mode transforms primary awareness into presentational knowing and expression, bringing felt meaning to a point where conceptual thought can occur (Heron J. , 1992, p. 139).

The conceptual mode, Heron names as having an individuating discriminatory aspect, our ability to make distinctions, categorise, differentiate, prioritise in terms of our individual needs and style. In concordance with Husserl (Woodruff Smith & McIntyre, 1984) (Zahavi, 2003) and Merleau-Ponty (1962/2005, p. 213), how we make sense of experience is dependent upon our 'substrate of habitualities', or 'style' of being in the world. The participatory aspect is our ability to reflect upon and to see the relationships between that which we have inventoried; "The intellect is seeking to formulate a conceptual model that is inclusive and comprehensive. This is the domain of models, generalizations, laws and theories" (ibid). Expressions of propositional knowing will always be subject to our 'prejudices' (Gadamer H.-G. , 2004) because prejudices are present in the act of perception and colour all aspects of our knowing thereafter.

The practical mode consists of action and intention. An action is an intentional behaviour or act by the individual. Intention is the purpose behind the action, or the meaning of it, which may have motives that transcend the individual's wants or needs; it is the realm of strategy, design, and policy.

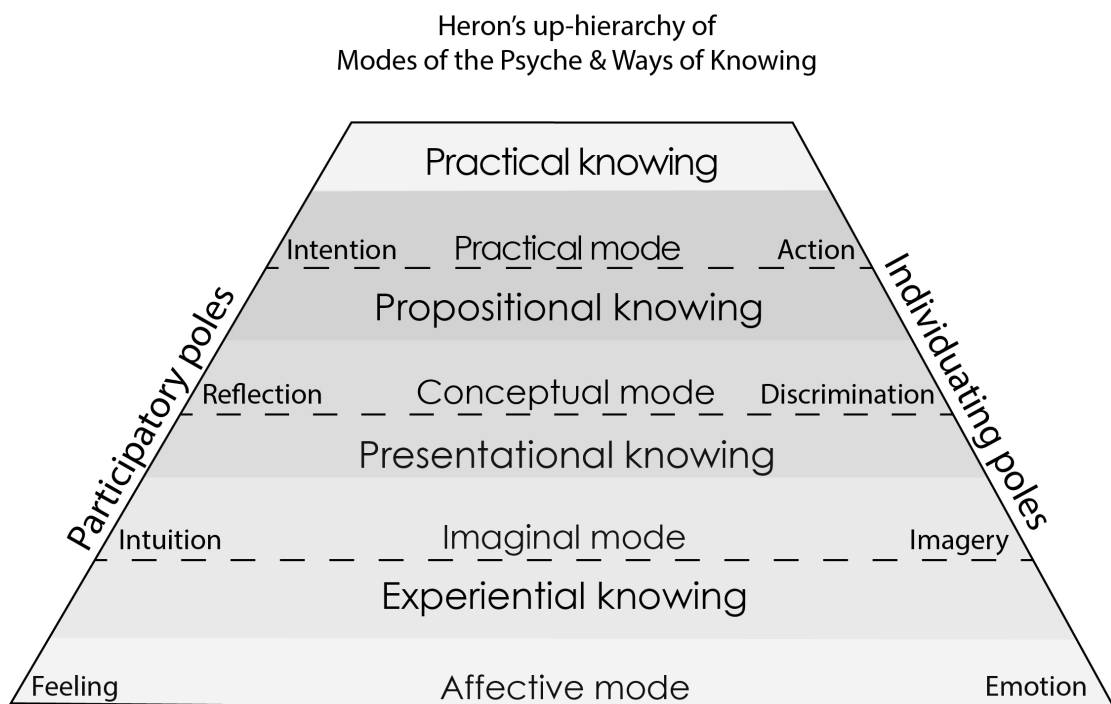


Figure 6. Heron's Up-hierarchy of Modes of the Psyche and Ways of Knowing (Heron J. , 1992), R. Lovie 2017

Figure 6 illustrates how the modes of knowing give rise to the ways of knowing. The broken line divisions and horizontal colour zoning is my attempt to convey that all of the boundaries implied in the presentation of Heron's framework are permeable, that the modes interact with each other, constantly informing and transforming the others in a fluid and dynamic fashion.

Heron's extended epistemology is, of course, only one perspective and articulation of knowing. It is an imaginative exploration of the ways in which we know, intended to expand conceptions of how knowing is generated, and balance out the over-emphasis often placed upon propositional knowing. Our ways of knowing are not always clearly delineated and have fuzzy boundaries and overlaps as they interact and intertwine as we try to make sense of phenomena. This shows in Heron's framework, as he attempts to illustrate how each way of knowing proceeds to inform and transform knowing holistically through their interactions.

Heron concedes that the framework is intended as a guide and not a comprehensive theory of knowledge, acknowledging, after Capra (1982/1987), that it is "expressed in terms of a self-consistent but limited and approximate model" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 1). He says,

"My theory is thus only a belief, and falls far short of fulfilling a claim to knowledge. At the same time it is not mere abstract speculation. It is a working belief and a lived belief. It is experientially, phenomenologically grounded and applied" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 11).

I hold this framework throughout my inquiry in the spirit in which it is offered, and explore, clarify and transform my understanding of it as I proceed.

Concluding thoughts

My exploration of the dimensions of being and knowing in this chapter illustrates how I began to expand and synthesise the pre-existing lenses I held upon coming to the inquiry. Much of what is explored here was written prior to most of my fieldwork, although I returned to it when selecting early writing to include in my thesis, clarifying, omitting, and otherwise editing it with wiser eyes. One of the exceptions is that I discovered the writing of Henry Corbin much later. However, I have tried to remain true to the essence of my thinking at the stage of inquiry prior to much of the fieldwork, although in choosing what to include, I selected writing that was directly relevant to the 'story' of my thesis, aware that all stories are retrospective attempts to bring sense and continuity to our worlds.

3. Dimensions of transformative learning

Introduction

To track the experience and processes of developmental learning in my inquiry, I needed a framework for understanding the meaning of development, how it may transpire, and how to identify it in myself and participants of the programmes I studied. I began my search for an adult learning and development theory and practice commensurate with my approach to inquiry, with many questions: what is the difference between learning and development? What might prompt people to develop? What factors might inhibit or encourage growth experiences? What conditions help learners to willingly push beyond the limits of their current understanding? Are there indicators in the ways in which people speak of their experience that might reveal they are on the edges of their understanding, or have reached new understandings of themselves? How will I recognise what development might feel, look and sound like in the field situations of my inquiry and in the data gathered?

My search for a learning and development theory that would be commensurate with the perspectives I have explored: the co-creative, participatory nature of existence, the narrative aspect of self, and the symbolic language and landscape of the psyche, was not an easy one. I struggled to find a framework that encompassed the complexity of the social and psychological dimensions of embodiment, and that also gave credence to the mystery of the intuitive, creative, imaginal realm of being. Learning theories alone did not seem sufficient to explore what I think of as development. Kolb's experiential learning framework appears to exclude, to a large extent, the intuitive and symbolic aspects of experience. Heron (1992, p. 197), for instance, criticizes Kolb for assuming knowledge always means propositional knowledge, and not accounting sufficiently for presentational knowing.

Scholars and practitioners of Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) subscribe to collaborative, constructivist and phenomenological principles of learning. I chose TLT due to its flexibility and diversity of applicable contexts and because, despite its origins in Critical Theory, it is open enough to accommodate numerous perspectives. I see the variety of perspectives as mirroring the innumerable ways in which people learn and develop as human beings. TLT has evolved as a theory and a practice, and its contributors come from diverse areas of learning and development. Mezirow (1997), who developed the theory, charted the process of TL through the lens of conceptual-rational knowing. Others (e.g. (Dirkx J. , 2006) (York & Kasl, 2002) (Taylor E. , 2001)), seeking a more holistic (Gunnlaugson, 2008) and inclusive approach, place a greater emphasis on experiential, presentational, and practical knowing in whole person development.

TLT has been criticised for having become too generalised, resulting in its concepts being interpreted in too many different ways to remain viable (Newman, 2012). Newman argues that what many people call transformative learning is just good learning. Inconsistencies may stem from researchers having varying ideas of what constitutes and is evidence of 'perspective change', the primary measure of

transformative learning. A clear definition of what perspective change means, then, was important, and yet trying to discern it during my own learning experiences and from participant interview responses would prove not to be straightforward. As well as method, TLT focuses on process. This was useful to my inquiry aims because it provided me with some practical guidance and indications for how to recognise transformative learning as it occurs. Rather than relying solely on retrospective sensemaking, I would be able to observe the process in action, both in others and myself.

In this chapter, I set out the process of TL as Mezirow saw it, drawing attention to some of his assumptions regarding approach and methods, and to aspects of the process that he omits from his model of the TL process. Focusing on the process of TL, I introduce various observations and ideas from alternative perspectives of other scholar-practitioners.

Adult development

Traditional thinking held that childhood development tailed off as we reached adulthood, and while adults continued to learn throughout their lives they ceased to develop (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Theories of adult development arose in the 20th Century (Clark & Caffarella, 1999), as modern and postmodern scholars and practitioners began to advance theories of adult learning to account for and better understand the continuing process of personal growth that can occur throughout a person's life. Some build upon the work of previous childhood development theorists from the cognitive perspective such as Piaget, and synthesise their ideas with constructivist principles of learning (Dirkx & Smith, 2003), including Kegan's staged theory of adult development (1994) (2002) (Kegan & Lahey, 2009), and Kolb's theory of experiential learning (1984), while others such as Jung (1960) (1967) (1971), and later, Heron (1992), developed theories focusing on development as development of the psyche.

In taking a developmental perspective on TL, I will distinguish between learning and development by using adult development theorist Robert Kegan's distinction. Learning, according to Kegan (1994), can be defined as adding to our current meaning-making structures, whereas we *develop* when we change not only *what* we know but *how* we know. TL in this sense implies development, because our meaning-making structures undergo change, and it is this that distinguishes development from learning. Mezirow too, explicitly equates transformative learning with development (1978, p. 6), which also becomes apparent in his elucidation of the theory.

I do not use Kegan's theoretical framework in my inquiry, so only briefly outline it here to acknowledge his influence on my thinking prior to my discovery of the wider realm of TL. Kegan proposes that individuals create a construction of reality which can develop throughout life with ever more complexity, with each leap in cognitive complexity requiring a transformation of meaning-making scheme or frames of reference within the individual. Kegan identifies a hierarchy of five stages or "orders of consciousness" (Kegan R. , 1994), each one denoting a qualitatively different way of

3. Dimensions of transformative learning

meaning making and constructing reality. The greater an individual's cognitive complexity, the better equipped they become to deal with uncertainty and the complexity of modern life. Once a new stage has been reached, Kegan argues, we rarely revert to our old ways of thinking because fundamental structures have been altered (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

I include Kegan's higher three stages, or mindsets in figure 7, to illustrate how he defines three levels of cognitive complexity and the qualitatively different lenses they form through which people make sense of the world. They are described as plateaus in this table because Kegan argues that development is not continuous, but remains stable at each stage until there is a transformative leap to the next stage.

Three adult plateaus described	
Socialized mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are shaped by the definitions and expectations of our personal environment. • Our self coheres by its alignment with, and loyalty to, that with which it identifies. • This can express itself primarily in our relationship with people, with "schools of thought" (our ideas and beliefs) or both.
Self-Authoring mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are able to step back enough from the social environment to generate an internal "seat of judgement" or personal authority that evaluates and makes choices about external expectations. • Our self coheres by its alignment with its own belief system/ideology/personal code; by its ability to self-direct, take stands, set limits, and create and regulate its boundaries on behalf of its own voice.
Self-transforming mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can step back from and reflect on the limits of our own ideology or personal authority; see that any one system or self-organization is in some way partial or incomplete; be friendlier toward contradiction and opposites; seek to hold on to multiple systems rather than projecting all but one onto the other. • Our self coheres through its ability not to confuse internal consistency with wholeness or completeness, and through its alignment with the dialectic rather than either pole.

Figure 7. Three adult plateaus (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 17)

Kegan's categorisations are attractive in that they offer a clearly defined map of development that appeals to my desire to order and categorise; the descriptions of each stage providing a structured way of conceptualising development that can be applied to evaluate an individual's stage of development. I find this dangerous ground though, because we risk pigeonholing people by assessing them in this hierarchical way without questioning the motivation for doing so, or the validity or usefulness of the method or model.

Perhaps development occurs for the most part in a more incremental and multi-faceted way. People undergo many transformations throughout life, some more

profound than others. There seems to be an assumption in Kegan's framework that all aspects of our being move at the same time, while I experience my own development somewhat differently. I can see that one or more aspects of myself might shift, particularly when a previously held assumption is challenged and breaks down. This becomes evident in changes in the way I think about certain things, interact, and respond to stimuli. There are, however, many other aspects of my thought and behaviour that remain unaffected and unchanged, particularly aspects that feel more remote from the assumption that has broken down. This leads me to think that staged models may be too simplistic, and that in reality development is a complex and convoluted process. A Jungian perspective of the self as a multiplicity (Jung C. , 1959) (Miller J. , 2004), an amalgamation of aspects or 'selves' that often contradict or conflict with each other, makes more sense to my personal experience of development, explaining why some aspects of myself feel stuck in certain patterns while others feel more developed.

Mezirow's model of Transformative Learning

Jack Mezirow (1978) (1991) (1997), whose early influences included Dewey (1910), Habermas, Freire (2005), and developmental theorist Roger Gould (1978), developed TLT from his research into women re-entering adult education in the USA between 1970-75. It was founded upon the Constructivist assumptions that meaning is constructed from our interpretations of our experiences and interactions, and they are socially and culturally influenced. The goal of Transformative learning is a process of "examining, questioning, and revising those perceptions" (Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 5). Mezirow defines transformative learning as, "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference— sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2003). By the time they are adults people have developed a particular lens, or set of lenses through which they see the world. They have what Mezirow terms 'a frame of reference' for understanding the world that he describes as consisting of "structures of assumptions" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5)¹⁴. A frame of reference includes values, associations, concepts, feelings, and ways of responding that result in a coherent sense of self and are an accumulation of our life's learning, cultural assimilation and experiences (Cranton & Roy, 2003). Our frames of reference are the ways in which we

¹⁴ These correspond to Husserl's habitus or 'habitudes' of mind – deeply entrenched ways of responding to phenomena, of sense and meaning making (Moran, 2011) (Zahavi, 2003).

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make sense of and understand experiences; they shape how we perceive and interpret experience and act to reinforce our internal narrative constructions of reality (Kerby A. , *Narrative and the Self*, 1991).

According to Mezirow a frame of reference consists of two aspects, habits of mind and points of view. The habits of mind are relatively fixed, for unless we engage in self-reflective practice we may remain relatively unaware of them. A point of view, according to Mezirow (1997), is less fixed and might be moderated or shifted more easily through discussion, reflection, and feedback from others. A point of view is a manifestation of a habit of mind, often expressed as a judgement, so hearing another's point of view will give an insight into their frame of reference. Experiences and dialogue may result in the point of view being changed, but Mezirow maintains that frames of reference are harder to alter because they are formed by cultural assimilation and the influences of primary caregivers, making them deeply rooted.

Frames of reference can be transformed, he argues, only when we critically reflect upon the manifestations of them, and call into question the assumptions upon which they are based (Mezirow, 1990). TL happens when we open up our frames of reference to scrutiny and discard that which no longer serves us, or is recognised as self-deceptive or limiting, and replace it with new insight, thus altering the frame of reference and everything (thoughts, behaviours, responses) that flows from it thereafter (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow's intended outcome is that through reflective practice people become more open (Cranton & Roy, 2003), enabling them to accept and hold multiple perspectives, which in Kegan's terms indicates a developmental shift towards a self-transforming mindset (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Mezirow (1978, p. 16) describes the phases of TL as a "dynamic process of negotiation" by which perspective transformation is reached. By this he means that TL can be embarked upon by people at numerous 'stages' of development (as set out by developmental psychologists) and, through the process he describes involving dialogue and critical reflection, they may come to see how their previous ways of thinking were limiting or distorted.

Whether following this process ultimately results in action, Mezirow is more circumspect, saying that at any time during the process learners may halt their progress or choose not to act on their newly found knowledge, citing "compromise, backsliding and self-deception" (Mezirow, 1978) as some of the reasons why. Although he offered some insight in his interpretations as to why some of the women he studied did not complete the transformation process as he saw it, he did not, at that time, seem to fully appreciate the totality of the complex dimensions of the lives of the women he studied.

His emancipatory aims are well-founded, but his perspective is one of rationality and logic. Mezirow's early work and formulation of theory missed, or at least greatly downplayed, other dimensions of being and knowing that, I think, are fundamental to development. Figure 8 (overleaf) shows Mezirow's initial conceptualisation of the process of TL. He later complementarily acknowledged the work by others to expand

and build his theory into a more holistic framework (Mezirow, 2011), and acknowledged the shortcomings of his earlier work in relation to what others have called “women’s ways of knowing” (see (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986)). He also revised his theory, in 1991 adding a phase: “renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships” (Mezirow, 1994, p. 224) after “building competence and confidence in new roles and relationships”. According to Kitchenham (2008), this was to emphasise the importance he placed on critical reflection, but it seems to me to point towards action as much as reflection. It reveals that an important step was missing in the original framework between trying out new skills and the more complex process of figuring out how to be and act in the world after a transforming perspective shift.

Mezirow’s first iteration of the process of transformative learning	
1	A disorienting dilemma.
2	Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame.
3	Critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions.
4	Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated similar change.
5	Explorations of options for new roles, relationships, and actions.
6	Planning of a course of action.
7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans.
8	Provisional trying of new skills.
9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships.
10	Reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective.

Figure 8. Mezirow’s first iteration of the phases of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978) in Kitchenham (2008)

The process of Transformative learning

I will explore some of the key phases of the process of transformative learning from different perspectives in order to discuss some of the queries raised by scholars and practitioners with differing views. Laura Formenti speculates about the predominance of Mezirow’s rational approach to TL in the USA, wondering if it is because it is culturally more acceptable, with its symbolic references to individualism, whiteness, masculinity, and because it holds “the promise of an exciting journey into awareness and clarity, as opposed to unconscious and dark things?” Formenti in (Formenti & Dirkx, 2014, p. 129). The extrarational approach, she says, encompassing emotion,

feeling, and the unconscious, may be interpreted as more feminine in nature, ambiguous, and of holding less certainty. She deliberately sets up this polarity for discussion, to get us to consider the different approaches in this way, and her challenge highlights the still predominant paradigm of rationalism in Western society.

The catalyst

What initiates the process of transformative learning, given that we can be more likely to engage in thinking and dialogue that reinforces our existing frames of reference rather than changes them? What are the unique set of circumstances and internal processes that prompt some individuals to seek perspective change? Mezirow (1978) describes the "disorienting dilemma" as a disturbing sense of inadequacy, in that there is conscious recognition that some kind of internal change is needed. When assumptions are challenged there is a feeling of disruption, the usual continuity or flow in thinking and doing is disturbed or interrupted. It could not be described as a comfortable state to be in, and although some relish it, others may wish to avoid it.

Mezirow's observations of the disorienting dilemma occurring in students does not take into account people who have an inquiring mindset and regularly engage in self-reflective practice, so I question whether transformative learning always requires a disorienting dilemma. The stage of cognitive complexity that Kegan calls the 'self-transforming mind' (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) is where a person reaches a stage of development that enables them to live life more or less in an attitude of inquiry and curiosity, as Marshall describes (1999). This is not to say that they are in this state all the time, or that they don't have their 'blind spots', but describes a general demeanour. Perception still takes place through a unique lens or filter, but the individual is practiced in being able to not only look through it, but at it. The result is that they are not entirely transfixed by their lens and can and do question it often and readily seek to modify, enhance and shift their own meaning-making structures. In this case an individual may often be in a state of alert readiness for the opportunity to transform, and so would presumably not need much of a prompt because there is an awareness that meaning-making structures are not rigid or fixed. The individual may have developed the ability to hold multiple frames of reference. I do not, however, suggest that the transformative learning process would be any easier or more comfortable.

Precursors

McWhinney and Marcos (2003) envisage the disorienting dilemma differently. They put forward the idea that the precursor to transformation is the recognition of the inability to move forward, or a situation where current meaning-making structures no longer work. This describes the often vague sense that things are not working anymore the way they are, but how to become unstuck so that one can move forward is not clear. I suggest that dissatisfaction may be felt as a need for something to change, but there may not be a realisation that it is one's own perspective that needs to do so, for assumptions can be held unconsciously, so it is only when they are challenged that we realise we have them. A post-Jungian perspective suggests it is

possible that the sense of unease and knowing that something needs to change, is a prompt from deep within the psyche (Hillman, *Healing Fiction*, 1983/1996), from a place beyond the socially constructed self that possesses a more objective sense of knowing in that it may be less attached to the demands of the ego, more transpersonal perhaps (Foster & Little, 1984). In Heron's terms it could be viewed as the influence of the participatory aspects of the psyche coming into play (Heron J. , 1992). If, as Heron says, the participatory aspects of the psyche extend beyond the concerns of the ego, they may, if felt strongly enough, override the fear or discomfort of the challenge to identity involved in perspective change.

Willingness to change

Mezirow and others (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) agree there is a need for learners to be willing to change, because they are otherwise unlikely to engage in critical reflection. In post-compulsory education there is an assumption that learners are there by choice, and possess a willingness to learn. It could be, however, that their motivation is to learn technical skills, and so expecting them to be ready and willing to engage in transformative learning may be unrealistic.

In my teaching of young adult students I found that it often took many weeks for students to develop a willingness to take responsibility for their own learning. They had been in compulsory education for so long that for some it had become a game of *avoidance* of schoolwork, so finding themselves in an environment where the assumption was they would *want* to engage in learning took some getting used to. This change of attitude was in itself a transformative experience for these students and they needed encouragement and support to stabilise their new and unfamiliar state before new challenges could be set. In my experience, older adult students, though often more immediately motivated to learn technical skills, are sometimes more 'set in their ways' than teenagers, having had longer to establish and sediment their habits of mind. They tend to have an established sense of identity and story of self, unlike teenagers whose identities are more malleable as they try out different personae in their search for adult identity formation. Perhaps for some older learners, the sense of identity is more fixed and rigid, making transformative learning more threatening.

Identity

Many texts regarding transformative learning contain some element of coming to know oneself (Tennant, 2005), usually through deliberate self-examination of some kind that raises conscious awareness of one's meaning-making structures. Dirkx (2012) acknowledges both the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions of self-critique, but also hints of something more. To him, self-formation means recognising the multiplicity and fluidity of the self in relationship with the world.

"As Transformative Learning, self-formation involves both a critique of self as it has come to be known within particular sociocultural contexts and the nurturing of that which is innate to the human

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psyche. The former seeks to address self-deceptive practices and the latter helps encourage the unfolding of a more integrated and authentic self." (Dirkx J. , 2012, p. 402).

Dirkx refers to an "authentic self" here in the Jungian sense, which is a realisation that beyond the ego lie myriad hidden aspects of the Self which may be gradually revealed and brought into relationship with the conscious in the process of Individuation. A part of this lifelong journey is discovering one's "gifts" and calling in life. Although an authentic self implies an essentialist idea of self, it could be interpreted as an ever-unfolding discovery of the many and changing selves that constitute us, including the recognition that we can grow beyond the social and cultural forces that originally shaped us by honouring our predilections, talents, and desires for who we would like to become.

The sense of identity is so bound up in our frames of reference that the prospect of transformation can be felt as threatening. Mezirow recognises that,

"To question the validity of a long-taken-for-granted meaning perspective predicated on a presupposition about oneself can involve the negation of values that have been very close to the centre of one's self-concept." (Mezirow, 1990, p. 11).

This can be a barrier to change, because letting go of a part of our identity can be challenging, particularly to those with a fixed sense of self (Dweck, 2000). It seems to me however, that the direct challenge to the identity implied by the kind of discourse Mezirow advises could sometimes be felt as an existential threat (Illeris, 2007) (Illeris, 2014). Indeed, Jarvis (2006) found, for her adult women students, that romantic fiction was a useful medium for enabling learners to develop a greater awareness of how social structures influenced their frames of reference by being somewhere to anchor conversations. Perhaps in this sense, presentational forms such as storytelling can act as buffers, providing a medium whereby emotions, feelings, and symbolic aspects of life can be seen to have a legitimate place alongside the critical, consciousness raising aspects of Mezirow's vision of TL.

From a Jungian perspective, McWhinney and Marcos (2003) describe transformational education as an archetypal journey and liken it to The Hero's Journey (Campbell, 1949). In the monomyth¹⁵ of the Hero's Journey, which in symbolic terms represents a

¹⁵ Campbell studied myths from numerous cultures around the world and identified remarkably similar core elements and structure to many of them, which he termed 'The Hero's Journey'. Influenced by Jung, he speculated that the myths spoke of inner journeys of psychic development. Feminist scholars question whether the Hero's Journey depicts an exclusively 'masculine' journey of development [see (Murdock, 1990)]. Jungian analyst and storyteller Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1996) offers an interesting array of 'feminine' psychic development

journey of psychic growth and individuation, the hero is initially reluctant to accept the 'call to adventure' and refuses the invitation. Upon thinking long and hard about the consequences of maintaining the status quo the hero accepts the risk involved and crosses the threshold into the uncertainty of the unknown, because to remain the same would eventually become untenable. To me, this tale brings to mind the concept in Living Systems Theory, which offers an oddly parallel explanation for radical change to occur: until a crisis is reached a system will not usually risk the expenditure of energy needed to change; however, when a certain threshold of potential danger to maintaining the status quo is crossed, the system will risk expending the energy required to make a radical change (Capra, 1996). The attitude of willingness required to embark upon a path of transformative learning may not then, manifest as all-out enthusiasm for the venture, but might instead be born out of an impending untenable status quo.

The threshold

"[T]he best technique for supporting people at their growing edge is simply to provide openings for people to push against the edge and then be company for them as they stand at the precipice; once they are there, the growing edge is its own teacher. Although finding the edge sometimes requires a guide and staying there requires support, ultimately the way through the confusion is to grow, and only the person at the edge can do that growing." (Berger, 2004, p. 345)¹⁶.

When people are clearly at the edges of their understanding it means they are on the threshold of transformation. Berger (2004) says this can be evidenced in the way people speak about trying to understand a situation, how usually articulate people can flounder and stumble and loop in trying to explain or make sense. This phenomenon was evident in some of the interviews I conducted (see chapters 5 and 6), in which I or the participant struggled to find words to describe the felt-meanings of our learning experiences.

There seems to be some consensus across perspectives that the transformative learning process takes people into a place of uncertainty and not-knowing, which must at some level be accepted or surrendered to, if one hopes to transform. Taylor and Cranton (2013) ask what brings a person to a state of readiness, not only to learn but to change? They ask whether a person needs to be at a point of readiness before they can engage in transformative learning. Desire to change they say, "refers to that

themes in other myths and folktales, which perhaps speak more directly to the experiences of women in a culturally patrivalent world.

¹⁶ In chapter 6, I discuss how 'openings' were provided and how guides supported participants at their growing edge in the Vision Fast.

step that individuals must take to move from reflection to transformation" (Taylor & Cranton, 2013, p. 35). So, even when evidence of self-reflection is observed in learners, the implication is that it does not automatically lead to change. This is an important point, and one that Mezirow (1978) mentions in his early work. Berger (2004) concurs, making a distinction between reflective thinking in which, she says, we use our habitual lens to notice 'what is', and transformative reflection to unpack thoughts and try on new lenses to view them with. What, though, determines the range of new lenses that are available to us? The range may be limited to those offered, and so we must ask whether learning facilitators have a moral obligation to offer a range of lenses to learners.

Scott describes the period on the cusp of transformation from a depth psychology perspective as being an intensely personal extrarational process that requires the individual to 'sit' with what is going on, to listen or wait. "The ego needs to be quieted before the internal images can be attended to, and this requires a readiness, willingness, and openness" (Scott, 1997, p. 46). This causes me to think that a transformative space is liminal in nature, where we face the limitations of our knowing and choose to push those limits. It is not simply a place propositional knowing, but a state affecting the whole self. Turner (1964) describes liminality as an "interstructural situation", a period of transition from one stable state to another. It is a process of becoming, the new state having significantly different properties to the previous one. It is ambiguous because it has neither the properties of the prior or future state, hence Turner's phrase "betwixt and between" (1969/2008).

To let go of who we were without the certainty of knowing who or how we will be on the other side, it is no wonder some people choose not to proceed. It takes will and courage to step fully into the liminality of transition, to be in that space of not-knowing, perhaps because once the passage has been made there can be no going back. Once on the other side, one could perhaps choose not to act, but there would be an inauthenticity to that, which might be difficult to live with. Better then, for some, to remain at a reflective stage, where change is a theoretical possibility and not fully embodied.

Depending on a person's situation and perhaps other factors such as personality, being on the 'edge of understanding' can be either anxiety provoking or exciting and energizing, or both (Berger, 2004). Some people are more comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity than others, but there may be many reasons why someone may find this situation distressing or exciting (e.g. what is at stake, the amount of support from others in one's life, whether one's values or integrity are compromised, whether anyone else is affected etc.).

Discourse in transformative learning

Mezirow puts discourse, "dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values" (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59), at the centre of meaning-making, as the social process by which we validate what and how we know. He asserts that effective discourse is necessary in the process of transformation of frames of reference

because it becomes a vehicle for critical reflection. Facilitated discourse in the context of an educational setting enables one to problematize and explore what and how one knows in a safe environment. It provides an arena for listening, critical engagement and reflection. It can encourage the kind of self-reflection that enables new perspectives to be developed and existing frames of reference to be transformed, and be a place where they can be tested and validated (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow's assumption is that if individuals engage in rational dialogue and reflection they will effectively change their "distorted" (Mezirow, 1990) conceptions. It is built on the underlying assumption that they will come to the learning situation in a state of openness and willingness to allow this to happen. As anyone who has ever engaged in or facilitated an adult learning session knows, the reality strays far from his idealised scenario. People are often quick to defend their points of view and can become defensive when they are challenged, closing down instead of opening up to inquiry.

Is critical self-reflection necessary?

Discourse-induced critical reflection may represent only one possible pathway to TL (Cranton & Roy, 2003) (Gunnlaugson, 2008). Is TL possible without either dialogue or the kind of critical reflection that Mezirow infers? Could experiential knowing and forms of presentational knowing other than linguistic ones lead to transformative learning, as Taylor (2007) suggests, and if so, how? I attempt to answer this question in chapter 6. Can transformative learning be both consolidated and demonstrated through action alone? Taylor (2001) cites studies in which learners demonstrated transformation through action and various ways of knowing, including intuition and emotions that appeared as guides in the change process.

Stories as vehicles for change

Hoggan and Cranton discuss research undertaken with students utilising fiction reading as a vehicle for TL, saying that as well as, "developing the capacity for narrative imagination, fiction prompts transformative types of learning through the use of metaphor" (Hoggan & Cranton, 2015, p. 7). Referring to a study by Jarvis (2006), they add "It can offer disorienting dilemmas, encourage dialogue where contradictions can emerge, lead to imagining alternatives, and allow for the trying on different points of view" (Hoggan & Cranton, 2015, p. 11). Some of the responses from students indicated that the distance (from the self) created by living through another's story provides a place of safety from which to examine one's own habits of mind and assumptions without feeling threatened as one might in a more direct, personal challenge (Hoggan & Cranton, 2015). Interestingly, many also reported feeling a readiness to change after reading the stories.

Randall (2010) uses an autobiographical method of working with adults' life-stories which he calls Storywork. He believes that each time we revisit a memory we see it differently and so our relationship to it changes; similarly depending on who we tell the story to and in what context it can also change. He uses Storywork to help people come to know themselves better and to recognise hidden wisdom by aiding them in

“opening up their stories and reflecting on what is ‘in’ them” (Randall, 2010, pp. 33-34). Randall (1996) sees what he terms re-storying as TL because he says as we re-story our lives we transform the past, create new possibilities for the future, and transform our identities.

The role of the affective and imaginal in change

Dirkx describes his post-Jungian approach to TL as being a mythopoetic¹⁷ one, because he utilises Jungian concepts that offer a view that the process of meaning-making is highly symbolic and image-based¹⁸. He advocates working imaginatively with learners using the likes of “story, myths, poetry, music, drawing, art, journaling, dance, rituals, or performance” (Dirkx J. , 2000, p. 2) to work with the feelings, emotions, and unconscious material that surface in TL situations. “Such approaches”, he continues,

“allow learners to become aware of and give voice to the images and unconscious dynamics that may be animating their psychic lives within the context of the subject matter and the learning process” (Dirkx J. , 2000, p. 2).

This implies that presentational forms can act as mediators for learners to transpose their symbolic contents to the contexts of their own lives and circumstances. He argues that mythopoetic processes lead back not to “the life of the mind” (i.e. reflection and analysis) but to the soul (Dirkx J. , 2000, p. 1)¹⁹. The mythopoetic perspective then, acknowledges our need for meaning-making as well as sense-making, and hints that sense-making derives from felt-meaning. Sanctioning feeling, emotion, and internal conflicts, creates learning environments of non-judgemental acceptance because all ways of knowing are considered valid. Dirkx maintains that these aspects of the psyche are always seeking expression and that allowing them voice can be an experience that provides a means to integrate different aspects of the self. By acknowledging our internal conflicts, we may begin to become dialectically aware. Dirkx (2006) says that ‘soul work’ can involve working imaginatively with

¹⁷ Mythopoetic = Imaginal meaning-making and knowing (Leonard & Willis, 2008); the autonomous image-making and affective meaning-making aspect of mind (Price-Williams, 1999).

¹⁸ Image here meaning ‘of the imagination’.

¹⁹ Dirkx, like Jung, uses the word ‘soul’ interchangeably with ‘psyche’. He is referring to the theory that the psyche is comprised of many aspects of self, both personal and transpersonal. Rather than simply the ego, which many identify as their sense of self, Dirkx refers to the soul as the primary or original Self, comprising the many aspects of self in a relatively cohesive whole (Dirkx J. , 2000).

feelings and emotions. He points out that this dimension of TL “involves very personal and imaginative ways of knowing, grounded in a more intuitive and emotional sense of our experiences.” (1997, p. 80).

These ways of knowing, from a phenomenological perspective, represent the fundamental ways in which we experience and generate meaning (Heron J. , 1992). These dimensions of knowing are, I think, important in TL because presentational knowing and expression are our primary ways of interpreting and transforming the felt-meanings of experience. If they sometimes do stem from beyond the ego, as Dirx argues, then they may be able to play a significant role in TL because they can bypass our socially formed points of view to directly reveal our assumptions at a feeling level.

A role for multiple sensemaking systems?

There is a question when using sensemaking systems differing from the critical-rational norm, that learners not versed in those systems will find them confusing or incompatible with their existing frames of reference. Kucukaydin and Cranton (2012) criticise the use of Jungian thought and depth psychology in transformative learning practice, arguing that they could find no evidence of critique or scholarly analysis of its value in adult education. They ignore much, although not all, of the vast body of supporting psychotherapeutic literature outside of transformative education in their review, perhaps because TL is their area of focus. They also take a Critical Theory approach to critique it, which may not be entirely appropriate, because as they admit, mythical and symbolic systems are incompatible with rational discourse (Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012, p. 52). While agreeing that caution and sensitivity to how such systems are presented and explained is needed, I disagree with them that these systems are not subject to reflexivity, or open to questioning. It should be recognised that any sensemaking system is one among many so is bound to have its limitations. It does not mean that one has to accept it to the exclusion of all others; indeed, they should all be subject to scrutiny²⁰.

Jungian theory has continued to develop and is in constant revision by post-Jungian practitioners and scholars, who continue to rigorously explore, critique, and advance Jung’s original theory (Hill, 1992) (Hillman J. , 1983/1996). Dirx maintains that we all experience an inner life, and so to ignore its influence in the learning process would be remiss (Dirx J. , 2006). Kucukaydin and Cranton (2012) express concern about the potential dangers of using Jungian theory and depth psychology in general in learning and development situations, because, they say, the claims to knowledge of these systems are difficult to argue, so must be unconditionally accepted. We do not tend to question rationalism as a sensemaking system, and yet it is as idiosyncratic as

²⁰ I explore this further in chapters 5 and 6, my experience causing me to partially concede to Kucukaydin and Cranton’s concerns.

any other. Surely context is an important consideration here. Rational thinking can become an obstacle to intuitive knowing and imaginative freedom in some learning contexts, as over-reliance on extrarational thinking can be inadvisable in others. Might it be better then, to offer learners multiple sensemaking lenses where possible?

My experience as a learner is that it is entirely possible to adopt an additional sensemaking system without excluding others. I have found that if I suspend disbelief and 'proceed as if' for a time, it gives me another way of seeing and making sense of experience that can complement or challenge other ways. This offers a multidimensional view experience but requires a level of cognitive complexity to be able to hold more than one perspective.

I think there are questions of ethics to ask, of how learning facilitators without any psychotherapeutic training or expertise can safely utilise depth psychology and Jungian theory and techniques without potentially putting participants at risk of psychological harm. What and where are the boundaries between a learning environment and a therapeutic one? What are the responsibilities of facilitators and where and when does their responsibility for the learner end? These are issues that become relevant during two of the programmes that I attend in my inquiry, and I discuss them further in chapters 5 and 6.

Have I transformed yet?

McWhinney and Marcos make the assertion that, "All transformations have a beginning, a middle, and an end" (2003, p. 23), but I question whether TL experiences be organised neatly into stories with endings. While one can often retrospectively identify a beginning to a transformative experience, is there really any end to its subsequent unfolding? If a transformative experience is a process, does it culminate in a moment in which transformation occurs. McWhinney and Marcos continue, "There are conditions that support changes, processes that initiate them, and ones that complete the changes" (2003, p. 23). Processes may be initiated, perhaps by a disorienting dilemma, but the conditions surrounding a learner will be crucial in supporting or hindering the processes involved in TL.

Is it a myth that transformation is instantaneous and irrevocable? It cannot be assumed that any change will be permanent. It seems to me that making an intellectual leap, having an insight, or experiencing an emotional realisation, will not automatically result in long-term change, and might even simply be forgotten. For change to become long-term, it would seem that new ways of thinking and being must be habituated through praxis, the practice of fully incorporating the structural shift through embodied action in the world (Taylor E. , 2001).

Berger (2004) stresses that people who have undergone a transformative learning experience must then be supported and helped to find firm footing and ground when they reach the other side. This is an important observation, that TL is a process that might need to be supported in all its phases, which includes helping to stabilise and nurture the new frame of reference once it has been formed. This hints at TL being a

socially mediated process. If Kegan's theory is applied here, we might see learners in a socialised mindset needing more validation from external sources to stabilise change, and perhaps facing challenges from their existing sources of validation, who may not support their change. Even those with a self-transforming mindset may benefit from the social support of others as they begin to embody their transformation and encounter its consequences in life.

In a formal education setting it may be more straightforward to provide ongoing support for learners because courses often run for many months, and institutions usually have a variety of support mechanisms in place. In personal and organisationally arranged development programmes it may not be practicable to provide ongoing support for participants. The programmes themselves may be good at challenging assumptions, facilitating critical reflection and dialogue, and enabling insights, but how, after programmes end, do participants find firm ground on which to integrate their insights? Taylor observes that "Without experiences to test and explore new perspectives, it is unlikely learners will fully transform" (2008, p. 11), suggesting that praxis is a vital aspect of the process. Tennant warns that,

"It is also necessary to act on those things that work against transformative change to sustain it: typically such things as everyday habits, patterns of interpersonal relationships, community and organizational structures in which one is embedded, and broader social structures and agencies that oppress, deny, or overly shape who you are" (2005, p. 109).

So, transformation may require vigilance, work, resilience, and practice to manifest and sustain.

Negative transformation

It must be recognised and noted that not all personal transformations are healthy or helpful to individuals or society. Traumatic experiences such as war, natural disaster, violence, abuse, illness etc. are known to transform people, and these often radical experiences can result in deeply rooted trauma and psychic disturbance.

In these cases it can be assumed that there is no prior desire to change in the ways that are imposed, no consent to or readiness for change, and perhaps no explicit critical reflection or dialogue that leads to the restabilisation of meaning structures. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is an example of a non-integrated form of transformation, where a radical experience embeds itself in the psyche but cannot be made sense of in terms of current meaning-structures. Trauma resurfaces unbidden, manifesting in a variety of often confusing or frightening ways. It will continue to do so until the experience can be made sense of, come to terms with, and integrated into the whole person (Siegel J. , 2006).

We cannot assume then, that all transformations have positive impacts on individuals, but my focus is on the intentional facilitation of transformation in individuals in ways intended to be empowering. I make the assumption that no teacher or facilitator of

transformative learning would deliberately subject learners to traumatising experiences, but that does not mean experiences cannot be deeply challenging – indeed, they probably need to be.

Concluding thoughts

Mezirow's original map of the process of TL has been called into question, as has its bias towards logical-rational thinking and discourse. Mezirow (1997) stresses the crucial role of critical reflection in the TL process, but also concedes that rational dialogue and critical self-reflection may result in points of view being altered without an accompanying shift in frames of reference; therefore, learners' engagement in these activities cannot automatically be assumed to be indicators of TL taking place.

Mezirow thought that the TL process begins with a disorienting dilemma. It appears that while not everyone may experience a disorienting dilemma, some kind of catalyst prompts people to engage in TL (McWhinney & Markos, 2003). There seems to be a consensus that people need to be willing to engage in their own development, and some speak of a need for readiness (Taylor & Cranton, 2013) and openness (Scott, 1997), as if perhaps, being willing is not sufficient in itself. Many TL theorists and practitioners discuss issues of identity, both in terms of our frames of reference being bound up with the sense of identity, as well as changes in identity or identity formation being a result of TL (Mezirow, 1990) (Tennant, 2005) (Dirkx J., 2012).

Mezirow and others discuss the importance of dialogue, but it remains unclear as to what kinds of dialogue might be conducive to TL. Certainly Mezirow's (2003) concept of discourse appears to be one route, as well as the reflective self-dialogue advocated by Kegan and Lahey (2001). Others cite conversations around fiction, as well as storytelling itself, as possible openings for TL (Hoggan & Cranton, 2015) (Randall, 2010) (Dirkx J., 2000). Taylor questions whether dialogue is necessary at all to TL, and argues that TL may occur through intuition, feeling, unconscious processes, and embodied action in the world (Taylor E., 2001). This is an intriguing assertion, which may be difficult to evidence because of the predominance of dialogue, whether it be discourse, conversation, or internal narrative, in our daily lives.

Garvey Berger (2004) and others (Scott, 1997) (Page, Grisoni, & Turner, 2014) offer some thoughts about there being a threshold or liminal phase of TL, a place of uncertainty and not-knowing. This particularly interests me because I have much experience of being in uncertainty and not-knowing, it being an essential aspect of the creative process, and because descriptions of this aspect of the TL process are sketchy at best. This aspect appears to be a largely internal process and I investigate it further from an experiential, first-person perspective as a participant in three programmes.

There are suggestions that the culmination of TL might be action of some kind (Taylor E., 2001) (Taylor E., 2008) (Tennant, 2005) (Taylor & Cranton, 2013). This suggests

that there is an end to a TL experience, as McWhinney and Marcos (2003) assert. So, whilst I am viewing TL as a process, it is unclear as to whether it is more akin to an event, an iterative process, or an ongoing journey. It is another of the questions I will continue to explore further in my inquiry.

The evolution of TLT to acknowledge the role of affective and imaginal ways of being and knowing has provided me with a way of framing learning and development within the holistic framework of Heron's extended epistemology. TLT offers some guidance as to how aspects of the TL process might unfold and manifest in participants as they go through different phases of the transformative learning process. These appear to be many and varied, and part of my challenge was to try to document and better understand the process of TL, especially in relation to affective and imaginal modes of being.

This chapter concludes the first phase of my inquiry. Equipped with the theoretical frameworks, concepts and questions I needed to proceed, I entered a new phase of immersive embodied inquiry, in which the concepts could be opened up to a different kind of embodied exploration, testing, reflection and review. Although building a theoretical knowledge base prior to experiential learning seems contrary to my inquiry approach, the development of my inquiry lenses (chapters 2 and 3) served to cohere and expand my prior body of experiential, presentational, conceptual and practical knowing, and so was a necessary step to enable me to conduct the main fieldwork element of inquiry in a focused and systematic way.

Introduction to chapters 4, 5, and 6: immersive, embodied inquiry

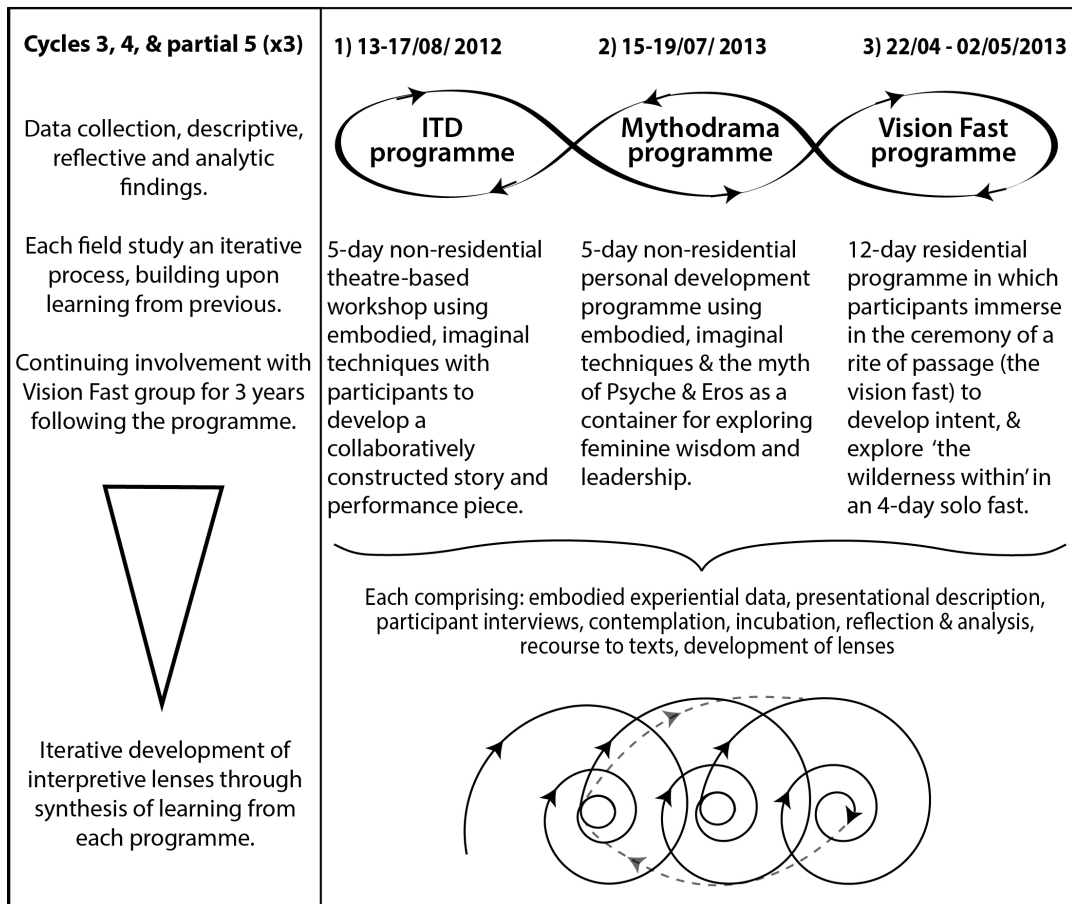


Figure 9. Phase of immersive, embodied inquiry.

In the phase of my inquiry documented in the following three chapters, I undertook three iterative cycles of inquiry, depicted in figure 9. These cycles were very different from my close reading of the phenomenological texts explored in chapters 2 and 3, which, although I had engaged in affective and imaginal modes to some extent, had been a predominantly intellectual pursuit. In this phase, the starting point for my meaning-making and knowledge construction was my embodied participative experience of three creative and developmental programmes. My approach to this phase is summed up by phenomenological researcher Van Manen, when he says that while theory enlightens practice, it is practice (or life) that comes first. Theory comes as a result of reflection. "The integrity of praxis does not depend on theory", said Schleiermacher, "but praxis can become more aware of itself by means of theory" (1964, p. 40) in (van Manen, 1990, p. 15).

Each iterative cycle broadly corresponded to Anderson's (2011) hermeneutic cycles 3 and 4. Also inherent in the process was a synthesis of the learning from each fieldwork experience, present in my reflective analysis as I engaged with new and familiar texts to both enhance and challenge the knowing gained through my embodied experience of each programme. In making sense of experience I looked beyond my own experience to those of other participants via conversations and interview data.

Choosing the programmes to study

I began this phase of my inquiry by seeking out programmes involving storytelling, embodied creative practices, and imaginal processes. Although still interested in studying creative leadership development, I had begun to believe that the kinds of development I was interested in tracking and understanding were first and foremost, personal in nature. Personal growth, I reasoned, would inevitably have a 'ripple-out' effect into all other spheres of an individual's life. Studying development within an organisational context brought its own complex issues, and so I focused on personal development in groups of self-selected individuals.

The programmes selected, I reasoned, need not be specifically termed as personal development programmes, but would need to offer the possibility of creative emergence, to enable me to investigate the affective and imaginal modes and processes of interest to my inquiry: what conditions are conducive to creative processes in groups and individuals, what techniques and methods can be used to initiate creative processes, what is the lived experience of working in affective and imaginal modes with creative and/or developmental aims, and what are the internal and external processes involved? What kinds of knowing emerge from these modes of presence? Does intuitive knowing arise, and if so, can its origins and process be tracked? Are personal and transpersonal aims included or accounted for in the design and facilitation of programmes, and if so, how?

