REVERIE: A PORTAL TO THE NUMINOUS—AN EXPLORATION INTO EARLY CHILDHOOD PSYCHOSPIRITUAL AWARENESS

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Abstract

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by

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Researchers have examined reverie and the numinous autonomously; however concomitant studies on reverie and the numinous are nonexistent. Moreover, no research in depth psychotherapy explores reverie or the numinous as essential experiences associated with early childhood psychospiritual awareness. This heuristic investigation examines the experience of reverie as it can lead to the numinous in the context of Child Centered Play Therapy (CCPT). Case history as arts based data conceptualizes this premise. Five nonactive child case histories give an initial glimpse into the researcher's clinical experience of reverie as it can lead to the numinous.

Reverie is defined as a daydream, and numinous is viewed as an ethereal attribute given to one's personal experience of phenomena. Both descriptions are universal depictions. The researcher includes personal perspective through autobiographical accounts of early childhood experiences and through reflections of reverie as it can lead to the numinous in adulthood. In heuristic inquiry, understanding the researcher's internal frame of reference is essential to understanding the research premise and the unique explorative research process.

Overall, this research serves as a way to include children and their unique depth psychotherapeutic processes. Understanding how children access unconscious material may help depth psychologists to understand what informs early childhood psychospiritual awareness.

Ultimately, children can and do access psychological material that can and do lead to transformation and healing at a deep level. Children's psychotherapeutic processes manifest differently and sometimes emanate from a place of reverie; what manifests from those soulful reveries sometimes take on a numinous quality.

This initial heuristic investigation on reverie as it can lead to the numinous is exploratory in nature and is not intended to be conclusive. More research is likely needed to continue to expand on this dissertation's premise.

Key words: case history, child centered play therapy, daydream, heuristic, numinous, psychospiritual, reverie, Sol *niger*.

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I have had the grace to witness the development of early childhood psycho-spirituality from so many children. These experiences have culminated into the heart and soul of this research, and I am forever grateful to all of the children who have invited me so warmly into their reveries and into their lives.

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Special gratitude goes to my three ‘Soul Sisters’; Jacqui, Carol, and Barbara. Our collective and spirited experiences at Pacifica continue to be heartfelt.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my son, Andre Wisdom.
God be with you.

To Jenny, Billy and Sarah
With God

To Kate
With us

To my loving and supportive husband, William—
With me

I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Anna and Thomas; my grandparents, Victoria and George; and to my seven best friends—my siblings, through the darkness and the light; Rickmen, Clinton, Reginald, Joane, Roslyn, Myron, and Deidra; and to my precious nieces and nephews.

Table of Contents

Page

The style used throughout this dissertation is in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Edition, 2009), and *Pacifica Graduate Institute's Dissertation Handbook* (2013-2014).

Table of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

"Don't worry Miss Victoria, God is with us," the soft voice whispered. In that particular moment, I was jolted out of a reverie, and then plunged into a liminal space where I experienced profound humility, fear, deep love, and compassion all at once. I sensed that an entity larger than humanity had permeated my consulting room, and thus had penetrated my soul.

The soft voice came from a tiny 6-year-old boy who sat on the floor in the corner of my office feverishly building something out of my view. As I slowly crawled next to him, I could see that an object in the sand tray (a large cross that he had built out of colorful Popsicle sticks and was trying to place above a small mound of luminous marbles in the sand) had suddenly mesmerized him. My cherubic little patient, with the large green eyes was now transfixed in his own reverie.

After what seemed like an interminable amount of time, the little boy gazed at me and murmured, "It's a grave."

Heuristic methodology was employed to examine the experience of reverie as it could lead to the numinous. The conceptual framework this study utilized was through arts-based data in the form of case history presentation. Freud created the art form of case history in his treatise, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, when he came up with the idea in 1900, wrote it in 1901, yet waited until 1905 to publish it (Rieff, 1963a).

In their depiction of Freud's art form, both James Hillman (1983b), depth psychologist and author, and Rieff (1963a) in his introduction to Freud's book, *Three Case Histories: The "Wolf man," the "Rat man" and the Psychotic Doctor Schreber*, had

documented that Freud was aware that he was transitioning from purely scientific writing to a new art form. On that account, Freud had sometimes pictured himself as more of an artist than a scientist. To illustrate the patient's psychoactive life in a comprehensive yet creative way, Freud's case history model was adopted. Overall, case history has become a standard in the way many psychotherapeutic encounters are written about today.

Case history was used in this heuristic investigation to explore the researcher's experience of reverie as it could lead to the numinous during the course of a series of child centered play therapy sessions. Through review of five nonactive cases entitled: "*Do you have a mother?" "It's a grave," "Moon sand exchange," "The hypnotist," and "The sister is buried"* the efficacy of those findings was further explored in terms of early childhood psychospiritual awareness.

Research on the experience of reverie as it could lead to the numinous was nonexistent. More research that could expand this initial inquiry is likely needed. This study was not meant to concretize a cause and effect, but to make and initial inquiry into (a) How reverie might lead to the numinous? (b) How reverie might lead to the numinous during the course of child centered play therapy? and (c) What role does reverie play as it can lead to the numinous in early childhood psychospiritual awareness?

Reverie and Numinous Defined

Phenomenologically, the terms *reverie* and *the numinous* are immersed in subjectivity, thus the interpretations of such introspective, and ephemeral occurrences remain ambiguous. For that reason, it was imperative to make certain distinctions about each term early on.

Reverie. Reverie is the French word for daydreaming (Singer, 1975). A daydream is "a pleasant fantasy or reverie" ("Reverie"). Further distinctions between various types of reverie are discussed in the literature review. Overall, reverie as a daydream is the current and universal perception of the term, and this dissertation aligned with that understanding.

Numinous. The term *numinous* has been defined and appropriated in many ways. This study did not refute seminal or current perspectives on the matter, but sought to gain comprehensive insight from both established and ongoing documentation. In general, numinous is defined as, "the presence of a divinity, spiritual, awe-inspiring" ("Numinous"). This research further explored the historicity of the term *numinous* elsewhere in this study through literature review.

This dissertation also considered Dan Merkur's (1996) expansive understanding of the term *numinous* and *numinosity*, which he described:

> Numinosity does not exist in the abstract. It is an aspect or quality that phenomena have. Numinosity might be said either to be embodied by numinous phenomena or to manifest through them, but it is never experienced apart from phenomena that are numinous. It is also very much in the eye of the beholder. Not everyone experiences numinous phenomena, and among those who do, some people are more sensitive or responsive than others. Anything and everything can be numinous, but nothing is numinous necessarily. Again, some things are numinous to some people, but not to others; and a person may experience a phenomena as numinous on some occasions, but not on others. In all, numinosity is a "category of value" that the psyche or soul has the capacity to endow to certain of its experiences. (p.73)

Merkur's interpretation, while broad, captured the subjective nature of the term numinous. The way this dissertation incorporated the meaning of the terms, *numinous* and *numinosity* was in a similar and inclusive manner.

In considering reverie as it could lead to the numinous, this heuristic investigation required researcher transparency and also relied on the researcher's own experience of reverie as it could lead to the numinous. The researcher's description is as follows:

> *Reverie as it could lead to the numinous was experienced as a spontaneous trans conscious (betwixt and between consciousness and unconsciousness) felt sense of suspended animation where one may experience a subtle mental shift in space and time. This disconcerting and ephemeral experience may or may not have been precipitated by a repressed or an unconscious trigger. Reverie in this sense is far removed from a dissociative or fugue state, as there remains that Athenian thread ever so quietly weaving a lasting impression and vividly conscious connection. Additionally, there is an obvious ethereal moment and an initial fright about the experience that ultimately subsides into a deeply touching and heartfelt moment—a moment that can then be later reflected upon and utilized as a perpetual source of insight and psychospiritual healing*.

At the apex of heuristic inquiry is the researcher's experience of the phenomenon under investigation. The researcher's internal frame of reference therefore served as an initial foundation for the study. According to Moustakas (1990):

> To know and understand the nature, meanings, and essences of any human experience, one depends on the internal frame of reference of the person who has had, is having, or will have the experience. Only the experiencing persons—by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings and sense—can validly provide portrayals of the experience. (p. 26)

In that regard, introspective behaviors and personal experiences can mainly be "described" rather than defined. Therefore, examining reverie as it could lead to the numinous was not lauded as a definitive basis for a specific outcome, but as an initial inquiry into alternative yet natural ways the unconscious may contribute to transformation at a deeper level.

Contextual Background: Humanistic Child Centered Play Therapy

Child Centered Play Therapy (CCPT) is a humanistic psychotherapeutic approach developed by child psychologist, Virginia Axline (1964). Axline's modality was based on

Carl Rogers's (1940) original theory which he called Person Centered Therapy. Rogers (1986) asserted:

> There is considerable evidence that when clients receive congruence, unconditional positive regard, and empathy, their self-concepts become more positive and realistic, they become more self-expressive and self-directed, they become more open and free in their experiencing, their behavior is rated as more mature, and they deal better with stress. (p. 201)

Even though Rogers mainly applied his theory to adult patients, the basic premise served as an essential foundation for Axline's child centered play therapy approach.

Comparatively, Axline (1964) subscribed to the philosophy that a child could self-regulate in the therapeutic setting through nondirective play. She contended that this form of therapeutic autonomy gave the child freedom to explore and to choose which way they wanted to engage in their own transformative process. The personal growth the child experienced in the therapeutic milieu was then transferred concurrently into the child's psyche and natural setting where a new sense of agency, self-confidence, freedom, and existential meaning manifested.

It is at this important developmental stage that children begin to grapple with existential concerns—an essential spiritual process often overlooked or minimized (Hart, 2003). These normal cognitive and psychospiritual processes could manifest in the form of dark and expressive imagery or through creative storytelling aka healing fiction. However, sometimes these natural psychotherapeutic processes could be interpreted as a developmental or a cognitive anomaly. As a consequence, existing literature minimized early childhood psychospiritual awareness (Sifers, Jackson, & Warren, 2012).

Humanistic theorist, Clark Moustakas (1966), and philosopher, Martin Buber (1970), contributed to the seminal works of Axline, Klein, Bion, and Winnicott in regards

to fundamental precepts required to engage the psychotherapeutic process with children. In that respect, Moustakas and Buber believed that the therapeutic bond was an essential component that helped children come to terms with their own existence. Moustakas (1959) referred to this self-realization as the "existential moment," and described this instance for the child as, "a moment of pure feeling, a moment of reflection and solitude, a moment of wonder, joy, or grief" (p. 2). To experience the child in the existential moment meant that the therapist also had to leave behind many clinical preconceptions that may pathologize natural, albeit numinous, phenomena.

Additionally, Moustakas' (1966) humanistic approach called for the therapist to include those indelible moments during interactions with children and believed that these instances could be mutually transformational. He did not mean for the therapist to totally abandon clinical approach, but to avoid presumptions that could be detrimental to the child's creative imagination and transformational process. This open state of mind would then allow the therapist to fully appreciate what the child might need to divulge in order to begin to heal in earnest.

Moustakas (1966) described specific and important attributes the therapist might embody in order to establish and maintain genuine engagement with children when he stated:

> He is willing to plunge deeply into life with a child, to venture into new and unknown regions of experience, to risk his own identity while searching and struggling and inquiring into the depths of a troubled mind and heart. He is willing to live the moment and believe in the creative value of spontaneous, emerging life, long before the hidden pieces of the puzzle are revealed. (p. 3)

Existentialist, Buber (1947) took Moustakas'(1966) notion of relating to children a step further when he asserted:

> Because this human being exists: therefore, he must be really there, really facing the child, not merely there in spirit . . . . In order to be in and to remain truly present to the child he must have gathered the child's presence into his own store as one of the bearers of his communion with the world, one of the focuses of his responsibilities for the world. Of course he cannot be continually concerned with the child. . . . But if he has really gathered the child into his life then that subterranean dialogic, that steady potential presence of the one to the other is established and endures. Then there is reality *between* them, there is mutuality. (p. 98)

The empathic engagement that Buber and Moustakas spoke of was viewed as an essential aspect in terms of authentic therapeutic engagement with children.

In this dissertation, existential philosophy was not used as a theoretically complete schema, but as "a paradigm by which one views and understands a patient's suffering in a particular manner" (Corsini & Wedding, 2005, p. 284); one that considers suffering as an innate and necessary existential experience that may be the essence of transformation. In that regard, this dissertation used existential theory for interpretive discernment and to shed light on early psychospiritual processes that may inform one's *Weltanschauung.*

Researcher's Autobiographical Origins and Internal Frame of Reference

There was a sudden realization that I was no longer swaddled by the walls of my mother's cozy womb or lulled to sleep by her melodic, amniotic haven. ***In there****, is where my mother's muffled crying trained my psyche to be still and to listen. It was a lesson in empathy and compassion.* ***In there****, is where my mother's spirited laughter and postprandial hiccups caused the feathery bubbles to tickle my ears. The jostling and exploding circles made the sides of my mouth turn upwards. It was a lesson in the art of laughter.* ***In there****, the constant drumming of my mother's heart beckoned me to drift closer to its source—her unconditional love. When I was no longer immersed in the*

warmth of my mother's all encompassing sphere—I felt shipwrecked and lost on a deserted island. ***Out here****, in the radiance, and with my life line fading from deep blue, to crimson, and then to nothingness—in my new existence, I experienced grace and humility.*

As an introspective infant, I used to lie silently in my tiny crib while meticulously taking in the peculiar surroundings. I was especially curious about the long, dark, even bars on the sides of my crib. But I was even more fascinated about the airy spaces between the lines that I could easily peer through. Like a gestalt, I was mesmerized by the foreground and the background. The smooth bars on my crib contained and secured me, while my developing imagination sprang free. Infancy was the inception of my perpetual reveries. As I grew older I accepted my propensity to engage in deep reverie as an essential aspect of my psychospiritual awareness and development.

In the later years, my mother would comment to me on how I was a very quiet baby. She would say, "You never cried when you were hungry and you never stirred when you were wet." Though I enjoyed hearing about my early childhood antics, my mother's provocative declarations activated reveries within me about my early psychospiritual awareness and development. I pondered questions such as: What was I actually doing during those quiet crib moments? Had I perfected the art of reverie at such an early developmental stage? Was reverie an innate quality that I ultimately developed during my uninterrupted and introspective crib time? What purpose did reverie really serve?

Reverie as a Portal

I was only seven when I saw the colorful and luminous rainbow in the mysterious night sky. That was almost five decades ago; yet during this investigation, the intensely moving and numinous occurrence brings me to tears time and time again. In that instance, and perhaps even now, I found solace in the spectacular image, and it provided illumination and hope for me, an introspective little girl, whose soul's spark had begun to fade. In that awe-inspiring moment and in my perpetual childhood reveries, is where I also grappled with seemingly adult-like existential concerns—mainly freedom, isolation, death, and experiential meaning. In retrospect, I believe the paradoxical nighttime rainbow provided an essential bridge to my developing psyche and spirituality.

Through my childhood reveries, I experienced freedom—a newfound liberation in the sense that I was suddenly aware that I had the power to choose a spiritual path. Furthermore, there was a profound, yet much welcomed awareness of my ultimate *aloneness*. In spite of the aching, yet comforting solitude, I experienced an overpowering sense of inner connection. Surprisingly, I felt lulled by the notion of death and not at all frightened by its finitude. Moreover, I felt radiant and empowered by a new existential understanding.

Though heartfelt, I could not fully articulate this katabasis at the time. In retrospect, I believe that I was on the precipice of a spectacular intra-psychic transformation. Somehow, whether the numinous nighttime rainbow precipitated the soulful reverie or that the reverie served as a conduit to a numinous dimension, might have been inconsequential—then and now. What seemed salient was that both reverie

and the mysterious imaginal and numinous nighttime rainbow helped to create a portal to a deeper source of healing for me.

In retrospect, this early illumination seemed like such a heavy and perplexing spiritual sojourn for a child to undertake; but for me, the dilemma was to either venture over the mysterious nighttime rainbow and then spiral downward and inward, or to hold onto parts of me that wanted to and needed to undergo transformation. Though the misperceived *opus contra naturam* was initially frightening and unanticipated, trying to hinder this process did not appear to be a viable nor controllable option. In other words, sometimes the psyche propels us downward and forward; and despite initial resistance to the call, "we must go over the bridge and let it fall behind us, and if it will not fall, then let it burn" (Hillman, 1979, p. 13).

Betwixt and between (igniting the bridge), I found a safe haven, counsel, and hope in my reveries. Where else does a child go to contemplate ontological concerns? Those childhood feelings of groundlessness and angst were not the kind of calm and clarity I experienced in my reveries, and that confounded me. Clark Moustakas (1966) maintained:

> In each life, there are moments that leave an imprint in the mind and heart and spirit, moments that transcend lesser times and enable a person to stretch beyond what he has known, into a new realm of discovery. In such moments, the person feels his feelings; he hears his own inner dialogue; he feels his footsteps and knows them to be his own. The individual trusts his senses to guide him in the right direction. He forms words that build bridges to deeper regions of his own being and strengthens his relatedness to others. What he says and what he does and what he feels really matter. (p. 1)

Reverie was such the conduit that guided me towards serenity, spirituality, and ongoing transformation. The love, grace, and humility I found in reverie rekindled a flame at the

core of my being and propelled me, the transformed researcher and the transformed depth psychotherapist, in my personal and vocational endeavors to date. Upon current reflection, Joseph Campbell's (2004) words resonate:

> Now, as I've gotten older, I've been thinking about these things. And I don't know what being is. And I don't know what *consciousness* is. But I do know what *bliss* is: that deep sense of being present, of doing what you absolutely must do to be yourself. If you can hang on to that, you are on the edge of the transcendent already. (p. xxiii)

To follow one's bliss might not be a static endeavor, but one that continues to evolve and deepen. My quest to understand reverie as a portal to the numinous, and how this phenomenon may help in understanding childhood spirituality and mental health, is yet another one of those soulful calls.

In childhood, reverie was a way for me to gather the nuances of my external world into a place where I could process perplexing events and ideas. Reverie served as a portal to deeper and undiscovered sources of psycho-spiritual connection and healing. When I recall my childhood vision of the paradoxical nighttime rainbow, I had experienced something ethereal and profound in that moment. I had no words for the mystical aberration at the time, but in that instance, I experienced a psycho-spiritual awakening.

Reverie as a Portal to the Numinous

I nearly died once.

I was driving to complete training on Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) when it happened. I was in my car behind the front white line, idling at the red light. When the light changed to green, I accelerated. Instead of the car moving forward, the engine quivered, and then died. The other cars drove around my immobile car, and for

what seemed like an eternity, I sat at the deserted intersection, alone. I contemplated getting out of my car to open the hood. Beyond the normal "disabled car in the road protocol," I was not certain what else I could do.

I drifted into a deep reverie.

My next recollection was a horrific sound in the distance that came from the rear of my tiny car. It was the screeching sound from an out-of-control semi tractor truck that was trying desperately to brake. The smell of burning rubber permeated my nostrils and the smoke clouded my rearview mirror. As the horrible grinding sound got closer and louder, I immediately crouched into the fetal position, and then braced myself and hoped for the best. The back of a very large truck, perilously swerving around my passenger side door was the last image emblazoned in my mind—before I felt a tremendous, earth shattering collision from behind. The car behind the truck smashed into my rear bumper. My small sports car (with me wedged in it) was propelled forward about 20 feet—like a cue ball on a pool table—into the center of the miraculously empty intersection.

My head lurched backwards. I saw stars and then there was total blackness. Time seemed to expand, and then there was crushing silence. I felt encased in an unknown and liminal space.

***In my out-of-body experience**, I stood not far from where my car had stalled. I then walked around the crash scene to assess the entire wreck. There was scattered debris everywhere from the impact of both cars. When the ambulance arrived, the paramedic ran over to me on the driver side of the window. I was unresponsive. He then gently placed a large brace around my neck, and then gingerly pulled me through the window of my car and onto a carefully placed board.*

I watched silently as I was being extricated from my old car and old life, and then cradled into a new life; a forever changed life. When I regained consciousness in the back of the ambulance, I noticed another person staring at me from the other side of the vehicle. I believe the shock that we had both survived the wreck had rendered us speechless.

I was grateful that my life had been spared. The unforeseen outcome was that the shock to my brain from the closed head injury seemed to have stimulated my creativity. My mind and my heart were overwhelmed with such compassion and a compulsion to paint. A new and inexplicable style of painting manifested. I sensed that the amorphous figures that now materialized on my canvases, emanated from that liminal space; a space that exuded expansive and unconditional love. It was within me.

Figure 1. Arrival (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

In childhood I drew on anything I could find—walls, paper bags, notebooks, and school desks. The simple doodles progressed from circles to stick figures to more representational pieces of art. In adulthood I continued to paint as a hobby, but not to a

large degree. However, after the car accident, I began to paint feverishly in a new, colorful, and three-dimensional style. Whenever I drew or painted the figures, I felt as though I was tapping into a new source of healing from an unknown, yet familiar dimension. It seemed that I now had tangible manifestations from a specific space in time. These numinous experiences, when recognized as such, may lead to ongoing transformation. In that sense, the numinous experience continued to heighten my awareness and sensitivity in terms of interpreting extraordinary and transformational occurrences.

One such event happened in 2011 at about 10 o'clock in the morning in my home. I was photographing my old artwork for a school presentation. The hovering ball of light miraculously appeared on the blackest part of the painting. The mysterious orb was not visible to the naked eye but appeared upon review of the digital image in the viewfinder of my camera. I have read of entities called, "Spirit Orbs . . . spiritual crystalline energy in the shape of a sphere," and there very well may be other causative factors for the anomalous image (MacDougall & Veit, 2009, p. 47), but when I immediately re-photographed the painting, the luminous sphere had completely disappeared.

