# Reclaiming One's Gold:
# Imagining the Inner Child Through the Art of Therapeutic Fairy Tale Writing


**by**
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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology**


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## Abstract

Reclaiming One's Gold:
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by Susan Ashley Batistick

This production thesis utilizes an artistic-creative methodology through the workings of both heuristic and hermeneutical approaches to explore the function of story—how we are told stories and how we retell them—throughout an individual's life. Furthermore, this thesis examines their role and effect on the mental-emotional realm. Through the craft of creating her own personal fairy tale by way of active imagination, the author offers an example of working with archetypal images (common to the author as well as the collective) to come into contact with unconscious drives and shadow impulses, confront their intentions, and ultimately come to resolution over their tensions, resulting in psychological transformation. This thesis offers a look into the importance of play, the imaginal realm, and the endless nature of meaning making and their relationship to healing.

## Acknowledgments and Dedication

For Mēnessa and every inner child out in the universe.

A big thank you to all the shepherds along the way, most notably Sheryl Paul and Jennifer Kaplan, the Women's Clinic and Family Counseling Center, my soul sisters, and finally my family: without you, Mēnessa never could have been born.

And to Michael, the man who is in constant reflection of my heart. I love you to the moon and back, round and round again.

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# Chapter I
# Introduction

## Area of Interest

As long as I can remember, I have believed the story that I am broken. Broken on the inside, somehow not whole. Although I was a relatively easy pregnancy according to my mother, I had colic as a baby and terrible separation anxiety as a child; I was timid among my peers and even more so with adults. I have fond memories of kindergarten because of the unlimited access to imaginative play. But in grade school, I had a difficult time socializing and I disliked the structure: sitting in rows and rows of desks and listening to long swaths of instruction. But I wanted to be like all the other kids. I wanted to like school. And I wanted to not feel so much. Years later sitting in the office of my therapist, who would initially spur me onto the journey to write this thesis, I understood for the first time that how I see myself, how I understand myself, and the stories that I tell to corroborate this vision could be untrue.

All people develop these stories, of course, to make sense of the chaos. Like blueprints, they eventually corroborate future stories: somehow I would either fail—I was too emotional, too sensitive, and flat out not smart enough— or succeed, but just barely. At the edge of any sort of risk, the precipice of change ignited the belief that I am too broken to succeed, often resulting in a descent into the emotional realm in a dark night of struggle.

The internal struggle to feel good enough, or really to feel I am worth something, has brought me to write this thesis and explore how stories, the ones people were told as children and retell into adulthood, shape their relationship to the self. After my most recent decent into the underworld, which will be further explored in Chapter III of this thesis, I was curious to understand how the psychic presence of these stories and their metaphors shape people's very existence within and outside of this world, both in their waking perceptions and through their dreams. What is it about story that is so powerful, powerful enough to keep people from feeling unimportant or to encourage them to take risks?

**Rationale for This Work**

Many people spend their lives walking around with a story of shame. Brené Brown (2012), a research professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work and the author of the TEDTalk "The Power of Vulnerability," defined shame as the fear of disconnection, noting, "We are psychologically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging. Connection . . . is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives" (p. 68). But shame tells us otherwise. Jungian analyst James Hollis (1996) described the repercussions:

> The consequence most terrible to us all from the primal wounding is not the wound itself, but the distortion it causes in one's sense of self, and the unconscious compulsion to replay analogs of that relationship over and over later in our lives. (p. 63)

And so people repress their feeling state, disassociating it from the body and soul and causing a split. Jungian analyst Marion Woodman (1985) described this disconnected state as such: "When the authentic feeling is cut off from the instincts, genuine conflict

either remains in the unconscious or becomes somatized there" (pp. 58-59). In depth psychology, this material is considered the shadow, what Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz (1995) described as repressed qualities, "which are not admitted or accepted because they are incompatible with those chosen, the shadow is built up" (pp. 4-5). It is usually at moments of transformation, on the axis of a transitional rite of passage, when what has been repressed is encouraged to deliver (Henderson, 2005), but not without difficulty or fear. Von Franz (1995) described it as such:

> It is a tension of the opposites not to be decided by the ego, for such a creative solution of the shadow conflict means giving up the ego and its standards and conflicts; it means complete surrender to the unknown forces within one's psyche. (p. 71)

The work of this thesis is to explore the creative-artistic healing modality of storytelling, the kind of containment and safety it can provide, toward the illumination of shadow and its grip on the individual.

Using storytelling therapeutically is not new, of course. But I was curious to explore meaning making and its potential to transform. After all, telling stories is people's birthright and starts at a very early age with "Once upon a time." Carl Gustav Jung (1989), the founder of analytical psychology, in his prologue to *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, said it best:

> My life is a story of the self-realization of the unconscious. Everything in the unconscious seeks outward manifestation, and the personality too desires to evolve out of its unconscious conditions and to experience itself as whole. I cannot employ the language of science to trace this process of growth in myself, for I cannot experience myself as a scientific problem. What we are to our inward vision, and what man appears to be *sub specie aeternitatis*, can only be expressed by way of myth. Myth is more individual and expresses life more precisely than does science. Science works with concepts of averages which are far too general to do justice to the subjective variety of an individual life. Thus it is that I have now undertaken, in my eighty-third year, to tell my personal myth. I can only make direct statements, only "tell stories." Whether or not these stories are "true"

> is not my problem. The only question is whether what I tell is *my* fable, *my* truth. (p. 3)

As a student of the archetypal realm, I wondered, what importance does the story I tell have and how much of it is true? How much of it is unseen or untold? Only by way of exploration, I imagined, would I find these answers.

## Research Question and Methodology

**Research question.** Much has been written about the purpose of storytelling, especially its influence on children; the ways in which image and narrative can tend to the inner, emotional realm for young people; and how it can make meaning out of life for adults (Bettelheim, 2010; Franz, 1996; Tatar, 1992). In the depth tradition, of course, storytelling is the playground for active imagination to explore the metaphors of one's dreams, as well as the associated myths and tales, and how uncovered archetypes from these explorations relate to one's personal myth. This model has been a clinical healing modality dating back to Freud and Jung (Bettelheim, 2010). Jungian analysts Donald Kalsched and Alan Jones (1986) explained why this is: "As far back as we are able to trace the origins of our species, we find myth and myth-making as the fundamental language through which man relates to life's mystery and fashions meaning from his experiences" (para. 1). The Neanderthals told stories to process death through grave sites; in early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and later China, India, and Greece, creation myths in the form of poetry were told to restore connection to the land and the divine; across China, India, the Middle East, and Europe, religious texts were used to make sense the mystery of psyche (Armstrong, 2005). Story is how people relate to one another, how they see themselves individually and collectively.

As such, the therapist's office becomes the scene of a fireside chat; clients begin with "Once upon a time." And yet, somewhere along the way, the story becomes literalized—in fact truth. Kalsched and Jones (1986) spoke to this failure: "'Once upon a time' does not mean "once" in history but refers to events that occur in eternal time, always and everywhere" (para. 2). But patients, as archetypal psychologist James Hillman (1989) noted, are always in search of their story, the piece that defines who they are. In reference to a former client, he mused,

> I believed her story to be her sustaining fiction, but that she had not read it for its hermetic possibilities, its covert meanings. She had taken her story literally in the clinical language in which it had been told to her, a tale of sickness, abuse, wastage of the best years. The story needed to be doctored, not her. (p. 79)

This appears to be the major flaw, as Hillman (1994) argued in *Healing Fiction*, for the client in therapy and, oftentimes, the therapist: both fail to speak in mythic language.

My sense of curiosity around this failure led me to question what happens when people get stuck on the story: The patterns continue to play out. Metaphors turn into symptoms. And symptoms reinforce the story with which one is fascinated. In my own personal work, I have wondered if this is because the door to my childhood had closed; I had been approaching metaphor in a language that psyche could not understand, the language a child comprehends because of its mutable qualities, its suspension of disbelief, its magic realism.

Outside of the depth psychoanalytic tradition (where it is an underpinning) (Kalsched, 1996, 2013), little research has been carried out examining if the ways people once played as children in the imaginative realms of myths, legends, fables, and fairy tales can be a vehicle in adulthood to the unconscious in hopes of unhinging the literalism and reality testing that is so fiercely coveted. What is it about childhood that allows the

child to transform? Furthermore, can a psychic return to the place of childhood, in essence where the inner child lives, help shift one's personal story as adults. The focus of this thesis is twofold: First, it centers on the ways in which people continue (or do not continue) to mythologize in their everyday lives. Second, it examines how a return to the fairyland as an operational definition of the psyche of a child, specifically the reclamation of one's shadow when viewed in terms of Kalsched's (1995) tandem image (the dual presence of both the inner child and a caretaking image, like that of a mother) can relieve the shadow of its protector status, simultaneously freeing it from its persecutory status (p. 35). This work is an effort to revisit the emotional landscape of childhood, when the defensive mechanisms are automatically activated to protect the self and an individual story is birthed that imprisons the self in order to protect it from trauma. The fairyland, where the frailty of childhood that is often incapable of integrating life's difficulties, is revisited and revisioned from the adult landscape, where the necessary strength has been developed to integrate what was once overwhelming. This work, however, considers this integration from within the fairyland that was the context where the repression occurred. My research question is as follows: How can the use of active imagination ignite the power of one's creative resources to bring the inner child to life, in its homeland, and help that inner child reclaim its lost birthright, shift the story, and be bestowed all of the potential truths that are each person's essential calling?

**Methodology.** To explore this research question, my methodology will be strictly qualitative. As a result, there will be no attempt to prove a hypothesis; rather, this question hones in on my understanding of this area of research as well as an exploration of my own internal processes. I will use the production of my own personal fairy tale

grounded in a heuristic inquiry of inner experiences influenced by my personal life journey to achieve an understanding; since all understanding is self-understanding, I will make meaning through the hermeneutic tradition using active imagination in the context of childhood experiences and fantasies, both of which can be healing fictions.

Clark Moustakas (1990), a leading humanistic and clinical psychologist, defined heuristic inquiry as “a process that begins with a question or problem which the research seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self” (p. 15). Through the use of self-dialogue, what Moustakas described as “becoming one with what one is seeking to know” (p. 16), I will be open to the unconscious, allowing for emergent phenomena to inform this research, and attempt to situate the emergent phenomena in the archetypal. The archetypal will be evaluated in terms of culture and storytelling—specifically, fairy tales. This approach will also allow for the essence of the research to emerge. Moustakas explained that heuristics allows for one to “enter into dialogue with the phenomenon, allowing the phenomenon to speak directly to one’s own experience, to be questioned by it” (p. 16). He added, “Self dialogue is the critical beginning” (p. 16). I will also employ tacit knowing, one’s ability to sense wholeness out of parts, intuition, indwelling (a process by which one turns inward to find deeper meaning), focusing, and holding an internal frame of reference in the research (Moustakas, 1990).

Hermeneutics is best defined by core faculty member at Pacifica Graduate Institute and clinical psychologist Robert Romanyshyn (2007): “The alchemical hermeneutic method attends to the margins of consciousness in research. It keeps open a space for the researcher’s dreams, symptoms, synchronicities, feelings, and intuitions to come in from

the margins" (p. 275). I will examine my own dreams, symptoms, and feelings. Romanyshyn described the feeling function, as understood by Jung, as a feeling of the heart that Jung called cardiognosis (p. 287). Romanyshyn explained:

> As method, then, [it] is about remembering the ancestors who linger in the work, and in this respect the feeling function—as the method of the heart, as the path of the heart—is . . . particularly suited to the imaginal approach to research insofar as one of its chief characteristics is this devotion to the unfinished business at the heat of the work. (p. 287)

I will let the heart guide this research by listening and dreaming while focusing on the metaphors of dense forests, murky lakes, encounters with strange scary creatures, shadows, and evil to get to the original wound and reclaim it as something other than broken.