It was important to me to choose programmes that would be personally meaningful to me by furthering my own development desires to become a more creative designer and facilitator of TL experiences, to better understand myself, and to expand the boundaries of my current frames of reference. If I were to study the experience and process of TL, I could only do so authentically by being a fully engaged participant in any programme I studied. Whilst a dispassionate stance may be desirable in some research situations, it was unsuitable for my aims.

I dismissed taking an observational role instead of a participatory one, not wanting to separate myself from the experience or participants. The shared experience with others minimised misinterpretation of meanings expressed in the narrative accounts of experience that some participants shared with me in later interviews. Interviews were important, because stories are a way of speaking about the felt-meaning of experience. Sometimes they help us make sense of experience, as they did for me and, I hope, for some of the participants. I attended to my own experience to provide rich descriptions of process and identified core themes and key developmental aspects as they occurred for me. I then expanded my perception with experiences of others to deepen my understanding of the process.

I was unsure at first how to analyse the complexity of experience. I did not want to deconstruct elements of a programme or experience at the expense of losing the essence of the whole, and yet I knew that I must identify and separate elements in order to understand their roles within the whole. Moustakas advocates using intuition to make possible "the perceiving of things as wholes" (1990, p. 23). He explains that

intuitive knowing in heuristic inquiry comes from attending to the clues provided by observation, experience, and by making connections and seeing relationships. He recommends viewing the phenomenon under inquiry from as many angles as possible, until a deeper and richer understanding of the whole forms. It is a unifying, integrative process.

In early 2012, I began to research and make initial contact with likely organisations and programmes. In the spirit of intuitive inquiry, I scattered the seeds and waited to see which had fallen on fertile soil. My first opportunity came unexpectedly, when my supervisor, Andrew Quick, invited me to join a theatre-based workshop at Lancaster University in the summer of 2012. As theatre director and member of experimental theatre company 'Imitating the Dog', who ran the programme, Andrew was also lead facilitator of the workshop. The programme promised a week of collaborative storytelling and creative activities, followed by a performance. My motivations for attending this programme were primarily personal. I had spent the previous year on Lancaster's HighWire Masters and PhD programme, largely immersed in theory and getting to grips with new ways of working in the unfamiliar territory of doctoral inquiry, at a university very different from the progressive arts institutions I was used to. I had felt like a fish out of water at Lancaster, and was still trying to find my way. I lacked the passion for my doctoral inquiry topic that I knew I needed. My creative practice had suffered due to the intense workload, and I felt oppressed by my intellect. I embarked on the ITD workshop in the hope of rebalancing myself by engaging in creative process, and rekindling my passion for my inquiry. I was not disappointed.

In my thesis, I chose to write about the programmes in a different order to how I experienced them chronologically. The subject of chapter 4 is the ITD workshop, then I place the Mythodrama programme next (chapter 5), followed by the Vision Fast (chapter 6). The Vision Fast experience seemed appropriate to place last of the three programmes for several reasons:

- Its impacts were the most profound and developmental of the three.
- It was the longest in terms of its unfolding learning. The Vision Fast remained 'alive' in me for much longer than the Mythodrama programme.
- The inquiry group of fellow participants of the VF, set up to share the continuing unfolding of our learning, continued to meet online for more than a year. The follow-up interviews with some of those participants took place between a year and three years after the event. I include their retrospective insights and reflections in chapter 6, which I completed in 2017.
- I had not fully processed the Vision Fast experience when I attended the Psyche and Eros programme, and as a result of the Mythodrama programme I was better able to make sense of the Vision Fast.
- When considering where to place my accounts and discussions of the programmes in the thesis, the Mythodrama programme seemed to provide a natural bridge, particularly in terms of storying the thesis and showing the development of my thinking, between the creative aims of the ITD workshop and the more radical 'self-knowing' aims of the Vision Fast.

During my viva voce, my examiners asked, when the Vision Fast provided so much rich data, why I also then felt it necessary to investigate a Mythodrama programme. After the ITD programme in 2012, I had become very interested in Victor Turner's writing on ritual and performance, especially the rite-of-passage. Although I understood it in theory and could readily identify with the liminal phase from my arts practice, I did not have an embodied sense of the purpose or significance of the first and third phases. I put these thoughts to one side while I pursued my relationship with Richard Olivier and OMA, still at that time hoping to conduct some of my inquiry in the space of organisationally commissioned leadership development.

Richard invited me to participate in the Psyche and Eros programme as a way of introducing me experientially to the Mythodrama methodology and process. Thus, I had arranged to attend that programme prior to gaining a place on the Vision Fast. When, in February 2013, I was presented with the opportunity to attend the Vision Fast and further explore the questions I had concerning the phases of the rite-of-passage in an embodied way, I took it. It made sense to me at the time to continue my research activities with Mythodrama and OMA, and although I did not manage to conduct much further research with them in the organisational sphere, the Psyche and Eros programme proved to be a valuable piece of the puzzle of my inquiry.

4. Imitating the Dog: a creative learning environment

Introduction

The subject of this chapter is a five-day programme in August 2013, by experimental theatre company Imitating the Dog (ITD). It offered the opportunity to engage in embodied, experiential learning of a collaborative, creative process of storytelling, artistic production and performance. Participants shared memories and invented stories, created sound, image, and movement, around given themes. These elements were compiled and curated by the group throughout the programme, culminating in a performance at the end.

I was still finding my way in the inquiry process and was unsure how the programme might relate to my inquiry aims in terms of investigating TL. It soon became apparent that this was an excellent opportunity to investigate how conditions conducive to individual and collaborative creativity were established and maintained. The environment, along with the programme's emotive themes and activities was also conducive to self-inquiry, and so had developmental potential. Whilst this was not one of the programme's objectives, it highlighted the potential of this kind of creative environment for nurturing TL. I examine how the creative environment was established. I introduce the concept from psychotherapy of a container or holding environment (Winnicott, 1990), which provides a safe psychological environment in which to experiment. I reflect upon perceptions of psychological safety within that environment. I consider the necessity of uncertainty in the creative process, drawing upon cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's (1982) explication of liminality. I discuss the methods used to stimulate the imagination and elicit creative materials, which shifted participants into affective and imaginal modes of being and knowing (Heron J. , 1992). I remark upon the sense of *communitas* (Turner V. , 1982) that emerged, which enhanced the collaborative atmosphere and appeared to have an energising and uplifting effect on participants. I discuss the significance of the programme's performative elements (Schechner R. , 1988/2004) (Dilthey, 1976/2010) (Turner V. , 1982), and conclude with some thoughts about the impacts and implications of the programme.

Methods

I engaged in first-person inquiry as a full participant and kept a field journal. Observations and conversations with participants and facilitators during the programme informed my sense-making and analysis of the experience. I conducted semi-structured, conversational interviews with four of the participants about aspects of their experience of the programme. Pseudonyms are used for participants.

Alex: 20/09/2012. Retired business owner and mature student at Lancaster.

Luke: 19/10/2012. Artist, producer, writer.

Britt: 30/10/2012. Professional cellist and teacher.

Jack: 01/11/2012. Computer scientist, researcher, and mature PhD student at Lancaster. The interviews were very informal, and I used a loose set of questions as starting points for conversation, which differed with each respondent, including: participants' experience of collaboration, creativity, relationships, the psychological environment, the

themes, activities, techniques used, memory and emotion, sharing personal stories, and the performance. I grouped their responses thematically, by activity or felt experience, and include some short interview extracts in corresponding sections of text to help illustrate my points of discussion.

Introduction to the workshop

Course and participant information

Imitating the Dog²¹ use a collaborative approach to developing new creative work. Typically, techniques such as photography, creative writing, sound creation, and storytelling are employed to stimulate the imagination and begin the process. Some of the creative materials generated in these sessions are developed further and woven together into a coherent performance piece. ITD use digital technologies, specifically a software programme (Isadora), to create multi-layered, interactive projective environments for live performance. Isadora²² is a platform for compiling and controlling audio and visual material and lighting in real time so that it can be used as a tool for live performances.

Date: Monday 13th to Saturday 18th August 2012

Duration: Five-days + feedback session

Venue: LICA (Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts) Building and theatre, Lancaster University

Facilitators: Andrew Quick, Simon Wainwright, James Hamilton

Themes: The house, place, memory, nostalgia.

Aims: To enable participants to experience and develop a working knowledge of the collaborative process of co-creating a story with rich audio and visual elements, turning it into a live performance piece; to introduce methods, techniques, objects and technologies that can be utilised in creative idea generation, collaborative storytelling, and performance.

Pre-programme information: Prior to the workshop, participants were sent an introductory and preparatory text (appendix 2).

Extras: Beverages and light breakfast provided each morning, and beverages provided in breaks.

Cost: £100/£150

²¹ <http://www.imitatingthedog.co.uk>

²² <http://troikatronix.com/isadora/about>

Participants: Seventeen, self-selected. The programme was advertised on the LICA (Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts) website²³, so most participants were made aware of the workshop there or through LICA staff or members of ITD. All were familiar to some extent with the performances of ITD and expressed a desire to learn more about ITD's creative process, the digital projections used in ITD performances, and how they might use aspects of that process in their own work. We were a mixed sex, mixed age group of different nationalities, predominantly UK nationals. Some participants were students, others worked in the arts in some capacity, some in arts education. Each had relevant skills and expertise to bring to the programme.

Programme summary

Participants were introduced experientially to ITD's creative process by co-creating, with the guidance and help of the facilitators, an original performance piece culminating in a performance on day five. The process began with activities that stimulated the imagination and led to the generation of creative materials.

Format: A series of large and small group and individual workshops and creative activities. Day one consisted largely of creative, collaborative whole group activities, such as creative-writing and soundscape production²⁴. On day two the group split into three, self-selected smaller groups. Frequent whole group meetings ensured all small groups were coordinated with each other and the wider goal. The whole group assembled regularly for sharing and discussions.

Example Activities: Creative writing exercises had participants recall and describe in ever increasing detail, a house they knew well. Focus and visualisation with increasing resolution brought memories alive. We wrote postcards from the house, based on a memorable moment, and remembered songs and meals, jotting down lyrics and recipes.

"...the creative writing exercises were about unpicking a memory, keep attacking a memory from different perspectives and different media, to unpick and make rich the description... So rather than it being just a memory about a physical place, a house, it then became a story about a lived place." (Jack, 2012)

²³ <https://www.lancasterarts.org/projects/summer-school-2012-imitating-the-dog>

²⁴ A collaborative technique requiring no musical knowledge, for 'painting' the space with sound to create an evocative sonic environment.

Participants were asked to select a plain, brown cardboard box from the stack that had been prepared for us. Each box contained a variety of objects, whose purpose was not immediately explained (figure 10). The artefacts within became a starting point for constructing stories.



Figure 10. Examples of the boxes.

We wrote imagined histories of one of the objects from our boxes. Where did they begin their life, how were they acquired, who used them. This task took us from familiar memories to reaching deeper into the imagination to create new stories.

“...they [the boxes] seem to have become a key element of the whole process and people seem to have developed some kind of attachment and relationship to them. The “made” memories they contain are

4. Imitating the Dog: a creative learning environment

becoming more real and deepening as the workshops go on and it's lovely, quite simply." (Burtin, 2012)²⁵

Tuesday morning was spent sharing thoughts, emotions and memories that had arisen in us the previous day. We played, sung, or spoke the lyrics of our songs and told of the associations they held for us. We shared recipes, maps, photographs taken during the previous day's task, and personal stories, many of which were later creatively compiled for use in the performance (figure 11). The storytelling established trust and fostered empathy as we disclosed aspects of our inner worlds.



Figure 11. Shared maps and song lyrics used in personal storytelling.

Structure: Most of the audio and visual material was generated in the first three days, and selectively edited and collaboratively compiled into a story and performance, which was performed to an invited audience. A short closing session on the sixth day enabled those in attendance to share thoughts and feedback on the week.

On day two, participants formed three groups, each focusing on different aspects of creating a production: visuals, audio, and performance. We were invited to stay with or move between groups during the rest of the week. One of the three groups worked with Andrew to create a performance script and physical narrative from our storytelling activities. The second group worked with James to create a soundscape for the performance, and the third group, which I joined, worked with Simon to curate and manipulate the visual materials contributed by participants. The groups continued to create and compile ideas and elements that could be used in the production, coming together regularly to share progress and shape the performance.

²⁵ Extract from personal blog post: <http://thehouselancastr.wordpress.com/>

We all moved into the theatre on Tuesday afternoon; the set, projections, lighting and sound, adding a new dimension to the work. We worked in the theatre space for the remainder of the week, with some groups leaving to use other spaces as and when necessary. An ad hoc group formed at one point to record some video sequences based around songs we had shared that held nostalgic memories.

Set up: In the theatre, a simple set had been constructed of two blank white walls with window cut-outs that would represent 'the house'. Behind the house was a wall of black curtain. All the surfaces could be projected onto (see figures 12-13). The projections and sound instantly transformed the plain, sparse area into a wonderland of light, sound and images. We began to get excited about what might be possible, and because Simon and James would take on most of the technical aspects of production the participants could focus on media, story, and performance creation.



Figure 12. The bare set.



Figure 13. The set lit with projections.

4. Imitating the Dog: a creative learning environment

The Emergent Narrative: There seemed to be an implicit trust in each other's abilities and skills. Energy levels were high, and most people seemed to be actively engaged in production and conversation much of the time. The sharing sessions with the whole group were characterised by thoughtful observation, constructive feedback, and negotiated agreements on how to proceed. There was an openness to the sessions in which everybody appeared to respond well to the feedback. The collaborative nature of the dynamic that had formed meant that nobody seemed to be overly concerned with the specific inclusion of their individual ideas, and actively engaged in reaching consensus for the sake of the collective piece. The emerging narrative (figure 14) became 'our story', as if each of our lives had been incorporated within it without being diminished.



Figure 14. Storyboarding the performance.

On Thursday afternoon, the 'performance script', was agreed with the whole group and the performance materials compiled accordingly. Final adjustments were made, and last minute additions were produced to tie scenes together (figure 15).



Figure 15. Agreeing the performance script.

"...it wasn't as if, we must have this bit of the task done by the end of Tuesday, or this task done by the end of Thursday, it was just more of a general, we must build materials, and the last day we'll put it together somehow - magically. ... you're creating, like a palette of materials: images, video, sounds, bits of writing, bits of acting. That, and you're delaying any sort of commitment to anything 'till the end, and then

you'd configure those materials together in some magical way. I think at some point, then the skill did take over, Andrew's directing abilities. He said, ok, this is how we can put this together, but it wasn't until the last day really that's what happened. So, that was really nice." (Jack, 2012)

The Performance: Friday morning consisted of rehearsals and tweaking of timing, and the production was performed to an invited audience at 3pm (figure 16, and performance footage, appendix 5, DVD).



Figure 16. Performance screenshot 1

There was high energy, nervous excitement, and trust in everybody to be able to pull off the performance. No single person or group had control or knowledge of every aspect of the performance except for the three facilitators, in whom we put our trust. Its ephemeral nature meant that we were unconcerned about its level of perfection as a performance; the important thing seemed to be that it was performed as a fitting conclusion to the programme.

Afterwards, there was a palpable sense of relief amongst the participants, as if we couldn't quite believe we'd managed to do it. Far from being anticlimactic, the performance provided a release and renewal of energy. There were expressions of satisfaction, pleasure, and accomplishment. We congratulated each other and parted, most of us returning the next day for a concluding discussion with the organisers and facilitators about our experience.

Programme Activity Table

ITD Summer School activity table					
Monday	Introductions to each other and the programme	Whole group. Opening the boxes, discussion	Whole group sound workshop	Whole group Creative-writing workshop	Individual photography task
Tuesday	Whole group discussion: responses to themes	Photo sharing & storytelling	Song and lyric, & recipe sharing & storytelling	Introduction to the theatre & set. Isadora demonstration & tutorial	
Evening meal and socialising at Andrew's house in Lancaster					
Wednesday	Small group work	Projections, sound and acting elements created by groups shared with whole group	Whole group creative discussion to plan weaving elements together	Small group work to adapt elements based on the earlier sharing of work	Whole group progress & planning meeting: approximate performance script agreed
Thursday	Small group work: lighting rigged, scenery altered, sound & video recording completed	Combining of performance elements in performance space, followed by whole group discussion	Small group work to adapt elements based on the earlier sharing of work	Performance run-through. Additions, changes. Live music	Whole group planning meeting to finalise performance
Friday	Morning performance rehearsals			Afternoon performance	
Saturday	Follow-up discussion & programme feedback				

Figure 17. ITD Summer School Table of Activities, R. Lovie 2017

Discussion: emerging themes in group creative process

In analysing the programme, I chose to view it as a whole because creative process cannot easily be broken down into stages or individual elements given that it is highly reflexive and iterative (Lawson, 1980/2005) (Lovie, 2013). I identified themes as an integral aspect of the meaning and sense-making inherent in immersive, embodied experience. Reviewing my field notes after the programme, grouping activities, experiences, and processes, I identified (or generated) key themes or qualities that the programme seemed to possess or were generated through a complex combination of structural elements, content, group dynamics and facilitation. Consulting literature from various disciplines (e.g. psychotherapy, anthropology, and performance theory, arts-based inquiry) enabled me to give conceptual form to the themes.

This section is a discussion of those themes, which are held lightly here, pending further inquiry. Hence, they are discussed in the ensuing chapters, along with others

that emerged during those learning experiences. I begin here with the creative learning environment itself, turning to theory and practice within psychotherapeutic environments because it is a field with particular expertise in creating and holding safe, open spaces for people to work reflectively and creatively with personal stories and emotive psychic imagery.

My teaching training emphasised the importance of creating a psychologically safe learning environment, drawing from Maslow (1943). He argues that basic sustenance and safety needs must first be met in order for learners to be able to engage in learning for its own sake. As a teacher of art and design I was acutely aware of the need to create conditions conducive to learning and creativity within my classroom. Artistic inquiry is enhanced when artists step outside of their comfort zones, and examine inner aspects of themselves (McNiff, 2011) (Carabine, 2013). Presentational forms, it could be argued, communicate one's imaginal processes and inner life more directly than propositional knowing, and so there is a personal vulnerability inherent in the generation and expression of presentational knowing.

The creative learning environment: ludic liminality and creative process

"...to get into a room with people, that kind of being in that open space together, that we all were, you know, where there was room to play and learn." (Britt, 2012)

Uncertainty or not-knowing is considered to be an intrinsic characteristic of the creative process (Carabine, 2013) (Grierson, 2007) (Graves, 2009) (Antal, 2013). The ITD programme's liminal qualities emerged in the initial whole group activities, the creative writing workshop, and were most prevalent in the physical space of the theatre with the projections and sound creation imbuing the space with an otherworldliness, and when the group was engrossed in creative production and working principally in affective and imaginal modes. These modes are characterised by feeling and emotion, intuition and imagery (Heron J., *Feeling and Personhood: Psychology in Another Key*, 1992). In creative process, Heron equates the affective mode with "creative feeling", which he says is "pregnant with imagery", and the imaginal mode with "germinal image" which is "pregnant with concepts" (1992, p. 106). These periods were characterised by a sense of being in a different kind of space to mundane reality, a space pregnant with creative possibility and not-knowing, of immersion and flow²⁶.

Anthropologist Van Gennep (1909) used the term liminal, derived from the Latin limin, meaning threshold, to describe the 'threshold' phase of a rite of passage. It is a

²⁶ As in Csikszentmihaly's concept of 'flow' (Csikszentmihaly, 2002/1992).

transitional space between a past and future state of being, a temporal condition that mediates or prepare one for an emerging future state yet to manifest (Turner V. , 1964). Although in some ways it might be thought of as a kind of limbo, Turner (1982) suggests it can have positive and active qualities, a spatiotemporal condition which inverts the established order and becomes an interface for the generation of meaning. Turner describes liminality as anti-structural, being, "more creative and destructive than the structural norm" (1982, p. 47), perhaps because it is disruptive, inviting or compelling us to let go of our habitual ways of being and thinking. He suggests liminality provides an opportunity to view things from a different perspective; "in liminality, people "play" with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements" (Turner V. , 1982, p. 27). In the playful environment of the ITD workshop, we shared specific nostalgic memories that held emotion for each of us. By relinquishing ownership of these to the group, they took on a life of their own, becoming creative fodder for the creation of a new collective story of the ephemeral liminal organism that the group had become.

Liminality, according to Turner (1982), becomes an arena for innovation where existing elements can be seen afresh and reworked to create cultural newness. This view is supported by play theorist Sutton-Smith (1972), who sees liminal situations as potential seedbeds of cultural creativity. Turner (1974) suggests that liminoid phenomena, expressions of presentational knowing generated in neutral, creative, spaces are particularly relevant to cultural innovation because they are voluntary, not subject to 'normal' societal rules, and are characterised by playfulness and freedom. Our performance emerged in such a way, through playful engagement in the activities and creative production. The performance contained elements of content that were only personally meaningful to individual participants, but the amalgamation of individual stories became a surreal, emotive expression of archetypal themes that invited aesthetic participation and individual interpretation by the audience (Heinrich, 2014), rendering it a cultural artefact.

The process of creation from an empty container of possibility on Monday morning to a performance on Friday afternoon was challenging for everyone. The tensions held within the uncertainty of the liminal space were sometimes felt by me as excited anticipation, but other times as doubt and unease. Those I shared my thoughts with expressed similar feelings. There were times when I felt safe, and with that came a sense of creative freedom. At other times I became unsure of my psychological safety as memories stirred up old trauma and I wrestled with where my personal boundaries should be in this unusual and disruptive context. Though the liminality of the

programme was intentional and ludic (playful)²⁷, it did not guarantee psychological safety at all times, and perhaps this is an inevitable aspect of engaging in creative process. This brings me to the question of how a general environment of safe-uncertainty (Mason, 1993) can be created in a creative or development programme.

Safe uncertainty

I introduce the concept of safe uncertainty here, because, although it is only discussed by family therapist, Barry Mason (1993), as far as I am aware, in a single paper, it provides some interesting ideas about our relationship, feelings, and behaviours associated with certainty and safety. I discovered Mason's Safety-Uncertainty matrix (figure 18) after I had completed the three immersive, embodied programmes. I present the framework here because I adopted it retrospectively throughout the remainder of the thesis, as a useful shorthand to describe the experiential impact of aspects of structure, facilitation, and process of the programmes. It gave me a succinct, non-judgemental way to describe different experiential states that I found myself shifting into during the programme experiences. How it does this will become clear in my discussion of the matrix.

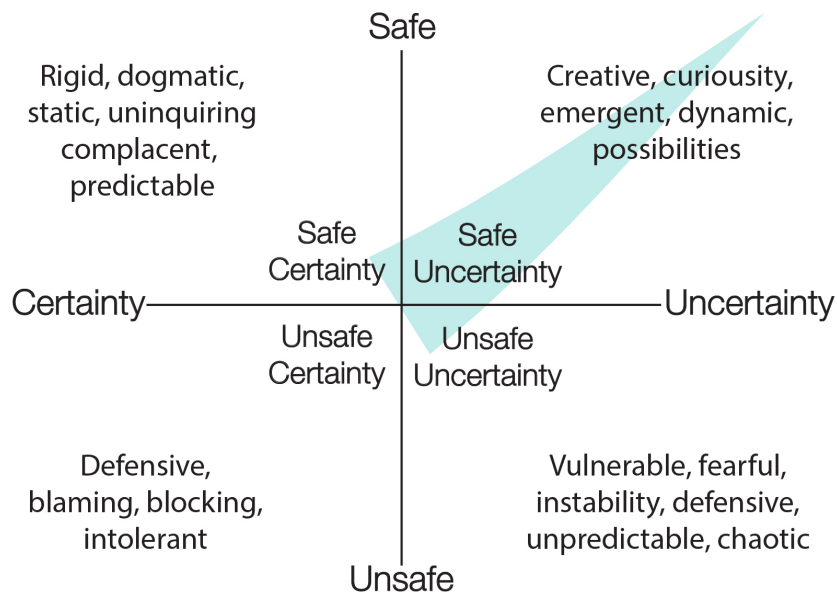


Figure 18. Mason's Safety and Uncertainty matrix, (Mason, 1993, p. 195), descriptions added, R. Lovie 2015

²⁷ In contemporary game design (see e.g. (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004)) ludus and paida are used to describe more and less structure, respectively, within play and games. I retain the Latin derivation: of, or relating to play (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004).

4. Imitating the Dog: a creative learning environment

Mason (1993) thinks we have a psychological predisposition to seek both safety and certainty in life because, like Maslow (1943), he sees both physical and psychological safety as primary needs. We also desire certainty, Mason says, wanting to predict outcomes to avoid unpleasant surprises. It is easy to confuse certainty with safety because both produce a feeling of comfort, but certainty, he asserts, can lead to stagnation and a closed mind, and inhibit learning. Mason maintains that certainty is always an illusion. I think this is perhaps Mason's most important insight, that the 'coupling', as he puts it, of safety with certainty is a mistake. We can never fully know the present let alone the future. We are creatures of habit, perhaps because of the human propensity for categorising and inventory (Zahavi, 2003). But while on one hand we like predictability, curiosity causes us to seek novelty. Uncertainty brings with it the possibility for things to be different.

Mason (1993) devised the Safety-Uncertainty matrix to illustrate how different positions can produce very different responses. He infers that the conditions in which we find ourselves influence our psychology, and so the 'positions' might be thought of as fields of influence. The fields affect us when we interact with them. They are both external and internal, referring as much to the 'position' of our minds as the external conditions imposed upon us. These positions then, relate to for example, the climate of a family, social, classroom or organisational situation; the moment-to-moment states we shift to and from through our interactions; and our underlying assumptions, which influence how we perceive and respond to any given situation. The positions are not fixed, but always in a state of flow. This is an important point of Mason's, that in any given situation a person may shift between states depending on many different factors and triggers.

A position of safety is a state in which one feels secure, while a position of certainty is characterised by fixity. Safe-Certainty then, is a feeling of security within the confines of a limited perspective. Mason warns that an underlying sense of safe certainty can give rise to unreflective behaviours, complacency, lack of inquiry, and cause us to jump to judgements too quickly. Unsafe-Certainty is an inversion of safe certainty. The implied fixity of certainty means that when conditions are perceived as unsafe, change or difference is hard to accept, and adaptation and improvisation may be difficult.

Uncertainty can be perceived as positive, e.g. full of possibility and potential, or negative, e.g. bewildering and chaotic. Unsafe-Uncertainty occurs when, whilst in an unpredictable situation or liminal (Turner V. , 1964) state, psychological or physical safety is perceived as under threat. Situations of unsafe uncertainty can produce transformational experiences because of their disruptive capability, but those transformations may be traumatic and damaging (Nelson, 2011). When we feel safe, however, the potential anxiety of uncertainty is alleviated. It must be remembered that even when we are in a safe environment, we may not always *feel* safe, and can shift between positions in a moment.

Mason and others (Carabine, 2013) (Grierson, 2007) (Graves, 2009) (Antal, 2013). maintain that a situation where a high degree of safety is felt, but in which a high degree of uncertainty is present is likely to be generative, creative, and emergent. This

is because conditions of Safe-Uncertainty, Mason (1993) argues, in the context of the psychotherapeutic environment, open one up to inquiry where new perspectives and meanings might emerge. Creating conditions of uncertainty conducive to development entails dispelling the illusion of certainty without diminishing the sense of safety, and Mason discusses ways of achieving this through the generation of a holding environment (Winnicott, 1990), discussed below.

Mason's ideas are relevant to my inquiry because creative and TL processes appear to benefit from taking place within safe, non-judgemental, environments that offer freedom within their structure. It cannot be assumed that learning environments can be made safe for everyone at all times, because the TL process necessitates vulnerability and challenges to identity and beliefs. The matrix enables disconcerting and challenging aspects of TL to be tracked and examined in a way that does not confer negative or positive judgement on facilitator or learner. Thus, the roles and responsibilities of the learner and facilitator in TL begin to emerge.

The safe-uncertainty of a strong holding environment

The idea known as the 'holding environment' or 'container' was first proposed by the psychoanalyst Winnicott (1990), who worked with John Bowlby, known for his theory of early childhood development based on the interactions with our primary carers, called attachment theory (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Originally set out by Winnicott as the importance of the primary interactions between mother and child to the child's future psychological health (and consequently the subject of much feminist critique), it has since been more roundly developed. It is considered fundamental to the psychotherapeutic relationship because Winnicott considered the holding environment to be a precondition of development.

In a therapeutic relationship, the therapist endeavours to create and maintain a safe psychological space for the client, thus giving them the confidence to be able to explore their issues (Mason, 1993). A situation of safe uncertainty is established by the therapist, through the creation of an environment of openness, curiosity, empathy and attentiveness (Ginot, 2001). The therapist endeavours to 'hold' the space for the client. By sharing their stories and seeking feedback, clients open them up to exploration by transforming them into learning opportunities. The client needs to feel that they are in safe hands, and that they will be supported if they venture into psychologically difficult territory.

Transposing this concept to a group learning and development seems useful, particularly where creative expression is sought or unconscious psychic material is likely to surface. If participants are going to be prepared to risk new expressions, they need to feel that it is personally safe for them to do so, that they will not be judged for not-knowing or making mistakes, because when we enter into states of not-knowing we can feel very vulnerable (McNiff, 2011). Behaviours such as non-judgemental empathic listening and responding are thought to foster openness and trust (Minkle, Bashir, & Sutulov, 2008). Kasl and York argue that, "Trust, solidarity, security, and empathy require human interaction through affective and imaginal modes" (Kasl & York, 2002, p.

6). The ITD programme's activities meant that participants were functioning in those modes for much of the time. The ITD facilitators helped to create a respectful and inclusive atmosphere. Andrew's friendly manner and experience as a theatre director and learning facilitator enabled him to hold the space well. His non-judgemental approach to creative work meant that participants' contributions appeared to be equally valued. No ideas were dismissed, and all were added to the growing body of creative ideas: writing, pictures, photographs, sound, and video.

Davis-Manigaulte et al. (2006) suggest that expressive activities can help generate an empathic field, an environment that supports people to 'learn-within-relationship' (2006, p. 31). They describe it as an aspect of a generative learning space that develops as we come to know others by identifying with their experiential knowing. The ITD expressive warm-up activities and sound workshop not only helped dissipate nervous tension through physical movement, but appeared to contribute to the generation of an empathic field, as did the personal storytelling. Other informal aspects of the programme contributed to the relational atmosphere, and may have helped build and strengthen the holding environment, such as the provision of refreshments during breaks, breakfasts each morning in a casual meeting space, and a social evening during the week in Andrew's own home.

Not all participants found the informal social aspects easy or beneficial, as evident in Alex's comments in response to my question, "Do you think the process influenced how people related to each other over the course of the week?"

Alex: "Yes...up to a point, but I think for a number of reasons I think that aspect of it didn't blossom as well as it might have done. I think there were... clearly some people knew each other so there was a tendency for people to stick together. ...outside of that [the soiree] I felt that I didn't really get the chance to get to know people as well as I might. I'm not a terribly, you know, gregarious person and I don't find it terribly easy to strike up a conversation." (Alex, ITD Summer School Interview, 2012)

Alex had immediately focused on the informal social aspects of the programme when I had intended my question to refer to the creative process of the programme's format. I realised I had made an assumption about the social aspects based upon my general observations own experience of them. Alex's comments served as a reminder that we do not always obviously outwardly reflect what we are experiencing internally. He went on to suggest, "maybe we could have just spent a bit more time on that first day getting to know each other through having to move around groups" (Alex, ITD Summer School Interview, 2012). For some people then, more time spent early on, on structured activities geared towards relationship building may be helpful.

Despite Alex's social anxiety, he found the experience conducive to collaboration and creativity,

"it was relaxed. ...I think the way it unfolded was very good, I think the ice-breaker aspect of making the soundscape worked really well ...it

reminded me of a couple of similar incidents in the past where I've done something completely alien and really thoroughly enjoyed it."
(Alex, 2012)

I asked if he had felt comfortable sharing his personal stories, to which he replied, "I did actually, because I felt everybody was being honest". Alex's conflicting perspectives of finding it difficult to socialise without structured activities but of also experiencing openness and trust within the group illustrate that even when a safe container is established, not everyone will feel comfortable or safe at all times.

In the following comments from other participants we see some evidence that a safe container was established and maintained, leading them to feel the atmosphere was conducive to learning and creativity.

"I really felt that we, that it was what it should...what all good creativity's about, which is playfulness, and a humble kind of attitude, and an atmosphere where people open up rather than close down, which is, you know, it's very common to close down because it's vulnerable, it's difficult. But we felt secure..." (Britt, 2012)

"Generally the atmosphere was very, very positive and it was, it felt very creative. You could tell that, the minute everyone would come in, we would almost not say hello to each other but start talking about ideas and kind of grab a cup of coffee, and even in all the breaks that we had... actually those breaks were almost as important as the time spent together in the theatre because that's where some ideas and conversations start... So yeah, I thought it was very positive, very creative and very open. ...I think it was a very safe environment..." (Luke, 2012)

"I felt slightly nervous I suppose, about how I would contribute here – would I be exposed? I've been to numerous workshops where you end up doing things you don't want to do and feel uncomfortable with I suppose, and some kind of weird psychoanalysis of yourself. ... There wasn't a lot of tension, there was a lot of acceptance, a lot of generation of collaborative ideas. ... I ended up with the sound group... and I stuck with them. I found that really supportive, anything I said was listened to." (Jack, 2012)

"I thought there was loads of good things about the way it was planned out, the way it revealed creativity. It helped us find material really easily, it was playful and light but at the same time really serious." (Britt, 2012)

The holding environment can be thought of as a structure. The safety and certainty that structure provides in a learning programme may make it tempting to overuse. Too much structure may stifle emergent phenomena by creating rigidity, but Alex's observations imply that structure can provide safety in an environment of uncertainty

by clearly defining roles and activities. A strong holding environment might ultimately reduce the need for much structure, but may be useful while the holding environment is being established. The trust and mutual respect that comes from building upon relationships thereafter strengthens and maintains the holding environment as the participants begin to support each other.

Psychological risk

Working with personal story and emotive memories can have unpredictable consequences (Dirkx J. , 2006) because memories strike at the heart of our self-concept (McClean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). To illustrate, I include an extract from my interview with Alex as we continue our conversation about sharing personal stories:

Alex: "...you know, it's not easy, I mean there are probably things you wouldn't divulge. I know there's some people, I think you mentioned there were some personal issues, you were less than happy in your background, and a couple of other people mentioned the same thing... And I think this is one of the aspects of nostalgia that I've come across is that, it's not all good, some people find it's a painful exercise, suddenly something, a picture triggers off a memory..."

R: "It drags some quite powerful stuff out of the unconscious doesn't it? It needs to be a safe space if you're going to work with that."

Alex: "Yeah. I'm interested in the therapeutic aspects of nostalgia, which is widely used in areas of dementia, and I know from conversations I've had with one or two practitioners in the area that just showing photographs to people can be very beneficial, but suddenly you come across something that's absolute dynamite, and you'll get a family photograph and there'll be somebody included who shouldn't be there and it can create completely the wrong response..."

R: "Well... wrong? An undesirable response?"

Alex: "An unexpected response. You're hoping it's gonna be all warm and..." (Alex, ITD Summer School Interview, 2012)

We cannot know what emotions or trauma might surface for participants, even in a playful workshop such as the ITD Summer School. In a therapeutic environment it might be expected and prepared for but in an arts workshop it may not often be considered. One way to consider the predicament is through the concept of personal boundaries.

We all have perceptions of personal boundaries (Scott A. L., 1988), an embodied sense of the degree of separateness of the self in and from the world. Two fundamental boundaries are the body boundary (Fisher, 1963), and the ego boundary (Lewis & Schilling, 1978). Developmental psychologists think that we develop these boundaries to project ourselves into the world, to individuate, and to protect ourselves (Piaget J. , 1954). Most of us develop healthy, flexible boundaries; we can choose, depending on

context, how open to be, to discern the appropriateness of how much of ourselves to disclose to others (1988). We use our tacit knowledge of the norms and expectations of different social contexts to determine the physical and psychological safety of these situations, and moderate our behaviours and actions accordingly (Phelan, Locke Davidson, & Cao, 1991). Sometimes, though, in situations such as the ITD programme, it is not straightforward to determine where one's boundaries need to be to remain safe.

The themes and activities of the ITD programme quickly moved a group of strangers into a position of (untested) implicit trust. I experienced confusion in my own boundary setting, because the programme produced the emergent qualities of trust, camaraderie, and openness; qualities I would usually associate with being in a group of close friends. My boundaries unconsciously shifted to that context, which I experienced as positive and creative until unexpected memories and emotions drew my attention to the ambiguous context of the situation and caused me to question my safety within it.

From my reflective notes made during the programme:

Many people chose a house from childhood, telling warm, glowing tales of visiting their grandparents' homes as kids, very different from my own memories. It made me feel sad and different because my grandparents' house held traumatic memories for me. I was clearly not the only one because somebody asked Andrew whether we should focus on nostalgia or explore darker territory. Andrew replied that ITD's themes were often quite dark and so it would be nice to have a break from that.

I felt a sudden wave of feeling of being denied, silenced. I began to feel very cynical about the whole exercise, thinking the performance might end up as a sentimental, rose-tinted piece of fluff. I felt my experience, my memory, my self, negated somehow by Andrew's response. I took hold of myself, spending a few minutes examining my reaction. I noticed the memories of my childhood triggered feelings of aloneness and betrayal, as well as dark, shadowy archetypal images (Boyd, 1991). As soon as the underlying reasons for my reaction were exposed, I understood that it would be inappropriate to share those memories here, and that I didn't want to after all. If I wanted them to become part of 'our story' I could allude to those feelings through metaphor, symbol, and visual imagery, without having to explicitly share my story.

I marvelled at how suddenly memories can trigger strong emotions, and how deeply it can affect the whole self in the moment. Had I not been able to reflect on my reaction I may have found the workshop difficult, and may have remained in the closed, cynical state of mind, which always seemed to be my first line of defence when I felt unsafe. It would have hindered my ability to be creative and my desire to collaborate, as well as possibly having an unhelpful impact on the group dynamic. Had I shared those memories, I do not know what effect it would have had on the group, but I think I would have regretted the disclosure.

It could be useful in unusual contexts such as the ITD programme, to discuss the potential for boundary ambiguity to arise. Participants could be encouraged to consciously consider their boundaries and take a few moments before sharing a personal story to consider whether or not they want to give themselves permission to share it, and the group permission to hear and respond to it. It might also help for the facilitator to give participants the authority to not take part in anything if they do not feel inclined. It is easy to feel pressurised into participating when it may not be in our best interests or simply not what we want (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). It would seem, though, that environments of uncertainty will always carry the risk of participants shifting from safe to unsafe positions, and perhaps the discomfort it causes is a worthwhile risk to take for the sake of creativity and potential development. Mezirow (1978) puts the disorienting dilemma at the beginning of the transformative learning journey and Saul (2005, p. 130) identifies "turmoil" as one kind of "episode of individuation", a developmental step.

Storytelling

The 'house', 'memory' and 'nostalgia' themes of the ITD workshop, together acted as conceptual boundary objects²⁸ for creative collaborative working (Fominykh, Prasolova-Førland, Divitini, & Petersen, 2016). The themes had universal qualities, in that everyone present could readily relate to the concepts, and they provided a host of potential fodder for co-created storymaking.

"...there was something beautiful about [sharing] the recipes; I don't know, that's again to do with the universal nature I think, and also the house, how it relates... it's so universal anyone could relate to it and everybody has loads of stories to tell around food." (Britt, 2012)

"...everyone can connect with the idea of a house, it wasn't an abstract notion, it was very concrete, something we've all experienced, we all have a connection with our memories with a house ...it allowed us all to connect really early on." (Jack, 2012)

The diversity of objects within the boxes acted as physical boundary objects, offering individuals the creative opportunity to imaginatively bestow them with affective interpretations. A workshop with Andrew on the first day used a combination of

²⁸ Boundary objects are "artifacts, processes, concepts and other entities that provide bridges across boundaries and act as shared references that are meaningful for learners and collaborators with different backgrounds" (Fominykh, Prasolova-Førland, Divitini, & Petersen, 2016, p. 85).

boundary objects and imaginal activities to elicit a wealth of experiential and presentational knowing, as the group shifted into affective and imaginal modes (Heron J. , *Feeling and Personhood: Psychology in Another Key*, 1992) in order to participate fully in the process. With these psychological modes at the fore, the group collectively felt and shared feeling, emotion, and imagery, which was evident in the subsequent storytelling and empathic listening. It was as if we tapped into a common pool of feeling and experience, the collective unconscious perhaps (Irvine, 2010) (Boyd, 1991). Participants I spoke to during and after the programme spoke of the affective impact of the activities.

“...when I went into the house of my childhood, and I felt that with the other stories...that you just really felt that you were meeting with some strong material.” (Britt, 2012)

“...it was a way of moving beyond – in a normal meeting, even if you’ve been working together for a week, you’d never discuss those emotional, personal details... But as part of a process, people are individuals, I mean, they’re not representing their discipline or anything, they’re individual people.” (Jack, 2012)

“...as soon as you drew in your own experiences, yeah obviously, it became personal... I think the thought of what to put in those boxes and what they were intended to elicit in terms of response was ingenious... how people see something which on the one hand could be very personal – to you or it could be personal to somebody else – and you can become very empathetic about somebody else’s emotion...” (Alex, ITD Summer School Interview, 2012)

The evocative nature of stories creates intimacy and generates empathy (Keen, 2006). Storytelling stimulates the ‘mirror neurons’, making us feel what the other feels, softening the boundaries between subject and object, ‘self’ and ‘other’ (Severino & Morrison, 2012, pp. 147-8) (Gallese V. , 2005). Within a safe container, personal stories can quickly move us into relationship with people in a way that is ordinarily reserved for those closest to us. We find ourselves relating to and caring about people we hardly know (Gallese V. , 2014).

Communitas

This brings me to the sense of communitas (Turner V. , 2008) that emerged in the group. I had been struggling to find an appropriate way of describing the bond that seemed to grow within the group as a whole over the week. I do not speak of the individual attachments that formed but the cohesiveness of the group as a whole. This was not a lasting bond between the participants, but a spatiotemporally specific coalescence that lasted for the duration of the programme. Turner’s work linking ritual with theatre provided me with an articulation of the camaraderie, trust, and non-judgemental acceptance that had developed, that he terms “communitas”.

4. Imitating the Dog: a creative learning environment

Turner defines 'community' as a group of people that live, work, or otherwise spend time together, and 'communitas' as a modality of social relationship, an experience of being with each other in the Buberian sense of "I and Thou" (Buber, 1937), of experiencing the other as linked or joined in a mutually resonant consciousness where the boundaries of self and other lessen, and so the experience of 'being with' feels like a mutual sharing of experience. To elucidate the concept, Turner says it is the "notion that there is a generic bond between men [sic], and its related sentiment of 'humankindness', are not epiphenomena of some kind of herd instinct but are products of men [sic] in their wholeness, wholly attending" (Turner V. , 2008, p. 128). Turner uses the words, "wholly attending", and I see this as an important concept. Being fully present in the moment is to willingly give all of one's attention to experiencing the present moment in its fullness. This implies an intentional, conscious directing of all of our senses towards the unfolding phenomena before us (Senge, Jaworski, Scharmer, & Flowers, 2005). It implies devoting the self's capacity for directing its attention to the immediate, and the interpretation of that data as experiential knowing. Is it possible that the act of being present forces us to extend our senses and therefore ourselves (Abram, 1996)? Does wholly attending mean more fully participating in the moment? It implies that one's attention is not partially in the past or in anticipation of the future. It seems to illustrate why a safe container or holding environment is conducive to "wholly attending". If we wholly attend, we are vulnerable because we have opened ourselves to the present, and in doing so, the boundary between self and other becomes blurred. The often dominant individuating aspects of the self may be, in these moments, less prominent than the participatory aspects (Heron J. , 1992).

Aspects of the programme that contributed to communitas were synonymous with those that created the holding environment: sitting in circle together, informal breakfasts, the social evening. The sharing of personal stories meant that trust was demonstrated and respected by the group. Allowing ourselves to be vulnerable with each other seemed to increase the cohesiveness of the group, so maintaining the container. When people perform a creative act together, as we did in some of the group activities as well as in the construction of the performance, and the performance itself, something is created that is greater than the sum of its parts. In these circumstances the 'we' is experienced as a source of empowerment to the 'I', as we see how our contribution helped to create something greater than we could have achieved alone (McGonigal, 2011). In a small sense, it perhaps mirrors our participatory relationship with the world, because we directly experience our and others co-creative action with immediate mutual feedback (Heron J. , 1992).

Turner argues that an experience of communitas generally lies outside of our usual daily interactions with people, and so when we experience it we return to the structures and norms of our everyday relationships "revitalized" (Turner V. , 2008, p. 129). The ITD participants expressed feeling energised by the experience of the workshop, citing the creative and collaborative nature of the work and the openness of the other participants as reasons, "It was a nice kind of supportive feeling of everybody taking care of each other..." (Britt, 2012).

Communitas appears to be both a product of and contributory to maintaining a strong holding environment. I identified two main ways in which communitas was generated, one being the quality of the holding environment and the other the 'magic circle' of the play space, a term that Huizinga (1949/1980) coined when he identified the phenomenon in his study of human play. When we enter into a ritual, play, or game space, Huizinga says, we cross a threshold into a world where the rules are different from those with which we are familiar and have come to expect. In this respect it is disruptive, because we must learn or negotiate the new rules and structures of this space if we want to participate. There has to be a willing collusion by all of the players if the game is to succeed. In unstructured play, the rules are established by the players as it unfolds, and the journey may be more important than an end goal. Within the spatiotemporal boundaries of the play space, the players exist in their own separate reality for the duration of the game, which results in feelings of camaraderie that come with a shared experience and shared goals (McGonigal, 2011).

The sense of stepping across a threshold into a ludic, imaginal reality happened most markedly when we moved into the theatre to work. As soon as the projections illuminated the bare, white walls of the 'house' scenery and spread across the black backdrop, the space was transformed (figure 19).



Figure 19. The set lit with projections.

All remarked upon the 'other-worldly' sensation it produced and we willingly colluded in the fantasy environment. Participants noted that the projections set a tone that the performers and musicians picked up on and worked with; the visual designers responded in turn, moving the collaborative creative process along. We tentatively developed our own 'rules of play' that were implied rather than explicit, such as when to speak and when to watch and listen, when to let things unfold and when to offer constructive feedback. When we were in this space we were something of a collective organism, relying on trust and intuition. The performers, musicians and projections all needed each other in order for the whole thing to work, and it was as if we jointly *intended* the final story and performance into existence by the force of our shared will.

Performance

Screenshots of the performance (figures 20-22):



Figure 20. Performance screenshot 2.

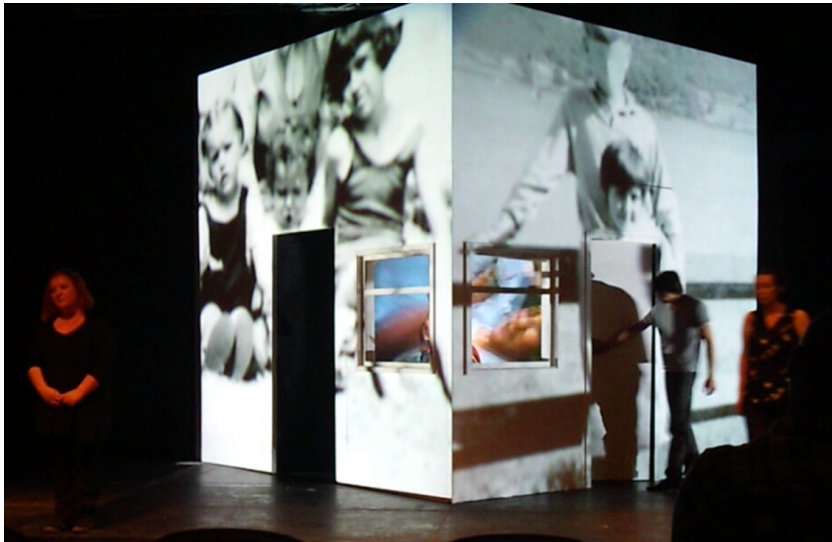


Figure 21. Performance screenshot 3.



Figure 22. Performance screenshot 4.

I had thought the performance would be a motivator, putting some pressure on us to synthesise our ideas. It turned out to be more significant. The act of performing a story appears to have the function of making manifest something in the world, enabling each of us to take part in and witness a novel cultural artefact taking form.
From my journal:

A new story was born, one that represented a week of our lives in the making, as well as a combination of fragments of each of our lives. It felt like a statement of the complexity of existence, manifested in woven nodes and threads of individual experiences through a weft of common experience. The act of performance gave me a sense of closure, and a starting point to move forward from. It felt as if all of the energy of the week was contained in the performance, enabling me to reclaim that energy. Had we not performed it, I might have felt differently about the week, less energised, incomplete.