I could not account for the mysterious, cloud-like image on the painting that suddenly appeared and then disappeared. However, I do recall that shortly before I began selecting paintings to photograph, that I was perusing through old art pieces and drifted into a deep reverie about what my life was like during the time I created certain paintings. The 3-D paintings corresponded to about the time after the car accident. The one image that really gripped me was a rather primitive, black and white painting. It was the very first experimental painting in the new style, after the car accident in 1996. It was

awkwardly painted, and I knew that I would not show it, nor photograph it, but I was certainly mesmerized by it.

I eventually walked away from it and instead walked downstairs and photographed a different representational piece. The image I photographed was a very large pastel drawing of a man playing the saxophone. The background was painted in Mars black.

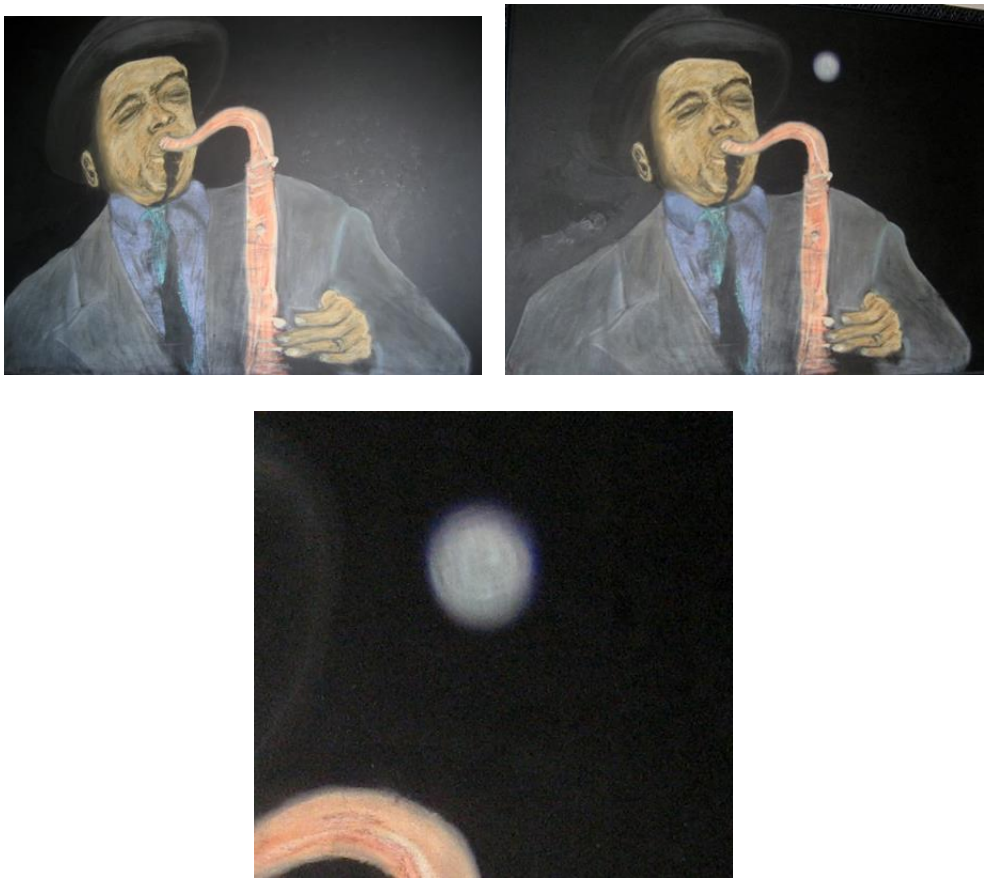

Figure 2. Without Words (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

I gasped when I uploaded the image onto the computer and saw what appeared to be a floating white cloud. I cannot be certain what the image was, but again, the experience felt eminently numinous to me. Having the propensity to engage in long periods of reverie that began in infancy became a natural way I engaged my psyche.

Reverie, as it could lead to the numinous was a hypothesis that I discovered in my personal adulthood experiences and in my professional experiences during Child Centered Play Therapy.

In grappling with a viable clinical modality that also felt natural and respectful to children's spiritual and psychological health—one that empowered and invited a sense of autonomy to the child—I explored from an existential depth perspective the nonverbal and soulful ways that children communicated their innermost angst via storytelling, imagery and sandplay. Hence, this study was the result of amalgamate themes; reverie as it can lead to the numinous and reverie as it could lead to the numinous as a factor in early childhood psychospiritual awareness.

Statement of the Research Problem and Questions

The move to focus solely on children's psychospiritual health was a deliberate one. Children have been generally underrepresented and "unvoiced," in depth psychology. Expounding on the soulful ways children contribute to depth psychology was an important inclusion with important implications. Those implications may be conducive to understanding children's evolving psychospiritual development more fully.

Reverie and the numinous have been researched in the past, however concomitant investigation on how these ephemeral entities might coexist was nonexistent. More importantly, studies about how reverie or the numinous and how these concepts relate to children continue to lag in depth psychology. Current depth psychology literature primarily focuses on the adult psyche. In regards to children, outside of the accepted Bionian interpretation of reverie related primarily to the mother—child dyad, reverie in the clinical setting had not been explored in any other genre (Grinberg, 1962).

Child psychoanalysts continue to broach the occurrences of reverie from a purely clinical perspective and viewed reverie as focal to the initial bonding experience between primary caregiver and infant. To date, no research had occurred that expanded thinking on reverie and children beyond infancy. In that regard, childhood psycho-spiritual development had been minimized and therefore excluded from depth psychology literature in any pertinent way. This research was essential in bridging that chasm.

Coles (1990) maintained that children primarily access their spirituality when faced with grief and loss. Current research acknowledged children's spirituality, though in a neatly confined context (Walker, 2012). Viktor Frankl (1980) asserted, "Man lives in three dimensions: the somatic, the mental, and the spiritual. The spiritual dimension cannot be ignored, for it is what makes us human" (p. xvi). In exploring a child's psycho-spiritual life, we can perhaps begin to "envision that what children go through has to do with finding a place in the world for their specific calling" (Hillman, 1996, p. 13). Ideally, this multidimensional aspect that Frankl referred to, and the angst that children endure that Hillman gives credence to, might ultimately provide important insight and data conducive to understanding children's early engagement with the numinous through reverie.

This dissertation was necessary to continue to explore children's psycho-spiritual vicissitudes; vicissitudes that philosophers, theologians, and depth psychologists remain curious about, as reflected in comments and queries such as:

> But is not the normal child just as truly interested in moving out into the world, exploring, following his curiosity and sense of adventure—going out "to learn to shiver and to shake," as the nursery rhyme puts it? And if you block these needs of the child, you get a traumatic reaction from him just as you do when you take away his security. (May, 1983, p. 17)

> The fear of death ordinarily goes underground from about six to puberty, the same years Freud designated as the period of latent sexuality (Yalom, 2009, p. 3).

> Loneliness belongs to childhood, too . . . . Its source, however, seems to be the solitary uniqueness of each daimon, an archetypal loneliness inexpressible in a child's vocabulary and formulated hardly better in ours (Hillman, 1996, p. 54).

> The alive relationship between the therapist and the child is the essential dimension, perhaps the only significant reality, in the therapeutic process and in all inter-human growth (Moustakas, 1959, p. ix).

> Without a theory that backs the child from its very beginning and without a mythology that connects each child to something before its beginning, a child enters the world as a bare product—accidental or planned, but without its own authenticity (Hillman, 1996, p. 14).

Reminiscent of Hillman (1975) when he stated, "I want to shed light on obscure issues, but not the kind of light that brings an end to searching" (p. xvi), this dissertation investigated these essential curiosities also embedded in the research examination pertaining to reverie as it could lead to the numinous in the context of child centered play therapy.

Definition and Expansion of Terms

Active Imagination – Active imagination is a method created by Carl Jung (1934/1959) to dynamically engage the unconscious. He developed this approach based on his initial personal experiences by systematically engaging with the images in his fantasies. Jung describes active imagination as:

> By this I mean a sequence of fantasies produced by deliberate concentration. . . . It is not a question of the "free association" recommended by Freud for the purpose of dream analysis, but of elaborating the fantasy by observing the further fantasy material that adds itself to the fragment in a natural manner . . . the resultant sequence of fantasies relieves the unconscious and produces material rich in archetypal images and associations. (p. 49)

Archetype – (in Jungian Psychology) a primitive mental image inherited from man's earliest ancestors, and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious. ("Archetype")

Collective unconscious – (in Jungian Psychology) the part of the unconscious mind derived from ancestral memory and experience common to all mankind ("Collective unconscious").

Depth psychology – Focuses on the unconscious. Psychoanalysis to reveal hidden motives ("Depth psychology").

Katabasis – a psychological term used in mythology to refer to the journey to the underworld.

Narrative – A spoken or written account of connected events in order of happening ("Narrative").

Psyche – The soul; the spirit ("Psyche").

Psycho – Relating to the mind or psychology ("Psycho").

Spiritual – concerned with sacred or religious things; holy; divine; inspired ("*the spiritual life; spiritual songs"* ("Spiritual").

Unconscious – that part of the mind that is inaccessible to the conscious mind but which affects behavior, emotions. ("Unconscious").

Weltanschauung – a particular philosophy or view of life; a conception of the world ("Weltanschauung").

Organization of the Study

This dissertation followed Moustakas' (1990) six heuristic investigative phases: Initial Engagement, Immersion, Incubation, Illumination, Explication and Creative Synthesis. Each chapter was entitled as such.

Initial engagement was outlined in the autobiographical section of this research. The Immersion phase of the study was achieved by reviewing instances during child play therapy sessions where reverie as it could lead to the numinous may have occurred. As part of the Immersion phase, 5 nonactive child case histories were narrated in chapters 4-8 and entitled:

Case History Narrative # 1 - "DO YOU HAVE A MOTHER?" A 6-year-old girl in deep reverie initiates a soulful descent into the unconscious through creative artwork. Sol *niger* aka the Black Sun manifested as a numinous and transformative aspect of her psychospiritual process.

Case History Narrative #2 - "IT'S A GRAVE." Lorenzo, a 6-year-old boy, often initiated his sessions by building "graves" in the sandtray where he would ultimately drift into deep reverie. What usually emanated from those reveries was tales of healing fiction where he relayed creative narratives that were filled with memories and hopes of reuniting with an absent mother.

Case History Narrative #3 - "THE MOON SAND EXCHANGE." Harriet, a little girl who was referred for play therapy sessions for violent acting out in the classroom, initiated each session by inviting me to play the "bury and find" game with her. Harriet ultimately discovers a way through her own darkened thoughts and feelings which leads to transformation at a deeper level.

Case History Narrative #4 - “THE HYPNOTIST.” Thomas, a bespectacled and serious little boy presents an interesting dilemma for the therapist—a child who on the surface resists play therapy. Resistance in the transference and the counter-transference are explored.

Case History Narrative 5 - “THE SISTER IS BURIED.” Sophia, a soft spoken little girl who was referred for violent acting out in the classroom (and who was ultimately facing expulsion for her untoward behavior), unconsciously plays out her grief and loss associated with early prenatal trauma. Graves and burials were also thematic in her therapeutic process.

Chapter 9 - The Incubation phase involved researcher disengagement from the research topic in order for the researcher to experience insight about the topic at a deeper level (Moustakas, 1990). To facilitate this process the researcher engaged in a lucid art project that included paintings and the researcher’s self dialogue.

Chapter 10 - The Illumination occurs for the researcher through the manifestation of Sol *niger*.

Chapter 11- Explication of findings during the illumination stage is discussed.

Creative Synthesis, Conclusions and Implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Reverie: An Introspective Process

Introspection sheds light on information about various occurrences yet "yields some data otherwise inaccessible" (Radford, 1974, p. 250). What precipitates introspection is a state of suspended animation, a state of reverie, where the mind is open and ready to accept data (Welker, 2005). Mental openness is the aspect of intra psychic activity that allows introspection to occur. In this essential mental milieu, devoid of thought, an assortment of information can be assimilated.

However, Wilhelm Wundt (1910), a psychological researcher who studied phenomena in the lab environment, believed that because introspection was characteristically ephemeral, like reverie and the numinous, it could not withstand quantitative scrutiny. Welker on the other hand contends that it is through the experience of introspection that introspection itself can be explored, in that "introspection may be the most direct method of observing psychic reality" (p. 774). Phenomenologists concur, "Anything that is perceivable immanently is perceivable *only* immanently" (Husserl, 1983, p. 95). Though discourse between scientists, psychologists, and philosophers persists about how to research introspective processes like reverie, the different disciplines of learning and understanding continue to seek ways to widen these divergent yet compelling perspectives (Giorgi, 2010).

Reverie: A Historical Perspective

Scientific. Historically there has been interest about various introspective processes, particularly reverie. Earlier researchers (Klinger, Gregoire, & Barta, 1973)

believed daydreaming occurred because the mind was fixated on a future yearning that was not being met in the immediate moment. Jerome Singer (1975), preeminent researcher on daydreaming, acknowledged the conundrum in describing the private and introspective nature of daydreaming when he suggested:

> Daydreaming, our ability to give "to airy nothing/a local habitation and a name," remains one of the most fascinating, if perplexing phenomena in the vast range of human behavior. . . . Because of its completely private nature it is impossible to formulate a generally agreed upon definition of this act. Probably the single most common connotation is that daydreaming represents a shift of attention *away* from some primary physical or mental task we have set for ourselves, or *away* from directly looking at or listening to something in the external environment, *toward* an unfolding sequence of private responses made to some internal stimulus. The inner processes usually considered are "pictures in the mind's eye," the unrolling of a sequence of events, memories or creatively constructed images of future events which have varying degrees of probability of taking place. (p. 3)

Researchers continued to grapple with a concrete definition for daydreaming, though agreed that the static denominator in describing reverie was that it involved both conscious and intra psychic activities.

Eric Klinger (2000) initially agreed with Singer's (2006) perspective in that he believed reverie was a product of ongoing thoughts and fantasies, but changed his line of thinking when later and more comprehensive research expanded his understanding. Klinger ultimately concluded:

> People gain knowledge by spontaneously reviewing their past experiences in daydreams and rehearsing for future situations. Daydreams appear to generate creative solutions to difficult problems. They are linked with greater empathy for others. They may be spontaneous, but not entirely idle. (p. 439)

Singer (1975), however, was apprehensive about attaching specific meaning to such private mental behaviors, and earlier warned, "It is too tempting to use one's private experiences and to generalize from these to all humankind" (p. 5). He believed reverie was an individualized act that could not be measured for a singular outcome. Singer

(1975) later acquiesced to a small degree however when he stated, “In daydreaming all of us are in a sense authorities because of the very private nature of our experiences in this sphere” (p. 6). Singer’s (1975) perspective shifted and he embraced more of a qualitative understanding rather than to pursue an empirical quest, but continued to consider other opinions on the matter.

Clinically, Singer (1975) turned to Freud to situate his understanding regarding the study of daydreaming though recognized that “Freud combined his own self-analysis with the material he obtained from his patients” to formulate his opinions about daydreaming (p. 11). Singer acknowledged that historically, self analysis was highly regarded as pertinent data, but in terms of daydreaming he implied that, “it had fallen into disfavor … for the obvious reason that it was difficult to get two people to agree about their private experiences” (p. 11).

Singer (1975) continued to validate the complexity involved in studying daydreaming and its ephemeral nature. However, he maintained an open mind and considered practical ways reverie could be applied when he asserted:

> Indeed, it is possible that regular exploration of one’s daydream world make this world a familiar realm and one less likely to evoke anxiety. A possibility, worth exploring in research, is that many people who have failed to indulge in fantasy play may be the very ones who later misinterpret their own daydreams or images as hallucinations and thus may be made much more anxious by the sudden seemingly autonomous occurrences of a fantasy image. (p. 30)

In shifting his perspective on reverie in and outside of the clinical setting, Singer (2006) advanced his belief that there may be more to daydreaming than it being a simple introspective behavior. He began to envision therapeutic value in reverie and saw daydreaming as a healthy segue to creative imagination in that, “the capacity for make-

believe provides us with a power over our environment and an opportunity to create for ourselves novelty and joy" (p. 254).

Singer (1975) ultimately believed that, "our daydreams are in a sense an extension of our childhood capacities for enjoyable play" that can be capitalized on during the course of our day-to-day activities (p. 253). In other words, he believed the reveries from youth might ultimately serve as a therapeutic resource in time of need. Though, Singer cautioned, "We have, of course, to build into it a self-checking system that keeps us from driving off the road or bumping into objects along our walking route" (p. 253). He contended there should be parameters with daydreaming; that not all daydreams pointed to positive or intra-psychic recovery. Earlier researchers concurred with this perspective as well.

When Singer (1975) alleged, "The art of successful daydreaming lies in the smooth shifting from external awareness to inner concentration" (p. 253), he believed daydreaming could be controlled. In his later work, Singer (2006) focused on the practical uses for reverie in psychotherapy. He believed that the imagination was essential to daydreaming when he stated, "I recognized how much of what seemed to be necessary and also effective in clinical treatment depended on the patient's ability to produce vivid and concrete memory and fantasy images" (p. 6).

Philosophical. Singer (1975) also intimated at a specific moment when one turned inward to engage reverie at a deeper level, but stopped short of calling this level of intra psychic involvement unconscious activity. Instead, Singer turned to Gaston Bachelard to ground reverie in an esoteric realm when he offered:

> Philosophers, such as Gaston Bachelard, have proposed that the dimension of the unreal in our experience is a critical aspect of our ultimate reality. What is most

> truly human about man, what is perhaps his greatest gift derived from evolution and perhaps his greatest resource in his mastery of the environment and of himself, is his capacity for fantasy. By dreaming man can examine the alternatives that inhere in every moment. (p. 253)

Singer expanded his understanding of reverie to include yet another aspect of the psyche—the imagination.

While Singer (1975) agreed with Bachelard's philosophical interpretation of reverie, he admitted there were obvious dimensions to reverie that may spiral us to deeper and darker aspects of our own psyche. Singer (1975) continued to grapple with understanding the many levels of reverie. In his quest to understand reverie in its totality Singer (1975) warned:

> Attention to our own experiences and dreams brings us into contact with the pettiness and evil within us, with our doubts and failures of the past, and the wishful deceptions or vengeances of the future that flit across our consciousness. (p. 254)

Singer realized the therapeutic values of reverie on the one hand, but also realized that aspects of reverie could bring one in touch with abhorrent, repressed or forgotten experiences. To this Singer (1975) counseled:

> The daydreamer is therefore not immune to an awareness of suffering and to the tragedy inherent in life itself. But greater enrichment is also part of our human potential and daydreaming is a fundamental means of such enrichment. The practiced daydreamer has in a sense the best and worst of two worlds. What his increased inner capacity offers him is a fuller sense of being intensely alive from moment to moment and this is worth the frequent pain of a deeper self-awareness. (p. 254)

Singer saw reverie as an essential intrapsychic activity that influenced many aspects of consciousness. He also believed that reverie propelled us in our daily life in ways that were conducive to positive psychological change overall.

What precipitates a daydream, the purpose of the daydream itself, and how it can be controlled are ongoing research interests (Smallwood, 2013). Today, researchers are seeking understanding from a neuroscientific perspective rather than solely a psychological framework. However, it has also been determined that changes in mentation, such as emotionality should not be excluded (Harrison et al., 2008). Whereas Smallwood's (2013) hypothesis that many aspects of the brain are stimulated by what is going on in the outer environment, other researchers maintain that daydreaming could be a form of psychopathology ((Elua, Laws, & Kvavilashvili, 2012) and linked daydreaming to an inability to control thoughts (Nigg, 2000).

Scientifically, terms such as "mind wandering, attention deficit and rumination" are being used to describe daydreaming (Smallwood, 2013). While researchers maintain this line of thought and attributed daydreaming to low mood, Smallwood confessed "Although the processes engaged in mind wandering are becoming reasonably well established, those that influence the occurrence of the experience remain less well understood" (p. 530). In that regard, research continues to lag but is now considering more closely the milieu of these "mind wandering" occurrences (Smallwood, 2010).

Clinical study in a lab may not be the best context to observe such a normal and spontaneous behavior under close scrutiny and artificial conditions (Kingstone, Smilek, & Eastwood, 2008). Because the process of daydreaming harbors significant information as to how the brain functions (Christoff, 2013), research directed at the process rather than the content is essential for ongoing studies in this area.

In the end, Singer (2009) agreed with Freud's (1908/1962) assessment that daydreaming was essential to creativity, particularly in the form of writing. There have

been many attempts to define reverie (Singer, 1975), though the prose to aptly explain reverie remained elusive. Rather than solely turning to theory and scientific terminology, Singer (1975) associated aspects of his theories on reverie with Bachelard's (1987) philosophical perspective. "Bachelard never developed a metaphysics capable of unifying his reflections on science and poetry" though his dual attraction persisted (p. xxxiii). In fact, Bachelard's ideas on reverie evolved rapidly, which was the premise behind his rather fluid perspective on the matter. Gaudin (1987) admonished:

> We must always bear in mind Bachelard's vigorous warnings against the temptation to unify and reduce to identical, which he saw as one of the most important "*epistemological obstacles.*" Instead of immobilizing the intuition by a too rapid unification, as in prescientific theories, living thought should be dominated by its "*shifting character*," which is an ability to shake off intellectual habits, to accept the lessons of an evolving science. For Bachelard this is the *sine qua non* of the modern educator. He rejects the role of the scholar who shares the fruit of his learning in the form of established truths, and invites us to experience with him "the essential mobility of concepts." (p. xxxiii)

For Bachelard, the perpetual modification in his perspective was an essential aspect in terms of "experiencing" in the moment rather than maintaining stagnant perceptions.