## Ethical Considerations

Before asking for permission into the unconscious, it was necessary to consider the risks. Jungian analyst and author of *Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination*, Robert A. Johnson (1986) cautioned,

> The techniques of inner work are intended to set in motion the great powers of the unconscious, but in a sense this is like taking the cap off a geyser: Things can get out of hand if you are not careful. (p. 17)

Throughout the production of this thesis, I made a commitment to moving at pace I was comfortable with as well as to bringing these explorations into my personal therapy.

## Overview of This Thesis

The next chapter of this thesis follows with a brief history of storytelling and its function throughout the ages. Chapter II, the Literature Review, continues with an exploration of how story weaves itself together from the collective unconscious, and I borrow from various experts in the field of depth and Jungian psychology to define the

terms commonly used when analyzing its mechanics. The chapter continues by citing various psychologists' arguments for the importance of fairy tales as well as how and why they are used as tools in the therapeutic container. Finally, I conclude with enlisting arguments for the function of story in therapy and how it helps or impedes (or both) the clients' progress. Chapter III annotates the production piece of this thesis, highlighting various aspects of my heuristic inquiry to the role of fantasy in storytelling as well as the impacts of a hermeneutical approach to the process. I conclude this thesis in Chapter IV with a summary of my research and clinical findings followed by an assessment for future implications to the field of psychology.

# Chapter II
# Literature Review

## Introduction

This literature review seeks to provide the reader with a foundation upon which to encounter the production piece of this thesis. The chapter will be divided into the following sections: introduction to storytelling; archetypes defined; active imagination and the role of childhood fantasy play; and the role of fairy tales and the function of story in therapy.

## Introduction to Storytelling

There is more literature on the history and importance of storytelling than could fit within these pages, but it is vital for the purposes of this thesis to understand what story is and how it functions. Jack Zipes (2012), an expert on fairy tales and the author of *The Irresistible Fairy Tale,* credited storytelling to a necessity for survival. He explained,

> Genres of storytelling and tale types originated from the application of storytelling and stories to social as well as biological life—that is, daily occurrences. Those tales that became relevant for families, clans, tribes, villages, and cities were retained through memory and passed on as traditional verbalizations of actions and behaviors. (p. 8)

Story and the commonalities it provided gave humankind the ability to relate to as well as care for each other—a necessary skill to keep societies alive—through a storehouse of patterns that reverberated within and among groups. Zipes also highlighted,

> Different cultures throughout the world employed many of the same sequences of events or patterns in the communication of stories, but the application of the verbalization that included specific realties, customs, rituals, and beliefs led to various tale types, variants, and differences. (p. 8)

These stories, he added, “tell us what we lack and how the world has to be organized differently so that we receive what we need” (p. 14).

Joseph Campbell (2002), a prolific mythologist and an author of a series of essays on the mythological dimension titled *Flight of the Wild Gander*, understood tales to be something all together different. Unlike myth or legend, vehicles that inform and teach a society, Campbell described tale as pastime. Campbell asserted, “Fireside tales, winternights’ tales, nursery tales, coffeehouse tales, sailor yarns, pilgrimage, and caravan tales . . . pass the endless nights and days” (p. 8). He continued:

> The most ancient written records and the most primitive tribal circles attest alike to man’s hunger for the good story. And every kind of thing has served. Myths and legends of an earlier period, now discredited or no longer understood, their former power broken (yet still potent to charm), have supplied much of the raw material for what now passes simply as *animal tale*, *fairy tale*, and *heroic* or *romantic adventure*. . . . Tales of such origin are regarded with differing degrees of seriousness by the various people who recount them; and they can be received by the sundry members of the audience severally, with superstitious awe, nostalgia for the days of belief, ironic amusement, or simple delight in the marvels of imagination and intricacies of plot. . . . They are reshaped in terms of dramatic contrast, narrative suspense, repetition, and resolution. (p. 8)

So what makes a myth different from a tale? In his seminal book *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim (1989) argued very little:

> In most cultures, there is no clear line separating myth from folk or fairy tale; all these together form the literature of preliterate societies. The Nordic languages have only word for both: *saga*. German has retained the word *Sage* for myths, while fairy stories are called *Märchen*. . . . Myths and fairy tales alike attain a definite form only when they are committed to writing and are no longer subject to continuous change. Before being written down, these stories were either condensed or vastly elaborated in the retelling over the centuries; some stories merged with others. All became modified by what the teller thought was of greatest interest to his listeners, by what his concerns of the moment or the special problems of his era were. (pp. 25-26)

However, Bettelheim noted, “In myths, much more than in fairy stories, the culture hero is present to the listener as a figure he ought to emulate in his own life, as far as possible” (p. 26). The hero is divine, Godly, otherworldly. Bethleheim added, “The fairy tale is presented in a simple, homely way; no demands are made on the listener” (p. 26). Despite this difference, the profound effect fairy tale images have on the reader (or listener) have kept them alive. Campbell (2002) agreed: “The playful symbolism of the folk tale—a product of the vacant hour—today seems more true, more powerful to survive, than the might and weight of the myth” (p. 24). He continued:

> The acids of the modern spirit dissolved the kingdoms of the gods, the tales in their essence were hardly touched. The elves were less really than they were before; but the tales, by the same token, more alive. So that we may say that, out of the whole symbol-building achievement of the past, what survives us today (hardly altered in efficiency or in function) is the tale of wonder. (p. 24)

The wonder is hard to escape and its magic impossible to cast off because of the “symptomatic of fevers deeply burning in the psyche” (Campbell, 2002, p. 24).

Story and its mimetic power to transmute, reflective of deeply burning fevers, originate from a primary source that has been supplying and generating energy over the course of millenniums (Campbell, 2002; Zipes, 2012). Von Franz (1996) noted this significance, contending, “we have written tradition for three thousand years, and what is striking is that *the basic motifs have not changed that much* . . . certain themes of tales go as far back as twenty-five thousand years before Christ, practically unaltered” (p. 4). Fairy tales were popularized by their ability to travel among individuals, even across cultures and through generations, providing a vehicle to reflect what was transpiring among people collectively (Franz, 1996). Von Franz attributed this to the fact that “fairy tales mirror the more simple but also more basic structure—the bare skeleton—of the

psyche” (p. 26). She explained, “When something strange happens, it gets gossiped about and handed on, just as rumors are handed on; then under favorable conditions the account gets enriched with already existing archetypal representations and slowly becomes the story” (p. 19).

**Archetypes Defined**

An archetypal representation, von Franz (1996) explained, is

> a specific psychic impulse, producing its effect like a single ray of radiation, and at the same time a magnetic field expanding in all directions. Thus the stream of psychic energy of a “system,” an archetype, actually runs through all other archetypes as well. (p. 3)

This path, this web of light, connects an individual (or, on a larger scale, a culture) to what Jung (1959/1969) defined as the collective unconscious: a guiding force that humans are bound by and yet unfamiliar with, until, of course, the energy contained within the unconscious is experienced by a conscious eruption of an imaginative representation that is called an archetype. Jung explained, “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its color from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (p. 5 [*CW* 9, para. 6]). It is through this individual consciousness that one gains access to what is unknown and understands why story is an appropriate vehicle for such. Johnson (1986) explained:

> As the word itself implies, archetypes are related to *types*—types in the sense of a characteristic trait or a set of qualities that seem to appear together over and over again in recognizable spontaneously recurring patterns. The “virtuous maiden” is a type, the “wise and gentle queen” is a type . . . Almost no real human being fits exactly any type, for types are, by their nature, idealized models of character traits or behavior patterns. . . . If we find our way back to the primordial pattern that produced each of these universal *types* that we instinctively recognize as personality traits existing potentially within us all, the primordial image that existed in the mind of the first human as well as in yours and mine, then we will

> in a sense also find the original of the type, the first of the type, the plate from which the page was printed. (p. 29)

It all boils down to one and at the same time uncoils back out into multitudes. Von Franz (1994) offered,

> As an aid to understanding, imagine the archetypes as nuclei or nexus points of a multidimensional network or field where the nexus points represent the archetypes in their relative specificity and where the network or field is comparable to the connections between meanings and their partial overlappings and identities and where all archetypes thus appear as contaminated by all other archetypes and even as in part identical with each other. . . . Now in every mythologem, the thread of the story follows certain connections between archetypal meanings. . . . In this way, every individual tale illuminates a quite definite aspect of the collective unconscious and this is where the meaning and living function of that particular tale lies. (pp. 177-178)

Johnson (1986) stated, “Identifying an archetype is a matter of sensing that one is keyed into a universal human energy system, seeing a powerful symbol that springs from deep within our collective human nature” (p. 30). Von Franz (1995) added,

> So one can see how a story originates: there is always a nucleus form of a parapsychological experience or a dream. If it contains a motif that exists in the neighborhood, then there is a tendency to amplify the nucleus with it. (p. 11)

These parapsychological experiences could be quite frightening, as von Franz (1996) suggested, resulting in a need for meaning making:

> The most frequent way in which archetypal stories originate is through individual experiences of an invasion by some unconscious content, either in a dream or in a walking hallucination—some event or some mass hallucination whereby an archetypal content breaks into an individual life. That is always a numinous experience. In primitive societies practically no secret is ever really kept, so this numinous experience is always talked about and becomes amplified by any other existing folklore which will fit in. Thus it develops, just as rumors do. (p. 24)

Von Franz added, “There is a need to spread it abroad and not keep it to oneself” (p. 33).

**Active Imagination and the Importance of Childhood Fantasy Play**

For Jung (1921), experiences of encountering the unconscious proved to play out quite similarly. In the introduction to *Jung on Active Imagination*, Jungian analyst Joan Chodorow (1997) articulated how Jung, after his break from Freud in 1912-13, suffered from squalls of depression and anxiety. For a period of 3 years, he felt he was losing touch with the outside world. Jung (1959/1969) described it as meeting the unconscious:

> His consciousness is menaced by an almighty unconscious: hence his fear of magical influences which may cross his path at any moment; and for this reason, too, he is surrounded by unknown forces and must adjust himself to them as best he can. (p. 154 [*CW* 9, para. 260])

Chodorow (1997) explained that Jung "had to find a way, a method to heal himself from within" (p. 1). That way was what Jung (1928) would later call active imagination. Chodorow (1997) continued, "It all began with his rediscovery of symbolic play of childhood" (p. 1). Chodorow (1997) cited Jung as saying,

> Every good idea and all creative work are the offspring of the imagination, and have their source in what one is pleased to call infantile fantasy. Not the artist alone, but every creative individual whatsoever owes all that is greatest in his life to fantasy. The dynamic principle of fantasy is *play*, a characteristic of the child, and as such it appears inconsistent with the principle of serious work. But without this playing with fantasy no creative work has ever yet come to birth. The debt we owe to the play of imagination is incalculable (p. 5)

Chodorow (1997) noted, "The great joy of play, fantasy, and the imagination is that for a time we are utterly spontaneous, free to imagine anything. In such a state of pure being, no thought is 'unthinkable.' (Nothing is 'unimaginable')" (p. 5). Jung came to realize that by playing with the images, he was able to find concealed emotions, and as a result inwardly settle (Chodorow, 1997, p. 2). Chodorow (1997) continued to articulate:

> Jung view[ed] emotional dysfunction as most often a problem of psychological one-sidedness, usually initiated by an over-valuing of the conscious ego viewpoint. As a natural compensation to such a one-sided position, an equally

> strong counterposition automatically forms in the unconscious. The likely result is an inner condition of tension, conflict, and discord. Jung used the term "emotionally toned complex" to describe the unconscious counterposition. (p. 4)

Complex is defined as "a collection of images and ideas, clustered round a core derived from one or more archetypes, and characterized by a common emotional tone. When they come into play (become 'constellated'), complexes contribute to behavior and are marked by affect" ("Complex," 1989, p. 34). Furthermore, Chodorow (1997) explained, Jung "found that there is an inborn dynamic process that unites opposite positions within the psyche. It draws polarized energies into a common channel, resulting in a new symbolic position which contains both perspectives" (p. 4).

