

**Contextualizing Transformation:
Initiation Dreams of Depth Psychotherapists-in-Training**

by
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Abstract

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This thesis explores how the depth psychotherapist can experience a sacred passage of initiation in the context of archetypal dreams. It examines the intersections of meaning making in alchemical and mythological dream imagery and the numinous experience of initiation. It explores C. G. Jung's individuation process and whether identifying dream images as archetypal wounds can deepen the psychotherapist–client therapeutic relationship. Using hermeneutic and heuristic methodology, this research uses a comparative analytical lens and the author's personal process of tracking two archetypal dreams that coincide with the author's answer to the soul's calling to depth psychology and the first phase of seeing psychotherapy clients in graduate training. Honoring the unconscious as a map for psychological complexes, emotional states, unexpressed narratives, and symbols of both the personal and collective, the author expands upon an ancient way of honoring the death and rebirth of an individual in a transformative state of growth.

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Last, I thank Carl Jung. May this burgeoning dialogue be a catalyst for future initiations.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Sandy and Jay Kline, whose unconditional love, support, and belief in my soul's calling has acted as a well of abundant water for me to bathe, drink, float, swim, and dive in to. Coming home to write has been a place of restoration.

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And to the long lineage of all healers, dream tenders, teachers, and initiates, who have honored the courage to break through into a new consciousness, embrace the shadow, and find meaning through the cosmological and semiotic perspectives.

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Chapter I Introduction

A true initiation never ends.

Wilson, R. A., 1981, p. 257

Area of Interest

Initiations have long been the markers of the transition of an individual in a community, group, society, or role in the culture into a new paradigm of living that involves a shift in consciousness with new responsibilities (Eliade, 1958/1994; Henderson, 2005). Most commonly associated with indigenous tribes or religious rites, initiations marking the evolution of an individual from child to adult take on various forms of expression. Often joined with a ritual, initiations mark discernments between significant stages of psychological and physiological growth, spiritual development, and functions in society (Eliade, 1958/1994; Henderson, 2005).

There is a primal, often elemental quality in initiations that can strip a person down to a form of physical and emotional nakedness, while creating a space for the initiate to enter a state of remembering or forgetting. The entered space marks a death of some part of the self that is needing to be transformed (Eliade, 1958/1994; Henderson, 2005). This remembering is a thread of connection to an archetypal lineage of a motion toward beginnings, rebirthings, and exiting. Remembering the feelings and sensations of where one has come from holds a sacred quality in the honoring of noteworthy moments

(Eliade, 1958/1994). This remembering is a core experience of living; it creates meaning making that instills in the initiate a universal sense of belonging.

Scholar of mythology, anthropology, and psychology Michael Meade (1994) described the wisdom of remembering in this way: “The future is contained in the past; and the past is carried within us like seeds of memory waiting for the waters of attention” (p. 6). Meade continued,

Initiation includes death and rebirth, a radical altering of a person’s “mode of being”; a shattering and shaking all the way to the ground of the soul. The initiate becomes as another person: more fully in life emotionally and more spiritually aware. Loss of identity and even feeling betrayal of one’s self are essential to rites of passage. In that sense, every initiation causes a funeral and a birth; a mourning appropriate to death and a joyous celebration for the restoration of life. (p. 8)

The initiation process provides two germane considerations: the meaning that is created during the time of the rite of passage and the meaning that is constructed in retrospect, well after the initiation has passed. Dreams that are rich with archetypal symbolism carry a wisdom and richness for the depth psychotherapist because they hold a personal and collective place in the human psyche, as described by Swiss depth psychologist pioneer Carl G. Jung (1936/1968) when he stated,

Since archetypes are supposed to produce certain psychic forms, we must discuss how and where one can get hold of the material demonstrating these forms. The main source, then, is *dreams*, which have the advantage of being involuntary, spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche. (p. 48)

My interest in reframing archetypal dreams as initiations for the depth psychotherapist lies in the therapist’s need to sanctify the internal letters from the unconscious as essential pillars for self-reflection that can lead toward a more expansive sense of individuation. As Jung (1952/1969) stated,

The difference between the “natural” individuation process, which runs its course unconsciously, and the one which is consciously realized, is tremendous. In the

first case consciousness nowhere intervenes; the end remains as dark as the beginning. In the second case so much darkness comes to light that the personality is permeated with light, and consciousness necessarily gains in scope and insight. (p. 468)

This need to translate dream images into personal narratives that weigh heavily on self-realization stemmed from my personal experience of yearning for an understanding of how my psyche was transforming as my academic and clinical work in depth psychology deepened. The isolation constellated by my aloneness in my inner world felt too big for my personhood, and the initiation process that has historically taken the individual undergoing a drastic change into the collective was begging for an exploration to create a sense of wholeness. Instead of feeling splintered off without any reference points to honor the shifts that were happening as I committed to my path of inner work and supporting my clients, my intuition and appreciation for cultural traditions shepherded me toward this saving grace of feeling guided into the great womb of universal connection and meaning making through symbols and mythology.

My curiosity in the archaeological digging up of the bones of the psyche—waiting to be discovered and translated from the ineffable webs of the unconscious into a valuable construct of symbolic personal pillars for the depth psychotherapist—is a driving force for this topic of inquiry. After coming to the end of my academic initiation in graduate school, I realized that I was searching for another kind of initiation, a soul initiation that connected me to inner figures and new revelations about the shifts in growth I had undergone. After reflecting on a monumental trip I took to India months before sending my application to Pacifica Graduate Institute, I realized that I had initiated myself into a dreamlike state of heightened color and chaos, where each rickshaw ride could potentially take me to a place of unsafe terrain while I feared being kidnapped or

robbed by overt tricksters or equally seduced by the labyrinth roads of Jain temples and streets studded with shrines. This self-imposed initiation from a Western world of relative security into an archetypal land of dancing deities and hungry hustlers, serene sadhus and famished families, transformed my understanding of emotional reactivity to others. Thus, my wishful naïveté was bridged with my guttural intuition. The connection between seeing the mythological and religious symbols of statues and paintings saturated throughout both urban and rural terrain, while simultaneously experiencing the archetypal characteristics within my personal context, conjured many questions. These inquiries asked how others' practices in which archetypal images act as initiation markers inform and become informed by psychological changes.

Guiding Purpose

Having embarked on a committed path of the studying and practicing of depth psychology, I have become aware of the psychic transitions that often occur without a tangible conceptual container to frame the changes in. In other words, images birthed in the dream state that reflect life transitions can feel nebulous and difficult to place in the context of personal development. Through following two dreams with particularly strong archetypal content, I hope to expound upon the imaginative musings of my unconscious by using the scaffold of initiation as a meaningful structure.

My goal is to invite an engaging perspective for the depth psychotherapist that includes the individuation and self-reflection process based on historical traditions of developmental stages known as initiations. My intention is to enable the opening of a sacred, mythological, symbolic, or alchemical dialogue of inner work between dreams

from the unconscious and the therapist as a way of honoring suffering and stamina during stages of sacrifice and commitment.

Methodology

For this thesis, I examine my scholarly findings through heuristic and hermeneutic lenses. American psychologist Clark Moustakas (1990) wrote,

Heuristic inquiry is a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. . . . [It] is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance. (p. 15)

This idea of the microcosmic linking to the macrocosmic experience provides a bridge from the subjective research analysis to the objective, collective spheres of inquiry.

Inviting an impartial perspective for comparing and contrasting research, the hermeneutic approach can be conceptualized equally for what it is as well as for what it is not, as 20th-century German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975/2013) lucidly explicated in his seminal work, *Truth and Method*.

[The hermeneutic approach] is not concerned primarily with amassing verified knowledge, such as would satisfy the methodological ideal of science—yet it too is concerned with knowledge and truth. In understanding tradition, not only are texts understood, but insights are acquired and truths are known. . . . The hermeneutic phenomenon rests, I think, on the fact that only a deeper investigation of the phenomenon of understanding can provide this legitimation. (pp. xx-xxi)

I chose these research methodologies because the self-reflective nature of using my dreams as a depth psychotherapist-in-training, in tandem with the analysis of comparative scholarly works, created a template rooted in an historical, philosophical, and personal circumambulatory conversation. My exploration of archetypal dream image and symbol as an initiation into the work of depth psychology might have weighed too heavily on a biased perspective due to the nature of my subjective limitations. Inviting a

comparative gathering of written works gives my thesis question and problem a substantial foundation from which to birth my exploration. Through Gadamer's (1975/2013) sensitive insight about the deeper investigation of truth, my commitment to plunge into the intimate relationship of the research findings provides a framework for this paired perspective.

Research problem. The academic road map to becoming a depth psychotherapist can be perceived as a traditional form of an initiation from student to practitioner. Courses are completed, a thesis is written, a diploma is awarded, and postgraduate hours in the clinical field are accumulated. There is, however, another component of initiation that speaks to the inner workings of development that might be invisible to the outsider's eye. A particular awareness of psychic shifts as demonstrated through dreams can spearhead new meaning makings for the student transitioning into the depth psychotherapist role. I have yet to come across a body of research that directly links archetypal dreams to an initiatory rite in becoming a depth psychotherapist. The goal of this thesis is to expound upon the examination of how specific dreams, labeled as initiatory thresholds for the depth psychotherapist, can offer greater insights into the human psyche at work in the context of the profession of depth psychology.

Research question. The research questions I propose and expound upon throughout my thesis are these: Is initiation revealed through dreams for the depth psychotherapist? If so, how can this exploration of identifying dream images as archetypal using the initiation lens create a closer connection between psychotherapist and client?