The prose to describe reverie remained elusive; however, in Bachelard's (1960) *Poetics of Reverie; Childhood, Language, and the Cosmos*, he attempted to capture the essence of reverie through the written word. Rather than simply defining reverie, Bachelard (1960) described the process he used to formulate an initial impression of reverie when he stated:

> By obliging us to retrace our steps systematically and make an effort towards clarity of awareness with respect to a poet's given image, the phenomenological method leads us to attempt communication with the creating consciousness of the poet … In times of great discoveries, a poetic image can be the seed of a world, the seed of a universe imagined out of a poet's reverie. (p. 1)

From a phenomenological perspective, Bachelard (1960) helped us to visualize this experience from a different point of view, from perhaps the inside looking out, which makes the unconscious material more transparent. In other words, he takes us on an expedition from "the soul of the poet" (p. 4).

Historically, there are various adjectives for daydreaming, such as "reverie, brown study, woolgathering, castles in Spain, and looking into the middle distance" (Singer, 1975, p. 3). For the poet, these may be welcomed descriptives. While Bachelard's (1960) contribution on the matter might be about a different form of reverie, a 'written reverie,' the words emanate from a liminal space of possibilities.

Bachelard (1960) deepened our enchantment with reverie when he said, "It is already facing the great universe of the blank page. The images begin to compose and fall into place. The dreamer is already hearing the sounds of written words" (p. 6). This type of reverie was activated by deep contemplation. In other words, "poetic reverie listens to this polyphony of the senses, and the poetic consciousness must record it" (p. 6). In this sense, Bachelard wrote from a depth perspective.

While Bachelard (1960) defended the written reverie, he shifted his perspective to encapsulate reverie in a broader sense when he reflected, "Poetic reverie is a cosmic reverie. It is an opening to a beautiful world, to beautiful worlds" (p. 13). At this point, Bachelard ventured toward activities in another dimension, of the psyche perhaps. He further described cosmic reverie as:

> The cosmic reverie … is a phenomenon of solitude which has its roots in the soul of the dreamer. It does not need a barren land to take root and grow. A pretext—not a cause—is sufficient for us to enter the "solitary situation," the situation of the dreaming solitude. In this solitude, memories arrange themselves in tableaux. Décor takes precedence over drama. Sad memories take on at least the peace of

> melancholy. And even that indicates a difference between dream and reverie. (1960, p. 14)

Bachelard (1960) continued to situate aspects of the reverie he described in the vicinity of the psyche when he stated, "The soul does not live on the edge of time. It finds its rest in the universe imagined by reverie" (p. 15). This shift in perspective propelled Bachelard's ongoing work in which he broadened his understanding about reverie's psychological implications.

In the psychological genus, Bachelard (1960) reached for deeper comprehension when he suggested:

> In order to know ourselves doubly as a real being and an idealizing being, we must *listen* to our reveries. We believe that our reveries can be the best school for the "psychology of the depths." All the lessons we have learned from the psychology of the depths will be applied in order to understand the existentialism of reverie better. (p. 58)

Bachelard (1960) clearly saw depth psychology as a psychology that embraced the ephemeral yet essential and soulful qualities that were embedded in reverie. "In other words, a *complete psychology* must reintegrate with the human that which detaches itself from the human—unite the poetics of reverie with the prosaism of life" (p. 58).

Bachelard (1960) made a plea to consider the whole as opposed to disassociating the somatic, mental and spiritual, which he believed sought to communicate in a unifying manner. "The subconscious is ceaselessly murmuring, and it is by listening to these murmurs that one hear its truths" (p. 59). Bachelard continued to intimate at a deeper source of experiential meaning.

Bachelard (1960) was passionate about childhood reveries, upon which he reflected, "Those original solitudes, the childhood solitudes leave indelible marks on

certain souls" (p. 99). He believed such initial reveries helped soothe children when he asserted:

> Their entire life is sensitized for poetic reverie, for a reverie, which knows the price of solitude. Childhood knows unhappiness through men. In solitude, it can relax its aches. When the human world leaves him in peace, the child feels like the son of the cosmos. … When he would hold dream in his solitude, when the child knew an existence without bounds, his reverie was not simply a reverie of escape. It was a reverie of flight. Thus, childhood images which a child could make, images which a poet tells us that a child has made are, for us, manifestations of the permanent childhood. Those are the images of childhood. (1960, pp. 99-100).

Bachelard (1960) suggested that such images and metaphors represented liberation, which children mainly accessed through their reveries. He also believed that we retained the ability to access this dimension, and "when we go looking for it in our reveries, we relive it even more in its possibilities than in its realities" (p. 101).

While Bachelard (1960) gave credence to reverie in childhood, he also intimated at its inspirational aspects often revealed later in life when he explained: "In the last quarter of life, one understands the solitude of the first quarter by reflecting the solitude of old age off the forgotten solitudes of childhood" (p. 108). Bachelard (1960) believed that we contained these childhood moments in our reveries, which ultimately resurfaced during periods of quiet reflection later in life. He believed that what differentiated these types of reveries from the day-to-day reverie was that they were mainly historical reflections that induced serenity. Bachelard (1960) included creativity and the imagination, yet also viewed daydreaming as a deeply psychological move towards wholeness.

Phenomenological

Robert Romanyshyn (2007), a phenomenologist and depth psychologist, shared Bachelard's (1987) ideas on reverie and the imagination, but expanded his line of thinking when he asserted that reverie could not be controlled and that reverie was a naturally occurring phenomenon that offered pertinent insight. Romanyshyn compared reverie to "a kind of abduction" that took one on an unintended journey, a journey that ultimately led to recollections that had current relevance (p. 142). He believed that "these moments are opportunities to attend to the depths of the work, which might otherwise be forgotten" (p. 143). From a depth perspective, Romanyshyn perceived reverie as the primary way to access the unconscious.

Romanyshyn (2007), like Bachelard, captured the essence of reverie in many aspects of his writings, though he did not want to lay claim to any specific definition of reverie. Instead, Romanyshyn wrote about reverie experientially, which was evident anytime he described various phenomena:

> We can no more hold otherness with the word than we can hold water in the palm of the hand without it dripping away. There in one's open hand, those few drops seep out between one's fingers. And although a moment comes when one might want to squeeze one's hand together, the better to hold the remaining water, one can only hold it, the water, the word, the story gently, with open hand, while it continues to slip away. (p. 88)

Understanding reverie from his phenomenological perspective made it easier to locate and experience the fluid nature of what Romanyshyn (2002) so aptly illustrated through texts. He believed reverie animated the phenomenologist's world and acknowledged that ethereal descriptions of reverie bedeviled those who sought concrete substantiation of subjective experiences when he defended:

> A daydreaming phenomenologist is loyal to differences. This loyalty requires a kind of patience, the best virtue which a daydreamer has and, not surprisingly, the one which a fact-minded person often finds so irritating. This patience characterizes the style of what I call the witness, the one who stands up for the things of the world, especially for those small things which often go unnoticed, like the play of the light and shadow in a grove of trees, or the early-morning song of a bird. (p. 110)

Romanyshyn valued all aspects of various types of experiences and these integrated experiences ultimately informed his *Weltanschauung*.

Romanyshyn (2002) was also inspired by works of art and wrote in detail about his experiences with the aesthetics when he described, "Looking at paintings can be an occasion for reverie and for change. An occasion if the painting is more than what we look at; if it is also a moment which reflects how we are looking" (p.111). He believed that medieval art had a way of transporting one to a different dimension and that this realm could be accessed through reverie when he contended, "In their power to change us, paintings can create fields of reverie where conversations with the dead who always accompany us in the landscape of the imaginal can take place" (p. 113). In viewing seraphic artwork, Romanyshyn (2002) commented:

> They are everywhere, dominating the spaces which they share with our medieval ancestors, before we lost sight of them. Magnificent beings, these angels announce by their presence the continuity between the divine and the human realms. They are, as their name indicates, messengers, beings who connect us and keep us in touch with the glory and the wisdom of another order of reality. (p. 111)

In relating to art and in connecting with the world in this way, Romanyshyn believed that what had been lost could now be recovered and embodied. He valued and embraced this unique way of being in the world, though lamented:

> As a daydreaming phenomenologist, I am for better or worse a witness for what has been lost, forgotten, left behind, or otherwise marginalized and neglected, a witness for those lost things which still remain and haunt the outer margins of the

> experienced world. For their sake, and in service to them, I write in a mood of reverie and with a sense of love. (p. 113)

Romanyshyn grounded his depth and phenomenological perspective based on these ongoing experiences that he continued to revere.

Psychoanalytical

Reverie in Object Relation Theory. Child psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1975) developed Object Relation Theory. The premise of Klein's theoretical approach was that the newborn formed an intense connection to the primary caregiver whom the newborn then internalized as an *object* that had emotional and psychological significance to the newborn. This primary relationship typically had highly charged and varied emotional associations, such as affection, revulsion, fear, desire, and resistance.

Over the past 40 years, Klein's work had been further examined and her Object Relation Theory was enhanced to include other aspects of the parent child relationship, such as the mother's or primary caregiver's reverie. Neil Skolnick (2006) believed these earlier attachments were ultimately played out in the transference through projective identification. He posited that in essence, the therapist's role was to accept the transference "as a creative form of good object" (p. 1).

Reverie was the portion of Klein's theory that Wilfred Bion (1997) expanded. Bion, a psychoanalyst, strongly believed that the mother's reverie played an essential part in the formation of the child's attachment. In that regard, the ability of the infant to form a healthy attachment to the mother was contingent on the mother's ability to hold the child's projections, while maintaining a deep bond through daydream-like states (Warshaw, 1994). It was through the mother's *reverie* or projective identification that the child was able to think about his or her own emotional process. Bion (1997) further

contended that this important role played by the mother reduced the likelihood that the child would create unhealthy internal images that could, in turn, lead to harmful projective identification. This discovery informed Bion's later work regarding the relationships between the patient and the analyst in terms of the overall therapeutic relationship.

Bion (1997) was successful in defining and developing his theories about the inclusion of reverie in the therapeutic dyad in technical terms; however, Bion (2004) later expounded and shifted his understanding from a purely clinical stance to a seemingly depth perspective. This change was the result of other psychoanalysts including and accepting other emotions in the therapeutic relationship. Brown (2009) believed there was an unseen and perhaps unconscious, yet collaborative entity operating in the therapeutic relationship. Antonio Ferro (2002, 2005) had already established that this third entity was a prelude to deeper therapeutic attachment. It was this introduction of the third entity that Bion (1997) had begun to address in his later works. Spillius (2007) had also begun to address different aspects of the therapeutic relationship but often linked his understanding to Klein's projective identification concept. Even earlier the shift had begun to include the concept of erotic transference. Bion (2004) however moved forward in his thinking.

Avedis Panajian (2004) described Bion's shift in perspective in his article, "The Challenge to Stay Open: Buber and Bion" when he clarified:

> In his later *Theory of Thinking*, Bion attempts to integrate the feminine in himself, as if he has been thinking too much … He moves to poetry and to meditative states in order to spiritually liberate and aid psychoanalysis, and he tries to go deeper into the origin of being. Bion asks the mother and the analyst to take themselves outside of time and open up to faith, to encounter whatever one

> encounters. He requires us to have the freedom and the maturity to venture between memory and imagination. (p. 111-112)

Bion's shift in perspective employed a more phenomenological approach.

Heinz Kohut's Theory of Self-Psychology related to Bion's ideas about the mother's initial role, in that the initial interaction with the infant was crucial for psychological development (Kohut &Wolfe, 1978). Kohut stated that "how" the parent related to the child was more important than "what" the parent did (p. 417). His theory on mirroring suggested two types of self-objects: the parent/therapist who is fully attentive and admiring to the baby/patient and the idealized parent /therapist who served as the soothing self-object. It is through this process that the child made personal associations.

Child psychiatrist Donald Winnicott (1971) also saw important psychological and spiritual value in reverie when he stated:

> The "void within" can be a potential space for inspiration and thought, and by opening "doors and windows" in the perimeters of our psychic boundaries, we can think about the process of reverie as one which allows the soul to travel between thought and prayer, beyond our known selves, to experience the "what is not." (p. 384)

Winnicott believed that children had great psychological potential and viewed various aspects of the therapeutic relationship as pertinent and viable information to draw upon. However, Winnicott never used reverie in the clinical setting per se, but saw reverie as an experience 'within' the therapeutic relationship.

Reverie as a metaphor. In his article, "Reverie and Interpretation," psychoanalyst Thomas Ogden (1997a) used Winnicott's insight to anchor his perspective on reverie when he said, "The paradox is 'to be accepted and tolerated and respected … for it is not to be resolved' " (Winnicott, 1971, p. xii). Like Singer, Bachelard, and Romanyshyn, Ogden (1997a) agreed that to try to define reverie was exigent. He

believed, “the analyst’s reveries are personal psychological events” and “unconscious intersubjective constructions generated by analyst and analysand” (p. 567). Even though Ogden (1997a) saw therapeutic value in reverie, he was also protective about his own reveries when he confessed:

> Reverie is an exquisitely private dimension of experience involving the most embarrassingly quotidian (and yet all-important) aspects of our lives. The thoughts and feelings constituting reverie are rarely discussed with our colleagues. To attempt to hold such thoughts, feelings, and sensations in consciousness is to forgo a type of privacy that we ordinarily unconsciously rely on as a barrier separating inside from outside, public from private. (p. 567)

While Ogden (1997a) acknowledged the clandestine nature of reverie and alluded to the analyst’s associated vulnerabilities, he insisted that reverie could be utilized therapeutically, mainly in the counter-transference through projective identification. This perspective was closely associated with Kohut’s and Bion’s inter-subjectivity theories.

In his efforts to describe reverie, Ogden (1997b) fell short of attaching numinous quality to reverie, but made it known that control over reverie was tenuous at best when he implored:

> One must struggle to “hold on to” one’s reverie experience before it is “re-claimed” by the unconscious (….) A reverie that has at one moment seemed fully available to conscious awareness will frequently at the next moment seem to have “disappeared,” leaving only a nonspecific residue of feeling in its wake. (p. 720)

Even though Ogden maintained that the analyst’s reveries were private behaviors, he continued to research ways to incorporate it into his sessions. Ogden (1997a) argued that in the context of psychoanalysis, reverie was the result of what was occurring in the therapeutic relationship in that the “analyst and analysand together contribute to and participate in an unconscious intersubjectivity” (p. 568).

Ogden (1997a), who only made references to his work with adults, continued to

look for ways to incorporate reverie in his sessions when he acknowledged:

> The experience of reverie is rarely, if ever, "translatable" in a one-to-one fashion into an understanding of what is going on in the analytic relationship. The attempt to make immediate interpretive use of the affective or ideational content of our reveries usually leads to superficial interpretations in which manifest content is treated as interchangeable and latent content. . . .
>
> Our use of our reveries require[s] tolerance of the experience of being adrift. The fact that the "current" of reverie is carrying us anywhere that is of any value at all to the analytic process is usually a retrospective discovery and is almost always unanticipated. . . .
>
> No single reverie or group of reveries should be overvalued by viewing the experience as a "royal road" to the leading unconscious transference-countertransference anxiety. Reveries must be allowed to accrue meaning without analyst or analysand feeling pressured to make immediate use of them… Neither should we dismiss any reverie as simply "our stuff," i.e., as a reflection of our own unresolved conflicts, our distress regarding events in our current life (however real and important those events might be), our state of fatigue, our tendency to be self-absorbed. (p. 569)

Ogden (1997b) outlined the ongoing challenges with his theory, but argued that reverie still had a viable place in the consulting room when he made revisions in his theory to include the use of metaphors.

In Ogden's (1997b) article, "Reverie And Metaphor: Some Thoughts on How I Work as a Psychoanalyst," he contended, "Reveries (and all other derivatives of the unconscious) are viewed not as glimpses into the unconscious, but as metaphorical expressions of what the unconscious experience is like" (p. 719). In other words, when Ogden experienced a sensation or emotion (in his private reveries) and within the therapeutic relationship, he would then discuss his experience with the patient as an indicator of what was actually occurring between himself and the patient at an unconscious level. He explained, "I have found that my interventions very frequently take the form of elaborating a metaphor that the patient or I have (usually unself-consciously)

introduced" (p.723). When Ogden (1997 b) expounded on the presented metaphor, he believed he could then work through unconscious issues at the conscious level. He further explained:

> I trust that it is clear that when I speak of the use of metaphors in the analytic dialogue, I am not referring to self-consciously "poetical" use of language. Ordinary language is replete with metaphor, albeit often deadened in effect by over-usage or else hardly detectable because it has become so much a part of the meaning of the word. For example, each time a patient speaks to us or we speak to a patient about feeling "under pressure," "tongue-tied," "feeling worn out," "being deaf," "torn," "divided," "racked with pain," "emotionally drained," "not giving a shit." etc., the patient and analyst are introducing metaphors that might be elaborated, modified, "turned on their ear," and so on. (p. 725)

Ogden (1997b), however, qualified his use of reverie and metaphors as primarily being an explorative endeavor rather than it being a definitive analytic technique. He confessed, "Rather, the thoughts presented are heavily weighted in the direction of aspects of analytic technique and practice that are currently of most interest to me (perhaps because I understand them least well)" (p. 719). Ogden (1997b) continued to consider many aspects of the analytic relationship, though remained committed to developing his understanding about the way reverie and metaphors correlated.

In Speziale-Bagliacca's (2008) article, "Reverie and Metaphor: A Particular Way to Investigate the Unconscious," he described reverie when he stated, "to daydream or to dream without actually sleeping" (p. 351). Speziale-Bagliacca contended that the images and emotions that arise during psychoanalysis could be verbalized in the form of a metaphor, and then that metaphor can be expanded upon by transforming the metaphor into a daydream. He believed that such images from reverie were rich in interpretive and therapeutic value, which provided tools that could be used diagnostically to facilitate transformation. Though Speziale-Bagliacca believed in the efficacy of reverie as a

distinct modality, he also contended that the analyst must possess a specific predisposition when he explained:

> One has to enter a peculiar state: one has to be able to let oneself go. To explain what "let oneself go" means in this case, we can think of the very popular picture books, of the Pentica series, "Single Image Random Dot Stereogram,"…The books contain two-dimensional reproductions that look like normal color pictures but, if you look at them in a particular way, you can see hidden three-dimensional images. (p. 352)

Speziale-Bagliacca ultimately believed that if an analyst did not possess these skills, the analyst and the patient could be trained. He described briefly how to mediate this process: "I manage to put myself into an attitude of "evenly suspended attention" as I await a reverie. My patient's words fade into the background"(p. 352). Speziale-Bagliacca prepared for reverie by placing himself in a self-induced prehypnotic state.

A new term that has emerged to describe reverie is "associative dreaming" (Cwik, 2011, p. 14). Associative dreaming uses Jung's 1914 active imagination to bring attention to the unconscious occurrences within the therapeutic milieu. In fact nothing has been scrutinized more than the therapeutic relationship (Jacoby, 1984; Schwartz-Salant, 1998; Sedgwick, 2001; Spiegelman, 1996; Stern et al., 1998). It was established that the deep bond between a therapist and patient was just as important as the therapist reflections and paraphrasing. Ogden (2004) expounded:

> Feeling known in the analytic situation is not so much a feeling of being understood as it is a feeling that the analyst knows who one is. This is communicated in part through the analysts speaking to the patient in such a way that what he says and the way he says it could've been spoken by no other analyst to know other patient. (pp. 866-867)

Even though specific aspects of the therapeutic relationship cannot be identified as more important than the other, many have speculated that the therapist reverie acts as a portal to intrapsychic activity in the patient (Schaverien, 2007).

Reverie in the transference and counter-transference. Elena Molinari (2011) speculated in her article, "From One Room to the Other: A Story of Contamination, The Relationship Between Child and Adult Analysis," that there was an obvious difference in the way the analyst approached therapy with children versus therapy with an adult. She compared "the analysis of children to painting and that of adults to writing" (p. 791). Using these two metaphors made it easier to imagine aspects of the therapeutic dyad, although it excluded how the analyst might be perceived. Molinari later rectified this in the same article, when she stated:

> Reflecting on my experiences, I feel that I am a different psychoanalyst … . When I work with children, "I think less." When I am with children, I immerse myself in practical activities … in such a way as to take me further away from reflective thought and from what can be experienced as cluttering the mind. (p. 794)

In her description, Molinari intimated at a form of reverie that she later associated with Bion's theory, in the sense that the analyst "abandons memory and desire" to remain in tuned with his or her own intra-psychic activities (p. 794). Molinari viewed this attention to one's own unconscious as equally important data.

In reflecting on her sensations after the sessions, Molinari (2011) described a state of reverie when she disclosed:

> When writing up notes on a session of child analysis, I have a far greater sense of the presence of inexpressible fragments, whether in terms of the sequence of the play or the meaning of the narrative. Accompanying this is the sensation of having incorporated many images into a process, which comes close to a kind of slow assimilation until I feel as though the images have become my own. (p. 794)

Molinari realized that in theory this type of reverie seemed logical, but in practice, she explained, "When I am working with children, daydreams emerge very quickly through playing and I know that just as if I were painting, I will be unable for some time to reflect

on the process with a clear frame of mind" (p. 797). Molinari drew closer to the core of these sensations when she further concluded:

> Rather than understanding through counter-transference […] I feel through a kind of involvement which revolves around seeing and which entails avoiding tracing clear boundaries between oneself and the other or between oneself and objects—a feeling similar to that of being moved by a painting. At times, I even feel anxious about being captured by this way of feeling, with the result that my capacity to think will remain subjugated by it. (pp. 797-798)

Molinari realized there was an ethereal quality to what she described and found value in it, though she continued to grapple with the complexities inherent in the transference and counter-transference field.