Jung's "ongoing relationship to [the] lively spirit within himself," Chodorow (1997, p. 2) contended, helped translate his inner experience into images rooted in the transcendent function of the psyche, the process by way of uniting opposite images into a new form. Said in another way, James Hollis (2000), the author of *The Archetypal Imagination*, offered this: The archetypal function "is the means by which the individual brings pattern and process to chaos, and it is the means by which the individual participates in those energies of the cosmos of which we are always a part" (p. 7). The journey inward, Jung discovered, enabled him to stoke the flames of curiosity, separate himself from the emotion, and restore equilibrium to all five senses. Johnson (1989) described the process as such:

> The essence of Active Imagination is your *conscious participation* in the imaginative experience. This kind of imagination is *active* because the ego actually goes into the inner world, walks and talks, confronts and argues, makes friends with or fights with the persons it finds there. You consciously take part in the drama in your imagination. You engage the other actors in conversation, exchange viewpoints, go through adventures together, and eventually learn something for each other. (p. 140)

And Jeffery Raff (2000), a Jungian analyst and the author of *Jung and the Alchemical Imagination*, suggested that

> the imaginal encounter between the ego and the unconscious unites conscious expectations and suppositions of the ego with the living reality of an inner figure. The ego cannot control or manipulate the imagination to produce the experience it may desire, for too much contrivance produces fantasy eliminates unconscious participation. Instead of directly controlling the imagination, the ego brings its attitudes with it, and these guide and channel the experience. (p. 90)

He added,

> One of the mercurial and chaotic aspects of active imagination is the tendency of the unconscious to create images that just won't stand still. The ego enters into an active in order to speak with a dark-haired handsome animus figure, and before two words have been exchanged, the image has transformed into [an] old man, and then a witch, followed by a horse that is running in a field. . . . In order to create any real connection with an inner figure, order must be established. (pp. 101-102)

Chodorow (1997) expounded that this is why Jung "differentiate[d] between symbolic expression and a state of unconscious merging or identification" (p. 2). She added, "He made every effort to maintain a self-reflective conscious point of view" (p. 2). This conscious view was the tether that kept him from transmuting into the child lost to fantasy—in essence, the self-healer's responsibility to return to the childhood fantasy supplied with tools of consciousness to invite healing. Chodorow explained, "In the spontaneous dramatic play of childhood, upsetting life situations are enacted symbolically, but this time the child is in control" (p. 5).

In a chapter titled "Active Imagination as Imaginal Play-Space," author and Jungian analyst August J. Cwik (1991) highlighted Jung's connection to the realm of active imagination to the world of fantasy play in children, theorizing that both are dependent upon the reliability of a safe container similar to object-relation's theorist Donald Winnicott's theory of the good-enough mother. He summarized that given ample

time and space to attach to one's mother (or analyst), the child/client is soon ready to transition out of the womb-like sanctuary into the world of the unknown with the help of a transitional object. He explained that Winnicott "view[ed] the establishment of the transitional object as the individual's first experience of play because the child 'creates' a mental concept of an object which symbolizes both the self and mother—the 'me' and the 'not me'" (pp. 100-101). He further articulated,

> [The transitional object] helps to alleviate the normal developmental stress of separation-individuation. One should not ask whether the object exists before the child creates it—it exists in a nether world, between inner fantasy and outer reality. A metaphor of an intermediate area or space describes this nether world in which the infant both creates and experiences illusions and is allowed to do so, in attempting to cope with separation. (p. 101)

As a child is able to act out complex emotions through play, so is the client. Cwik explained, "The establishment of an imaginal play-space through active imagination allows an individual the opportunity to diminish the acting out of complexes by playing and relating to them in fantasy" (p. 107).

**A Tale of Two Stories: The Role of Fairy Tales and the Function of Story in Therapy**

For most, the notion of "Once upon a time" reminds of an otherworldly time in which one's head rests upon the bosom of a mother's heart. Storytelling in essence provides a safe container for exploration of the unknown. Bettelheim (1989) articulated, "The child knows from his experience that everything has to rest on something, or be held up by something. . . . More importantly, to feel secure on earth, the child needs to believe that this world is firmly in place" (p. 48). He continued:

> The child fits unconscious content into conscious fantasies, which then enable him to deal with that content. It is here that fairy tales have unequaled value, because they offer new dimensions to the child's imagination which would be

> impossible for him to discover truly on his own. . . .When unconscious material *is* to some degree permitted to come to awareness and worked through in imagination, its potential for causing harm—to ourselves or others—is much reduced; some of its forces can be made for positive purposes. (p. 7)

Furthermore, he offered, “The fairy tale is suggestive; its messages may imply solutions, but it never spells them out. Fairy tales leave to the child’s fantasizing whether and how to apply to himself what the story reveals about life and human nature” (p. 45).

Fairy tales also offer the child an opportunity to play out forces of good and evil, similar to the aforementioned tension of the opposites. Sheldon Cashdan (1999), a professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, explained, “The way young children deal with this distressing state of affairs is by mentally ‘splitting’ the mother into two psychic entities: a gratifying ‘good mother’ and a frustrating ‘bad mother’” (p. 27). He elucidated further by saying, “This allows children to respond internally to their maternal caretakers as ‘good mommies’ one moment and ‘horrible mommies’ the next without having to deal with inherent inconsistency” (p. 27), to which he added the following:

> This is why female characters figure so prominently in fairy tales, and why there are many more witches than ogres, and appreciably more fairy godmothers than fairy godfathers. Fairy tales are essentially maternal dramas in which witches, godmothers, and other female figures function as the fantasy derivatives of early childhood splitting. (p. 28)

Much of what is cast off as bad in childhood makes its way into adulthood via complexes and the shadow. Unlike the vehicle fairy tales provide for young children to assimilate these structures, von Franz (1995) pointed out that adults normally deal with uncomfortable feelings by trying “to be good and commit all sorts of bad things we do not notice,” (p. 68). She continued, and “if we notice them, we have an excuse, a headache, or it was the other person’s fault, or you forget about it” (p. 68). Before long,

these excuses begin to no longer serve and one is without a vessel to entertain (or defend) the symptomology that up rises. Woodman (1985) explained,

> Many people can listen to their cat more intelligently than they can listen to their own despised body. Because they attend to their pet in a cherishing way, it returns their love. Their body, however, may have to let out an earth-shattering scream in order to be heard at all. . . . It is possible that the scream comes from the forsaken body, the scream that manifests in a symptom, is the cry of the soul that can find no other way to be heard. If we have lived behind a mask all our lives, sooner or later—if we are lucky—that mask will be smashed. (p. 25)

This shattering is what drives many into a therapist's office: the individual awash to the suffering of one's complexes. Hillman (1994) in *Healing Fiction* argued, "The sophisticated 'therapeutic class' who come to private therapy have their stories already formed into the therapeutic genre, that is, the story is self-reflective and focused upon the 'problems' of the main character" (p. 14). He moved on to say, "The core mistake of mechanism in psychology is that it literalizes functions and actions as discrete moving parts, separated from each other" (p. 25). This argument is similar to one Hillman (1989) addressed in *A Blue Fire* regarding the nature of archetypes, insisting they are not static representations, emblems on the crest of the individual, noting, "when images no longer surprise us, when we can expect what they mean and know what they intend, it is because we have our 'symbologies' of established meanings" (p. 24). He continued:

> If the mother in our dream, or the beloved, or the wise old counselor, says and does what one would expect, or if the analyst interprets these figures conventionally, they have been deprived of their authority as mythic images and person and reduced to mere allegorical conventions and moralistic stereotypes. They have become personified conceits of an allegory, a simple means of persuasion that forces the dream or fantasy into doctrinal compliance. (pp. 24-25)

As Marie-Louise von Franz (1995) acknowledged, when allowances are made for the images to reignite, an acknowledgment of the tension between the archetypes, permission is granted for the symptoms to guide toward healing. She explained, "The

fairy tale says that one endures such a conflict until the creative solution is found. The creative solution would be something unexpected which decides the conflict on another level" (p. 70). She further noted that one suffers "the conflict till something unexpected happens which puts the whole thing onto another level" (pp. 70-71). Shaun McNiff (2004), a professor at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and the author of *Art Heals: How Creativity Cures the Soul*, agreed, arguing for more creative freedom in the therapeutic office. He mused,

> Imagination is a "middle realm," where the interplay between inner and outer worlds takes place. It is an open and dynamic zone where narrow fixation is discouraged because it interrupts the ecology of creative relations and dulls a person's sensitivity to new influences. The middle realm is not a static center of equilibrium and is not be confused with a tepid "middle of the road" stance or with compromise. Gathering the strongest possible elements and allowing them to interact freely within a safe environment, the imagination integrates and transforms ideas into new relationships. . . . The middle realm accepts contradictory principles, encouraging their individuation while enabling them to interact with one another and find a creative way of integrating their energies (p. 225)

Kalsched (1996) offered a similar interpretation:

> In each [fairy tale], the human world of misery or innocence exists in some kind of counterpoint with another world represented by transpersonal powers, and these powers are usually introduced through an intermediate being such as a spell-casting witch or wizard, in any case a Trickster. These mediating spirits are usually "evil" as experienced by the "ego" in the tale, but often as we shall see, it is not so easy to tell. Usually, the traumatized or innocent hero or heroine of the tale is "bewitched" by the "evil" side of the transpersonal entity and then the struggle in the tale centers on how to release this hero or heroine from bewitchment and turn this tragic state into what we might call "enchantment," which is what fairy tales mean when they end "happily ever after." (pp. 145-146)

Enchantment, or healing, requires autonomy of the images. Chodorow (1997) explained, "After an unconscious affect or image is given form, Jung generally encouraged his patients to live with it, be with it. The image has everything it needs; allow the meaning to emerge from it" (p. 14). Chodorow (1997) cited Jung as saying he "took good care to

let the interpretation of each image tail off into a question whose answer was left to the free fantasy-activity of the patient" (p. 14). This very notion is what led Hillman (1994) to argue,

> Our reflection needs to turn to psychoanalytic literature as *literature*. I am suggesting that literary reflection is a primary mode of grasping where one is ignorant, unconscious, blind in regard to the case because one has not differentiated the subjective factor, the Gods in one's work. (p. 24)

Adding,

> We have to see the inner necessity of historical events, out there, in the events themselves, where "inner" no longer means private and owned by a self or a soul or a ego, where inner is not a literalized place inside a subject, but the subjectivity in events and that attitude which interiorizes those events, goes into them in search of psychological depths. (p. 25)

# Chapter III
# A Story Retold: She Made a Mēnessa and Ran With It

## Introduction: How the Story Came to Be

Early into the journey of pursuing my master's degree in counseling psychology, I had a profound dream for which I had no understanding and to which I could not attribute meaning. The message came to me through sound, like whisperings from the unconscious: "She made a mēnessa and ran with it." I woke up startled by how prominent the voice had sounded. It was unusual for my dreaming state. I so often dreamed in images. But despite its peculiarity, I wrote it down, heeding the suggestions of my teachers.