Telling a story of an experience as the experience draws to an end might be a way of capturing something more than internal images and lingering feelings for later reflection. There is something in the presentational form of storytelling of experience that brings sensemaking to it in a direct way. It does not feel like propositional knowing, because although it involves talking *about* experience it does so in a way imbued with affect and imagination, an extension of the experience itself. German hermeneutic philosopher Dilthey considered performance to be the proper finale of an experience, because an experience is never truly completed until it is expressed, and communicated to others. "Culture itself is the ensemble of such expressions - the experience of individuals made available to society and accessible to the sympathetic penetration of other 'minds'" Dilthey (cited in (Turner V. , 1982, p. 14)).

From my journal:

Our performance felt like a culmination of experiential and presentational knowing, a creative re-enactment of experience. Our shared experience was somehow validated by externalising it and having it experienced by others, its ephemerality transformed into materiality through being performed and witnessed.

Performance is often seen as inherently ephemeral, but perhaps we have an outmoded idea of what it means for an experience to endure. In Western tradition we think of a physical document as that which remains. In oral traditions, no such material evidence is or was necessary, because other ways of knowing such as memory and bodily knowing were treated as having archival qualities of permanence (Schneider, 2001). When a story is told, a performance performed, the listener actively participates in the creation of meaning. The listener is also thought to be important in identity formation (Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2009), a concept I explore further in Chapter 6, when 'witnessing' reveals itself to have significance in the transformative learning process of participants of the Vision Fast as they reform their identities.

Schechner describes dramatic performance as consisting of "*restored behaviour*" (2013, p. 28), because performers re-enact instances of authentic and learned behaviours from

their accumulated life experiences. These are formed into reconstructions of the past, and also into alternative pasts, presents and imagined futures.

From my journal:

In the workshop we restored instances of our past experiences, conjuring up the energy of them through the visualisation and embodiment of them. But in the retelling and hearing of them, they were re-storied, combined and altered into a collective imagining of a life that all of us recognised in part but none of us had lived. It became all of our stories and yet none of them. The dreamlike artefact was a product of our combined memories and imaginings, influenced by the social, political, and cultural contexts of our lives.

Schechner states that restored behaviours are “out there” (2013, p. 34), separate from the self, part of the world of human experience, and as such can be recognised by audiences. Once expressed as works of art, Turner says, experiences can be reflected upon because they are trustworthy messages from the depths of humanity (1982). I think the depths Turner speaks of represent more than cultural patterning, and reach into the realm of the collective unconscious. The themes emerging in the ITD workshop included archetypal ones of love and loss, and fear and courage. They involved archetypal images of the Mother, Father, rites of passage, and metaphors of growth and death and rebirth (Jung C. , CW9 Part 1: The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, 1990). It seems we all understood those without having to unpick and explain the symbolic meanings of the imagery and sounds we created.

Impacts

In my after-programme recorded conversations with four participants, I asked what they had taken away from the experience. While Mezirow’s ‘perspective transformation’ (Mezirow, 1978) was not evident in the terms he describes, respondents did talk about feeling energised, positive, inspired, and seeing expanded possibilities.

Luke: “It has [changed the way I think]. It’s not changed it in the sense that I was an A and now I’m a B, but it’s informed it and it’s made it move and that move is definitely a move forward as opposed to sideways, yeah, definitely.” (Luke, 2012)

Jack: “In a bizarre way it’s affected my confidence on a PhD, to believe in the value of being slightly more creative, and be willing to open up these ideas and in this case, storytelling... So that helped my confidence about being able to do that... But it also consolidated my opinion of myself...”

So often at the end of a couple of weeks [of academic research] I’ve just had a few thoughts and notes about things, but there was a thing! ...that really happened. It helped my motivation in the research actually – I’d had a fun time, so it sort of boosted the energy levels. I

think as well, ok, this [research] can be fun, this can be interesting”
(Jack, 2012)

I could relate directly to Jack’s comment. The programme had left me feeling more confident about using creative methods and themes in my PhD. Importantly, it had left me feeling more confident in myself and my ability to be creative with others within a supportive environment. It reconfirmed my love of collaborative creative, artistic work. It had been the most enjoyable and creative time I had spent in my year at Lancaster. The change in perspective I experienced was of my energy and enthusiasm being restored. The nature of the insights I experienced about my hopes and desires, and the ways I enjoy working, were a wholly embodied remembering of things I knew but that had gradually been eroded. I began to wonder if it was the year long programme I had just completed that had been transformative in a negative way, and the ITD programme that had been restorative rather than ‘transformative’ in Mezirow’s terms, bringing me back home to myself. The insight I had during the ITD programme into the negative way I tend to react to feeling unsafe seemed to fit with my experience at Lancaster.

As a researcher, I gained new perspectives on the creative process and learning environment from investigating texts from fields of study other than those I had been exposed to previously (i.e. most of the texts referenced in this chapter). I was struggling with identifying those changes as transformative learning though, because they simply felt like ‘good learning’ (Newman, 2012) to me. I began to wonder if TL was not one specific, readily identifiable thing, but if there were different kinds of TL with different depths and qualities. Was it too soon after the programme for me to make full sense of its impact? Perhaps I would not understand the full impact until those insights had the chance to unfold in my life holistically. In which case, it problematizes the assessment of TL and suggests the need for more longitudinal studies into what constitutes TL.

At the time, I did not know that the programme would lay the experiential foundation to the rest of my inquiry, but as it transpired, it marked an important step of my TL journey that unfolds throughout the rest of this thesis. Four years after the ITD programme one of the participants contacted me to discuss something unrelated to the programme. I took the opportunity to ask him if, in retrospect, the programme had an impact on him. This was his response:

“...the experience did have a lasting influence. Possibly more than I realised at the time. I have found the whole PhD experience transformative; I think the summer school was the start of it. I have never made a direct connection with the summer school experience but about that time I started writing poetry, I had never written a poem until then. I have since published a book of poems and I have enough work for about another two books. I also include a poem as part of my practice response [in PhD thesis]. I suppose you could call that transformative.” (Alex, 2016)

Concluding thoughts

The ITD programme's content and structure made for a highly creative and collaborative environment. Stimulating experiential and presentational ways of knowing with multiple media and collaborative activities had the potential to generate self-knowing through storytelling and the social processes of working collaboratively with those stories. It is clear why learnings from psychotherapy are useful to transpose to this context. It may be that, as Lawrence suggests (2012), "artistic ways of knowing help us to experience the world in more holistic ways that deepen understanding of self, others, and the world around us". Affective and imaginal ways of engaging through artistic practice offer opportunities for self-knowing (Lawrence, 2012). Dirx (2006) argues that emotion-laden images mediate a relationship between the conscious and unconscious, offering willing participants the opportunity to discover more of themselves by observing and examining the feelings contained within the images that appear to them. Learners engage with different personal intentions and at different depths of course, and not all will choose to take up the challenge of self-inquiry.

The ITD workshop enabled me to examine an example of how a creative learning environment is established, and demonstrated to me how this kind of environment could be adapted to one of personal development. The personal storytelling, imaginal activities, and performative aspects of the programme prompted me to continue this line of inquiry. I decided my next experiential inquiry undertaking should be of a programme explicitly intended to exploit the developmental potential of experiential and presentational knowing.

Turner (1964) articulated the state of liminality I was so familiar with in creative process but could not previously name. In reading about liminality, I became intrigued by Turner's accounts and explication of the process of the rite of passage, involving 'separation', 'liminality', and 'incorporation' (1982) (2008). I detected a link between the process of the rite of passage and that of development, alluded to by Turner, and wanted to explore it further. Though I understood the rite of passage in theory, there were aspects of it that I could not really appreciate from reading and contemplation. That it would not leave me alone indicated to me that I needed to give it more attention. To this end I set my intention to finding a programme in which I could experience the rite-of-passage process, set within a context of increasing self-knowing through storytelling and imaginal processes. This narrowed my search somewhat. Fortunately, an unrelated meeting with a friend provided exactly the opportunity I sought, and propelled me into the next two cycles of inquiry.

5. Mythodrama: Psyche and Eros

Introduction

In 2012, I contacted several organisations offering arts-based personal and/or professional development programmes. At the time, it was still an intention to venture at some point into the realm of arts-based professional development. My inquiries were generally met with enthusiasm but did not amount to concrete research opportunities. I sought a programme of several days duration because programmes of at least three days appear more likely to result in deep learning (Gibb, 2004). The ITD programme highlighted emergent social aspects of creative learning situations that I wanted to study further, and a programme of a longer duration would give time for these aspects to emerge. An introduction by a friend instigated my association with Richard Olivier, artistic director of arts-based leadership development consultancy Olivier Mythodrama Associates (OMA). He gave me the opportunity to participate in a unique Mythodrama programme that is the subject of this chapter.

Structure and content of the chapter

I begin by introducing Olivier Mythodrama and the Psyche and Eros programme I participated in. An outline of the programme follows. I highlight some of the activities, to illustrate the varied embodied methods and techniques used to generate experiential and presentational knowing in participants, and which provided learning and development opportunities. I do so by providing examples of my own experience in the form of descriptive narratives written-up from my field journal. I reflect upon and discuss the impacts of the various activities in terms of the different ways of knowing they stimulated, and speculate upon their value in providing development opportunities for participants. I employ Heron's theoretical frameworks of the modes of the psyche and ways of knowing to aid my analysis of the experience. I refer to Petitmengin-Peugeot's (1999) 'interior gestures' of intuitive experience to enable me to systematically identify how subtle ways of knowing manifest when functioning in affective and imaginal psychological modes. I discuss the potential for psychic dilemmas when working in affective and imaginal modes. I then illustrate and discuss some of the participants' self-perception of learning from the programme, gleaned from recorded conversations with participants following the programme.

Inquiry Methods

I attended the programme as a full participant and kept a detailed field journal which included: details of the proceedings, observations, and my own immediate experiences during activities (when appropriate) and reflections in the field following activities.

I wrote a detailed narrative account of the experience the day after the programme whilst in a contemplative, 'being there' state of recall. This entailed preparing myself by slowing my breathing, relaxing my body, and quieting my internal dialogue. I then tried to visualise as exactly as possible, the programme in chronological order, with myself as both an observer and participant, referring to my field journal as an aide memoire. I placed my attention, as fully as I could, in an embodied recollection of the experience,

which included sensations of presence such as smell, taste, and touch, as well as visualisation. I recalled my reactions, responses, images, feelings, interactions, etc., and reflected upon them and how they related to my learning journey.

In addition to conversing with participants and facilitators during and after the programme, I conducted five recorded conversations (see interview section for details).

Multiple data sources informing this inquiry cycle:

Pre-programme 'Innovation Lab' information via email.

OMA (Olivier Mythodrama Associates) website.

Various conversations with: OMA associates, Richard Olivier, and previous attendees of Mythodrama programmes.

Email correspondence with Richard Olivier, and Psyche and Eros programme designers and participants.

Richard Olivier's book (Inspirational Leadership: Henry V and the Muse of Fire, Timeless Insights from Shakespeare's Greatest Leader, 2000).

Attendance on two, one-day Mythodrama professional leadership development programmes - The Tempest: Transformational Leadership, 04/07/2013. Macbeth: Ethical Leadership, 24/02/2014.

Attendance on a five-day Constellations training course with Jan Jacob Stam: 10-14th Feb 2014.

Various literature from different fields, including: philosophy, TL, psychology, anthropology, and play theory.

Olivier Mythodrama

Olivier Mythodrama™ is an arts-based methodology created by Richard Olivier, who saw in Shakespeare's plays, their potential to illustrate lessons in leadership. He formed OMA, a consultancy offering professional leadership development. As two essential skills of leadership (Biehl-Missal, 2010), performance and storytelling are forms of everyday activity and appear to be some of the most accessible methods to those with no previous experience or training in the arts.

Olivier has much experience in personal development, having undergone psychotherapy, taken part in shamanic ritual work, and been actively involved in the Mythopoetic men's movement²⁹. Mythodrama developed around a Jungian-based framework and the archetypal psychology of James Hillman (1992). Olivier's motivation stems from his interest in psychology, mythology, and personal development (Olivier R. , 2000, p. xxi); he says "the origin and deepest purpose of theatre is to see and to know ourselves, each

²⁹ Men's movement of the 1980s inspired by the likes of post-Jungian James Hillman, Joseph Campbell, and American author Robert Bly (1990). A movement focused on self-development, aimed at helping men reconnect to what they saw as the essential aspects of manhood. For feminist critique see: (Gremillion, 2011).

other and our world more clearly and to develop ourselves to our full potential" (Olivier Mythodrama, n.d.). He emphasises whole-person learning: "engaging brain, heart and body", maintaining it enables participants to start thinking, feeling, and behaving 'differently' (Olivier Mythodrama, n.d.).

In a typical OMA Mythodrama workshop, participants are taken on a storied journey through a specific play. They are introduced to the characters, and guided through the intricate plots, as leadership dilemmas and styles are analysed and paralleled with those faced by the participants. The consequences of the actions of characters are explored, and various options for action are generated and experimented with by participants. In bespoke OMA Mythodrama programmes of several days duration, as well as participating in group process, clients often also engage in individual coaching, and/or Constellations³⁰.

The Psyche and Eros project

I met Richard Olivier at his offices in London to discuss the possibility of carrying out some research on the impacts of OMA's leadership development programmes. As an introduction to the Mythodrama methodology and process, I was invited to participate in a personal development Mythodrama project, unrelated to the work of OMA, on the theme of feminine leadership. The Psyche and Eros programme was, Richard explained, "a one-off event, created specifically to allow some keen students of personal development Mythodrama to find their own story and design a personal development process for it – under my supervision" (Olivier R. , 2017). It was the first time Richard had worked on a story that he had not personally chosen. He attended two of the group's design meetings, and, "agreed to take a lead role in the more emergent facilitation process during the event, using the outline of their design".

The five-day programme would be an opportunity for the facilitators to try out many different ideas and activities and seek feedback from a friendly audience, most of whom were known to one or more of the facilitators and were familiar with Mythodrama, having participated in at least one prior Mythodrama programme. Some had done so at the Findhorn Foundation, where Richard had led several programmes with a more personal development bias than the professional development offerings of OMA, in keeping with Findhorn's vision as "an international centre for holistic learning" (Findhorn Foundation, 2015).

³⁰ Constellations are explained later in this chapter.

Programme information

The programme	An email stated the aims as: "To explore feminine wisdom through the Eros and Psyche myth", and "The myth will provide a container for the exploration of feminine self-leadership" (Pinger P. , 2013).
Mailshot to prospective participants, circulated in 2012	The group stated that they intended the innovation lab "to provide a container for: - "Mytho-dramatising" a story or myth to be used in self-exploration and self-development; - continuing our journeys of self-exploration by tapping into the energy and wisdom of the participants/co-facilitators; - exploring ways of becoming the sovereigns of our various ambits in life" (Pinger, Casolani, Hamer, & Daly, 2012, p. 2).
Dates	2pm Monday 15th July – 2pm Friday 19th July 2013
Fee	£550, lunch and evening meals included, non-residential.
Venue	A private residence in West Sussex with extensive gardens, and a group room with seating for up to around 20 people in the form of a small wooden building in the grounds adjacent to the main house. Lunch and evening meal were served in the main house, and participants had access to both the ground floor of the house and the gardens, as well as to the countryside tracks, footpaths and river nearby.
Number of participants	Seven full participants, two programme co-designers who considered themselves participant-facilitators, and two co-designer facilitators who participated when not facilitating.
Programme supervisor/consultant, lead facilitator	Richard Olivier
Programme design, organisation, and facilitation	SD, EMH, CC, PP Facilitators requested their real names be used in association with the programme. They are referred to by their initials throughout the text. Richard presented the programme and appeared to be assisted principally by PP. SD also assisted, and along with CC took on various mythic roles during some of the rituals. EMH wrote and narrated the version of the myth used.
Facilitator expertise	"various qualifications around coaching, literature, mythodrama, consulting, self-development...to name just a few..." (Pinger P. , 2013)
Format	Principally consisting of the narration of small sections of the myth (12 in total) so the story unfolded slowly over the five days, interspersed with rituals and activities relating to each stage of the story, transposed by the participants to their own life contexts.

Structure and content of the programme

Mythodrama Innovation Lab activity table		
Day	Venue	Activity
Mon 15th	Group room. 14:00	Chairs in a circle. Altar to Psyche & Eros in centre. Introductions and check-in. Ceremonial candle lighting & incantation “to everyone’s intentions”, to Eros & Psyche”, and “to love & beauty”.
	Group room	Series of questions posed by Richard for group discussion around feminine wisdom.
	Group room	Story reading section 1 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Courtyard garden	Embodiment exercise
	Group room	Story reading section 2 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room 10-15 mins	Write a poem “to my castle of illusions”
	Group room	Story reading Section 3 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
		Contemplation questions to sleep on.
Tues 16	Group room 10:00	Check-in
	Group room	Discussion
	Group room	Story reading Section 4 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room	Intro of Post-Jungian archetypal concepts
	Group room	Discussion in pairs
	Garden	Introduction to Constellations & practical demonstration.
	Group room	Story reading Section 5 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
		Guided journaling
	Garden	Ritual: Rejection, Fear, and Trust
Wed 17	Group room 09:30	Check-in
	Group room	Story reading section 6 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room	Guided journaling
	Group room	Story reading section 7 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Grounds 1 hour	Sorting the Seeds exercise relating to the task set Psyche by Aphrodite.
	Group room	Guided journaling
	Group room	Story reading section 8 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Local environs 1.5 hours	Gathering resources activity mirroring the stage of Psyche’s journey

	Group room	Poem reading by Richard: David Whyte, Rainer Maria Rilke
	Group room	Story reading section 9 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room	Theory: The three worlds, metaphors of the psyche
	Garden 15 mins	Rhythmic movement/ 'wild dance'
	Garden	Automatic writing
	Garden	Guided journaling
	Garden & grounds 1 hour	Write about a memory or current situation as if it were a scene from a myth or fairytale.
	Garden & grounds	Debrief in pairs or groups.
	Group room	Poem reading
	Group room	Story reading section 10 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room	Contemplation questions to sleep on.
Thurs 18	Lawn 09:00	Guided visualisation meditation
	Gardens	Constellations
	Group room	Story reading section 11 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room	Guided journaling
	Group room or courtyard	Write a warning letter to self.
	Group room or courtyard	Write a 'shadow lullaby' How could you sabotage your progress?
	Gardens	Ritual: Causes of slumber and reawakening (straying from & refinding your path)
	Group room	Contemplation questions to sleep on.
Fri 19	Group room 09:30	Check-in
	Group room	Story reading section 12 Note-taking of impressions & short discussion.
	Group room	Imaginative description activity
	Group room	Questions: reflection and intention
	Group room	Poem Readings: Kabir: Breath, The Swing, The Clay Jug, from (Bly (Ed.), 1997)
	Gardens and grounds	Decorating the 'sacred' spaces for the day's rituals.
	Gardens and grounds	Ritual: Ambrosia, marriage & birthing. Intention setting.
	Group room and gardens	Clearing up
	Garden 14:00	Final gathering

Figure 23. Mythodrama Innovation Lab Table of Activities.

Photographs from the programme

To set the scene and give the reader a sense of the aesthetic of the programme, I include some photographs that I digitally enhanced to convey more of the evocative mythical feel of the experience.



Figure 24. The group room, where check-ins, readings, and some group activities took place.



Figure 25. The altar to Psyche and Eros in the group room, set up by the facilitators.



Figure 26. Apollo's Mount, the scene of a ritual on the final day.



Figure 27. Participants placed their 'resources' together around the centrepiece in the group room after an activity.



Figure 28. The wedding altar, prepared for a ritual on the last day: the marriage of Psyche and Eros.

Living the myth

I share some of my personal journey through the myth by including several of my own narrative accounts of some of the activities. I include my immediate reflections on the experience, recorded in my field journal either immediately following the activity, or as soon as possible after it on the same day. These illustrate the ways in which the activities stimulated different ways of knowing and led to personal insights, sometimes through the body, or imagination, and at other times triggering self-reflection. Some of these activities were mentioned by other participants as being catalysts for their insights, and so I detail my own experience of them here to familiarise the reader with them and to illustrate their processes.

My narrative accounts were constructed from the extensive notes made in my field journal during the programme. After each account documented here, I also reflect (post-programme) upon the processes involved. These reflections were a result of contemplating the programme, using my notes as an aide memoire. In the days following the programme I also paid attention to dreams and waking moments in which images and feelings appeared (Anderson R. , 2000). My conversations with other participants following the programme also aided my own sensemaking of the experience.

I forward the idea that perhaps self-reflection is not always necessary to change, because it appears that sometimes change occurs without the necessity of sensemaking through externalised language or even internal narrative. I do not seek to diminish self-reflection, and would argue that it often forms part of the larger overall process of incorporating TL, but here I want to illustrate how I found experiential and presentational ways of knowing valuable to the process of TL. I attempt to demonstrate how some insights began to be incorporated during the programme through the cumulative effects of stimulation of different ways of knowing, showing how engaging in activities that stimulate a variety of ways of knowing contributes to a dynamic, fluid, and holistic process of development (York & Kasl, 2002).

Activity from Day One: A poem to my castle of illusions

I begin by describing and reflecting upon an activity from the first day which illustrates tensions between propositional and presentational ways of knowing, and shows how when the intellect 'steps back', presentational knowing can surface in generative ways. Prior to this activity were two readings of sections of the myth, interspersed with activities relating to each stage of the story. The story section preceding this activity portrayed Psyche and Eros in love, seeing each other only as their idealised projections of the other. As with all the story section readings, we were asked to notice our individual emotional responses and then discuss our initial thoughts and feelings about the unfolding narrative, contemplating the couple's situation. By attending to the psychic images arising from listening to the storytelling, it was often possible to track our visceral responses back to incidents in our own lives. Richard asked some questions, pausing between each question to allow us time to jot down our responses. With many of these activities, Richard did not allow much time between questions, encouraging us to notice and work with our initial response rather than to overthink. This discouraged intellectual reflection and kept participants in the affective and imaginal modes.

From my field journal:

Richard: When have you lived in a castle of illusion?

What was in it for you?

Who and what happened to make you realise it was an illusion?

Write a poem to your castle of illusion.

We are given ten or fifteen minutes for this exercise. I struggle with it - I haven't written a poem since I was at school. I loved creative writing though, so resolve to just write a few evocative lines without judgement, and see how it goes. I know what I shall write about. When my ex-husband left me unexpectedly it shattered my beliefs and assumptions about our relationship and caused me to question my story of the fourteen years we had spent together. This is my starting point. I scribble away but am not happy with what I write. I start to become anxious as time ticks on, knowing I only have a few minutes for this. I try to amend it, thinking hard and sticking with the same structure, which doesn't work at all.

Oh how blissfully I walked with you in my story that I thought we shared. I felt blessed.

Till you shared your story with me and I realised it was not mine at all.

And I felt betrayed.

In piecing back together my shattered heart I made a new story.

And realised I was blessed after all.

No, no, no! This won't do, it's all wrong, it sounds wrong, it feels wrong, it's not what I want to say, or how I want to say it! Time has nearly run out but I can't leave it at this, so I abandon it and start again with two minutes to go. I feel extremely vulnerable and my mind goes blank, I can't think. I give up.

In a sudden rush of intense feeling something comes up and out of me onto the paper. I don't have time to think, I just write the words down as they pour out of me.

Your news struck me like a bolt of lightning

My story shattered

The dead wood peeled back layer by layer to reveal

Not the heart of darkness that I feared I'd find

But instead a shining sapling

That could bend and bend, but would not break.

Yes! I don't know where that came from but it feels just right! Richard asks if we would like to share our poems, and I feel suddenly that I need to speak mine, as if it will somehow give it substance. I can't bear the thought of leaving it on the page as dry ink. As I read the words aloud something more happens. I hear my voice, calm and sure, yet full of emotion. I like how it sounds. As each word re-enters my being through my eyes as they scan the written words, and leaves again through the breath on my lips I feel the power of them resonating in my body and around the silent room. When I finish, I am moved by the experience, and look up to see that others appear to have been affected too. I sit down, feeling as if I have managed to convey the essence of what was a long and difficult process of loss, grief, insight, and ultimately finding self-love. I watch and listen to others who go after me, and see something similar seem to happen with them. I am moved by each of their performances.

Later reflections

In writing a poem, a task I found challenging and unenjoyable to begin with, I was able to express feelings in a succinct way that went beyond my usual ability to describe complex emotions. My first, failed attempts at writing came from my intellect, and while it was occupied, it seems something else within me was at work composing the 'real' poem, but could not surface while my conscious mind was busy thinking. It was only when I abandoned hope of being able to complete the task, that my rational-intellectual faculties seem to step aside, defeated, and allow a different kind of knowing to express itself. Clarkson describes this phenomenon as "a confluence of conscious and unconscious forces in the liminal zone of the creative imagination" (2005, p. 11).

My second attempt evoked very clearly for me, not simply the emotions of the event I was speaking of, but it symbolised an experience which reshaped my entire being over a period of months. It encapsulated the initial destruction and grief I felt of betrayal and abandonment; the fear and dread of being alone and unloved, and the necessity of having to re-examine and question my reality and loss of identity. As the defences of my ego crumbled under the weight of the undeniable truth of my situation, I was

forced to look into the very core of my being. Instead of the darkness I had expected to find, I discovered an overwhelming expanse of light and love. The self-love that this revelation enabled, led to a sense of renewal with the discovery that I was much more resilient and adaptive than I had imagined.

There was certainly a marked qualitative difference between my first attempt at a poem, and the second offering, which was far richer in metaphor and imagery. The consistency of the metaphor was noticeable, as was the difference in the rhythm of the lines. I know nothing of poetry structure so I am unable to expertly analyse why the first felt very wrong on a number of levels and the second felt so right. Measured against Heron's canons of validity for presentational knowing (1992), the poem had rhythmic vitality, qualitative coherence, and compresence with the experience. Merleau-Ponty (1968) describes such acts as creative adequation, an integration and expression of thought and felt experience.

The interesting perceptual difference was that rather than being incremental, as intellectual knowing tends to be, it came all at once in a kind of bundle. It was all I could do to write it down quickly enough to keep up, as it seemed to rise up and pour out of me, mirroring Petitmengin-Peugeot's (1999) description of intuitive knowing as surging forth, unexpectedly. In terms of Petitmengin-Peugeot's interior gestures, I did not experience them quite as she observed, but recognise aspects of the process occurring.

1. Letting go: Although I did not feel the calmness or slowing down of mental activity suggested in her description (1999, p. 59), perhaps the disruption to my habitual ways of thinking by being on the programme induced a quality of attention and presence conducive to intuitive experience that, although not immediately evident to me during this activity was, nevertheless, present.

2. Connection: I held an intention to make an energetic connection with the memory experience/psychic image I was seeking to find expression for. (1999, p. 64).

3. Listening: the story readings, venue, atmosphere, and activities combined to produce in me an inner sense of presence and attentiveness to subtle phenomena. People in Petitmengin-Peugeot's study described achieving a state of receptivity where knowing is not grasped at but accepted (1999, p. 68), and I had had the sensation that when I stopped grasping for it, the poem came to me.

4. Intuition: An experience of direct knowing without knowing how one knows, accompanied by a sense of certitude, and coherence (1999, p. 70), as I described.

What further surprised me was the need I felt to speak the words I had written. This arose as an imperative rather than an emotion. The urge to utter the words was another instance of intuitive knowing, for I did not know why I had to do it, but was nevertheless certain that I did. Speaking is participatory, calling for attentiveness and listening by the audience, as they see, hear and feel the words embodied in the speaker through gesture, accent, volume and intonation. It can have more impact than the passive form of the written word (Palmer, 2014). What surprised me is the impact it had

upon me; it was as if I embodied the knowing contained in the words. It was a realisation of the truth of those words on a level difficult to explain, encapsulating and expressing the essence of my experience, seeing that I had risen to the challenge, and been transformed by it in positive ways that resulted in personal growth.

By embodying knowing through verbal expression, it appears to take on form, shape, substance; becomes more real in the world and perhaps, completes an experience (Turner V. , 1982, p. 14). Sense-making involved the transposition of the felt meaning of experience to imagery to story; the use of one presentational form to interpret and express another. In the case of the poem, I had an intuitive experience which gave rise to the written prose, which in turn became a performance of spoken word. It was not until the words were spoken that I felt the experience was complete. Presentational forms then, are not equivalent; they each appear to have different qualities in terms of how one generates, interprets, and expresses knowing through them.

Activity from Day Two: Introduction to Constellations

Olivier often uses Constellations in Mythodrama programmes as a method of eliciting embodied knowing. The individual Constellations that everybody took part in later that week were mentioned most frequently by participants as being a developmental highlight of the programme. I refrain from describing those to protect participant confidentiality. The following description of a Constellation illustrates the process. Not all the participants were familiar with Constellations, so Richard provided an interesting and useful introduction.

Family Constellations Therapy was developed by psychotherapist and philosopher Bert Hellinger (Wolynn, 2004-2010) (Reynolds, 2013). It was originally developed as a therapeutic method used in difficult or inexplicable family situations, and drew from Family Therapy theory. Using the phenomenological concept of a dynamic field, said to form between participants and bodily inform them of the nature of situations, participants 'feel' their way to new positions, gaining insights into the issues they are dealing with during the Constellation session. Since its inception, various offshoots such as Organisational Constellation and System Constellation approaches have been developed (Stam, 2006) (Whittington, 2012).

Method: A person wishing to examine an issue, the 'issue holder', briefly describes their issue to the constellator (facilitator), who helps them distil it into a few key elements. The issue holder then chooses people from the group to be 'representatives' for those key elements, e.g. people (or the roles people have in a particular situation), emotions, archetypes, conflicting commitments, an abstract concept. A person is chosen to represent the issue holder to enable them to observe the Constellation. At some point in the process, they relieve their representative and take their place in the Constellation once their situation has become clear to them. Either the constellator or issue holder places the representatives into a starting configuration which, in terms of where and how the representatives are posed, appears to reflect the issue. Representatives are asked to take a minute to elicit data from their bodies and senses and to report the

surfacing sensations. It is a deeply embodied process that relies on representatives suspending their intellect, judgements, and personal stories so they can be antennae or conduits for the dynamic field.

It is not understood how Constellations work, but they seem to be able to reveal that which is present but is not always immediately apparent or easily able to be broached by usual means.

From my field journal:

Richard invites one of the facilitators experienced in Constellations to work with a betrayal experience that remains unresolved in her life and facilitates the session. He asks C, who has facilitated Constellations before, to briefly explain the situation she wants to work with, and to name the 'characters' involved³¹. He asks her what elements will be represented in the Constellation. She chooses who amongst us will represent her and her other chosen characters. C 'arranges' the representatives according to what feels right to her in the moment. I am chosen to represent C and step into the 'field'. I am gently posed by her until she is satisfied with where and how I am standing in relation to the other characters she has placed. When she has her characters in position, C sits and observes.

Richard asks us representatives to be keenly aware of our bodies and especially how it feels in relation to the other elements in the Constellation. We remain for a minute or two still and silent in our places, focusing on bodily sensation. The emphasis is placed on perceptive intuition in subsequent steps of the process. Very quickly I feel as if I am getting deep down into my body. I can, after a short time and to my surprise, feel the 'field'³². It is a palpable phenomenon in that it is, to me, unmistakably present. Richard asks each representative in turn how and what they are feeling. Despite the warm day, I notice a cold sensation in my left arm, which is the one closest to the representative of the betrayer. Due to the angle that my head is placed in I feel distant from him, and slightly disturbed as I can only see him in my peripheral vision. This makes me feel uncomfortable, and slightly threatened. I am struck by the novelty of what I am experiencing.

The exercise continues like this with Richard occasionally interjecting, to ask one or all of us if we feel as if we'd like to move, or if any new or different sensation has occurred. Over a period of about half an hour, the underlying dynamic changes as we shift our special arrangement, notice new feelings and shift again. My mind is unusually quiet. I am surprised by the physical quality of the experience, and enjoy focusing on the subtleties of bodily sensation, surprised at

³¹ Characters may be actual people involved in the situation, or can other things such as emotions, archetypes, diseases, or abstract concepts.

³² Psychiatrist Albrecht Mahr (1999) coined the term 'the knowing field' specific to Family Constellations. Biologist Rupert Sheldrake (1987) (1988/2011) conceptualised something similar with morphic resonance. Both envisage subtle energetic fields of systemic data containing collective inherited memory which bring to mind Jung's 'Collective Unconscious' (Jung C.G.,1990, CW9).

how many different visceral responses I am feeling and attempting to name. All the while, C is observing.

Eventually, Richard asks if she is ready to take the place of her representative. She agrees and she steps into the position I had been in. C takes a minute to feel herself into her new position and says how it makes her feel. She instigates another move, and we feel the dynamic shift again. This continues and there is now a feeling in the field that resolution may be in sight. When every representative feels right in his or her place and the other representatives are in agreement, C says a few words aloud; a declaration of sorts which feels, she says afterward, as if some kind of closure had been achieved, in that she saw the situation in a different light and managed to resolve some of the negative feelings she had been carrying. The exercise is repeated with another of the participants.

Later reflections

The Constellations were a novel experience for me and I was surprised by the tangible qualities of 'the knowing field'. I wondered if it was due to the general effect of the programme on me, which had disrupted me and seemed to increase my sensitivity to subtle phenomena; however, several months later I participated in an Organisational Constellations workshop in a completely different setting with different facilitators and felt 'the knowing field' just as strongly.

Referring to Petitmengin-Peugeot's interior gestures I examine the qualities of the experience of being a 'representative' during the Constellation:

1. Letting go: Being asked to focus on the body had the effect of calming my mental activity as I shifted my attention from mental processes to the body. I had an acute awareness of being present in the moment (1999, p. 59).

2. Connection (1999, p. 64): I held the intention to energetically connect with 'the field', and to notice the interaction between it and my body. I did this by placing my awareness, as much as I was able, in my body, and 'feeling' my awareness extending from my body into 'the field'.

3. Listening (1999, p. 59): I felt presence and attentiveness to subtle phenomena and felt I had achieved a state of receptivity where knowing is not grasped at but accepted (1999, p. 68). I did not try to feel or know anything, but to be aware of any phenomena and to treat it as valuable data to share.

4. Intuition (1999, p. 70): A sense of certitude and coherence regarding the intuition. I was aware during the experience, of having thoughts and opinions relating to the issue holder's issue, and consciously put these to one side, 'bracketed' them, because it felt as though they were interfering with my ability to sense 'the field' accurately. The intuitive knowing I experienced, appeared to come from my body, as if it were interpreting 'the field' and in turn I tried to interpret and verbally express what I felt my body was telling me. There were moments when I felt certitude regarding the accuracy of my descriptions, and other times when I was uncertain as to whether I was misinterpreting the sensory and subtle data that appeared.

The Constellation work was one of the few activities that did not focus on stimulating the imagination or eliciting psychic imagery. Representatives stood within the liminal space of 'the knowing field' and became liminal beings, conduits for data from that field. The representatives relay data from the 'field', felt as bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions that the representative does not recognise as their own. It is important to disregard one's own thoughts and psychic images, which might bias one's reporting of sense and subtle data. Hellinger described it as a "phenomenological way of observing" (Stam, 2006, p. 105) with an inner attitude free of personal opinions or judgements, as in Husserl's epoché (Zahavi, 2003). This deeply embodied activity appeared to generate the interior gestures of intuitive experience without imagery or reflection. However, it did require playing 'the believing game' (Elbow, 2008), a willingness to accept the possibility of a knowing field and that the process itself may have value.

Constellations appear to engage the participatory aspect of the affective and imaginal modes, feeling and intuition, rather than the individuating aspects of personal emotions and imagery. The participatory aspect of feeling is "empathic resonance" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 93), and has a quality of "unitive perception" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 61), which Heron describes as our capacity for imaginal participation in sense and other perception. I seemed to be operating with what felt like "intuitive grasp" or "holistic cognition" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 17).

The individuating aspect of the conceptual mode seemed to be active in my interpretation of the sensations I was experiencing, as I tried to distinguish and define the sensations so I could communicate them. This did not quite match Heron's description of the individuating aspect of the conceptual mode, because I did not do so according to my own needs and preferences (Heron J. , 1992, p. 17), but instead, as in phenomenological reduction, tried to report accurately as a conduit of information. My personal 'habituallities' (Moran, 2011) determined how I interpreted and communicated the data, and perhaps this is what Heron means by 'preferences'. When Heron proposes that the polarities represent a tendency for the predominance of one aspect or another, not the exclusivity of them (Heron J. , 1992, p. 18), it makes sense that experiences can be simultaneously individuating and participatory or transpersonal.

Activity from Day Three: Sorting the seeds

This activity illustrates how imaginal immersion in a story can be combined with personal intent in contemplative problem-solving. Hinted at here, and explored further in chapter six, is the role that the natural world can take in reflecting the psyche and facilitating self-knowing. In the myth, Psyche is set a succession of seemingly impossible tasks by Aphrodite. Each time, just as Psyche gives up all hope and is in despair, something intervenes to help her accomplish the task. Each helper or guide symbolises inner, intuitive wisdom. The helpers and guides often appear in the form of creatures from the natural world, hinting of the creative power of nature as an aspect of feminine wisdom, the notion being that this type of wisdom is not about confronting problems head-on, but about approaching problems obliquely with contemplation, presence, and listening to the intuition to find creative, unexpected solutions.

Sorting the seeds - 1 hour

Richard often used methods to stimulate the imagination while employing the intellect in an instrumental task, the goal being to allow unconscious processes to work behind the scenes in knowledge generation. The activities often included elements of contemplation and self-reflection. I chose this example not because it provided me with great insight, but to illustrate the subtle ways in which self-knowing can be surfaced or generated over a period of time. This exercise galvanised my intention for the remainder of the week, and yet in retrospect, I had begun to develop my intention on the first day. Some activities took me away from it but I always seemed to be drawn back to working with the themes of fear and trust in various guises.

Summary of story reading, section 7: In her throne room, Aphrodite, testing Psyche's merit, sets her a time-limited task of separating an enormous pile of mixed barley and wheat seeds. An army of ants come to Psyche's aid, and sort the seeds into two distinct piles. When Aphrodite returns, much to her surprise she finds Psyche's task completed.

From my field journal:

Richard: What are the issues you face; the components of your question? What habits, people, forces, emotions are involved? What keeps you from doing what you ask for?"

Richard suggests that here we are being directed into a task that the conscious mind does not know how to complete, but that something within us does. We are asked to imagine being Psyche in Aphrodite's throne room, and then to go outside alone, and each find a quiet spot in nature that will be a substitute for that place. We are to contemplate what it is in each of our lives that needs to be separated, discerned. Richard urges us to allow images, thoughts and feelings to surface, and to make a note of what comes up. He asks us to surrender to that quiet, natural space, and to treat everything that comes to mind as information, and to especially notice any interaction with the insect world. We are encouraged to look for opposites, differences, opposing forces: things that could support or thwart us. He suggests we may choose to focus our attention on one of those separations.

I head outside into the warm sunshine, and make straight for a shady, grassy spot that I keep finding myself drawn to. I am glad that no one else has chosen the spot, and sit down, making myself comfortable on the soft, dry ground. I write my question to the Great Feminine in my notebook, ready for contemplation and note some of the opposing forces that I notice in my life (figure 29 overleaf):

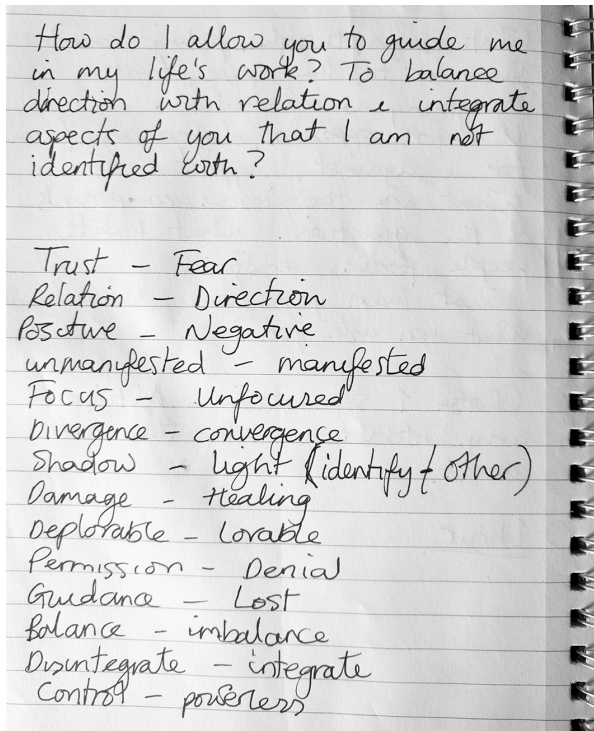


Figure 29. Field journal notes: question to the Great Feminine and opposing forces.

Satisfied with my list, but not knowing which of these to focus on, I allow myself to become distracted by the insect activity around me. Insects: they see differently, have their own agenda. Ants symbolise the impersonal, the collective, service. They adhere to a bigger plan, have a systemic view; they represent diligence. Noticing the butterflies fluttering around I consider their seemingly random flight, knowing that they navigate by smells carried on currents of air, that they have a different system of organisation. We only seem to notice these creatures at the end of their lives, when their colourful presence declares itself as they fulfil their life's work.

I decide on trust and fear to focus on as they were the first things to come up for me this morning, and struck me yesterday as significant; it seems right to explore them further (figure 30):

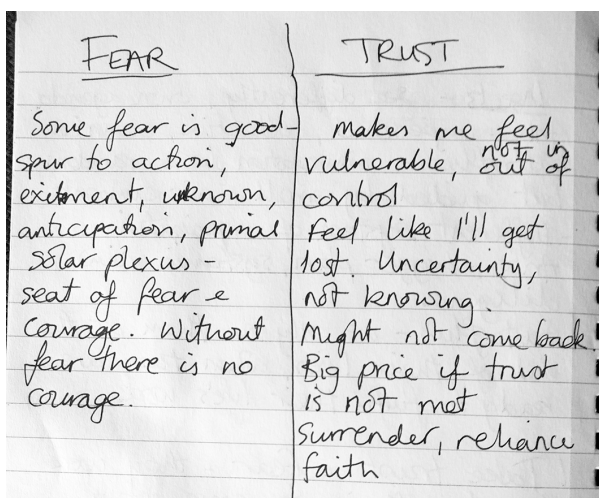


Figure 30. Field journal notes: Fear and Trust.

I make a list of forces apparently hindering my progress (figures 31-32):

Forces - Assume masculine
Hindering - Critical Mother!
- Abandoning Mother
- difficulty in asking for help
- " " expressing my needs
- fear of rejection, refusal, disappointment, being let down
- feeling powerless, pathetic, needy, vulnerable, defenceless, dependent
- fear of putting energy into fruitless pursuits, of having expectations & not meeting them, of them not being met. Of letting myself down... feeling like a failure
- Fear of not fulfilling potential paralyzing, not being able to act in the right way
- impulsiveness leads to trouble
- Contemplation & reflection lead to swimming in sea of too many options
- Can't find focus, too many connections, patterns, too much

Figure 31. Field journal notes: Forces hindering my progress.

systemic / meta thinking - need to be in the body more.
Seek help in unexpected places
Trust it will come if I reach out.
Share thoughts more with wider world
Seek out connection, relationship
Actively pursue & nurture it
Use fear to motivate, to act
be more aware of own perspective & listen more before responding.
Lower defences
Don't react, respond - use body as a guide
Accept what I deplore in myself but be ready to deal with it when it surfaces & examine it as an observer rather than getting hooked into it - be more present.
Nurture myself.
Don't miss things by looking too

Figure 32. Hindering forces (cont.) and emerging strategy.

I reflect on those hindering forces, emotions, and feelings and ask how they relate to the task in hand, of sorting, differentiating, discerning? It occurs to me that I should seek help in unexpected places, and trust that help will come if I reach out. I should share my research, my thoughts and insights, otherwise how will anyone know what I am doing? I need to seek out connection, relationship; actively pursue and nurture it. Perhaps I can use my fear as a motivator, a spur to action.

I need to be more aware of my own perspective, listen more deeply before responding. I should try to lower my defences because they act as a barrier, a filter, which distorts my perception. The Constellation work comes to mind and I think that maybe I could practice responding using my bodily sensations as a guide. I can easily miss significant things by looking too hard for them with the wrong part of me.

Instead of rejecting what I deplore in myself, I could try to accept it as part of me, and be ready to deal with it when it surfaces and attempt to examine it more dispassionately as an observer, rather than getting ensnared by it. That requires being more present and practicing mindfulness and reflexivity.

I need to be more forgiving of myself, to allow myself to make mistakes and to learn from them. I don't need to have all the answers. It's ok to not know things. Importantly, I need to remember that there is more than one right or good way of doing things. I mustn't hold people to my own standards, standards that even I can't meet most of the time.

There must be a balance. So I must sort, differentiate; create order and structure, which will allow creativity and improvisation to thrive within it and will enable me to act.

Later reflections

The story reading prior to the activity set the tone for the task and stimulated my imagination, bringing to me imagery of opposing internal and external forces, conflicting and seemingly impossible demands upon me that I needed to satisfy to achieve my goals. I felt determination to draw upon my internal resources to complete the task. Making the list of opposing forces felt like an intellectual pursuit, even at the time. It gave me a starting point and kept my mind occupied, presumably while unconscious processes were at work.

Allowing my mind to wander outwards towards the insects around me in the grass enabled me to stop focusing on the objects of the task and incubate for a few minutes, allowing the themes of fear and trust to emerge as the obvious choice for further contemplation. These themes had surfaced briefly for me on the first day in one of the activities, and then again on the following day when activities had centred around the themes of betrayal. I did not come to the programme intending to work on these themes and was not consciously aware of how or why they had been surfacing. The themes contained within the myth and the activities were likely to have influenced the direction of my thoughts. It was interesting to me that some of the psychic material that had surfaced was in relation to issues I had thought I had put behind me, but clearly there was still energy in them, and so I accepted that there was more work to do.

I think Richard's constant reassurance to 'trust the process' caused me to consider trusting the process with regard to my doctoral inquiry journey. I began to feel a shift

away from fear toward trust, mirroring Psyche, perhaps, on her stage of her journey as she began to discover her inner resources and feminine power. We discovered that Psyche was also pregnant, symbolic of the creative force, gestation and of manifesting something new in the world; my as yet unwritten thesis sprang to mind.

This activity demonstrates how development is not delineated clearly into the 'personal' and 'professional', but the complexities of the psyche mean that work in one area can serve the development of another.

Referring to Petitmengin-Peugeot's interior gestures I examine the qualities of the experience:

1. Letting go: I felt no calming of my mental activity until after the listmaking when I allowed my attention to drift outward. I felt present in the moment, but my focus was outside of myself rather than in my body, as described by Petitmengin-Peugeot's research group (1999, p. 59).

2. Connection (1999, p. 64): I held the intention to connect with the tensions within me that might be indicators of internal conflicts as well as the impact of external forces.

3. Listening (1999, p. 59): I felt presence and attentiveness to subtle phenomena. I felt alert and calm.

4. Intuition (1999, p. 70): The only part of the experience I would class as a moment of intuitive knowing was the certainty I felt that fear and trust were the two issues I needed to work on. The other thoughts that came to me were not all novel, though I was curious as to why it was they had shown themselves to me during the activity.

In terms of Heron's modes of the psyche, this activity felt to me at first to be based in the conceptual mode of reflection and discrimination. It was, however grounded in the affective and imaginal modes, due to the constant presence of the myth and of the archetypal themes of the activity, coupled with being in outdoor surroundings conducive to contemplation. The practical mode was present in the quest for intention, and of understanding the underlying causes behind our actions.

Reading back over my initial thoughts about the insects, I see that at the time I did not further examine my thought about the butterflies, "that they have a different system of organisation". Later in the week, however, my individual Constellation provided me with the insight that I was using my intellect to lead my inquiry, because it was what I assumed I should do, and that I should allow my heart to lead instead: in effect, I needed to use a different system of organisation in my inquiry.

Programme analysis

In this section I discuss aspects of the programme thematically. Rather than analyse elements individually, in the spirit of retaining its integrity as a whole, I examine relevant themes that begin to form threads of connection through all three fieldwork components of the thesis, such as the container or holding environment, activities stimulating various ways of being and knowing, liminality, storytelling, and TL opportunities.

Programme structure

Most of the days were long, starting at 9-9:30am and going through well into the evening. With lunch and an evening meal provided, and plenty of time to contemplate alone or talk with other participants, it felt as immersive as a non-residential programme could be. In post-programme conversations with three of the four co-designers, it became apparent that although a great deal of thought had gone into the theme of the programme and the writing and 'sectioning' of E.M.H's (Hamer, 2013) version of the myth to be used, few firm plans had been made regarding structure or content other than a rough outline for days one and two, themes and possible rituals for particular days, and the inclusion of Constellations on the fourth day. There appeared to be a heavy reliance by the others on Richard to direct proceedings, create and deliver the specific content on each day, and set the activities, although I understand that the co-designers worked with Richard during breaks and evenings to devise and finalise some of the programme activities. The ambiguous roles of some of the co-designer-participant-facilitators meant they did not seem to be entirely focused on the quality of the experience for participants.

It was clear to me that the facilitators had not worked together in this context before and their approach necessitated lengthy deliberations to agree the content of activities and delegation of roles etc., which took time to do. The participants had no input in these conversations and were left to their own devices during these frequent long breaks in the day. The spaces between activities may have been conducive to the filtering down and incubation of the rich material that participants were given to work with, allowing time for subtle communications from the unconscious to begin to surface (Dirkx J. , 2001) (Scott S. , 1997).