A therapist can never fully prepare for *what* material a patient presents, nor for *how* the material might pervade the therapist's psyche (Waska, 2009). In other words, while the patient's transferential material is often evident, and considered an inevitable and viable entity in the therapeutic encounter, counter-transference reactions can be equally illuminating, if not more so for both the therapist and the patient. Waska (2009) asserts:

> In our efforts to establish analytic contact with patients, we are in extremely close, intimate proximity to their unconscious visions of themselves and their objects. We have to be close to the fire to understand why and how it burns so brightly and destructively. In doing so, we often end up covered in ashes ourselves. (p. 104)

The therapeutic field is clearly interactive, and one must be aware of and be able to appreciate how these dynamics might ultimately influence the work.

Based on a therapist's theoretical orientation, counter-transference enactment can be described in many ways. Goldberg (2002) and Hirsch (1998) offer a psychoanalytic perspective, and assert that counter-transference enactments are essentially inescapable, and can be used to aid the analytic work. Maroda (1998), on the other hand, believes that

enactment stems from a parallel process within the analytic dyad that can either enhance or harm the analysis when she stated:

> Regardless who has initiated the enactment, it obviously has potency and therapeutic relevance only if it is mutual. If one side drops the ball and does not participate, no enactment occurs. In fact, one could argue that a major factor in a good analytic match is the ability of the analyst and patient to stimulate a therapeutic level of enactment between them, along with the ability to work the accompanying strong affects. Too little enactment leads to stagnation; too much leads to premature termination, impasse, or unacceptable acting out (repeated sadistic encounters, sexual acting out, etc.) p. 521

The psychoanalytic consensus reflects that while counter-transference enactments are inevitable, it is important for the analyst to have some awareness about these vital dynamics, and the myriad of effects, both positive and untoward, it can have in the treatment.

Another Kleinian point of view on counter-transference enactment gives credence to projective identification in terms of boundary concerns, and the challenges it creates within the therapeutic relationship (Waska, 2009). What is also compelling about the Kleinian perspective is that it considers the analyst's behavior to be just as salient as the patient's transference. Anderson (1995) believed:

> Enactments often are the analyst's defensive response to the threat of concrete projections that are experienced as an incessant attack. In a similar vein, O'Shaughnessy (1992), Feldman (1997), and Caper (1997) have noted how enactments can serve as a defensive refuge from painful realities for both patient and analyst. (p. 102)

As Maroda (1998) mentioned, in many cases, these projections can be sorted out and worked through in a productive manner; however, in some instances, the activated material can be so evocative to both analyst and patient, that the treatment might stagnate due to resistances in the transference /counter-transference field and thus become counterproductive.

Helen Morgan (2010) makes the point that while understanding transference and counter-transference is important, it is not tantamount to transformation. In other words, it is possible that many factors influence the therapeutic field and these events might attribute positively or negatively to the case outcome. Ultimately, it is not *what* the therapist does, but *who* the therapist is that appears to elicit long lasting change.

Conversely, Goodman and Parlow (2010) believe that the client's current level of relating in the world is based primarily on early relationships and attachment style as described by Bowlby. This learned behavior ultimately manifests with the therapist. When this presents in a counterproductive manner, as outlined by the client's associated narrative, behaviors, and affect, then the therapist has an opportunity to provide a corrective experience through current interactions with the client. Depth psychology anticipates and embraces these interactions as viable opportunities to effect important and mutual transformation.

Counter-transference is viewed as an unconscious desire in the therapist induced by the patient (Ferro, 1999). Bonovitz (2009) takes this a step further and asserts that counter-transference is the therapist's entire reaction, conscious and unconscious to the patient. This would include the therapist's childhood recollections and associated emotions tied to certain events. Additionally, how the therapist incorporates those thoughts and reactions in the work with the child is significant. The article chosen will detail what role counter-transference plays, particularly as it relates to the therapist's childhood recall and associated positive or negative connections.

In the past, these childhood memories being played out, usually unconsciously in the therapist, were viewed negatively, but now they are considered an important aspect of the therapeutic alliance. In other words, if the therapist can access the child parts of his or

her self, then the empathic connection with the patient would be greater. Especially in working with children, it is typical for therapists to get distracted by reverie about their own memories from their youth. However, what is most important is how these recollections are used within the transference/counter-transference field (Bonovitz, 2009).

Even though there may be instances where memories are difficult, the therapist's counter-transference can be used to enhance the therapeutic process. For instance, if the therapist were conscious of how he or she is affected then they are likely be more in tuned with the child/patient's inner world (Bonovitz, 2009). This awareness is vital in helping the child gain insight and to helping the patient work through particular concerns. The therapist ultimately builds a bridge where there is a meeting of the psyche on a deeper level. It is here where transformation is possible for both the therapist and the child.

There has been much controversy about how counter-transference can be useful but little research has been related to counter-transference and children (Akert & Stockhamer, 1965; Friend, 1972; Giovacchini, 1973; Levy-Warren, 1996). In general, the effect that the child has on the therapist is considered important and the fact that little attention has been given to this particular transference/counter-transference field is a manifestation/indication of the overall issues with therapist's counter-transference who work with children (Marshall, 1979). In fact, theorists cautioned that the therapist's counter-transference could be harmful to the therapeutic relationship (Bick, 1962; Bornstein, 1948). This perspective does not shed a positive light on how counter-transference can be used to enhance the therapeutic encounter (Bonovitz, 2009).

Recently however, there have been shifts in this line of thinking, and most theorists believe that the therapist's counter-transference with children is useful

(Brandell, 1992; Ekstein, Wallerstein, & Mandelbaum, 1959). In fact, Winnicott (1949) asserted that it was necessary to dislike the patient in order to connect with feelings of love, and that this complex dynamic in the therapeutic relationship was a crucial part for the infant to access the mother's love. So, it is plausible that based on this factor, the counter-transference is not only useful, but also encouraged.

For example, the therapist's own childhood memories and embodying those earlier characteristics is one form of counter-transference. Another type of counter-transference is where the therapist may recall herself as a sibling, parent, grandparent, or companion with the child patient. Having awareness about those instances can bring the therapist in touch with playful aspects of those types of relationships and those recollections can be utilized to facilitate a transformation in both the therapist and the child (Bonovitz, 2009). These previously disowned parts and new experiences can then be integrated in a productive and positive manner as opposed to in the past (Brown, 1995).

Counter-transference is just as active with children as with adult patients. During child play therapy, the therapist's childhood memories as well as the parent, sibling, and friend parts are activated. Many of these aspects are typically unconscious, but are alive and interactive in the transference/counter-transference field. Like Bonovitz (2009), many therapists welcome these as opportunities to not only deepen the patient's work, but to also recover and perhaps replay and work through unconscious activities made conscious because of a child patient's work. The key is to ultimately be able to distinguish what can be useful in helping patients integrate their own parts and not the therapist's.

The Numinous: A Historical Perspective

Mysticism. According to Ninian Smart (1978), a researcher on mysticism, interpreting numinous or religious experiences is a complex endeavor. He asserted, "Understanding is a matter of degree. …So when we explore how it is that we may understand someone else's religious experience, it will be a matter of what degree of understanding can be obtained and in what circumstances" (p. 10). Smart believed that in comprehending religious experiences (which he initially used interchangeably with mystical experiences), there needed to be an initial attention to perceptions *and* in what context these experiences were happening.

This dissertation does not refer to religious experiences. However, in describing numinous experiences (in the presented cases), there are qualities (as described in this literature review) that frame the overall affective nature of the numinous experiences referred to in the research. Additionally, "There can be existential and/or theoretical understanding (of different degrees) of religious, dramatic, and/or interpreted experiences, which crop up inside or outside religious and analogous traditions" (Smart, 1978, p. 12). Rudolph Otto (1958), a theologian, succinctly qualified this stance in his understanding as well.

Theological. Many ineffable experiences are identified as religious experiences (Smart, 1978), but even Otto (1958) made distinctions in his description of numinous experiences to try to bracket out the religious aspect when he asserted:

> The feeling of it may at times come sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind with a tranquil mood of deepest worship. It may pass over into a more set and lasting attitude of the soul, continuing as it were, thrillingly vibrant and resonant, until at last it dies away and the soul resumes its "profane," non-religious mood of everyday experience … . It also has its wild and demonic forms and can sink to an almost grisly horror and shuddering. It has its crude, barbaric

> antecedents and early manifestations, and again it may be developed into something beautiful and pure and glorious. It may become the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of—whom or what? In the presence of that which is a *mystery* inexpressible and above all creatures. (pp. 12-13)

Otto avoided using the word religion in his account of a numinous experience, but captured the essence of an experience that was truly *sui generis*. In that regard he ascribed to a distinct emotional state to which he attached the term *mysterium tremendum et fascinans.* This affective state is how Otto distinguished his understanding of the numinous when he expounded:

> Its nature is such that it grips or stirs the human mind with this and that determinate affective state. … We must once again endeavor, by adducing feelings akin to them for the purpose of analogy or contrast, and by the use of metaphor and symbolic expressions, to make the state of mind we are investigating ring out, as it were, of themselves. (p. 12)

Otto began to situate his understanding of the numinous, not from a cognitive or necessarily religious perspective, but from a point of view that represented one's emotional or intra-psychic state of mind.

Carl Jung (1936/1969) agreed with Otto's assessment about numinous experiences having a definitive affective quality but Jung attached, "religion and spiritual" as additional qualifiers to compliment his theories on archetypes when he explained:

> Before I pursue my reflections further, I must stress one aspect of the archetypes which will be obvious to anybody who has practical experience of these matters. That is, the archetypes have, when they appear, a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as "spiritual," if "magical" is too strong a word. Consequently, this phenomenon is of the utmost significance for the psychology of religion. In its effects, it is anything but unambiguous. It can be healing or destructive, but never indifferent, provided of course that it has attained a certain degree of clarity. This aspect deserves the epithet "spiritual" above all else. (1969, p. 205, para. 405)

Jung appreciated Otto's perspective on the numinous, but he primarily incorporated Otto's understanding of the numinous as an adjective that reflected his strong feelings about the intense nature of an archetypal experience. Without the associated spiritual component, Jung did not give much numinous credence to the experience.

Depth psychology. Roderick Main (2006), in *The Idea of the Numinous*, scrutinized Jung's use of Otto's numinous when he reported:

> In sum, much of Jung's basic characterization of the numinous straightforwardly agrees with Otto's. He retains from Otto an appreciation of the potent, compelling, and ambiguous nature of numinous experience (*tremendum et fascinans*) and, unlike other depth psychologists, remains genuinely open to the transcendent reality of the religious object (*the mysterium*)… . However, in appropriating Otto's concept of the numinous, Jung modifies it in a number of ways that connect it closely to the human and empirical. (p. 159)

While Jung may have appropriated and interpreted Otto's understanding of the numinous differently to expand aspects of his theoretical perspective, Jung fully embraced Otto's interpretation of a numinous experience.

Lionel Corbett (2007), Depth Psychologist, author, and physician maintained:

> If we develop a spirituality based on our own personal experience of the sacred, and find a workable way of speaking about the Unspeakable, there is no need to fall back on ancient traditions and the experiences of people long ago. (p. 4)

Corbett (2007) did not believe in concretizing the definition of a numinous experience nor did he believe numinous experiences were special occurrences when he contended, "Numinous experiences are not confined to special people. They may happen to anyone at anytime, and they are more common than is generally acknowledged. There are various vehicles or portals through which they may be expressed" (p. 13). Corbett (2007) normalized the numinous experience and aligned his perspective with Jung's in that, "at most, a numinous experience is a pointer, and expresses the sacred as an image or symbol" (p. 35).

Corbett (2011) later refined his earlier descriptions of the numinous when he suggested:

> There are universal accounts of mystical experiences that allow us to infer the existence of a transcendent reality […] They are so consistent across time and geography that they must be taken into account […] As a discipline, psychology cannot prove that they are experiences of a transpersonal dimension […] It may have a sensory quality, or it may simply feel like a sense of presence. What matters in the therapeutic setting is that the individual takes the experience to be one of the sacred. (p. 9)

Though Corbett (2011) reflected on the commonalities that surfaced when describing the numinous, he concurred that the overall experience might be subjective. In other words, what appeared to be salient was how the individual experienced the event and not the actual event itself. According to Corbett (2011), "While there are no logical proofs of the existence of a spiritual realm, a direct experience of the sacred or the holy *is* convincing to the one who experiences it" (p. 10).

Corbett (2011) also believed that the therapist's experiences and receptivity to numinous occurrences are important in terms of validating and framing the work. He asserted, "For those of us who accept that numinous experiences are experiences of the sacred dimension, the problem becomes one of integrating the experience into the larger context of our lives" (p. 68).

Corbett (2011) may have responded to this interesting conundrum when he contemplated, "with a spiritual sensibility, one can see any creature or any object that inspires awe, a sense of beauty, mystery, grace, or terror as an expression of the divine. With this vision, we can re-sacralize or re-enchant the world" (p. 80). Ninian Smart (1978) however maintained a more tentative perspective when he asserted:

> For what is often forgotten is that we have a long and delicate path to pick before we are really in a position to make an evaluation; and that path is

> phenomenological. It means that we must be able to disentangle varieties of religious experiences, have a nose for degrees of interpretation in their descriptions, see what they meant existentially, place them in their living contexts and so on. (p. 20)

Smart confirmed the ongoing subjectivity that began decades ago, yet persists today.

Tobin Hart (2003), a researcher on children's mystical experiences, agreed with Smart's perspective and believed that these deeply moving experiences taken out of context could have divergent meaning. Like Corbett (2011), Hart preferred to use the term *spiritual* as opposed to religious when he asserted, "But defining it is a bit like trying to hold water in our hands. We can hold some for a while and we may even bring some to our mouth and swallow, but a great deal just passes through unconfined, ungrasped (p. 7). Hart ultimately believed that spirituality was not an experience that could be detached from the individual but that spirituality was an embodied essence. Hart stated that we should, "think of ourselves as spiritual beings having human experiences" (pp.7-8). On the other hand, Walter Stace (1961), a philosopher and educator who wrote about mysticism, surmised:

> It is probably impossible … to isolate 'pure' experience. Yet, although we may never be able to find sense experience completely free of any interpretation, it can hardly be doubted that a sensation is one thing and its conceptual interpretation is another. (p. 31)

While conjecture about numinous phenomenon continued, philosophers, theologians and psychologists mostly accepted this line of thought as a necessary evil that perpetuated diverse discussions on the matter.

Helene Shulman (1997) argued that even though the types of experiences that Stace (1961), Hart (2003), and Corbett (2011) refer to are highly subjective and difficult

to validate, that these experiences should not be minimized. However, as Mageo and Howard (1996) pointed out:

> In the normative "enlightened" modern situation, even in the rare corners where the uncanny may be encountered, its *validity* as a knowledge-yielding experience is now discounted. It becomes a fascinating illusion, or cover story for supermarket checkout magazines. Experience, doctrine, and epistemology have all shifted. As we pass beyond the modern, all this may shift again. (p. 20)

Mageo and Howard were not that far off in their perceptions over a decade ago. Understanding and experiences in terms of spirituality continued to shift throughout the years to consider inexplicable phenomena.

In fact, Myron Denney (also known as Mike Denney, 2002), a physician and Depth Psychologist, hypothesizes in his article "Walking the Quantum Talk" about different spiritual approaches to healing. Denney (2002) expounded on the notion that prayers might be palliative or curative when he suggested:

> When we start to think in this way, we begin to enter into a true quantum shift in consciousness. As laudable as the current research might be, we begin to entertain the possibility that perhaps we cannot prove nonlinear, quantum questions by seeking cause-and-effect answers to linear, human-made questions. We begin to wonder whether, in addition to our ordinary research, we must enter into the paradoxical mystery of quanta itself. We may even begin to seek understanding and enlightenment rather than just scientific proof. (p. 22)

The consensus has continued to shift in that as Denney mentioned, these possibilities might best be discovered experientially rather than solely through perpetual intellectual conjecture.

Reverie and the Numinous in the Inner World of Children

"Children have a secret spiritual life" (Hart, 2003, p. 1). Hart preferred the term spiritual as opposed to religious and qualified the terms when he stated, "Religion is a

systemized approach to spiritual growth formed around doctrines and standards … *Spiritual* refers to an intimate and direct influence of the divine in our lives ”(p. 8). Hart embraced spiritual as a way of being that accounted for the way an individual navigated the world rather than spirituality being a separate entity outside of the individual. Hart believed that because children have an innocent perception of the world that “they can often penetrate to the heart of an issue and open to an intuitive source of *wisdom*” that offered hope for them (p. 10). Hart viewed spirituality as a normal part of development in children. Corbett (2007) also normalized children’s experiences when he stated:

> Children are particularly receptive to numinous experience because their sensitivity has not yet become blunted by exposure to social expectations. They lack the prejudices of adulthood and are still permeable to transpersonal experience. They are therefore not surprised if they meet a fairy at the bottom of the garden or are visited by angels. (p. 27)

Corbett believed that all children have the propensity for such experiences, but if a child was taught that these experiences were abnormal or pathological these awe inspiring moments may never come to fruition and children may try to avoid them.

“Children have the capacity to connect or relate deeply with others” (Hart, 2003, p. 12). Hart contended that while children may at times be confounded by happenings in their surroundings and caught up in their own childhood and normal dramas, children “simultaneously have the capacities for deep empathy and compassion” (p. 12). He also stated that despite their ability to engage in self-absorbed activities, children are able to maintain a harmonized attachment to others, and that this type of connection was often overlooked by psychologists.

“Children *see* in other ways as well” (Hart, 2003, p. 12). Hart believed that children had the capacity to access different realms of knowing and understanding that he

considered to be spiritual. He cautioned that this perspective may be considered "controversial" and described:

> When consciousness opens, we may notice things that we did not sense before—we may *see the invisible.* The revelation from the sages and mystics is that the world is not just physical form; rather, it is multidimensional—layers upon layers of existence—and children's natural openness often allows them to see into it. These insights may help reveal more of who we are and what the universe is. (p.12)

Hart asserted that if we could learn to incorporate this type of connection and understanding, these experiences could lead to a more fulfilled and sacred life.

Rumi (1995), the Sufi poet, also described a deeper level of understanding and connection in his poem "Two Kinds of Intelligence":

There is another kind of tablet, one
Already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness
in the center of the chest. This other intelligence
does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
and it doesn't move from the outside to inside
through the conduits of plumbing-learning.
The second knowing is a fountainhead
from within you, moving out. (p. 178)

Rumi gave great credence to these accessible and internal resources that guide us intuitively. Today, these internal resources are often ignored for more tangible and quantifiable validation (Hart, 2003).

Play Therapy

Nevertheless, children access their imaginative and spiritual resources through play (Axline, 1974). "Children learn especially through their free play with the world" (Hart, 2003, p. 164). In the therapeutic environment, the child receives unconditional positive regard. Axline (1974) believed that nondirective play and a nurturing bond with the child was the foundation for great change within the child and in his or her

environment. Moustakas (1959) also believed this was a shared process when he stated, "Step by step therapist and child share significant experiences and each in his own way comes to new self-insight" (p. 4).

Moustakas (1959) believed the objects in the play room setting as equally important to the therapeutic process when he explained:

> Sand, water, paints, and clay are among the most frequently used items. The unstructured nature of these materials makes it possible for the child to use them in a way that enables him to express and release tense, pent-up feelings. (p. 5)

Sand Play

Margaret Lowenfeld also understood the importance of non-directive play and the importance of having available objects that might help the child re create their inner world (Taylor, 2009). In particular, Lowenfeld (1979) developed Sandtray therapy in the early 1900s. At that time, Lowenfeld referred to Sandtray as the "World Technique." In this modality, a tray (75 x 50 x 7 cm.) is filled halfway with sand and placed on a waist-high table. Small objects and figures are used to reflect life, landscape, and movement (i.e. trees, scoop, hose, etc.), along with other assorted items. According to Lowenfeld (1979) clients may use these objects as a way to relay feelings and to work through concerns. This technique was later enhanced by Dora Kalff (1980) who applied a Jungian perspective, which viewed Sandtray as a vehicle for healing at the unconscious level. These healing properties have been evident in sand-play therapy with children.

Integrative Approaches

Creative arts and non-verbal psychotherapies are alternative modalities to talk therapy and medication (Körlin, Nybäck, & Goldberg, 2000). A significant aspect of creative therapies is that imagery and inventive representations are seen as metaphors or

signs of the individual's unconscious. Such techniques help connect, shape, and assimilate events, recollections, and feelings that cannot be directly put into words. The methods used consist of art therapy, active and receptive music therapy, dance therapy, psychodrama, and expressive arts therapy. Many of these techniques are connected and used in a variety of ways. A significant aspect of creative therapies is that imagery and inventive representations are seen as metaphors or signs of the individual's unconscious. Toy weapons, dolls, and a variety of items are used, "but by no means is the setting or atmosphere determined solely by play materials and equipment or space" (Moustakas, 1959, p. 5). Moustakas also believed how the therapist related to the child was equally important.

Various techniques have been devised to help with a child's psychological development, though without consideration for the developing *soul* (Hillman, 1996). Hillman, an archetypal psychologist, expressed a sense of urgency regarding this lack of attention to children's psyche in his earlier work, *The Soul's Code: In Search of Character and Calling*, when he asserted:

> A restructuring in perception is what I am after … I want us to see the child we were, the adult we are, and the children who require us in one way or another, in a light that shifts the valences from curse to blessing, or if not blessing at least symptom of calling. (1996, p. 35)

Hillman echoed Alice Miller's (1986) earlier perceptions about children and aspects of child psychology when Miller, author and child advocate stated:

> It wasn't until I wrote my books that I found out just how hostile society is toward children and how it ignores this fact. … More recently I have come to realize that hostility toward children is to be found in countless forms… even in most schools of therapy (p. 18).