For months I pondered its message. What was a mēnessa and why did this woman need to run with it? Was she me? Was I she? The unknown was unsettling. For a while, I put the search to rest, concluding maybe it was up to me to define.

I was working as a nanny at the time, having quit my corporate, masculine-centered nonprofit job to enter the imaginative realm of childhood. Submerged within the feminine, I spent days playing on the jungle gyms with toddlers, acting out silly fantasies where I was a fire-breathing dragon or scary monster. I often thought of John Bowlby (1988), the English-born sociologist known for his work on attachment behaviors and the central role they play in child development. Professor of psychology at the City College of the City University of New York William Crain (2011) in *Theories of Development: Concepts and Applications* cited Bowlby as saying,

> Being alone is one of the greatest fears in human life. We might consider such a fear silly, neurotic, or immature, but there are good biological reasons behind it. Throughout human history, humans have been able to withstand crises and face danger with the help of companions. (p. 58)

The children I took care of were willing to act out their scariest fears during play as long as they knew I would not leave them. I was their secure base. Bowlby (1988) stated, "All of us, from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organized as a series of excursions, long or short, from a secure base by our attachment figure(s)" (p. 62).

I have struggled in life with a fear of abandonment. My parents initiated a series of separations and reconciliations over the course of 6 years starting when I was 12 that ultimately ended in divorce; my father faced and surmounted an alcohol addiction; and my sister and I spent much of our childhood between babysitters and nannies. As a self-identified highly sensitive person (Aron, 1998), I also had a nervous system that struggled to find equanimity in all of the chaos. Despite this, however, I did have a powerful imagination and a love for play, and both provided a sense of security and self-esteem—my stuffed animals offered loving arms; I spent hours looking through hedges pretending to see a magical world special all to myself and creativity encouraged connection to other playmates, crafting our own stories through dance and acting, often sourced from fairy tales and folklore. All of these interactions yielded a sense of camaraderie and support. There were also a handful of years spanning two decades where I experienced a fierce love for and from both my parents, a felt-body sense of knowing security and attachment. Psychotherapist Patricia A. Burke (1999) highlighted the importance of this foundational childhood development:

> When the infant develops a sense of "object constancy," she/he begins to understand that mother does not cease to exist when out of sight but is still a presence in the world, just as humanity later discovered that the sun did not die

> every night but simply slipped from view over the horizon due to the turning of the earth on its axis. This ability to imagine or know that something exists while not in plain view is a more mature state of consciousness in which we can view our world and experience life from a more expanded perspective. (p. 11)

Growing up, I found myself leaving the world of imagination and object constancy was in poor supply. As briefly mentioned in Chapter I of this thesis, many of the objects to whom I tried to attach, most notably throughout school, projected judgment and criticism. My family lineage suffered from caregivers who oriented to life similarly, leaving children to raise themselves. As my family life began to deteriorate, my darker inner mother often interjected her harsh parenting—a pattern not only familiar to me but also, I am sure, to the experiences of my mother and father. My first dark night of the soul was 9 months before my wedding; the second, a year into my masters' work to become a therapist. Both rites of transition initiated descents into depression and anxiety, both opportunities to heal the split between what children's author L. Frank Baum (2012) illustrated as the good witch and the wicked one.

Months into the second dark night experience, I discovered mēnessa's meaning. I had been steadily working the images of the good witch, to whom in my active imagination dialogues I would refer as a loving adult, as well as the wicked, whom I labeled Judgment. It seemed Judgment was in a trial by fire, licked and ravaged by flames, and she had no business believing anything love had to offer. She did not want to give way to the pitfalls and tribulations of risk, risk being the assimilation into a new identity, formerly maiden to bride, now patient to therapist. Jungian analyst Edward F. Edinger (1994) in the *Anatomy of the Psyche* explained, "Most lists of alchemical operations begin with *calcinatio*" (p. 17). A form of purification, a sacrifice of *prima materia* for the Gods, fire is the beginning of transformation (p. 19). He added,

"Psychologically it would signify the death of the ruling principle of consciousness, the highest authority in the hierarchical structure of the ego" (p. 19). I searched the Internet for terms that corresponded to mēnessa and fire to make meaning of what quite literally and metaphorically felt like death. What I discovered was the Latvian translation for moon, rather the word *mēness* ("Mēness," 2015). And I understood my journey would be to reclaim the night for myself and actively challenge the shadow judgment that kept me afraid and small.

**The Creative Piece and Process: She Made a Mēnessa and Ran With It**

My story does not read like a traditional fairy tale, but glimmers like one. And the process through which I was able to create something out of my imagination was not without resistance. I struggled to find the words; like flickers to flame, at once the images seemed so bright and then gone. I feel a lot of this resistance was embedded in the same impulse to write the piece: I did not feel good enough.

Much of my creative process can be attributed to the types of therapeutic dialogues I write and share in my personal therapy—a form of active imagination, where I access various characters within my psyche from the seat of a main narrator to whom I refer as my loving adult, in psychoanalytic terms, the feminine ego. This process is called inner bonding, created by psychologists Margaret Paul and Erika Chopich (1990) and taught within the book *Healing Your Aloneness: Finding Love and Wholeness Through Your Inner Child*. The basic premise works to heal the roots of shame and the resulting self-abandonment. Over the years, I have refined the process to discover the variety of faces of self-judgment and criticism. These dialogues undoubtedly have made their way into this piece.

*She Made a Mēnessa and Ran With It* (Appendix A, p. 50) begins with my loving adult narrating, as it is often she who initiates a dialogue. With loving care, a scene I have known all too well in my waking life was set:

> The child within wants to explore. Will you let her roam? Or will you command she stays to sit upon herself in a bind of silence. Within the illusion, we think she is safe, protected, and unscathed. But the wilderness always calls. What will she think of its beckoning? It's wild they say, dark and stormy; an abysmal mouth perched to destroy. Despite this protest, her childlike curiosity wanders to the edge.

My inner critics were not okay with my writing this. Fear whispered, "If you go into the dark forest, you will never return. You will lose your sanity." Judgment replied, "This is stupid. You will not pass. Stop now." I imagine these powerful voices developed at an early age—guards trying to protect me. But at the edge of finishing this piece, their spell intimidating, I needed to find a way to face my demons.

I tried to harness the child within. Who is she? What did she want to say? How did she feel? I wrote and rewrote many iterations of her voice, trying to express just how much she wanted to explore. To which I found the same old stories of her not feeling good enough, which often left me feeling unsettled and anxious, which in turn drove me away from the edge. Coaxing her back, I thought, "Yes, yes, I know it was challenging growing up and I know you felt unseen and unheard, but what about your curiosity? What about your love of play?"

I was reminded of a meditation I wrote (Appendix B) over the summer quarter in year two of my studies. The class was working with the concept of flow, an optimal state of deep involvement and creativity, as articulated by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2008) in *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. He mused,

> The opposite state from the condition of psychic entropy is optimal experience. When the information that keeps coming into awareness is congruent with goals, psychic energy flows effortlessly. There is no need to worry, no reason to question one's adequacy. But whenever one does stop to think about oneself, the evidence is encouraging: "You are doing all right." (p. 39)

The purest state of this kind of conscious attention I have come close to is in my work with children as well as unpacking experiences with my inner child. To this effect, I led my class on an imaginative exploration of what it might be like to play as a child with the help of one's inner parent. From that narration, I was reminded that my fairy story did not have to be a work of art, per se, but rather an exercise—an attempt in curiosity that harnessed play: "Tell me your story, and I will tell you mine," I began. And with it, my inner child emerged. From there it was easy to write. It flowed.

My inner child leads my loving adult on a journey from a high stone tower (Appendix A, pp. 51-52) down and out onto a glen until it reaches the forest edge. Willingly she enters and my loving adult follows (Appendix A, p. 52). Together they explore the world of her powerful imagination. She plays out her scariest fantasies, knowing her adult is rooted into the deep earth; it is safe for her to play because she is firmly attached. Ultimately, however, her loving adult knows that she will need to face what seems unseen. She challenges her to call it out for what it is (Appendix A, p. 53). As a result, the shadow attribute of the great mother archetype, the witch, emerges (Appendix A, p. 54). With her entrance, we also see my inner child transform into something greater: a warrior princess. The two go head-to-head, and through an alchemical process of fire and water; the resistance that has kept me small transforms (Appendix A, p. 54). As a token, I am able to take the moon home with me (Appendix A, p. 55).

**A Walk Through the Forest: What the Images Mean to Me**

To get a more intimate look of this creative process, I will begin exploring the magic of the forest. It was once told that shortly after Snow White was taken into the forest by the huntsman and shown mercy for her beautiful heart, she was left in the woods:

> The poor child was now all alone in the vast forest. She was so frightened that she just stared at all the leaves on the trees and had no idea where to turn. She started running and raced over sharp stones and through thorn bushes. Wild beasts hovered around her at times, but they did her no harm. She ran as far as her legs would carry her. (Grimm & Grimm, 2012, p. 251)

Zipes (1987) explained:

> Inevitably [characters] find their way into the forest. It is there that they lose and find themselves. It is there that they gain a sense of what is to be done. The forest, always large, immense, great and mysterious. No one ever gains power of the forest, but the forest possesses the power to change lives and alter destinies. In many ways it is the supreme authority on earth an often the provider. (p. 66)

Like the European ancestors before me, I too have found myself here. Bettelheim (2010) possibly acknowledged why: “Since ancient times the near-impenetrable forest in which we get lost has symbolized the dark, hidden, near-impenetrable world of our unconscious” (p. 94). And this is what scared me the most about it.

When I was nine, I got lost on a camping trip with my dad and wandered for what felt like hours among the trees anxious for any semblance of home. Tall pines obscured our campsite and the rustle of leaves and the birds sounded monstrous. I cried for help, and not long after was scooped up by a family hiking nearby. They led me back to my dad. I remember the warm feeling of relief and never wanting to be lost again.