Whilst the programme was an 'innovation lab' for the facilitator cohort, it was not so much for the participants, who were in effect, willing 'guinea pigs' in this lab. The themes and story were predetermined and the activities prescribed. While participants were occasionally given opportunities to vote on which aspects to focus on next, their decisions led to other prescribed activities.

Although the facilitators determined the content of the entire programme it did not mean that it had no emergent properties. On the contrary, at each stage participants were encouraged to ask themselves how the story pertained to or had resonance with their own lives. This enabled us to follow personal threads of meaning throughout, that could be focused upon and explored within the context and parameters of the

programme. The content of the Constellations was co-created spontaneously by participants responding to the 'field', and the success of the Constellations was at least in part due to the thoughtful planning of when they took place. It seems to me that care was taken to ensure the participants had undergone the necessary preparation to be able to make full use of the Constellating process. By then we had spent three days largely in affective and imaginal modes, working with the body, feeling, emotion, intuition, imagery, and intention, and were primed for the process (Heron J. , 1992).

Feminine wisdom

One of the intentions of the programme was to explore feminine wisdom through the myth (Pinger P. , 2013), but some participants questioned whether the programme succeeded in exploring it. 'Feminine wisdom' was never clearly defined, though Richard spoke of it as a way of relating to the world that could balance out the masculine, which he saw as being dominant in society. There has long been a cultural perception in the West of rational, intellectual knowing as being masculine in nature (Ross-Smith & Kornberger, 2004). In this sense, feminine wisdom could be seen to have been present in almost all of the activities because they were designed to stimulate affective and imaginal modes and experiential and presentational knowing, if these ways of knowing can be considered feminine as some suggest (Tarnas, 1998) (Formenti & Dirks, 2014).

Jungian sensemaking

The Jungian sensemaking system provided a shared language to some extent, although there was not a great deal of explication of the concepts or language of Jungian theory. There seemed to be an assumption that people would be familiar with these and that there was a shared understanding of meanings, however, in conversation with participants during the programme it became apparent this was not the case. I developed an appreciation for the concerns expressed by Kucukaydin and Cranton (2012) regarding the casual use of sensemaking systems such as Jungian theory and terms that I had previously thought largely unfounded. They rightly point out that, "When terms and their meanings are uncertain, metaphorical, or mythical, such as those in Jungian theory, people are more likely to interpret and understand them in different ways" (2012, p. 48). The programme imposed a Jungian perspective, but because not everyone was overly familiar with it, misunderstandings arose which meant that key metaphorical insights of the myth were lost on some.

Despite continuous reference to the archetypal characters central to the myth, participants were given only brief explanation of the Jungian and post-Jungian concept of archetypes. This may have been so as not to pin the images of the archetypes down to specific meanings and to let individuals feel into them in relation to their own frames of reference, yet it may have been helpful to discuss the ambiguity and variety of manifestations and aspects of the archetypes in more detail. This was alluded to in an interesting activity exploring responses to betrayal, based upon a text by James Hillman (1965).

Explanations, though sometimes simplistic, gave a flavour of their nature. For example, Psyche's father, the king, early in the myth, was painted as a traditional patriarch who saw himself as a patron and guardian of his family and kingdom. His shadow side was the tendency to be rigid, controlling, and to impose order at any cost. The lack of subtlety in the depiction of the characters may actually have been helpful, because their polarised natures evoked strong emotions and images, but I felt that treating the story in a somewhat literal sense at times detracted from its potential.

Having familiarised myself with the myth prior to the programme and discussed its deeper meanings with a psychotherapist friend³³ who had worked with the myth, I felt that some potentially valuable meanings embedded in the myth were lost or overlooked, and was surprised given the Jungian flavour of the programme that more was not made of the story as a tale of the integration of the masculine and feminine aspects of the self in life's journey of individuation (Campbell, 1949). This could have enhanced the understanding of the interplay of dynamics and tensions between aspects of the self in ways that were less polarised than the archetypal extremes that the programme tended to focus upon.

Ludic liminality: playful collusion in the mythos

To fully engage in the activities, the Mythodrama programme required participants to collude in a certain kind of playfulness that I refer to as ludic liminality³⁴ that was induced by the necessity of suspending disbelief. There had to be a conscious decision by participants to play along, to suspend the judgements of the intellect and surrender to the delight and immediacy of sense experience, to proceed 'as if' (Seligman, Weller, Puett, & Simon, 2008) the experiences were real but in the safety of a rehearsal environment (Nissley, 2010) that carries with it no risk outside of the magic circle (Huizinga, 1949/1980) of the container.

Philosopher and cultural ecologist David Abram captures the essence when he says, "the perceiving body does not calculate logical probabilities; it gregariously participates in the activity of the world, lending its imagination to things in order to see them more fully" (Abram, 1996, p. 58). Although we cannot interrupt the flux of participation, Abram argues, we can choose how we participate. Immediate engagement of the intellect upon perceiving a phenomenon instead of allowing the imaginal faculty of the senses to elicit and construct knowing is a learnt cultural habit. As a former street magician, Abram observed how some people refused to allow their senses to lead them

³³ Helena Lovendal Duffell, Director of the Centre for Gender Psychology; Head of Education: Sexual Grounding Therapy International.

³⁴ I use this term to denote a threshold state (Turner, 1969/2008) (Turner, 1982) that has playfulness as its defining quality, not as Sparisou (2015) uses the term to describe exile as a form of ludic liminality with the potentiality of positive cultural experience.

in magical experiences, and instead conjured up (erroneous) explanations³⁵ to explain Abram's 'tricks'. Abram continues, "Encouraged by a cultural discourse that distains the unpredictable and puts a premium on detached objectivity; such persons attempt to halt the participation of their senses in the phenomenon" (1996, p. 59), implying that we are predisposed to participation but are conditioned to play the doubting game (Elbow, 2008) to a degree that restricts our perception and imagination.

Containers for knowledge generation

Each activity was a container for knowledge generation that related to each stage of the myth. Some of these were designed to draw the attention into the body and beyond, such as with the 'wild dance' and Constellations. As embodied exercises they not only made certain kinds of self-knowledge (somatic knowledge (Lawrence R. L., 2012)) accessible, but may have contributed to the incorporation of insights, as they became 'stored' in our bodies, because it is thought that gestural activities involving movement, such as embodied storytelling, ceremony, ritual, dance, etc. contribute to 'body memory' (C. Koch, Caldwell, & Fuchs, 2013).

The 'wild dance', as Richard referred to it, took place in a secluded lawned area where we were asked to close our eyes and allow our bodies to move freely with the sound and rhythm of the drum which Richard played at varying tempos for around 15-20 minutes. The rhythmic physical movement and repetitive drum cycles induced a meditative state as one's attention seemed to be carried by the sound. Some neurophysiological research suggests that heart rate and brainwave rhythms can synchronize with rhythmic sounds to produce altered states of consciousness (Fachner, 2011). I was left feeling calm and euphoric, with increased body awareness which seemed to extend beyond the physical boundaries of my body.

Other activities were exercises in what Jung called "active imagination" (Chodorow, 1997), such as a guided visualisation, in which we were taken on a journey through the Underworld to ask Persephone for a symbolic gift; and the writing of a scene from a myth or fairytale, in which we directed proceedings in our own fantasies. Each of these activities was preceded by others, which were sometimes reflective or contemplative; at other times, as with 'wild dance' and 'automatic writing', designed to shift awareness from the conceptual mode to the affective and imaginal modes. All the while we were encouraged to be alert and open to all phenomena, to assume that everything we experienced was 'real' in terms of personal relevance, following the Jungian idea that unconscious communication takes the form of images (Stein M. , 2003). The term 'images' in this sense should be understood as meaning impressions of various kinds, rather than simply visual images. When engaging in imaginal activities we were encouraged not to self-reflect in a critical way, but instead, as Jung advised, to maintain

³⁵ He gives the example of someone claiming to see wires when none were used.

an active attitude of engagement with whatever surfaced (Chodorow, 1997). The emergent self-discovery arising from these activities was generative, a creative activity of observation of, interaction with, and compassionate and innovative interpretation of spontaneous images. This implies that the process of individuation or self-knowledge is as much about the capacity to imagine who we are as it is about revealing who we are.

Challenging assumptions

Devices were employed to stimulate self-reflection and encourage participants to challenge their assumptions. For instance, Richard would challenge us to interrogate a habitual behaviour or ask a series of questions that prompted self-examination in different ways. The disruptions were gentle, frequent and persistent rather than critical or confrontational, which may have served to reduce internal resistance³⁶ (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). Each activity had some element of self-exploration and discovery, by peeling back a layer, exploring or exposing some aspect of self.

Opportunities for acknowledging unhelpful or redundant aspects, patterns, and ways of being and letting them go were integral to some activities. There were many opportunities for contemplation, which seemed to create space to acknowledge the previous usefulness of what now needed to be let go of, so that it could be detached from. Myers and Boyd (1991) stress that for new linkages to be established, inappropriate existing linkages must be broken down. New ideas can be painful and difficult to accept, perhaps because a part of the identity must be given up to enable its reorganisation (Bowlby, 1961).

It felt as if we shifted in and out of liminal states throughout each day. The imaginal and generative activities in particular, provided opportunities for gaining self-knowledge, and the range of activities stimulating experiential and presentational knowing, combined with the reflective activities meant that novel meaning making was encouraged, and I would venture, likely to occur. Sense-making however, was, for the most part, discouraged by Richard, whose belief is that when working in the mythos, efforts to sense-make should be kept to a minimum. New meanings are generated, and sense-making, he says, can and should be left until after the experience to allow the psyche to integrate them. In addition, my guess is that it helps to keep conceptual thought and propositional knowing to a minimum at times when the focus is on directing awareness towards other ways of knowing.

³⁶ The tendency to defend our existing beliefs.

Rituals

Rituals took the form of guided activities in which participants were asked to engage in a set dramatic scene. For each ritual, we were guided to different areas of the garden and instructed to engage with the scene before us as directed, whilst contemplating questions posed prior to the ritual. The facilitators took on the roles of mythic characters from the story, and issued instructions, guidance, or posed questions that required answers from each participant as they proceeded one by one through the scene. The ritual structure and content were at the same time playful yet solemn. The playfulness came from our willingness to 'make-believe' and collude in the ludic liminality of the mythos, and the solemnity from each ritual's form and content and our individual intentions to gain self-knowledge. These seeming contradictions in experience were disruptive, challenging habitual ways of thinking and behaving as well as social and cultural conventions (Sutton-Smith, 2001).

Langer describes rituals as, "a symbolic transformation of experiences that no other medium can adequately express" (1954, p. 39). In this way, the rituals served as symbolic enactments (Romanoff, 1998) to facilitate the integration of the accumulated knowing generated by the various activities. The interplay of the body, psyche, and conscious contemplation seemed to foster their embodiment, enabling me to "body forth" (Seeley & Reason, 2008) further knowing through the sensory immersion of 'acting' in the scene. It seemed to me as if acting out the ritual caused it to become part of me somehow, my mind fooled by my intention and action into believing it to be a 'real' act. The liminal nature of the rituals meant that we existed within them in a kind of threshold zone between the conscious and unconscious (Sas & Coman, 2016). Perhaps the symbolic nature of the rituals touched a part of me beyond the rational mind to fully comprehend, rooted as they were in the symbolic language of the unconscious (Langer S. K., 1954) (Jung C. G., 1967; Hillman J. , 1965).

The content of the rituals, being determined by the facilitators, meant that not all aspects seemed wholly relevant to my personal intention for the activity. Nevertheless, overall they seemed to provide one way of embodying insights by transforming them into presentational knowing through the experiential knowing of enactment.

Storytelling

The myth itself provided the overall structural framework, or container, for the programme. The story reading sections were interspersed throughout each day, driving the journey onward. Stories have long been used as vehicles for teaching, so there seems to be merits in using 'wisdom stories' for self-development purposes. Using a story imposes its themes onto participants. It may have many relevant elements but some, inevitably, will not fit or suit all the intentions of a programme or participant. Sufficient space within the framework of the story and workshop for participants to be able to relate metaphors, character situations, and ethical dilemmas to the context of their own lives may be key. Dirx suggests texts that stimulate imaginative processes have the effect of transforming ordinary existence into 'soul work' by establishing meaningful connections between the text and our life experiences (Dirx J. , 2001, p. 70).

Referencing Hillman (1989/1991) he suggests that we “glimpse the nature of the soul through the work of the imagination” (Dirkx J. , 2001, p. 70).

Frequent poetry readings and quotes from Jung and post-Jungian texts kept participants in the mythos through the evocative and emotive use of language. Richard kept propositional language to a minimum, only occasionally giving short explanations of Jungian and other concepts when participants were asked to suspend judgement and proceed ‘as if’ (Seligman, Weller, Puett, & Simon, 2008), those concepts were ‘real’.

There was little sharing of personal stories with the group except for at the morning check-ins, although there was some in pairs and small groups. After experiencing the power of personal storytelling to generate an empathic field (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006) on the ITD programme, the Mythodrama programme seemed oddly individually oriented by comparison. I wonder if this was, in part, an attempt to avoid crossing into a psychotherapeutic environment. Another explanation could be the influence from Olivier’s professional development work, where personal storytelling may be considered less acceptable, appropriate, or safe for participants due to issues of rank and power in organisations.

Most images, feelings and thoughts that arose concerning participants’ personal journeys were kept private, and in some ways this provided an assurance of safety and freedom, with the knowledge that we would not be asked to share intimate details of our inner worlds. As Dirkx (2001) advises, it can be important to avoid hasty disclosures that may be regretted. However, I feel that some opportunities for expanding insights and gaining different perspectives through the benefit of group interaction and learning may have been missed (Boyd, 1991).

We often moved directly on from activities into another story reading, which took us in a different direction. I felt at times I was on the cusp of grasping an insight, but had to leave it as my attention was needed for the next activity. Encouraged to trust the process, I surrendered to it, but on later reflection I felt as though some of those near-insights had been lost to me. One example of a missed opportunity for incorporation was after the activity of ‘Gathering Resources’, when participants arranged the objects they had gathered on their nature walk in the group room. These objects represented various resources that participants had identified as being needed to accomplish short and longer term goals. Nothing more, however, was said or made of this and eventually we all removed the objects and kept or discarded them.

It may have been helpful for people to share with the group what resource each of their found objects represented. Sharing those stories could have contributed to the sense of *communitas* by the group witnessing and acknowledging the fruits of each other’s ritual struggle (Clarkson, 2005). It may also have helped activate the power of those ‘resources’, to animate the symbolic objects and manifest them in the lives of the participants, bringing the stories to life in the world (McLean, Pasupathi, & Pals, 2007). Instead, the potential energy within them, and possible further insight through sharing (Aksana, Kisaca, Aydina, & Demirbuken, 2009), palpably dissipated when our attention was turned to the next activity.

Psychic dilemmas of working in the mythos

The affective-imaginal nature of the programme meant that we were often emotionally triggered by the content of the myth or the ensuing activities. We delved into dilemmas and challenges before us, and were frequently confronted by aspects of our behaviour or thinking that were not pleasant to face. Inevitably, this meant that at times, some of us experienced, what Boyd (1991) describes as, 'psychic dilemmas'. These difficult moments are opened-up to inquiry in this discussion.

Safety within the holding environment

The establishment of the holding environment began in the first session, with Richard's confident, reassuring manner appearing to put everyone at ease. Those I spoke to said they felt Richard was 'a safe pair of hands'. The holding environment was soon strengthened and maintained by the participants, who fostered a general atmosphere of trust and camaraderie conducive to openness (Boyd, 1991, p. 205).

One of the co-designers stated her assumption that because most of the participants were familiar with Mythodrama they would be able to handle whatever came up and hold the group between themselves. Only one of the three co-designers I spoke with had considered her role to be responsible for establishing and maintaining the holding environment. Richard, with his long association with therapy and personal development was keenly aware of his responsibility for maintaining a safe container. Despite this, the integrity of the container seemed to weaken at a certain point when some of the participants, myself included, struggled with difficult material that the story and activities brought up for them, which was not addressed, or perhaps went unnoticed by the facilitators. This aspect of the programme was not mentioned by any of the participants I conversed with after the programme, perhaps indicating that they were aware the programme might prove challenging in places and were prepared for and accepting of it.

I include the section below from my field journal because it illustrates that the process was at times challenging. It had become apparent that the group was, in some sense, living the myth. Our immersion in the mythos appeared to have an energetic effect on the group. Some mentioned poor sleep, vivid dreams, mental disquiet, disturbing emotions, and deep-seated patterns of behaviour being triggered by the themes and activities. A series of seemingly unrelated questions the previous afternoon had culminated in a ritual. Some, including me, had found the questions confusing, and did not understand the aim of the exercise. The ritual had left me feeling defensive and unsupported, and another participant feeling "defiant".

From my field journal: morning check-in on Wednesday 17th:

"Some participants voice their frustration at the myth, and there is some consternation as to where and when the so-called 'feminine wisdom' might be found. Three of us voice that we did not find the ritual yesterday helpful and were struggling to understand the point of it, but someone else said she found itl very useful because her responses to the questions in the various activities leading up to the ritual were related, and gradually became condensed as the ritual

progressed, making absolute sense to her. One participant noted she had experienced difficulty in fully immersing in the ritual, remarking that she had pulled herself up and made the effort to let go and trust that there was something to be learned here.

Richard urges us to stick with it, to trust the story, to live through it. He assures us that the sensemaking will come later. Reflecting on his words, I realise that my feelings of despondency and very low energy are probably indicators that I am in the story with Psyche, am feeling as she might have felt at this stage. Richard reminds us that Psyche is in a place of extreme vulnerability right now, and I realise that the negativity and defensiveness I felt at the end of yesterday stemmed from feeling vulnerable myself."

It was perhaps no coincidence that Psyche too, was feeling alone and unsupported, with nowhere or no one to trust or to turn to at that point. My conscious or ego-self experienced it as doubt in the design of the programme and negative feelings towards the quality of facilitation. Because I felt vulnerable and unsupported my defences went up, and I took myself into a place of greater safety and certainty with a familiar pattern of behaviour as my cynic came to the fore and took over to protect me. It was not until later, in quiet contemplation, that I was able to get from out of the grip of my initial emotional reaction and use those emotions as a vehicle to examine memories, associations, and images that helped me get to the heart of my reaction. As Dirkx (2001) points out, emotionally charged images tend to appear spontaneously within the learning process. These images invite us, he says, to explore realms not usually available to our every day consciousness. Dirkx suggests that it is an "engagement with soul" (2001, p. 69), which he describes as a "deep, emotional and spiritual connection between our inner lives and some aspect of our outer experience" (2001, p. 69).

Dirkx (2001) maintains that we are more able to engage with these images if we "*relax*" the ego, which suggests to me that when the participatory aspects of the psyche are active this loosening of the ego can occur. Perhaps this is why the strength of the holding environment and sense of communitas within a group is conducive to this kind of learning. I reflected that perhaps I was thrown into individuating aspects of psychic functioning (Heron J., 1992) when I felt unsafe, when negative emotions caused my defences to rise. I speculate that the level of vulnerability needed to fully engage in a programme like this means that if one's sense of safety is diminished one reverts rapidly from participatory to individuating aspects as the ego 'tenses'.

Boyd observed that when one has, what he terms as a "psychic dilemma" (1991, p. 179), one can experience a draining away of psychic energy. Psychic material from my past, embedded in painful memories, had surfaced, and I had questioned whether this was an appropriate environment to allow them in. Others appeared to be struggling with their own issues. It may have been useful to have some space for the group to address what was going on in a structured way, because there was an opportunity for supported learning to take place. Dirkx (2006) suggests that by consciously realising what is going on and choosing to work with it, we may gain insights into the self which revitalise us.

This time seemed to be the point of the lowest energy for the group as a whole, although it may not have been for individual participants. It was a phase in the

programme where participants were likely to surface difficult psychic material. Emotive psychic images and possible negative thoughts and projections could close a person down if they are not examined, understood, and worked through. As Boyd cautions, "Identification of and working on psychic dilemmas requires a supportive structure, a setting in which an individual feels safe and secure to engage in this difficult work." (Boyd, 1991, p. 181). To create and maintain safety whilst also generating the uncertainty needed in a learning environment full of potentialities is no easy task. In this instance, although the container was established quickly and soon reached a seemingly high level of safety, at times when everyone seemed busy with their own journeys and facilitators were unavailable, one or two of us were left feeling unsupported.

My confidence and energy was restored on Wednesday morning, coinciding with an upturn in Psyche's fortune in the myth. There was a palpable upward turn in the group's energy from that point on which was remarked upon by others.

Therapy, non-therapy, or simply learning in affective and imaginal modes?

Because Mythodrama uses Jung's Analytic and Hillman's Archetypal psychology and techniques there is a tendency for many personal issues to surface in the form of memories, images, emotions, and feelings; it is, after all, a personal development programme. I found not knowing what and how much to share with others difficult. It could be argued that some of the personal issues raised for participants might be more safely dealt with in a psychotherapeutic environment, which was not available here.

There are ethical considerations which do not appear to have been accounted for in the design of the Mythodrama programme. The possibility of psychological crisis was not raised, so there was no protocol or guidance for the participants of what to do or who to turn to if experiencing difficulties. It was not made clear, who, if any among the facilitators, was equipped or willing to deal with any of these kinds of issues. Conversely, it could be argued that the participants were all intelligent, educated, consenting adults, who had willingly embarked upon a journey of self-development. There was a reasonable presumption that they accepted responsibility for themselves. One of the indicators of being on the verge of self-growth seems to be the discomfort of aspects of the self feeling challenged (Mezirow, 1978) (1990). This discomfort could be seen as a symptom of being on the threshold of new knowledge, but Berger (2004) states that the person at the threshold needs to be supported to make the crossing.

There is a fine line to be walked in some personal development programmes between the desire for depth and the need to retain a boundary between development and therapy. I question though, whether this boundary is an illusion and if all development inevitably involves psychic dilemmas? Any programme that stimulates knowing beyond the rational-conceptual level is potentially subject to this dilemma. This is perhaps because in rational-intellectual learning the conceptual mode of functioning is further

removed from the affective and imaginal realms (Heron J. , 1992), maybe acting as something of a shield or buffer for the psyche. Facilitators employing Jungian or any psychotherapeutic methods have an ethical responsibility to consider the possible consequences of their work. That aside, facilitators of any learning experience cannot know what small and seemingly innocuous thing will trigger deep psychological issues in another person. It would be unwisely risk-averse to try to avoid the territory altogether, because to grow often means to 'face one's demons' along the way. It would be wise for facilitators to develop a 'psychological sensitivity' (Kokkos, 2014), awareness, and understanding of the unconscious processes that can hinder, as well as help learning in affect-imaginal modes, and to consider how they could manage difficult situations.

Participants' self-perception of transformative learning

Collecting participants' data: methods

During the introductions between participants and facilitators at the beginning, I disclosed that I would be inquiring into the programme as part of my larger doctoral inquiry. At the end, Richard gave me a brief forum to talk about my inquiry themes to the group and what I required of them if they chose to participate: to discuss their experiences, impacts, and learning gained from participation in the programme. Several gave me their contact details and I proceeded to contact and correspond with them over the following days and weeks. Respondents were issued with a letter informing them of my study, and a consent form (appendix 1) prior to the recorded conversations.

I conducted five participant interviews in person (x 2) and by Skype (x 3) in the days and weeks following the programme. Respondents were two men and three women, two of whom were also involved in the programme design. Interviews took the form of unstructured, informal recorded conversations that had a generative, sensemaking quality to them.

Respondents were offered a set of images as a possible starting point for conversation and aid to elicit multimodal knowing (see figure 33). They were selected from a set of Tarot cards based on the Greek Myths and Jungian archetypal psychology, illustrated by Tricia Newell (Sharman-Burke & Greene, 1986). Selected for their pertinence to the archetypal flavour of the programme, I chose a selection that contained rich imagery and symbolic elements that visually linked to some of the themes and topics of the workshop. Respondents were given the images a short time before the interview and invited to use them if desired, in whichever ways would be most helpful to them. Four respondents utilised the cards.



Figure 33. Examples images used in the interviews. Artwork by Tricia Newell, from (Sharman-Burke & Greene, 1986).

Two participants requested I ask specific questions about the programme as an aid memoire, and the others were content to talk about the week generally in a non-linear fashion, some focusing on their choice of image cards to tell a story or stories of their experiences. Some sensemaking was accomplished by respondents as the natural conversation unfolded, in which I engaged as a peer. The recorded conversations were between 30 minutes and two hours in duration. I also spoke to three co-designer-facilitators to gain insight into the motivation, intentions, design process and other programme design considerations, and that data informed my writing in other sections.

Thematising data

I listened intently and repeatedly to each of the interview recordings as I recalled, with an embodied sense, the energetic flow of the conversations and 'body language' of the respondents, which were part-and-parcel of my interpretation of their narratives (Anderson R. , 2000). I noted where respondents spoke directly about or alluded to learning that came about as a direct result of the programme, looking for indications of TL by referring to the TL texts discussed in chapter 3. I transcribed those sections of the conversations.

The ways in which participants spoke about their experiences suggested that there were different qualities or depths to their developmental journeys, and these provided the thematic coding for the transcripts. The coding is illustrated in the 'respondents' learning journeys' in the following section. I differentiated these qualities of learning and development, grouping the qualities in the different narratives into four thematic categories, each indicating incrementally deeper levels of learning, moving towards perspective change:

- assumptions challenged
- insight
- incorporation
- continuing unfolding.

They denote the process from the point at which one's current perspective is recognised as being limiting, to realisations (the seeds of change), to the early stages of embodying change. Linking perspective shifts evident in the personal stories to identity (Kerby P. , 1988) (Illeris, 2014) (West, 2014), I suggest that several participants experienced TL in the form of identity revision (Kroger, 2002) and development (Sokol, 2009).

Assumptions challenged

This category denotes a reflective quality to respondents' learning during the programme. When their assumptions were challenged, there was a revelatory tone to the respondents' voices and manner; expressions of surprise that they could have held those assumptions without questioning the origin of their construction or their current validity. Often, activities that elicited deeply emotional responses and images instigated self-exploration and reflection.

These initially disruptive and sometimes disconcerting insights into the origins of assumptions appear to play a part in driving the TL process forward, when TL occurs as a result of self-reflection. Something of the existing structure of the self is challenged and recognised as no longer being of service. What should take its place is not necessarily clear. So, I use this category to indicate a very early stage of the TL process, because it did not necessarily lead to generative insights about how to be or think differently, but rather, revealed what existed and invited further inquiry.

Insight

I used the term 'insight' for sudden or dawning intellectual and emotional realisations reached during the programme, often in relation to patterns of behaviour or habitual responses to situations that suddenly seemed baseless. I distinguish 'insight' from 'assumptions challenged' because they occurred less as a direct result of reflection, being more often instantaneous.

In a review of psychodynamic and cognitive behaviour therapy literature, Kunczewicz et al (2014) address the question of why insights do not always lead to behaviour change. They conclude that insights may be not always match the person's motivation, may not carry the potential for change in the current context, or other, external factors may not support the change process. Several conditions must be met, then, for insights to lead to change.

According to Kuncewicz et al (2014), no insight is wholly intellectual or emotional, though largely intellectual insights appear to increase understanding of the mechanisms of the problem and can give rise to possible solutions, though do not in themselves provide the motivation for change, while largely emotional insights, which may be felt with great intensity in the moment, may reveal previously unrecognised motivations which can lead to greater clarity of intention for change. Insight alone is not enough to further the TL process.

Incorporation

Insights seem powerful in the moment but can fade if not acted upon in some way. I use 'incorporation' to refer to insights that became more deeply embedded as embodied self-knowledge during the programme itself. I envisage incorporated knowing as embodied and holistic in the sense that it is realised in thought, feeling and action. Incorporation implies thinking, feeling, and being differently.

Continuing unfolding

I use the term continuing unfolding to refer to the ongoing and retrospective sensemaking that comes with the passing of time as we practice new ways of being and reshape and refine our new ways of being. Most of the interviews were carried out at least a week and sometimes several weeks after the programme, giving participants time to notice the ways in which they have been responding to life situations since. They were able to reflect on tangible psychological and behavioural differences that they could relate back directly to their self-development work done during the Mythodrama programme. Respondents spoke about their perspective shifts in ways that resembled newly formed strategies for moving forward. These were not precisely articulated, as if sense was still in the process of being constructed; yet shifts had resulted in tangible changes. There was a sense of respondents still being at their growing edge (Berger, 2004), and sense of anticipation of the continuing expansion of their self-understanding.

Respondents' Learning Journeys

Pseudonyms that attempt to reflect their cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds are used for all five respondents. I include responses from two of the co-designer-participants, Cordelia and Fiona, because they considered themselves to be full participants. Their responses were a little difficult to place because they had been working with and attempting to live the myth during the six months prior to the programme. Some of their comments I have taken to be 'continuing unfolding' despite one of the interviews taking place only a few days after the programme, because it was clear to me that some of the realisations and incorporation being spoken about were

processes that had been unfolding for some time during the work on the myth and the programme design rather than as a direct result of participating in the programme.

I summarise respondents' learning journeys in the spirit of Moustakas' (1990) creative synthesis³⁷, gleaned from my long conversations with them, using the data I had identified as falling into one or more of the qualities of learning categories. I indicate within italicised quotation marks where I have used respondents' own words.

Shrivas

Interview: 25/07/13

Shrivas was new to Mythodrama and attended out of curiosity for the programme's themes and interest in mythology and drama. Throughout the recorded conversation, Shrivas began to make further sense of his experience, appearing to gain new insights, showing surprise at his new thoughts and feelings.

Shrivas questioned the value of the myth as a container for development, but found the programme itself enlightening, learning much from his interactions with the women. He confessed that his assumptions about women had been challenged. Prior to the programme, he had not spent much time with women, and admitted that they were a mystery to him. He had perceived them as being alien to him in many ways **[insight]**. Shrivas also realised that he had previously rejected any notion of the feminine within himself **[insight]**.

Shrivas felt that he had gained a better understanding of the challenges women face. He admitted to having the realisation that he had never really listened to or heard women before **[insight]**. The programme enabled him to listen deeply, empathise and to reach a better understanding of the "*mystery of the feminine*", which not only lessened "*the grip*" that the mystery of the feminine had over him, but enabled him to gain more insight into the feminine within himself. "*The woman in me that I don't recognise, don't understand, can't accept, I'm now able to accept*" **[incorporation]**. Shrivas appeared to be full of wonder at his discovery, and also slightly shocked at his previous state.

Shrivas's mother had treated him harshly when he was a child, and he recognised this trauma as the origin of some of his psychic patterning **[insight]**. Shrivas had the realisation that his mother had been a martyr, and that he had unwittingly become one too **[insight]**. He spoke of her rejection of him and his fear of rejection **[insight]**, and saw a link between death and rejection but hadn't quite figured out quite what that meant yet. "*The Lab forced me to face my fear of death*". Shrivas expressed struggling

³⁷ Moustakas describes the creative synthesis as an expressive synthesis of components and core themes arising from the inquiry data, often conveyed in a "*narrative description utilizing verbatim material and examples*" (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 31-32)

with allowing things that need to, come to an end **[insight]**, and was now aware and developing strategies for working through that **[incorporation]**. Shrivass realised that he had been going through a gradual, semi-conscious process of internal change of late, and that the Lab had served to consolidate that shift **[incorporation]**. *“Something in me has been dying and I feel I’m in a new place”*. He felt that things were taking a new turn in his life, and though he didn’t know where that would lead, felt better equipped to face the challenges ahead **[continuing unfolding]**.

“Those Constellations are still alive in my mind, I constantly use them”. Of one of his Constellations Shrivass said, *“To have it [my relationship drama] played out in public, being embodied, seen, watching it, I have a better appreciation of the dynamic. I can think of it and it helps me work through it”* **[continuing unfolding]**.

Shrivass spoke of having acquired, through the Constellation work, a set of internal characters as resources to draw upon and he now felt self-supported **[incorporation]**, mentioning the archetypes of the King and the Magician as two of these resources. He had been thinking about those archetypes prior to the programme, and it seemed that the Constellation work enabled them to become embodied resources for him. He spoke about the woman who represented the King in his Constellation and said that every time he needed the King he thought of her, using his imagination to conjure up the qualities she had embodied as the King. Similarly, I was brought in to represent a ‘new resource’ in a Constellation of his, which he now has an image for within himself to call upon when needed. His ability to visualise internal resources as characters seems to have become a way of enabling him to gain more clarity and a kind of objectivity or distance that has allowed him to step outside of his habitual patterns of behaviour. *“What does it mean to be a man? I must rule my own kingdom now, to be my own man. Now I use it as an internal reference – what would the King do?”* **[continuing unfolding]**.

Shrivass recounted a recent incident in which he felt present and able to speak what he felt he needed to instead of reverting to his habitual behaviour of silence and later resentment. He spoke of being able to set clear boundaries so that he would not suffer his usual resulting feelings of self-betrayal **[continuing unfolding]**

Cordelia

Interviews: 30/07/2013, 31/07/2013, 02/09/2013

Cordelia was a co-designer as well as a participant and had clearly spent many months living in contemplation with and reflecting upon the myth. Her responses were reflective and insightful. I have tried only to include learning that appeared to directly relate to Cordelia’s experiences during the programme itself, but she had clearly reached many new understandings over the longer period of her involvement with the myth and the programme design.

Cordelia spoke of her frustration with Psyche, especially in the early stages of the myth, *“It’s the times in the story when I feel Psyche has been drawn on her quest, but of not*

knowing how to accomplish it – so there's all this potential she has but she really doesn't know how to accomplish these tasks she's been set. She's fairly ineffectual, and I think that's how I've been at times" [insight]. Cordelia spoke about learning "so much" from the Wednesday tasks "It was the point at which I really met the parts of myself that I've been struggling with for possibly many years, of realising that if I gave myself too much to my flow state and being in the moment, that it's very easy for me to lose sight of some of the necessities – the insight was structure and flow...I've given so much of my personal journey over to the flow state that I've let the structural aspects of my life...go, and that wasn't serving me well at all" [insight]. She concludes, "It [the task of 'sorting the seeds'] gave me a way of being able to embrace order" (without associating it with a masculine trait of power and dominance) [incorporation].

Cordelia asserted that the biggest revelation of the week was "stopping and being in nature, just looking up into the universe and knowing that everything I need to learn in my life is being presented to me here in nature..." [insight]. Seeking to be one with nature but experiencing her neglect of practical matters, she realised that the solutions she sought had been right there all along, inherent in the natural world, not in opposition to it. Cordelia spoke of understanding her felt experience of flow and structure in the natural world as an eco-systems perspective [insight].

Cordelia remarked that being in the Constellation and needing to ask for what she wanted made her realise that articulating her needs was something she had to, and was beginning to, put into practice [continuing unfolding].

"Previously I've been very afraid of spending time in a place of darkness ...because we came back from the journey into the underworld and from meeting death, somehow I felt more prepared to be able to really enter into that experience". She reflected upon this darkness being framed as depression by society, but that she was beginning to see what she had previously thought of her own "depression" very differently [assumptions challenged].

As a child, Cordelia had gained recognition and reward for academic achievement and independence and so lived her life like that. She implied that she had learned little about love from her family. "I didn't know what love... was, it was a big unknown". "Now I'm realising that the more I engage with love in my life – that it is the energy of life – and yet I had no idea about that!" [continuing unfolding]. ... "What I feel as I come out of the story is a huge sense of balance [incorporation]. I'm not saying that's a constant state, I'm saying it's a sense of almost like remembering that part of me that knows the exquisiteness of balance and peace within" [continuing unfolding].

Cordelia seemed full of insights and shifts in perspective. She had gained awareness of the origins of some of her patterns of thought and behaviour, which had caused her to challenge her assumptions, reflect upon insights, and generate new ways to be. Cordelia appeared to have incorporated some of the insights she gained during her involvement with the programme, and expressed motivation to realise them fully through further action.

Harriet

Interview: 23/09/2013

Harriet had participated in several Mythodrama personal development programmes, and spoke highly of them as learning experiences, saying, *"It's a place I'm going to learn and it's not always comfortable"*. She had attended this one specifically because she had felt *"stuck"*.

Harriet assumed that she understood and had already dealt with her family issues, but they surfaced again during the programme **[assumptions challenged]**. She was surprised at a family situation arising in her Constellation. *"Witnessing the stuckness of it was enough to wake me up"* **[incorporation]**, and although that stuckness remained unresolved in the Constellation, she found that it had *"allowed me to see the relationships in the family differently"* **[insight]**. She remarked that though her family issues continued, the work had enabled her to become unstuck in other aspects of her life since. She noticed that something had *"unblocked"*, enabling her to move forward with her professional practice, and she told me about a series of professional engagements now booked in her diary **[continuing unfolding]**.

Although Harriet's responses were on the whole general and high level, she did reveal an instance of intuitive knowing she had experienced during one of the rituals. Harriet remembered vividly being woken by the beating wings of Eros, and of *"finding that very, very moving"*. She had then experienced what she described as a moment of *"knowing", "beyond doubt, beyond question, beyond understanding"* what she needed to do in the moment **[incorporation]**. She recalled having experienced that feeling of knowing before.

Harriet also reported that things had shifted a little for her in a significant way, in that she had asked for *"the gift of simplicity"* in her life. *"I tend now not to use the word 'only' or 'just' and to use the word 'simply', and I think that was something important for me"*. She has noticed since that, *"It has helped. I do notice, somewhere in there is simplicity... to do things with simplicity"* **[continuing unfolding]**.

Edward

Interview: 22/09/2013

Edward was a Jungian psychotherapist by profession and so often spoke in Jungian terms about his insights and development. He had been struggling for some time with particular issues to do with his relationship to *"the feminine"*, and the programme appeared to help him make a breakthrough with some of those. Edward had been hoping to gain a better understanding of feminine leadership in order to better help his female clients; however, he professed to have found more insight and understanding from his interactions with the women participants than he did from the myth itself. It struck me as a mature insight to find wisdom in ordinary women rather than in the somewhat elevated forms of mythic feminine archetypes (particularly in the way they were portrayed in the Mythodrama programme).

Edward highlighted the Constellation work as *“one of the most personally helpful pieces of the whole time”*. He was particularly struck by the loving strength with which one group of women held him in his Constellation **[assumptions challenged]**. He remarked upon how they remained ruthlessly true to what they felt from the field as representatives despite his evident anger and frustration at times, enabling him to cross the threshold into new understanding and self-knowing **[incorporation]**. The Constellations, he said, helped to bring in the *“light feminine”* after years of feeling dominated by the *“dark feminine”* which had previously had a profoundly unhelpful effect on him and his relationships with women. *“What I found in the Constellation work was that even though there could be a lot of energy there that wasn’t necessarily all pleasant, it wasn’t all dark, and there could be whatever…rage, there could be all those things and it was held, it was not made wrong, it wasn’t run away from, it wasn’t… everything just had to find the right space and in that sense then I could move forward”* **[incorporation]**.

Edward admitted to always having felt split when in relationship, but felt safer now, more able to remain intact **[incorporation]**. He expressed now *“knowing that the parts of myself that I’d split apart in order to go on, that I was either following the adolescent completely or denying him completely”* **[insight]**. Edward realised that he had been looking for a partner who would fulfil all his needs, desires and expectations, and he had realised it was unrealistic to think that one person could and should be all of that for him **[insight]**. He spoke of previously assuming that he had to lose something in order to gain what he desired, but had realised that it was *“nonsense”* and that he would not have to compromise or *“give up”* anything regarding his current relationships in order to *“make room”* for others **[assumptions challenged leading to strategy for incorporative action]**.

Edward spoke passionately and movingly about something that was just becoming clear, that *“there was an aspect of me that was there before [a previous partner] that was as beautiful, that is mine, is not related to her, that it’s me, like she was carrying my Anima there. …I just had this dream not long ago where it showed me that there was a piece of my Anima that was there before her that was as beautiful, if not more beautiful than that”* **[continuing unfolding]**.

Fiona

Interviews: 03/09/2013, 06/9/2013

Fiona was a co-designer as well as a participant, and had studied the myth in-depth in the months prior to the programme and had reached her own understandings of its symbolic and archetypal elements. The key themes that had emerged for her were *“beauty”* and *“trust”*, which was interesting to me because I had experienced her as seeming a little wary of some of the participants during the programme, and she had been the most reluctant at first to be interviewed. Once I had gained her trust by sharing the intimate details of my own experience of the programme with her, however, she participated enthusiastically in our conversation. Fiona used the image cards I provided, which she asked for well in advance, to respond with symbolic and intuitive

responses that she had written down after contemplating the cards. She spoke in general terms about the programme, only alluding to her own learnings. It was very difficult to decipher which learning was as a result of the programme and which was reached during her involvement with it as a whole. We conversed around the images, and some of them we made new sense of together, which provided fresh insights for both of us.

Fiona reflected upon the integration of the masculine and feminine and spoke of Eros at one point as *"contemplating loss but remembering bliss"*. She spoke of Psyche seeming to have found some balance and being ready to come out of the wilderness after *"so much suffering and betrayal"*, and I felt strongly that she was referring to her own life despite speaking in the third person **[insight]**. Fiona realised that *"what you run from is what you need the most"* **[insight]**.

Fiona talked about the inherent beauty of *"the deep feminine soul"*, that *"It is a place of complete peace"*. She described having reached a fuller understanding of the dimensions of Aphrodite since having *"met"* her during the programme. *"It was if I was able to touch into that at various points that week"* **[incorporation]**.

Trust seemed to pertain to the trust in one's intuitive self and in other, unseen and unknowable forces. She spoke of the need to trust the self in the Constellation work, of keeping one's integrity and of suspending all judgements. She described it as going into the underworld, trusting *"the truth of the unconscious"*, referring to it as *"a sacred journey"*. Fiona also valued the humility required to do the Constellation work, in which she was experienced and continuing to practice **[continuing unfolding]**.

Seeds of change?

The programme provided a diversity of learning and development opportunities throughout the week by engaging participants in variety of activities in which participants could generate knowing in various ways.

The interview data suggests that each respondent felt they gained potentially transformative self-knowledge from engaging in the programme; they reported perspective and behavioural changes. Insights gained were varied and deeply personal, and their incorporation seems to have been aided by the activities engaged in on the programme and through interactions with other participants, as well as through reflection and action. While being able to pick out key moments of insight, most agreed that it was the programme as a whole that enabled insights as opposed to any single activity. Significantly, respondents made direct and clear links between their recent developmental progress and the work they did on the Mythodrama programme.

Everyone responded positively to the Constellations and remarked upon them as a developmental highlight of the programme. There are many possible reasons for this and I will speculate on a few of them. As a representative, I experienced high functioning in the participatory aspects of the affective and imaginal modes, which

produced very positive feelings of connection to others and 'the knowing field'. People were held, acknowledged and witnessed within its safe, structured container. The shared experience of knowledge generation, with participants actively involved in helping each other with a specific issue, not only validated the person, their dilemma, and the knowledge generated, but increased empathy and feelings of *communitas* (Turner V. , 1982). Issue holders could observe a living, multidimensional representation of the systemic connections of their issues and watch how shifts in their energetic configuration could influence all aspects of them. It was a radically different way of generating knowing in group situations than most people were used to. The knowing was physically tangible, if inexplicable, which rendered it irrefutable to those who experienced it.

The "as if" (Seligman, Weller, Puett, & Simon, 2008) frame of mind of ludic liminality facilitated exploration and experimentation with different ways of thinking and being. The rituals punctuating the week provided immersive embodied experiences that, at their most successful, enabled participants to both generate and begin to incorporate knowing. At worst, they sometimes seemed irrelevant to the aims of individual developmental journeys, but may have contributed, through the necessity of willing collusion, to the generation of an empathic field (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006) and sense of *communitas* valuable to the learning environment.

The Mythodrama programme illustrates how experiential and presentational knowing can be generated through activities that shift us into affective and imaginal modes. It gives some insight into how the inherent creativity of imagination can be harnessed in the service of self-knowledge.

Some of these narrative accounts indicate changes in respondents' perspectives. But is it enough to say that TL occurred? Are these insights but the seeds of change? Does the perspective shift that insights afford us, merely show us a glimpse of transformation? Insights can fade, along with their transformative potential. Even if our insights remain clear, how can they be transformed into lasting changes that help us to thrive? What form do these changes take? Do they require action in the world, and what forms would action have to take? Is it enough that we feel different? Do we need to be different, or have that difference noticed by others?

These questions are, in part, a response to my own failure to maintain the initial enthusiasm and intention to act upon some of the insights I gained in the Mythodrama programme. I take these questions forward and am able to address some of them in my longer term investigation of the Vision Fast programme, detailed in the following chapter.

Reflections on the study

The programme was a unique event that would not be repeated and so there would be no opportunity to study the process and impacts as experienced by a different cohort of participants. Longer term study of impacts of the programme on participants was not possible, so it cannot be known if the initial enthusiasm and insights led to lasting

change. It may also have been the case that the participants who gained the most from the programme were the ones who volunteered to be interviewed, so it cannot be assumed that all participants had developmental experiences.

Only two of us were new to Mythodrama and did not know anyone involved with the programme. Others were uncritical of any aspects of the programme, perhaps because of their apparent awe of Richard and familiarity with the co-designer facilitators. This meant that it was difficult to comment critically on the programme except from my own perceptions. I have tried to be careful in this respect, to make it clear that the opinions formed were my own, and to reflect upon my own inner conflicts and assumptions. Where I have made critical generalisations about the structure and facilitation, I have done so when issues also appeared to impact upon other participants. Even so, I struggled at times because of my own teaching experience, knowledge, and style, to refrain from making judgements about others, or thinking that I knew better just because I would have done some things differently.

I enjoyed the Mythodrama programme immensely and found it personally valuable, yet there were influences that may make my view of the experience appear more critical than it was. I had offered to write an evaluation of the programme for Richard and had begun to integrate some developing thoughts on how my research could have implications for running events with transformative potential (see chapter 7, where I bring some of these together). At the time of writing the main body of this chapter (2013) one of my supervisors had been encouraging me to show how I could take a critical approach in my thesis generally, which also influenced my analysis, in part because I was still trying to find my own voice and confidence as an inquirer. On reflection, this evaluator's perspective, along with my additional focus on criticality influenced my style of writing in this chapter.

I am new to interviewing, and because of my enthusiasm of being a fellow participant, I sometimes did not give the respondents enough space to respond. I took silences to mean they did not understand my question or had nothing to say. I realised, listening back, they probably just needed time to think. I was often too quick to offer my own thoughts, which may have influenced others. If I had conducted more structured interviews I may have found it easier to stay on point, but their unstructured nature meant that our conversations meandered a lot. This made it laborious to listen back to and identify learning. It was difficult to compare responses from different people because the conversations varied too widely.

The programme focused on surfacing and working creatively with unconscious material or psychic images to facilitate self-development. As such, it was not a typical example of transformative education and so it may appear, at first, that findings cannot easily be transposed to other contexts. However, I argue that the data presented here illustrates how affective and imaginal modes of being can be employed to generate experiential and presentational knowing that can be a valuable aspect of the transformative learning process in different contexts.

6.1. The Vision Fast: a rite-of-passage

Introduction

In the previous chapter, liminality, considered to be a potentially transformative state (Turner V. , 1964) (Sutton-Smith, 1972), becomes a central theme of learning in affective and imaginal modes. Entering intentionally into ludic liminal states appears conducive to the generation of creative presentational knowing. The Mythodrama programme data suggested that the 'not-knowing' of these liminal states sometimes gave rise to insights but did not guarantee TL. Liminality also sometimes gave rise to embodied knowing, which appeared to be integrated knowing and as such, perhaps a better indicator of TL. Neither insights nor embodied knowing were isolated events but part of, or a result of a larger process at work.

Anthropologist Arnold van Gennep coined the phrase 'Rites of Passage', which he defined as "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (van Gennep, 1977) in (Turner V. , 1967, p. 94), implying that rites-of-passage not only apply to major transitions in life, but in relatively small changes too, such as changes of role. Van Gennep referred to rites of passage in the context of rituals that marked transitions of participants from one state to another in a psychosocial sense. Victor Turner (2008) later broadened the concept to a wider cultural context.

The Rite-of-Passage (RoP) consists of three phases: Severance, Threshold, and Incorporation. To Lertzman (2002), transformation is the essence of an RoP. Turner focused on the Threshold or liminal phase as being the most significant phase of the process (Turner V. , 1964), and Lertzman describes it as, "where core experiences of transition take place; the individual is, in a sense, unformed, or being reformed" (2002). I could understand why there was so much emphasis on this phase. In my design work, it was where the creative 'magic' seemed to happen. However, without intention and preparation, liminality was unproductive. Without subsequent work to build on the creative insights gained in liminal space, projects could not be brought to completion. I felt that the phases of the RoP preceding and following the liminal phase must be crucial to the process as a whole.

The Three Phases of the rite-of-passage³⁸

I outline the three phases here, and elucidate further throughout the chapter.

1. Severance (School of Lost Borders (SoLB)) / *Séparation*³⁹ (van Gennep, 1977):
Disruption. The removal or detachment of an individual from a state or fixed point in a social structure. Preparation; becoming ready for the transition into a new role or state of being. Symbolic death; acknowledging and grieving, letting go of what must be let go of.

2. Threshold (SoLB) / Liminality (Turner V. , 2008), *Marge* (van Gennep, 1977):
Traversing a realm that resembles neither the previous or future state. A state in which the person has left behind the old position but has not yet adopted the new one. It contains symbolic elements of death and rebirth. "Betwixt and between" (Turner V. , 1964) two stable psychological and/or social structural states.