In her later comment, Miller was referring to psychoanalysis and specifically to the theorists who developed, "the theory of infantile sexuality" (p. 19). She believed that this

perspective was a blatant projection with unsubstantiated claims that propelled numerous and misguided theories about children and childhood. Miller wrote about those theories in the past tense and later reflected:

> Now that new therapeutic approaches which help patients uncover the traumas of their childhood have restored speech to those who were threatened and forced to be silent as children, these newly awakened voices will henceforth play a role in enlightening and humanizing society. No longer will they speak solely in the symbolic, i.e., disguised, forms of literature and art, for now they can communicate directly, with full consciousness and full responsibility. (p. 24)

On the surface, child play therapy may appear to be cathartic for the child simply on the basis of the act of play itself. However, by reviewing these imaginative expressions from a depth and archetypal perspective it may offer a different and more soulful way of being present with the child as they explore their developing spiritual psyche and imagination.

Therapy with children can be challenging and rewarding. In the optimum therapeutic environment, play therapy is the most viable option in terms of allowing children to express her or himself freely. One of the most important considerations however is the temenos and the therapist's presence. According to Axline (1974), when the child feels safe, "bit by bit, with extreme caution, the child externalizes that inner self and states it with increasing candor and sometimes with dramatic flair" (p. ii).

Children "play out" their issues where as adults can talk out their issues in therapy (Axline, 1974). Play therapy can be directive in that the therapist guides the process and nondirective where the child guides the process. During play therapy, the child begins to learn about himself or herself in relation to the therapist. In this process, the therapist responds in a way that relays safety and openness for the child to explore their environment that includes the relationship with the therapist, the relationship with themselves and ultimately in relationships with others. At the same time, the child is

learning ways to use this freedom responsibly. Because of this self-examination through play therapy, the child learns self-respect and respect for others. The therapist's presence also becomes a major factor not only in terms of *what* the child chooses to reveal, but in the manner the material manifests. In other words, when the play is nondirected and there is unconditional positive regard, there is also perhaps space for the child to access deeper concerns—concerns that perhaps transcends the immediate and most visible behavioral manifestations. The child can continue their spiritual journey, uninhibited and with confidence and grace.

The use of Corbin's Creative Imagination (1969) here does not imply fantasy and nor does it have psychological connotations. Corbin's perspective on Creative Imagination does not align with Jung's Active Imagination, or the Westernized sense of the phrase. Corbin's Creative Imagination, takes shape in the spiritual realm, which emanates from his background in studying the Islamic spiritual teachings related to Shi'ite Sufism. Corbin expounds on his understanding of Creative Imagination and on the realm from which it emanates when he described:

> Between the world of pure spiritual Lights (*Luces victoriales*, the world of the "Mothers" in the terminology of *Ishraq*) and the sensory universe, (…) the world to which the ancient Sages alluded when they affirmed that beyond the sensory world there exists another universe with a contour and dimensions and extension in a space, although these are not comparable with the shape and spatiality as we perceive them in the world of physical bodies. (pp. 42-43)

Here, Corbin alludes to a highly spiritual, yet imaginal, realm. He further contends that many references to the unconscious and the imagination have been reduced to fantasy and states a shift in perspective beyond tangible theories needs to take place in order to begin to explore other possibilities. This dissertation considered that shift.

According to Bloom (1969), in the preface to *Alone with the Alone*, the *imaginal* and Active Imagination that Corbin refers to warrants a definition because to move forward one needs to understand his perspective which differs from Jung's and the Western world in that with Corbin's perspective, Bloom described:

> the schema in which the imaginal world is by its essence the intermediate world, and the articulation between the intellectual and the sensible, in which the Active Imagination as *imaginatio vera* is an organ of understanding mediating between intellect and sense and as legitimate as these latter and that world itself. (p. xvi)

Corbin described a seemingly complex yet viable betwixt and between world that is spiritual and alive. Bloom further warns that the imaginal world taken out of this context would not be conducive to the full understanding of ongoing and deeper extrapolations on the matter as Corbin envisions it within these specific parameters.

To capture the essence of this imaginal realm, Corbin (1969) relied on the era of the Romantics, which included the philosophies of Boehme and Paracelsus. Seen through the veil of that timeframe, Corbin asserted:

> We wish to stress on the one hand the notion of the *Imagination* as the *magical* production of an *image*, the very type and model of magical action, or of all action as such, but especially of creative action; and, on the other hand, the notion of the image as a body (*magical* body, a *mental* body), in which are incarnated the thought and will of the soul. The Imagination as a creative magical potency which, giving birth to the sensible, produces the Spirit in forms and colors (…). But a warning is necessary at the very outset: this *Imaginatio* must not be confused with *fantasy*. As Paracelsus already observed, fantasy, unlike Imagination, is an exercise of thought without foundation in nature, it is the "madman's cornerstone" (p. 179).

Corbin grounded his perspective in spiritualism, philosophy, and creative imagination rather than allowing his thoughts to be anchored in a literal interpretation. In further distinguishing his thoughts, Corbin situated the Imagination in "the place of the soul or souls" (p. xv).

Corbin appeared to expand on this notion as a type of portal or holding space for unseen, yet heartfelt and imaginal possibilities when he further explained:

> The Imagination is the "place of apparition" of spiritual beings, Angels and Spirits, who in it assume the figures and forms of their "apparitional forms"; and because in the pure concepts (*ma' ani*)and sensory data (*mahsusat*) meet and flower into personal figures prepared for the events of spiritual dramas. (p. 189)

According to Hillman, "the aim of therapy (q.v.) is the development of a sense of soul, the middle ground of psychic realities, and the method of therapy is cultivation of imagination" (1983a, p. 4). Corbin's *mundus imaginalis* might make a place for such engagement more than a possibility.

Corbin's and Hillman's perspective help situate a betwixt and between world that is often difficult to articulate. Where Corbin's understanding might derive from a seemingly esoteric perception, it espouses archetypal discernment. In other words, the commonality might be its locus; within the archetypal trajectory of ethereal possibilities. This perspective might eliminate or minimize the urge to make literal associations to terms such as the imagination when trying to articulate concepts that may at least be in the same genre. Hillman (1983a) concludes:

> This development of true imaginative power (the *vera imagination* of Paracelsus; the *himma* of the heart of Corbin) and the ability to live one's life in the company of ghosts, familiars, ancestors, guides—the populace of the metaxy—are also aims of an archetypal. (p. 46)

Corbin's *mundus imaginalis* sheds light on another realm that may be viewed as a portal to engage a deeper source of possibilities that may in turn lead to a deeper source of healing.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Procedures

Methodology: Heuristic Inquiry

Heuristic originated from "the Greek word *heuriskein,* meaning to discover or to find" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristic investigation can be used to uncover research problems or to understand the unique dimensions of an experience. The hypothesis guides the research and the process of discovery becomes the main endeavor. Whatever path or steps are taken during the research process becomes the correct path.

Expounding on the complex processes involved in heuristic examination, Braud and Anderson (1998) asserted:

> Any and all sources of evidence, ways of knowing, and ways of working with and expressing knowledge, findings, and conclusions can be brought to bear on the issues being researched. Both *emic* and *etic*, both subjective/experiential and objective/conservational modes of knowing, are recognized and honored. There is an epistemological stance of what William James (1912/1976) called *radical empiricism* – a stance that excludes anything that is not directly experienced but includes *everything* that is directly experienced, by anyone involved in the research effort. Thus, the research participant's subjective experiences and self-perceptions are treated as valid data, as are the experiences and perceptions of the investigator. There is an important place for intuitive, tacit, and direct knowing; for various arational ways of processing information; and for a variety of forms of creative expression in conducting and communicating research. (p. 241)

Essentially, whatever yielded insight, or a shift in perspective about the experience of reverie as it could lead to the numinous became a product of the researcher's unique investigative process.

Heuristic inquiry also "refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9). Heuristic inquiry is an organic process whereas the researcher is guided in such a way that is unique to the

researcher's own tacit knowing and intuition. According to Moustakas, the main objective of heuristic inquiry was to "recognize whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness, to receive and accept it, and then to dwell on its nature and possible meanings" (p.11). Like a gestalt, information begins to come into focus once both the researcher and the research process connect in a unifying way.

In order to experience a modification in understanding or to gain new perspective about a phenomenon, heuristic examination required the researcher to have direct experience with the phenomenon under investigation. Moustakas (1990) expounded on that notion when he stated:

> In heuristic investigations, I may be entranced by visions, images, and dreams that connect me to my quest. I may come in touch with new regions of myself, and discover revealing connections with others. Through the guides of a heuristic design, I am able to see and understand in a different way. (p.11)

This process essentially brought forth rich data that ultimately facilitated lasting psychospiritual growth.

According to Romanyshyn (2007), "Re-search with soul in mind, re-search that proceeds in depth and from the depths, is about finding what has been lost, forgotten, neglected, marginalized, or otherwise left behind" (p. xi). Researchers in the past had examined the experience of reverie and the numinous separately; however research that considered possible relationships between reverie as it could lead to the numinous were nonexistent. By way of heuristic investigation, this dissertation examined those connections.

The context I used to frame the study was by exploring a series of Child Centered Play Therapy sessions in case history format. Five nonactive cases were compiled into composite case histories. As outlined in the introduction to this study and expanded on in

the commentary and literature pertinent to the method section, case history was established by Freud in the early 1900's as a way of presenting dynamic psychotherapeutic experiences (Rieff, 1963a). In the same vein, case history was used in this investigation as arts based data. Hillman's (1983b) discernment, in terms of his theory on "healing fiction" was incorporated to expand on Freud's observations about the therapist's unconscious processes. Both Hillman and Freud believed the therapist's psychic content was inevitably embedded within the case history narrative.

Essential to heuristic investigation is the inclusion of the researcher's unique processes and how those processes are narrated. Moustakas (1990) contended:

> The story of a crucial human experience must be told in such a way that in itself it enables self-transformation, as in Buber's tale of the lame grandfather who while imitating the way in which his holy Baal Shem would hop and dance while praying, suddenly himself began to hop and dance and was dramatically cured of his lameness. (p. 14)

In this dissertation, Freud's and Hillman's complimentary perspectives on case narration were used as a foundation and framework for case history presentation.

Procedures

There are six phases inherent in Moustakas' (1990) heuristic approach: "Initial Engagement, Immersion, Incubation, Illumination, Explication, and the final Creative Synthesis" (pp. 27-31). In the *Initial Engagement* phase, the researcher is inquisitive about a personal experience; an experience that could ultimately have deeper personal meaning and socio-cultural implications. Based on the significant experience, the researcher then formulates a research question. According to Moustakas:

> The engagement or encountering of a question that holds personal power is a process that requires inner receptiveness, a willingness to enter fully into the theme, and to discover from within the spectrum of life experiences that will

> clarify and expand knowledge of the topic and illuminate the terms of the question. (p. 27)

During this initial phase of the investigation, the researcher sought deeper understanding about her experiences of reverie as it could lead to the numinous.

In the second phase, *Immersion*, the researcher deepened into the research question by recalling specific instances of reverie as it could lead to the numinous. "Everything in his or her life becomes crystallized around the question"(Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). In maintaining close contact with anything associated with the research question, the investigator also maintains openness and epistemic humility to allow for new or modified insight to manifest. To conduct this phase in heuristic examination, the researcher relied on "spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension" (p. 28). Tacit knowledge and intuition became an important aspect of the research process.

In the *Incubation* phase, the investigator is no longer consumed with the research topic. "Although the researcher is moving on a totally different path, detached from involvement with the question and removed from awareness of its nature and meanings, on another level expansion of knowledge is taking place" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). Different or modified knowledge about the research question begins to surface. Like a gestalt, the researcher begins to see the whole. A natural awakening then occurs in the illumination phase.

In the *Illumination* phase, the researcher is in touch with new and expanded knowledge about the research question. Moustakas (1990) contended:

> The illumination as such is a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question. The illumination process may be an awakening to new constituents of the experience, thus adding new dimensions of knowledge. Or, the illumination may involve corrections of distorted understandings or disclosure of hidden meanings. (p. 29)

Information about the phenomenon that was perhaps out of the researcher's awareness begins to materialize and in a pertinent way. This new or modified way of understanding the experience opens the path towards transformation.

In the *Explication* phase, the researcher explores more deeply the new perceptions and meanings. Maintaining a sense of openness, "the heuristic researcher utilizes focusing, indwelling, self-searching, and self-disclosure, and recognizes that meanings are unique and distinctive to an experience and depend upon internal frames of reference" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). In a concentrated effort, the investigator includes their overall subjective experience. Modifications and connections are made based on new insight and new discoveries about the phenomenon under investigation. "The essence of the experience" is then described in full detail (p. 31).

The final phase in heuristic inquiry is the *Creative Synthesis*. After full explication of the experience has occurred, the researcher condenses the knowledge about the experience into a collective creation. According to Moustakas (1990), "this usually takes the form of a narrative depiction utilizing verbatim material and examples, but it may be expressed as a poem, story, drawing, painting, or by some other creative form (p.32). However the researcher is inspired to depict the experience is acceptable.

Procedures for Collecting Data

Moustakas (1990) asserted that what is most essential to heuristic inquiry is that the "researcher must keep in mind throughout the process that the material collected

must depict the experience in accurate, comprehensive, rich and vivid terms. In heuristic research, depictions are often presented in stories, examples, conversations, metaphors, and analogies" (p. 49). This dissertation used nonactive cases to formulate 5 composite case history narratives. Case material from over 30 hours of combined Child Centered Play Therapy sessions was used to recount details of the sessions that included quotes from the children and the therapist as the experiences unfolded.

Procedures for Analyzing Data

The individual case history material and case narratives were given a comprehensive review and then put away. This period of detachment from the written work allowed for reflection and tacit knowledge and intuition to emerge. As part of this process, case materials were reviewed several times. Notes were taken about the experience under investigation to uncover possible themes or inconsistencies. Each case was reviewed in the same manner. Any differences in accounts of the phenomenon under investigation were modified in the conclusions section to reflect the actual experience. If the documented experiences were not congruent with the actual events, those findings were included as well.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher's experience of reverie as it can lead to the numinous was explored, in part, retroactively via case history material. The results were the researcher's perspectives of her personal and professional experiences which are subjective in nature. As part of the heuristic process, the researcher's own interpretations and reflections on case material were used as data.

Ethical Concerns

This study included five case history narratives of private individuals. The sessions transpired over 7 years ago and the cases have been nonactive since that time. The names and identities throughout this research were distorted to ensure anonymity. The cases included in this investigation were viewed from a Depth Psychological perspective and the research does not profess that the accounts or conclusions proposed in this examination were factual. The experiences, descriptions, and results were considered essential aspects of a potentially viable depth psychotherapeutic process that included subjective interpretations and application of depth psychology principles.

Literature and Commentary Pertinent to the Method

Case History. Depth psychologists Freud, Adler, and Jung openly acknowledged the necessary creative and artistic qualities inherent in their case histories (Freud, 1963). According to Rieff (1963b), Freud had been lauded as a gifted case history writer and case history presenter when he suggested, "it was Freud's capacity to rationalize sympathetic understanding into an analytic program of therapy, under the banner of science, which accounts for a compelling quality in his thought" (p. 7). Many of Freud's colleagues at the time were not only intrigued by how Freud recorded and then presented his cases, but in how the cases seemed to mirror aspects of their own lives.

Rieff (1963b), referring to Freud's book, *Freud, Three Case Histories: The "Wolf Man, The Rat Man, and The Psychotic Doctor Schreber,* contended that "implicit in these case histories is the realization that none of us, including Freud, is so very different from the wretched men here analyzed. . . . We are cases; we have histories. There is no reducing us to non-cases, without histories" (pp. 7-8). In this regard, Freud's case history

presentations might have served a double aim; to create healing fiction, and to heal himself and others through his literary and creative art form. This compassionate literary quality endeared Freud to many of his colleagues, and aspects of this creative art form endure today.

In Hillman's (1983b) essay, "The Fiction of Case History: A Round with Freud," Hillman uncovered an interview in which Freud was transparent about his literary and artistic aspirations. One could say that Freud also speculated about the healing and transformative value inherent in his case history presentations when he confessed:

> Everybody thinks, [Freud] went on, that I stand by the scientific character of my work and that my principal scope lies in curing mental maladies. This is a terrible error (…) that I have been unable to set right (…) I am a scientist by necessity, and not by vocation. I am really by nature an artist (….) My books, in fact, more resembles works of imagination than treatises on pathology (. . .) I have been able to win my destiny in an indirect way, and have attained my dream: to remain a man of letters, though still in appearance a doctor. In all great men of science there is a leaven of fantasy, but no one proposes like me to translate the inspirations offered by the currents of modern literature into scientific theories. (p. 3)

Freud was optimistic about his new case history art form as pertinent data. Freud also understood the importance of framing his case histories in such a creative way as to disguise his patient's work while at the same time unwittingly uncovering his own psychological predilections.

Through case history, Freud perpetuated his important psychological contributions under the veil of, "*roman `a clef*, meaning a work which presents real persons and events, but disguised by the author" (Hillman 1983b, p. 5). Freud's case history narratives were written in a way that ensured patient confidentiality. Furthermore, Freud's "psychoanalysis could make no further headway in the world of medicine, unless it could find a suitable form of 'telling' that gave the conviction, if not the substance, of

medical empiricism" (p. 5).

Hillman (1983b) believed that once there was transparency about the naturally fictitious aspect of writing case histories that therapeutic value could be realized. He argued, "Our work more particularly belongs to the *rhetoric* of poiesis, by which I mean the persuasive power of imagining in words, artfulness in speaking and hearing, writing and reading" (1983b, p. 4). The case narratives in this dissertation were filtered through this essential framework.

Quasha (1983) agreed with Hillman's perspective when he stated:

> What remains unsaid in us is forever angling to come into view; it seeks its art. Psyche and logos, soul and speech, psychology and poetics—Hillman wants us, the therapists and the poets (who once upon a time shared a single body), to see them as they are, inseparable, reflexive, and interdependent, and so to end one more hidden dualism that divides us from ourselves, our healing arts, and our sources. (p. xxii)

Hillman (1983b) did not entirely abandon psychological thinking but expanded his clinical perspective to include an essential aspect of the human condition—the creative imagination.

In fact, Hillman (1983b) believed the imagination was most animated in the ambit of case history recollection and documentation when he asserted:

> Case history in psychology is a genuine psychic event, an authentic expression of the soul, a fiction not created by the doctor but by the historicizing activity of the psyche, and that this genre of telling corresponds with the reemergence of soul in our age through depth analysis. (p. 48)

Hillman's healing fiction theory sheds light on yet another dimension of the therapeutic relationship that is seldom discussed, but is practiced unwittingly by anyone who writes or presents case material in the form of case history.

Hillman's healing fiction theory was employed to bring to the foreground ways in which writers and readers engage the written word. Hillman (1983b) described case documentation as "a piece of soul-making whose aim is not hermeneutic, not a gesture of understanding" but more or less a re-creation of events that ultimately alters both reader and writer (p. 30). He challenged one to look beyond literal interpretation and to give consideration to the other human processes that factor into writing and reading case material when he asserted:

> Case history as factual history, a true account or knowledge about the "succession of events through which anything passes" is a fiction in the sense of a fabrication, a lie. But it is only a lie when it claims literal truth (p. 12).

Case history ultimately includes the author's intra psychic experiences.

In later literature on case history, Stake (1995) contended that a case can be written in a variety of ways as long as it is intelligible to the reader and expounded:

> Ultimately, the final writing, for me, is more than aggregation of sections but a shaping of them into a narrative that makes the case comprehensible. It sometimes takes on a story quality. And that is a story I come to understand as I am writing it, not really before. (p. 124)

This perspective corroborates Freud's and Hillman's stance that case history is an artistic form of data.

Whereas heuristic inquiry embraced a unique way of immersion into the experience, heuristic inquiry also required researcher transparency. Moustakas (1990) asserted:

> It demands the total presence, honesty, maturity and integrity of a researcher who not only strongly desires to know and understand but is willing to commit endless hours of sustained immersion and focused concentration on one central question, to risk opening the wounds and passionate concerns, and to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every heuristic journey. (p.14)

The procedures section also outlined specific steps to help maintain epistemic humility during the research process. Stake (1995) additionally pointed out that "any over focus on a rare and vivid moment mostly because it happened to coincide with the researchers predilections need to be challenged (p. 130). The same holds true for how one interprets a work or an experience.

Umberto Eco (1994) included the reader's perspective when he stated:

> The model reader of a story is not the empirical reader. The Empirical reader is you, me, anyone, when we read the text. Empirical readers can read in many ways, and there is no law that tells them how to read, because they often use the text as a container for their own passions, which may come from outside the text or which the text may arouse by chance. (p.8)

The case narratives will detail the experience of reverie and the numinous as remembered by the researcher. This research does not make definitive claims linking cause and effect, but served primarily to shine light on the different ways in which children may engage their psyche through processes germane to children.

Literary Reverie. In the process of reading and writing this dissertation, reverie was a natural companion. Reflecting on certain cases and recounting numinous experiences (in reverie) were where quiet states of introspection made way for new, modified or synthesized perspectives. Reverie guided most of the writing process in the way that Bachelard (1987) described. Literary reverie, according to Bachelard, is "that strange reverie which is written and indeed forms itself in the act of writing, which systematically goes beyond its original dream and none the less remains true to basic oneiric realities" (p. 18).

Gaudin (1987), a French professor who translated and wrote Bachelard's preface in *On Poetic Imagination and Reverie,* stated:

> Bachelard never lets his readers forget that the word *method* has a double connotation. It suggests the rigor of a system and the indeterminacy carried by its Greek root *hodos* ("way"); it mixes personal discovery and conceptual construction. Bachelard's methodological shifts can therefore be interpreted in terms other than "evolution" or "inconsistency." A method is both necessary and dangerous. As a way of approaching things, of initiating a discourse, it must be guided by principles, but these principles have a tendency to become frozen into a system divorced from its "formation," thereby paralyzing discovery. The dead formula of a system runs the risk of becoming "a dictatorship of the mind." (p. xxi)

Bachelard (1987) also stated that developing and then incorporating methods were complex endeavors.