Methodological approach. Through the process of immersing oneself in the research question, there is an opportunity to achieve an understanding of it (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). I believe it is through this receptive, curious, and self-reflective process that a holistic interpretation can be revealed, which, like the symbolic, tail-devouring serpent uroboros (Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, 2010, p. 704), becomes an infinitesimal cycle of death and rebirth around the inquiry. Tracking my dreams as a depth psychotherapist in the context of an initiation process offers a personal and archetypal narrative that plants roots for further investigation about this phenomenon. From hermeneutic research, I summon the Greek God Hermes, whom anthropologist of ancient cultures Maurizio Bettini (2000/2011) described as “the god of circulation” (p. 6). Bettini added that “everything circulated around [Hermes]; [he] was the herald (*kerux*) and messenger (*angeles*), functioning as a kind of channel for communication between the transmitter and the addressee of a certain message” (p. 6). My approach toward the research is a circumambulatory process; like Hermes flying between the upper and lower worlds, I gather information that honors the sentient perspectives of this mythologized emissary. According to Bettini, the 1st-century Roman Stoic philosopher Cornutus wrote, “Hermes is called the messenger (*diaktoros*) because . . . he leads (*diagen*) our thoughts to the souls (*psuchai*) of those near us” (as cited in Bettini, 2000/2011, p. 6).

Jungian analyst Robert Romanyshyn (2013) defined the concept of re-search as “a searching *again*, for something that has already made its claim upon us, something we have already known, however dimly, but have forgotten” (p. 4). In this sense, the re-search that “keeps soul in mind” (p. 4) is fertile ground for my approach to this thesis. Part of this re-search process includes my examination of how depth psychology can be a

raft for the unconscious waters to heal the psyche through images of transformational qualities. My interest in bringing the healing work of shamanism, as I discuss through the lens of anthropologist and scholar Mircea Eliade's (1951/1964) writings, highlights the role initiation has played in human developmental stages. Through my re-search process, I examine how the individuation process in its relation to alchemical symbolism (Jung, 1936/1968, p. 41) has shown up in my initiatory dreams.

Ethical Considerations

Due to the nature of using my personal dreams in this thesis as the mark for initiation as a depth psychotherapist, there is an inevitable favored inclination toward my own inner psychic landscape and translation of content. As neutral as I try to be in engaging in a critical analysis of my dream images and symbols as a rite of passage, I am also thoroughly immersed in my own experience. Swiss psychologist and scholar Marie-Louise von Franz, in her memorable interview with Jungian analyst Fraser Boa, said,

The trouble with interpreting your own dreams is that you can't see your own back. If you show it to another person, he can see it, but you can't. And dreams point to your back, to what you don't see, and you have to stand on your head so-to-speak, to understand your own dreams. (Franz & Boa, 1988, pp. 14-15)

The goal of this thesis is to bring attention to the value of recognizing archetypal dreams as specific numinous inceptions that can architect and imprint the depth psychotherapist's path by honoring the great themes of depth psychotherapy such as mythology, alchemy, and symbolism. Through this illumination, there is opportunity for a new narrative to emerge from within one's personal phenomenology of meaning making.

Overview of the Thesis

In Chapter II, I review a selection of literature on initiation from Eliade (1951/1964, 1978/1982, 1958/1994) and C. G. Jung (1950/1968) to examine its function,

its role in society, and how it elicits a numinous feeling that provides purpose through action to experience the enlivened soul. I look at similarities between the qualities of the depth psychotherapist and the shaman to provide a container for looking at initiation. Using Jung's (1939/1968, 1940/1968, 1950/1968) examination of the individuation process, I connect his understanding of differentiating psychic growth with his ideas about the unconscious. In the same vein, I highlight the way dreams serve the development of individuation. Jung and archetypal psychologist James Hillman's (1979) interpretations of dreams are used to move through the significance of the dreams' content as a rite of passage.

Looking at the concept of the wounded healer, I make comparisons between the depth psychotherapist and the shaman through the initiatory phases of death–rebirth, acceptance–revelation, and the return home through the works of Jung (1961/1989), C. A. Meier (1989), and other Jungian analysts. In Chapter III, I discuss two personal dreams that have significant meaning due to their strong archetypal themes and track how they are revealed as initiatory experiences. My analysis of the importance of recognizing the transcendent function through dream image is threaded with a healing element of personal soul retrieval as a means to look deeper within, toward self-realization and individuation.

In Chapter IV, I summarize the seminal points of view and newfound discoveries of the heuristic process through my analysis and conclude with a statement of how this circumnavigation of research contributes to the field of depth psychotherapy and counseling psychology in large part because of its acceptance of the unpleasant, repressed, and negative sides of the personality as a reality. This dark content of the

personal unconscious was a key aspect in healing psychological wounds and increasing the level of therapist empathy in order to understand clients and the phenomenological human experience. In the closure of my inquiry, I offer questions that have yet to be explored, supported by research ideas that continue the conversation.

Chapter II Literature Review

An Overview of Initiation

The verb *initiate*, which derives from the Latin word *initiatus*, was first used in the 16th century and was defined in three senses: (a) the cause of a beginning; (b) the formal acceptance of someone as a member of a group, usually in a special ceremony; or (c) the act of teaching new facts or ideas (“Initiate,” 2014, defs. 1-3). The interest in scholarly research on global initiation from a psychological and anthropological perspective has been a recent niche of writing starting in the 20th century. According to analytical psychologist Joseph L. Henderson (2005), the first rediscovery of the initiation body of knowledge occurred in 1909, when ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep wrote *Les Rites de Passage*, in which he acknowledged that rites were educational processes for growth acceleration (p. 1). Henderson further pointed out that men were not the only demographic in need of admission into adulthood; women too needed rites that were in appropriate alignment with the beginnings of starting menstrual cycles and passage into marriage (p. 1). Belonging to the Ecole Sociologique in Paris with van Gennep, father of sociology Emile Durkheim contributed to this exploratory compendium of scholarship by recognizing that the collective representations of human social life have been continually manifested in primitive and civilized ritual behavior alike (pp. 1-2). Concurrently in England, Greek scholar F. M. Cornford found that

cosmogony had its roots in ritual and that ritual itself was also a collective representation of universal functions (p. 2).

In his book, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, historian and scholar of religious hierophany, Eliade (1958/1994), brought attention to the neglect of significant rites of initiation in the modern era. Philosophically, he stated that initiation is comparable to an existential transformation, in which the apprentice rises up from his or her younger self with a newfound knowledge of adult behavioral patterns, techniques, sacred myths, and conceptions of the world as a changed being (pp. 17-18). Such transitional rites include baptisms in Christianity, puberty rites among tribal societies, and marriage throughout all cultures (p. 18). Acting as channels to divine experience, these practices offer illumination and wisdom through the vulnerability of completing the ordeals that command inner strength from within the individual. Eliade's reverence for the in-depth value of the initiation process is lucidly explicated: "The novice whom initiation introduces to the mythological traditions of the tribe is introduced to the sacred history of the world and humanity" (p. 24).

Eliade (1951/1964), in his seminal classic, *Shamanism*, explored the role of the shaman as spirit world traveler, soul-retriever, and healer. He described three aspects of initiation through the traditional rites of the shaman: (a) experiencing illness, (b) undergoing ecstatic experiences, and (c) entering the dream realm. These three states of consciousness act as pathways to the ceremonial themes of initiations as represented in suffering, death, and resurrection. The shaman's affliction, which is further accessed during initiatory tortures and by enduring psychic isolation, becomes a symbolic approximation of death through physical discomfort, extreme fear, and unconsciousness,

thus making the “sickness-vocation,” the sacred inception (p. 33). Eliade noted that the quintessential element of the initiation for the neophyte is to embrace a death of sorts, followed by a resurrection of a newly integrated self.

Eliade (1958/1994) described the initiatory themes of the Norse mythology *Vulsunga Saga* as passing the test of courage and resisting physical suffering, followed by a magical transformation (p. 135). Further, Eliade highlighted another state of initiation, known as the state of magico-religioso power. The magico-religioso phenomena, which are practices based on divine beliefs and supernatural occurrences, are expressed as an elemental heat, a sensation of burning, or a very hot temperature. This magical heat corresponds to a real experience, a sacred power. Eliade described one example of this heated process through the asceticism of Prajapati, the Hindu deity of the lord of all creatures, who created the universe by his magic sweat. Eliade also noted that the awakening of the corporeal energy in the yogi philosophy known as *Kundalini* in tantric texts is manifested by burning, thus creating a higher state of consciousness or spiritual enlightenment (pp. 139-140). In *Ordeal by Labyrinth: Conversations With Claude-Henri Rocquet*, Eliade (1978/1982) claimed that “human existence consists of a series of initiatory ordeals or trials; man creates himself by means of a series of unconscious or conscious initiations” (p. 27).

Jung (1950/1968) described rebirth as a phenomenological experience that becomes known on a psychic level in the following way: “One speaks of rebirth; one professes rebirth; one is filled with rebirth” (p. 116). Jung explained that “rebirth is an affirmation that must be counted among the primordial affirmations of mankind . . . All

affirmations relating to the sphere of the suprasensual are . . . determined by archetypes”

(p. 116). Psychic events underlie these affirmations (p. 116). Jung further posited,

By the “transcendence of life” I mean those aforementioned experiences of the initiate who takes part in a sacred rite which reveals to him the perpetual continuation of life through transformation and renewal. In these mystery-dramas the transcendence of life, as distinct from its momentary concrete manifestations, is usually represented by the fateful transformations—death and rebirth—of a god or a godlike hero. (p. 117)

Further, the initiate may be a witness of the divine drama, take part in it, or be moved by it, or he may see himself or herself identified through the ritual action with the god. It is in this tangible, externalized act by which the transformation takes place (p. 117).

Jung (1950/1968) gave an example of how physical participation imprints the initiate’s psyche in the ritual of connecting to the Egyptian god of the afterlife, death, life and resurrection, Osiris:

The initiate who ritually enacts the slaying, dismemberment, and scattering of Osiris, and afterwards his resurrection in the green wheat, experiences in this way the permanence and continuity of life, which outlasts all changes of form and, phoenix-like, continually rises anew from its own ashes. This participation in the ritual event gives rise, among other effects, to that hope of immortality which is characteristic of the Eleusinian mysteries. (p. 117)

Jung (1928/1966) elucidated his ideas on the symbolism of initiation stemming from unconscious content in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*:

The point is not—I cannot be too emphatic about this—whether the initiation symbols are objective truths, but whether these unconscious contents are or are not the equivalent of initiation practices, and whether they do or do not influence the human psyche. . . . It is enough that they exist and that they work. (p. 231)

Jung (1936/1968), in *Psychology and Alchemy*, also made the connection between the initiations of late classical syncretism and alchemy, stating that the theme of ascension was present in their explorations (pp. 56-57). This theme of ascension and alchemy is explored later in the thesis in its role as a pillar for the first stage of the initiatory dream.