3. Incorporation (SoLB) / *Agrégation* (van Gennep, 1977):
The initiate emerges transformed; a stable state is once again attained and clearly defined. Recognition by the community that the initiation has taken place. The new state is nurtured and reinforced by the community, and the initiated one assumes their new role.
(Turner V. , 1964) (2008)

I was particularly taken by an article by McWhinney and Marcos (2003), who liken the rite-of-passage (RoP) of a Navaho healing ceremony to the TL process, whilst emphasising the developmental, emancipatory and holistic goals of contemporary transformative education practice. A conversation in February 2013 with a psychotherapist friend about to undertake a Vision Fast with the School of Lost Borders (SoLB), led me to embark on a contemporary RoP to gain embodied understanding of the roles of the three phases of the rite-of-passage in the process of transformation. In April 2013 I flew to New Mexico to participate in a twelve day

³⁸ The 'term rite of passage', originated from the first English translation of van Gennep's *Les Rites de Passage* (1909), but more appropriately translates as 'rite of transition' according to Solon T. Kimbal, author of the foreword to the 1961 edition, but is kept to the original due to the general usage of the phrase.

³⁹ Van Gennep's original French is 'séparation', translated as 'separation', but can also mean detachment, which I think is perhaps more apt in describing its purpose. Similarly, 'marge' is translated as 'transition', but can also mean margin, hence the term 'threshold', used by some. Gennep's term 'agrégation' translates well enough as 'incorporation' or 'integration'.

Women's Vision Fast⁴⁰ programme, which included four days and nights of fasting in the desert in freezing temperatures, alone except for a few bottles of water, a sleeping bag, and a tarpaulin.

As with my other field inquiries I was a full participant in the Vision Fast (VF) programme. My inquiry interests in this cycle included: the investigation of the rite-of-passage process and its relationship to TL, particularly in the context of working primarily in affective and imaginal modes; to interrogate the notion of transformation; to consider whether different sensemaking systems (in this case Jung, and the Four Shields) might be useful to adopt when working in extrarational modes; to gain further insight into the psychological modes and ways of knowing as set out by Heron, by tracking the ways in which I was functioning and generating knowing; to better understand how intuitive knowing is generated.

I kept a field journal to track my experience, in which I recorded my immediate responses to and observations of each part of the programme as well as reflections on the process during the twelve days of its duration. I attempted to remain aware of changes in my awareness and perception, and to track the ways in which I was generating knowing. Following the programme, I wrote a narrative account of my experience while it was fresh, using visualisation to relive the events, and my journal notes as an aide memoire. Over the following months, using a process of immersion and incubation (Moustakas C. , 2001), I analysed the experience and process, aided by an inquiry group set up with some of my fellow participants. My relationships with these women endure, and I recorded extended conversations with three of them, one in June 2014, and two in 2016, about the Vision Fast and its impacts.

Structure and form of the chapter in three parts

The variety of texts across the three parts of the chapter are my attempt to provide layers of meaning and sensemaking from multiple modes of being and ways of knowing.

Part one comprises an introduction to the study, information about the programme and SoLB organisation, followed by my edited narrative description of the experience (pseudonyms are used when mentioning participants by name). I end the section by reflecting on the experience as a personal transformative learning journey.

My account is written in the first person present tense. The sense of the unfolding newness of experience gives an immediacy and, I intend, an aliveness to the writing. As philosopher David Abram puts it:

⁴⁰ I chose it because my friend had already committed to joining this programme, the timing of it worked well for me, and I felt the high desert would be an additional challenge for me.

"If ... we wish to describe a particular phenomenon without repressing our direct experience, then we cannot avoid speaking of the phenomenon as an active, animate entity with which we find ourselves engaged. To the sensing body, no thing presents itself as utterly passive or inert. Only by affirming the animateness of perceived things do we allow our words to emerge directly from the depths of our ongoing reciprocity with the world" (Abram, 1996, p. 56).

The difficulty in writing about this kind of experience is that its qualitative nature lends itself more to narrative, expressive, presentational forms, rather than propositional ones. This makes for enlivening reading, but is neither concise nor analytical in the way that propositional writing can be, because the insights and analysis contained within are rarely as explicit. Nevertheless, I want the reader to experience a sense of living the experience to appreciate its intensity and profundity, and to view narrative form as a frame that provides a distinctive gateway into the understanding of experience.

In part two, I present, analyse, and discuss interview data from three Vision Fast participants, which, in addition to my primary data set represented by my own experience and reflection upon it, I use to draw out and discuss core experiential themes and processes involved in the transformative learning journeys of participants. I distil the elements of the VF RoP and create an illustrative process network map.

In part three, I compare the VF process with two recognised models of transformative process. Firstly, I look at Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey from the realm of the mythos, to establish the VF process as an undisputable model of development. I then return to Mezirow's TLT, in the realm of the logos, discussing differences, parallels and intersections in the two processes.

The School of Lost Borders

The SoLB was established in the 1970s by Meredith Little and Steven Foster PhD.⁴¹ SoLB adopts the RoP as a framework for the design of its contemporary wilderness rites-of-passage programmes, described as a process of dying, passing through, and being reborn (Foster & Little, 1992). The SoLB Vision Fast is based upon the Native American tradition of the Vision Quest (Irwin, 1994), an initiatory rite usually taking place in the natural environment. It serves as a vehicle for entry into a symbolic

⁴¹ Foster was a University lecturer, interested in pan-cultural mythology and rites-of-passage. He conducted an in-depth personal inquiry, spending several months in the desert and studying with Native American teachers, before setting up the SoLB. (School of Lost Borders, 2015).

liminal landscape, sometimes referred to as the 'wilderness within' (Foster & Little, 1984) because it enables the outer landscape to mirror the internal one. This is thought to facilitate contemplation of one's identity, values and place in the world.

The purpose of fasting is to experience the physical and psychological effects it produces. Firstly, there is an emptying out, where the body is freed from the effects of the usual digestive processes. Secondly, the preparation and eating of food is part of the daily routine for most of us. Disrupting that habit frees us from the taken for granted and from mindless consumption. Without the necessity or even possibility of food we may seek sustenance in other ways. Foster says,

"Without food in its belly, the human psyche 'eats' memories, sensations, emotions, feelings, thoughts, illuminations and prayers; it 'eats' the landscape... Fasting erases the boundary between the self and nature. The person who returns from a wilderness fast may have a hungry body, but the soul, the mind, and the spirit has been fed" (Foster & Little, 1996, p. 19).

I embarked on the programme with as few expectations as possible, but my fears were that it would be either based on overly romantic interpretations of First Nations culture or a bit New Agey, blending together various spiritual practices to suit, but without much depth. Founder of transpersonal psychology Stan Groff voiced my worry that,

"There needs to be cultural integrity and sound guidance from trained individuals when dealing with transformational practices. Such processes done incorrectly or without proper training can do more harm than good, and perhaps should not be done at all" (Groff, 1996).

The programme: New Mexico Women's Vision Fast

Venues: Cochiti Lake Campground, Pueblo de Cochiti Indian Reservation, Sandoval County, New Mexico (days 1-3 and 9-12).

Galisteo Basin Preserve, Galisteo, New Mexico (days 4-8).

Programme duration: 12 days, 22nd April – 2nd May inclusive.

Accommodation: tent camping.

Fees: Dependent on ability to pay⁴²

⁴² SoLB is a non-profit organisation. Fees cover the School's and guides' expenses but not time (Coyle, 2016). Fees are structured according to one's ability to pay and suggested amounts are on their website. Scholarships are available to those without sufficient means, funded by

Guides: Lead: Emerald (real name) and Mari; Assistants: Sorrel and Ana (pseudonyms)
Participants: 12 women of mixed age, nationality, and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Diversity of gender identity and sexuality.

There were two prerequisites for attending the programme, both designed to help participants focus on their reasons for coming, and to help bring them to a state of readiness for embarking on it. The first was a 'Medicine Walk', a day of fasting and walking in nature, asking 'nature' and 'solitude' to help clarify intentions. The Medicine Walk provided a taster for the longer solo Fast. My walk was a bitterly cold trudge through the Chiltern hills amid flurries of stinging snow. I returned from my short adventure with some insights about my habitual responses to situations, and how they had a tendency to override my inner sense of knowing, leading to poor decisions. Improving my ability to listen to and trust that inner knowing became one of my intentions for the Vision Fast.

The second was to write and send a letter of intent to the guides. Its purpose was to clarify my thoughts and feelings about what I hoped to gain from doing a VF. The intention setting meant I spent a lot of time contemplating this, honing my previously convoluted thoughts to a two page letter of intent. I might not have given it as much attention had I not have been asked to write the letter.

The Four Shields of Human Nature

I present the Four Shields framework here, as it is referred to in the narrative account that follows. I comment further on its use as a sensemaking device later in the chapter. The Four Shields framework was offered to participants as a sensemaking tool. It is a map of human development which places people in relation with the natural world and its cycles. Shared with Foster and Little by the Cheyenne teacher Hyemeyohsts Storm⁴³ (Foster & Little, 1999), they developed it as their philosophical approach to wilderness fasts and story council. The 'shield' is a term from Native American culture, where the shield serves a dual purpose, "to defend the bearer from harm, and to express, through its design and themes, the individual who stands behind it" (Foster & Little, 1999, p. 4). As a form of medicine wheel, the Four Shields is intended to be a practical guide for balancing or harmonising the different aspects of ourselves, indicating where we might be stuck and how to shift out of the fixation of that position. The idea is that it is healthy to be in the flow, to cycle through the directions to maintain balance between the different aspects of self and ways of being. I am reminded of Heron (1992): if we fixate on one mode of being or way of knowing, we

donations. In the Native American tradition, gifts may be given to the guides at the end of programmes, but are not expected.

⁴³ See: Storm, Hyemeyohsts: *Lighteningbolt*, (1994), New York: Ballantine Books., *Seven arrows*, (1972), New York: Harper & Row., *Song of Heyoehkah*, (1981), San Francisco: Harper & Row.

do so at the expense of the others, which is limiting. The concept of balancing our different qualities are found in various forms in Eastern and Western Mystic traditions (Edson, 2012). As well as achieving short term balance, the Four Shields framework aims at helping people transition through different phases in life, which makes it highly relevant for use in RoP ceremonies.

The encompassing outer circle symbolises wholeness and continuation. The directions: South, West, North, and East, represent four archetypal components of body, psyche, mind, and spirit. The Four Shields framework can be used as a diagnostic tool because (retaining the 'medicine' metaphor) each archetypal 'direction' comprises what could be termed healthy and unhealthy, or balanced and imbalanced aspects. The model is kept simple so it can be understood and used by most people to spot 'indicators' of action, speech, thought, and feeling in themselves. Lengthy descriptions are also avoided so as not to overly pin down meanings. As archetypal, the symbolic Shields each have their feeling tones, are ambiguous and manifest in unique ways in individuals. As a guide to the symbolic realm of the Vision Quest or Fast its rootedness in the natural world become useful as the landscape becomes a mirror to the psyche.

I set out the Four Shields model below (figure 34) in an illustrative diagram⁴⁴, using Foster and Little's text (1999, pp. 2-8).

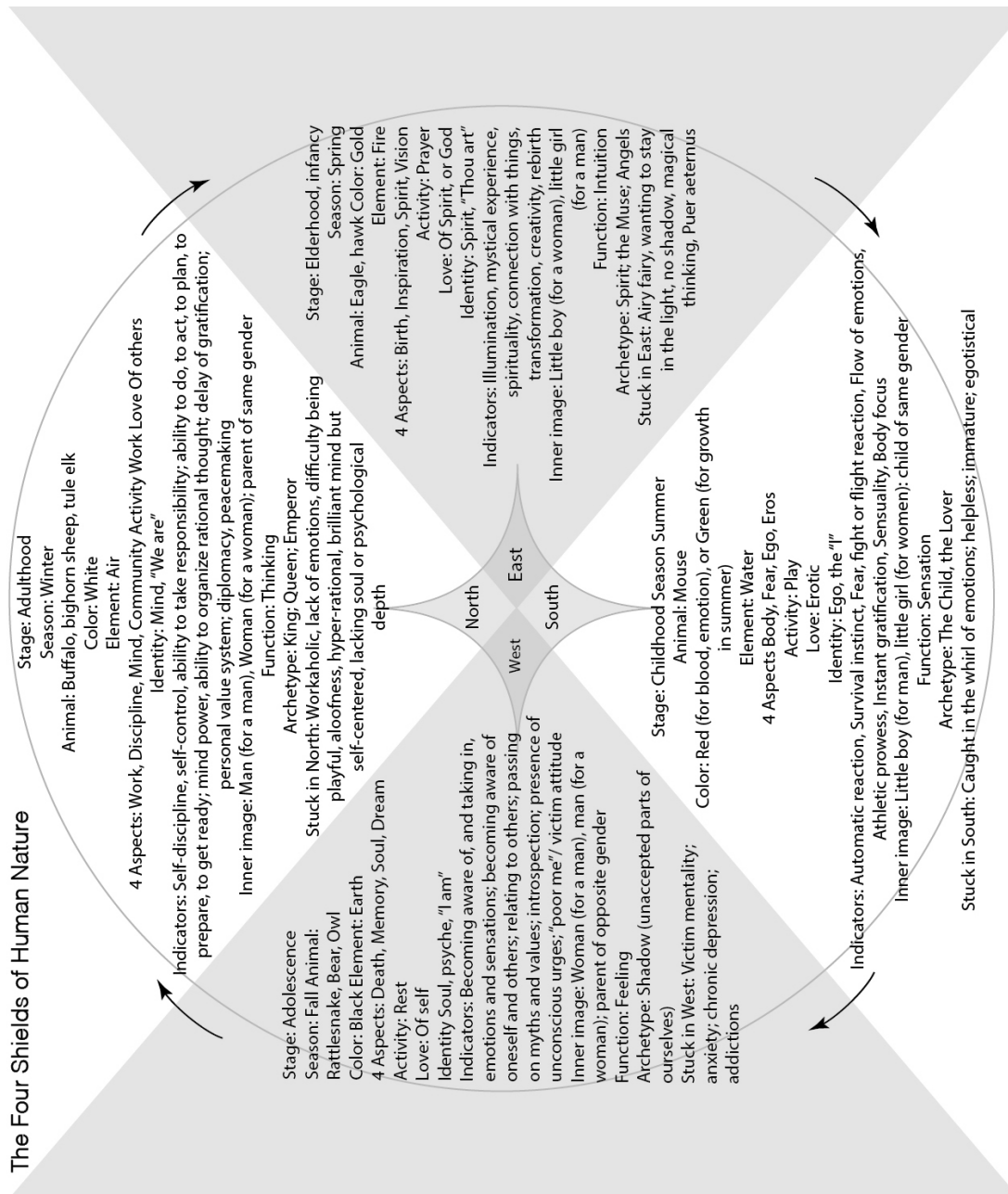


Figure 34. The Four Shields of human Nature, illustration: R.Lovlie, text: (Foster & Little, 1999)

⁴⁴ See appendix 4 (DVD) for digital versions of figures 1-2.

I was so intrigued by the technique of 'mirroring' used by the guides in Elder Council (discussed in Chapter 6.2), that I subsequently attended a 'Mirroring the Four Shields' training programme, where a more detailed elucidation was discussed. I set some of that out in a separate diagram (figure 35) below, to illustrate the 'indicators' in more detail, which show how it can be used as a diagnostic tool. Again, these were offered as feeling tones, rather than set rules.

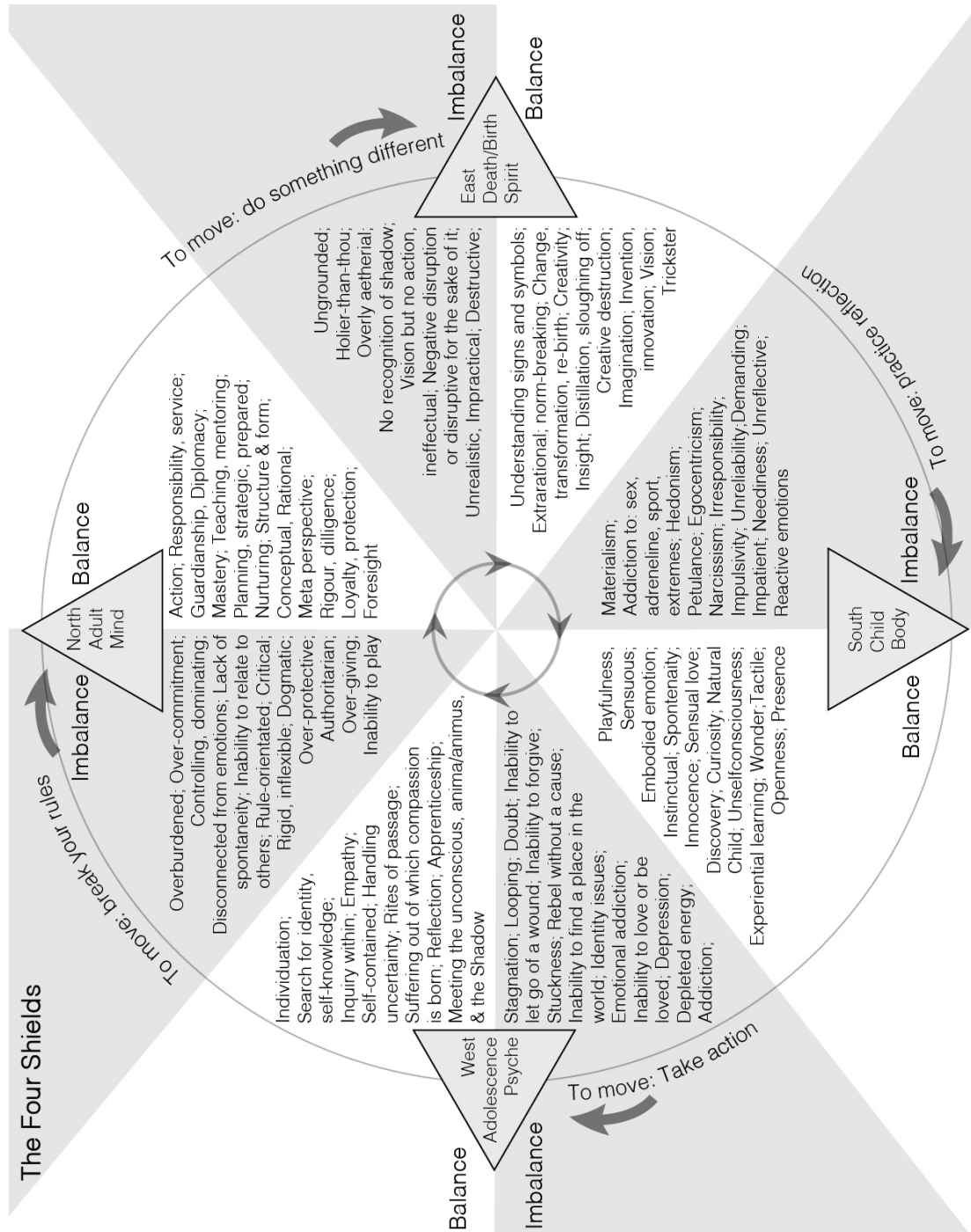


Figure 35. The Four Shields as 'indicators'. Illustration: R. Lovie, from 'Mirroring the Four Shields of Human Nature: The Art of Story Telling and Listening' training, July 2014.

Vision Fast: Experiential narrative

Phase 1: Severance

Monday 22nd April: Day 1

Emerald, one of guides⁴⁵, is in her early 60s, her wild shoulder length grey hair unkempt, a floppy khaki hat plonked on her head, the brim partially concealing her very bright, twinkling eyes. She laughs easily, and has a powerful, husky voice that seems to speak directly from and to the heart. Emerald has an air of unquestionable authority that we all respond to; she exudes authenticity and indomitability. Mari, our second experienced guide, seems somehow ageless, of slight build, her pale skin and silvery-blond hair suggestive of Northern European ancestry.

We sit, twelve participants, two guides, and two assistant guides, under a large, open but roofed, circular structure set apart from the main camping area. This becomes the place where we come together each day to “sit in ceremony”, as the guides call our meeting circle. We construct a circular arrangement of assorted camping chairs and cushions on the ground. In the centre of the circle are four large stones, placed to correspond with the cardinal points, two large half shells filled with dried mugwort and sage, and two rattles.

Emerald welcomes us and briefly explains the concept behind *Smudging*, a traditional Native American cleansing ritual, before lighting the dried herbs and demonstrating the procedure by wafting the resulting smoke over her face and body before passing the shell to the person next to her. The other shell is lit at the same time and goes around from the opposite side of the circle. As the smoke fills the space we quieten down and gradually settle into silence as the shells complete their circuit and are placed in the middle once more.

We introduce ourselves in turn and share how we are feeling. The person speaking takes a rattle and shakes it before and after speaking. It provides a punctuation point between speakers, and the sound seems to clear the air. We are asked to speak concisely and from the heart. One by one, we tentatively express our feelings of vulnerability and trepidation. We go around the circle a couple more times, each time Emerald beginning with a different point of inquiry. I sense that as we each add our voice to the mix, we become a little more comfortable, although we all seem reserved, unwilling to share too much too quickly with these strangers. Each person brings their

⁴⁵ Our lead guides are both elders, people who make a commitment to use their knowledge and wisdom in service to others. There is no specific age for becoming an elder although it is usual these days for people to be over fifty, when obligations of work and family have lessened, and one has accumulated a deal of worldly experience and self-knowledge.

personal wounds, hopes, fears, and desires - their stories. The women vary in age from their early twenties through to fifties. We share our motivations for being here; some wish to mark their transition into womanhood, others are celebrating moving closer to or into elderhood. Some are here to heal fresh or old wounds; others are seeking ways to move forward positively in life. Some seek clarity and direction, and some have come simply to affirm their connection with nature and to all beings.

Emerald explains the significance of the four coloured stones marking the directions and introduces the Four Shields of Human Nature as a sensemaking system to act as a map or field guide for our journeys through the "wilderness within". She reassures everyone that there is no religious bias in the programme and encourages us to hold the ideas contained within the Four Shields framework lightly, to use it if, where, and when it suits us. It is offered rather than imposed, presented in such a way that I feel curious rather than obliged to try it.

Tuesday 23rd April: Day 2

Day two begins with the smudging ceremony and a check-in from everyone as to how they were feeling. Then we launch into clarifying our intentions for our solo time in the wilderness. Emerald explains that our intentions may alter before or during the fast, but that this process acts as a severance phase, recognition that when we return from the sacred space of the Fast we will be changed. We each spend around 40 minutes or so sharing our intentions with the group. The guides remind us to speak from the heart and to try to be as clear and concise as possible in expressing ourselves. They help us to hone our intent while the job of the participants is to be present, listen, and hold the stories. People take their turns when they feel ready.

Karen is keen to go first. She tells us what brought her to the Fast, some of the circumstances of her life, and the issues she faces. The guides interject at points and ask her to clarify and explain, "When you say that, what does that mean?"; "Who is that person you want to become?"; "Who is that person you want to escape?"; "Are you willing to meet others on that level?"; "Are you willing to take that on?". She is asked what it is she wants for herself and what she will bring back for her people, which seems to help her put her intentions into the context of her immediate and wider community, making what she seeks for herself more meaningful.

At a certain point Karen is asked to make her statement of intent, to beckon the future by daring to declare those intentions as if they were already fulfilled, as if she already fully embodies those qualities she seeks. She tries something out, a few phrases, trying to capture the essence of her intent, and spends some time honing it further until she is ready to stand and make her declaration, a single sentence that is spoken in the present tense, beginning "I am...". She does this with power and conviction and I see a glimpse of the woman she might become as she steps into her potential self.

The process continues as people share their stories with honesty and openness, exposing themselves, allowing themselves to be vulnerable. It's clearly difficult for

people as their emotions well to the surface, but nobody shies away from talking about the difficult stuff, and nobody makes a meal of it either; there is an admirable level of composure, dignity. I feel proud to be numbered among these women and privileged to be witness to the depth of their inquiries. I know now that I cannot hold back when it is my turn, only absolute authenticity and naked, ruthless honesty will do me, these women and this process, justice. We all learn from and hold each other's stories, each of them so different, so personal, and yet each of us learns so much about ourselves, our individual journeys, and our reasons for being here, from them. I feel tears welling-up in me at some point in each story. I feel so connected to these women, they are so brave, baring all like this, yet without indulging in their dramas.

At some level I feel as if I am hearing the collective story of all women through generations, millennia, across cultures. Themes emerge: difficulty in manifesting the full expression of womanhood in a patriarchal society; guilt, self-betrayal; love and care lavished on others but often not on the self, a neglect of the soul's and body's needs and desires. There is anger and shame over abuses of power. It often seems hard for the women to admit and express these feelings. Many express their reluctance to take on the qualities they want to embody, as if they don't deserve to or it would be arrogant to do so. I am struck by the similarities in our wildly varying tales. We all seem to be telling the same story in different ways. It amazes and saddens me that when so much is supposed to have changed for us, we manifest the symptoms of a collective feminine conscious that appears to belong to a former century⁴⁶.

What also surprises me are the feelings of aloneness with which we speak of these burdens. There is a palpable sense of relief that we can share these feelings without judgement, and once they are out it's as though a weight is lifted and the thing sapping vital energy from the soul is removed. There's a point in each woman's inquiry where the energy shifts, something to do with the unburdening. Then it's as if she clambers out from underneath a heavy and suffocating weight, takes a deep breath and turns her face to the sun.

An evening meeting deals with the practical aspects of the fasting time: equipment needs, physical and psychological effects of fasting, the weather, emergency situations, flora and fauna, safety, protocols, and so on. We were all asked to read the *Lost Borders Vision Fast Handbook* (Foster & Little, 1984) before we arrived, so most of us are familiar with the content. The "buddy system" that will be in operation is explained to us⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ In the sense that Murphy (1973) used the term collective conscious to describe an interpersonal field.

⁴⁷ We will pair up with another faster, and unless people have a particular preference, who will depend on where we are drawn to wander on the day before the fast when we go out to find

Wednesday 24th April: Day 3

The rest of us share our stories and are expertly guided, without being pushed, into making a clear statement of intent. I detect no inflated egos or hidden agendas from the guides. They don't seem to let their own personal stories interfere with this process, and don't offer advice, just gently and firmly steer the participants into discovering what it is they want to say. They listen deeply and ask incisive questions that are direct and challenging, and cut through emotion and confusion to the heart of things. It's not therapy either, nobody is pathologized; issues are treated as aspects of the natural cycles we move in as we journey through the Four Shields.

When it comes to my turn, the guides help me dig down through the surface to the underlying matter. I find myself unexpectedly speaking about how the girl I was suffered a life changing abuse of power and a betrayal. I thought I'd developed a reasonably healthy relationship with the masculine and feminine after working on my childhood trauma, but it becomes clear to me that I have retained very skewed versions of both. I'd come to see men as embodying either the Good Father or the Predator, and women as either the weak Victim or the Critical Mother. No wonder I have at times rejected or not been comfortable with embodying femininity, and have unconsciously polarised the masculine. My assumptions exposed, I move on. I say what I love about teaching, of helping young people develop criticality and creativity, of holding them as they step across the threshold into adulthood. I speak of the times when I know things without knowing how, of wanting to put it to use in helping others but not having enough trust in it.

When my statement of intent finally comes, it is as though it were there all along just needing to be revealed. I am nevertheless taken aback by its power, its audacity, the resolute assertion of it. It seems to come out of nowhere and yet there is no denying the 'rightness' of it.

"I am a medicine woman who travels to other realms and brings back healing and knowledge to her people."

I am slightly embarrassed by the inner authority the statement bestows upon me. It seems to have come from outside of myself, or perhaps from deep within, from a source I cannot name. I would never have had the temerity to utter a statement like

our *power spots*, the places we will set up camp for four days and nights. Buddies will ensure that they camp no more than about 10 minutes walk from each other, and they will be the only ones who know the exact spot where the other is camped. At a place half way between their two camps they will build a stone pile, each morning one will go to the place and build a stone pile to indicate that they are ok. Each evening the partner buddy will visit the place and dismantle the pile to indicate that she is ok. If on any visit there is no sign that the other has visited, the buddy will make their way to the person's camp to ensure that they are not in any difficulty. In the event of a problem the buddy is to try to help if immediate assistance is possible, then return to base-camp and alert the guides.

this about myself under usual circumstances. What has happened to me? I repeat it and am filled with a rush of energy that makes me run around the outside of the circle, shaking the rattle I hold in my hand, scarlet blanket flowing from my shoulders. I laugh raucously, and the other women join in, feeling my sudden sense of freedom and abandon.

After the session I spend some time alone contemplating what took place, what I have effectively committed to try to accomplish during the Fast. I must somehow find a way to heal and integrate the masculine and feminine within myself. I think back to my childhood when I named, what I thought of as my "boy self", Alexander. What would Alexander be like now, what did I need him to be? An image of Alexander The Great pops into my mind and makes me laugh. I decide to go with it. Ok, but how the hell do I become a medicine woman?! How could I have said that? What does it even mean? My tasks seem impossible, and I feel daunted yet full of eager anticipation for my mission into the unknown.

Thursday 25th April: Day 4

We pack up camp and drive to the Galisteo Basin Preserve, where we have permission to camp on Native American land on the proviso we leave no trace of our presence. A base camp is set up where most of us spend the night in a communal tent, and the guides and assistants sit vigil for us during our Fast. We head off in pairs along the trails, using intuition to find spots to set up our individual camps for the Fast time.

In a ceremony that night Emerald teaches us a Sioux ceremonial chant (hear appendix 6, DVD) that we are invited to join in with:

*We are One with the infinite Sun
For ever and ever and ever (repeat)*

*Kia wahté, lenya lenya, mahoté
Hyahno, hyahno, hyahno (repeat)*

*We are One with the infinite Earth
For ever and ever and ever (repeat)*

*Kia wahté, lenya lenya, mahoté
Hyahno, hyahno, hyahno (repeat)*

Phase 2: Threshold

Friday 26th April: Day 5: [Vision Fast: Day 1]

Shortly after dawn we gather standing in a circle, each bringing a rock to anchor us in our absence. We are encouraged to return to camp if we experience difficulties or wish to end the Fast early. We sing the song again, do a short ceremony, then leave

6.1. The Vision Fast: a rite-of-passage

one by one for the Fast. Once outside of the circle we effectively become ghosts, invisible to the guides and each other as we enter the dreamscape of the Vision Fast.

I spend several hours setting up my camp, concerned with ensuring my shelter for the night. A Faster appears. It's Uma, speaking with a child's voice, asking me to play. I am irritated because I am enjoying being alone at last. I don't want to play, but try and feel awkward. I refuse her offer of a sweet, not wanting to break my fast. Uma is embodying her South Shield by being deliberately disruptive and playful because it is one of her intentions for the Fast. After she leaves, I feel I did Uma a disservice. I couldn't relax enough to genuinely play and know it's because I am stuck in my North Shield, an adult place, serious, no time for frivolity. I resolve to try to shift myself the following day from the North to the East Shield by doing something to embody some of the East traits. Emerald suggested breaking one's own rules, but I already feel so disrupted I can't think of what to do.

By the time night falls I am happy with my camp and have even etched a circle around the perimeter and decorated it with an array of sticks and stones, creating a symbolic barrier (figure 36). I burn some sage and smudge the perimeter of my camp to ward off... I don't know, my fears perhaps. I return and put on warm clothes, and settle down for the first long, freezing night, hoping I've not camped on an ants' nest.



Figure 36. The 'guard' at the entrance to my camp. New Mexico Vision Fast 2013

I reflect on the link between home-making and psychological security and sense of belonging. I had always been a little disparaging of domesticity, and yet here I am trying to convert a small piece of wilderness into a cosy homestead. It seems to have been a way to alleviate my anxiety about being in the wilderness, an attempt to control a small part of my environment in order to gain a sense of safety amid all the uncertainty. I am in the North, being responsible, sensible, parenting myself and using my practical skills to create my camp, worrying about creatures and the elements, and

the physics of setting my tarp correctly. The Four Shields is a useful method of reflecting upon my behaviours and thought patterns without making them bad or wrong.

Saturday 27th April: Day 6: [Vision Fast: Day 2]

I spend the morning hiking some of the trails. Trying out the Four Shields as a guide, I attempt a few things to help me shift from my position in the North: meditation, then shaking the small rattles I'd brought with me. Neither activity shifts me and instead I feel self-conscious. Feeling despondent I become cynical. Everywhere I go seeking solitude I seem to encounter people: cyclists, horse riders, and other Vision Fasters. "It feels more like a Vision Quest theme park than a wilderness", I think cynically. I return to my camp and try unsuccessfully to paint. I'm just not feeling it.

I give up, lay down and attempt *The Death Lodge*, a ceremony described by Emerald that entails imagining it's my last day on Earth, and inviting anyone who had ever made an impression upon me to present themselves. The idea is to examine one's attachments to others, and to release the energy bound up in the relationships by relinquishing any emotions still contained in the memories – to make peace with them⁴⁸.

My Father comes and we speak. I thank him for his teachings and express my wish that he'd been there for me to a greater extent during the most difficult aspects of my childhood, acknowledging that it must have been hard for him to balance his spiritual calling with family obligations. He tells me I have chosen a difficult path and will come to understand the choices that have to be made if the demands of the two worlds are to be met.

A large moth flies through my camp right under my tarp. In Castaneda's (1974) shamanism the moth is a harbinger of knowledge. How odd to see this nocturnal creature in the middle of a sunny afternoon. Three little birds flutter into the tree that my tarp is tied to, carrying on about their business as if I wasn't there, pecking and chirping away to each other. I feel as if I am no longer an alien in this place, that the land is accepting me. Although I feel in an ordinary state of awareness, things around me seem to be taking on symbolic significance. There's a difference in my level of attention, as if I'm noticing more.

⁴⁸ Castaneda (1982) describes a similar shamanic exercise called 'recapitulation', containing the same principles. He asserts that freeing the energy bound up in emotional attachments leads to more energy becoming readily available for other shamanic practices such as sharpening attention and shifting awareness.

At sunset I wrap up warm and sit on a rock in a high place near my camp with a view of the distant mountains, marvelling at the beauty of it. I don't feel very... visionary. Using my imagination, I ask for help and guidance from whatever source will listen and respond, not believing, but proceeding "as if". I invoke a fantasy of a pervasive awareness in the universe, imagining that the entire universe might be aware, alive somehow, and full of its own intent.

Sunday 28th April: Day 7: [Vision Fast: Day 3]

I wake this morning at dawn feeling different, purposeful somehow and yet I don't have a plan. I head up to the same high place I've hiked to for the last two days and sit for a while on 'my' rock and gaze at the desert and mountains (figure 37), feeling quiet inside, my internal dialogue dampened down. I have nothing to say to myself and am content to simply be.



Figure 37. View from a peak in the Galisteo Basin Preserve, New Mexico, 2013

I feel guided by something, inside or outside of myself I cannot tell. There's a blurring of the boundary between myself and everything else, and everything appears to vibrate with life and awareness. It's a subtle sensation, no loss of my sense of self, and I'm still talking to myself occasionally and questioning my actions. As I seek somewhere to perform my first ceremony I find a feather from a Great Horned owl. I take it as a sign I am in the right place.

I ad-lib the ceremony on the sandy floor of the wash, holding the thought that the psyche can't tell the difference between a symbolic act and a real one. As I perform it, I feel guided as to what to do. I enter an altered state in which the ceremony feels very real, as do the presences of Mother Earth and the Great Spirit. I make a sand-angel, embrace the Great Mother and make a vow of allegiance to her. In the hollow created by the sand-angel, I construct an effigy of my animus, Alexander, from river stones (figure 38 overleaf), and lay on top of him to take part in a marriage ceremony. I am overcome by waves of energy and my perception changes markedly as the union is forged. I feel absolutely connected to everything, the air feels thick and alive. I feel this event has been witnessed by everything that has ever existed in this place, and that what just happened was very real. I rise and sprinkle water on the site to bless the union.



Figure 38. Effigy of the Animus, New Mexico Vision Fast 2013

I know without doubt how to proceed. I return to camp and feeling playful, decide to make my animus a wedding gift. I make a driftwood sculpture of a great horse (figure 39), remembering my childhood obsession with them, and thinking it a fitting gift. I let the child in me assemble the sculpture, a large bass relief of a rearing stallion. It manages to embody the qualities I'm after and it strikes me that I am calling for these gifts for myself, trying to make them manifest through the creation of this symbolic artwork. I walk back to the riverbed and invite Alexander to my camp.



Figure 39. Alexander's wedding gift, New Mexico Vision Fast 2013

After the sun has set I sit on a large rock contemplating the day's events. I feel content, surprised at the remarkable change in me from the doubt and cynicism yesterday. Today has been extraordinary from the moment I awoke feeling different, to now when I feel calm, content, energised, and as if I have really accomplished something for myself. What happened feels truly significant.

My thoughts though, gradually return to my declaration of intent, to the gift I have vowed to bring back for my people. I ask the universe to show me how to begin to be a medicine woman. I hear a loud buzzing around my ears and shake my head in surprise as an enormous moth flutters insistently around my head. It lands on me for quite a few moments before flying off into the encroaching darkness. Hmm, I think, the harbinger of knowledge at dusk, the crack between the worlds. I take it as a message that the knowledge will come, and that I should be patient and alert, diligent in noticing everything.

Monday 29th April – Day 8: [Vision Fast: Day 4]

I wake feeling weakened by hunger but set off for what I intend to be a short walk, and stumble upon some cicada husks: strange, empty shells of a creature transformed (figure 40). I pick a few up and turn to return to camp, but feel compelled to continue higher. I follow the impulse to keep walking, noticing that despite my rational protestations my body continues to move forward. I allow the experience to unfold as it will, curious as to where this sensing, knowing body will take me.



Figure 40. Cicada husks

At the summit, I encounter another Faster and know I must give her of the cicada husks, realising it's the reason I came here. I place them on a stone next to her, turn to leave, and go a few paces before hearing her squeal of delight and shout of thanks.

I am suddenly overcome by emotion and am breathless, feeling that an act of power has just taken place. I make up a story that perhaps she needed something as part of her healing journey.

So, I muse, is this what it is to be a Medicine woman, knowing how to hear and obey the command of the "Abstract"⁴⁹? Damn-it! I had visions of becoming all wise and knowledgeable, but it probably doesn't work like that at all. I could be a complete idiot, in fact I feel like an idiot now, thinking that I would understand things, when perhaps all that is required is to know things, with no understanding involved. But how can one know that one knows, and that it's not just some fantasy of the ego?

Later I follow instructions given by the guides before the Fast and make a circle of stones to sit vigil in all night and "cry for a vision"⁵⁰ (Foster & Little, 1992). Unable to stay awake despite the freezing cold, I finally stop fighting unconsciousness and allow myself to fall asleep, realising as I do that if I am to have any kind of 'vision' it is likely to be in the form of a dream. I awake from an incredibly vivid and semi-lucid dream. It had a coherence to it that is sometimes lacking in the often chaotic realm of dreaming. I chuckle as I recall every profane and sacred moment of it, trying to ensure that I will remember it exactly in the morning. It surely is confirmation of my integration of the masculine and feminine, and given to me in such a playful way that I am left delighted but somewhat stunned at the cheekiness of it.

I don't know why I didn't realise before that wisdom for me often comes in dreams. They are my magical places where anything is possible, where boundaries don't exist. This is my vision space. I am not talking about ordinary dreams, but of the self-contained, coherent ones, full of symbolism that leave one with a lingering sense of them upon waking. I fall asleep again and have another dream of a similar ilk, and when I wake the sky is becoming lighter, sunrise an hour or so away. What is the significance of this flow, this fluidity between polarities, between the sacred and profane, the mundane and the extraordinary? These apparently diametric concepts, qualities, seem much closer together to me than they ever did before.

Tuesday 30th April: Day 9: [The Return]

I pack up my camp and go to the dry riverbed to perform one final ceremony, this time as a service to an unknown Faster whose torn up letters I had found littering the wilderness. I had originally collected them because we were told to leave no trace of our presence here. I had pondered long over whether to leave them be or rebury

⁴⁹ Whatever the pervasive awareness and intent of the universe might be.

⁵⁰ The notion of 'sacred intent' as described by Reason (1993) when he talks about the concept of prayer.

them, but eventually felt compelled to burn the fragments, feeling it would be the only way to release the energy stored in them. Afterwards I pour the last of my water onto the hot ashes, thank the land, and trudge slowly back to base camp.

By the time I get to the base of the last big ridge it looks like a mountain to my tired legs and breathless lungs, and I pause for a moment before attempting the daunting climb. Just then I hear someone call my name, and Judy comes striding over the ridge and down to meet me, saying that I am the last to return. I tell her the reason for my delay is that I had to fulfil a promise to someone, and she nods in understanding. She insists on carrying my pack and I couldn't be more grateful to her for taking my burden at this moment. I stroll easily with her back to base camp and enjoy the warm welcome, food and hot tea that is waiting for me there. After a short farewell ceremony to the Galisteo Basin we return to the campsite at Cochiti Lake and to rest.

Phase 3: Incorporation

Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd May: Days 10-11

The next two days are spent in Elder Council with the guides. They practice a technique they call Mirroring the Four Shields (School of Lost Borders, 2013). We sit in circle and each tell the story of our Fast time. We sit as witnesses, holding the circle for each other and listening attentively. I find it easy as my mind has become quiet and receptive.

After each tale, the guides are silent for a while, as if they are not thinking about what to say, but waiting for a response to rise up from within and pour out. As they feel inspired, they take turns to mirror back the woman's story to her and the group, transforming it into a mythic-symbolic journey that is both deeply moving and empowering to me as a witness, and even more so it would seem, to each of the women whose stories are mirrored.

When I tell my story, Judy reveals that the letter fragments were hers and that she had not known what to do with them. She thanks me for burning them, expressing gratitude and relief that they have been disposed of in an appropriate ceremony, certain that it was the right thing for me to have done. I am overcome with a rush of feeling as she speaks, relieved after my worries about the "right" thing to do, to have confirmation that I had performed an act of healing, behaved as a Medicine woman might have done. It feels fittingly reciprocal that it was she who came to find me on that last morning to take my burden just when I thought it was too much for me to manage.

I hear the symbolic and practical significance of my offering to the other Fasters when she tells her story. I could never have guessed the reason why it was meaningful to her, but was glad to have been of service to her in that moment and honoured to have become part of her story. It's interesting to hear how some of the stories intertwine, the small, sometimes inadvertent interactions that some of the Fasters, for

various reasons, had with each other, and some of the same natural phenomena that people had experienced but had interpreted so differently to one another.

That last evening, we drive into town and eat at a cantina, to help us begin the transition back into ordinary reality.

Friday 3rd May: Day 12

On this final morning, we meet in ceremony for the last time and are each asked to make three commitments to action to accomplish over the next few weeks, to initiate the incorporation process. One of us makes a commitment to organise monthly group 'check-ins' online over the coming year for those of us who wish to participate.

The group of ordinary women I had sat in circle with on the first morning had transformed into a community of extraordinary women who had been on a mythic journey together and individually, and had been changed by the process. It felt as if our experience was like a small stone thrown in the lake of human consciousness, creating ripples that would spread out and gently move the larger body of water surrounding us, affecting all those within our spheres of influence and beyond.

By early afternoon our camp is dismantled and we head out into a different world.

Reflections on my experience as a transformative learning journey

Intent

The pre-programme Medicine Walk and letter of intent were significant in bringing me to a point of 'readiness' to begin the process that unfolded during the Vision Fast. Intent involves thought, feeling, and a bodily sense. My initial intention was to increase my ability to listen to and trust my intuition. I think as well, I wanted to gain a better sense of my 'calling', though this was not explicit. Both clearly informed my more dramatic statement of intent of the VF. The nature of my declared intent was appropriate to the context of the VF, and I understand it as a symbolic metaphor of the qualities I seek to embody in everyday life.

That it was a women's Fast meant the themes that arose had pertinence to deeply held assumptions I was unaware of having. The depth of inquiry that the other women entered into, gradually exposed my own wounds and distorted archetypes. It was more akin to dawning insight than conscious reflection, and it was deep, empathic listening that brought about the awareness. Emerald described meeting the animus as integrating the masculine principle, enabling women to express themselves fully in the world. It made possible, she said, the active authorship of one's own destiny outside of expected social norms. If we have only skewed images of the masculine and feminine, or disown either one of them, their creative energy becomes inhibited or unavailable to us.

I had previously been critical of the concept of the animus, defensive, insulted that Jung supposed as women we needed some kind of internal masculine figure to enable us to take action in the world. Emerald's explanation disrupted my previous judgement and caused me to question my internal images of and relationship with the concepts. I imagined myself as comprised of complimentary forces; masculine and feminine simply metaphors for an indescribable energetic configuration. A vivid, moving image of the Yin Yang symbol depicting binary universal forces entered my mind, the tensions and shifts between the polarities like magnets, both repelling and attracting each other in a dynamic system perpetually in motion, striving for equilibrium. This insight held energy for me, and I felt a pressing need to work with it.

Once I had the insight, I saw an opportunity to change my relationship with the masculine and feminine in a way that would never have occurred to me, or perhaps been possible, outside of this situation. The structure and facilitation of the severance phase, the ceremonial space in which we worked, the landscape, the personal storytelling, the social interactions, all combined to create what I can only describe as an opening. Intent demanded that I seize the opportunity.

Shifts in awareness and psychological modes

My awareness had been quite altered when I uttered my statement of intent. It seemed to come from a place of knowing outside of my usual awareness. I tried to critically examine it but was unable to, because it felt beyond question. This troubled me when I considered the atrocities committed by people convinced their actions were beyond question, often decreed by some god or other. I took heart that the 'rightness' I felt contained no judgement of or intent to harm others.

The gradual changes in awareness that I experienced were not linear, in that I frequently switched between different modes of being, or rather, other modes were in operation, but one or two held dominance at any one time. An example of this was on the first day of the solo Fast, when I was operating largely in the conceptual and practical modes, or the North Shield. It was odd then, that I had made a symbolic circle around my camp to ward off unknown entities in the full knowledge that it would not present an obstacle to any wild animal. I had not even questioned my motivation for this action. This indicates that although one mode may be dominant, the others are still functioning and able to exert influence on their own terms. According to Castaneda (1988), the nagual⁵¹ is always on the edge of consciousness, unnoticed for the most part when we are in our "rational minds".

Whilst I remarked at the time upon not feeling any different on day two of the Fast, it is clear from the way my field-journal writing changed that I had shifted, in the language of the Four Shields, into the East. I had begun to interpret signs and symbols, and become more imaginatively contemplative, moving from my habitual conceptual mode. I was functioning in the imaginal mode from both individuating and participatory aspects, allowing intuition to guide my imagination. I was unaware of this shift at the time, indicating I must have had a different expectation of what a shift in awareness would feel like. I find it odd that I wasn't aware of it, because I believed I was paying close attention to any changes. Maybe I was focusing on individual thoughts instead of noticing the subtle shift occurring throughout my being, or, perhaps it was just such a natural way to be that it did not feel abnormal.

In the imaginal exercise on the evening of day two of the solo Fast, I drew on my knowledge of participatory and shamanic literature, e.g. (Abram, 1996) (Skolimowski,

⁵¹ The nagual and tonal are the two qualities of the world we know. The tonal is all that we know, everything in our perceptual inventories. The nagual comprises the unknown: that which can become known to us if we venture beyond our usual ways of perceiving, and the unknowable: the majority of the universe beyond our perceptual reach.

1994) (Castaneda, 1988) (1993), to invite a world full of mystery, wonder, and endless possibility to reveal itself to me, offering myself up for participation in its creation. Working on the premise that we construct the world according to our expectations, I was attempting to change my expectations in order to summon a different construction of the world.

There did seem to be an incremental shift in my awareness toward the participatory aspects of being. The most profoundly noticeable shift was on the third day of the solo Fast, when I felt guided. Although I mean guided by intuition, it was a most unusual feeling because it was so strong that it felt almost as if it came from outside of myself, and I wonder if it is because it originated beyond the ego, so felt alien to it. In Heron's (1992) terms, the participatory aspects of the modes of the psyche were dominant. In the affective mode of feeling, resonance, and unity took precedence over emotion. In the imaginal mode, I seemed to have an immediate and intuitive grasp of what was happening, an "holistic cognition" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 17). My image-making capacity was highly active, but it seemed to be led by the participatory intuitive aspect. The conceptual mode in both aspects of reflection and discrimination was suppressed. It was not that I didn't think at all, but that conceptual thought was sparing, and did not have its usual dominant place in the proceedings. In the practical mode, intention and action were intertwined.

I include quotes from comparative phenomenologist Lee Irwin, speaking about the nature of historical Vision Quest experiences of peoples of the Great Plains⁵², which corroborate my contemporary experience.

"The encounter with the sacred is charged with power, mystery, and transformation. In all cases, the phenomenology of the visionary experience involves the crossing of a critical threshold from the explicit world of the everyday to the implicit reality of the visionary world. That such a threshold is recognized is evidenced by the preparations and concentration of thought necessary for an actual encounter." (1994, p. 119)

The individuating aspects of emotion and imagination were active in my willingness to participate and to perform the ceremonies as if they were real. The participatory aspects of intuition and feeling perhaps accessed or generated an "empathic resonance" (Heron J. , 1992, pp. 93-94) between my body, psyche and the landscape, and I might speculate, tapped into the archetypes of the collective unconscious, producing symbolic or "metaphorical insight" (Heron J. , 1992, p. 17). My experience was not one of gaining self-knowledge as such, but of healing, the integration of previously unidentified, or misidentified aspects of my psyche (Jung C. , 1940). This

⁵² Irwin's historical ethnographic study is of accounts by Plains Indians spanning 150 years. His book is endorsed by Dakota Sioux activist, theologian, historian, and writer, Vine Deloria Jnr.

kind of healing is alluded to throughout Heron's writing with regard to affective and imaginal modes (1992, pp. 83, 86-87, 133) (2000). Of these kinds of empowering experiences Irwin writes:

"The primary consequence of the encounter is the transformation of the visionary – his[sic] immediate sense of empowerment... There is an unquestioned energetic charge to the experience that leaves the visionary feeling that the gift of power has transformed him[sic] in a profound and lasting way." (Irwin, 1994, p. 129)



Figure 41. Visionary landscape, R. Lovie, 2013.