And yet, that would be impossible. My two descents into darkness paralyzed me with same kind of fear I remember feeling as a child on that camping trip, similar to what echoed off of my parents split. As Bettelheim (2010) continued,

> If we have lost the framework which gave structure to our past life and must now find our own way to become ourselves, and have entered this wilderness with an as yet undeveloped personality, when we succeed in finding our way out we shall emerge with a much more highly developed humanity. (p. 94)

This wilderness is what Hollis (1996) referred to as a swampland. He explained, "Our task is to live through them . . . to experience some healing within ourselves, and to contribute healing to the world[;] we are summoned to wade through the muck from time to time" (p. 15). He added, "Where we do not go willingly, sooner or later we will be dragged" (p. 15). I was dragged to the swampy wilderness during those two descents, forced to make meaning (or be devoured). But now, back, and willingly, I wondered if I could create a place to gently enter in hopes to form a new relationship with the unknown. Hollis clarified:

> In each of these swampland states there is a developmental task. Just as Jung suggested that in each therapy one should ask what task this person is avoiding through his or her neurosis, so we have to ask what task is implicit in each of these dismal places. In every case it is some variant of gaining permission, leaving dependency or finding the courage to stand vulnerably and responsibly before the universe. In every case we are challenged to grow up, to take on the journey with greater consciousness. While such enlargement is often terrifying, it is also freeing and brings dignity and meaning to our lives. (p. 54)

Writing my inner child's, or Mēnessa's (as I refer to her in the text), story provided me with a conscious development task to stand vulnerable to the universe and take responsibility. I realized I had a choice in how I could relate to the forest, in what Hollis illustrated as the ego, "like a petty tyrant who must fulminate on the rightness of its position as a compensation for the swamp of doubt upon which its castle is built" (p. 56).

I could step aside of the ego's minions of fear, judgment, and doubt to harness into the opportunity for Mēnessa to show me what had her returning to its edge.

**Mēnessa: The Inner Child**

Mēnessa informed me she was tired of sitting in the stone castle, a place where, "I try to be brave. But it's hard. We have tests. Lots of tests. I get nervous when I don't finish them in time" (Appendix A, p. 51). She wanted to tell me that although she was fearful, she also loved to play and felt a surge of safety in the midst,

> I am so glad you are here. Because, I have so many things I want to show you. Like, how I paint pictures, or how I play house. I am a really good teacher. And I love my stuffed animals. (Appendix A, p. 51)

This was me as a child. But it was structure and the pressure to perform—stay in line, raise your hand, do not cry, do not be a baby—that locked me in. Mēnessa really saw this tower as the scary place whereas I assumed the scary place was the forest given its dark, unknown nature. As Hollis (1996) articulated, "The message of the childhood experience, the message of vulnerability, powerlessness in the face of the environment, and the legitimization of one's dependence, is overlearned, deeply ingrained, while the counter idea of personal freedom, personal responsibility, is intimidating" (pp. 10-11).

So I encouraged Mēnessa to begin: "Once upon a time I was locked away in a high tower that I dreamed of fleeing" (Appendix A, p. 51). Running barefoot and free out the door with her loving adult behind, Mēnessa arrived at the hedges she saw as magical, twilight abound, open to possibility, and a tree within, a spiritual place of potential. While writing her decent, I was struck by how much agency she actually had: "But at the bottom of the stairs she stops, turning toward me to whisper: I have the key" (Appendix A, p. 52). Burke (1999) illuminated, "The imagination can open a doorway to

a direct and immediate experience of God that goes beyond image, beyond naming, beyond language" (pp. 9-10). As Jung (1959/1969) articulated it,

> It is a striking paradox in all child myths that the "child" is on the one hand delivered helpless into the power of terrible enemies and in continual danger of extinction, while on the other he possesses powers far exceeding those of ordinary humanity. This is closely related to the psychological fact that though the child may be "insignificant," unknown, "a mere child," he is also divine. From the conscious standpoint we seem to be dealing with an insignificant content that has no releasing, let alone redeeming, character. The conscious mind is caught in its conflict-situation, and the combatant forces seem so overwhelming that the "child" as an isolated content bears no relation to the conscious factors. It is therefore easily overlooked and falls back into the unconscious. . . . Myth, however, emphasizes that it is not so, but that the "child" is endowed with superior powers and, despite all dangers, will unexpectedly pull through. (p. 170, [*CW* 9, para. 289])

Although I am the real child, Mēnessa is the divine one, the grace of light that has power to illuminate anything. Donald Kalsched (2013) offered this point:

> Both the indwelling soul and the quintessentially alive child, therefore occupy that potential space *between the worlds*. It is this correspondence between child and soul that seems to account for the fact that, in dreams, the child can be said to symbolize the soul or to represent a symbolic *carrier* of that spiritual substance we refer to as the soul. When trauma occurs in a child's life, one of the most tragic results is the *foreclosure of transitional space*. . . . [But] as the imagination is opened again, the two worlds we have described are potentiated. It is as though the child is a spark that jumps across a synapse created by the proximity of these two worlds as they come to presence through relationship. (p. 58)

He further annotated this experience in saying,

> This archetypal imagery gives us a glimpse of the life-saving function of the archetypal psyche when life cannot continue "on the surface." A child is buried and preserved—invisible and hooded—until this lost heart of the self, heretofore kept out of the suffering of life, re-enters the life-stream once again. (p. 66)

While writing, I was able to tap into a deep knowing that much of the feelings of darkness I experienced were in abdication of my inner child's divine right to be the hero, to harness into the center of her power.

**Momma Moon: The Loving Adult and the Archetypal Feminine**

Reflecting back to Bowlby's (1998) child development theory, which stated that in order for children to explore they need a secure base, I was acutely aware of how much Mēnessa needed my loving adult's presence in order to feel the weight of her potential. Kalsched (2013) explained:

> [The human soul] seems to need a resonant image from the human or non-human environment if it is to come forward, something it *recognizes*. We can imagine that the infant responds to this resonant image repeatedly, in the deep embodied holding by its mother, and in the equally soulful eye contact and gaze that is part of their mutual play and loving connection. These moments, which we now realize are so critical to later "secure attachment" and even to the healthy formation of the brain, are the first quickening of the soul, the earliest beginning of its "indwelling" as Winnicott would say. (pp. 21-22)

It is evident my loving adult was aware of this, too: "As I make my way out, brushing off the dust, the greatest tree I have ever seen stands before us both. . . . I look up to see Momma Moon above, half lit with sparkle and glisten. She knows. I know. It is safe here" (Appendix A, p. 52). Mythology scholar Jules Cashford (2002) in her book *The Moon: Myth and Image* reported that the moon was traditionally male in all Indo-European languages from 2000 BC onward, but the West had come to associate the moon with the greater feminine as seen in the Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age mother goddess (pp. 151-152). The feminine association even made its way into the fairyland. Cashford cited folklorist and fairy tale archivist Jacob Grimm as saying, "Down to recent times. . . our people were fond of calling the sun and moon *frau sonne* and *herr mond*" (p. 151). For me, the importance for this shift comes in the form of my first encounter with the definition of mēnessa. Cashford specified, "The Balts' Moon god was called *Meness* in Latvia and *Menuo* in Lithuania, both names still close to the original Indo-European" (p. 213). Cashford continued:

> Both the Latvian *Meness* and the Lithuanian *Menuo* behave in the same way: they are married to *Saule*, the sun goddess, and seduce the Sun maiden, her daughter, who is the younger form of the Sun herself as dawn and spring when the Sun is gentle and fresh. (p. 213)

This understanding became important as I worked the moon's imagery into the story. There is no Latvian word like mēnessa, for which I can only attribute at this point to my psyche's choice in naming the piece as feminine in response to the wounds of masculine form and structure, elucidating the importance of healing out of the divine. But also making a point that there is this opposite, the moon god, a tension of Mēness' aggression and the healing balm of Mēnessa, as well as my loving adult's need to hold and contain both to alchemize suffering. Hillman (1989) stated, "Within the affliction is a complex, within the complex an archetype, which in turn refer to a god" (p. 146). In essence, it was the act of loving the wound/image/god that got me here.

But I have not always wanted to acknowledge the dark side, worshiping only the good mother, the energy of mēnessa—all healing and no suffering, leaving no room for my feminine ego to be fallible. This possibly can be attributed to how Burke (1999) interpreted the inner mother: a "representation . . . developed from the experience of seeing, smelling, hearing, touching, tasting mother and the felt sense of her presence, is analogous to the first image of God" (p. 11). Furthermore, she added, "The God image is the representation of permanence in an impermanent world" (p. 11). She, the moon, is stable; she is solid; she is constant despite how her image moves from out of the viewfinder of daylight hours. She rises again every night. This is the projection of all children—mothers being the Virgin Mary, father kings of Mount Olympus—that should be shattered through the many rites of transition.

Yet, I found myself clinging to these imaginative infantile states. In the prior descents, I, being the feminine ego, abandoned her in retribution of having to hold the opposites. I overidentified with archetypal goodness and light to remain static—fixed, one could say. A fault, Hillman (1989) warned, that is all too common:

> A trauma is a salt mine; it is a fixed place for reflection about the nature and value of my personal being, where memory originates and personal story begins. These traumatic events initiate in the soul a sense of its embodiment as a vulnerable experiencing subject. . . . The danger here is always fixation, whether in recollection, childhood trauma, or in a literalized and personalized notion of experience itself: "I am what I have experienced." Paracelus defined salt as the principle of fixation (II: 366). (pp. 126-127)

What I found to be interesting was just how static most images in my life had become—not only the great mother within but also the wound, the witch. If she would not leave (or if I was too afraid of an exorcism), I certainly could not have my loving adult disappear. I would remain the child, holding onto a paper moon with all my might, wearing the image down into ashes. But a real moon glows in duality, its craters shifting their feminine shapes with the help of a rotating masculine sun. Marion Woodman and Elinor Dickson (1996), Jungian analysts and pioneers in the field of conscious femininity, articulated:

> A duality in which one valence is valued over the other causes dichotomies within our perception of ourselves and others. We begin to live a one-sided reality, an illusion created by our own mind. Among our dominant dichotomies are masculine/feminine, mind/body, thinking/feeling, and life/death. Feminine, body, feeling, and death have all been subjugated by their opposite. Distinctions are indispensable, the recognition of differences is necessary. It is only when we identify exclusively with one side of the duality and dissociate or repress the other that we begin to have a false view of reality. Clinging neurotically to our chosen identification, we cannot move to a position of wholeness. In choosing mind over body, we have cut ourselves off from the rootedness of our past body consciousness out of fear of falling into it. A new balance must be found if we are to proceed wholly into our future evolutionary growth. (pp. 50-51)

To do so would be acknowledging not only death but the death of the dark mother—the witch—a product of the perverted masculine mentioned earlier. My loving adult replied:

> Mēnessa, you can't keep running. I know you want to. I know you want to hide in the bosom of my breast. But you wouldn't be fulfilling your creative destiny. You wouldn't be living this one wild and precious life. (Appendix A, p. 53)

Woodman and Dickson (1996) acknowledged that at a certain point in an initiates' journey they are ready to face the darkness, in essence, to form a new relationship to death (p. 44). They offered,

> In terms of our mythology, a new image of God/Goddess yearns to be found within ourselves. The kingdom is first within. It is manifested through body and mind. We are moving beyond an ego consciousness not only to an integration of body and mind but to a transcendence of the body/mind split, to a new level of consciousness based on the dance between soul and spirit. The soul embodied in matter, manifested in the Goddess as container and transformer, will take us beyond dualism, beyond the defensive splits within our psyche if we open up to her energy within us. She faces us with our greatest fear and by showing us the treasure hidden away within it, she takes you to a place where love is born. Love is the true antithesis of fear. It expands where fear constricts. It embraces where fear repels. (pp. 44-45)

And it is with love emanating from my loving adult:

> I see Mēnessa, Mēnessa sees me;
> Mēnessa sees somebody I want to see.
> So, God bless Mēnessa and God bless me;
> And God bless the "somebody I want to see." (Appendix A, p. 53)

As such, my initiate, the warrior princess, was able to face the darker energy of which she is so afraid.