Harvesting the Meanings of Dreams

Jung (1957/2011) stated in *The Undiscovered Self* that the language of dreams must be tended to with care and detail, as dreams are a science in and of themselves that the human being must consider in a symbolic manner and that are expressed in immeasurable varieties (p. 107). The dreamer, who provides personal associations and contextualizes the scenes, offers assistance in placing the landscape of the unconscious. However, when exceptional dreams are dreamt, personal associations are no longer relevant and are only adequate for a pedestrian interpretation. Jung noted that according to the founder of psychoanalytic psychology, Sigmund Freud, an “archaic remnant” (p. 107) dream is one that is neither individual nor birthed from personal experience. It can be conceptualized as innate, primitive, and hereditary of the mind. The vastly ancient psyche, which is similar to an animal, relates to mythological motifs. Archaic remnants, or, as Jung called them, archetypes or primordial images, are inherited predispositions of the mind that represent these mythological motifs and that consist of a wide variation of representations (p. 108). Jung made the analogy that just as the “morphologist needs the science of comparative analogy, so the psychologist cannot do without a ‘comparative anatomy of the psyche’” (p. 108). In this sense, Jung claimed there must be an equal balance of knowledge of dreams and other elements of the unconscious, as well as a foundation in mythology.

In *Symbols of Transformation*, Jung (1952/1967) described a foreshadowing perspective that the dream can embody:

From the written records of all times and peoples we learn of significant and prophetic dreams, of warning dreams and of healing dreams sent by the gods. When an idea is so old and so generally believed, it must be true in some way, by which I mean that it is *psychologically true*. . . . If we translate this into the

language of psychology, the ancient idea becomes much more comprehensible. The dream, we would say, originates in an unknown part of the psyche and prepares the dreamer for the events of the following day. (p. 7)

Jung continued to describe the dream as a sequence of contradictory or senseless images that hold material that in fact yields a lucid meaning when properly deciphered (p. 7). In other words, the order to the dream could be revealed if placed in the patient hands of the capable translator. Hillman (1979) wrote, in *The Dream and the Underworld*, that dreams involve entering a downward spiral toward the realms of the shadow, with feelings of hopelessness, followed by surprise and delight. It is through this darkness that the dreamer enters the underworld, and the mystery in this place is unintelligible. It is this entryway to the presence of a foreign world that is a therapy in and of itself, and just as the training of perceptual awareness helps formulate the ego for existence, dreamwork moves in a different manner and for a different purpose. The dream helps retrain the senses, honing in on the invisible, thus gaining wisdom from tuning in and developing a relationship with what is brewing underneath the surface (p. 191).

Hillman (1975) discussed, in his seminal collection of writings, *Re-Visioning Psychology*, the importance of naming images and metaphors, as they act as living psychic subjects instead of concepts, which can feel both stagnant and lifeless. Hillman suggested that in connecting to images via personification, the autonomy and diversity of the psyche is saved from the conquering of a single power, a power that can be marginalized or one-dimensional. The conquering figure can be either archetypal or personally enriched in egomania. Hillman believed that through personification, the soul could answer to egocentricity; through dreams, personification occurred. Hillman continued,

Dreams are crucial in any therapy of depth, any therapy that would make soul and not only build ego. Dreams are important to the soul—not for the messages the ego takes from them, not for the recovered memories or the revelations; what does seem to matter to the soul is the nightly encounter with a plurality of shades in an underworld, as if dreams prepared for death, the freeing of the soul from its identity with the ego and the waking state. . . . By employing the dream as model of psychic actuality, and by conceiving a theory of personality based upon the dream, we are imagining the psyche's basic structure to be *an inscape of personified images* . . . constituted of multiple personalities. We can describe the psyche as a polycentric realm of nonverbal, nonspatial images. (p. 33)

Hillman's emphasis on dreams as an entry into death, into the underworld that is rich with manifolds of personified images, offered a way of conceptualizing a portal into unexpressed parts of the self waiting to be birthed.

Jungian analyst James Hall (1983) highlighted how dreams act as persistent patterns to the ego; dreams shed light on perpetual mistakes that are then presented in a variety of ways. It is when these challenges are tended to that their truth reveals a more responsible path for direct action to take place; thus the dream can be in service to the entirety of the psyche and is trivial in relation to the ego. It is, however, imperative for the waking-ego, the responsible ambassador in the name of the autonomous psyche, to assess its own placement and partake in the process in order to enter a deeper state of exploration. When threatening figures become less prominent as they approach the dream-ego, the archetypal imagery becomes germane. The immature ego rarely makes contact with the mature ego without being met by horrific and sinister experiences (pp. 102-103).

Hall (1983) professed that if the work with the unconscious transcends neurotic suffering, there is potential for drastic shifts in ethical, philosophical, and religious issues that can impact the individuation process. In this way, one is met with the choice to decide what self to respond with, out of a plethora of selves, in which the ego is then

presented with the decision of how to respond. Dreams can demonstrate, imply, or confirm this shift of decision making and its deeper implications (p. 106). Hall further posited that “the process of individuation is what is finally served and facilitated by dreams, although dreams can be used *along the way* in the ordinary psychotherapeutic tasks of problem solving and personality development” (p. 113).

Eliade (1978/1982) revealed that dreams possess mythological structures that are experienced in isolation (p. 162). He noted that the mere existence of a dream is a guided force toward a specific goal, an enterprise, or a focused task that asks for an outcome of accomplishment. Further, he stated that dreams are “a matter of your deep destiny, and therefore of the obstacles you are going to encounter of serious, irreversible decisions you are going to have to make” (p. 66).

Again, in *Shamanism*, Eliade (1951/1964) proposed that the essence of the sacred life is entered through the dream as an instruction, whereby contact with the gods and spirits is restored, mythical epoch is reclaimed, and historical time is eradicated. For the shaman, the dream thus offered an opening back into the initial stages of life, bridging the realms of cosmogony with the ancient mythical teachings (p. 103).

Playwright and author on ritual and meditation, James Roose-Evans (1994), in his book *Passages of the Soul*, wrote that Jung regarded the task of modern man and woman rediscovering and reawakening images that exist within and manifesting these archetypal images through dreams (p. 2). Roose-Evans provided insight relevant to the dreamer: “A dream has to be lived with. It is not a puzzle waiting to be solved by the intellect. It is, rather, a living reality and must be experienced. Certain key dreams, certain images, will last a lifetime” (p. 3). There is a fated sense of significance that the images in the dream

have upon the dreamer. Sigmund Freud, wrote about the imperative need of working with dreams:

The interpretation of dreams is in fact the royal road to knowledge of the unconscious; it is the securest foundation of psychoanalysis and the field in which every worker must acquire his convictions and seek his training. If I am asked how one can become a psychoanalyst, I reply: "By studying one's own dreams." (As cited in Thurschwell, 2009, p. 31)

Sacred Searchings and the Quest for the Numinous

The ability to perceive the sacred is a state of consciousness, as professed by Eliade (1978/1982) in conversation with poet, playwright, and critic Claude-Henri Rocquet (p. 153). All aspects of reality are reflections of the divine experience. Eliade noted that by merely participating in daily life, humans make meaning of their impulses and experiences through consciousness. The mind grasps onto the difference between what is revealed as real, potent, rich, and meaningful and that which is deficient in those qualities (p. 153). This is the idea that if experience of the sacred lives within the prefecture of consciousness, then the sacred experience is birthed from within (p. 154). The individual must find the liminal space between what is constructed as real and unreal in order to have the phenomenological experience of numinosity.

Psychologist and professor C. Michael Smith (1997), in *Jung and Shamanism in Dialogue*, described Jung's meeting with the Pueblo Native American Ochwiay Biano as a meaningful revelation of accessing the sacred through relating to something beyond oneself, an archetypal numinosity mediated through mythology (p. 250). According to Smith, Jung believed that an individual needed only one myth to live by to experience a life of meaning. It was this transpiral toward the inward process that reestablished contact with the numinous archetypal images, a source of both substance and form. The turning

toward the origins of the collective unconscious offers an opportunity to enter a living relation with the powers of the numen (p. 250). Jung (1954/1968) defined the collective unconscious as the deeper layer of the unconscious that is not individual but universal, containing archetypes or universal images existing since the remotest of times (pp. 3-5). Jung (1940/1969) defined the numinosum as a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness and is experienced by the subject independent of his or her will (p. 7).

In Western society, the loss of the sacred, as Smith (1997) wrote, is a loss of the soul, not only of the self but of society, the planet, and the cosmos. The retrieval of the sacred is imperative in order to find or recover one's soul (p. 243). The situation of the loss of the sacred has been defined by a variety of existentialist philosophers in their own accounts. The nihilism of German philosophers such as Frederich Nietzsche proposed the loss of the sacred from the assumptive world, and Martin Heidegger depicted how the withdrawal of Being from contemporary consciousness was equivalent to a loss of a deep sense of importance, dignity, and mystery (p. 242).

Jung (1957/2011) wrote about how the humanities' lack of connection to the cosmos, detachment from nature, and dissociation from emotional participation in natural events has caused the emotional energy to sink into the unconscious. This monumental loss is compensated by the symbols in our dreams, as they bring up our intrinsic nature, instincts, and unique ways of thinking, while also bringing up the strange and intangible language of the dream (p. 135). When the image is charged with a feeling of the numinous, this combination of emotional charge with the symbol speaks to the archetypal construct, thus producing consequences constellated from great psychic power. Jung

postulated that the archetype is an active, alive matter. Although the archetype is not limitlessly exchangeable, Jung said the archetype belongs to the economy of the individual, and cannot be cut off and used at random. It is through the personal experience of the archetype that the numinous can be experienced and meaning is made. It is through the symbol-generating function that dreams lead one's mind back to consciousness, where it has visited or undergone vital reflection (pp. 137-138). Jung further postulated that "*we have been* that mind, but we have never *known* it" (p. 138). Further, the emotional value of the experienced archetype must be held closely and examined through the intellectual interpretation (p. 140). On the other hand, Jung felt that there were no longer any gods whom we can invoke to assist us.