That evening, my conceptual capacity returned, functioning in the participatory aspect of reflection as I tried to gain an overview of the past few days, and in the individuating aspect of discrimination as I attempted to make sense of my personal experience. I experienced a shift towards the individuating aspects as I returned to a state of mind I was more used to.

Early in the VF programme I abandoned the use of Petitmengin-Peugeot's (1999) process of intuitive experience because the whole experience was full of intuitive knowing and I became aware that, as Heron (1992) points out, it is an intrinsic aspect of consciousness, permanently present in the participatory ground of being. We have intuitive experiences all of the time, but do not attend to them. Here, free of distractions and an excess of inner dialogue, intuitive experience was easier to attend to.

My experience was one of constant shifting between the mundane and the extraordinary. One minute I was deep in meditative contemplation and the next I craved nachos, and a mattress. It was an insight to realise that there is no huge divide between the aspects of the world that we polarise. Jung describes the Archetypes as conjoined, Janus in nature, two sides of the same coin. The gap between polarities seemed smaller to me than ever before. My dreams on the last night of the solo Fast

confirmed my integration of the masculine and feminine principles. Is psychic healing achieving the dialectic of polarities? This is what Laub and Weiner suggest in their therapeutic pyramid model (2007) and, I think, what Jung meant by "achieving unity" (Jung C. G., 1973).

Watts suggests that, "what lies between the poles is more substantial than the poles themselves" (Watts, 1963, p. 49), in the sense that what we denote when we speak of two poles is that which is absent in the description: the field that the poles bound. I now had an embodied sense of the interdependence and interpenetration of polarities (Heron J. , 1992, p. 171) (Reason, 1993). The ability to hold multiple perspectives, it would seem, is dependent on a tacit understanding of this principle.

Landscape and participatory awareness



Figure 42. Wilderness within 1., R. Lovie, 2013

"By acknowledging such links between the inner, psychological world and the perceptual terrain that surrounds us, we begin to turn inside-out, loosening the psyche from its confinement within a strictly human sphere, freeing sentience to return to the sensible world that contains us. Intelligence is no longer ours alone but is a property of the earth; we are in it, of it, immersed in its depths." (Abram, 1996, p. 262)

Free from the distractions of designed objects, spaces, and bombardment of sensory experiences, a space seemed to open up for the natural world to exhibit its richness. Myriad subtle qualities that often go unnoticed, drowned out against the immediate and alluring availability of the synthetic. There was a temptation, in the liminality of visionary space, to see significance in the smallest of phenomena. These phenomena all took on meaning that I would not normally ascribe to them, became metaphors, symbolic knowledge for me to interpret, to find the personal significance of. It is easy to see how people who live(ed) permanently within the natural landscape might place great stock in the ability of nature to provide knowledge in the form of signs and omens. Besty Perluss, psychotherapist and professor of ecopsychology, offers a Jungian, perspective that the psyche both shapes and takes shape in the landscape. She sees it as the receptacle for many of our psychological projections, quoting Jung,

"we need to project ourselves into the things around us. My self is not confined to my body. It extends into all the things I have made and all the things around me. Everything surrounding me is a part of me." Jung, 1950, pp. 202–203 in (Perluss, 2005, p. 235).

Dream interpretation in Jung (Hillman & Moore, 1989/1991) and Process Work (Mindell & Mindell, 1992) holds that, contained in the signs and symbols of dreams is

knowledge from the unconscious seeking external expression and conscious understanding. In the context of the Vision Fast, nature became a mirror to my unconscious, assembling itself before me as a symbolic language. In the imaginal mode of the VF it was a language I understood. As Hillman says poetically, "the wilderness without reflects the wilderness within" (2007, p. 118). More than this, I gained the embodied, perceptual experience of being in relationship with the world, including all that had gone and all that was to come. It was as if both space and time had opened up and become more accessible to me. I wonder if the sense of participatory awareness I felt was because my unconscious externalised and manifested in the landscape, connecting me with the collective unconscious.

Artwork inspired by the landscape of the VF

Created from photographs taken on and around the VF in New Mexico 2013. See appendix 7 (DVD) for digital versions of these images.



Figure 43. Dignity in surrender, R. Lovie, 2013.



Figure 44. Entwined, R. Lovie, 2013.

6.1. The Vision Fast: a rite-of-passage



Figure 45. Down the rabbit hole, Alice, R. Lovie, 2013



Figure 46. As above, so below, R. Lovie, 2013. Landscape.

6.1. The Vision Fast: a rite-of-passage



Figure 47. Wilderness within, R. Lovie, 2013. Landscape.

6.2. Vision Fast: presentation and analysis of the data

Introduction

In part two of this chapter, I present participant interview data and analysis of the SoLB wilderness rite-of-passage programme, which I refer to as the Vision Fast (VF). I identify, illustrate, and discuss its structures, activities, experiential themes and intrapersonal and interpersonal processes. The experiential themes were identified based upon my inquiry foci of seeking to track and understand: the lived experience of the TL process when in affective-imaginal modes; the impacts of the structure, content and facilitation on participants' experiences; and the conditions conducive to TL, and how they are created.

I begin by looking at the constituting elements of the programme itself, and to understand the full process of TL initiated in the VF, I proceed to look beyond the programme to see how participants understood and incorporated their transformative experiences. I present substantive extracts of recorded conversation (RCs) with participants, which illustrate the experiences and allude to the processes I identify and discuss. The RC extracts are distinguished by their presentation in the text in boxes with the participant's initial to the left of the relevant body of text. I then describe my analytical process of clustering and ordering the intrapersonal and interpersonal constituting processes within the larger overall process of the VF. I attempt to encapsulate the essence of those processes by naming and describing them succinctly. I conclude by developing a conception of the affective-imaginal TL process of the VF from the experiential and narrative data presented and discussed, in the form of a VF rite-of-passage process network map.

Methods

In the first chapter section (6.1) I presented an abridged story of my VF experience. The experience, along with my field notes, formed data set 1. I remained in contact with several of the other participants of the programme, with whom I met online for group 'check-ins' monthly for the first year, and less regularly since. The strong bonds formed between the participants meant that levels of trust and honesty in our ongoing reflective and inquiring conversations were high. Data from these meetings influenced my theme-building and analysis of the programme. I did not record or take notes of these sessions, so do not refer to their content directly in the text, but they informed me sufficiently to identify them as data set 2. Interviews with three of the VF participants from this group, long after the programme, constitute data set 3.

Additional sources consulted in this study include:

conversations with previous participants of other SoLB Vision Fasts;

attendance on a five-day Mirroring training course: 7-11 July 2014;

SoLB website and links to other VF related resources (School of Lost Borders, 2013);

Betsy Perluss (VF guide and academic) blog 'Psyche and Nature (Perluss B. , 2017);

published literature by SoLB founders Stephen Foster and Meredith Little (1984) (1989/1997) (1992) (1996) (1999);

Conversations with Emerald North (VF guide) 7-11 July 2014, and 6 May 2017.

Interviews

Of the six or so regular attendees of the online VF group I was able to record three conversations. At the time of the VF, Shelly, a nurse, was fifty-one, Misha, a writer and performer, was in her mid-forties and Kaz, now a graduate student, was twenty. Each conversation was one-to-one and took place on Skype on the following dates:

Misha: 4th June 2014, duration: 85 minutes;

Kaz: 4th March 2016, duration: 59 minutes;

Shelly: 21st March 2016, duration: 77 minutes.

The RCs were extended conversations engaged in as a way of further sense-making and articulating experience. Both Misha and Shelly remarked that the conversations had enabled them to gain further insight into their experience, and the conversations enabled me to gain insight into their individual experiences and their perceptions of the shared aspects of our experience on the VF. We all experienced very different individual learning journeys, but many of our felt experiences of different elements and phases of the programme shared similarities, as will become evident. All said their experiences were transformative. Shelly and Misha were more circumspect about the nature of their transformations than Kaz and I were, which provides a range of perspectives and experiences for analysing the programme.

I had learned from the Mythodrama RCs that completely unstructured conversations could become unfocused and convoluted and drift far from the subject under inquiry. Having become friends with the VF participants, this seemed particularly likely to happen without themed, open questions. I acknowledge my active role in thematising data, which I did initially in the experiential process of the programme, then by reflecting on my experience, and later from the meetings with the VF group. My conversation-starting questions (appendix 3) to the RC participants, then, were based around themes already identified. Close study of the RCs led to the revision of the themes I originally identified in my primary and secondary data set.

Thematic analysis again provided the foundation for data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) (van Manen, *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*, 1990) (chapter 1). I tried to remain faithful to the RC data when identifying themes of experience, but because of my shared VF experience and later interactions with participants, experiences were alluded to in the conversations that I had knowledge of, but that were not explicit in them. I explicate relevant details in my discussion when presenting the narrative data. I included activities as themes when looking at the RC data, to identify qualities of experience that were linked to them. This also gave clues as to what processes were initiated by engagement in specific activities. The processes I concerned myself with were those pertaining to the generation of knowing (Heron J., 1992) and the TL process. I did not adhere to Mezirow's (1978) (1991) themes of process because that would have limited what I would be able to see in the data.

Structures and pervasive thematic elements

The fundamental structure of the SoLB Vision Fast programme was the three-phase process of the rite-of-passage⁵³, so it formed the structure of the overarching process. Within this, there were three ceremonial structures, one in each phase, each with a different function according to the phase: Severance: preparation; Threshold: emergence and transformation, Incorporation: initiation of incorporation. The philosophical framework of the VF was the Four Shields (see chapter 6.1). I briefly discuss these aspects below, along with the recurring themes of disruption, and holding environment. I then go on to look at each phase in more detail, where I discuss participant experiences and the apparent processes at work.

Conceptual framework: The Four Shields

Central to the SoLB's philosophy and approach to the rite-of-passage, the Four Shields was a context-appropriate way for participants to frame the VF rite-of-passage, thinking, behaviour, and development. It was used and offered to us by the guides, who explained its principles using simple language and concepts. Thereafter, there was no obligation for us to use the framework or the language associated with it, although it gradually entered our vocabulary as we became more familiar with it. I detected no peer pressure involved in this adoption, there was no subcultural capital (Thornton, 1996) to be gained from using it, for there was no hierarchy within the group. I think it was adopted in part because it provided a novel way to discuss and reflect upon emotions, feelings, and thoughts in this liminal environment that disrupted our habitual, often self-critical or judgemental ways of thinking.

Only a rudimentary understanding of the Four Shields was needed for it to be of use. It helped people to ground their intentions into action plans for the solo Fast and beyond because it offered practical guidance for shifting from positions people felt stuck in. It did so without necessitating 'buy-in' to a belief system, and its archetypal references and metaphors of the natural world were appropriate to the context. Its function and form was mythopoetic; it provided a lyrical, metaphorical way of thinking and speaking about affective and imaginal experience that was practically useful within the given context.

⁵³ Referred to by SoLB as: Severance, Threshold, and Incorporation.

The holding environment of ceremonial space

The three ceremonial structures were: Ceremony of Council, Ceremony of the Vision Fast, Ceremony of the Council of Elders. The ceremonial working spaces of phases one and three were where the facilitated work took place and where the holding environment was first established. Each ceremonial structure was a holding environment. It was initially established by sitting in circle and with the introduction of ceremonial aspects or protocols. The time spent in Council was specifically referred to as being "in ceremony", which delineated the special conditions or 'magic circle' (Huizinga, 1949/1980) of the working space. The circle itself symbolised a container, and the smaller circle within marked by the stones, shells and rattles, created an anchor point around which we all revolved. The space felt still, but also dynamic like a wheel, because it represented the flow of the Four Shields, and because of the way the participants contributed in turn during the daily check-ins. The smudging ceremony that began each session acted as a means to cross back and forth across the threshold of the liminal ceremonial space. Other protocols such as using the rattles to mark the beginning and end of each person's turn at speaking, acted as structural markers, clear signals that were consistent and could be relied upon. They provided the few tangible points of safe certainty in a space otherwise characterised by safe uncertainty (Mason, 1993). The ceremonial circle provided a designated holding space for non-judgemental listening and facilitated self-inquiry which included the sharing of personal stories, feelings and emotions. In the incorporation phase, the technique of 'Mirroring' (see chapter 6.1 VF narrative, Phase 3: Incorporation) was used to empower participants and facilitate their return to the world.

During the Threshold phase the ceremonial space extended to encompass the symbolic landscape. The buddy system acted as a thread of connection between the guides and participants, providing the only fixed structure in the liminal environment. Because the holding environment and sense of *communitas* had been so well established in the Severance phase, the buddy system was sufficient to maintain it, despite our separation from the group. I will provide illustrative examples of all of these aspects when I present the RC narrative data as I discuss each phase.

Outside of the ceremonial space, our general encampment, with its central communal kitchen, became a social space for informal conversation and activities that contributed to the quality of the holding environment. The informal nature of camping together and the pooling of various resources that occurred because there was little access to additional food or supplies from outside our camp, added to the sense of *communitas* (Turner V. , 1991). The two lead guides did not camp with us, and refrained from spending much time with us outside of the formal activities, leaving participants to their own social interactions and relationship formation. This helped to maintain their formal status and avoided the potential of unconsciously putting the guides in a parenting role.

Disruption

The 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1978) that most participants said prompted them to seek out the programme, could be considered as an initiating kind of disruption. Many aspects of the programme contained 'disrupters', changes from the participants' usual routines and habits. These included: camping, spending twelve days with a group of strangers, being in ceremony, fasting, sleeping outside without a tent, being alone, being in community, separation from digital technology and home comforts, facilitated self-inquiry in a group situation, practicing non-judgemental listening, the Four Shields framework, and so on.

When done with consent, disrupting any routine, habitual behaviour or way of doing something, is thought by psychologists to disrupt or dislodge "functional fixedness", or fixed or habitual thinking or behaviours (Ritter, et al., 2012). In addition, making intentional small changes to usual thinking or behaviour, known as "schema violations", is thought to increase cognitive flexibility and enhance creativity, by enabling new associations between concepts to be made (Ritter, et al., 2014). The variety of disrupters in the VF programme may therefore, have contributed to the process of loosening or dislodging our habitual thinking and behaviours. Because everyone came with an attitude of inquiry, these disruptions may have served an 'opening' function for new connections to be made. Disruption then, can be viewed as an experience and a process.

Disruption can feel uncomfortable, bringing us back to the notion that the process of transformative learning may sometimes necessitate discomfort, unease, resistance, anguish and suffering. These negative or difficult feelings, although unwanted, could be seen as positive and sometimes cathartic when viewed in the context of the TL process as a whole.

Experiences and processes in the three phases

In analysing the VF, I treated each phase separately because structurally speaking, they served different functions. I tried structuring the elements I had identified under headings of Activities, Experiences and Processes:

Activities: active, functional elements carried out within the ceremonial structure of each phase;

Experiences: the experiential impact of the activities;

Processes: the internal processes initiated by the activities and identified in the data sets (primarily in the RC data within participants' descriptions of experience).

I set out my initial workings in the table below (figure 48 overleaf). I begin each of the following three sections with an image of the circle of ceremony, the purpose of the phase, and the activities occurring within it, followed by a table listing participants' experiences of each phase. I continue by discussing the elements of each phase, using extracts from the RCs to illustrate.

Structures	Activities	Experiences	Processes
Phase 1: Holding environment: Ceremony of Council	Check-ins; Smudging; Speaking concisely from the heart; Non-judgemental listening; Facilitated inquiry: personal storytelling, sharing of feelings, emotions & experiences; grieving process; working with Intent.	Willingness; Disruption; Feeling held, seen, heard; Trust, vulnerability, openness & authenticity; Self-challenge of assumptions etc., struggle, discomfort; Self-discovery, self-acceptance; Connection, empathy: <i>communitas</i> ; Purpose.	Preparation, establishing mode of inquiry; Disruption: presence, loosening, dislodging, opening; Self-inquiry; Identify, acknowledge, detach from what is unhelpful; Develop intent, focus for liminal phase.
Phase 2: Holding environment: Ceremony of Vision Fast	Imaginal activities guided by Intent: active imagination; symbolic enactments: ceremony, ritual; Maintenance of buddy system.	Disruption; Shifts & tensions between modes of being and aspects of self; Heightened awareness, flow; Participatory/ transpersonal experience; Not-knowing, uncertainty; Self-discovery, nature as a teacher, knowing, felt-meaning, embodied, insight, transformation, increased self-awareness.	Transition into symbolic realm; Emptying, Symbolic death; Opening to experience and aspects of self; Creative process: being, letting go, letting come; exploration of wilderness within; generation of knowing & meaning; Transition, emergence; Symbolic rebirth Nascent transformation.
Phase 3: Holding environment: Ceremony of Council of Elders	Storytelling; Mirroring; Witnessing; Renewal of Intention with commitment to action.	Phase 1 experience of <i>communitas</i> etc.; Confirmation, validation; Empowerment, renewed energy; Embodiment of new knowing; Increased self-awareness; Transformation.	Initiation of incorporation; Structuring of experience, sensemaking; Transformation of felt meanings into: story; symbol, metaphor, image; Synthesis, integration.

Figure 48. Table of structures, activities, processes, and experiences in the Vision Fast

Phase 1: Severance: the ceremonial space of Council



Purpose: to prepare participants for the solo VF. Marking the first phase of the rite-of-passage, this phase takes the initiate through "symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual ... from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a "state"), or from both" (Turner V. , 1991, p. 94). It is prerequisite to the initiate's ability to embody their forthcoming new state. An important part of this process, when there is no prescribed state to transition into, is to develop one's personal intention of the future self-state.

Experiences of Council:

Non-judgemental listening
Loving acceptance, empathy, being seen, heard
Feeling held
Connection, camaraderie, bonding, communitas
Trust, vulnerability, unguardedness
Openness, authenticity
Discomfort of self-honesty, self-challenge, internal struggle
Willingness to inquire deeply, challenge self
Enabling expression of emotion, feeling
Dignity, discretion, in manner of expression
Depth and quality of inquiry
Illuminating, rich, meaningful, self-discovery
Self-acceptance
Powerful, transformative
Rare, novel, unusual (space for and way of women sharing in that way)
Intent

Figure 49. Experiences of Council identified primarily within the RC data set.

Personal storytelling and facilitated inquiry

The purpose of council is not to change participants' behaviour but to welcome what is present for them in the moment, and to help them reach fresh insights. Participants were asked to listen without judgement and speak concisely from the heart. The sharing of personal stories necessitated vulnerability and trust, and this was developed with short rounds of inquiry on the first day to enable everyone to settle into the format and begin to feel comfortable with each other. In these rounds, the guides and assistants took first turns at speaking to model the format and mode of expression. We began with what we knew, what had brought us here, and how we were feeling in that moment.

The second day began, as each day of Council did, with smudging and a short 'check-in' round for everyone to share what was going on for them in the moment. Then began in-depth individual inquiries which led to the declarations of intent. Participants told stories of their personal struggles, fears, desires, and patterns of thinking and being. The guides inquired about aspects of their stories using open-ended prompts, and gradually, intentions for the Fast were formed or reformed. The stories revealed patterns of thinking and behaviours that were gently but directly inquired about, facilitating insight and self-reflection, to discover how these patterns were established, how they may have once served a purpose but may no longer be useful. Behaviours and ways of thinking were never deemed wrong or foolish, but spoken in terms of their current usefulness to the person. Many aspects of the stories resonated with other participants. As witnesses, we were not passive listeners but empathically mirrored the stories with our bodies, in tears, smiles, and nods, helping to hold the storyteller and their story.

Some people told stories that contained elements of abuse or other trauma. Kunczewicz et al note that when insights are accompanied by strong negative emotions, people are

often motivated “to review their previous life goals and to abandon those which may be maladaptive” (Kuncewicz, Lachowicz-Tabaczek, & Załuski, 2014, p. 114). Their findings imply that the discomfort of experiencing negative emotions can be helpfully disruptive in the TL process within a supportive holding environment.

Communitas

Not a structural element but a ‘field’, communitas (Turner V. , 1982), which I have discussed previously (see chapter 4), emerged as an experiential result of the combination of other structural and experiential elements. The practice of non-judgemental listening and speaking concisely from the heart were fundamental behaviours to the process. Adopting them helped us develop an ‘attitude’ for personal inquiry and was conducive to the emergence of the empathic field of communitas.

K	These people are actually a community, and camaraderie, and I feel connected with these women! ... And because we’re all human there is a trust that we’re gonna bond and support each other through that. And it really works if you just do it, and you know, that your humanness makes you worthy to be yourself and support each other. It works.
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The experience of non-judgemental listening:

K	It felt like we all had, well, I felt that when other people were sharing I could just be completely there for them, and like, my role as an individual was to be part of the container. And then, coz I knew I was going to get held in the same space you know, so then as an individual I could really tell my story and it didn’t matter that I was stumbling over the words and didn’t know what I was talking about - because the group was there. It was one of the first times in my life when I actually wanted to be with a group of people.
K	To have compassion and to really hear their story. To really hear it, be compassionate, and to feel what that was like. It feels good. So, yeah, that positive association, and then the plus beyond that is seeing what happens when people do have that accepting - when they want to actually look at themselves. The reason why I think it’s productive, why the Fast was productive, was because we came here because we wanted to learn about ourselves. We wanted to go deep. And so when that willingness is met with acceptance, acceptance and that holding space, then that’s a really potent situation.

The experience of authenticity in inquiry:

M	it’s a way of interacting that I don’t do with my friends. Where all you do is listen and not really comment – and not interact, just allow the person to sort of say where they are, how they are, how they’re feeling in that moment, physically - and not judge it. The hardest part, I mean that’s such a hard part, I have great difficulty with it. I’m so busy judging myself but then I’m doing the same thing with others, you know.
R	When we were honing intent, I was really impressed with the way people were really laying everything out on the line, and not holding back, but there was a real dignity to it, it didn’t strike me as emotional gushing.

M	Dignity is a very good word to describe it. The other one I would use is that there was a certain kind of discretion, it wasn't like yeah, I'm just putting a bunch of shit out on my blog or my twitter feed, I'm sharing deep and important and authentic things, without a lot of censorship and mitigation, but I'm telling the story for myself, not for other people. Not to impress or shock them.
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The experience of empathy:

K	Ruby, she was so good at feeling into every person's story. And my story was different from your story and yet when she was mirroring that back to me it was like, oh my god, when I saw her speaking it was like, "she knows what I'm talking about". I could see it in her body - her posture, the words she's choosing, her tone of voice. Everything mirrors my feelings and my experience, and it's making it clearer for me. Without being overwhelmed.
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The experience of being consciously open to experience:

M	I absolutely felt like there was no point in doing it if I wasn't giving myself over to it. But how that felt was sometimes doubtful.
M	I would say it was not until the end in fact that the whole smudging thing caught on for me. For the first few days I would watch other people and I would feel like, really? Really? I don't know. Are you just faking it, this whole business of needing to put it under your feet and here and there and the other place? And by the end I was like, yeah, ok." I started with, ok, just do it and see if you feel anything, it's like, let it happen and then see.

Grieving as a process

Once participants had identified ways of thinking or being they perceived as needing to change to enable them to grow, they were encouraged to go through a kind of grieving process. Whilst grief is associated primarily with loss, it marks a transition and potential transformation (Boyd, 1991). If, as Illeris (2014) proposes, transformation amounts to changes in identity, redundant aspects of our identities need to be deconstructed or allowed to 'die' in order to make room for new structures to form in their place. The rite-of-passage process is referred to as a symbolic death and rebirth (Eliade, 2012) (Turner V. , *The Ritual Process*, 2008). The Four Shields, mirroring natural cycles of life, death, and rebirth, provided a positive conception of partial death of the self because it guaranteed to bring new life.

The grief process can be viewed in a number of ways depending on who is grieving and for what reason. A common perception of the stages of grieving is that of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969): denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Another is Okun and Nowinski's (2011): crisis, unity, upheaval, resolution, and renewal. I would argue that the symbolic death under discussion cannot be treated in the same way as physical death, and so the process, while containing some similarities, differs. Neither is it quite the same as Myers and Boyd's (1991) concept of social grieving, which describes the process of transition within groups. They acknowledge Bowlby (1961), deriving: numbness and panic, yearning and protest, disorganization and despair, and restabilisation and reorganization, from Parkes and Prigerson's (2010) perspective of

the grief process. I see some correlations in Bowlby's (1961) original three stage process: the urge to recover what has been lost (a longing from the soul, perhaps), disorganization and disintegration (a disorienting dilemma), and, reorganization. I find his remarks regarding reorganization most interesting. He implies that transition to a new state is an innovative aspect of the process, achieved, Bowlby says, "partly in connection with the image of the lost object and partly in connection with a new object" (Bowlby, 1961, p. 21) in (Myers & Boyd, 1991). This is what the development of Intent sought to do, as we conjured an image of the renewed adult Self from the ashes of the lost essential Self of childhood.

It could be argued that the grief process begins with a disorienting dilemma (Hartman & Zimberoff, 2009) because it leads to the realisation that an aspect of the self might benefit from re-vision. I hyphenate revision here to remove the negative connotation of self-deficiency from this realisation, and to imply that it can be felt as an affective and imaginal vision of emancipation from an existing limiting construct of the self. It was evident on the VF, however, that many of us had developed negative perceptions of aspects of ourselves.

Structures of the self begin to develop in childhood. Those resulting from abusive or self-denying relationships can be assimilated as negative or limiting concepts of the self as intersubjective dynamics are translated into intrasubjective ones (West, 2014). The Vision Fast provided a relational environment of acceptance (West, 2014) in which these dynamics could be changed. As participants entered deeply into self-inquiry, they were often able to identify the sources of unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving. These realisations alleviated self-recrimination by enabling us to see how, as children, we had adapted to external forces in order to survive (James, 1994). Thus, it was possible for us to honour the resourcefulness of the child, and to realise that as adults, the same constructs that had once protected us, no longer served us.

The group witnessing and holding of each other resulted in a transpersonal experience of grief, as we realised that many of our stories contained similar motifs and were the result of dysfunctional socio-cultural influences, practices, expectations and norms (Scott S. , 1997). Our individual work took on a greater significance as a feeling emerged in the group that freeing ourselves from our own psychic bonds would impact upon the collective feminine psyche. Although expressed in poetic terms appropriate to the mythos of the VF, our emancipatory accomplishments here would inevitably impact on those in our spheres of influence on our return to the world.

K	the opportunity to be with women, and hear our stories, and have that be - have those be the only stories. And not have to put them in a male context or a patriarchal context is so helpful, and it made me strong, and made me feel like I could bring that into the world, because I see that the world needs it ... so the fact that I got to go there and get that medicine, and see what it's like when it's a cooperative, accepting, fierce, embodied, natural, wild experience. And dignified, you're human and you have dignity. Yeah, that's so important for the world and me.
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Our guides described themselves as lay midwives. A midwife holds the space, tries to ensure safety, and ‘catches’ the baby, but the work of labour is the expectant mother’s alone. The metaphor implies that the process, though ultimately rewarding, likely involves suffering. The grieving process involved acknowledgement, mourning, and letting go, in order to be ready to let something new take its place. These ‘meaning perspectives’ (Mezirow, 1991), despite their redundancy, deserved to be acknowledged, and honoured. Their loss needed to be mourned to avoid the denigration and denial of the suffering child. A formal ritual for undertaking the grief process is the Death Lodge ceremony. Some participants attempted this during the Severance phase, while others made it part of their solo Fast, as did I (see chapter 6.1. VF narrative).

Intent

Developing intent was a key aspect of the Severance phase. The process entailed exploring our developmental desires and calling. It culminated in a declaration of intent spoken in the present tense, which enabled people to momentarily embody their potential self. The statement contained elements of both the personal and transpersonal self, describing qualities that one wished to develop and embody for personal empowerment and for the benefit of one’s community or sphere of influence. By acknowledging the social self, it placed people in context with their participation in and relationship with the wider world and evoked a sense of purpose and worth beyond the self. Statements of Intent did not set a clear path from A to B, or contain rigid or fixed objectives or outcomes. They were necessarily ambiguous. The means to achieve it were left to emerge during the threshold experience.

Not all participants had absolute clarity of intention before, or even during the solo Fast, some said it became clear after. Although statements of intent were called for, they were understood as provisional, an approximation of an idea, feeling, or image. Kaz recalls the powerful image of her intent below.

Intent as an image:

K	I think I went in pretty confused, and it was hard for me to make an intention. I didn’t even know what I even needed or wanted to do. So the Fast brought me clarity, kind of after the fact - of what the intention had been. I mean, I think I was afraid to leave behind what I was, to leave behind childhood Kaz, and so I couldn’t come out at the beginning of the Fast and say, “this Fast, my intention is to move into womanhood”. I just couldn’t do that. I think I was too afraid of it, I was too afraid to - “Oh my gosh, what if I can’t, or what if this is too much for me?”.
R	So, difficult for you, despite what you voiced in your statement of intent. Do you remember what that was?
K	I remember an image, and you know I think that’s why my intention at the beginning was really an image. I couldn’t put it into words. But the Black Madonna holding the baby was my image. And looking back, that’s a perfect symbol. I still had the little baby at the end, I still had that innocence, but I had - and it was a very specific Madonna, it’s Polish [Czarna Madonna]. So, she’s got these scars on her face, and, it’s like, you know she’s, she can take the hits, and

	she's still going to protect this little baby. She's covered in gold, so there's that honouring and dignity and beauty of womanhood there. And she's dark like the earth, like the soil, so there's that groundedness and embodiedness. And she's centred, you know, her own person, definitely. And then it's two beings but it's one image, so that multiplicity of well, ok, yes, I can have this innocence and I can have this assertiveness and...
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In depth psychology, archetypal images are seen as the "deepest patterns of psychic functioning" (Hillman & Moore, 1989/1991, p. 23), that can only be spoken about in metaphor. The soul, Hillman says, "searches everywhere for the myths that will nourish it" (Hillman & Moore, 1991, p. 193), and clearly, this image had made a deep impression on Kaz at some point, possibly bringing her to the VF when her struggle to negotiate the passage into adulthood on a rational level failed her.

Misha speaks here about being undecided about the focus of her intent before she came, torn between two possible foci. The dilemma itself held up a mirror to her struggle to develop her self-belief, which had been undermined by her inability to fit comfortably into the restricting social norms and expectations of her family and culture:

M	<p>I thought I was ready when I came and then I felt like the setting of intention the way we did it definitely deepened my purpose and pushed me farther than I would have pushed myself... What I came with was blander and a little more timid... so I decided to make it about my art.</p> <p>I thought about it a lot. I was torn between whether my intention should be something around my relationship, and then I decided one of my issues was my tendency to prioritise that over things I should do for myself, so I decided the big step for me was to make it about my art. And I felt that was right. It was one of the strongest feelings I had, right when we first got out there, was, ok, I'm out here for the right reason. My relationship is fine or it's not. The thing that needs to be fine is my relationship with myself, and my art, and my ability to express, and my willingness to be as creative as I want to be and not feel stifled. Not doing what a 'good girl' should, that I'm being too loud, or too - not being like my older cousin Maureen! My mother would say, "<i>why can't you be more like Maureen? She's such a nice girl</i>".</p>
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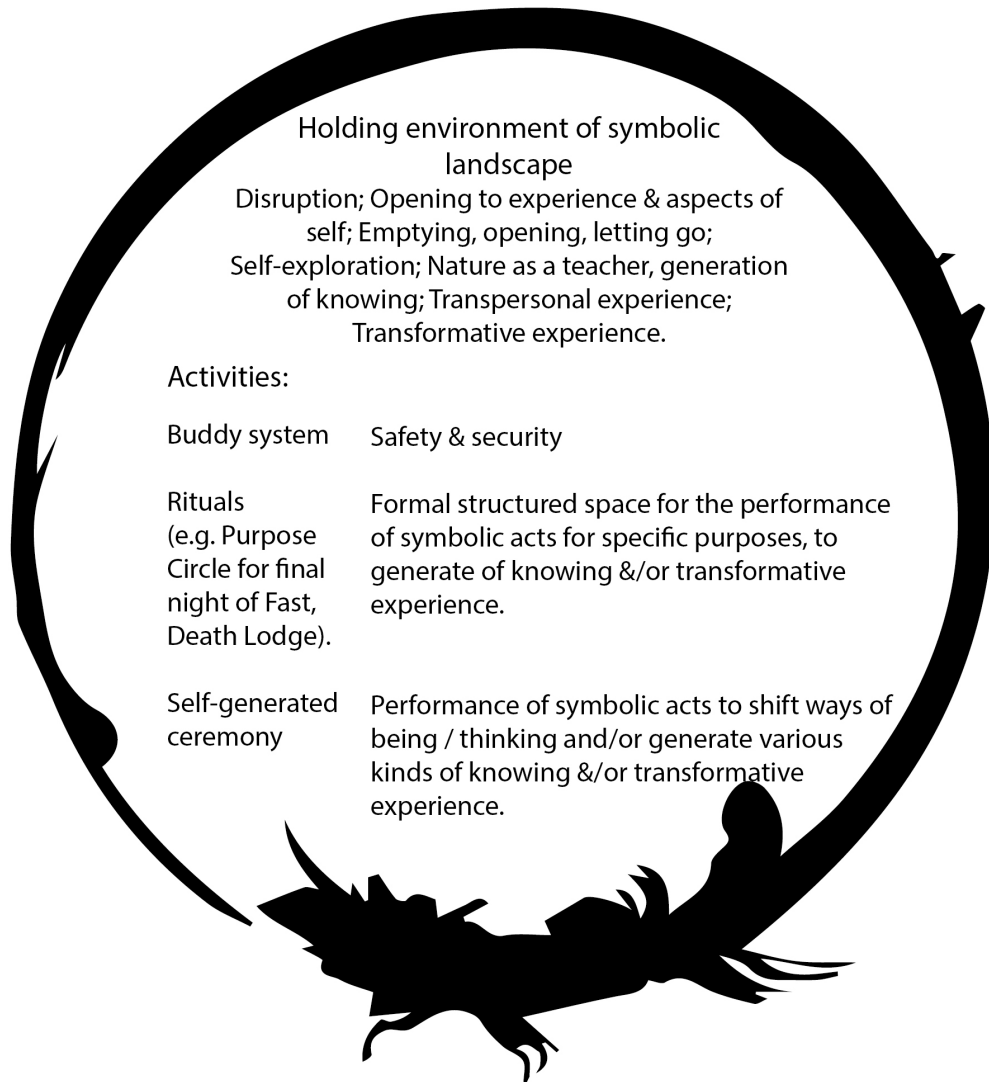
Shelly, by contrast, had given her intention little thought beforehand:

S	<p>The reason I went on the first Fast has been becoming, became clear as I went on the second one. My intent, I feel, wasn't really specific, wasn't really thought about too much. You think this is what you want to work on, and then it gets changed. ... My intent was unspecific, unfocused, but there. I spent time on the Fast in ceremony. My intent was present in the ceremonies I did.</p>
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Shelly's later realisation was that she had come on the Fast because she had met one of the guides previously elsewhere, who had become an image of the nurturing mother to her. Shelly admitted she just wanted to be close to her, which is why she had not considered her intent much. Her inner need to be mothered drew Shelly to the VF,

where she developed the intention and ability to become that nurturing mother to herself.

Phase 2: Threshold: the ceremonial space of the Vision Fast



Purpose: Transformation, emergence. Called the Threshold phase because one crosses the boundary between the mundane outer world into the symbolic realm of the Self, or wilderness within. Being anti-structural, the liminal phase lacked fixed structure, the only one being our daily routines of maintaining the buddy system to ensure everyone's safety. Other than that, there was discretionary use of the Four Shields to help frame and navigate the symbolic landscape, and ritual and self-generated ceremony, undertaken for various purposes and guided by one's Intent.

Experiences of liminality:

<p>Liminal experience</p>	<p>Disruption, struggle, resistance, discomfort, challenge of assumptions and habits. Shifts & tensions between rational & extrarational modes. No escape from self, contemplation. Opening to experience & aspects of self. Dreams, images, moments of insight, knowing, felt meanings.</p>
<p>The experience of nature as mirror, guide, or teacher</p>	<p>Connection, belonging, acceptance. Boundaries thin, dissolving, participatory experience. Self-knowledge / discovery, intuitive knowing. Transpersonal awareness / knowing, feeling guided.</p>
<p>Transformation</p>	<p>Felt meaning, insight. Self-knowing. Transpersonal knowing. Perspective change, embodied change, changes in self-perception. Glimpses of potential self-state.</p>

Figure 50. Experiences of liminality, or threshold identified primarily within the RC data set.

Liminal experience

Immersion in the symbolic landscape seemed to provoke initial disruption, and tensions and conflicts between different ways of being and knowing. As the angst of disruption receded, participants attained varying levels of internal quietude that aided contemplation and created an opening-up to experiencing phenomena in symbolic ways. Participants experienced attaining knowing of various kinds: self-knowing or other intuitive knowing, transpersonal knowing, and varying degrees of participatory experience. Misha and I both experienced boundaries between self and world becoming thin or dissolving at times when the ego receded, indicating that participatory aspects were more pronounced than individuating ones at times (Heron J. , 1992). The preparation of the Severance phase and disruptive qualities of the liminal environment facilitated transitions into affective and imaginal modes of being. Shifts into imaginal modes were not stable or constant, indicated by experiences of frequent interjections of conceptual thought and conflicts with extrarational aspects of the self.

The experience of internal conflicts:

M	<p>The resistance was constant, I mean, it was a constant tension between thinking into it and thinking, oh, this is all cockamamy, and then oh wow, this is so deep, oh...but that's my battle, that's my constant battle. I have a lot of trouble feeling that the things I do are valid.</p>
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The experience of being alone with oneself:

S	<p>... because you're out by yourself, you have nothing, there's no way to escape anything, you're there, in your own head, your own mind, your own body.</p>
K	<p>I was supported by the group, but during the four days when we were on our</p>

	own, you're really... on your own, and, I had to face the question, and it made me realise it was a question, well can I do things by myself? And, I guess the pressure of being alone, it kind of awoke a toughness in me and that toughness allowed me to be a little bit, I don't know if angry is the right word, but aggression, a little bit of aggression, like oooh, of course I can, I can do this.
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The experience of moments of insight:

M	One moment I would think, oh yeah, got it, yeah, this is the thing...and then I would lose it. So it was all like, to the extent I got things and let go of things, they were all slippery watermelon seeds, like they were there for a second and then gone. But it's like peace of mind, it's like if you see it often enough, even for like tiny glimpses, you can start to understand that it's there, that it really does exist... that it really is in your power to go to that place of refuge, of your mind, of peace, and strength, and ownership of how you want to be.
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The experience of transpersonal / participatory awareness & knowing:

M	That was something very profound I felt. I thought, I'm out in the desert, I am not going to sleep one iota. I'm so fucking scared that I'm going to be bitten by a spider, or a snake, or a coyote... oh my god, it's just going to be so frightening to be out there, alone, no protection of a tent. And the first night, when I got into my sleeping bag, I thought this is when I'm going to be really scared because it's dark now. But then I thought, no, I'm fine, nothing wants to hurt me, I just know it, I mean I just felt like no, I'm ok, nothing wants to hurt me out here... and I was like that for the whole of the rest of the time...even when I sat beside a snake for a while, not knowing until it curved away, but even then when it curved away I thought wow, I just sat beside that snake for like, 45 minutes!
M	So...but you know, I would say that it...yeah, I would say that in the desert, you know there were definitely... I had feelings of this is the right thing to do, um, and little glimpses that the universe was...bound up with me, was watching over me. Watching over me sounds so childish, but just that...that if I looked it would give me guidance.
S	On the Fast, I remember one walk I was taking, and I don't even remember what was on my mind. It was as the sun was coming up, and I remember turning around and seeing my shadow, and it was so big. My huge shadow, but it made me feel, the message I got was that Mother Earth saw me, that I was being seen. And that was the hugest message I got, that I was being seen, and heard, and witnessed. And no one else was there, it was just me and Her... and the tree people and the animals. Yeah.

The experience of opening to aspects of self:

S	it was as if something finally broke. And then I was able to start looking at maybe what one of the main ... I had been denying that story for so long that it kept trying to come out in certain ways, and I think that kind of cracked it enough to where I could start peaking at it a little bit here and there.
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Shelly had only partial access to her memory of severe childhood abuse, which she had been unable to face, the unresolved trauma taking its toll on her psyche and body. It is

testament to the skill and compassion of the guides that they built and maintained a holding environment of the quality that enabled someone as fragile and wounded as Shelly had been to safely open to what had happened to her, which provided her first step towards healing. She uses the metaphors “broke”, and “cracked”, referring to the opaque shell she had built around the memory in order to survive it.

Nature as a teacher

In my reflections of my solo Fast experience, I discussed the experience of nature as a teacher and mirror of my psyche. Here, I provide some examples of how other participants experienced the same phenomenon. In conversation with Misha, she suggested that any landscape, an urban one, for instance, might act as a mirror or teacher, because of her conviction that it is a state of attention that enables the phenomenon. When I speak of nature as a teacher, guide, or mirror, I mean self-knowing or transpersonal knowing manifesting in the external world. The locus of this knowing may be the Self, as arguably, for instance, Misha’s feeling of being guided by an animal (see below) could be viewed, but it can also be experienced as transpersonal knowing that seems to come from outside of the self. Misha’s experienced could be viewed either way. Whether the locus of the knowing is within the individual or of remote origin is a matter of speculation (Sinclair, 2011).

M	I was at the top of the bluff and looking down and I thought, gee, do I have to go back the way I came, or is there another way? And a hare or rabbit showed me the way to get down, and then I just felt like...it’s ok for me to be here and I belong here, and then I much more sank into, you know, just like lying on the ground under bushes and just feeling totally...I don’t know, just very – yeah, much more integrated.
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Ceremony

I use the term ‘ritual’ for ceremonies whose set format was described to us by the guides, and ‘self-generated ceremony’ to describe the improvised ceremonies that individuals devised themselves. Both were used for the performance of transitional symbolic acts: symbolic enactments that facilitated the transition from one state to another. Because the ceremonies were creatively conceived by the individuals performing them, and performed alone, they were tailored to the specific needs of the individual in the moment. Some participants indicated that, much like their statements of intent, the ceremonies were considered prior to enacting them, but when performed, the content and form were somewhat improvised and emergent. Some said that they felt guided, others that they simply knew what they had to do when the time came. Even the most mundane of daily tasks, if carried out mindfully, became a ceremony.

S	When I think back to how I picked my spot [for the solo Fast], I remember having that in my [VF] story. That the spot I found was down in the valley, and I was under this huge tree. So, I had the best shade, there was no wind, it was awesome. But I had to clean it out because there was so much coyote and cow pooh and horse pooh, everywhere. So, I spent a lot of time at the beginning just
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	getting rid of that pooh. I had a lot of house cleaning to do, getting rid of that shit.
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Shelly's story of deciding where to camp contains obvious symbolism. In *'Women Who Run With The Wolves'* (Estes, 1996), Jungian therapist and storyteller Clarissa Pinkola Estes, tells the story of Vasalisa's initiation into retrieving her intuition through an encounter with the Wild Woman archetype, Baba Yaga. Baba Yaga sets Vasalisa the task of cleaning and cooking for her. Estes describes this symbolism as representing a time of learning, "acclimating to the great wildish powers of the feminine psyche. Coming to recognize her (your) power and the powers of inner purifications; unsoiling, sorting, nourishing, building energy and ideas" (1996, p. 94). The cleaning represents creating order and space within the psyche so it can thrive.

Shelly was instructed by the guides to eat in her solo Fast, because with anorexia nervosa, fasting would be neither disruptive nor challenging to her habitual patterns of behaviour. Feeding herself in the symbolic context of the VF, equated to self-nurture and self-care of both body and soul. Shelly recalls being shocked and resistant to the idea at first, recalling how she had to drag several food laden coolers and bags to her spot. However, she diligently carried out these house-cleaning and self-nurturing ceremonies. Of all the participants, Shelly's return was one of the most memorable:

R	You came back from the Fast looking like a warrior, naked, totally covered in red mud. You looked physically transformed.
S	I remember getting the message that, the thought came to me on about day two, that that's how I was going to go back. And I was fighting with it, thinking, ok, if you're going to make me go back you're going to have to help me, because I'm not going to go back naked... and all that stuff. So, when it came to it, I thought, ok, I have water left, so I can make mud, so there was part of me that was using the mud as Mother Earth, but it was also helping to cover me, protect me a little bit.

Shelly's account illustrates her experience of awakening to the Wild Woman archetype, to intuitive knowing. As someone extremely self-conscious of her body, to return naked would have previously been unthinkable. She describes fighting with the 'instruction', as if there were no question of disobeying it, and asking for help to enable her to do it. She was rewarded on the last morning with Baba Yaga's gift of knowing how to 'dress' herself in the red earth and water, blood and life, to protect her.

Transformative experience

The possibilities that opened up when deep self-exploration was made within the symbolic liminal space sometimes presented themselves as potential new ways of being that could be embodied, tried on. It became an embodied way to assess whether the new form would provide a move towards attainment of the desired self-state. Others gained an embodied sense of what it would be like to be whole, integrated.

The experience of glimpses of the potential self-state:

K	...this is how I know how to be in my family, and I love them and I don't want to let that go and... so, the Fast kind of forced me into dipping my toes into to what it would be like to be the new me, the more developed me. And then it was like, "oh wait, I can do this. I can let go and move into this new phase of my life... and it's ok".
S	I got a taste of what my true essence could be, so it's like, "ok, I have to keep going now, there's no way I can go back and close everything back up again".

Felt meanings emerged, seemingly without the need to overly sense-make. In a liminal environment in which experiential and presentational knowing is the norm, sense-making may be less relevant than meaning-making, at least during that phase. People returned from the Fast looking and feeling, they said, different, but many had not yet made sense of their experiences.

The experience of perception-shift:

K	I remember after the four days of fasting, when we were back in Cochiti, I looked in the mirror and my face looked different. It was like, something was..I could see a difference. And it was almost like I didn't want to look at it too closely because, it's like dissecting something, it kills it somehow. Like wow, something seems...I think my awareness, of how the world was around me, changed, and how I fit into that, I started to feel connectedness... to the group, and that I, at the same time my boundaries around myself were more defined.
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Phase 3: Incorporation: the ceremonial space of the Council of Elders



Purpose: to help participants initiate their incorporation process. Liminal experiences which, having taken place in solitude and in non-ordinary reality, were in danger of being lost, much as a dream may be remembered immediately upon waking but quickly fades from conscious recollection as the business of the day pervades one's consciousness. They needed to be shared and grounded to lift them out of the intrapersonal realm and give them substance in the world. This was achieved through participants telling their stories of the solo Fast experience. The guides mirrored their stories. All bore witness to the stories of threshold experiences. There was time for participants to quietly reflect and enter into dialogue with other participants to generate further sense-making of their experience.

Experiences of the Council of Elders:

Storytelling	Structuring of experience Sensemaking
Mirroring	Empowering Sensemaking of felt experience Metaphors for felt meaning Clarity for action in the world Permission to be oneself Confirmation of experience, verification of transformation.
Witnessing	Holding of storyteller & story Validation of experience Story given substance, retains its energy and meaning Witnessing mirroring of others illuminating

Figure 51. Experiences of the Council of Elders, identified primarily within the RC data set.

Storytelling

I was attentive to the process of sense-making that I went through immediately after the Fast. I returned feeling as though I was embodying a fundamental change to my being, and identified specific meaning-making structures that had altered, although I could not fully articulate what I felt. At this point my story was only in my own mind, a bundle of images and feelings, none of which I could be sure was 'real'. I felt the need to share it, to make a complete story of it before it faded. It would have been so easy to return to everyday reality and to rationalise my experience as one in which I had just allowed my imagination to run away with me. It felt vital that the insights I had gained remain alive because I did not want to return to my former state.

In order to tell a story, experiences must be structured and felt meanings articulated or expressed in some form. I spent several hours over the following two days sense-making, structuring the story of my Fast in preparation for sharing it in Council.

Kaz:

K	During the fast I was so absorbed in an... in discovering different things, but it wasn't until the mirroring process it helped me to realise what had happened, so that was, it put my experience in context so I could take it into the world with me.
K	Like you said, so it has to have structure because before that point you have your felt sense of what happened, well for me, I had a felt sense of what happened. And then when I told my story for the first time I was like, you're just reciting a list of facts here, this isn't a story and I'm not sure what to do with it. And so the story kind of brought into the felt sense and made that the structure. Ok, so you felt aggressive, ok, so we're going to use this metaphor because it was not a literal experience. It was concrete but it wasn't literal. So when the guides, when they took my story, they had picked up on my felt sense and used that felt sense, to give it structure and meaning, and put it into a metaphor that captured the meanings for me, and helped me make it something, not just you know, a smattering of facts that I couldn't bring into myself.