**An Encounter With the Witch and the Birth of a Warrior Princess**

Mēnessa, no longer a child but grown into the center of her warrior-like power, commenced with, "We need a fire" (Appendix A, p. 53). And the stage was set:

> Down below, beneath the tree, she begins her work: a pot of water, a flame. Bubbling and more bubbling. Mēnessa begins to add twigs, leaves, and dirt. She stands in front of the concoction. "Come out, come out, wherever you are. I am here. Come and get me." (Appendix A, p. 53)

She demanded the dark energy come forth, and I could sense she had a plan; one that had lived inside of us all along, one that only now, after the maddening experiences of two descents, could come to fruition. This plan came to me in a dream two winters ago:

> I am in a group and I'm trying to defeat someone. A woman? I'm not sure, but she is—or needs to be—defeated. We are to pour hot lava over her head—to make her face like molten metal. We all have our places. And when it happens, I run, run like the wind—flying over trees and it's amazing. I'm flying. We need to get away from her. I don't want to see her face. I don't want to see the horrific damage we have done but it needed to happen. As we land, I'm carrying someone with me, we fall into a meadow where there are drops of diamonds living in the tress, they appear hazy, but I know I want one. It will be mine. It is safe. (Appendix C, p. 59)

It is only safe until her face melts like molten lava, something up until now my inner child could not stomach because of how I loved her—pangs that radiated throughout my chest cavity in grief. My witch, my dark mother, has lived inside potentially since birth, incarcerated over years of my family's matriarchal splitting from the feminine. Woodman (1985) noted,

> Where the parents for their own narcissistic reasons are unable to mirror their child, the child lives with little sense of its own authenticity. When it grows up, it continues to love mother, or father as mother, as a power principle, not as an individual person. Mother gives, mother controls, mother demands performance; the grown-up child is still helpless, its very life dependent on pleasing mother. . . . The demanding negative mother, whether internalized or projected . . . destroys the feminine ego in a woman and the anima in a man because it leaves no room for individual feeling. (p. 105)

The witch feeds off of power despite her frail looks and demands I please her in a multitude of ways: Be good; do not have feelings; you are pathetic; you will never be enough. The warrior princess conjuring the witch symbolically is calling all of these lies, these spells, out of the darkness and into the light. And it was not until I acknowledged that it was the spell, or the metaphor, I would be sleighing that I identified with my princess warrior's strength and ability to accomplish her task. In Woodman's (1985)

words, she is driven by the Self toward a natural gradient of wholeness (p. 23). Her fight was an "attempt to push the neglected part forward for recognition. It contains energy of the highest value, the gold in the dung" (Woodman, 1985, p. 23). The warrior princess demanded the witch give her her wounds: Wounds cast from "a spell to hide yourself from a wound so great, you feel it is you. And yet, you promised it was me" (Appendix A, p. 54).

Cashdan (1999) explained, "The child's encounter with the witch brings to the fore the negative trait the witch personifies" (p. 35). Furthermore,

> The encounter with the evil presence in the story forces children to come face to face with unwholesome tendencies in themselves by casting those tendencies as concrete characteristics of the witch. . . . Destruction of the witch is the third, and quintessential, portion of the fairy-tale cycle. If children hope to overcome bothersome thoughts and unwholesome impulses, the witch must die. (p. 35)

In the process of the witch's transformation I had to ask myself, was I really ready to give up this way of believing? Was I ready to have something else replace the space this story has held? I imagined the witch pleading with me, begging me not to destroy her. And yet, I felt fully ready to say good-bye because of how much pain she had caused herself and quite possibly generations before me. These were stories she was spinning, a web of pain and hurt that were no longer necessary. I had the impulse to stroke her cheek and push away the wiry hair that covered her dark and stormy eyes. And then, "the witch move[d] to lunge toward Mēnessa," and I was not willing to sacrifice the divine nature of my inner child (Appendix A, p. 54).

The witch's death required the strength of heart, represented in the thumping of Mēnessa's breastplate and the catalyst of molten metal to extinguish her curse:

> [Her] blackness begins to melt and a rush of smoke like the wings of a raven thrust toward the sky, with it a thousand whispers of ancient spells disperse into

> the heavens: You're not good enough; you'll never be good enough; I don't love you. (Appendix A, p. 54)

Woodman and Dickson (1996) explained:

> Having a heart of flesh means being able to feel with, suffer with, the other. The heart that is in balance has to find its source in the root chakra. Its root is love, love of life and trust in life. Psychologically, the enlightenment of the root chakra lead not to possessing the other, but rather to commitment to the wholeness in oneself, and, therefore, to the wholeness in the other. This involves standing alone, which requires being grounded in the muladhara [the root chakra]. From that standpoint, one can desire what is best for the other, even if it means surrendering one's own desires and letting go of the other. Within oneself, it means suffering the death that brings new life. (p. 60)

With the flames of my heart and using this survival instinct, I was able to destroy the principles that keep me split. What was left was merely a mound of ashes. And I wept.

Through the tears I shed in those dark nights, and even the tears that emerged through this process, I was moved to create a token in remembrance of this struggle and also of my dark mother. According to Edinger (1994), "*Solutio* pertains to water. . . . Water was thought of as the womb and *solutio* as a return to the womb for rebirth" (p. 47). And although this piece is not a pure alchemical process from *calcinatio* to *coniunctio*, there have been elements of dissolving the *prima materia* into separates, setting it on fire to refine and make whole. This process could be akin to what Kalsched (1996) referred to as lesser *coniunctio*, "a stage of union between two substances which have not yet been sufficiently differentiated and which is therefore highly unstable" (p. 146). And breaking the spell "leads out of the lesser to the greater coniunctio—out of participation mystique and into true living (enchantment) and true relationship" (p. 147). It would not be until the addition of water would I be able to mold the gold of this process—the elements for which were no longer serving and transition them into something of maturity. In Kalsched's words, the witch "is then transformed and becomes

an angel. . . [and] is liberated from its defensive role as a survival-Self and sets up it guiding function as the internal principle of individuation" (p. 147). My Loving Adult said, "Out from the earth, she pulls out a gold orb, faces of the moon that weigh heavy in her hand" (Appendix A, p. 55).

**Embracing the Dark Goddess**

My supervisor once told me, "the darker the night the brighter the moon" (personal conversation, September 18, 2014). Now I understand this to be true. It is not the darkness one needs to fear, but how one perceives, or discerns, it. I can choose how bright I want to shine. Astrologer Demetra George (1992) in her book *Mysteries of the Dark Moon: The Healing Power of the Dark Goddess*, argued,

> The most important concept to realize is that the malefic nature of the Dark Goddess, as she is embodied in our psyches as personal demons contained within the feminine shadow, is not by nature inherently evil. Nor does she have an independent reality outside of us apart from our mind's projections. The negativity and evil associated with the dark feminine is not her true essence; it has only become distorted in this way through our personal and cultural repression. . . . Jungian psychology tells us that in order to heal wounds and suffering caused by denying and rejecting aspects of our wholeness, we must first enter into our unconscious and develop a relationship with our shadow. (pp. 54-55)

This, in effect, is what I have tried to accomplish by writing Mēnessa's story. I am aware of my feminine ego, but more importantly her limitations—or areas for which I have needed to encourage her growth—in relationship to and how she experiences the shadow and energies charged within deeply rooted complexes. Said in another way, Woodman (1985) articulated, "The goal of human striving in the individuation process is the recognition of the Self, the regulating center of the psyche. That recognition relativizes the ego's position in the psychic structure, and initiates a dialogue between conscious and unconscious" (p. 27). She continued by quoting Marie-Louise von Franz as stating, "The

only way the Self can manifest is through conflict. To meet one's insoluble and eternal conflict is to meet God, which would be the end of the ego with all its blather" (p. 27). And added,

> If the ego rejects that conflict, then the goal is contaminated by the ego's desire for more and more power, or wealth, or happiness. The result is ego inflation. . . . The inflated ego tends to idolatry. It focuses on a single image, fashions it and worships it. Determined to create that image, it is trapped in profane ritual. (p. 27)

Setting the witch on fire has given me the courage to relinquish my religion—or at least acknowledge with humility my wounds are not as powerful as I believe, no longer can I be a victim to their circumstance, and I am miraculously multifaceted, which in turn, allows for me to be fluid within my journey toward individuation. The child needed to become the warrior who needed to sacrifice the witch, and ultimately manifest into the crone:

> Beaming with pride, I notice the fine tender lines of my own skin, like old worn leather. My hair, thick with long gray strands that dance beneath my shoulders. . . . She turns toward the doorway of bushy trees and mysterious hedges, the doorway of greenery closing before I could grab her hand. As I make my way out, she stands in front of me. Little Mēnessa smiling from ear to ear. (Appendix A, p. 55)

Again, I am not the archetypes, nor am I the complexes from which they originate within my unconscious. And I no longer have the liberty to identify with them as such. Woodman and Dickson (1996) explained, "To *identify* is to 'become' the God or Goddess without the feminine ground to reestablish the boundaries that return us to humanity. To *relate* is to know that the ego is the instrument through which the divine energy flows" (p. 6). In the bold words of Woodman (1985), "Whether we like it or not, one of our tasks on this earth is to work with the opposites through different levels of consciousness until body, soul, and spirit resonate together" (p. 26). In this relatedness, I am aware that the

darkness within and the darkness I have experienced have the potential for otherness, to be shapeshifters in between images. Time is no longer linear. I am at once the child, the warrior, the crone, each already developed and co-occurring in development.

Most importantly, the mother archetype is not always life giving. She can also take it away. And I am slowly coming to a greater appreciation of these life rituals, from death to rebirth, slowly finding compassion for psychically vanquishing all that is unneeded. But it is not without compassion or love. Rather the opposite. It is birthed from the sacral root chakra. Leading expert on energy medicine Caroline Myss (2004) explained, “Each of us will have some ‘sacred flaw,’ something given to us to endure . . . , something *we* cannot change but that is meant to make *us* change. Through this sacred flaw we are meant to connect to divine mystery” (p. 68). This sacredness is leant to the dark goddess. George (1992) articulated,

> In the process of reclaiming the Dark Goddess and the feminine shadow, it is important to extend compassion to the weak and undesirable aspects of our personalities that we had previously despised and rejected. It is ultimately through the accepting and empathizing with the hated and denied parts of ourselves that we can transform and heal the wounds of the shadow self. (p. 55)

With this, I imagine inviting the witch over to dinner, bestowing her with the gold orb. At this long banquet table filled with a feast are vanquished shadows of my family’s inner feminine. We talk dearly over the events that have brought us here, and I have a profound love and respect for their presence. A gratitude for being born to my mother and father, to a lineage that has inspired healing. In this tender moment, I am reminded of the ancient Polynesian prayer practice Hoʻoponopono (Len & Brown, 2015, para. 3): I am sorry. Please forgive me. I love you. Thank you.

**Summary: Implications for Counseling and Depth Psychology**

When I set out to write this thesis and also experiment with an exercise of writing my personal fairy tale, I worried it would have little impact on the field of depth psychology. As soon as the experiment began, however, I discovered that if one of the benefits was an effect on how I practice as a therapist (or more importantly, if I can grow compassion for my inner process), that would be enough. That would create small ripple effects to shift energy beyond the physical realm.

There were many points at which I wanted to stop writing; I feared the process would destroy me. It was painful to come into contact with highly guarded psychic structures, and I have been working solidly with these images for years. But what I discovered was that if I kept at it, if I kept returning to the edge, I ultimately would find my way through.