Soul

The idea of each person being born into the world with a calling stems from Plato's Myth of Er, as resurrected by Hillman (1996, p. 7). Hillman described the foundation of soul as a daimon that leads one on one's path, which is selected in a specific image or pattern for each individual. It is the daimon, the destiny carrier, that remembers all that humans forget after birth, while life is being lived. The Myth of Er offers a potent message in its last passage: by preserving the myth, humans can preserve a consciousness and prosper toward destiny by answering the call (p. 8). Hillman posited the three aspects of bringing awareness to the call: (a) accept and familiarize the call as an essential fact of human existence, (b) align life with it, and (c) recognize and make note of the seemingly quotidian events that make up the pattern of the image necessary to complete it. The call, then, makes a declaration; the daimon does not bid farewell (p. 8).

Hillman (1975) proposed that “soul sticks to the realm of experience and to reflections within experiences” and offers a metaphoric sense to life with a lexicon such as ‘*close, near, slow, and deep*’” (p. 69). Involving humans in the flurry of phenomena and the movement of expression, soul is the “patient” part of us who elicits vulnerability and suffering, reminding humans of the importance of remembering. Hillman believed that “*soul is imagination*” (p. 69).

Individuation and Its Relation to the Unconscious

Jung (1939/1968) described individuation as the process of a person becoming a psychological “in-dividual,” distinguished from others, or “whole” (p. 275). Individuation is a natural transformation and rebirth that has notable psychic effects and creates another being made of the larger and greater personality maturing within the human, “whom we have already met as the inner friend of the soul” (Jung, 1950/1968, pp. 130-131). Jung posited that the goal of the individuation process is to engage in a synthesis, or entelechy, of the self. Further, he wrote, “The symbols of wholeness frequently occur at the beginning of the individuation process, indeed they can often be observed in the first of early infancy. . . . [It seems] as if something already existent were being put together” (Jung, 1940/1968, pp. 164-165). He noted that whereas the assumption had been that consciousness made up the entirety of the self-realized person, “knowledge of the phenomena that can only be explained on the hypothesis of unconscious psychic processes makes it doubtful whether the ego and its contents are in fact identical with the ‘whole’” (Jung, 1939/1968, p. 275). Jung stated that if the unconscious mechanisms exist, they must reside within the totality of the individual, as separate from the constituents of the conscious ego. Thus, if these parts were of the ego,

then they would be conscious, because matter related to the ego is conscious. In other words, the relation between the ego and psychic content is consciousness (p. 275). Jung stated that a plethora of activities occur semiconsciously, and even more remain entirely unconscious (p. 276). Highlighting the historical lineage of the concept of unconscious, he continued:

Carus and von Hartmann treat the unconscious as a metaphysical principle, a sort of universal mind, without any trace of personality or ego-consciousness, and similarly Schopenhauer's "Will" is without an ego. Modern psychologists, too, regard the unconscious as an egoless function below the threshold of consciousness. Unlike the philosophers, they tend to derive its subliminal functions from the conscious mind. Janet thinks that there is a certain weakness of consciousness which is unable to hold all the psychic processes together. Freud, on the other hand, favors the idea of conscious factors that suppress certain incompatible tendencies. (pp. 276-277)

Additionally, dreams, wrote Jung, do not show an apparent order or tendency toward a systemization (p. 276). Jung believed that emotions, which are spontaneous reactions and instinctual by nature, disturb the rational order of consciousness by their elemental eruptions, birthing the autonomy of the unconscious (p. 278).

The Archetypal Wounded Healer

As the symbol of the wounded healer, the Roman God Asclepius was a renowned physician and dream vision visitor. Psychologist and Jungian analyst Joel Covitz (2000) wrote about Asclepius's role in his dream temple:

Dreams were the focus of a healing ritual that took place at the sanctuaries to the god Asclepius. There were sacred places where people could incubate or induce a healing dream. After performing the appropriate rituals, they would go to sleep in the sanctuary. The god would appear in some form in a dream, and tell the dreamer what remedy was needed; in some cases the epiphany of the god was itself the healing event. (pp. 40-41)

A powerful archetypal and mythological figure, Asclepius showed up in one of Jung's visions to deliver the message as the magnificent wounded healer who "understood the

divine truth of Asclepius” (p. 40), according to Jungian analyst and doctor of psychiatry, C. Jess Groesbeck (1997). This truth was revealed in Jung’s (1961/1989) autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, in which Jung stated, “only the wounded physician heals” (p. 134), a realization that the medicine the depth psychotherapist carries is built into the ability to access his or her suffering as a means to help others.

In C. A. Meier’s (1989) research on Asclepius, the psychiatrist, psychotherapist, and cofounder of the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich found in some works that Asclepius was not human but a god who was the physician in the divine realm. In the era of antiquity, man’s perception of sickness was that it was a result of a divine action and that it could then be cured only by something of divine status, thus presenting the nature of homeopathy. The tending of illness was vested with healing powers and held in the consciousness of dignity and reverence. In other words, the healer was both the sickness and the medicine (p. 3). Meier described Asclepius as both mantic and chthonic, a figure who was consulted as an oracle (p. 19). It was Chiron, the incurably wounded centaur poisoned by the arrows of Hercules, who taught Asclepius the art of healing; it was Zeus who punished the healer by slaying Asclepius with a thunderbolt for his daring to bring Hippolytus and Glaucus back to life (p. 25). This act of bringing the dead back to life is particularly momentous in the mythology of the wounded healer, as it was the Asclepian vision of resurrecting those who had been deceased that stands as a psychological metaphor.

Alchemy as Psychic Transformation

In *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung (1956/1970) described the importance of the container, or *vas-symbol*, in alchemy; the specific vessel had to hold the specific content

(p. 215). The substance of transformation, or the *aqua nostra*, Jung believed, was its own vessel in and of itself. When describing the vessel that is the *vas rotundum*, he posited that the “roundness represents the cosmos and, at the same time, the world-soul, which in Plato surrounds the physical universe from outside. The secret content of the Hermetic vessel is the original chaos from which the world was created” (p. 279). One perception of looking at the vessel with liquid substance is through the symbolism of a baptism, and Jung noted that in the *Rosarium*, the ablution, or cleansing, happens with a fire that is often used as a synonym for water (p. 235). Further, Jung pointed out that “the alchemists did not hesitate to call the transformative process a ‘baptism’” (p. 236). Jung continued:

Thus, the “*Consilium coniugi*” says: “And if we are baptized in the fountain of gold and silver, and the spirit of our body ascends into heaven with the father and the son, and descends again, then our souls shall revive and my animal body will remain white, that is, [the body] of the moon.” . . . The same is true of the idea that baptism is a submersion in death . . . and the corresponding stage in the opus in the *solutio*, which signifies the total dissolution of the imperfect body in the *aqua divina*, its submersion, mortification, and burial. (p. 236)

The concept of water leading toward the path of dying and death, followed by the ascension of rising into the heavens into the element of air, was described by St. Augustine, according to Jung (1956/1970, p. 237). These concepts are further revealed in a discussion of my archetypal dreams in Chapter III. Psychologist Thom F. Cavalli (2002) described metaphorically the merging of dual forces that resulted in the occurrence of an inner transformation; the vessel had to be strong enough to hold the boiling liquids and acids in the excessive heat, and the alchemist had to contain the passions, visions, and secrets that were birthed from the experiments (p. 88). Further, Cavalli noted how magician of alchemy Albert Magus suggested that “the initiate possess traits of character that include being discrete [sic], reserved, patient, persistent, diligent,

and unwearied” (p. 88). There is a tension of opposites between the virtues of withdrawing and being assiduous, both being germane facets that pose as healing forces for internal metamorphosis.

Summary

In the beginning of this chapter, initiation was defined as an ordeal that is composed of a meaningful participation in a new role or community that signifies a transition from one stage of life to another (“Initiate,” 2014). Eliade’s (1958/1994) contemporary perspective on ancient rites of initiation as a psychological rebirthing of the initiate was outlined; initiation brings a burgeoning template of knowledge regarding the sacred stories, roles of deities, adult responses to internal and external stimuli, and shifting responsibilities in mature development (pp. 17-18). Also explored were Jung’s (1950/1968) ideas about how initiation constellates archetypal forces, bridging the personal experience of the initiate’s development with existential meaning making into the collective unconscious through external rites. Moving into the realm of dream tending, Hillman’s (1975) notion of personifying the image to maintain the energy and curiosity of the unconscious, ultimately as a way to unearth “the nature of psychic reality” that is the dream itself, was considered (p. 33). Moving from the symbolic threshold of initiation into the trajectory of dreams as a landscape of mythological, elemental, and alchemical content, Jung’s (1939/1968, 1940/1968, 1950/1968) concept of individuation and how it relates to the unconscious was introduced. Smith’s (1997) recognition of contemporary humanity’s soul loss due to lack of meaningful and reflective experiences with the plant, animal, and cosmological systems was woven into the dire need for an awareness and a seeking for numinous connections. The role of the

archetypal wounded healer, as personified by Asclepius, was illuminated by Meier (1989), Covitz (2000), and Jung (1961/1989). Concluding the chapter, Jung's writing on alchemy (1956/1970) was briefly reviewed in relation to the psychological dying process in which a baptizing through heat or fire offers a cleansing for the person who is entering a rebirth.

Chapter III

Analysis and Clinical Application

Overview

Initiations act as openings into unfamiliar territories, concretizing vital transitions that help define a significant change in the initiate from the past into the present and future. In Chapter II, I reviewed the role initiation has played in human consciousness and how the experience of being initiated is comparable to an existential transformation (Eliade, 1958/1994, pp. 17-18). I introduced the concept of initiation through the traditional rites of the shaman, as embodied in three states: (a) experiencing illness, (b) undergoing ecstatic experiences, and (c) entering the dream realm (Eliade, 1951/1964, p. 33).