Kaz discusses the difference between an account and a story, and in a way this is key to the mirroring process. The mirroring transforms an account into a story of empowerment. Both Kaz and Misha spoke of the practical impact of mirroring in clarifying meanings or providing useful metaphors to take back out into the world.

It was evident that much felt-meaning in the form of experiential knowing was present before participants were able to make sense of it. Narratology researcher Polkinghorne asserts that "narrative is the primary scheme by means of which hermeneutical meaningfulness is manifested" (1988, p. 125), the use of the word "manifested" suggesting that meaningfulness exists prior to sense-making, and "hermeneutical" that meaning and sense-making are both interpretive processes. I have come to think that there is a subtle but important distinction to be made between meaning and sense-making. The felt-meanings formed in experiential knowing can be expressed through any presentational form (gesture, making art or music, etc.), but it seems that the processes involved in bringing linguistic expression to felt-meaning result in sense-making. Sense-making, it would appear, is one way of enabling us to apply felt-meaning practically in our lives.

Mirroring

Mirroring involves the guides being interpretive 'mirrors' for the person who has just told their story. It is an attempt to "shine a light on the gifts of the story" (North, 2014), by fashioning the story into a mythic-symbolic journey. The guide listens intently for elements of the story that stand out as possible 'gifts' that can be reflected back to the storyteller in a way that imbues the story with power. The Four Shields is used to reveal the archetypal symbolism and teachings from nature reflected in the tales. Mirroring is a generative, imaginal, and above all, intuitive exercise; the guide should separate any prior knowledge of the storyteller, and focus solely on the data communicated in the tale as it is told. Mirroring should not contain advice or judgement of any kind (North, 2014). There would usually be more than one mirror, because inevitably the mirroring will be coloured by the hue of the mirror. In a typical SoLB VF there are four mirrors in an incorporation story council, each offer different perspectives and elaborate on or highlight different gifts. A mirror rarely attempts to mirror the whole story, but selects aspects to imbue with power⁵⁴.

Heidegger says that poetic language "brings the unsayable as such to the world. In such saying, the concepts of its essence - its belonging to world-history, in other words - are formed" (2002, p. 46). The mythopoetic style of the Mirroring placed each woman's story into a greater context, that of the myth of humanity's struggle, its search for meaning, purpose and wisdom, and that our stories 'belonged' there.

⁵⁴ Mirroring information gleaned from my participation in Mirroring the Four Shields training with SoLB, 7-11 July 2014 at Dragonback Springs, Colorado, USA.

Misha:

M	<p>I mean I had a feeling before we started all the general mirroring, just from the chat with people, that, of course I judged my own experience to have been far less worthy than everyone else's, and you know, less epiphanous, or less filled with epiphanies and conversations with god as it were, and so what fascinated me in the mirroring was, the thing that I took away in the mirroring from Mari [a guide] was that my role, as I described my own experience and then sort of compared it to others, was to capture sort of, the mundanity even, of transformative experiences for everyone.</p> <p>...I found Mari's...her mirroring to me was sort of, I almost found it shocking.</p> <p>...and I felt like Mari's mirroring, when she said it, it felt both true, it felt incredibly scary because it felt very arrogant, like "oh-oh, now she's saying I can do something that I can't do or that I'm not worthy of, or that it would be arrogant to think that I was worthy of" ...but it sort of gave me permission, so yeah, I, the mirroring I thought was, for me, an essential piece of the experience that clarified very precisely something I could take away.</p>
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Despite recounting instances of insight, transpersonal experience, and knowing on the solo VF, Misha was still plagued by her habitual self-judgement and questioning of her own self-worth. She describes feeling almost shocked, frightened by the power and permission bestowed upon her by the mirroring, perhaps because, as Mälkki and Green, citing Sartre, suggest, "Consciousness is afraid of its own radical freedom because it knows that at any moment it can make a choice that could undo a lifetime of choices" (2014, p. 9). It also highlights the fragility of transformation before it has become fully embodied. Misha found empowerment in the mirroring of her struggle to hold onto insights that when she attempted to analyse using her sharp intellect, evaded her. These glimpses of transformative possibility that cut through her usual barrage of banal thoughts became a source of further contemplation and creativity for her, and she subsequently authored a book on the theme.

The guides did not simply speak the mirrored story, they seemed to embody it, sometimes standing to perform scenes, occasionally grabbing a nearby object to use as a prop in the performance, sometimes breaking into song. These 'performances' were spontaneous, improvised, and inspired; sometimes they were hilarious as one of the guides grossly caricatured a scene from a VF tale, gently making fun of the Faster's ego, self-judgement, dilemma, or habits or assumptions they have mentioned being challenged by the experience. Far from being cruel or belittling, it seemed to enable the Faster to see herself from a different place, the humour a liberating energy that dissipated the angst or frustration expressed in her original telling of the tale.

Shelly:

S	<p>I honestly don't remember that much about what was said or done, but I know it was empowering. I remember the guide got up, and she had all those bags, and she was miming me struggling, and it was so powerful, but everybody's was powerful. It's one of my favourite parts, the mirroring. It made me want to learn</p>
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	<p>how to do it for others, I felt such a strong attachment to it. I think I learnt more from listening to others being mirrored because I could relax and take it in a little bit more. It was empowering to me to hear other people's stories.</p> <p>After I'd told my story, there was a moment of fear when I thought someone might cut me down, tell me "you've fucked it up and you don't know what you're doing".</p>
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Despite the safety of the holding environment, support of the guides and group, and Shelly's VF experience of cracking open, developing her intuition and gaining self-knowing, she, like Misha, found old fears still haunted her. For Shelly, it was the familiar fear and existential threat of being diminished, negated, and rejected. It seems as if transformative experiences do not necessarily erase old fears and habits, but enable conscious awareness of their presence, so they no longer have us in their thrall.

Witnessing

Mirroring was often told in the third person, enabling participants to become witnesses to their own story. Others witnessing the mirroring, helped to affirm and validate the person's transformation. The simple act of sharing one's story appeared to be important in beginning the process of incorporation. The concept of 'bearing witness' in the Christian tradition suddenly became clear to me. Having one's story heard and held in the minds of others was incredibly meaningful in the context of a rite-of-passage. My experience had become more real, its validation by others more significant than I would have thought. Others expressed feeling the same about their own stories. The sense of *communitas* in the group was stronger than ever at that point, for we were the living proof of the truth of our nascent transformations.

M	<p>There's a lot of shared experience in the gender, and so, I mean there's a lot of shared human experience of course too, so I thought in that way listening to people's stories also...it was illuminating to bear witness to other people's experiences. I mean I don't think it would have been as rich to tell my own story and to take off, to not hear about what other people were experiencing at the same time, in parallel, in that same kind of, space. In the moment it can feel long and draining, but I think it's good, and I, you know, I think that's part of the point, is listening to each other, validating each other.</p>
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In a traditional rite-of-passage, one's family and community would witness and attest to the transformation, and support the initiate's incorporation by behaving toward them as though they fully embodied the new self-state. We only had each other, which made it so important to be there for each other, because soon we would have to return to a world in which nobody had witnessed our journeys.

Intent for action

Unlike traditional vision quests that were a cultural norm in some societies, we would return to our communities alone. Our small, temporary community was the sole

repository of our shared experience, and provided for our initial needs. Returning to communities who had no idea what we had just experienced was a challenge, and we dealt with the need to practice being in our new states by making commitments to action. It was a way of redefining intentions for incorporation in the light of new self-knowledge and felt meanings beginning to be made sense of. It took the form of declarations of several short-term actions to set in motion the active phase of embodying our new states.

The further support offered by some of the participants, in agreeing to meet together regularly over the coming year, alleviated some of the anxieties about returning to the world alone, for Foster and Little warn, "The absence of social validation can be a crushing blow to one who has just fulfilled the terms of initiation and who, by all intents and purposes, ought to belong" (1989/1997, p. 23).

Transformation

All three of the participants interviewed said, in retrospect, that they saw the VF as transformative. I asked them how they experienced transformation both during and after the VF, and what their perceptions about the nature of transformation were.

Misha reiterates what she experienced as the "*mundanity of transformative experience*":

M	So, that's what the Vision Quest felt like to me, there was a lot of like teeny little – I didn't have, and you know of course I judged myself for that, I didn't have like, grand, giant epiphanies... I felt like small things happened, and in between small things I was incredibly aggravated by the wind and the sand and the sun and the heat and the knapping of my tarp and...
M	<p>I think as an experience it was transformative. ...But was it transformative in that nothing will ever be the same again and I'm a brand-new person, unrecognisable? That's simply not so...</p> <p>I think that transformation needs to be understood as...the perhaps, increase in intensity of moments in which we glimpse the possibility of change. It's not a light switch. It's part of the practice... But it's the practice where you really start to see what you can do...So, yeah, it was a transformative experience. It's hard work to keep it rejuvenated. ...</p> <p>I have a feeling we need to go and do these experiences and then come back to 'real' life, and that's the point, the integration is the hard part. We have to do things with our bodies and minds and participate in the world.</p>

Kaz underwent what Kegan and Lahey (2009) term a developmental shift from the Socialized Mind to a Self-Authoring one. From a Jungian perspective it is seen as individuating:

R	Did it make you feel more assertive?
K	Yeah, more assertive, and sort of recognising myself, you know, I ... What are my needs and what do I want? And so that aggression you know, made me realise, hold on, I'm a person of my own, I have boundaries for myself and

	what do I want? And I'm allowed to follow those. You know, so yeah, it helped me do that.
K	<p>Yeah, both to recognise and appreciate what was already there, and appreciating it, and also to discovering more parts of myself, so I came into the fast feeling incredibly inadequate. I felt young and not in a good way. ...It turned into feeling, like I could recognise and appreciate that sweetness about being young, but I also had a newly discovered capacity to protect that in the world and deal with the world so I could keep that safe.</p> <p>...And also, valuing that um, innocence and vulnerability. That's pretty systematically demeaned, at least in the culture I'm surrounded by. Not seeing it as a weakness, which is how I came in feeling, but seeing it as something precious, which also you know, if you're gonna be walking through the world being pretty tough you don't wanna be barefooted, you want your big boots, so ah, I wanna keep my tender feet nice and soft, but I can take them off when I need to though, you know. This weak and vulnerable centre well, ya, that's there, and it's free and I'm gonna make sure it's alright.</p>

Kaz spoke of transformation as a change in self-awareness, self-perception, with a non-linear trajectory of external impacts:

K	I think for me the transformation was a change, was an awareness. And it was like, I don't know, when you were talking about popular conceptions of what is transformation, it feels like it has to have a concrete result. It has to be the fulfilment of a goal. ...I think awareness in itself is transformation. ...so I didn't come back and then all of a sudden I could solve all my problems, but I was a different person inside because I had a different perspective because I had a change in my awareness. So who I was, and who I could be... So yeah, maybe the external changes don't happen like, on a timeline you know. "Oh well, I went on the Fast and within two months I'm going to have this job and blah blah blah." Maybe it's not that linear. Because of this, at some point I'm going to have enough momentum to slip into this other external situation but it started with the internal.
R	So would you consider it to be a fairly significant event, experience, the Fast, in your life, in retrospect?
K	Yeah, definitely. It was necessary for me to go through the Fast to become an adult. To be able to live the kind of life that I would want to live and that I think I'm meant to live.



Blowing on the fire: incorporation and unfolding beyond the programme

Victor Turner seemed to value the liminal Threshold phase of the rite-of-passage over the others, and it is easy to see why. There is an attraction to the phase because it appears to be where transformation occurs. Turner was interested in the anti-structural, disruptive qualities of liminality, and its potential as a seedbed for cultural creativity and practices (Turner V. , 1982).

Irwin (1994), however, concludes that intent was the most significant element of the vision quest to the Plains peoples, and I can also relate to his view. I doubt my Vision Fast would have had the focus and purpose that intention brought to it, and I suspect that was the case even for those whose conscious intent was unclear at the time. As Kaz said, *“Some part of me took me on that Fast, and some part of me knew what I needed to grow up. So that part always had the intention of, this is a rite-of-passage, moving into adulthood ceremony. I recognised that after the Fast”.*

The significance of the Incorporation phase, though, cannot be overstated because it marks the beginning of embodying and practicing change. The first challenge is to reintegrate into one’s life, which Mezirow (1978) places last in the process of TL. Contrary to being a last step, my inquiry group experienced reintegration as the first step in a much longer journey of incorporation and maintenance of the changes we felt on the Fast.

Experiences of reintegration and incorporation:

Reintegration:	Struggle to fit back in Renegotiation of role and relationships
Requires:	Hard work Practice Action
Benefits from:	Support, connection, renewal, community
Blocks:	Self-criticism, self-judgement, self-doubt

Figure 52. Experiences of reintegration identified primarily within the RC data set 3.

Shelly found reintegrating into her job as a nurse in a busy hospital difficult to return to:

S	...my life is fucked up! I talked to others, it happens to a lot of people. You come back and your life’s a mess. I didn’t want to go to work, I just wanted to be outside, I wanted to be connected with people who would sit and talk and listen and be deep instead of... surface stuff. So, it was really, really hard. Since then, I
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	<p>go through phases. Sometimes I'm ok, do my job so I can go on these things, training and VFs, other times I just think, I'm not doing what I'm supposed to be doing, or that it's taking too long, or I'm still caught up in old stories.</p> <p>When I'm involved in ceremony, I love it, but then the real world always seems to bog me down. I don't know why, but each time I go and do something like that, I get more and more crabby at work. I'm resentful of it and get short, and I don't like myself when I feel that way. ...</p> <p>...when I come home my life isn't any different than it was, but I've been changed, and I think that's where the angst is. I'm still trying to fit in with how I've been changed, and trying to fit myself in to the world here, is what makes it uncomfortable. It's like my clothes got changed and they don't fit quite right. ...</p> <p>I think it's now just the way that I'm viewing everything. And there's a part of me, when I've become aware of things, it's in my face. It's like all of my buttons and all of my edges are all right here and it's like I'm aware of them now. I can't go back to being asleep. ...</p> <p>So, I think the Fast totally messed up my life, but in a good way. ... I think it's seeking that divine essence and trying to get back to it.</p>
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Shelly returned to an unsatisfying job. She lived alone and did not have the benefit of family support. Shelly's journey of reintegration and incorporation has been a difficult one, exacerbated by chronic Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from childhood. She has found much of the support, healing, and sustenance she needs from her continued work with SoLB, undergoing a second VF, two trainings, and assisting on a further VF. It is somewhere she can be herself and engage safely at a depth and quality difficult to find outside of that environment.

Kaz's story is quite different:

K	I did have support because, especially with my mom. She could sort of recognise that something had happened, and, I don't know, somehow when people recognise a change, you don't have to explain yourself. It's not like, "oh, Kaz's behaving in this different way, what's ..?", it was just like, "oh, ok, well I know what's happened so we can continue this change". And then also... yes I felt supported, and then also I continued to incorporate. The things I'm continuing to incorporate are maintaining my ability to sort of keep my boundaries around myself. And not in a defensive, armoured way, which can happen, I'm not going to lie.
R	Of course, yeah. It doesn't make us saints, does it?!
K	No, no. It's so tempting to armour up. But yeah, so now I'm learning a balance between how do I be open and loving and compassionate, ...and keep that innocence and sweetness, and vulnerability safe, ...and still have assertive aggression. You know, "wait, how do I juggle these parts, how does this work, how does this go together?"
R	My god, it's a lifelong struggle in itself isn't it?!

K	So I think I was supported when I came back and I think it helped me realise that... that it is a lifelong thing. It is a lifelong learning process. So now I can recognise that well, the Fast was adding one piece, and now I'm kind of adding another piece to the piece I added on the Fast, so, it's like, yeah, it snowballs.
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Kaz noticed changes in her personal story and internal narrative:

K	Yeah, well, some changes that happened for me were, one, realising that I could change how I perceived myself, and then how that helped me interact with the world. And specifically, I think my story shifted from having to... pretend. I pretended a lot, because I would... I hid and pretended a lot. So that story is a story of fear, fear of being judged for who you are, and also of kind of self-reproach, "you're kind of a fraud or a liar, hiding all this". Fear and judgement, and also being kind of inept or inadequate. "If you have to hide who you are then who you are must not be very worthy or acceptable." So that was the story I kind of went in with.
K	And coming out, my story, which is continuing to develop,... I go through situations every day where I put this story into practice, and so it continues to inform my practice and change who I am. But it's more about... I guess that I'm allowed to be who I am. And I can have boundaries around people and situations pushing against who I am.

Kaz, at age twenty when she attended the VF, was still in the process of adult identity formation. Her existing fears were banished as her awareness of herself as a person who could exist independently of social roles and expectations resulted in burgeoning self-confidence. The support she received from her family enabled her to renegotiate her relationships with them without conflict. This could have been much more difficult if her family had not recognised her transformation or had rejected it. That Kaz's mother is a Jungian therapist and that they share interests and closeness in their relationship were undoubtedly helpful in Kaz's ability to incorporate.

Kaz also discussed feeling her transformation in her body:

K	You can't go... once it's in your body... I mean thoughts come and go. Anyone who's paid attention for two seconds knows that, and you know there are patterns of thought, but, oh... once it's in your body, you... you can't help it, it just changes you, you know. It's... yeah, it's concrete now.
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The fully embodied transformation I experienced on the VF as a healing of my relationship with the masculine and feminine principles has never since been subject to self-doubt. Neither did I feel the need to reflect on it in order to make sense of it, because the knowing needed no voicing for it to be so. It resulted in an immediate and, I believe, permanent change, percolating through all aspects of my life in which those principles are at work. I hazard then, that a signifier of incorporation is feeling it in the body, the sense that it is integral to the Self.

As Mezirow (1978) speculated, transformation appears often to involve struggle and internal conflicts, as old sedimented patterns continue to haunt us. Being able to

incorporate change requires resilience and determination, and appears to be greatly aided by having a support network of others who are aware of one's quest. For those reaching middle age and older, sedimented patterns may be harder to shake off, having established over many years. People, by this time, are also often ensconced in complex personal and career relationships, and must face the demands and expectations of these upon their reintegration.

Shelly's increased self-awareness means she is better able to deal with her old adversary, 'the critic':

S	[I've] Very gradually [found self-acceptance], and that was an issue for me previously, for me before going in, is that old story comes up, of, "I'm not good enough", "I'm different", "I'm whatever, blah blah blah". So that's a constant. I'm having to say, "oh there you are again", and just... not listening to that, but that's hard.
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Old, unhelpful self-stories, narrative themes and patterns, do not always cease after transformative experience, especially perhaps, when they are voiced by 'the critic'. Both Misha and Shelly reported ongoing struggles with the internal voice of self-criticism, self-judgement, and self-doubt. Increased self-awareness means strategies for combating unhelpful narrative patterns can be developed. The theme surfaced in many of our group's online meetings as we shared our struggles to fully embody the self-transformations that we had 'visioned' for ourselves.

The group provided a space for us to reconnect regularly with others who had shared the same profound experience. We were keepers and guardians of each other's sacred stories, and though we had spent only twelve days with each other and knew little of each other's lives, we had seen into each other's souls. Our meetings generated the same energy we all felt on the VF, re-energising us and renewing our commitment and intent to continue the work.

Misha:

M	I feel about the people I've kept in touch with... that sense that I have about a few people in my life, not a lot, that it wouldn't matter how long I went without seeing them, we would not talk about the weather as the main conversation, it would be meaningful, and very unguarded, which I just think is incredibly rare. I think that being vulnerable is very uncomfortable for people, to be really known. A lot of people don't want to be totally known, they think they do, but they don't really. Because to be totally known means people also see the shitty things that you think and do and are.
R	...and they still think you're ok!
M	Exactly!

Shelly:

S	I think what helps for me too, is the connection, that we stay connected. Because even though there's been longer periods in between, to suddenly get an email from someone...it's like, yeah! And for me to continue the work, even though it's with different people.
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R	Do you think it rekindles something of the original energy for you?
S	Yes. I don't know if it's the people, or if it's just the energy that we bring. So, there can be people not there [at the online meetings], and I still think it's the collective energy of all of us.
R	Sometimes I come to it, feeling bad because I feel flat and haven't got any energy to bring to it, I just want sustenance. But then, as soon as we're all together it starts fizzing and zinging and my heart's full of love again.
S	Yeah, we're rekindling it, we're blowing on the fire.

So far outside of our cultural norms was the VF that many of us did not share our stories outside of the group, fearing our experiences would be misinterpreted outside of the mythic-symbolic realm in which they took place, making the continuing connection with our VF group so valuable. It is lamentable that imaginal journeys seem to be largely removed from today's society, separated from us by screen or page, and seen as mere fantasy. When the mythos is made tangible through experiences such as the VF, human consciousness is revealed as a mysterious and magical phenomenon, and its transformative possibilities can be harnessed and brought back into the world of daily existence.

Mapping the Vision Fast process

Clustering of processes

From my analysis of participants' experiences of the VF, I identified sixteen processes within the overall process, in which I included the unidentified initiating experience that brought participants to the VF as well as the processes involved in continuing incorporation following the programme (figure 6). These processes are both intrapersonal and interpersonal, because although some of them, for instance, those initiated in the Threshold phase (undertaken by individuals in isolation from the group) could be seen as solely intrapersonal, the interpersonal influences were indivisible factors within the greater process. For example, the holding environment was first established through the actions and behaviour of the guides, but influenced by the willingness and openness of the participants, then strengthened and maintained by all. It was not possible to isolate the processes from the felt experience of them because the elements constituting the processes were influenced by or contained emotion or feeling, and sometimes the feeling best described the process, as in the experience of 'grieving' or 'opening'.

The two-dimensional limitations of the page necessitate listing the processes (figure 53); however, it must be noted that they do not necessarily occur in this order or start and end at the time of their initiation. Instead, each process, once initiated, became a part of the ongoing process of personal inquiry, informed and transformed by the other processes initiated during the larger process.

Constituting processes of the SoLB Vision Fast		
1	Initiating experience	A disorienting dilemma or an orientating experience prompting willingness to enter into deep inquiry.
Severance phase		
2	Disruption	'Schema violations' causing a loosening and dislodging of habitual ways of thinking and being; attentive awareness.
3	Establishment of the Holding Environment	An interpersonal process of establishing a non-judgemental, empathic environment of safe-uncertainty in which to engage with others in deep inquiry. The sharing of personal stories & feelings establishes trust and empathy.
4	Facilitated personal inquiry	Examination of the feelings and emotions bound up in psychic images, and the release of those energies so they may be redeployed more productively elsewhere. Involves contemplation of epistemic, sociocultural, & psychic assumptions (Mezirow, 1978) and habitudes.
5	Grieving	Identification and acknowledgement of, and emotional detachment from, redundant ways of thinking and behaving / aspects of self. Grieving may begin with the disorienting dilemma or during the facilitated inquiry, and continue into the Threshold phase.
6	Development of Intent	Exploration, clarification & declaration of image/feeling/concept of desired potential self-state, to envision and embody the purpose of transformation in the context of self and one's 'people'.
Threshold phase		
7	Disruption of liminality	Tension and struggle between ways of being and knowing as means are sought to navigate the symbolic landscape.
8	Opening	to experience and aspects of self. The body and mind 'empty out' and are freed from habitual expectations (Foster & Little, Wilderness Vision Questing and the Four Shields of Human Nature, 1996). Attachments to the familiar are suspended, not-knowing is surrendered to. Awareness becomes heightened, possible participatory/transpersonal experience.
9	Exploration, encounters	in the 'wilderness within'. The symbolic landscape becomes a mediator between the unconscious and conscious. Feeling guided; experience of nature as a teacher; encounters with the Shadow, the Anima / Animus and other archetypes, invite new relationships to form. New ways of seeing are made possible. Possible participatory/transpersonal experience.
10	Knowledge generation, emergence	Knowing is generated through spontaneous and intentional imaginal activities and symbolic enactments, guided by Intent. Emergence of new connections, expansion of consciousness. Possible participatory/transpersonal experience.
11	Nascent transformation	Emergence of changed self: perspective shift, embodied insight, new meaning-structures, increased self-awareness, expanded consciousness, healing.
Incorporation phase		
12	Sensemaking	Structuring of liminal experience into a story. Storytelling creates the necessity of structuring experience so it can be told. The 'performance' of telling brings stories into the body and gives them

		substance in the world.
13	Empowerment	Confirmation and validation of transformation by the temporary community. Witnessing gives stories substance and validates experience. Mirroring empowers by 'shining a light on the gifts of the story', corroborates and articulates knowing. It provides metaphors for felt meaning. Being and knowing, meaning and sense-making coalesce, forming an integrated new perspective which can be acted upon. The activities of the incorporation phase contribute to synthesis: a coalescence of the energies of being and knowing. Meaning and sense-making combine to form an integrated new perspective which can be acted upon.
14	Intent for action	Commitment to action assists incorporation and integration of transformation into life.
15	Reintegration	Courage and fortitude are needed to re-enter one's life changed. Possible tensions and conflicts may arise as balance between the mundane and mythic world is sought. Support eases transition and aids incorporation.
16	Action, practice	Transformation is realised through action and practice. The new state needs attentiveness to maintain and prevent reversion to prior habitudes. Periodic revitalisation is needed to sustain energy to transform self and world and to renew Intent. Support energises and reactivates, keeping the flame alive.

Figure 53. Processes of the Vision Fast rite-of-passage

Whilst there were clear boundaries to the purpose and structural elements of each phase, there were no such boundaries to process or experience. The processes initiated in each phase continued into or linked to one or more of the others. For instance, the grieving process, begun in the first phase, might resolve in the second phase, sometimes aided by a ceremony such as the 'Death Lodge'. Intent was developed in the first phase to take into the second phase, but tapped into the third phase when participants momentarily embodied their third-phase transformed self-states. The felt-meanings and knowing experienced in the second phase were made sense of and given form and structure through metaphor and mythic-symbolic storytelling in the third phase.

Dissatisfied with the two-dimensionality of a list, I created a visualisation of the network of processes to better illustrate how they pervaded different phases (figure 54). The image should be read as a three-dimensional, holographic map of process, because although I have placed them in an order to be read clockwise from the top, I do so attempting to place them roughly in order of their initiation. In reality, it was a much more fuzzy affair than the illustration suggests. Processes and experiences were initiated, built upon, revisited, and transformed throughout the process.

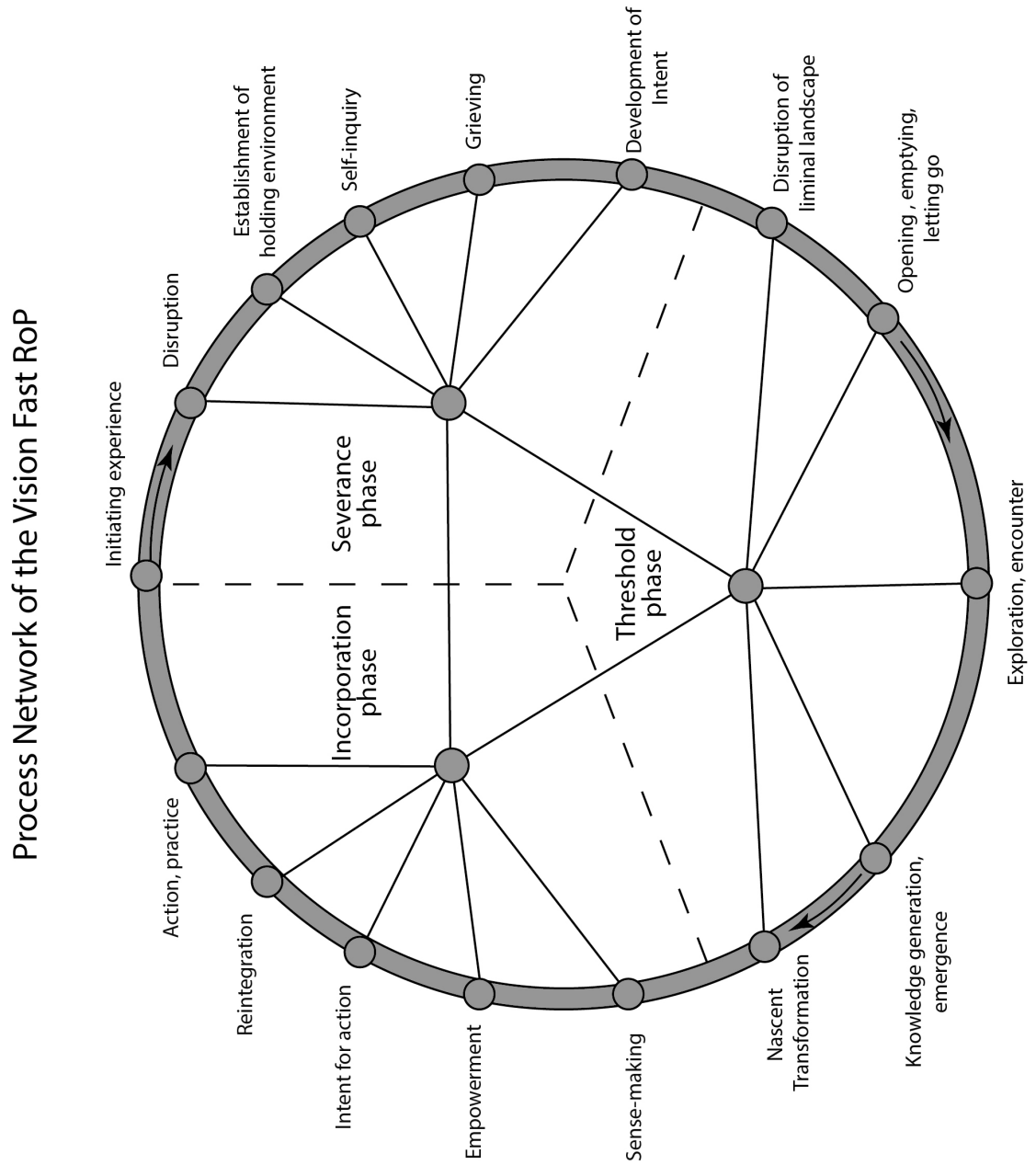


Figure 54. Process Network of the Vision Fast, R. Lovie, 2017

Concluding discussion

Responsibilities of learner and facilitator

The SoLB VF programme was an outstanding example of facilitation, structure, and process of TL, and the group were open, honest and reflective. The benefit of this was that I was personally able to experience TL in its fullest sense. A drawback, if it can be said to be one, was that I was unable to experience or observe any potential negative impacts. One question that kept returning to me was of the responsibility of the learner in TL in relation to that of the facilitator. There is a kind of contracting implicit in embarking on any learning programme, and especially perhaps, when that programme is billed as potentially transformative. It is, I think, reasonable for a learner to expect a facilitator to provide, to the best of their ability, an environment conducive to learning, appropriate tools or techniques, structure and process for the aims and objectives of the programme to be met.

The adult learner is responsible for their own learning, conduct, and general wellbeing. When it comes to the unconscious, however, we cannot know how we or others will respond to any given stimulus, so learners and facilitators must find ways to manage this tricky terrain. I described moments during the ITD and Mythodrama programmes that triggered disturbing psychic images, causing me discomfort and distress, and how practicing attentive awareness and reflexivity was useful.

The behaviour of a facilitator will impact upon individuals and groups, and it is likely that individuals will project their own unconscious fears, desires, needs, etc. onto a facilitator. In the Mythodrama programme, I noticed the projections of some of the participants upon Richard Olivier as a wise and benevolent father figure. In the VF, Shelly mentioned projecting her unconscious need for a loving mother onto one of the guides. I asked Emerald North, VF guide, how she dealt with issues of projection and being an authority figure. She said she made every effort to discourage the phenomenon, in part by daring to be ugly, hairy, laughing too loudly and belching!

"It's one of the reasons I've developed this persona, I would call it, for working, it is to keep people from being able to project ... you know, you can't really wanna be me [laughs loudly] ... Self-reliance is really what this is all about, and reliance on the group. I try really hard not to insert myself in the role all the time, as the old, wise, knowing one, you know, so that people see the old, wise, knowing one in them, in each person in the circle. So, that's really important to me, and I know I've succeeded when, in the final circle, people are not only talking about the guides, they're talking about each other more, and most circles, many don't even mention the guides, it doesn't occur to them. And that means we have managed to not place ourselves in the centre of their circle on a pyramid, saying "hi, we are the way" ... the most important thing in facilitation is not to have the focus always draw back

to you, and to take any kind of opportunity to have the circle support itself." (North E. , 2017)

Emerald summed up the skill and role of the facilitator in establishing the container and holding the space until the group can hold it themselves, and in employing various modes of facilitation, always with the autonomy of the participant in mind (Heron J. , 1999).

Common themes of process

Looking back over the three programmes, common themes can be seen running through each of them. I compare the process of the ITD and Mythodrama programmes with that of the VF. The ITD workshop illustrated how disruption, affective-imaginal activities, and an open, collaborative atmosphere produced an empathic field conducive to individual and group creative process. Self-inquiry in this case, is replaced with artistic inquiry and intent. Much of the ITD creative process took place within the threshold phase, followed by sense-making and the act of performance to incorporate and complete the cycle. This suggests that liminality plays a significant role in the creative process, and that creative process plays a significant role in affective-imaginal modes of TL.

The Mythodrama programme contained all the processual elements of the first two phases of the VF, though they were entered into at less depth and the programme's transformative opportunities were constrained somewhat by the content of the myth. The processes of the incorporation phase of the VF, save for 'Intent for action', were largely missing from the Mythodrama programme, which may go some way to explain why I struggled to incorporate insights gained there as well as I would have liked.

Inquiry questions answered

The questions I brought forward from the Mythodrama programme included: whether the perspective shift that insights afford us merely shows us a glimpse of transformation; how insights might be transformed into lasting changes; whether TL requires action in the world to manifest it, and if so, what forms of action; is it enough to feel different, or do we need to be different, or have that difference noticed by others?

It seems that TL can take many forms, be different, and mean different things to different people at different times. TL is clearly not one thing, nor can its occurrence, depth, or implications be easily evaluated. Transformation, it seems, can be instantaneous (as in my healing experience, chapter 6.1), or unfold over time; it may be felt in some sense but unable to be made sense of; it may be short-lived; it may be small or utterly life-changing. Feeling different may not be enough to establish TL. Action of some kind would appear to be necessary, and may take the form of subtle changes in behaviour as opposed to grand gestures. The social dimension of incorporation suggests that if others notice and support our change it is helpful to incorporation, but if change goes unnoticed or unsupported by our communities (i.e.

colleagues, loved-ones, friends), then conflict, struggle, and potentially life-changing disruption can ensue as difficult choices will have to be made regarding acceptance, exclusion, and questioning “who are my people?” (Schein, 1997). The price for some, will prove too great, and transformation may not be sustainable (Mezirow, 1978).

6.3. Vision Fast: a comparison of processes

Introduction

Although small scale qualitative studies do not usually seek to make generalisations about their findings, some (e.g. Giorgi, Wertz) believe that their phenomenological method of reduction, the epoché, will reveal the essential features of lived experiences, which they argue can be considered universal. I remain unconvinced that this reduction is possible, especially when it comes to lived-experience comprised of several interdependent processes, such as the experience of transformative learning. Inductive theory building is, however, integral to Anderson's Intuitive Inquiry methodology, and in the spirit of imaginative extrapolation, I proffer the following ideas as an exercise in imaginal possibility, rather than any claim to knowledge.

The Rites-of-Passage Process Network I developed seemed to contain broader implications for theory and practice in different contexts⁵⁵ than it reasonably should for the findings of such a limited study. That may be because the SoLB wilderness rite-of-passage methodology is based on experiential and scholarly inquiry and thirty-five years of practice and reflection (School of Lost Borders, 2015). The many correlations of its constituent processes to the research observations and findings of others across disciplines, and the similarities in process to the other programmes I studied, persuaded me that the RoP Process Network, might usefully represent an alternative affective-imaginal TL model to Mezirow's conceptual-rational one.

To further my speculations, I compare the RoP process network with two established processual frameworks for development, from two different paradigms: the mythos of Campbell's (1949) Hero's Journey, and logos of Mezirow's TLT. I first look to the Hero's Journey, to verify the RoP Process Network as a developmental framework. The Hero's Journey resembles the VF process in many ways, as might be expected as the core structure of both is that of the rite-of-passage. I draw upon psychoanalyst and storyteller, Clarissa Pinkola Estes' introduction to the 2004 Commemorative edition of Campbell's 'Hero with a Thousand Faces' (Campbell J. , 2004), and a paper by Hartman and Zimberoff (2009), which demystifies and discusses The Hero's Journey from an explicitly Jungian perspective. I then return to Mezirow's conception of the TL process, to compare and discuss the conceptual-rational perspective with my alternative conception of an affective-imaginal one, discussing their parallels, intersections, and differences.

⁵⁵ My efforts to conduct part of my inquiry in organisational settings were unsuccessful; however, in a separate collaborative project with my partner Ben, a leadership development consultant, the VF process was adapted and applied by him in organisations as the 3-i (intention, immersion, integration) model of development, with some success, achieving positive feedback from clients and participants. Ben now uses the three-phase framework for designing organisational interventions wherever possible and appropriate.

The Hero's Journey

Joseph Campbell (1949) identified many similarities in the structure of the adventures of various mythic heroes in his extensive study of myths. He derived the monomyth (2004, p. 28) of the Hero's Journey from these correlations, which is widely understood to represent a journey of inner psychic development. Campbell considered the three-phase structure of the rite of passage to be the nuclear unit of the Hero's Journey, so correlations with the VF process might be expected.

The essence of the myth is that an, at first reluctant, adventurer crosses into a supernatural realm, encounters mysterious forces, and eventually returns personally empowered, with 'gifts' of knowledge and/or skills to benefit their community. The deeper meaning of the journey, Brown writes, is about "the courage to seek the depths; the image of creative rebirth; the eternal cycle of change within us; the uncanny discovery that the seeker is the mystery that the seeker seeks to know." (Campbell, Cousineau, & Brown, 2003, p. xix). This view is based upon the assumption that humans possess an inherent urge to transcend their current psychosocial and historical limitations. The Jungian perspective is that our psyche seeks wholeness, the mature reunion of the unconscious with the conscious, and the transcendence of duality. This urge may remain latent, be felt as an undefined yearning, or manifest as a conscious desire for development.

Many, though not all, of the heroes in Campbell's study were male, and it has been argued that the Hero's Journey is perhaps more representative of a masculine journey of development than a feminine one, if indeed, biological sex is perceived as binary and developmentally differentiating. The arguments for and against are not within the foci of my inquiry beyond acknowledging the pervasive existence of sociocultural gendering regardless of potential innate differences (Schmitz, 2010). While it is likely, then, due to sex and gender, that individuals will identify more with some archetypal energies than others (Hill, 1992), I think that due to their symbolic nature, literal interpretations of mythic elements should be resisted. Estes reminds us that an archetype is a "representation of the Irrepresentable" (2004, p. Ivi), and so the masculine and feminine nomenclatures in myths should not be taken literally, but be understood as representing "forces of immense creative energy" within the psyche. I argue the basic structure of the Hero's Journey can be interpreted as a non-gender specific developmental one, as will become clear when I discuss Hartman and Zimberoff's (2009) contemporary Jungian interpretation condensed to five stages, alongside Campbell's original conceptualisation.

Campbell (2004, pp. 34-35) sets out the Hero's journey in these stages:

Separation or departure:

The Call to Adventure: something disruptive occurs that draws the hero into a relationship with forces that are not understood. These "ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspected springs" (2004, p. 46), may be suppressed conflicts or desires. Hartman and Zimberoff (2009) suggest this phase, "The Call: Identify the Ego, the True Self and the Soul" (2009, p. 11), represents the psyche's desire for wholeness, the

yearning for growth and development (Hillman J. , 1983/1996), but without a clear path forward.

Refusal of the Call: the inner turmoil of an unsatisfactory status quo, but reluctance to risk everything one has in pursuit of an unknown goal with no guarantee of success. This describes the dilemma of whether embarking on TL is worth the risk, as if something within us knows that such change carries unpredictable consequences. The journey may end here.

The fear of not being able to fulfil one's potential, Hartman and Zimberoff suggest, can motivate a person to risk their ego for the possibility of transforming. The journey must be embarked upon willingly and wholeheartedly to stand any chance of success (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Only when that is accepted does a person actively embark on the search for transformation. This supports the perspective of TL as changes to identity (Illeris, 2014), it describes the disorienting dilemma of TLT (McWhinney & Markos, 2003), and why the experience of a disorienting dilemma does not always lead someone to seek TL (see below).

Supernatural Aid: confirmation the hero has made the right choice. Assistance in unexpected form representing the "benign, protecting power of destiny" (2004, p. 66), which encourages the hero's trust. This could be interpreted as taking the "leap of faith" required when embarking on a path that may lead to identity revision.

The Crossing of the first Threshold: the first step into "the sacred zone of the universal source" (2004, p. 75): entrance into the unconscious. The hero meets the "threshold guardians" at the entrance to the other realm, symbolising the limits of the hero's present horizon. Beyond lies the unknown (2004, p. 71). Hartman and Zimberoff call this stage, "Preparation for our Journey: Confronting the Guardians", facing our own self-limiting and self-sabotaging assumptions, thoughts, and behaviours, and developing a "stimulating and sustaining vision of the possibilities that lie ahead" (2009, p. 12). With it, comes the capacity to "see with new eyes". The Shadow is exposed and becomes known, and once in conscious awareness it loses its hold. This stage specifically equates to the facilitated personal inquiry and development of Intent of the VF.

The Belly of the Whale: the hero disappears into the belly of the whale, symbolising the death of the current self (2004, p. 83). The whale imagery represents a life-centring, life-renewing act (2004, p. 85). The first challenge is of facing the shadow aspects of the Self: one's own demons. If we view this stage as the beginning of the solo Fast, as their egos and cognitive normality were disrupted, participants struggled with tensions and conflicts between ways of knowing and being. Many remarked experiencing nowhere to hide from the self. This stage of the journey relies upon the preceding stages to unfold in creative or developmental ways. Without adequate preparation, the experience could range from the mundane to the terrifying.

The stage of the trials and victories of initiations:

The Road of Trials: Having crossed the threshold, the hero,

"moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials... it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage" (2004, p. 89).

Next the hero encounters feminine and masculine archetypes, grouped here:

The Meeting with the Goddess, Woman as the Temptress, and Atonement with the Father: these encounters represent connecting with and developing relationships with those archetypes within. We only see three of the four static and dynamic aspects of feminine and masculine (Hill, 1992) here. Presumably, because the hero him or herself is deemed to represent the missing dynamic masculine aspect. Conceivably one might encounter all and any aspects of masculine and feminine here, because this stage of the journey concerns preparation for the integration of those energies within;

Apotheosis (elevation to divine status): concepts of opposites are transcended and along with them the apparent fixity of duality (2004, p. 140). Often in myths this is represented by a sacred marriage;

The Ultimate Boon: the hero is rewarded with gifts of knowledge and abilities: the expansion of consciousness (2004, p. 176).

To Hartman and Zimberoff, this phase, "The Journey: Becoming Your Authentic Self – Generating New Visions" (2009, p. 16), represents opening to new, more expansive perspectives and possibilities, discerning what to let go of, and discovering new possibilities. Once the threshold between the world of limitations and the world of limitless possibility (conscious and unconscious) has been crossed, a doorway opens to the realisation that we need not be bound by our own limiting concepts or perceptual boundaries, or those imposed upon us.

It is essential, Hartman and Zimberoff insist, that this phase is approached with humility, because if the ego claims the gift of knowledge imparted here it may distort it and become overinflated. There is a moral imperative that the gifts received here should be used for the betterment of the whole community, not one's self-aggrandisement. One must assimilate them without identifying with them. It illustrates why the attitude of inquiry developed in the Severance phase of the VF was essential: self-honesty and humility, non-judgement, empathy, acceptance, and grieving, all reducing the grip of the ego, followed by the development of Intent, which included personal and transpersonal aspirations.

When telling their stories of the VF, all the participants mentioned participatory experiences, from feeling guided, connected to the universe, to conversing with animals, elemental forces, even deities. These revelations seemed to come from outside of the self, perhaps, indicating that the ego was not at the forefront of the experience, enabling the 'gifts' to be assimilated in a non-egoistic way. The practice and nurturing

of empathy in the preparation phase of the VF may have increased the potential for participatory experience.

Return

Hartman and Zimberoff call this phase: "Claiming the Treasure: From Vision to Commitment". The commitment here mirrors the final ceremony of the VF, when participants voiced their Intent for action. According to Hartman and Zimberoff, the egoless hero was initiated in how to use the skills and knowledge she now returns with. Participatory awareness reveals the interconnectedness of all things, and the knowledge of that relationship cannot easily be forgotten. Perhaps this awareness can lead to a more systemic understanding of the impacts of one's actions in all aspects of life, a more ecological sense of self (Piper, 2004). This does not always seem to be the case though, for if the ego is not kept in check, there will likely be no lasting expansion of consciousness beyond the level of the ego.

Campbell's stages continue:

The return: the myths diversify as to the manner and timeframe of the hero's return, and converge again with:

The Crossing of the Return Threshold: re-entry and integration into the mundane world. The hero may find reintegration with society the most difficult requirement of all (2004, p. 34).

Master of the Two Worlds: balancing mundane and mythic, inner and outer life, the ability to respond to the needs of both worlds, personal and transpersonal, without succumbing to or sacrificing either. This stage seems to represent the "unfolding of a more integrated and authentic self" (Dirkx J. , 2012, p. 402), as previously hidden aspects of the Self are gradually brought into relationship with the conscious.

Freedom to Live: if integration is achieved the power of the ego is reduced, freeing the hero from attachment to outcomes. She fearlessly and humbly continues in her life's work (2004, pp. 220-221). The hero returns with greater maturity and an expanded consciousness, realising that with personal empowerment comes responsibility to their community.

Hartman and Zimberoff describe the return stages of the Journey, "The Return: Transforming Your World", as about learning how to translate the ineffable knowledge gained (by transcending the ego) in the mythic realm into the language and form of the mundane world. The hero, they say, is likely to face self-doubt and challenges that can distract or unbalance her as she tries to integrate the two and learn to balance the two worlds.

But this phase is also about translating ineffable knowing into action in order to manifest and consolidate one's transformation (Taylor E. , 2001). Estes suggests that by reaching out to 'repair' the world as a more individuated person, one also "repairs the ravel of oneself" (Estes C. P., 2004, p. Xiv), the inner life strengthening the outer, and

vice versa. The message of this phase is that altruistic behaviour has its own rewards, as it nourishes the self.

The Jungian assumption is the unconscious is linked with the transpersonal and possesses a certain objectivity that the ego does not. The ego, however, will always come back into play upon the Hero's return, so there can be no guarantee that expansion of conscious will result in mindful, conscientious action. The Hero's Journey is peppered with guides to and warnings about the internal and external influences and conflicts that might be encountered, both helping and hindering development.

Ego development

In Figure 55 (overleaf), I map Hartman and Zimberoff's simplified five stage Hero's Journey to the VF process to illustrate their similarities. They (2009, p. 7) conceptualise the Hero's Journey as a potential journey of resolution of conflicting complexes and healing, higher ego development, or spiritual growth. One or more of these outcomes correspond with many of the VF participants' stories.

It could be argued that choosing a wilderness rite-of passage based upon the transpersonal values of Ecopsychology indicates some higher ego development (Loevinger, 1976) to begin with, but even so, the VF process seemed to further enhance or advance ego development. According to Loevinger (1976), higher stages of adult ego development include the capacity to cope with and resolve inner conflicts, greater acceptance of self and others, increased empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, cognitive complexity and ability to transcend dualistic thinking. The facilitation of the VF process prior to the solo Fast, fostered the development of these traits, preparing participants for their journey into the psyche proper. An example of higher ego development can be seen in Kaz, who told of how she shifted from her socialised childhood identity, gaining a more expansive, fluid and autonomous self-conception. I experienced the healing of distorted and conflicted complexes, as did others who claimed to return with greater clarity or feelings of peace and resolution of some internal conflict.