I imagine my clients feel similarly, some of who are just beginning the journey of self-exploration. The edge is scary and can be quite physically painful; I repeatedly felt as if the muscles within my chest cavity were being stretched, anxiety spreading like a firestorm. When people are unsure of what they will find or fearful of the duration, it is quite easy to drop the ores and hide underneath the tarp of their vessel. This is where a loving adult can be of service. She is developed with practice, through ritual, through the constant and steady affirmations of I love you and I see you. Of course, there are empathic failures—where I as a therapist have fallen short or I have abandoned my inner child all together—but they are not without repair.

The pilgrimage to write my own story was a risk. It may have been far easier to pick a fairy tale with the archetypes readily available. But I wanted to invite a sense of

personal responsibility. There is much healing and agency making in the art of writing your story. The process has elucidated the mud into which I have been stuck and also provided a vehicle to which I could use to pull myself out. Dennis Patrick Slattery (2012), a professor of mythology and an archetypal psychology at Pacifica Graduate Institute, offered:

> As neuroscience points with plenty of evidence to the brain's plasticity, namely, its ability to change, so too with myth. Myth has a plasticity and an elasticity; otherwise we might be arrested in one way of living if the myth could not metamorphosize into new venues or mutate into new areas of attraction. (p. 10)

The agency that resides in the container of storytelling allows static interpretations or assumptions to come to the surface. Slattery explained,

> These same assumptions may reveal where our perceptions are distorted, excessive, deficient, a bit twisted and where we are deformed in our knowing. They may at the same time, reveal the most interesting qualities about us. As carries or cargo hold for the fantasies we harbor, we in turn protect and feed them regularly because their importance underscores how we define our essential self. (p. 15)

And I believe this is where the field falls short. How easy it is to hand clients inflated interpretations, or for that matter, supply them with a bevy of pharmaceuticals to ignore the wisdom of the wound and suppress the symptomology. Something I painfully had to question, in that second descent, was how unwilling I was to take personal responsibility—out of fear, of course, and old pain. And this abdication is supported within Western culture. So many of my clients in their early 20s struggling with anxiety or depression fear they do not know how to slay the dragon or trick the wolf into not devouring them and protest in session, "I just don't know how to see it differently." And I do not believe they should know, necessarily. Part of the journey, of course, is finding a path that works; one's attempt at a multitude of trial and error before the Self can be

driven to emerge a shadow to confront. But my role as a therapist is to hold my clients' gold—their light—until they are ready to own it for themselves. I wonder if a therapist's refusal (unconscious or not) to acknowledge the necessity for personal accountability impacts how much longer clients stay victim to their complexes. I know moving forward in my own practice, when a client feels "I cannot," I can now mirror back, "You can," and that love and compassion can encourage bravery of heart. The witch never is who she appears to be. On the other side of vanquishing the spell is our human fallibility.

# Chapter IV
# Summary and Conclusions

## Summary

Chapter I of this thesis introduced my research question, which explored how active imagination can inspire one's inner child to life vis-á-vis the imaginal realm of fairy tale fantasy to help reclaim a lost birthright of knowing one's true self worth. Throughout Chapter II, I reviewed literature on the history of storytelling and its mimetic capabilities to connect societies as well as the individual self to the greater collective, as well as the purpose of stories to enable personal safety, love, and connection, and even serve as a playful past time (Bettelheim, 1989; Campbell, 2002; Zipes, 2012).

I explored von Franz's (1996) notion that connection through story is how one is able to access images common to society and that these images are birthed out of the unconscious. From here, I not only reviewed the depth psychological understanding of archetypal images and their intricate web that connects us (Johnson, 1986) but also how they are a necessary underpinning to Jung's foundation of active imagination (Chodorow, 1997). I then pulled from various Jungian scholars, including C. G. Jung (1959/1969) himself, to explore the history of active imagination, its mechanics, and its similarities to childhood fantasy play (Chodorow, 1997; Cwik, 1991; Johnson, 1989; Raff, 2000). Chapter II concluded with an argument for how fairy tales (and, by extension, the writing of one's own personal tale) serve as a conduit for active imagination (Bettelheim, 1989; Cashdan, 1999; Kalsched, 1996; McNiff, 2004; von Franz, 1995; Woodman, 1985) to

help clients take responsibility for their own healing (Hillman, 1984; Hillman, 1994; von Franz, 1995; Woodman, 1985).

Chapter III provided an annotated exploration of my production piece—a personal fairy tale featuring a cast of characters: my inner child, my loving adult, the moon, and an evil witch. Through the exploration of this piece, I came into contact with the inner dwellings of my psyche, ultimately realizing my own agency. The fairy tale was an attempt to challenge built-up false beliefs, spells that had the power to ignite fear and doubt, many times showing themselves in the form of great sadness and intense anxiety. I relied heavily on the wisdom of great Jungian pioneers such as Marion Woodman and Elinor Dickson (1996), James Hollis (1996), James Hillman (1989), and Donald Kalsched (1996), who served as guides along the journey, reminding it was possible to mine the murky underworld for potential. I discovered an intimacy with myself that maybe had not existed before, or maybe more so an appreciation for the relationship to Self. Ultimately, I came to know the lens through which one looks can always be shifted; it is never fixed, and the job of alchemical imagination, of course, is never finished.

**Final Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research**

Upon completion of this thesis, I had a dream that I was in a room with my father and grandparents, all of whom were happy to see me, most noticeably my dad (personal dream, January 10, 2015). His excitement was filled with exuberance and joy. I remember feeling slightly uncomfortable trying to welcome it all in. I awoke wondering about my animus, an archetype understood by Jungians as the inner figure of a man held by a woman's psyche ("Anima and animus," 1986, p. 23). So much of this work has been focused on the feminine. I am now curious about my inner masculine and the ways in

which he has been cast off to the shadow realm or has unconsciously inserted himself into my waking life. The notion of Mēnessa, as explored earlier in Chapter III, holds duality, what Woodman (1985) understood as solar and lunar consciousness (p. 40). This concept begs the question: In what ways is my soft body of consciousness oriented toward their mass and how can I honor their daily and nightly risings?

This curiosity and the subsequent hermeneutical approach speak to the validity of meaning making in the clinical realm, as well as how one's personal exploration of the unconscious is inexhaustible, never complete, swollen with possibility for multiple outcomes, various channels of growth. The client, in essence, can never really be stuck if open to the possibility for multiple meanings. Future research takes me to new depths of my shadow but not without a loving presence, a knowing sense, to anchor me into exploration. Woodman (1985) explained, "Unless the body knows that there are inner loving arms strong enough to contain it, however fierce or broken it may be, it will hang onto its own rigidity in an effort to survive" (p. 59).

Clinicians in the field can take this research one step further by encouraging willing and able clients—those not in crisis or early into the work of childhood trauma—to own their stories in similar ways, charting the course of imagination to rekindle lost selves, specifically an alienated inner child, to inspire personal autonomy. This thesis has taught me that although fairy tales common to our culture can be a roadmap throughout the therapeutic process by inviting various archetypes into the dyad and exploring their relationship to clients, clients may be better served by taking a more active role in the process by not only becoming one with the inner figure, but allowing the inner figure to be birthed out of their unconscious. This way, clients intimately know the figure and can

gain a sense of accomplishment by coming to some resolution for the image. In essence, writing my own fairy tale has shown me I can take responsibility for my story, reclaiming it out of the hands of my therapist and into the arms of a brave and fearless warrior. All too often, however, the importance of personal autonomy is overlooked, and clients stay stuck longer than needed. Fairy tale writing is one way in which the therapist can hand back the clients' projections, having them own their own images in return. It should also be highlighted that the art of writing one's story is not regulated to the practice of depth psychotherapy, nor does one necessarily need a background in it to encourage the client to initiate a dialogue between the ego and inner child. Storytelling is universal; fairy tales are rooted in childhood and the child is whom clients are seeking in writing their story. Bettelheim (2010) noted the fairy tale's goal, and by extension the goal of writing one's own,

> must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions; be attuned to his anxieties and aspirations; give full recognition to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems which perturb him. (p. 5)

Ultimately, the loving act of writing this thesis, giving bits of myself that have been voiceless, powerless, or in contrast, almighty, the opportunity to be seen and heard has been the necessary self-reflection for which I have yearned. It has stripped me from victimhood and required I take back my gold—the same kind of gold I hold for my clients and that my therapists have held for me. The very act that has been missing in this journey now allows me to sit in gratitude, humbly in silence counting blessings for Mēnessa.

## Appendix A
## She Made a Mēnessa and Ran With It

The child within wants to explore. Will you let her roam? Or will you command she stay to sit upon herself in a bind of silence.

Within the illusion, we think she is safe, protected, and unscathed. But the wilderness always calls. What will she think of its beckoning?

It's wild they say, dark and stormy; an abysmal mouth perched to destroy.

Despite this protest, her childlike curiosity wanders to the edge. Its wispy breeze moves across her face. Maybe it's a magical place where a princess lives atop a willow tree home to a gnome.

No, no. That's no gnome, rather an unpredictably dangerous troll. The princess, a venomous witch.

She returns afraid and armors herself in straight edges and polite behavior. Her loneliness grows and her courage is dismantled. Routine cycles in and out of days, the sun is lit falsely and the moon's glimmer a distant memory.

In the gallows of night a howl can be heard, far yet painfully close. Her dreams are restless and loud. They steal the sleep from her eyes.

Something is not right, they say. Straighten up, stay focused, respect your elders.

Is there anything we can do? Maybe she is lost forever.

I have been multiple women over the course of what feels like a lifetime. Many moons. Many iterations of me. A picture book of life at every stage, every transition.

At the core, however, this child within.

She is beautiful, bold, brave, and adventurous. She is also kind, quiet, and intuitive.

Come here little one. Let me embrace you with every fiber of my being.
Lean against this heart of pure gold.

And yet, you don't always see yourself this way.

Rather the witch or the troll.
Hurtful words, an internal dialogue that binds together to form a story of judgment, piercing judgment that keeps you feeling small.

And yet words, like a potion, a spell, have the power to transform.

*Tell me your story, and I will tell you mine.*

My name is Mēnessa and I'm nine. I love to play. I am so glad you are here. Because I have so many things I want to show you. Like, how I paint pictures or how I play house. I am a really good teacher. And I love my stuffed animals so much it hurts.

They're my friends. I have real friends, too. But sometimes I like to play by myself.

Can I tell you a secret?

*Of course.*

Sometimes I really believe that my stuffed animals are alive. And I feel bad for putting them away. I worry that they are lonely or scared. And I don't want them to be scared.

I get scared sometimes.

Sometimes, I am afraid of the dark. When I crawl into bed with my sister, and after my mommy has given me kisses, I keep my eyes open just in case something bad like a monster or a scary person is going to come in and steal me.

I really don't like school. I stay awake at night because I am worried I will do something wrong or the teacher won't like me. She scares me with that bun on top of her head and her dry, brittle, wrinkly skin.

I try to be brave. But it's hard. We have tests. Lots of tests. I get nervous when I don't finish them in time.

Have you ever felt like you are locked away in a tower like a princess? An evil witch putting you there?

*Yes, yes I have, little one.*

Let's pretend. Let's pretend I am there.

Once upon a time I was locked away in a high tower that I dreamed of fleeing.

I know the way. I can show you the way.