Continuing my exploration of states of consciousness that are constellated through engaged dreamwork, I introduced the concept of the magico-religioso phenomena. As explained by Eliade (1958/1994), the magico-religioso phenomena that are produced when entering this state of consciousness are symbolized by heat or a burning sensation; they bring in an elemental and alchemical component that is also transformative in nature (p. 135). In this chapter, I draw upon this figure of symbolic fire in my first initiation dream of identity disintegration. Having briefly addressed Jung's (1936/1968, pp. 56-57) findings of the connection between the themes of ascension and initiation in Chapter II, in this chapter I posit the archetypal significance of my second initiatory dream, which involves walking upward from the earth to the heavens, onto what my unconscious

named *the stairs of Asclepius*. Having introduced the historical and mythological relevance of Asclepius in Chapter II as both the dream chamber master and the wounded healer (Covitz, 2000, pp. 40-41), I tether these metaphoric psychic states with the idea that the depth psychotherapist must be able to travel into mysterious and painful places within in order to deeply see, feel, meet, listen to, and interpret the soul of the client. Like the initiated shaman who undergoes sickness, dreams, and ecstasies to transform the profane into the sacred (Eliade, 1951/1964, p. 33), I am proposing that the depth psychotherapist can recontextualize dreams as revelatory inquiries and delineations from a self that is in need of dying to a self that is in an active state of rebirth, with a gained perspective from having faced the perils of psychological lesions.

From a depth psychological perspective, to be initiated is to enter a new paradigm of self-accountability and meaning making that leads to greater self-awareness. This sense of separateness from the collective while concurrently creating inner wholeness is what Jung (1939/1968) defined as individuation (p. 275). Jung proposed,

If unconscious processes exist at all, they must surely belong to the totality of the individual, even though they are not components of the conscious ego. If they were part of the ego they would necessarily be conscious, because everything that is directly related to the ego is conscious. (p. 275)

Therefore, the connection between studying archetypal dreams as maps of the unconscious and reframing them as initiatory rites for the depth psychotherapist allows information about ego development to become known. In this way, archetypal dreams, through their symbolic, alchemical, and mythological language, can welcome the depth psychotherapist into a new community of the collective unconscious, as a wounded healer ready to face the thematic and inherent pains of the psyche. Eliade (1951/1964) stated, “It is the ecstatic experience that radically changes the religious status of the

‘chosen’ person” (p. 33). In this thesis, I am proposing a revised version of Eliade’s statement, in which “ecstatic” is replaced by “the unconscious becoming conscious,” “the religious status” becomes “the spiritual, cosmological, or psychological status,” and “the ‘chosen’ person” is replaced by “the therapist who both chooses and is chosen by depth psychology.” I posit that whereas the dream material may or may not produce feelings of ecstasy, there is a distinctive quality to dream imagery that provides a long-lasting reflection of inner development, bookended by past shadows and new entryways, and guided by the individuation process.

Initiation Dream: Plunging Into the Pool

Hillman (1979) wrote, “To know the psyche at its basic depths, for a true depth psychology, one must go to the underworld” (p. 46). To go to the underworld is to examine the dream without an agenda or an expectation and with receptivity. In other words, there is not an immediate knowing of what the image means, but rather an inquiry during which one faces excruciating images and feelings of both the psychologically emotional and somatic realms. In this otherness of underworld traveling, the imagination is alive, and the unconscious is equally fertile. Surrendering to the out-of-control, illogical spirit of the underworld is a task that can feel exhausting, unstabilizing, and explosive. Hillman said the underworld is a place where soul comes first (p. 47). Further, he posited that one must in some way cooperate with Hades and embrace Thanatos, or death, if one is to be a psychotherapist and work in depth (p. 48).

My significant fall into the underworld was encapsulated in the following dream at the time that I decided to take the path of the depth psychotherapist and enroll in Pacifica Graduate Institute’s depth psychology counseling program:

I am standing in front of a large pool surrounded by many familiar faces. As I contemplate jumping into the pool, I notice that it is not water that fills the pool, but hydrochloric acid. I decide to jump in and immediately start to feel the burning of my body. It is only a matter of time before I start to disintegrate. The stench of the acid is noticeable. I realize the severity of my situation. I have only moments before I die in the burning depths of this noxious liquid. (Author's personal memory of a dream from 2012, 2014)

In this dream, I was faced with my own mortality as my unconscious showed me the terrifying vision of choosing to enter a place of imminent danger. My act of assertive compliance, displayed in my leap into the dissolution of my body, provided a message of momentous change occurring within my psyche. Although I am not consciously making a suicide attempt, there is a distinct delineation between looking into the alchemical vessel and being in the alchemical vessel. In other words, had I taken an objective stance by simply observing what could happen in the vessel, or psychic container, it would have been a passive response that could have protected me from my curious death wish of transformation. To be in the vessel, immersed in the noxious fluid, was a thrust toward individuation. My unconscious was gifting me with the experience of a literal, flesh-burning self-annihilation; the jump into the pool reflected my need to destroy my current body, mind, and spirit trifecta in order to enter the next stage of my life. I was called to experience the unpredictable and self-destructive chemicals without knowing if I would be saved by an external force.

This existential rite of self-sacrifice spoke to the archetypal martyr that I had often identified with in my ego-based narrative. As a metaphor for my psychological state in entering psychotherapy and deciding to become a depth psychotherapist, I was being initiated into a new self through the dissolving of my current ego self. I was now facing the contract of a life of accountability, personal responsibility, and emotional pain that I

had previously been in denial about. Just as hydrochloric acid is produced from the stomach to digest food with its pungent, highly concentrated, and corrosive chemical composition, my psyche was metabolizing an old part of me that needed to die in order for a rebirth to occur. To frame this dream as the first initiation before embarking upon my studies of depth psychology offered a personal beginning point of reference for this work of great mystery. I shifted from a place of safety with a healthy body to a sizzling soon-to-be-corpse, alone in the symbolic alchemical vessel of the pool. Just as von Franz (1997) addressed 16th-century alchemist Gerhard Dorn's theory about the burning-up effects in the body related to sulphur and how contents of the stomach were cooked through this oxidation process (p. 145), I too was being cooked by my own symbolic psychological version of sulphur—the “desirousness and driveness of human nature in a negative sense” (p. 145). In fact, I had often struggled with balance, being lured by extreme experiences and heightened feelings due to my fear of banality and my avoidance of experiencing certain feelings in stillness. On the other hand, the power of sulphur is that it is the “fiery substance which keeps the whole process going on inside” (p. 146). The duality of this symbolic sulphur provided a gateway to one piece of my shadow. I needed to face this previously unconscious part as an honoring to my fated path of depth psychology, while also accepting the image as a gift of fecundant psychological preservation.

In her retelling of the ancient Sumerian tale of Inanna, Jungian analyst Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981) wrote that the door into and out of the underworld, or the Inanna-Ishtar door, was a portal that implied consciousness of the underworld for those able to pass through; Inanna sacrificed herself for wisdom and atonement through her descent

and submission, which led to her death (p. 13). The initial choice to enter the field of depth psychology involves a commitment to dialoguing with the unconscious, which can feel like a self-sacrificing contract for the sake of the client's and the collective's psyche. The self-sacrificing aspects, in retrospect, showed up in my life through an unbalanced schedule, in which I disconnected from nurturing, meaningful friendships in order to spend hours upon hours educating myself on the writings of Jung, von Franz, and Hillman. During this process, I placed myself under a magnifying glass, examining my insecurities and social responses. I unraveled the blind spots of my character that had been safely sheltered off for the first three decades of life.

Although the discipline in waking up in the early mornings of the sun's first sighs to document my dreams nourished my soul, I sacrificed my highly functioning defense mechanisms in order to come into a more transparent relationship with myself. This meant becoming conscious of how denial, acting out, compartmentalization, reaction formation, repression, displacement, intellectualization, and rationalization kept me confined to a limited awareness of my internal world. My oath to become more actualized by cutting out external distractions and learning how to become a transparent student of myself meant releasing comforts that had provided tight attachments to my emotional security. I knew I could no longer hide behind my existential avoidances and abandonment of unpleasant feelings in hopes of chasing insatiable instant gratifications. These parts of me that had been tucked away came to the surface as I observed my tendency to idealize others while devaluing myself in the process. These parts needed to be dissolved in the hydrochloric acid so I could become a more realized person, in touch with my delicately woven shadow. The dream pushed me to recognize the wisdom of

seeing how my personal growth would be in direct dialogue with my future psychotherapy clients. If I was not able to identify and creatively work with my own fear, insecurities, shame, and loneliness, how could I possibly sit with another suffering person and reflect back with empathy and sincere truth?

The depth psychotherapist's internal compass of intimately knowing the psychological mappings of defense mechanisms, fantasies, complexes, traumas, numinous experiences, and imagination makings can be guided to a new, deeper understanding by autonomously functioning images that are commanding and gripping. The sheer unpacking of these images provides new connections with feelings, mythologies, memories, behaviors, creative expressions, and pattern identification that can offer new insights toward reorganizing experiences into valuable life markers. These shifts in perception can be condensed into a life-changing passage of initiation. In my dream, I was lingering at the axis point between staying on the pool sidelines and passing through the Inann-Ishtar door. I had personal belief systems and narratives that were in need of transformation in order that I might begin to see images and experiences archetypally. For example, I had a pattern of minimizing my own self-destructive tendencies, while giving power to other people's problems. I often undervalued my emotional responses to painful relationships and instead internalized the issues of those I was in relationship with to lessen their pain. I provided endless support to self-sabotaging friends and lovers, thus sacrificing my reserves into utter depletion in order to play the archetypal savior. This led to a constant idealization of the other as a coping mechanism, because the reality of my self-sacrificing was too painful to consciously bear.

The idealization of others also manifested in rejection of owning my own positive characteristics. Being able to identify with the archetypal wounded healer and the martyr helped me to understand the universal human patterning of these roles that I was unconsciously acting out. I had also idealized the role of the high priestess, the sagacious feminine who could see through the metaphoric veils of human struggle through magic, ritual, and practice. The entryway into the realm of the high priestess created emotional safety, detachment, and ego inflation. To some extent, she offered a state of mild dissociation. She was a place where I believed I had access to knowledge and wisdom that others did not. My first initiation dream has become a psychic organism that selected images for me to grapple with in order to assemble a puzzle for a bigger picture of my life's work.