Gaudin (1987) further suggested, "The Bachelardian reverie, far from being a complacent drifting of the self, is a discipline acquired through long hours of reading and writing and through a constant practice of '*surveillance de soi*.' Images reveal nothing to the lazy dreamer" (p. xxviii). To turn inward with an eye on oneself as researcher and on one being examined could be a complex endeavor.

I explored 3 correlated research questions as it related to the main research premise—reverie as it can lead to the numinous; 1. How may reverie lead to the numinous? 2. How may reverie lead to the numinous in Child Centered Play Therapy? and 3. What role does the manifestation of reverie, as it can lead to the numinous play in early childhood psychosocial development? To answer these 3 questions, I focused on my professional frame of reference as a licensed child psychotherapist where I relied on case material, and on my own autobiographical frame of reference as recounted throughout this study.

Moustakas (1990) asserted, "Whether the knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena—whether the knowledge is deepened and extended through indwelling, focusing, self-searching, or dialogue with others—its

medium or base is the internal frame of reference" (p.26). Understanding the genesis of how one perceives and then interprets an experience is important in terms of grasping the experience as a whole.

In that regard, I considered the children's in-the-moment experiences through their spontaneous and verbatim dialogue. I also included my personal experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. Moustakas (1990) contended:

> To know and understand the nature, meanings, and essences of any human experience, one depends on the internal frame of reference of the person who has had, is having, or will have the experience. Only the experiencing persons—by looking at their own experiences in perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sense—can validly provide portrayals of the experience. (p. 26)

In the subsequent five case narratives, "Do You Have a Mother?, It's a Grave!, Moon sand Exchange, The Hypnotist, and The Sister is Buried!," the children expressed their concerns in ways that were conducive to self discovery and healing at a deeper level. The researcher's transformative process was incorporated as an essential aspect of heuristic inquiry.

Prologue

> The cauldron is a sacred container which signifies connection to the spiritual dimensions and to our ancestors. In antiquity it was used ritually to submit a question to the gods, asking about the right moment to act. Psychologically, the cauldron symbolizes the act of examining our situation deeply, "slowly turning and examining things" . . . a cooking process that releases transformative energy and renewal. (Corbett, 2011, p. xi)

Heuristic investigation is based on the researcher's internal frame of reference and personal experiences of the phenomenon under investigation; in this instance, the experience of reverie as it can lead to the numinous. Heuristic inquiry therefore cannot be neatly constructed or construed in a succinct manner. In other words, the heuristic research process is amorphous and is designed as such to facilitate the researcher's unique transformative endeavor. Whereas Moustakas' heuristic approach outlines six specific stages, those stages are intended to frame and to contain the research process (much like a cauldron) rather than to constrain it. Within this sacred cauldron, the research, an organic process took place. The contents of each of the six heuristic stages unfolded, migrated and then ultimately settled into their own prospective cauldrons. In the process, the researcher experienced illumination in the form of new, modified and synthesized awareness. The following chapters represent the cauldron from which such illumination occurred**.**

Immersion

Figure 3. Dimensions (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

> Virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus and concentration. People, places, meetings, readings, nature—all offer possibilities for understanding the phenomenon. Primary concepts for facilitating the immersion process include spontaneous self-dialogue and self-searching, pursuing intuitive clues or hunches, and drawing from the mystery and sources of energy and knowledge within the tacit dimension. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28)

Chapter 4

Do You Have A Mother?: The Case of Nekyia

Her gaze was riveting. The child paid no attention to the teacher, but instead gazed at me with such intensity that when our eyes met, I could not avert my own stare. The little girl never acknowledged the teacher's loud command to "get back into the line." Instead, she simply gazed at me for some time longer, smiled, and then walked gracefully out of the school's front door. It was the same front door I had great difficulty entering at the start of my day.

That same morning I drove to the school and parked. I did not want to get out of my car. In deep thought, I sat in my car and contemplated the fact that I had no clinical experience counseling children, nor had I originally aspired to be a child's psychologist. In reverie, I connected those fears to a job I had on a psychiatric adolescent unit at a hospital. One wing was for adolescents and the other wing of the hospital was for younger children, ages 3-10. Some of the briefings I attended on those particular cases made my heart sink. At the time, I did not believe that I would be an effective therapist based on those strong emotions. Those same emotions of sadness and despair were back again. While I experienced the dilemma as a new opportunity to work through those challenges, I also sensed my experience as a school counselor would be transformative.

I was sent to replace the current school counselor who requested to leave before his placement had expired. I wondered about the counselor's abrupt departure and had the impression that there was something about the school that played a part in his decision. As if reading my thoughts, the counselor assured me otherwise. He was leaving to work through grief brought on by the sudden death of a childhood friend.

There was a profound sadness as we engaged in the perfunctory "changing of the guard" routine where we discussed permission slips and the pile of student referrals. I was immensely terrified when the brief tour was over and I stood in the door of the cluttered make shift office with a list of about 30 students to see. Toys were strewn on a bookshelf, donated children's clothes were piled high in the corner of the room, and there were packed boxes everywhere. What beckoned me further into the space was a small table with really small chairs around it.

For a moment, my mood suddenly brightened and I found myself drifting in and out of childhood reveries about play and lighter times. Somewhat comforted by those reveries, I continued to peruse the room. I was looking for a place to situate myself and the abandoned plastic container filled with sand that was still weighing down the trunk of my car—like a living, breathing entity that needed to be released. I ultimately lugged the container into the room and placed it against the wall with a cover on it.

After I placed the sandtray into the corner of the room, I sat at the tiny table in the tiny chair, and was immediately whisked away into my own childhood reveries once again. In my recollections there were no school counselors, no toys, and no sand tray. I was released from my childhood reveries when the school bell rang angrily. I stood at the classroom door in silence and watched the children who were laughing and playing in the hallway. From the doorway is where I encountered the mysterious little girl on my very first day at the school.

After several weeks into my role as a school counselor, I was finding my way. I was taken aback by the children's openness and desire to reveal through play, where their specific concerns might be. Ultimately, the most important aspect of child play therapy

was meeting the children where they were emotionally, developmentally, socially, and most of all spiritually. There was soulfulness about each child I encountered.

Upon entering the room, many of the children inquired, "What is that?" while pointing to the oversized Tupperware (20 x 36 x12), a crude version of fancier types of sandtrays designed by standard measurements and materials. I believe that because the container I presented was so generic and inviting, that it was more approachable to the children. Most of the children were excited by the sandtray and either placed toys in it or stood in it, while others scooped up large portions with their hands and kneaded it until they drifted into a trance-like state—in reverie. There definitely seemed to be a therapeutic quality about it as the children either became animated or meditative when engaged with it in some way. I began to grow confident in my abilities with this new way of engaging the children.

In one memorable instance, I was sitting on the floor, and deeply engaged in this trance-like process with one child, when I sensed an immense presence behind me. When I turned around, I was face to face with the same little girl who had greeted me so warmly and unconditionally on my first day with her intense gaze. When she pointed to the toys, I smiled and then quietly explained to her that I was in a meeting and if she wanted to return that we would need permission from her parents and teacher. She nodded her head and then slipped the consent form from my hand and walked away. I followed her to the door and noted that her classroom was next door. And for the next three weeks, the little girl, Nekyia, continued to appear at my office door, each time inching her way in a little bit further.

It became clear to me that Nekyia was reaching out to me, though, according to protocol, I could not engage in counseling with the children without parental consent. While I enjoyed the unscheduled visits from Nekyia, they were typically during a time when I was in session with another child and on a very tight schedule. However, one afternoon during recess, I paid Nekyia's teacher a visit. Upon my inquiry about the mysterious little girl, the teacher stated, "Nekyia is usually late for school. She is typically oppositional and defiant in the classroom and could probably benefit from counseling. Her uncle usually drops her off. You can ask him at that time about the consent form."

I made a point to come in especially early the next day to try to meet Nekyia's family. True to what the teacher described, Nekyia was being dropped off about 15 minutes after the school bell rang. She ran up to me and slid her tiny hands into mine and greeted me as though we were old friends. I quickly initiated a discussion with her uncle regarding permission for counseling, which he agreed to without incident. Nekyia, who was 6 years old, would be my first "self-referred" child.

During the initial session with Nekyia, I formally introduced myself and then casually explained what would be allowed in the room by stating, "If you want to, in here you can talk about happy things, sad things, or mad things, or you don't have to say anything at all. You can just play with the toys for 30 minutes if you want to." Nekyia simply nodded and smiled. She had not spoken a single word to me in our three weeks of interaction. Nekyia lingered quietly around the shelf filled with toys, but did not appear to be interested in playing. I maintained an open and accepting demeanor by sitting quietly

and patiently as she took her time. When Nekyia discovered the paint set, she simply pointed and said, “I want to paint.”

As Nekyia pulled the paints from the shelf, I supplied paper and a cup of water and placed it on the table, then sat in one of the tiny chairs next to her. Nekyia sat quietly for several minutes in what appeared to be a deep reverie. She finally took a deep breath and plunged into her creation. After dipping her brush into the water, she located the black paint, and then slowly and methodically painted what appeared to be a black sun into the upper left-hand corner of the white paper. Nekyia, speechless and transfixed in her own reverie, systematically dipped the brush in and out of the water-filled cup, slowly, and with great intent as she made the continuous circle until the center was fully black. She then added spikes around the outer circle as if to denote its radiance.

The visual absurdity of the black sun caused me to take pause. In that moment my heart sank and I felt overwhelmingly sad. However, in the same instance, I reflected back on my alchemical studies where I read that, “The black sun is a paradox. It is blacker than black, but it also shines with a dark luminescence that opens the way to some of the most numinous aspects of psychic life” (Marlan, 2005, p. 5). I perceived something self-soothing, self-regulating, and cathartic about Nekyia’s demeanor that shifted my perspective from sadness to more of curiosity and wonder. In that regard, there was a “letting go of” any of my preconceptions about darkness as denoted by a diagnostically depressive state. When Nekyia made the final gesture to depict what seemed like luminosity, the darkness however seemed more numinous and transformational rather than ominous.

When Nekyia finished her painting, she looked up at me, smiled, and then stated, "I want to cut something." Again, I was a bit taken aback, but responded to Nekyia's curious request by handing her a sheet of paper and small scissors. She very quietly and carefully cut out two small strips of paper, put the scissors down, took a long and deep breath, then looked at me and smiled. She then stood up, waved goodbye and walked back to her classroom next door. When Nekyia left, I again returned to the small table and sat in deep reverie. I was speechless and in awe.

In our next session, Nekyia followed the same patterns where she would stand in front of the shelf filled with toys. She again stated, "I want to paint." Only this time, she started with the yellow paint and painted what appeared to be a yellow sun in the upper corner of the paper, and then added two smiling figures that she reported were her brother and her cousin. When Nekyia finished painting, she again stated, "I want to cut something." I handed her some small scissors and a blank piece of paper. She cut out two curvilinear forms, placed them on the table, took a deep breath, stood up, and smiled. This time, as she headed towards the door, I noticed that her one sock barely covered her heels.

I called out to Nekyia and asked if I could help her pull her socks up. When I asked her if she wanted to experiment with a different colored pair of socks, she seemed excited. We sat on the floor where she took off her sneakers and socks. I offered to preserve her old socks in a bag for her. As I replaced her socks, I noticed that her toes appeared deformed, as though she had perhaps worn shoes that were too small for her at one point. As she replaced her shoes, I felt to see if she had adequate space, and she did. I also gave her a new and longer blouse to cover her bare back. She had no belt for her

pants and she struggled to keep them up. In that moment, I felt overcome with a desire to nurture Nekyia.

In our subsequent session, Nekyia continued to paint. Her paintings seemed brighter and her affect brightened; she began to speak in full sentences. In fact, I was caught off guard when Nekyia looked up from her painting project and made a personal inquiry, "Do you have a mother?" I was used to getting inquiries asking if I had children, but to date, no child has ever made the inquiry Nekyia had. She had a very serious look on her face and had paused her painting. I smiled and stated, "Yes, I do have a mom." Nekyia then wrote the word "Mom" in her painting and asked me to spell my name as she wrote it next to "Mom." I was not quite sure what to think of what had just occurred, but felt we had reached a deeper level in our therapeutic bond. At times, I wondered about Nekyia's home life, but did not want to impinge on her work to satisfy my own curiosities. I wanted Nekyia to feel in complete control of her sessions and confident in her decisions.

I could sense an evident shift in Nekyia's mood from session to session. Her teacher reported that she was a "different person" and no longer exhibited "defiant" behavior. I occasionally stood quietly in the doorway of her classroom to observe her. Initially, Nekyia would run to the door when she saw me, but now, she exuded control and self-confidence and would turn around and wave to me, and then go back to her studies.

In session five, Nekyia painted briefly, then walked over to the shelf and pulled out two colorful puppets. She invited me to play with her. Nekyia pretended to be the "Mom" and yelled, "You can't go out to play right now. You have to stay in the house

until I get back!" I responded by saying, "I can't go out to play right now. I have to stay in the house until you get back!" She became extremely animated, jumped, and crawled around the floor and under the table. She then initiated a game of catch with a ball and laughed throughout the session. She now seemed to exhibit a new found freedom—independence in the room and in our relationship. She seemed more confident, more aware, and more alive. Additionally, her unannounced appearances at my office door had ceased. As often happens in nondirective play therapy, Nekyia had begun to self-regulate, and her new behavior ultimately transferred into her relationship with her teacher, and most likely in her home environment. This assessment was also based on reports by the teacher and in my own observations.

In our following session, I wanted to assess Nekyia's interpersonal skills with her peer group. When I asked her how she felt about having a playmate join us in our session her eyes brightened and she said, "Yes, that would be so great!" I already had another child in mind and sought her permission as well. It was met with equal excitement. In the joint session, Nekyia and the little girl were animated. They engaged in make believe cooking where they baked cakes with the sand and made tea with water. At one point, they both took off their shoes and socks and stood in the large tub of sand and laughed loudly. I observed how open, gentle, playful, accepting, and most of all nurturing Nekyia was during her interactions with the other little girl. She appeared to be transferring aspects of our therapeutic relationship into her peer interactions.

In our next session, once Nekyia completed her painting, she made one final request, "I want to cut." She first painted three figures on three separate pieces of paper. Nekyia then picked up the scissors and quietly cut out the figures, gathered them in a pile

and handed them to me. She said, “These are the monsters. The little nice monster is my little brother. The big mean monster is anger and the big sad monster is my neighbor. You can keep these.” At this point, I sensed that Nekyia’s soulful engagement in play therapy might be at an important threshold. It appeared that she had addressed some of her concerns, and in her own way.

In our following session, Nekyia’s, requests to, “cut something” had ceased. She was more animated and talkative. In this particular session, Nekyia painted while she talked. Her affect was the brightest I had experienced. She worked pensively on a complex and colorful project. When she finished, she looked at me and pointed, “This is a rainbow. This is a flower. This is your mom and me. This is your mom and my friend.” We then locked eyes, as in that initial gaze that created a sphere of unconditional love and unconditional positive regard.

Nekyia had initiated her own treatment by walking into my office. She terminated our sessions after six office visits. She had accomplished a personal and unknown goal and had satisfied a curiosity deep within her. The reciprocal and mutual reveries seemed to be a natural component that sprung up to help access a deeper source of information and understanding, and ultimately a deeper source of healing. Nekyia no longer showed up unannounced at my door, but would call my name or waved to me whenever she saw me in the hallways or on the playground during recess. No longer fragmented in her milieu, Nekyia appeared solidly grounded.

Chapter 5

It's A Grave: The Case of Lorenzo

"I just want to get in there and swim!" Lorenzo exclaimed. He had fixated on the large sand tray on the floor in the corner of the room. I could not keep Lorenzo, a wiry little six year old, from snatching off his tiny sneakers, and then plopping belly first into the large container. His arms and feet hung over both ends as he flopped and rolled, and then settled into a small ball in the middle of the sandtray. Lorenzo then peered at me with his sparkling green eyes from under a mop of curly, red hair. I could not contain my own laughter upon such an animated entrance.

Lorenzo continued to stare at me in silence. When I began to explain the parameters of our time together, I calmly stated, "We have 30 minutes together. In here you can play with all of the toys. You can talk about sad things, mad things, bad things, or happy things. You can talk about whatever you want to, or you don't have to talk at all. You can just play." I was not quite sure how the children would react after the instructions, but typically I could sense a combination of emotions like curiosity, excitement, and anticipation related to nondirected play therapy. I felt it was important to establish these boundaries so that Lorenzo could feel contained and safe in this new environment as he grappled with directing himself and his own needs. Setting these important boundaries was how I usually initiated the sessions with all of the children.

However, the moment I relayed these boundaries to Lorenzo, the mood in the room shifted. We were locked into a mutual gaze, and the initial playful energy dissipated as abruptly as it had begun. The earlier whimsical mood was replaced by a heaviness and silence. Wedged in the sand tray, Lorenzo continued to stare at me with great intensity as

his little chest moved rhythmically up and down. If his eyes were not wide opened, it would have appeared that Lorenzo had fallen asleep in the cramped box; but he had slowly drifted into a deep reverie.

For about 10 minutes, Lorenzo laid motionless inside of the sand tray. I mirrored his state of calm. Ever so softly, and in a monotone voice, Lorenzo began to forlornly narrate aspects of his young life. With unblinking eyes, he disclosed, "Me and my mom lived in Australia and we always went to the beach every day, and we would have so much fun—just the two of us." At that point, Lorenzo slowly burrowed himself deeper in the sand, and curled his knees to his chin until he was in a stationary fetal position. He seemed tranquil and never once averted his gaze from me. For the next several minutes, Lorenzo laid transfixed with a smile frozen on his little face. He appeared to have fallen asleep again, though his intense stare never wavered. Lorenzo had again succumbed to an even deeper reverie.

In the same moment, and in my own reverie, I had the urge to pick Lorenzo up and cradle him. While his narrative seemed joyous, I sensed a longing and an unfilled void between the lines of Lorenzo's creative account. He seemed especially vulnerable as he burrowed deeper into his work and even deeper into the sand tray. Locked in a mutual reverie, time seemed to expand. I felt as though I had momentarily slipped into a familiar liminal space, but this time I also experienced within this sphere.

I was enthralled by the way in which Lorenzo engaged in play, particularly with the sand tray, and with me. I had never experienced any child literally diving into the sand tray and then immediately plunging into the depths of their soul's work. It was a dramatic and deeply moving beginning. Just as Lorenzo had described, I imagined

Lorenzo and his mother running along the sandy beach, playfully dipping into the ocean hand in hand. I also wondered about what Lorenzo might be thinking as he continued to stare at me unblinking through his red ringlets of hair. I knew that he was referred by his teacher for behavioral issues in the classroom. However, in this moment, Lorenzo seemed so serene and so angelic. He also seemed quite fragile. In that moment, the tiny office seemed to be radiating with love. In some instances, the transference with children seemed so easy to accept; like a veil of love cast outward.

Our mutual gaze and mutual reverie were broken however when I sensed another presence in the room. When I followed Lorenzo's averted gaze over my shoulder, I could see a little girl slowly inching her way into the room and then quietly making her way towards the shelf filled with toys. I typically left the (makeshift office) classroom door open. The open door policy gave the children a sense of freedom to wander in and out at will, while also testing their ability to self regulate. This aspect alone proved to be an important piece in the children's social and psychological developmental process. The exposed toys in the room were a magnet for the kids, though most of the children resisted the urge to walk in at random and engage in play. The regal little girl who had made her way into the office, however, was determined to finally satisfy her curiosity about the toys—and about me.

After I gently guided the little girl back towards the door, Lorenzo leaped out of the sand tray. He plopped onto a large blue beanbag nearby on the floor, put on his sneakers, and then made his way to the shelf that was filled with toys. Nothing in particular seemed to interest him; instead he seemed to be curious about what the little girl might have been drawn to. Lorenzo picked up a doll and turned it upside down and

then gently put it back in its place. He touched various other objects, but nothing seemed to excite him more than the marbles and the sand tray. Upon quietly perusing the shelf, Lorenzo jumped up and down jerkily while he tried to shake the sand from his clothing and hair. Through his laughter, Lorenzo asked, "Can I come back tomorrow Miss Victoria?"

A week later in the second session, Lorenzo made an immediate dash for the sand tray. In reverie, I contemplated about how I might work effectively with Lorenzo and the other children on my growing caseload. I was beginning to feel overwhelmed. In the second week at the school, I began to also ponder the fact that I was a complete novice in terms of child play therapy technique. I had no practical experience and had only a theoretical understanding. In reality, my intellectual understanding just did not seem to translate entirely. Based on my experiences with the children, outside of establishing the environmental boundaries for the sessions, I felt at a loss.

For instance, when Lorenzo dove into the sand tray in the initial session, instead of placing miniature lifelike objects into the tray (as described by child play therapy concepts), I was perplexed. Early on, I had to let go of my own preconceptions about how I envisioned child play therapy to be. I could already see that Lorenzo was indeed directing his play therapy sessions in a way that was conducive to his unique healing process. But how could I know if and when the therapy was being effective? Whenever I documented the sessions, I mainly described the play activity and the child's affective state in the room. But was that enough? I was beginning to have grave doubts.

"Don't worry Miss Victoria, God is with us," the soft voice whispered. I was jolted out of my reverie, and then plunged into a liminal space where I experienced

profound humility, fear, deep love, and compassion all at once. In that moment, I had a visceral sensation that an entity larger than humanity had permeated the room, and thus had penetrated my soul. The soft voice came from Lorenzo. He was sitting on the floor in the corner of the office with his back towards me, feverishly building something out of my view. As I slowly crawled next to Lorenzo, I could see that an object in the sand tray (a large cross that he had built out of colorful Popsicle sticks and was trying to place above a small mound of luminous marbles in the sand) had suddenly mesmerized him. Lorenzo was now transfixed in his own reverie.