Hartman & Zimberoff's (2009) interpretation of the Hero's Journey mapped to the process network of the Vision Fast RoP

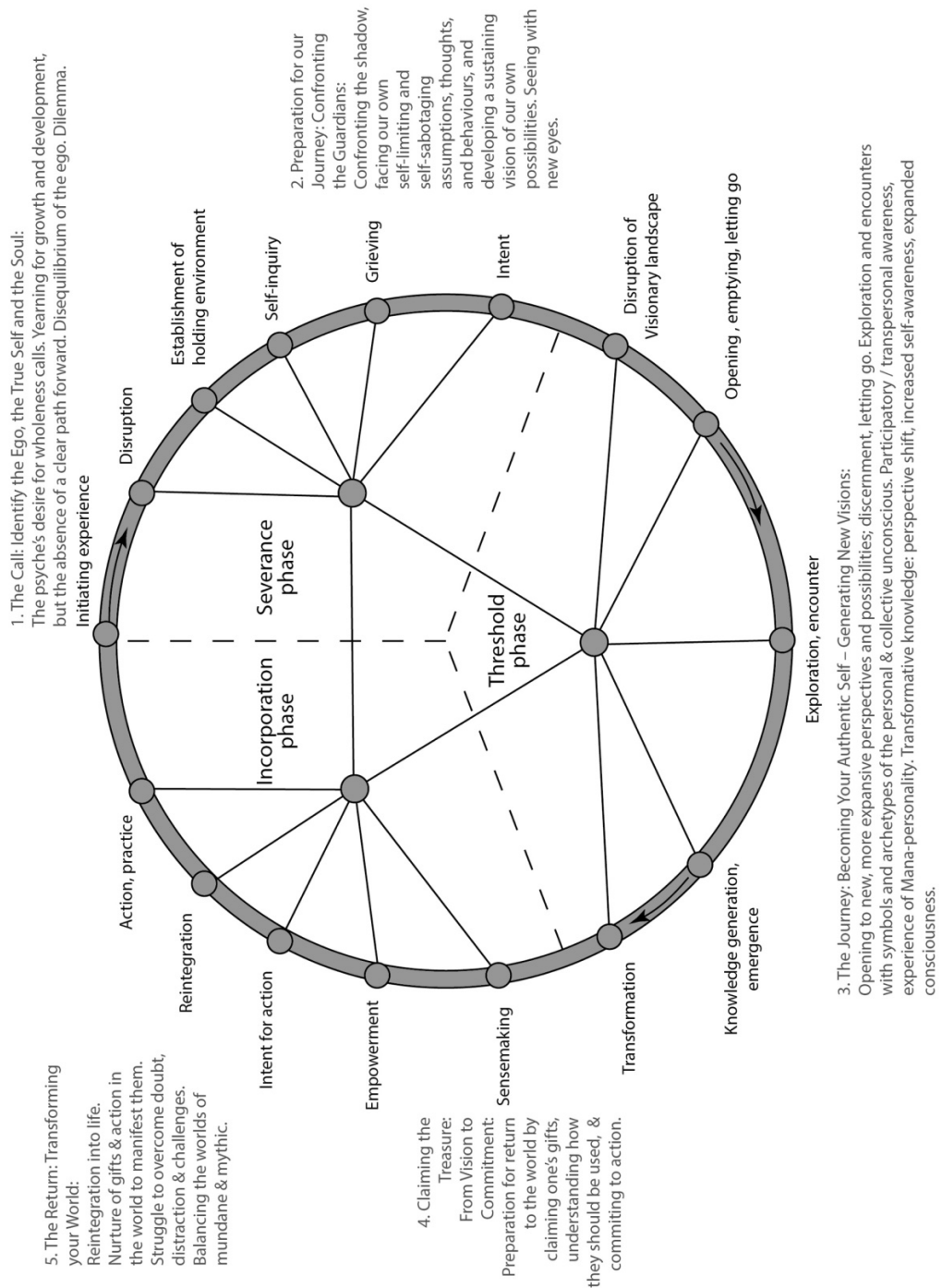


Figure 55. Hartman & Zimberoff's (2009) interpretation of the Hero's Journey mapped to the process network of the Vision Fast, R. Lovie, 2017.

Spiritual growth

One participant had long split with the church she was raised in, but returned from the Fast claiming to have re-established a personal relationship with Jesus. Kaz developed a relationship with the battle-scarred Madonna, Shelly with the Wild Woman archetype. Others said they felt a connection to something greater than themselves. I recounted perceiving awareness in the land itself, and of encountering energies beyond my understanding. It seems as if our transpersonal experiences reflected our individual

beliefs or conceptions, our imaginal capacity giving form to the “archetypal templates” (Heron J. , 1992, p. 170) we perceived, so revealing deeper truths about the phenomena while at the same time gaining self-knowledge about the shape of our individual minds.

This is, what Heron means by being compresent with phenomena, the interpenetrative nature of our participation in reality. The debateable method of phenomenological reduction, or epoché, espoused by some phenomenologists, may be less valid in some ways than a participatory methodology, because the extent of their affective-imaginal participation in the interpretive process is perhaps, under-acknowledged in their pursuit of objectivity.

Interdependent processes

Evident in the VF RoP process is how the initiation of each stage or micro-process serves a specific function within the overall RoP process, setting in motion internal processes that give forward momentum to the overall transformative process. The quality and content of each micro-process affects how the following ones unfold and how the ongoing ones resolve. The RoP Process Network depicts a multi-dimensional map of initiatory processes of TL. In addition, my investigation of the VF process illustrated how the interpersonal processes were symbiotic with the individual journey of development.

Comparison with Mezirow’s TLT

My findings indicate that TL is possible through an affective-imaginal methodology as opposed to Mezirow’s explicitly critically-reflective conceptual-rational methodology. I now revisit Mezirow’s TL process, to compare the affective-imaginal and conceptual-rational perspectives, to see if the seemingly paradigmatically different processes share any commonalities, intersections or parallels, or if their differences mean that “never the twain shall meet” (Kipling, 1994, p. 245).

It would be mistaken to suggest that Mezirow’s TLT is based entirely in the conceptual mode, because, if we return to Heron’s (1992) up-hierarchy of psychological functioning (see chapter 2), the affective and imaginal modes will always be active to some degree, even if the conceptual mode is at the fore. Mezirow readily acknowledges the role of emotion in TL (Mezirow, 2011), and his framework contains descriptions that imply feeling, emotion, and imagination at work. Nobody would assume a disorienting dilemma is experienced without emotion. There is substantial evidence to indicate that many processes previously thought to be either rational or extrarational are in fact complex and involve both (see for example (Naqvi, Shiv, & Bechara, 2006) (Beer, Knight, & D’Esposito, 2006)), although some extrarational processes may take place at a non-conscious level (Taylor E. , 2001).

Assuming the affective and imaginal modes are active in Mezirow’s process, and the conceptual mode is active at times in the VF process, let us examine them side by side.

The processes differ too much to directly compare each phase, especially as neither Mezirow's (1978, p. 16) or the VF process is to be considered entirely linear. Although they are different in many respects, there are similarities, and it is the intersections I draw attention to.

It is generally agreed that TL requires an initiating experience or life situation, a disorienting dilemma or, as I suggest, an orientating experience that prompts the willingness to enter into deep self-inquiry and seek inner change. Mezirow says a disorienting dilemma can, "bring into sharp focus questions of identity, of the meaning and direction of one's life" (1978, p. 12), which matches many of the VF participants' experiences.

Beyond the initiating experience, both approaches value the interpersonal dimension of TL. Important to both approaches is self-inquiry, which needs to take place in a safe, supportive environment with others willing to do the same. Each approach employs different methods according to which psychological mode they principally seek to activate. The aim is roughly the same, exposure of and emancipation from epistemic, sociocultural, and psychic assumptions. While Mezirow assumes a critical-rational approach to discourse, which he refers to as "dialogue involving the assessment of beliefs, feelings, and values" (2003, p. 59), the VF utilised the energy bound up in psychic images, emotions and feeling to do the same. Both can be powerful, and it would be too simplistic to argue that the critical approach is suited to sociocultural assumptions and the affective-imaginal approach suited to psychic assumptions. Both approaches elicit the consideration of issues in both realms. Deep self-inquiry is epistemologically holistic, in that all ways of knowing are active in the process. Criticality can be present when working primarily in affective-imaginal modes, as it was in the facilitated self-inquiry of the VF, just as feeling, emotion, and imagination can be present when working primarily in the conceptual mode.

The importance of shared experience is present in both perspectives. Mezirow's process model has it as "recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change", often achieved in the conceptual mode through a critical examination of sociocultural norms and political historicism. The VF utilises the empathy and connection generated in the sharing of feelings and life experiences, given sociocultural and historical context through illustrative myths and emotive historical references, as well as the use of sensemaking systems appropriate to functioning in affective and imaginal modes, such as Jung, and the Four Shields. Both approaches stimulate participatory aspects by placing individual experience in a broader sociohistorical context.

Mezirow's process speaks of the "exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions", and "planning of a course of action" (2000, p. 22). None of these can take place in a purely conceptual mode because they would lack the deeper meaning and sense of greater purpose that feeling and imagination bring. Mezirow says plans for action may be "tentative, provisional, incomplete, and vague with respect to specific outcomes" (1978, p. 15). Development of Intent was the VF's way of exploring new options for identity, purpose and action, and it did so without pinning down the course

of action to anything more than opening to experiencing the mystery of the Self, using Intent as an anchor and guide to action: to know oneself as opposed to knowing *about* oneself.

Mezirow's process speaks of "acquiring the knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans" (2000, p. 22), and the provisional trying of new roles. He does not mean for these to be understood as purely instrumental, but as means to develop a strategy for action to create positive change based upon reflective capability, sound knowledge and competence. The essential aim of the VF is similar: the acquisition of knowledge and skills to create positive change in the self and world. One of the main differences is that the VF aims first and foremost for self-healing because unintegrated wounds produce a range of debilitating impacts (e.g. see (van der Kolk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 2007) (Blum, 2003), (Zepinic, 2015)). Self-healing is integrative and emancipatory, and enables Intent to be harnessed for beneficial personal and social purposes.

One of the dangers of a principally conceptual approach to transformative work is that if emotions and feelings linked to personal trauma are unaddressed, personal wounds can become motivators for strategy and action, exploited rather than healed. Attachment to one's wounds in an unhealthy way (i.e. unconscious) can distort purpose and justify means of action that may cause harm. Conversely, it may lead to the inability to act. An example of this is given by Mezirow (1978, pp. 16-17). He recounts how one student joined a consciousness raising group in which women shared their experiences of psychic wounding. There was an outpouring of empathy in the moment but, evidently, no real healing took place. The student, Mezirow insists, failed to integrate any of the insights she gained, was unable to take any action and reverted to her old ways of being. By not addressing her need for healing, I see this student as having been left unsupported when her own wounds surfaced. It is no surprise that, re-traumatised, she felt unable to continue on Mezirow's route of transformation.

Mezirow's process has "building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships", and "reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective" (2000, p. 22). The VF provided validation, confirmation, and confidence-building in the safety of its supportive temporary community, much as Mezirow envisaged the camaraderie of the classroom to do for his students. He saw validation of knowledge as being reached by consensus through rational discourse, a method commensurate with functioning in the conceptual mode. Heron (1992) though, insists each way of knowing has its own validating criteria, so rational discourse cannot be used to assess the validity of experiential or presentational knowing. Mezirow places reintegration as the final phase of TL, but did not, apparently, investigate much beyond the classroom and college experience of his learners.

While Mezirow (1990) acknowledges the role of emotions in the formation of our meaning structures in early life, he maintained the view that most learning occurs "outside of awareness and may include emotional, intuitive, symbolic, imaginistic, and/or contemplative modes of learning"(Mezirow in (Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006, p. 124)). By continuing to hold the view that those modes remain outside of awareness, it seems to me that he never fully understood their role or potential in TL outside of the context

of psychotherapy or that these modes could be activated within awareness. He seems to equate awareness with conscious reasoning. From a Jungian perspective, Elias posits that transformative learning can occur, "through direct apprehension of an alternative framework of highly symbolic meaning, through the direct apprehension and appropriation of frameworks of meaning that emerge freshly from the unconscious" (Elias, 1997, p. 2).

Mezirow did not accept insight, or direct apprehension as valid forms of knowledge generation because their processes cannot be tracked in a linear, rational fashion. Neuroscience research, however, validates insight and intuition as ways of generating knowledge, revealing the bilateral, indirect neural connectedness of the process, as opposed to the more linear and direct neural process of deduction (Jung-Beeman, 2005), (McCrea, 2010). While the *process* of direct or intuitive knowing does not involve conscious reasoning, it can take place within awareness and its truths can be empirically validated. The VF provided a methodology for enabling unconscious material to find expression within conscious awareness, resulting in instantaneous insights and, in a more gradual way, allowing us to develop healing relationships with these images (Dirkx & Mezirow, 2006). The overall process generally involved a contemplative form of reflection rather than a critical one.

I have established that there are many shared points of reference in both perspectives and approaches, and also points of contention and difference. Ultimately, Mezirow's perspective appears more limited than a holistic perspective because it does not fully accept other ways of knowing as valid claims to knowledge. Envisaging development as a rite-of-passage can provide a useful framework for structuring TL experiences because attending to the structure and elements of this process mirrors the psychosocial process of development. The RoP Process Network is interdisciplinarily informed and grounded in radical phenomenology. As such, it recognises the inherent value and validity of experience, intuition, feeling, emotion, and imagination as ways of knowing, enabling the TL process to be interpreted in richer ways than through conceptual means alone. I suggest the RoP Process Network may be of practical use as an alternative, or accompaniment to Mezirow's model of TL, particularly perhaps, for those already privileging experiential and presentational knowing in TL.

7. The Return: incorporation of learning

Introduction

The three iterative arcs of immersive, embodied inquiry, meant that learning from each of those arcs was incorporated into the next. Although I participated in the VF prior to Mythodrama, the longitudinal nature of the VF inquiry and its unfolding learning over more than three years, meant that much of my learning from the other two programmes was synthesised in my analysis and presentation of the Vision Fast process. My synthesis then, is somewhat evident in my RoP Process Network, containing themes identified in, carried forward, and developed from the other programmes. This concluding discussion is a summary of my findings, speculative conclusions and implications for practice, and contributions of the inquiry. I also discuss areas for further research and reflections on my methodology.

Contributions to the field of transformative learning, inquiry, and practice

My inquiry's contribution to transformative learning is, in part, its transdisciplinarity (Bernstein, 2015). By transgressing boundaries of discipline, theory, approach and perspective, I have combined and synthesised a number of concepts, that despite their diverse origins, knit together into a coherent conceptualisation of the experience and process of TL in affective and imaginal modalities.

Elements of process

The generation of an empathic field (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006) or sense of *communitas* (Turner V. , 1982) is conducive to TL in groups. In situations where learners allow themselves to be vulnerable, e.g. when in affective and imaginal modes, a strong holding environment (Ginot, 2001) provides a container of safe-uncertainty (Mason, 1993) conducive to the deep self-inquiry required in TL (Boyd, 1991). A high-quality holding environment cannot guarantee learners will feel safe all of the time, but it ensures support whilst maintaining the uncertainty needed for creativity, emergence, and transformation. These fields of connection cannot be forced. Clumsy or insensitive attempts to generate them can be off-putting to learners. Behavioural role-modelling by facilitators of authenticity, integrity, respect, and non-judgement, and an open, inquiring attitude by learners, are all contributing factors in establishing trust and empathy, two key constituents of *communitas*.

Many aspects of the TL process are characterised by discomforting or difficult feelings often thought of in the negative. Disruptions or schema violations, while causing discomfort, are useful devices to interrupt habitudes, producing attentive awareness, so are conducive to seeing differently (Ritter, et al., 2014). Other challenges include: the uncertainty of liminality; ego resistance to identity change; tensions and conflicts between different modes of presence and ways of knowing; distress of surfacing some

kinds of unconscious material; struggle to incorporate change (Clarkson, 2005). As in the Hero's Journey (Campbell J. , 2004), TL can be a 'road of trials'. Suffering is sometimes a necessary aspect of TL that should not only be acknowledged but embraced. Challenging feelings and emotions are bound to occur when we are pushing the envelopes of our current meaning structures and challenging aspects of our identities. Removing the value judgements ascribed to these feelings and discussing them openly instead of avoiding them, legitimises and sanctions those feelings for learners, enabling them to voice their struggles.

'Ludic Liminality' is a new term I coined to describe an intentionally induced liminal state conducive to creativity, emergence, and transformation. It has playful and solemn qualities. It is a place of uncertainty, not-knowing, and openness to experience, where structural boundaries dissolve, enabling new ways of seeing, and creating a bridge for intuitive, unconscious, or transpersonal knowing to enter consciousness. Ludic liminality can be introduced in the classroom through the use of creative disruptors such as novelty, storywork (Jarvis, 2006) or improvisation games, which stimulate the imagination, facilitate trust, and disrupt habitual ways of thinking.

Development of intent can be a useful aid in TL, particularly when developed through facilitated inquiry and shared within a group. It can provide an embodied glimpse of transformation, an 'object' for one's intuitive attention (Petitmengin-Peugeot, 1999), and acts as an anchor when in the antistructural liminal space of unformed possibilities. There seem to be potential benefits to developing transpersonal aspects of intent, which may help self-knowing generated in liminal states to be integrated in personally and socially beneficial ways.

Willingness to change is seen as necessary to engage in critical self-reflection (Kegan & Lahey, 2009), but what, Taylor and Cranton (2013) ask, brings someone to a point of readiness to change? In the VF, participants arrived open and willing, but the Severance phase expedited their readiness. The grieving process can be seen as one that brings a person to a state of readiness by 'clearing space' and freeing energy in preparation for a new form to emerge. From her Jungian perspective, Scott (1997) speaks about the need for the ego to be quieted so that internal images can be attended to, which requires readiness, willingness, and openness. This typifies the sympathetic critical self-reflection that seems to be undertaken when in affective-imaginal modalities. Transformative educators should, perhaps, focus their attention not on transforming people but on bringing learners to a point of readiness to change.

Different sensemaking systems (e.g. The Four Shields, Jungian theory), when their concepts are sufficiently explained, and learners are encouraged to hold them lightly, can add to our ability to reflect upon, analyse and understand the richness of life experience in a variety of modes of being and ways of knowing. The capacity to temporarily proceed 'as if', enables a shift in perceptual perspective that allows us to see with new eyes. The ability to hold different sensemaking systems simultaneously might, in itself, be considered a sign of increasing cognitive complexity (Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Intuitive experience

Intuitive experience and knowing arises from being in affective and imaginal psychological modes, and may be linked with a shift towards the participatory aspects of those modes. I suggest that intuitive knowing is ever-present because participatory awareness is the ever-present ground of being (Heron J. , 1992), but our awareness of it is somewhat muted in everyday life due to the myriad routines, distractions and sensory bombardment that capture our attention in daily life. Intuitive experience then, is a matter of attitude and attention. This was clearly demonstrated on the VF, when usual daily distractions and routines were removed, and to some extent on the Mythodrama programme, when distractions and routines were replaced with contemplative, imaginal, and sensual activities. The prominence of the participatory aspects of the psychological modes (Heron J. , 1992) seems to be closely linked to participatory or transpersonal experience. Again, the VF encouraged empathic and participatory thinking and being, enhanced by the introduction of the nature-based psychological framework of the Four Shields and our immersion in the natural landscape.

Petitmengin-Peugeot's assertion that intuitive experience can be encouraged by "meticulous interior preparation" consisting of "emptying out, in giving up our habits of representation, of categorization, and of abstraction. This casting off enables us to find spontaneity, the real immediacy of our relation to the world" (1999, p. 77), rings true with the experiences of the VF. The ability to interrupt our habitual ways of perceiving appears to connect us to usually-unavailable sources of knowing. Petitmengin-Peugeot's (1999) provocative assertion that intuition is the basis for all thought supports Heron's (1992) description of presentational knowing as a bridge between experiential and conceptual knowing (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006). Intuition, felt through the body, is interpreted by the imagination and presented to the thinking mind for conceptual formation.

Transformation

Through my inquiry, we gain a more nuanced understanding about what it might mean to transform. A transformational *experience* differs, perhaps, from the *process* of transformative learning. McWhinney and Markos (2003) say the archetypal Hero's journey can be useful in TL because it has a clear beginning, middle, and end that facilitate transformation. Rowe and Netzer (2012) reiterate this, and in the context of a programme, the benefits seen in attending to all three phases of the rite-of-passage support this assertion. However, in the wider context of the TL journey I disagree. My findings suggest that although a programme inevitably has a beginning, middle and end, the TL process cannot be as clearly defined. Campbell (2004) states that the process is effectively without end, and that 'The Return' is the most difficult part of the process. It may be helpful to conceptualise transformation as an initiatory experience

that requires practice and commitment to fully embody. Transformational experience is not always a transfiguring event, but often a marker of the beginning of a longer journey of potential change. I speculate that a transformational experience creates an energetic configuration⁵⁶, an embodied memory, as well as a vision to hold on to and work towards. It could be seen as being akin to a kinaesthetic memory (Koch, Fuchs, & Summa, 2014).

It appears that with sufficient preparation a transformational experience can occur spontaneously and with instantaneous embodiment (integration), as in my VF experience of self-generated ceremony, or Kaz's experience of knowing, "once it's in your body, you can't help it, it just changes you". Although reflection was not part of the experience, it must be acknowledged that reflection and contemplation, insights, and the development of intent during facilitated self-inquiry, preceded what I perceived to be the transformative event itself, so it did not occur in isolation. I wonder if there is a 'tipping point' that leads to a transformational experience, one that depends upon first a dilemma/orienting experience, a move to willingness/acceptance, then preparation/readiness.

TL can be restorative or regenerative (Van Gennep, 1909) as well as developmental, the perspective shift being one of reconnecting people with 'lost' aspects of themselves. This was evident in the ITD programme, in which, although transformative learning was not immediately obvious, some participants said they felt rejuvenated, restored, or re-energised from taking part in the highly collaborative creative process.

Transformative learning and experience must be incorporated to be fully realised. Although incorporation can be instantaneous, it appears to occur for the most part, through practice and action in the world, which stabilises and habituates change (Taylor E. , 1998). The initial energy and insight of a transformative experience is difficult to sustain when reintegrating into a life otherwise unchanged. Internal change is not always immediately recognised or adapted to by others, who have their own desires and habitual expectations of an individual in their prior state. Recognition of one's transformation, and support from others to incorporate is highly desirable, for incorporation is fraught with continuing internal conflicts, as previous habitues resurface, and as a new balance is sought. In the face of rejection or social exclusion, incorporation may be abandoned or delayed, such is our need for inclusion. A transformative experience is radically personal, but the TL process appears to be, as Mezirow and others point out, a more socially mediated and dependent one.

⁵⁶ In Castaneda's terms it might be considered that our awareness has shifted its position of the assemblage point to a new place, and therefore we assemble the world a little differently. The position is stored in the energy body so that, being known to us, we can find our way back to it. Incorporation would mean a stabilised shift of the assemblage point to that position.

TL appears to result in a partial re-visioning and restorying of the self, subtly altering the ways in which we sensemake and construct meaning, changing the way we relate to and act in the world. Meaning-making is an aspect of experiential knowing, and involves the affective and imaginal processes of the psyche. Sense-making occurs when felt-meaning is interpreted and condensed into linguistic form, engaging the affective, imaginal and conceptual processes of the psyche.

Each programme I studied had its own character, and participants' self-knowing and stories were infused with those different flavours. Michelson (2011) warns that personal change narratives in TL may be as much a "by-product of particular pedagogical practice as they are of authentic self-inquiry" (2011, p. 11). While her observation carries important implications regarding the influence of a TL facilitator's style, approach, and assumptions, it is, after all, a new perspective that learners intentionally embarking on TL seek.

The fluid nature of existence and self (or selves) means that transformation is a continuous process of becoming. Permanence is illusory, which is a blessing and a curse, for it means that while certainty is pointless to pursue, there will always be opportunities to transform ourselves and our world. Throughout our lives, like the seasons, we learn and grow, blossom, die back, and regenerate.

Ethics of affective-imaginal TL

Affective-imaginal TL's potential for psychic and identity shift makes it a powerful tool, which could have harmful consequences. There is a moral imperative then, for those facilitating intentionally transformative affective-imaginal learning, to practice professional competence and integrity. There is an assumption that transformative education is inherently ethical (Ettling, 2006) (O'Sullivan, 1999), and Ettling argues that TL, "which implies a deep structural shift in one's consciousness and way of being in the world, presumes an authentic, value-based awareness." (Ettling, 2006, p. 65). We assume the facilitator comes with this awareness, but is there also an assumption that developing an "authentic, value-based awareness" is an intrinsic part of the TL process?

Ettling (2006) suggests facilitators should develop their own individual ethical creed, and although teachers and lecturers are trained to be reflective-practitioners, might there be a case for those facilitating affective-imaginal transformative work to consciously adopt some of the ethical and reflective practices of psychotherapy? In the psychotherapeutic profession, professional bodies such as the UK Council for Psychotherapy and British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy have their own codes of conduct (UKCP, 2017) (BACP, 2016), and encourage the development of personal qualities such as diligence, empathy, humility, integrity, and respect. Practicing psychotherapists belonging to professional associations must also undergo regular peer supervision, thought to be a transformative-practice (Shohet, 2011) (Hawkins & Shohet, 1991), to help them examine their own practice and deal with issues that inevitably arise in relational professions.

As contemporary facilitators of TL in affective-imaginal modes, we walk in the footsteps of the ancient traditions of transformation work. Should we then, be open to learning from experienced, adept practitioners in this field, or consider psychotherapeutic training or collaboration with psychotherapists in our quest to further this kind of TL work?

Implications for practice

Many of my inquiry's findings carry implications for practice, some of which I have mentioned above. There are, however, two important areas of focus for skills development for transformative educators that I will discuss here: those of pan-epistemic reflection and embodied imaginal practices.

It might be argued that programmes such as Mythodrama, and in particular the Vision Fast, are not accessible to most, so have little to offer us in terms of practical guidance for teaching and learning. On the contrary, I argue that the creative processes revealed in the Vision Fast represent the underlying affective-imaginal processes at work in all developmental learning. The Vision Fast threw these processes into sharp relief and enabled them to become visible because they were accentuated and accelerated by the VF process, and because many other elements had been stripped away in the radical disruption of its environment.

The assertion that affective-imaginal processes are central to developmental learning carries implications for teaching and learning practice in all levels of education, as well as in personal and professional development. Far from being nice additions to what are considered essential curriculum activities centred upon propositional knowing, affective-imaginal and practical activities and skills should enjoy equal status and proportionate allocation with conceptual ones. Only in this way can multiple ways of knowing and their roles in development be honoured and nurtured (Dirkx J. M., 1997).

To bring about transformative change in teaching practice we must be willing to transform ourselves, to expand the horizons of our knowing and what it means to know. Mezirow's emphasis on rational thinking and critical reflection meant that transformative educators have placed much emphasis on the conceptual realm of presence and knowing. We must now develop our proficiency in embodied imaginal practices, along with the ability to reflect and discern in multiple modes of presence and ways of knowing.

Critical subjectivity and pan-epistemic reflection

While, as Heron (1992) points out, rational critical thinking is appropriate to conceptual knowing, other forms of reflection are appropriate to other modalities and ways of knowing. Critical subjectivity (Reason & Rowan, 1981) is a term used to describe "a self-reflexive attention to the ground on which one is standing" (Reason P. , 1994, p. 327), of being able to examine the lens which provides our perspective on knowing. Marshall's

description of being present to and reflecting upon her “inner and outer arcs of attention” (1999, p. 433) provides a helpful illustration of the practice. Similarly, Marshall and Reason’s discussion on taking an “attitude of inquiry” offers a useful guide for practice (2007).

Heron and Reason (1997) also use the term critical subjectivity to describe the “developmental challenge” of being aware of “the four ways of knowing, of how they are currently interacting, and of ways of changing the relations between them so that they articulate a reality unclouded by a restrictive and ill-disciplined subjectivity” (1997, p. 280). All knowing must be reflected upon, analysed and evaluated, held up against other ways of knowing and scrutinised for quality and veracity. In the cases of experiential and presentational knowing, I suggest this is best done with the contemplative form of criticality I have practiced, developed, and described in this thesis. However, I find the term critical subjectivity to be problematic. To the uninformed, it can be misunderstood to be a conceptual exercise. In addition, the words ‘critical’ and ‘subjectivity’ are so connotatively loaded as to be unhelpful. To avoid confusion, I propose the term ‘pan-epistemic reflection’ to describe the skill of reflective analysis in a variety of psychological modes and upon different kinds of knowing.

Pan-epistemic reflection requires presence and acute attention to the different ways in which we encounter phenomena and generate knowing. It must be practiced with intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness and empathic participation and observation. Helpful in developing these skills are meditation or mindfulness practice, which teach how to quiet the internal dialogue and to become a non-judgemental observer of our thoughts, feelings, and psychic imagery. The emotional non-attachment of these practices helps us transform empathy into compassion, an essential skill in teaching. Many exercises for developing awareness in multiple modalities can be found in Heron’s *Feeling and Personhood* (1992). These can be conducted alone, in pairs, or small groups and adapted as needed.

Storywork

Two important ways of gaining insight into presentational knowing and the creative process are through the embodied practice of direct, intentional engagement with any of the arts (McNiff, 1998) because they are all presentational expressions and forms. Engaging in facilitated creative process fosters our artful and reflective abilities in presentational knowing, nurtures our generative, imaginal functions, and aids the embodiment of insights into presentational knowing and its role in development (Lawrence R. L., 2008), (McNiff, 1976).

Presentational expression and knowing arise from the imaginal modality, transforming experiential knowing in ways that give it form and enable it to be communicated to the self and others. This transformation of felt-meaning can lead to increased self-awareness⁵⁷, by, "making the subjective objective and open to reflection" (Wang & Yorks, 2012, p. 158), which in turn provides the potential for the TL process to progress. This quality may be especially useful when TL occurs in predominantly affective and imaginal modes, when knowing is largely experiential and presentational.

Storywork (Randall, 2010) in many forms was central to all of the programmes I studied and it played a key role in the TL process. When conducted with the discipline of presence, attention, deep listening and non-judgement, storywork fosters the deep engagement of participants with the learning process (Dirkx J. M., 2006). Storywork has the advantage of being one of the most easily accessible and adaptable presentational forms with which to work.

The term performativity was originally used by linguist John L. Austin to denote "a way of doing things with words" (1962) in (Hall K. , 1999, p. 184) and has also come to pertain to formalised acts such as rituals, because rituals are constitutive of the transitions they mark (Gardner D. , 1983). Gardner states, "a procedure is performative if it effects the transition from one conventionally defined state to another" (1983, p. 348), so 'performative' usefully describes the elements of storytelling, declarations of intent, and embodied imaginal action involving the entire being that facilitated change in some way.

In ITD, storytelling fostered empathy and creativity, aiding production of a new collaborative storied performance. A consummation of the group's creative endeavour, the performance produced a sense of completion. In Mythodrama and the VF, some of the embodied activities, ceremonies and rituals helped participants transition between psychological modes. They facilitated "bodying forth" (Seeley & Reason, 2008) of affective and imaginal knowing. In the VF, the performative acts of ceremony also produced embodied transformation, a unification of aspects of the psyche, felt in the body. Performative acts in TL can be seen as facilitative of transitions and are therefore valuable elements of any TL process.

These transitions were evident through storywork in all of the programmes: in ITD, stories and songs arose from evoking emotive memories; in Mythodrama, expressive writing surfaced and communicated felt meaning, in the VF, storytelling in facilitated inquiry enabled us to awaken to our "emotion-laden images" (Dirkx J. M., 2006), open

⁵⁷ Wang and Yorks provide a nice definition of self-awareness: "clearer perception of one's strengths, limitations, thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and emotions along with how one's taken-for-granted experiences have embedded these perceptions into one's way of being" (2012, p. 158).

up our stories and examine the hurts, hopes, fears, and expectations within them. It was crucial in developing intent. Later, storytelling and mirroring brought substance and structure to experiential knowing, aided sense-making, and provided useful symbols and metaphors for felt-meaning, which in turn facilitated the incorporation of TL.

As Randall (2010) observed, creating opportunities to revisit and reinterpret personal stories keeps them open and available for their various facets and depths to be re-examined, for each time we revisit a personal story, we can attend to it in a slightly different way that may bring new perspectives. In the VF, Shelly understood, with wry humour, the symbolic meaning and value of having to clear her otherwise idyllic campsite of excrement; by working with the symbolic image of the Czarna Madonna, Kaz was able to see the limitations of her previous either/or mindset. In Mythodrama, the programme's focus on the archetypal feminine, and Shrivastava's positive experience with the predominantly female inquiry group, forced him to re-evaluate his story about women, his mother, and himself as a man, resulting in a more integrated masculine identity.

I join the growing number of academics and transformative educators who assert that the role of storytelling is of immense importance in adult learning (Jarvis, 2006), (Michelson, 2011), (Randall, 1996) (2010), (Hoggan & Cranton, 2015), (Clark M., 2010), (Dirkx J. M., 2006). Learning the skills of facilitating storywork in different forms, spoken, written, and performed: personal storytelling; illustrative stories; fiction; use of metaphor and symbol; active imagination/imaginal method (Hillman J., 1992), (Dirkx & Espinoza, 2017), guided visualisation; journaling; free-writing; collaborative storytelling; role-play; games such as 'exquisite corpse', improvisation, etc. would be valuable additions in teacher training. To be able to apply these techniques in teaching, practitioners must develop their abilities through their own embodied self-inquiry practice.

As a vocation, teaching is bound up with identity. Dirkx argues that we nurture authenticity in our teaching by "connecting to a deeper sense of who we are" (2006, p. 31). Deeper knowledge of the internal conditions affecting teachers' understanding of their professional and personal identities can be gained by working with embodied imaginal practices (Leitch, 2006) such as storywork, and by practicing pan-epistemic reflection. In these ways, we may expand our understanding of ourselves in the context of our practice, and be better equipped to guide learners through the exciting but challenging territory of pan-epistemic learning.

Further research

There is much data generated from my inquiry I have not included in this thesis, and in many respects, I attempted too much over too broad a spectrum of activities and theory, for example, spending many months reading organisational theory and attempting to incorporate organisational development programmes into my inquiry. My inquiry became too convoluted, leaving me with difficult decisions to make in terms

of content, focus, and depth. Consequently, there are avenues of inquiry and questions that remain unexplored and unanswered, some of them regarding the potential application of the RoP framework in a variety of contexts and purposes.

I regret, in some ways, not devoting my entire inquiry to the VF. Had I organised interviews within the first year I may have gained interview data from a greater number of participants. On the other hand, the variety of programmes I studied meant that common features of experience and process arising from their differing methodologies could be identified and compared. I was particularly intrigued and excited by the transformative process and experiences of the VF. I omitted from this thesis a body of work that compared contemporary VF experiences with those of indigenous peoples of The Great Plains (Irwin, 1994) and Mexican seers (Castaneda C. , 1982) (1989) (1993), and explored conceptualisations of transpersonal experience (Ferrer, 2002). I see value in reopening this line of inquiry as a means to expand current understandings and conceptions of intuitive and transpersonal experience.

Longitudinal studies

The conscious and unconscious processing and impact of affective-imaginal work seems to require an unfolding over time. It problematizes the assessment of TL and suggests the need for more longitudinal studies into what constitutes TL and the ability to incorporate perspective shifts into tangible change in everyday life. My VF study was limited to a small sample group from a single programme, and so, despite commonalities of experience and process, any conclusions must remain contextual and speculative. A study involving a larger sample of diverse VF participants from a variety of SoLB's RoP programmes would enable a more comprehensive examination of the processes involved. A more diverse depiction and better understanding of transformation beyond a transformative experience might be gleaned. Is transformative experience an unusual or common phenomenon? The phenomenon of non-reflective embodied transformation could be further studied. A longitudinal study could track experiences of incorporation, learning more about what hinders and helps the process. Methodologies would require participants to be active co-inquirers, as generators of experiential knowing of the subject at hand. A participatory framework such as co-operative inquiry (Heron J. , 1996) would be appropriate. Methodologies focused on embodied knowing might include the use of: facilitated storywork such as group storytelling and mirroring; imaginal method (see (Dirkx & Espinoza, 2017, pp. 5-6) for an explication of the process of 'description, association, amplification and animation'); journalling (Dirkx J. M., Care of the Self: Mythopoetic Dimensions of Professional Preparation and Development, 2008), (also see (Progoff, 1992) for various methods); and one-to-one sensemaking conversations.

The impacts of natural environments on transformative learning

Some research indicates that walking and being in some kinds of natural environment can have beneficial physiological effects (Li, et al., 2008), (Ohtsuka, Yabunaka, &

Takayama, 1998), (Li, et al., 2011), as well as promoting psychological wellbeing (Alvarsson, Wiens, & Nilsson, 2010), (Barton, Hine, & Pretty, 2009). The environment of the VF appeared to be conducive to experiences of self-knowing and intuitive knowing. Further research is needed to investigate the impacts of natural environments on transformative learning.

Individuating and participatory aspects of being

Heron's extended epistemology and concept of individuating and participatory aspects of the psyche are key in connecting and explaining the often conflicting experiences and feelings that arise during the process of TL. My findings suggest that balancing individuating and participatory aspects of the psyche leads to TL with a transpersonal element, but further research in this area is needed, particularly with regard to the study of participatory or transpersonal experience and its impacts on TL, mindset, identity, behaviour, personal resilience, and sustainability practices. This area of research also carries significant implications for the areas of leadership development and management education.

In my study, it was unclear as to whether participants of the Mythodrama and Vision Fast programmes (given the nature of the programmes), were predisposed towards participatory experience, so more research is needed within everyday learning contexts in order to test the theory. My inquiry findings indicate that methodologies based in the participatory paradigm that employ methods to enable the elicitation and communication of embodied knowing are essential to achieving depth of understanding in this kind of inquiry. Performative methods appear to be some of the most accessible and effective ways for inquirers to generate, express and otherwise work with experiential and imaginal knowing, making them highly appropriate to use in inquiry within everyday learning situations.

Participatory research in modes of presence

Heron's descriptions of the psychological modes could be used specifically to code data collected with and by participants of learning programmes, to track which modes of presence are particularly active during each aspect of the TL process. There is room for inquirers to be inventive regarding the methods of eliciting and recording data, and to be open to following what data learners themselves suggest as capturing nuanced aspects of their experiences. This research may provide insight into what kinds of activities are most useful to learners in each phase of the TL process. In addition, teaching Heron's extended epistemology and model of the psychological modes and

their polarities to learners, may assist them in developing pan-epistemic awareness and reflection skills⁵⁸.

Contexts of everyday learning

Kasl & Yorks (2002, p. 185) observe that "although many adult educators are interested in promoting multiple ways of knowing, without a theoretical map to guide them they often struggle with trying to integrate emotion and feeling into the learning experience". My inquiry findings and accompanying RoP Process Network form such a theoretical map. I offer them as a guide for practitioners, which may be of use both in their own development and in their teaching practice. How they can be applied in different learning contexts is yet to be seen, and I envisage it being the subject of further research.

The RoP process network is a potential tool with practical applications for teaching but the challenge is in finding ways to nurture the processes identified in the Vision Fast in everyday learning situations. In curriculum development, the three phases of the rite-of-passage might be considered when designing programmes of education. Project-based curricula would lend themselves well to the three-phase model perhaps more than subject-based curricula; however, I envisage any course may benefit from using the RoP process as a guide, so fundamental is its structure to psychic development.

As an example, I provide an illustration of how the RoP process might be applied in professional development: My partner Ben Fuchs, an organisational consultant, regularly designs and facilitates leadership development programmes within a variety of organisations. Ben incorporated some of my inquiry's findings into a programme design for middle managers of a public sector organisation. These included dividing the programmes into three distinct phases that were described to the client as "Intention, Immersion, and Integration" (language acceptable in the organisational realm). *Intention* consisted of an initial meeting with participants to establish the holding environment, initiate Appreciative Inquiry through storytelling and listening, and set individual and group intentions for the programme. This was followed by an *Immersion* session in which the main content was taught and practiced and intentions for action made. Some weeks later, a follow-up *Integration* meeting was held so that stories of change and struggle could be shared, and collaborative plans for further action and peer support defined. At this meeting, the presence of senior managers was requested so they could also witness stories of the impacts of the programme. The format received positive feedback from the participants and client organisation, who

⁵⁸ Much as Dweck found that teaching a "growth" and "fixed" mindsets to learners aided their understanding of the concept and had a positive impact on their achievement (Dweck C. , 2000) (Dweck C. S., 2006) (Dweck C. S., 2015).

perceived the three-phase structure as improving participant engagement and behaviour change, and contributing to organisational culture change.

This anecdotal example indicates that research is needed into the ways in which the RoP process might be applied in adult learning in a number of different contexts.

Concluding thoughts

My inquiry contributes to a practical understanding of Heron's (1992) extended epistemology, and specifically as it pertains to TL. It illustrates how the various ways in which we attend to, know, draw meaning from, and make sense of the world, relate to, intersect and intertwine with each other. This process is mirrored in my inquiry as I allowed each way of knowing to continually inform and transform the other ways of knowing. The perspectives produced by each way of knowing are lenses that enable experience to be made sense of in different ways. Integrating these different perspectives can result in holistic understandings.

Intentional stimulation of and attendance to affective-imaginal modes and ways of knowing affords learners a variety of opportunities for knowing to emerge. Self-knowing and meaning-making powerful enough to shift frames of reference can be gained through embodied practice in affective-imaginal modes. Routes to affective-imaginal TL may serve those at every plateau of adult complexity (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) and intellectual capability. Affective-imaginal routes to TL can offer opportunities for inner development that do not rely on the ability to grasp complex concepts or theories. Nor, when done well, do they impose the explicitly political ideology of conscientization, or involve potentially confrontational dialogue of erroneous thinking versus enlightened thinking, which relies on critical self-reflection for success. My inquiry, therefore, contributes to the growing body of literature advocating arts-based approaches and methods in TL, and may be of use to those designing arts-based development programmes.

Affective-imaginal TL can be equally challenging in its own way, yet on the surface appears gentler than the conceptual-rational approach. Its techniques and methods have the ability to cut through social, cultural, and intellectual conventions and received knowledge and appeal directly to the "transegoic" (Dirkx J. M., 1997, p. 83) aspects of the psyche. The intentional engagement of affective and imaginal modes of presence allow us to work with the most fundamental of our meaning and sense-making structures. Affective-imaginal work has the potential to shift us towards the participatory aspects of feeling and intuition, through empathy and connection, which may enhance or give rise to transpersonal awareness and values (Heron J. , 1992).

Balance

A theme that keeps returning to me is that of achieving balance: balancing ways of being and knowing, individuating and participatory concerns, and in investigating,

collecting, analysing, claiming, and communicating knowing with rigour and sobriety and imagination and feeling. I cannot be certain I have achieved this, having made choices such as favouring, in many places, 'connected knowing' (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) and 'the believing game' (Elbow, 2008) over incisive critical engagement. I have allocated much space to narrative descriptions of experience at the expense, it might be argued, of concise critical analysis. The price, it seems, of trying to write inclusively from the perspectives of different ways of knowing is that when one only has words to work with, it takes too many of them to do experiential and presentational knowing justice.

One of the unfortunate consequences of the Cartesian emphasis on cognitive processes was the delegitimation of the body and imaginal realm of experience as modes of knowing. It could be seen as a 'masculinization' of thought and knowledge in which the 'feminine' ways of knowing: of body, emotion, feeling, and imagery, however personally useful they may be, could not be considered valid claims to knowledge (Bordo, 1987). My inquiry contributes to redressing the imbalance by challenging the status of critical and conceptual knowledge in academic inquiry and contributing to the growing body of work conducted in the Participatory paradigm. It helps extend the breadth and complexity of academic practice by expanding the epistemological capacity of academic inquiry.

Although major attempts have been made to move beyond dualism⁵⁹, as Heshusious and Ballard (1996) point out, discussing mind-body-emotion-image holism in scholarly ways that do not take the form of rational discourse or exposition is problematic, particularly in academia. While I previously relied on art to convey what I could not find words for, this project has been, for me, one of resisting that in favour of finding appropriate linguistic expression to convey processes and lived experience occurring in ineffable modes of being. Writing this thesis has been a struggle.

Had I been braver, I may have been more adventurous with the form of my thesis. Originally, I had wanted to produce interactive artwork, and present the thesis as an interactive, non-linear digital work. Time constraints, lack of technical expertise, support, and the additional resources I would have needed to accomplish this were all factors in my choice to take a more conventional route. I was also inhibited by my assumptions of what would be considered acceptable as a thesis submission. My choices forced me from my comfort zone, which meant that I had to re-channel my creativity and make sense of experience in other ways. I have had to explore and embrace propositional knowing to a greater extent than ever before, and I am richer for it. I have come to value and appreciate the contribution of each way of knowing as I had not previously.

⁵⁹ See (Heshusious & Ballard, 1996, pp. 9-16) for a concise summary and critique of contemporary thought and texts on the matter.

Another difficulty, of a transdisciplinary inquiry was in balancing the breadth and depth of the inquiry, in bringing together knowing from different theories, disciplines and fields of practice in a way that demonstrates congruence and depth. I built creatively upon Intuitive and Heuristic inquiry methodologies, using them as guides rather than following them prescriptively. My inexperience and lack of knowledge about how to conduct an inquiry of this kind meant that I used slightly different ways of conducting and analysing interviews for each of the three programmes, using learning from each one to inform the next. I can see in my writing how my confidence and scholarship improved over time. I gradually found greater focus as themes emerged, and as I accumulated, processed, and synthesised the different strands of data and knowledge they afforded me.

And what of the implications of the Vision Fast? Should we all take time out from the distractions and connectedness of the synthetic and digital world to seek a different kind of connection, one of presence, empathy, emptying, opening, and experiencing our fundamental participation in the world and the magical nature of consciousness?

Perhaps.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Participant information and consent form

Participant Information



About the researcher:

My name is Rachel Lovie and I am a PhD candidate undertaking doctoral research at the HighWire Doctoral Training Centre in Lancaster University.

About the study:

This study's purpose is to gain insights into the impacts on participants of creative learning programmes that use arts and theatre-based activities in knowledge generation. In order to gain a rich and detailed picture of these processes and the way they qualitatively affect participants, I am observing and actively participating in programmes and interviewing participants about their experiences. Participants will be asked to engage in an informal recorded conversation with the researcher.

Confidentiality:

Anonymity will be provided unless otherwise specified by participants. Personal data provided by participants will be treated with confidentiality. No personal identifying information provided by participants will be made available to any other party except to prove the authenticity of the data. The data you provide may be used in various contexts but will be anonymised and/or summarised to ensure that you are not personally identifiable. Before the interview, you will be asked how you wish to be referred to in the study. You may choose to use your real name or a pseudonym. Whichever name you choose will be the one used in any reports, articles and publications arising from the study.

If you have any questions or queries, want to know more about the study, would like a copy of the audio recording of your interview, or wish to withdraw from the study (no reason need be given) please contact me by any of the means below:

HighWire DTC, LICA, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancs, LA1 4YW
Tel: 07976 961 901 or 01844 698 257
Email: r.lovie@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints about this project and/or wish to speak to an independent person at Lancaster University, please contact:
Professor Gordon Blair, HighWire, LICA, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancs, LA1 4YW
Tel: 01524 594 157
Email: gordon.s.blair@googlemail.com

Information sheet produced 25th July 2013

School of Computing
and Communications

School of Computing and Communications | InfoLab21 | Lancaster University | LA1 4WA
Tel: 01524 510311 | Email: scc-ug-enquiries@lancaster.ac.uk
www.scc.lancs.ac.uk

Participant Identification Number/Name/Pseudonym: _____

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS
Artful Approaches To Leadership Development

Name of Researcher: Rachel Lovie

Please check boxes

- 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated _____ for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered to my satisfaction.
- 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- 3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research team.
- 4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations without my consent.
- 5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Rachel Lovie _____
Researcher Date Signature

Appendix 2. ITD pre-programme information for participants

Schedule for imitating the dog's Summer School

This 5 day workshop with imitating the dog centres on creating an original performance piece integrating sound/music, projection and text.

The company want to begin the workshop with a loose theme that focuses on place, memory and nostalgia with a particular emphasis on the house. Over the five day period we will collaborate to weave together material created through a series of individual workshops and tasks and we will spend the last two days putting this material together – in effect, using the same performance making techniques as imitating the dog.

Some of the tasks we will require you to do will be to journey into Lancaster and it would be advisable to bring a waterproof coat and umbrella. A small compact digital camera would also be useful – a camera phone is completely adequate. If you have specific downloading cables please can you bring them as well.

Schedule

Usually, the day will run from 10am - 5pm. We will have an hour lunch break each day at around 1.00pm and a morning and afternoon coffee break. At the end of the day we will usually meet to have a brief feedback session.

Day 1

Introduction : Introducing the company and the initial themes and ideas for the workshop. We will be keen to find out the experience of each workshop participant and the areas of practice they wish to focus on.

Writing Workshop : This workshop will focus on place and memory. In the afternoon we will send participants into Lancaster on an individual task based activity.

Day 2

Landscaping: This session will focus on creating the environment for the work – in effect we will establish the scenographic landscape for the piece.

Soundscaping: This session will focus on making and utilising sound – it will form the basis for the soundtrack making activity for the piece.

Day 3

Projecting landscape/memories: This session will workshop projection techniques. It will look at image manipulation and projection in three-dimensional space.

Filmscaping: This session will look at using film making techniques to create performance environments.

Day 4: Days four and five will focus on putting the final piece together.

Day 5: Finalising the work and showing in the afternoon.

Day 6: Morning session for feedback.

Appendix 3. Vision Fast participant interview 'conversation starters'

Vision Fast interview questions

What drew you to the SoLB Vision Fast?
What was your experience of working with your intent?
What was your experience of sharing and examining personal stories in the ceremonial space with the group?
Did your feelings toward the group of participants change during the process?
Did you feel your level of awareness or state of consciousness alter in any way at any point?
What was your experience of the ceremonial aspects of the programme?
What was the purpose or impact of doing self-generated ceremony for you?
What do you interpret the saying 'nature as a mirror' to mean?
Did you feel a deep connection with, for example: your 'essential' self, the other participants, the Earth, the ancestors, all other beings, your concept of The Great Spirit, God etc?
Did you experience (or have you since) any moments of inexplicable inner knowing or intuition?
How did it feel to have your vision fast story witnessed by the other members of the group?
What was the impact on you of the mirroring of stories?
Did you have any insights as a result of the Fast? Have you been able to incorporate (convert into tangible changes in thinking and being) any of them?
What, if any, changes in your life since can you attribute to your participation in the Fast?
Did the Fast alter your self-awareness, your patterns of thinking or behaving, or how you think about yourself or relate to others?
Did you experience gaining self-knowledge through the process?
If you have participated in any of the online check-ins since the Fast, why, and what, if anything do you gain from it?
Have you stayed in personal contact with any of the other participants?
How would you characterise transformational experience?