The burning of my body in the flesh-eating acid revealed the carnal quality of material destruction. When the body ceases to exist, interactions with the earthly world inevitably change. The *I* is no longer strapped inside a breathing entity, and the *you* cannot be a reflection of that *I*. In this sense, as my flesh and bone started to disintegrate, retaining a sense of the other was no longer a possibility. There was only the dying experience of utter solitude, a moment of differentiation in which relying on others was suddenly not an option, the loss of self was a fated decision, and the undeniable suffering was a necessary part of being present to an overwhelming event. Just as the caterpillar makes the chrysalis and pupates in order to transition into the butterfly, I too was entering a cocoon of pungent fears waiting to liquefy my body in this psychological metamorphosis (that is graduate school) toward individuation.

The rites of the shaman involve similar imagery of the disintegration of flesh, whether through means of being chopped, burned, or boiled (Smith, 1997). I highlight the comparison between the initiatory dream of the depth psychotherapist and the initiation of the shaman to show that in each there is a launching from an old self into a new self as ego and body enter the point of annihilation. One element of annihilation in the choosing and training to be a depth psychotherapist is empathic merging that occurs in the early stages of sitting with clients. In one of my early clinical experiences, my client was describing a violent trauma of domestic abuse that had left a lifelong injury. As she described the details, I felt my personhood dissipating in her narrative, as I vicariously imagined into the sounds, images, and feelings of her lived experience. An insurmountable wave of fear and helplessness washed over me. I had never experienced a trauma on that level, and yet I was paralyzed with powerlessness. At the time, I was less clear about establishing psychic boundaries between me and my clients. I knew how to merge and reexperience pain with others from years of relationships in which I entered the living psychic place of those around me as a way of feeling connected. This imbedded wound of not protecting myself and being conditioned to feel connected to others at the expense of my own psychological health was now unearthing itself in the *calcinatio* alchemical phase as expressed in my first initiatory dream. The *calcinatio* phase, according to Jungian analyst Edward F. Edinger (1994, p. 17), is one of the beginning operations of the alchemical process. In *calcinatio*, fire is the operation and images of burning appear. Edinger said that, according to Jung, fire symbolizes libido (p. 18). Further, Edinger noted that “whether one gets through such a *calcinatio* depends on whether one is acting on ego motives or Self motives” (p. 24). My plunge into the

burning pool symbolized my internal calcinatio phase, where a greater psychic force beyond my ego was pushing me toward psychological transformation.

Due to the possible interpretation of personal and archetypal inflation in my comparison of the depth psychotherapist and the shaman, I am not stating that these two healing roles are interchangeable. There is, however, a preliminary element of suffering for both types of healers to experience that allows an awakening to occur in the relationship between the personal and collective pain. It is in this first stage of dying, through the deterioration of the physical, earthly body and the individual personhood, that the division between the past self and the burgeoning unknown is marked. The entrance into this imminent mystery is also a surrendering to the feminine, specifically with regard to the image of the pool as a womb full of lethal waters. There is a returning to the beginning and a longing and call to dissolve into the physiological geyser of hydrochloric acid. The definition of “spirits of salt” (“Spirits of salt,” 2014, def. 1) is in fact a solution of hydrochloric acid in water. Both salt and tears carry an essence of bitterness. Tears can carry sadness, whereas salt itself does not. In the comingling of salt and tears, there is a shared quality of the feminine. Salt creates swelling and tears provide a release, an expression of the feeling function. Metaphorically, the plunging into the feeling function or spirit of salts, amid the bloating and discharge of emotion, is also a passage into the Mother.

The archetypal Mother embraces emotion and uses her responses to feeling as guides from her inner world. Jung (1954/1968) stated, “The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother” (p. 82). She understands the wisdom of the entirety of the feeling

realm, despite the discomfort of some of the less pleasant feelings. Returning to the feeling function is a returning to Mother, as Mother is the archetype of creation and caretaking. Just as my body and ego underwent a dying stage, I was equally initiated into the warm baths of salty terrain of affect, returning to Mother. My feeling world prior to answering the call to depth psychology had been overwhelming, indulgent, and neglected at various stages. I was used to channeling my emotions into the tapestries of writing poetry and playing flute; however, I often found myself flooded with thick rivers of melancholy. When I was not inspired by the throes of my creative outlets, I rejected my feelings and entered a landscape of distraction, through relationships and vices. I was ready to transition from a set of unpredictable responses of my less rational side into a person willing to show up for each feeling with care, curiosity, and compassion. Leaving the child behind, my work in depth psychology as a student, therapist, and person was leading me to embrace the maternal warmth that my ego yearned for but can only experience when it is in relationship with soul.

Initiation Dream: The Stairs of Asclepius

My second dream of archetypal significance was dreamt while attending my second year at Pacifica Graduate Institute. The excerpted dream narrative follows:

I am on vacation at a resort on an exotic island. Bartender is offering to take me on adventure. He is highly narcissistic and draconian in nature. Hesitantly, I agree, and soon realize I am being kidnapped. Paralyzed with fear, I am finding ways to appease him with light conversation and humor. He is ignoring me. Bartender is now driving maniacally over water to a small island that has an antiquity era stairway made of pink limestone, reminiscent of William Blake's *Jacob's Dream*, sans women. Bartender is now taking me to the top of Spiraling Stairs. It occurs to me that he is going to leave me here alone on the mountain in the dark of night. Just before his departure, I realize I have now arrived at the top of the *Stairs of Asclepius*. Alas, I feel a deep sense of relief. In the waters below, a strong feminine presence in the shape of a crone arrives. She has come to help me. (Author's personal dream journal, 2014)

The dream takes place in a foreign landscape with a malevolent male kidnapper and the naming of a mythological figure of healing, surrounded by the vast depths of water. Metaphorically, I interpret this scenario as a place within me where I am isolated with my interior masculine counterpart, or animus. The sense of being trapped with these polarized male archetypes appears to be a foreshadowing of the two inner figures, or aspects of Father, who “represents the *dynamism* of the archetype, for the archetype consists of both—form and energy” (Jung, 1954/1968 p. 102) and are in contrast to the Mother, who is “the matrix—the form into which all experience is poured” (pp. 101-102). I intimately get to know this figure through my active imagination, personal Jungian analysis, and by observing parts of myself in clients. The kidnapping, as an act of being pulled away from a place of pleasure and relaxation into the daunting night of the shadow, is an aspect of an initiation process. The illusion of a consciousness of safety, specifically under the guises of a holiday or a temporary place of pleasure, is instantly shattered as I am forced to face the terror of utter darkness, without protection. I am forced to leave my comfort zone and enter a new paradigm of mystical experience.

Upon hearing the words *stairs of Asclepius*, I am put at ease. Following the steps of the great wounded healer and dream chamber tender, the image of Asclepius in the dream left me in a place of contemplation. Am I now walking the path of this archetypal figure? Will this path of soul tending mirror my own path of being present for my pain as I am for my clients, leading me toward the heavens, toward a continually intimate relationship with both the sacred and the profane? Is the image of Asclepius a reminder that my dreams need continual care and that this figure whom, by mere sight in the dreamer’s world, had arrived to heal me? From my standpoint as the dreamer, the

Asclepian vision is a message of hope, a recommitment to trusting my psyche, or perhaps an internalized guide of my animus, who is now changing from marauder to kabiri.

The Presence of Kali

As the female helper comes to balance out the masculine forces that surround me, the reflection of the elder rising from the deep waters becomes an image of final completion for this initiation. I am met by the archetypal Wise Old Woman, and her physical presence shows me the archetype of both the protector and the destroyer; she gazes into my eyes with tender care and prepares to destroy Bartender. Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik (2003), in his book on Hindu mythology, described the great deity protector Vishnu as the master of time and space who maintained the rhythm of the cosmos. Vishnu admonished negativity in perception with his discus-shaped boomerang, the *Sudarshana*, which translates as “pleasing vision,” in order to offer life sustainability (p. 8). The goddess of death and destruction is the fierce goddess Kali, whose mannerisms were wild, representing untamed urges and a raw connection to the wilderness (pp. 199-200). These two dichotomous and equally harmonious roles appeared to be internal aspects of my psyche, just as the student and practitioner of depth psychology resided with the free-spirited, hedonistic, and artistic traveler. For example, Vishnu has been the force of my self-preservation, helping me to create boundaries in interpersonal relationships, while teaching me how to be selfish and practice self-care through conserving my energy by not overcommitting to others. This involves shifting from responding impulsively with a *yes* to practicing the art of saying *no*. Vishnu as Creator has provided an awareness of inner strength toward the tending to my introverted side, specifically in my quiet time practice of meditation. Without creating and coming

back to this personal solace of reflection, the inner worlds of my clients and the pressure of graduate school could burden my psyche. Simultaneously, Kali, as a force of self-destruction, had raised her scythe-waving hand and danced above my wounded body with wreaths of skulls dangling around her neck during several of my experiences as a graduate student of depth psychology.

The timeline of this second initiatory dream came to me as a pillar while I was in the midst of deciding my thesis topic and a year into my practicum site. My insecurities around feeling inadequate as a scholar completing my master's capstone and being a neophyte psychotherapist began to inflame, and my old wounds of paralyzing self-doubt and being judged by authority came to the surface. During the grips of this complex, I felt as if Kali had won the dance, standing upon my pulsating heart while my head hung from her righteous fingers. The dualistic crone in my dream carried the tension of opposites within as a symbol of individuation. In the dream's sequence of events, one interpretation was that I must walk the path of Asclepius to come to terms with my dual inner figures of the life sustainer and the life slayer. These figures live within the depth psychotherapist and call for proper tending through symbols of the unconscious; they also live and await further discovery in each client seeking guidance and psychological transformation. For me personally, these archetypal and mythological figures opened the portal for me to connect with the ancient lineages of storytelling that I have now internalized. Pattanaik (2003) described the Vishnu mythology as being grounded in a vocabulary of the sacred, expressed and shared through images and stories that nourish the quotidian existence of the believer (p. 9). I would add that Kali's mythology, imbued in her primal and untamed essence, has its own sacred vocabulary, and the depth psychotherapist-in-training needs

to acknowledge both sides of light and shadow in order to be initiated into the temenos of the personal and the client's soul's cosmogony.