After what seemed like an interminable amount of time, Lorenzo gazed at me and murmured, "It's a grave." I looked into the sand tray at the glistening mound and the colorful cross, and then looked at Lorenzo. He seemed to be searching my face for acceptance of his creation. I softly repeated his words and commented, "You built a grave." Expressionless, Lorenzo stared at me for a few seconds, and then the sides of his mouth stretched into a huge and infectious smile. He then grabbed a fistful of marbles from the large tin can and commenced to build several more small mounds in the sand. Though initially feeling overwhelmed by the numinous energy that pervaded the room, I surmised it was the beginning of deep and significant work. I also began to sense that my work with children would entail creating a space for their spiritual curiosity and development, in whatever way it might manifest.

In our third session, Lorenzo bolted directly to the sand tray and kneeled down in front of it with a purpose. This time he did not jump into the tray, but instead scooped up an armful of sand and watched it cascade over his little arms. Once Lorenzo completed this ritual, he grabbed a handful of luminous marbles, plucked them from around the

room, and then offered to teach me a game. He crawled heavily on all fours around the small room, laughing playfully. Lorenzo then made a large circle with the marbles and then directed me to flick one marble into the other as he chased it around the room. Once Lorenzo tired of this game, he then settled once again in front of the sand tray with a handful of marbles in tow. He slowly and deliberately concluded our sessions in his usual fashion—by constructing small and luminous mounds in the sand, which he articulated to be "graves." This final ritual appeared to be comforting and cathartic for Lorenzo. It also seemed to be his way of bringing an end to the sessions.

In the following session, Lorenzo began in his usual fashion by scooping the sand in his hands, though this time he gripped and kneaded the sand with such intensity and rage. I watched quietly as Lorenzo began to build the graves. There was an intense heaviness about him today and he seemed pensive and sad. In this session, Lorenzo disclosed, "My Grammy is sick and she can't get out of the bed anymore. My Nana takes care of her and my Nana takes care of me too." He voiced this concern as he continued to knead and embrace the sand with his spindly arms and tiny hands. When I stated, "You're worried about your Grammy and your Nana, and you're worried about you," Lorenzo sighed deeply as he continued to squeeze the cascading sand through his tight fists. The continuous movement seemed to lead him into deep reverie. Once completely "under," Lorenzo would then begin his task of building graves in the sand with the various luminous and colorful marbles.

In the following weeks, Lorenzo became more talkative about his family. As our bond grew, he disclosed more about missing his mother and confided that both his mother and father were "in jail." He described in details about the monthly ritual of

going “down in the dark room” to visit with his mother. Lorenzo confessed that he looked forward to seeing his mother during the monthly visits, though anticipated her return home someday soon. In one memorable session when Lorenzo spoke of his mother, he sat close to me while he played in the sand. With every movement in the sand he inched closer and closer to me, making sure that his little knees or elbows touched me periodically. To further test the limits of our therapeutic bond, Lorenzo made a bold leap towards me and landed on my lap. He then continued to play in the sand tray, going about the business of building graves.

Lorenzo exuded a new sense of freedom and confidence in his interactions with me and this seemed to have translated positively into the classroom setting. While Lorenzo continued to engage in the normal childhood classroom shenanigans, he spoke openly and calmly about his part in those occurrences and talked about the consequences the teacher ultimately doled out. When I met his grandmother and his teacher at the monthly parent teacher meeting, they were equally impressed with Lorenzo’s ability to relate to his classmates in a less aggressive and more playful manner.

Throughout our sessions, Lorenzo continued to engage in storytelling to relay some of his inner most angst. In one session, while I quietly watched Lorenzo build graves, I wondered in reverie about the nature of the grave building. As if to respond to my silent inquiry, Lorenzo began to narrate another story when he asserted, “I like graves. When I’m at home, I go in the yard and I dig a big hole and then I get in it and cover myself up in it. I hide in it and nobody can find me. It’s a deep hole.” I paraphrased to Lorenzo, “Sometimes it feels good to be with others, but sometimes you need to find a place where you can be alone to figure things out.” Lorenzo responded,

"Yes Miss Victoria, and I'm not afraid of being in the grave either." Lorenzo had found his own way to create silence in the midst of his complex home life.

Lorenzo had discovered a way to cope with, and to contain aspects of his life he was struggling to understand. Every month Lorenzo had to make the trip to the underworld of sorts when he visited his mother and where he ultimately shed parts of himself to come face to face with his own existence. Every day Lorenzo had to find a way to cope with the uncertainty of important yet tenuous relationships. In our initial sessions, Lorenzo built several graves. In our final session, Lorenzo built one large luminous grave made of sparkling marbles. I believe he had found a way to integrate his work in some way meaningful to him; work that included a new existential understanding.

Overall, I facilitated eight play therapy sessions with Lorenzo. What were most compelling were the spontaneous states of reverie he invoked to engage in deeper work. After meeting Lorenzo's grandmother, who was his primary caregiver, I understood more clearly Lorenzo's religious references. Throughout my discussions with her she often referred to the church and to her strong religious beliefs. She also confirmed Lorenzo's disclosure about both of his parents being incarcerated for the majority of his life. Outside of the monthly visits to see his mother in prison, Lorenzo had not spent any significant time with his mother or father. However, Lorenzo's grandmother seemed very encouraged that Lorenzo would be reunited with his parents someday soon.

Graves may have different meanings to different children. Talking about graves may be a way that children try to relay deep sadness; sadness often precipitated by feelings of aloneness and abandonment. A break in maternal attachment sets off perpetual

longing and a search for the mother figure. The child is ultimately seeking a new attachment to fill the maternal void. In grappling with the void in the maternal bond, and not understanding how these connections change, children spiral inward to sort through new existential meaning.

Chapter 6

Moon Sand Exchange: The Case of Harriet

The behavior the teacher described was startling. According to the teacher, Harriet had taken a pair of scissors and destroyed her classmate's art project. The teacher was at a loss in terms of what actions to take and found Harriet's behavior to be cruel and unusual. As the teacher grasped for motives, she disclosed that the change in behavior may have been the result of the birth of Harriet's new baby brother. Harriet had expressed some anxiety about how her household had changed, but mainly in terms of how much attention was directed towards her new brother and not towards her. I agreed that the violent behavior needed to be addressed, and I scheduled time to check in with Harriet later in the day. The teacher seemed relieved.

When Harriet arrived at my office door she was neatly dressed in a crisp pink dress. Her hair was pulled back in a severe bun and she wore lace socks and patent leather shoes. When she entered the classroom office, she was waving her permission slip, and explained that she had approval to be here from her teacher. Harriet, a confident little 7 year old, then walked around the room inspecting the toys. However, in that moment, she did not appear to be interested in playing with the toys. Harriet wanted to discuss the events that had precipitated her referral, and on her own terms. I was equally curious about the events and about Harriet.

Harriet then leaned towards me and stated, "I want to be a truth teller. So what I am going to tell you is the truth. I don't know how the art got cut up. I promise." She leaned away and stared intently waiting for a response. According to Harriet, the entire event was a mystery. Despite witnessed accounts from her classmates and teacher, there

was no point in confronting Harriet on the matter out right. In her creative narrative, she was innocent. I was at a quandary in terms of how to address Harriet's fierce denial. I could see why the teacher could make no headway in her direct confrontation with Harriet.

I resisted the urge to confront Harriet directly but instead offered, "You know in here Harriet, you can say anything you want to. You can talk about mad things, happy things or sad things. You can be quiet or you can just play with the toys for 30 minutes. You can do whatever you want to do. This is your time." Harriet quickly stated, "Okay then. We will play a game. You sit here and I will sit here." As Harriet instructed, I helped her drag the sand tray next to us and then we sat on the floor, knee to knee. She pulled out the large tin can filled with luminous marbles, and then emptied the entire canister into the sand. Harriet then proclaimed, "I will hide them, and let's see how much you can find. I will keep track!"

When our initial session came to an end, Harriet had great difficulty leaving the play room. She tried everything possible to prolong her time in the space and with me. To extend her time, Harriet offered to recover all of the marbles she had hidden in the sand before leaving the room. I assured Harriet that I would make sure that all the hidden marbles were removed before anyone else played in the sandtray, but Harriet was determined to stay.

There were more than 20 marbles left in the sand. When I stood up, I explained to Harriet that she could return weekly if she liked, but that our time together was over for today. While Harriet appeared very excited about this prospect, she remained on the floor kneading the sand for all of the hidden marbles. Harriet was not budging. When I

walked towards the open door, Harriet jumped up, slipped her tiny hands in mine and asked me to walk with her to her classroom.

Our next meeting would be only a few hours later. Harriet had managed to secure a bathroom pass, which she used to visit me in the office. Showing up unannounced had become a regular habit for Harriet. Her impromptu appearances not only allowed me to see how she regulated herself, but also allowed me to see how she longed for a new connection. I sensed that Harriet had felt displaced since the birth of her baby brother several weeks ago and was grappling with new existential challenges. In her mind, and partly reality, Harriet was no longer the primary object of her parent's affection, though Harriet was determined to recreate that unconditional bond in some way, and with me. I could certainly empathize with Harriet and her angst and knew it would be challenging to help her try to come to terms with her attachment anxieties.

In our next formal session, Harriet wasted no time pulling the sand tray to the center of the room and then grabbing the canister of marbles. She instructed me in the same way as she did in the initial session, and I playfully engaged in a game of finding the buried marbles in the sand. This time, Harriet kept close count of each marble on a piece of paper. She openly discussed her home life and seemed really excited about having a new little brother. Harriet also disclosed how close she and her mother were, and articulated how she had received "all of the attention," up until the arrival of her brother. This was the same scenario Harriet had described to her teacher. She was indeed angry about the addition to her family, and was now grappling to find her place.

When I acknowledged Harriet's sense of aloneness by stating, "You feel left out now," Harriet completely abandoned the sand tray game. I had apparently found the right

amount of marbles to engage her at a deeper level. The play therapy sessions quickly evolved into talk therapy where Harriet freely responded to my open ended inquiries about her and her home life. However, she resisted verbal discussion about the violent incident that resulted in the referral for play therapy. Harriet wanted to keep the incident buried. Though I believe the violent acting out may have been Harriet's way of reaching out for help.

Since initiating play therapy sessions, there were no further reports from Harriet's teacher about violent episodes in the classroom. However, Harriet had become completely fixated on me and our weekly sessions. She insisted that I see her twice per week. I believe the ongoing sessions were helping Harriet come to terms with her anxieties about feeling replaced by her little brother. On the other hand, Harriet positively transferred all of her affections towards me. Her fictitious excursions to the bathroom were a ploy to stop in my office to say hello. When Harriet's teacher caught on, and curtailed the hall passes, Harriet became more creative.

On one such occasion, as I sat at the tiny table looking through referrals and planning my day at the school, I heard a cough coming from the direction of the opened office door. Harriet stuck her head in the door shyly and asked if she could come in. Typically, Harriet would just walk right in. Even though she continued to misuse her hall passes to visit with me, it seemed that Harriet was beginning to regulate herself, even if to a small degree. As Harriet swung her full body into the room, I could see that she had her lunch tray in tow. I was both amused and impressed by Harriet's tenacity to attempt to extend the therapeutic relationship outside of the play therapy sessions. I smiled and

pulled out my lunch as we both ate in silence. When Harriet completed her meal, she stood up, politely excused herself and said, “Good bye, Miss Victoria.”

The school year was ending and I only had two more formal sessions with Harriet. She relayed that she had told her mother that she wanted to continue her sessions with me throughout the summer. When I explained to Harriet that our time together would be ending in a couple of weeks, she commenced to plan our summer together. She was excited about the prospect of teaching me Spanish, her native tongue. In our last two sessions I asked Harriet to help me translate full sentences into Spanish. She stood at the board laughing at my requests when I asked her to translate into Spanish, “I really like you. I enjoyed our time together.” I then pulled out a small red plastic container with soft bright orange sand in it labeled “moon sand.” I wrote on the lid, “Me gusta mucho. Me gusto nuestro tiempo juntos,” and then drew a large smiley face. It was a tangible way for us both to leave something with the other.

In my own reveries, I had imagined extending offices hours to accommodate Harriet’s wishes; having lunches, finding buried marbles, and engaging in fun conversations in Spanish. When I gave Harriet the moon sand, it was also a way for me to terminate with her in a way that honored the mutual bond that we had developed. I was also struggling with a way to extend our bond in a lasting and meaningful way. The moon sand exchange exemplified the many levels we had uncovered, and the dimensions yet to be discovered.

When a child perceives that the maternal connection is at risk, this can set off a frenzy of emotions, including rage. The child experiences inner turmoil that is sometimes projected outwards. In this anxiety filled period, the child begins to struggle with new

existential meaning. The only child experiences this more so, especially when they have enjoyed 6 years of unwavering maternal attention. When a new sibling joins the family, no matter how much preparation, the sense of having been replaced pervades the child's psyche. Thus the journey begins in search of unconditional positive regard.

Chapter 7

The Hypnotist: The Case of Thomas

When I accompanied one of the other students back to the classroom after a session, Thomas approached me. Peering at me over his horn-rimmed glasses he inquired, “When will it be my turn?” As Thomas pouted, I could see that he had been tracking my comings and goings for quite some time. From his perspective, I had neglected to intuit his needs. I instructed Thomas to come to the office after school to pick up a parental permission form. I was just as curious about the serious looking little boy as he was about me.

Several weeks transpired before Thomas, a bright little 8 year old wandered into my office waving his signed form. Even though my growing caseload at the school was at the maximum, I always made a space for self-referrals; Thomas would be my second one. I was curious about Thomas and about what his narrative might entail. I scheduled our first session for the following day. He seemed very excited that he was now a part of whatever he presumed his peers had a portal to. Though due to his serious demeanor, I instantly wondered about his ability to play.

Thomas had proven to be one of the most intense 8 year olds that I had ever encountered. For our initial session, Thomas showed up in starched camouflaged army fatigues and boots. Most notable was that he sported a military, adult-like haircut. His large, warm brown eyes and articulate speech, though unsettling, were somewhat inviting. I was taken aback when Thomas extended his arm for an introductory handshake.

In my initial session with children, I usually discuss the parameters of the play therapy sessions. Though with Thomas, there was a part of me that held back in terms of instructing him to play within particular confines. I believe I wanted to initially observe his level for spontaneity and playfulness. In retrospect, I believe that a part of me did not feel inspired to play with Thomas, nor inspired to witness his play activities. I had difficulty getting beyond the visual juxtaposition of a small child in military clothing. If I had challenges in terms of breaking through my own perceptions about children and childhood, and Thomas' serious demeanor, I wondered how Thomas was perceived by his peers, and his teachers for that matter.

Thomas's stoic behavior never waned. He perused the playroom with his little arms wrapped around his body. I folded my arms in silence as Thomas located a large box filled with pieces to an erector set. I helped him pull the box out of the corner and watched Thomas as he read the instructions and looked through the various illustrations. He found a picture he wanted to duplicate and then commenced to discuss how he would go about doing it. As Thomas poured all the pieces onto the small table, I pulled out a small chair and sat with him as he began to sort the numerous colors. When Thomas started to relay in detail his building project, I began to ease into a spontaneous hypnogogic state. Was he willing me into reverie?

Unlike many of my sessions with the other children, reveries about Thomas were absent. There was just a silent void in time; all of about 30 seconds. When I reoriented to the room, Thomas was still talking robotically about what he might like to build. As time was limited, Thomas never advanced beyond sorting through the pieces and discussing

what he wanted to do. When I accompanied Thomas back to his classroom, the other children pushed him aside, and he was once again lost in the crowd.

True to form, Thomas showed up in our next session in his military garb. He immediately located the erector set box and seemed determined to get the monstrosity he perseverated on in the initial session built today. In fact, Thomas relayed that he did not think of much else besides building the helicopter he saw on the front box cover. Thomas had indeed built the small helicopter in about 20 minutes. Once he was finished, he began to discuss the philosophy behind paper structures related to origami. I was really struck by Thomas's intellect and his penchant for constructing things. I listened attentively as he talked about how many folds it took to make various animals out of paper.

When Thomas was finished describing origami technique, I asked a few questions about the origination of origami. My interest seemed to please him. At this point, I explained the parameters of play therapy with Thomas. This information elicited a quick smile from him. Before leaving the room, Thomas shyly reached into his pocket and pulled out a tiny piece of folded green paper. He set it down on the table between us and instructed me to tap on it. When I did so, the paper leaped into the air. I was genuinely surprised when the paper frog took flight. Thomas had made a small origami frog as a gift for me, but also as a way to connect.

In our third session Thomas located the box filled with toy soldiers and began to line them up on the floor until he spotted the sand tray. He appeared to be excited as he pulled the tray closer and began to put the toy soldiers and military tanks in the sand. While he populated the sand tray, Thomas spoke nonstop about his paint ball expeditions with his father and how on every Thursday they went to the range to engage in paint

battles with other players where they shot balloon filled pellets of paint and then watched them explode. This would explain his military attire.

As Thomas spoke, I found myself drifting into reverie where I imagined Thomas running around an obstacle course, playing until he was exhausted. He carefully described every aspect of his playing *outside* of the playroom. However, I could not get a sense of the playfulness that he described was associated with him. I had begun to gather Thomas into my reveries, but had great difficulty keeping him there for any length of time. I was discouraged that I could not or would not form a more playful connection with him, despite Thomas' efforts.

In our next session, Thomas located the sand tray, a toy soldier set of about 15, and tanks with machine guns attached. He was again hyper talkative while he loaded the tray. He built a large hill and drove that tank up and down, then round and round in the same pattern; similar to an ouroboros—a serpent devouring its own tail in one realm, and a symbol of wholeness in another. I believe in some way, the image was representative of what was transpiring between, and within us, in a given time and space. Even though Thomas reached out to me, I continued to feel excluded from his sphere, and at a deeper level. In the counter-transference, I viewed Thomas as completely self-sufficient and without need, which did not activate a need for maternal bonding within me. The projective identification was complete in that sense.

I honored the symbol as a pertinent manifestation of the unconscious. Thomas was trying to communicate something. I wondered in that instant about the images that had sprung up for me, and between us. As the sound of Thomas' perpetual circle in the sand, and his monotone voice pervaded the room, I could again feel the strange hypnotic

state taking hold. I felt as though Thomas was willing me to be more transparent in my own interactions with him on a visual level such that he could "see" and then gather this data into his own reveries to interpret. I jerked my head up from a deep nod. I had again fallen asleep. When I opened my eyes, Thomas was peering straight at me over his large eyeglasses. He went on with his game and discussion as if this were a normal event. I on the other hand felt embarrassed and mortified. I had never experienced such lethargy in the course of play therapy. I was just as curious about what was going on for me as I was curious about what was going on for Thomas.

I took into consideration that Thomas never spoke about his mother. He mainly talked fondly about his stepfather who took him to the weekly paint ball war games. This would explain his military attire on the days we met for his sessions. I did not get a sense one way or the other that he experienced any maternal yearnings, though sensed that he had looked forward to our weekly sessions, and our developing relationship. He seemed determined to keep me interested in him, just as he struggled to keep his peers and his teachers interested. However, there was a complete misconnect somewhere.

It was clear to me that Thomas was a talker and a teacher. It was also clear to me that Thomas wanted to connect with me, but often got in his own way. It was similar to the noninteractions with his peers that I had witnessed. He had the capacity for play on the adult level, but yearned to play at the level of his peers. While he struggled to engage me in play at the adult level, I struggled to inspire childlike playfulness in him. I could see that we were engaged in a transferential and counter-transference battle. He wanted to learn how to play, and I wanted to help him to play in a variety of milieus, particularly with his peers. Thomas was knowledgeable about many things, but struggled with his

social skills. I believe in his own way, Thomas wanted me to teach him how to play. I did not want to impinge upon his personal processes and struggles in terms of achieving this goal. I wanted to draw out his spontaneity and on his own terms.

In the next session, I hid the erector set, toy soldiers, and sand tray. As Thomas looked around the room, I occupied myself. Thomas had located a huge ball in the corner of the room and began to bounce it noisily against the wall. He then kicked the ball hard in my direction. When I kicked the ball back towards him, he kicked it out of the room. He did not attempt to chase it but seemed rather pleased with his aim. When another child appeared at the door with the ball in tow, Thomas seemed pleasantly surprised, particularly when the child threw the ball back into the room. I stood silently as Thomas engaged in a game of catch with the other child, who soon grew bored and left. For the remainder of the session, Thomas talked about his anticipation of the simulated war game he intended to play with his stepfather that evening.

I believe Thomas was trying to communicate his displeasure with my actions. I did not want to be hypnotized. In order for me to avoid the strange fog, I needed to stay active in the room with Thomas. I wanted to play. I wanted Thomas to play. In his military attire, Thomas was the toy soldier incarnate. But even that image of Thomas did not conjure up playfulness. I needed to change my tactics to start right at the level Thomas was requesting.

In the next session, I had a huge paper plane I made out of newspaper waiting on the table. I wanted to engage Thomas immediately as he entered the room. As soon as he showed up at the door, I threw it in his direction. Thomas gasped in excitement as he began to chase the plan around the room while commenting on the aerodynamics. We

threw the plane around the room and laughed for a full 20 minutes. Towards the end of the session Thomas took great pleasure in showing me how to refold the edges to keep the plane airborne.

At the end of the session, I gave the enormous plane to Thomas. As I walked him back to his classroom, he threw it down the hallway and immediately engaged another child. When he showed up with the plane in his classroom, Thomas was an immediate hit with his classmates. All the students gathered around him. He was truly in his element when he proceeded to discuss the art of origami to his peers. I had never seen a more wide eyed audience. Throughout the day children were coming into the sessions with colorful paper creations that Thomas had help the children make.