*I watch her run down the stairs that spiral inward, slapping her little feet against the cold marble.*

*The tower is tall, lean, and strong. A buttressed column of stone you would need an army of giants to knock down.*

*But the bottom of the stairs, she stops, turning toward me to whisper:*
I have the key.

*And with the flick of her wrist, the door opens.*
*She's off in a flash, barefoot and free.*

Follow me.

*We arrive to a glen that touches upon a doorway of bushy trees and mysterious hedges.*

*It takes a few seconds to push my way through, getting down low to the ground.*

*A laugh bursts forth: Hers and then mine. This is an adventure I haven't taken since childhood.*

*As I make my way out, brushing off the dust, the greatest tree I have ever seen stands before us both.*

It's like a million feet tall, *she says*.
And a thousand feet wide. It can touch the stars, maybe even the moon.

*I look up to see Momma Moon above, half lit with sparkle and glisten. She knows. I know. It is safe here.*

Come on! Let's play, *Mēnessa says, dragging me to the bottom of the tree.*

I am the dragon coming to get you. You need to run away from me.

Roaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar! Roaaaaaaaaaaaaar!

I am a fire-breathing dragon, full of rage and anger. I am coming to get you.

*Indulging, I scurry up the tree, finding knotty nubs to harness my way up. She's close. I can feel her at my heels. Faster and further we climb. She's large, scaly, and craving a big bite. At last, we reach a platform, a fort of sorts, the kind made for trees.*

*And in a whirl, I turn around and grab her.*

*Caught you. A squeal of laughter abounds as we tumble onto the fort.*

I want to be a princess. Not the dragon. Not a troll either. Trolls are scary and ugly. And I hear they are mean. I definitely don't want to be a witch.

*She buries her soft face into my breast.*

Don't make me go back. Don't make me face the monster. Let's stay here forever.

*Together, we lie on our backs holding each other's hands. Above, tiny sands of starlight and this half-lit moon. I hear her whisper:*

I see the moon, the moon sees me;
The moon sees somebody I want to see.
So, God bless the moon and God bless me;
And God bless the "somebody" I want to see[1].

*I see Mēnessa, Mēnessa sees me;*
*Mēnessa sees somebody I want to see.*
*So, God bless Mēnessa and God bless me;*
*And God bless the "somebody" I want to see.*

*Mēnessa, I say, you can't keep running. I know you want to. I know you want to hide in the bosom of my breast. But you wouldn't be fulfilling your creative destiny. You wouldn't be living this one precious life[2]. What are you afraid of?*

Her. She's mean and ugly. She has a troll for a sidekick. She says things like: You're a child. You're stupid. You don't know anything. You're pathetic.

It hurts me, *she says, looking up into my eyes for an answer*. I am so afraid of her. But I also hate her. I want her to disappear.

*But she is only a figment of imagination. She is a spell of words and images, just like this magical place we live in. It's all but a dream. What do you need to change the spell?*

*With a pensive look, she bites the bottom of her lip and then stands.*

We need a fire.

*Down below, beneath the tree, she begins her work: a pot of water, a flame. Bubbling and more bubbling. Mēnessa begins to add twigs, leaves and dirt. She stands in front of the concoction.*

Come out, come out wherever you are. I am here. Come and get me.

*The forest grows eerie.*

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[1] Sourced from Brickman, J. (2002). *Love Songs and Lullabies* [CD]. Los Angeles, CA: Warner Bros. Pub.
[2] Sourced from Oliver, M. (1986). *Dream Work*. New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly.

*A little louder:*

Come out, come out wherever you are.

*No longer a child but a warrior. She is dressed in plated metal, feathers a top of her hair, ravenous beauty.*

Show me your wounds witch, *she cries.*

*The wind, picking up dust, begins to swirl. And like a freight train moaning in the distance, her arrival feels imminent. The sky grows dark, clouds washing away the night.*

*In a flash of smoke, she appears.*

Old, raggedy skin hangs from her cheekbones. Her long pointy fingers gripping a cane. She's cloaked in all black with silvery hair pinned to the top of her head. Inside her pupils, a dark storm passes.

*What do you want my princess?*[3]

I want you, *the warrior replies*. I want you.

*I see you got out. I see you look very different. No longer a child. But a woman.*

I am not your child. And I am most certainly a woman. Although I would love to believe otherwise, so are you—human.
Give me your wounds.

*My wounds? What wounds? I have none. My only wound is you. I am powerful. I am magic.*

A spell you created. A spell to hide yourself from a wound so great you feel it is you. And yet, you promised it was me. And while, yes, we are cut from the same cloth, I am tired of running out of fear we are the same. It's time for transformation.

*Never.*

*As the witch moves to lunge toward Mēnessa, Mēnessa thumps the belly of her breastplate, above her heart, fierce and loud. And with the other hand grabs the bubbling liquid, pouring it over the witch.*

*The witch's blackness begins to melt and rush of smoke like the wings of raven thrust toward the sky, with it a thousand whispers of ancient spells disperse to the heavens: You're not good enough; you'll never be good enough; I don't love you.*

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[3] The part of the witch is played by the narrator of this piece, the loving adult, and is formatted in italics for consistency.

*Mēnessa moves toward the ground where a mound of ashes lay. And with it tears, tears, and more tears.*

You're good enough. You always have been. And I love you.

*Like raindrops to the rich earth, Mēnessa's tears begin to germinate the soil. Rich, warm earth. She plows it into her hands, massaging into growth.*

It's time for a new story, one in which I begin to love her fiercely.

*Out from the earth, she pulls out a gold orb, faces of the moon that weigh heavy in her hand.*

They weren't all mine, you know. Thousands of years generated lies that great. And with the breastplate of my heart, I am able to dispel them. It's time for a new story.

*Beaming with pride, I notice the fine tender lines of my own skin, like old worn leather. My hair, thick with long gray strands that dance beneath my shoulders.*

*Yes my dear. I say with a smile. It is time for a new story.*

I will always love her. I will always love you.

*She turns toward the doorway of bushy trees and mysterious hedges, the doorway of greenery closing before I can grab her hand.*

*As I make my way out, she stands in front of me. Little Mēnessa smiling from ear to ear.*

You made a moon and ran with it.

## Appendix B
## Guided Imaginal Experience

The heartbeats of our children are embedded inside every one of us. Today, I want to take a journey with you into night of imagination so that maybe we can find our own child. To reconnect with him or her, to find the light that resonates within the unknown.

To do so I want to ask if you can be curious in nature, soft in approach. You can't go barreling through to the imaginative realm with linear thinking or rational manipulation.

No, this journey requires you to soften all your harsh edges, take a leap of faith, and catch the soft palm of his or her hand so that she may lead and you follow.

If you haven't already done so, take the time now to settle in. Feel the ground beneath your back or feel the firmness of the seat. As you begin to inhale, feel the air fill from your belly all the way up into your lungs. And then exhale, letting the expansion of your belly deflate ever so gently. Notice how it feels to let the breath wash over the expanse of your body. With each inhalation allow for chatter of today, the thoughts and words, all the buzz pool into a conscious source, notice where it forms in your body, and then with an exhalation, allow it and all the judgments to ooze out like pooling water rushing into the sea. Continue to inhale and exhale, trusting your rhythm, your pace, your process.

If you feel comfortable, in between breaths maybe you can turn your attention to the sounds around you. Notice what you hear, what you sense. See just how far your ear can reach . . . from the center of your heartbeat into the outdoors where the wind is making its way through the trees. The chitter-chatter of the swallows dancing through the sky. Maybe even the sounds of hummingbirds fluttering their way into the sweetness of nectar.

Within the pace of outside rhythms, see if you can take a pause and imagine the sun awash across your face. Maybe tilt your head upwards toward the sky and welcome in its radiance. Maybe a smile taking shape over this moment, just in the sweet noticing of the steadiness of being.

As you look down, a warm, small hand has taken your own. It's tender and tiny. Who is he? Who is she? A burst of sweet laughter exits her mouth; she says hello.

You kneel down, eye to eye, and greet him[4] in the only way you know how. Maybe you know him well already or maybe this is the first time you've met before. Either way, she is curious about you. Present. Eager. She wants to show you something today, something

[4] For the purposes of this exercise, pronouns are used interchangeably to include all participants.

special. Something sacred. You breathe him in. Maybe even feel compelled to wrap him in your arms. There is something magnificent about this one.

She knows. You know.

The journey is not that far she says. It's out through this lawn and into those mysterious hedges.
Suddenly she takes off barefoot and free, and you can't help but run after, her in the lead.

Through the cleaning you come to a doorway of bushy trees, "After you," she says . . .

If you're hesitant, let her go first; this is her most special place.

It takes a few seconds to push your way through, you even have to get down low to the ground, in some tight spots army crawl your way through. A laugh bursts forth: This is possibly an adventure you haven't taken since childhood.

You make your way out, brushing off the dust, and look up to notice the greatest tree you have ever seen. It feels like a million feet tall and a thousand feet wide; it's branches and leaves, full of magnificent color, extend out and up into the universe. It sparkles and glistens.

This is your tree. Her tree. Our tree.

It is strong enough for us to climb. There are branches for swinging, a tree house up top where we can look out under the stars. Inside, plenty of art supplies to color all day long.

"If you don't want to do any of these things, we can just sit underneath and play old maid."

"It's the most magical place of all . . . whatever you dream, we can it make happen."

You take this all in, maybe in wonder—in skepticism—maybe in excitement or awe. You are reminded of what it felt like as a child to play uninhibited without judgment, without resistance. You moved through the play's space worlds with abandon. And today, you get to pick it up all over again.

A surge of energy moves through your body—a desire to play . . . to be the pirate, the princess, the wizard, the knight, the superhero, the witch, the goblin, the monster of the night. Act it out or run wild and free, leaping throughout the dangling leaves of these jungle gym-like branches.

This experience radiates throughout your body and you can't help but dive right in.

The two of you spend what seems like hours imagining together. What do you play? How to do you play? Spend some time here, see what manifests into motion. "Don't worry about the time, we will listen together for the call to return."

. . . Slowly you begin to notice the day fading into dusk.

You want to stay but know that soon you must return. She knows too.

We can't stay here forever.

Eventually you two make your way to the bushy trees, taking one last look at your magnificent tree with a recognition that it won't be too far off for you to return, no matter how long it takes you to get back here.

Out from underneath the branches, and back into the reality of the clearing, the two of you walk hand in hand across the grassy lawn. The sun slowly fading into the crescent of the earth; the moon rising in all her glory.

You find yourself returning to your breath, inhale and exhale. You take notice of how this journey has felt inside, where new energy has coalesced into the crevices free from the chatter of earlier today. You notice his hands leave your own—she is gone but you most certainly recognize that he is always alive in your heart. Take your time moving back into the space of today, back into your body, the present moment. Feel the ground beneath your back or feel the firmness of the seat, noticing what inner experience has transpired and how it dances with the outer experience of this exact moment. At your own pace, come back into the room when you are ready.

**Appendix C**
**Personal Dream**

I am in a group and I'm trying to defeat someone. A woman? I'm not sure, but she is—or needs—to be defeated. We are to pour hot lava over her head—to make her face like molten metal. We all have our places. And when it happens, I run, run like the wind—flying over trees and it's amazing. I'm flying. We need to get away from her. I don't want to see her face. I don't want to see the horrific damage we have done but it needed to happen. As we land, I'm carrying someone with me, we fall into a meadow where there are drops of diamonds living in the tress, they appear hazy, but I know I want one. It will be mine. It is safe.

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