In many traditional rites of initiation, an honoring of ancestors connects the neophyte with the elders. In this way, I am proposing that the depth psychotherapist can link the path of inner work through archetypal messengers of the unconscious to a greater lineage of allegorical, historical, and alchemical symbolism. The dream landscape becomes a temenos that the depth psychotherapist can continually visit and revisit through dialoging, writing, and engaging in active imagination, as I have experienced firsthand. This sacred sphere then becomes a portal toward accessing the clandestine compartments of the unconscious that can be transcribed into a new set of personal narratives, epiphanies, and profound meaning making. Thus, in utilizing a unique, creative, continuously flourishing investigative approach, a recontextualization of the levels of growth can be identified as archetypally significant. Through this fervor-fueled longing for an interconnectedness of my personal academic, vocational, and spiritual pursuits, I have discovered that reframing the aforementioned dreams as initiations lassoes an innately human thirst for placement in the collective fabric of symbolic sapience.

Due to the ethics of confidentiality that the the depth psychotherapist must follow, the seductive pull of living an eremitic life can create a sense of isolation and existential overwhelm. In other words, containing the active lives of so many people has the potential to drive a depth psychotherapist to a quiet, secluded internal world to balance the rich terrain of client processing. Spiritual animal medicine writers Jamie Sams and David Carson (1999) described the role of the lynx in Native American animal totem

mythology; he is tasked with being the secret keeper who is able to move through space in silence (p. 109). It strikes me that the depth psychotherapist is like the lynx in a clinical and therapeutic setting. The containment of maintaining secrecy and the sacred holding of the inner lives of clients is a vital and venerable role. It follows that the responsibility of managing one's inner world as a depth psychotherapist through dream analysis is imperative for the maintenance of the psyches of both therapist and patient. Placing these unconscious wanderings into the context of an initiatory process helps separate the active, sometimes profane work in conscious waking life from the imaginative, complex, and illogical cinematic imagoes of the dreamscape.

Just as the shaman enters into an ecstatic trance after a thorough initiation process so that he or she acts as the mediator for the community, restoring the lost power of a soul or sick person, increasing the knowledge of other worlds, and embodying the psychopomp (Smith, 1997, p. 27), the depth psychotherapist can use archetypal dreams as an initiation to offer similar services. The very fact that initiations require an induction into uncharted territory indicates the necessity of crossing a threshold in the maturation process. In her essay, "Beloved Enemy: A Modern Initiation," Jungian analyst Marion Woodman (1985) wrote the moving words:

Integrating an initiation can become a lifetime task. And while most of it remains in the secret mysteries of the individual, some of it belongs to the universal soul that is striving to become conscious in each one of us. (pp. 183-184)

In other words, the decoding and courting of the meaning making behind the initiation is not finite. There are stages, cycles, layers, and other lessons that need to be experienced in order to compare and contrast the reflective shift of the insight embodied in action. I now know that my first alchemical dream before I consciously committed to studying

depth psychology was a metaphor for an internal psychic transmutation. At the same time, I continue to question further interpretations and associations that remain locked in my unconscious. I still wonder what else I have to learn about the teachings of Asclepius. This practice of never fully knowing, while committing to the search that there is continuously more to know, also helps cement my commitment to ongoing wonderment in listening to my clients with an open ear, even when their narratives and images sound familiar. The protracted process of discovering the meanings in archetypal dreams becomes an initiation in and of itself.

Initiation is a defining step in becoming differentiated and entering a stage of individuation. Finding one's true calling, or vocation, is also an initiation toward self-empowerment and a reflection of the active individuation process. Having followed my soul's calling into the infinite waters of depth psychology, I am now able to reflect on the psychology of my initiatory dreams. These dreams distinguished the parts of myself that were unborn into the parts that were being birthed. I needed the reframing of the dreams as initiations to mark my own differentiation from a previous consciousness into the next phase of my individuation, thus resourcing my inner Creator.

In this unearthing of being deeply moved by my archetypal dreams and needing a psychic initiation into this work, I was led to two concepts that offered another level of complexity to my unraveling epiphanies around these potent messages. The first was Jung's concept of the *participation mystique*, described by psychoanalytic psychologist Robert Waska (2014) as a "mystical connection, or identity, between subject and object in which the subject cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to a partial identity" (p. 97). Although this term

refers to the psychotherapeutic process, I am proposing that the dynamic can occur between two parts of one psyche. Waska made the connection between Jung's concept and psychoanalyst Melanie Klein's notion of projective identification, in which the reality of the self and other becomes blurred, and the influence from the subject subsequently impacts the identification of the object (p. 98). I experienced a participation mystique with my initiatory dreams; the content and emotional fervor in the dreams acted as the subject, influencing my identity as a depth psychotherapist object, concomitantly letting my ego peer into a small window of my shadow.

The conscious dissecting of my dreams, while returning to the literal images, has steered my ego toward reclaiming my depth psychotherapist projections. Understanding my projections has shed light on a psychic field that was highly active. The projections that I refer to are the terrors of the death of my identity, losing myself in the inner work of my clients and myself, embodying the wounded healer, being kidnapped by my animus, and reliving the existential anxieties of plummeting into a vat of utter aloneness

By embracing my initiations ensconced in the myriad faces of fear, hopelessness, retrievals, and affirmations, I discovered that there was a vigorously energetic life waiting to be harvested upon entering the hearth of depth psychology. The magical influence of the object, or my dream life, over my depth psychotherapist identity, or the subject, created a profound merging between the unconscious and conscious aspects my psyche.

The second concept that I was led to was Rudolf Otto's idea of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which Jungian analyst Lionel Corbett (2011) described as a mystery that is both tremendous and fascinating, beyond words, in which the subject, or myself in this case, experiences a sense of transcendence upon working with the dreams

(pp. 53-54). Sticking to the images of the two archetypal dreams I explored in this chapter, I experienced a numinous phenomenon by which my unconscious created startling, emotionally evocative memories to reflect upon as psychopomps leading me toward the epiphanies of undergoing exponential psychological transformation.

Clinical Application

At the same time that the process of becoming a depth psychotherapist entails the completion of academic requirements and clinical experience, I propose that there is a deeper calling to be initiated into the next transformative stage of personal and vocational development, through merging into the personal and collective unconscious via exploration of archetypal dreams. The process of individuation for the depth psychotherapist enables one to become more accountable for one's actions, thoughts, and behaviors. Further, one is able to express a deeper level of empathy as a result of one's inner shadow work. The psychotherapist's empathy and ability to merge with the client into a field of pain acceptance, which has the potential to create a numinous healing, allows the client to experience a new interest in his or her psychic phenomena.

I now posit a series of method applications for the depth psychotherapist to use in order to dialogue with archetypal dreams as a self-initiative process while using the stairs of Asclepius dream as an example. The first step in naming an archetypal dream involves a recognition that the symbols and images are beyond the personal account of one's historical life. Archetypal constellation requires a tracing of lineage from mythological, religious, alchemical, or historical contexts. These messages can be enshrouded in either subtle or evident visages. I apply Jung's (1974/2011) four-part dramatic structure (pp. 80-81) to first identify the statement of place. I am far away from home, and this

unfamiliar territory leads to me to believe the dream is pointing toward a blind spot in my own consciousness, an unknown psychic space where my roots are not quite established. As a traveler, I am conflicted between the fine line of freedom and escapism, and hence, anxiety is building. The plot develops as a pernicious male figure poses a threat to me. I no longer have free will, as he is driving the car. The negotiation I made through dialogue is unsuccessful, and I feel powerless. This could be a complex or an aspect of my shadow I need to further investigate.

The reversal of fortune, or *peripeteia*, presents itself to me in the apex of terror. It is at that moment that I recognize I have reached a sacred landmark known as the Stairs of Asclepius! An innate sense of safety saturates my soul; my intuition informs me that this staircase is a symbol of illumination for the healer within. The resolution comes after this epiphany, when the masculine figure walks away from me. Examining the most germane images through both subjective and objective lenses, I offer my associations and amplifications to enrich the sensate-based content. First, the bartender is a man whose job is literally to mix drinks or *spirits*. Metaphorically, he is an alchemist and has the power to concoct potions that can evoke leaking emotions, inhibitions, and at worst, unconscious oblivion. If he is a symbol of my animus, he might also represent the archetypal magician, an inner figure I have a previous relationship with. I can also identify him in my waking life as the man who wears the mask of seduction, as I have been drawn into his metaphoric den of metals and mystery in my past. He is also an aspect of Father—overpowering, silencing, and oblivious to my feelings. Why might the bartender be showing up now? Is there a new message he is carrying? These are questions for further exploration. The awakening or revelation in my psyche comes from

the other role he embodies. He is also the helper. It is he who leads me to the Stairs of Asclepius. As a guide and wise teacher, he leaves me to my inner work, in solitude.

My association with the stairs, as a spiral structure toward the sky, is an allegorical bridge from the earth to the heavens. This is a gateway that provides an ability to communicate with the cosmic realms; a new paradigm of knowledge is on the horizon. The ascension up the stairs acts as an initiation or rite of passage into the Asclepian consciousness. My first association with stairs conjures a memory from my travels to India where I visited the ghats of the holy Ganges River. Also known as the divine cosmic road, these stairs are purportedly the meeting place between the cosmic and harmonic orders of the universe. Stairs contain a mapping of the numinous or a channel between worlds. This upward journey invites flavors of mastery on the horizon through the gift of seeing what is above and below. Stairs hold the energy of an expansion of psychological and spiritual development that I feel I am moving into.

Being birthed into the rich metaphors of this dreamscape is a phenomenological claiming of newfound identities, blasting out the matrix embedded in overlapping personal and archetypal spheres. Further, it is not the meaning of the dream that matters most to the dreamer, as Corbett (1996) wrote, but the opportunity for the dream to align with the archetypal message (p. 120). These hints from the archetypal dream act as a catalyst toward a new metabolizing, embodying, and awakening of the development of my psyche as a depth psychotherapist. By this, I mean there is a peripatetic circumambulation around the mythology, alchemy, symbol, and affect in my dreams that has offered a quality of meaning to the archetypal themes of dying, being chased by a rancorous figure, ascending toward the heavens or a higher consciousness, and following

the path of the wounded healer. There is a divine quality in the pure essence of the revealing of these messages that transcends my personal path of the discovery and commitment to depth psychology into the collective fabric of the human psychological composition.

Summary

Initiations mark the transition from one stage of life to the next stage, creating a significant marker in the personal narrative of the initiated. For the depth psychotherapist, I have posited the importance of examining personal archetypal dreams as an initiatory process and as a means of defining a shift of consciousness through mythological, alchemical, and symbolic associations as presented in the dream realms. I have chosen two archetypal dreams, one from the beginning era of my deciding to study and practice depth psychotherapy and the other during the latter part of my master's program, after a year of seeing clients. I addressed key archetypal figures such as the Mother, Father, Creator, Destroyer, and Wounded Healer, who reflected the unconscious parts of myself I was not ready to face until I framed the figures in the initiation paradigm. Jung's concept of individuation was defined as a way to enhance the meaning making of initiation through the unconscious landscape of image messages.

Jung's (1974/2011) four-part dramatic structure was applied to my Stairs of Asclepius dream to unearth the personal and archetypal associations in an ordered model that could be used for other depth psychotherapists engaging in this process of insight growth. Through my analysis, I discovered that my associations left me with a feeling of intrinsic connectivity that transpired me into a cauldron of numinosity, giving me the phenomenological knowing that my story is embedded and influenced by the lineage of

psyche's multiplicity of forms. This felt experience personally affirms Hillman's (1975) statement that "our life is psychological, and the purpose of life is to make psyche of it, to find connections between life and soul" (p. xv).

Chapter IV

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

After undergoing pivotal stages of awareness through exploring inner work and committing to the metabolizing of theoretical application, the depth psychotherapist can undergo a metamorphosis, beginning with the first call of curiosity from the unconscious through the early stages of clinical work. In Chapter I, I addressed the fact that whereas a graduate program provides an initiation from student to professional with a completion of an academic ceremony and delivery of a degree, the research problem of this thesis is that there is an unnamed initiation taking place in the unconscious that needs to be identified and tended to via personal reflection and dream tending for the benefit of the depth psychotherapist's development toward individuation.

My opening question about whether framing archetypal dreams as an initiation process for the depth psychotherapist can inspire the closure and birthing of different selves through personalized meaning making has been investigated through my own mythological and alchemical dreams. Using hermeneutic and heuristic methodologies to provide the perspective of various depth-oriented theories, I have incorporated my own unconscious workings and personal associations to ground my research in academic and phenomenological findings.

In Chapter II, I gave an overview of the concept of initiation, starting with the 16th-century derivation of the word *initiatum*—the impetus for a beginning, the formal

acceptance of someone as a member of a group often affiliated with a sacred ceremony, or the act in which new facts or ideas are taught (“Initiate,” 2014, defs. 1-3). Bringing attention to Eliade’s (1958/1994) idea that initiation is analogous with an existential shift that elicits growth (pp. 17-18), I highlighted the human need for defining life transitions through a conscious act. Grounding initiations in the specific context of the shaman, I named the three themes of suffering, death, and resurrection that make up the foundation of the shaman’s transformational experiences of facing fear, relinquishing power, and becoming humbled so hubris is in a state of utter annihilation (Eliade, 1951/1964).

In Chapter III, I examined two personal dreams that embodied archetypal and symbolic content. These figures of the collective unconscious showed up as the Creator, Destroyer, Mother, Father, and Wounded Healer. Through the conceptualization and exploration of these figures using Jung’s (1974/2011) four-part dramatic structure, I was then able to internalize these forces as psychological imprints and create meaning from a depth psychological perspective. Through this process, the dreams transformed into profound initiatory experiences that I recognize as numinous phenomena.

Conclusion

Through my research and analysis, I have discovered that the dreams I chose as archetypal actually chose me. Although there are hundreds of dreams I have dreamt from my beginning pursuits in the studies of depth psychology until the near completion of my master’s program, there was a pull toward these two specific dreams that continued to push me toward circumambulating specific resonant images of alchemy and myth, creating a transpiring wonderment around how I was receiving healing by sitting with archetypal associations. In my first initiation dream, the pool as a vessel that held my

burning flesh was much like a coffin, containing the hydrochloric acid necessary for breaking down my defenses and fears in stepping into a new role as a graduate student dedicated to a lifelong relationship with the unconscious. I realize my personas as poet and performer, healer and hermit, daughter and daredevil were being disintegrated on a core level in order to be reintegrated with more self-awareness. As the dream depicted me as the archetypal martyr casting myself into the heat of my own death, the inability to be rescued by another was a testament to my unconscious nudging me toward individuation.

The practice of accurately assessing characteristics of archetypal dreams after waking can propose a challenge, as some dreams may not appear archetypal upon waking due to the immediacy of a personal connection. For the depth psychotherapist, there is a need to cultivate a sensitively trained eye and to refine one's intuitive sagacity in order to retrieve and spend time with the unconscious jewels of psyche's development. I now recognize that because I was called to spend more time with these two dreams, their meaning and my relationship with them began to grow. In hindsight, I wonder had I chosen two other dreams that held less significance to me during the beginning stages of this writing and developed a relationship with them that held their meaning with the same care, whether the significance of the initiations would have changed. Was the content less salient than the timing of the dreams? Was the longing to create an initiation for my own personal development the significant marking of a passage of time?

As it turned out, upon my last session in therapy before terminating, while nearing the end of writing Chapter II and Chapter III, my alchemical hydrochloric acid dream was read aloud. To my surprise, my selective memory had convinced me that this particular dream was my first dream upon starting therapy, when in fact it was the

second. There were also significant details that my memory did not hold onto: a levitation by which I was resurrected above the pool with my womb saturated in chemical radiation, preventing me from carrying a child. This rich imagery could have added yet another layer to my relation with the feminine shadow and the numinous quality I now recollect of floating in midair after feeling my body disintegrate. Due to my selective memory and a conscious intention of wanting to focus on the charged concept of self-annihilation as a means toward spiritual growth, my research was affected in that I did not acknowledge this major theme of the wounded feminine. Upon realizing with a sense of great tragedy that I would not be able to give birth, I was not able to experience the archetypal feminine as Mother. I wonder now, metaphorically, what other psychological aspects were causing an instant death of my reproductive system. The deep violation of experiencing a contaminated uterus after the self-imposed jump into the vessel of disintegration might have drastically shifted my relationship to this first initiation experience had I remembered or not excluded this salient event.

New inquiries regarding the psyche's self-care system, which Jungian analyst Donald Kalsched (2013) described as providing the retention of "an innocent core of the self out of further suffering in reality, by keeping it 'safe' in another world" (p. 24), have now been constellated through my initiation exploration. Kalsched's hypothesis that this innocent core of the self is a sacred something, often referred to as soul (p. 24), offers a further investigation around the connection between the natural timing of the discovery of archetypal dreams and how the unconscious works as a soul protector, releasing imagery during a natural cycle that cannot be forced. I agree with Kalsched that the forces of the unconscious that Jung called archetypal are experienced as spiritual or numinous (p. 24).

I am now contemplating the reasons for having been reacquainted with this information at the end of this writing project and how the awakening of the forgotten part of the dream adds a new layer to the initiation I was seeking.

Areas for Future Research

One area of further research is the study of archetypal narratives in a group or individual setting through documenting dreams of depth psychotherapists-in-training. The research question would focus on finding archetypal narratives as a way of self-initiating. I would explore how making these connections with the dream work might impact the depth psychotherapist's clinical work and whether having initiation dreams might change one's self-esteem or image. I would be curious to ask if there is a spiritual recognition that takes place, specifically in terms of a wider sense of understanding one's life and the interconnectivity between all matter with psyche, after reframing dreams as archetypal. Further, other questions arise. How does the connection to myth and alchemy decrease depression or a feeling of aloneness for the depth psychotherapist? How do these initiatory dreams empower, change behaviors, cultivate deeper relationships, and offer a new road map for being a more complex, multifaceted individual? What specifically gets accessed through archetypal dreams? What would be lost without initiations into this psychological work?

Closing Thoughts

Due to the nature of the unconscious being unknown, my attempt in examining two significant dreams has offered a sense of self-containment and structure amidst the frenetic, imaginative, and impulsive ways I have been unknowingly led by. My need for a named initiation into both depth psychology and into the praxis of working with psyche

in my clinical experience has promulgated a felt sense of intimately meeting my inner work from a place of openness and truth. I recognized that the burning disintegration of an old self and the inescapable fear of being chased by a monstrous masculine entity toward the ascension of the Asclepian stairs were monumental experiences that offered me profound insight into my inner world. My psychic landscape impregnated me with a vital thrust toward transformation. I have reached a newfound honoring in my relationship between the unconscious and consciousness; both spheres courted one another to support my process of meaning making, enveloping me into the historical fabric of rites of passage. I now have a personal relationship with Asclepius, whom I can work with through various methods such as active imagination and free association poetry. This bond has grafted my personal story onto the collective myth of the wounded healer, while integrating a supportive image of the animus into my psychic toolbox.

My barometer in tracking the ways in which clients create initiations through destructive patterns is now met with a clearer understanding for the need for meaning making and distinguishing different parts of the self as old and new. My experience of this significant archetypal conversion from death to rebirth, from terror to revitalization, has landed me in a place of honoring the functions of the psyche, specifically during painful, transformative stages. This truth surpasses theory. Although I am deeply grateful for the research that helped formulate a foundation for the circumambulation of the initiatory experiences of the unconscious, it is the returning to the inner world that has provided personal healing and a surrendering to collective suffering. Through this healing, I believe empathy is deepened and the ability to attune to clients who are struggling with their inner archetypes can be strengthened, softened, and met with soul.

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