Thomas had become an origami "rock star." In our final session, Thomas presented in his usual intellectual and instructive manner. His demeanor was just as much a part of him as the stars are to the universe. At this point, he enjoyed a large following and his abilities to teach was a part of his appeal, part of his personality, and a huge aspect of his being. Thomas had accomplished his goal of having others truly see him where he was. In doing so, Thomas was able to move towards exploring, though not totally committing to typical childhood activities. For his grade level and social skill level, Thomas was advanced. However, he needed/ wanted tools to be able to adapt himself in his current setting or otherwise risk being excluded from his peer group. He found a way through origami, which is how Thomas tried to engage me in our initial session.

Thomas in fact was a teacher, perhaps born to teach. I can see how it would be easy to mistake a child's actions as resistance, negative transference and such, rather than

to shift one's perspective to see the whole child. Perhaps the image of the ouroboros was a part of my psyche getting in the way of meeting Thomas exactly where he was.

Once children have experienced and adjusted to the initial change in the maternal bond, and the anxiety about separation is mostly behind them, they seek out other types of relationships in social settings and peer bonding desire seems to be most prevalent. The desire to attach to or to feel attached becomes a perpetual quest. Children who might not achieve this status often languish in their aloneness for some time until this can be achieved.

Chapter 8

The Sister is Buried!: The Case of Sophia

"She's biting the children. We need help!" Sophia's father sounded desperate as he relayed his concerns over the phone. He explained, "Her behavior is out of control and the school is threatening to expel Sophia. We really need help!" When I inquired further about the behavioral concerns, the father stated that Sophia had recently started kicking and biting her schoolmates. They were baffled by the sudden aggressive acting out. What was most compelling to me was the child's age—8 years old. Neither the age nor the biting behavior in particular seemed congruent with the child's developmental stage. I was equally concerned and curious. I scheduled an appointment the following day to meet with the parents and to obtain a detailed family history.

When counseling children at the school, I rarely had an opportunity to meet with family members to discuss the home life or the child's developmental milestones. The goal in the school environment was to eradicate the immediate disruptive behaviors so that the child could function in the classroom setting. However, in my private practice, the family was involved immediately, from the initial phone call, to transporting the child to the sessions.

While obtaining a family history is an important aspect of the treatment, sometimes excessive and negative information about the child could be counterproductive. Though, in some instances, the information seemed to accelerate and deepen the treatment. Sophia's parents supplied important information when they attended the initial consultation. I had requested that this initial session not include Sophia because I wanted the parents to be able to speak freely about their concerns.

Also, in the initial phone conversation with Sophia's father, I sensed there was more he wanted to relay in person.

When Sophia's parents initially arrived, I queried the family for historical information. Outside of the general line of questioning, I also felt it was important to ask about any losses the child might have experienced. I was intensely interested to know what events could have precipitated such aggressive behavior in an otherwise reported normal child. The parents seemed genuinely perplexed about Sophia's sudden acting out, and initially attributed the new behavior to Sophia being in a new classroom setting, and having a new teacher. Just as I was about to ask Sophia's parents to expound on their thoughts about Sophia's relationship with the teacher, the father blurted out, "We don't want to have any more children!"

After several moments in silence, the mother smiled nervously and then burst into tears. The second period of silence was broken when Sophia's father disclosed, "There were complications with her birth." I sensed there was deeper anguish when both parents began to sob uncontrollably. I tried to console the parents by offering, "Sophia's birth must have been a difficult time for you both." Through tear-filled eyes, the father asserted, "This isn't about us, we just want you to help Sophia not get suspended from school." I respected these boundaries, though wondered that if the parents were in such pain, how might Sophia be trying to relay her pain around her parent's presenting concerns in addition to their pain around her traumatic birth?

As the parents requested, I continued with the family history questionnaire. The parents had relayed no significant losses or concerns about Sophia's developmental years, though the mother quietly stated at the end of the session, "She is different. Sophia looks

different than other children." When I repeated the word, "different," both parents began to weep. At that moment, I was gripped by an overwhelming sense of grief and loss. The parents stood up quickly, gathered themselves, and then agreed to bring Sophia in early the next morning.

It was heart wrenching for me to witness the magnitude of Sophia's parent's pain. I felt completely shut out in terms of helping them to process their trauma further. In reverie, I wondered how Sophia might present her own concerns during play therapy. In the process of writing up the case history notes, I spiraled into a deeper reverie. I felt haunted by the parent's comments, but especially when Sophia's father stated, "We don't want to have any more children." I sensed Sophia's parents were exasperated by the current events, but also felt the comments evolved out of a space and time that was associated with immense trauma.

Sophia's parents never discussed losses, but for some reason, I began to experience a void within me. My reveries then gravitated to what the experience may have been like for Sophia—en utero; the trauma, the fear, being quickly detached from the precious lifeline, and then whisked away for possible resuscitative efforts. What may her father have gone through in terms of possibly losing both loved ones? What may Sophia's mother have experienced in those precious moments? Even though the childbirth occurred more than 8 years ago, the family appeared to be experiencing some post traumatic concerns; concerns too difficult to explore at this time. My primary focuses at this time were crisis intervention and management. I needed to help eradicate Sophia's biting.

Before leaving the office, I prepared the room to meet Sophia the following morning. When I asked the parents to describe Sophia's strengths, they said she was smart, read a lot about geography, and had a recent interest in blowing bubbles. I pulled out a colorful bottle filled with liquid, and then placed it at a level that would be visible to Sophia upon entering the room. I wanted to find a way to engage her visually. I placed other toys mid level on a book shelf and pulled the sand tray near the middle of the room as well. Based on the behavioral concerns, and the reported aggressive acting out (biting and kicking) as reported by the parents, I did not know what to expect. When I closed my office door for the day, I felt confident that the environment I had created would be conducive to therapeutic engagement with Sophia.

The buzzer to my office rang especially loud the next morning. When I pushed the intercom button, a cheerful little voice responded, "It's me, Sophia! Mom and dad are here too!" She giggled when I responded with, "Hello Sophia and mom and dad, I'll buzz you in."

When Sophia entered the room and saw the toys, she was excited. She picked up a bottle of bubbles and commenced to blow large bubbles in the air, and then chased them around the room. Her parents watched as she ran around the room in excitement. In physical appearance, Sophia looked like a normal and fully developed 8-year-old child. If there were anomalies, they were not apparent to me.

I could sense that the parents were waiting for some form of validation about their assessment on Sophia's appearance, but the child in front of me would not have stood out as "different" looking. Sophia looked normal, overall. Sophia quickly shooed her

parents out of the door, shut it hard and then politely asked if she could remove her shoes. She seemed focused on playing. I looked forward to Sophia's narrative.

Sophia immediately began to laugh and blow more bubbles around the room. She seemed really comfortable and excited to be in the room. I observed her for several more moments and then discussed the parameters of our time together. I also offered that if she wanted to speak about anything at all, that that would be okay too. I believe that because of the urgency of the situation, I really needed to have a frank discussion at some point about the biting and the looming school suspension. The case was very complex for several reasons. First, there was a crisis with the school and we needed to resolve that situation quickly. Second, I sensed there were some unresolved familial concerns that would not be broached in my individual sessions with Sophia alone, even though I felt strongly that Sophia's acting out could be a product of those concerns.

My experience in working with the children at the school without the parents' involvement in therapy sessions made me more hopeful about a positive outcome. In those sessions, I knew and sensed that the children experienced challenges in their home environment, but was able to be present with the children in the here-and-now experience as they worked through their own presenting concerns. My focus shifted towards Sophia, despite my lingering concerns about her parents.

After I explained the play therapy rules to Sophia, she looked puzzled and then spun around the room in excitement. She immediately fixated on the sandtray on the pedestal and ran over to it. Sophia then scooped the sand up quite aggressively with both hands and then asked, "What is this? Can I pour water in it?" Before I could respond, Sophia was already pointing to another object across the room that was high on the

bookcase. In fact, it was the most unreachable toy in the room. “I want that,” she shouted. It was a porcelain figurine of a little girl with a hockey stick. When I reached for it, Sophia said, “She reminds me of my mother when she was young.” When I handed it to Sophia, she clutched it tightly in one hand while grabbing other toys off the shelf to put in the sand tray. In her other hand, Sophia grabbed a tiny red fire engine truck. As Sophia methodically rolled the truck up and down the hill in the sand, I could see how the rhythmic motion began to soothe her.

At the same time, I began to wonder about Sophia’s actions and about the unusual way she continued to clutch the figurine in one hand while she played. No sooner than I began to drift into a reverie about the figurine, then Sophia plunged the small object into the sand—headfirst. She then buried the porcelain figurine deep in the sand. Sophia then moved away from the sand tray altogether and pointed to the very bottom corner of the shelf with the toys. Sophia walked over and picked up a small skeletal figure that had a fluorescent green face and large hands and wore a long black cape. She swung it around in the air by the black cape, and then casually commented, “This reminds me of my grandfather who died. I really loved him a lot.” I sighed deeply as Sophia became pensive.

I continued to observe Sophia as she swung the puppet around her fingers. She slowly made her way to my chair, plopped down on it, and then stared at me intently as I sat across from her on the couch. After she continued to throw the toy in the air, Sophia looked at me with a serious stare and said, “It was just a game you know. I didn’t mean to hurt anybody. I just got carried away.” When I casually repeated, “It was just a game.

You were only playing. You got carried away," Sophia softened her stare and began to giggle.

She then ran to the door and opened it to look out. When she returned, she sat on the floor to put her shoes back on. Sophia calmly stated that she would not do it again because it made her parents "mad and sad." Before turning the doorknob to leave, Sophia turned around slowly and asked if she could come back again. When I answered yes, Sophia ran out into the waiting room to meet her parents. I could see the look of anticipation and anxiety in the parents' posture. I had not formulated any maladaptive impressions of Sophia. I had sensed that Sophia might be grieving in some way, but could not be sure.

After Sophia and her parents left the office, I began to formulate some initial impressions. The one concern that seemed prevalent was how Sophia might be experiencing grief over her grandfather. While she did not discuss her loss in any details, I sensed her disclosure may have been an aspect of her current challenges at school. Because time was of the essence, I felt the need to confirm this with Sophia's parents. Maintaining a connection with the parents served two purposes: To alleviate their anxiety about Sophia's behavior and to make them feel they were a part of the treatment, even though they had rejected formal family therapy sessions. When I telephoned Sophia's parents, they seemed relieved to discuss my initial impressions.

In the following meeting with the parents, I inquired about any ongoing biting episodes and any other behavioral concerns. Sophia's parents stated that for the time being, the untoward behaviors had ceased. When I inquired about Sophia's grandfather and suggested that I thought that Sophia may also be grieving, Sophia's parents looked

quizzical and her mother stated, “Sophia never met her grandparents.” They had died long before her birth.

I was perplexed, but then began to consider that for whatever reason, death was a part of Sophia’s creative narrative. As I was about to change the topic, Sophia’s father then asserted, “She is probably grieving the loss of her twin sister.” A long silence occurred. As quickly as the disclosure happened, the parents ended the session and then scheduled a subsequent appointment for Sophia. While I was getting the complete and painful family history in portions, I began to understand the depths of Sophia’s and her parents’ anguish. I continued to allow the parents to disclose at the level of their comfort and continued to respect their boundaries around solely focusing on the school crisis.

With the sad disclosure about the death of Sophia’s twin, I began to appreciate the extent of the family’s grief. I also knew that the more the family disclosed, the more their anxiety increased about Sophia’s school situation. While their focus was on the current events, I sensed that there was a relation between the disclosures and what may be going on with Sophia. However, I would not be able to address any of those concerns with Sophia, per her parents’ request. So in my ongoing sessions with Sophia, I continued as I would normally—allowing her to work at her own pace and in her own way. Sensing that our time together would be brief, I increased my sessions with Sophia to two times per week. I wanted to give Sophia every opportunity to work through her concerns as they came up, and in a safe environment where she could begin to process these existential challenges rather than act them out in an aggressive manner at school.

The next morning Sophia rang the buzzer. We now had our own ritual in terms of how she chose to begin her sessions by declaring, “We are here!” After I buzzed Sophia

and her parents in, I could hear her running down the hallway in excitement. She would say goodbye to her parents and then slam the door shut.

On this occasion, Sophia seemed anxious, but determined. She asked, “How much time do we have?” We looked at the large clock on the table together, and I could see Sophia making calculations in her head. She then slipped off her shoes and gently placed them by the door. The very first thing Sophia requested was for me to help her move the sand tray to the floor. We lifted it off the small table and placed the large sand tray onto the floor. Once this was done, Sophia walked towards the shelf that was filled with an assortment of toys. She appeared to be deliberate in her choices as she took her time looking through miniature figures and various other objects in her reach. After Sophia had gathered the toys in her arms, she gently placed the objects on the floor besides the sand tray, sat down in front of them and then breathed deeply.

Sophia wasted no time populating the tray. In reverie, she methodically placed objects into the sand tray. Upon initial glance, the sand tray looked flooded with objects; however, when I reviewed more closely the objects she was gently placing, I could see that an interesting pattern was developing. In a deep reverie, Sophia’s intra-psychic trauma had begun to materialize. She mumbled at times, but moved the objects in and out of the sand tray while she continued to engage in storytelling when she asserted, “This is for protection” when she lined up two colorful cars on the edge of the tray. I could see that she had placed about 30 objects in the tray. What was most compelling was not necessarily what she had placed in the tray, but the way in which she had situated the objects. It was arresting. Each object was perfectly paired; 2 cups, 2 snakes, 2 Popsicle sticks, 2 horses, 2 trucks, and other miniature objects. There was only one object that was

not paired. Sophia picked up the one tiny object that was not paired—a tiny silver shovel—and shouted, "And the sister is buried!"

At this point, Sophia jumped up and began to run around the room playfully; she grabbed a baby's bottle off the shelf and put it up to her mouth while looking at me shyly. She then looked at the tray and asked if she could leave it exposed until she returned in two days. I told her I could not because other children played in here, but told her I would instead take a picture of it for her to keep if she would like. She enjoyed this idea and then engaged me in a discussion about digital cameras.

Sophia looked at the clock, put her shoes back on and stated, "I really like coming here. I wish I could come all the time." I could see that Sophia was beginning to form a bond with me, which allowed her to feel safe enough to do her grief work. She had also begun to self-regulate. She no longer opened the door during our sessions and her play seemed more purposive. She was working out her twin loss even though I never verbalized to Sophia that I knew about this significant loss in her life.

In our subsequent sessions, Sophia seemed more relaxed. She maintained her same routine for the next two sessions. There were no more reports from the school and Sophia had for now avoided permanent expulsion from her school. I met with Sophia's parents and we discussed terminating treatment. Sophia's parents felt that as long as Sophia was no longer biting the other children, that the crisis had been resolved. I planned the termination in two phases; one session to discuss ending my sessions with Sophia, and another to terminate treatment all together.

In our next session together, I initiated the topic of ending play therapy. It was apparent that Sophia's parents had already made her aware. Sophia began to ask

questions about her peer interactions with a new friend. She had difficulty sharing her friends and experienced anxiety around losing them to other peer groups, mainly when they engaged in play on the playground during recesses. We talked about different scenarios and Sophia giggled and laughed during some of our role playing. Sophia continued to ask questions to try to extend our time together.

In our final session, Sophia initially ignored the sand tray. She pulled out the toy tea set and played with it briefly. When the sound of an ambulance pierced the silence in the room, Sophia became visibly agitated and began to hold her hands to her ears and paced around the room. She finally calmed herself when she located a can of play-doh on the shelf, opened it, and began to knead the clay. She then opened a different color of play-doh and began to create an amorphous figure. Sophia worked quietly for several minutes and then presented me with her creation as a parting gift. In return, I gave Sophia the bubbles she enjoyed in our initial session. Before leaving the room, Sophia pulled out the sand tray and then located the tin filled with marbles. In her last expressive gesture, she poured all of the marbles into the tray and then spread them out neatly. Sophia stood up, headed towards the door, and said "good-bye." Before leaving the office, Sophia turned around and pointed to the tray and said, "It's a grave."

For many twins, twinship is the ultimate bonding experience. In utero and outside of the womb there is an intense bond that is difficult to duplicate. Some parents often feel excluded. Even when twins are separated, and grow up in different environments, there is a longing for the missing part (of oneself). When a twin is lost due to a death, especially early in life these longings for a similar type of attachment persists.

Chapter 9

Incubation

In the incubation phase, I disengaged from the research question in order to allow for essential meaning about the research questions to manifest. Moustakas (1990) stated, "Although the researcher is moving on a totally different path, detached from involvement with the question and removed from awareness of its nature and meanings, on another level expansion of knowledge is taking place" (p. 28). Tacit knowledge and intuition are embedded in that process.

Tacit knowledge enables one to grasp an entire concept through gaining understanding of the different yet associated elements. Like pieces to a puzzle, once all of the different aspects are considered, a unified perspective materializes. Additionally, tacit knowledge considers the intangible or subtle nuances that cannot be explicitly described but are nonetheless a valid way of knowing.

Intuition also played an important part in the incubation process. Moustakas (1990) asserted:

> In intuition, from the subsidiary or observable factors one utilizes an internal capacity to make inferences and arrive at a knowledge of underlying structures or dynamics. Intuition makes immediate knowledge possible without the intervening steps of logic and reasoning. While the tacit is pure mystery in its focal nature—ineffable and unspecifiable—in the intuitive process one draws on cues; one senses a pattern or underlying condition that enables one to imagine and then characterize the reality, state of mind, or condition. (p. 23)

Both intuition and tacit knowledge were incorporated to uncover deeper meaning and insight about the experience of reverie and how it may lead to the numinous.

While reverie was an aspect of the research topic, reverie was also the veil through which I engaged this dissertation and more specifically through which I engaged

the incubation process. By engaging the research process through reverie, deeper insight could be obtained and new or modified perspectives could be considered. Romanyshyn (2007) suggested, "In his or her reveries, the researcher surrenders to something/someone *other, which* is authoring the work" (p. 141). This perspective corroborated Moustakas' (1990) observations which he described:

> Like Archimedes, who discovered a principle of buoyancy and displacement of fluids while taking a bath, the heuristic researcher through the incubation process gives birth to a new understanding or perspective that reveals additional qualities of the phenomenon, or a vision of its unity. (p. 29)

Through the incubation process, a letting go of the work also helped to connect with various aspects outside of my immediate consciousness.

Incubation Process

Using a form of expressive art and imagery in the incubation phase was a natural way to disengage from the intensity and cognitive nature of the research. Combined with tacit knowing and intuition, I engaged in lucid art painting. Bogzaran and Onslow Ford (2001) asserted:

> Lucid Art explores impersonal and subtle energies of different layers of the inner worlds through mindful creation, highly rooted in contemplative philosophy and practice, fostering a systematic yet spontaneous creative flow. This state of flow allows the artist to bring forth images from the depth of the unconscious. Poetically, one can say that Lucid Art is the meeting of the visible and the invisible, the known and the unknown, the conscious and unconscious. (p. 30)

Coupled with self dialogue, Lucid Art imagery brought the core of the research to life in a visual way. The incubation process which included the entire Lucid Art process follows.

Lucid Art Process

Each phase was documented and photographed in order to capture the essence of the process that included; unconscious musings through reverie, self dialogue, and digital imagery that captured nuances that could be reflected upon later in the incubation process.

Materials used were; florescent paints, acrylic paints, acrylic latex and clear cement glue and canvas board.

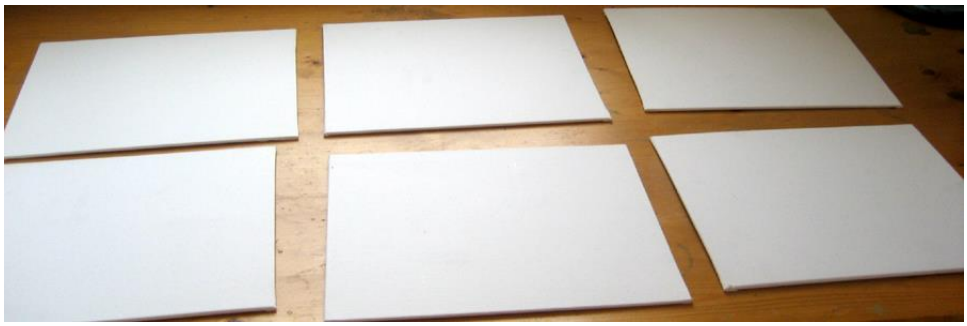

Figure 4. Incubation Process #1

1. I placed 6 pieces of 8x11 canvases on the table. I initially intended to use only 5 pieces to correspond with the case histories. The additional canvas was included spontaneously and right before I initiated the Lucid Art painting.

Figure 5. Incubation Process #2

2. I turned the canvases over and randomly labeled the back with numbers 1-5 with the last canvas labeled, “Mystery.” Once numbered and labeled, the canvases were turned over, shifted around and placed in a random order. At this point, I

was aware that I was still consciously controlling the process, but planned to randomly shift the blank canvases again once turned over. Periods of reverie were documented in italics to differentiate the shift in the Lucid Art.

Figure 6. Incubation Process #3

3. In the initial step, I chose red fluorescent paint. I was not really sure why I had chosen red and did not understand the images that included "xy and Q." XY represents the male chromosomes. I tried not to make literal interpretations during this stage, though I remained curious about the initial imagery. The Q began to look more like an oval. I paid little attention to the other four abstract images, and proceeded.

Figure 7. Incubation Process #4

4. I added quick strokes of yellow to compliment the red. Red and yellow are primary colors.

Figure 8. Incubation Process #5.

5. I added texture on top of the images by squeezing on Mars black acrylic paint. I paused in the process to continue to look for meaning in the images that were materializing. I was trying to imagine the foreground and the background image as a whole, but still could not make anything out of the abstract paintings. I continued to stare at the obscure images from many angles, and could begin to feel myself *drifting into a deep reverie . . .*

Figure 9. Incubation Process #6.

6. *I could see my hands randomly shifting the order of canvases. I then added purple, pink, turquoise and yellow paint as an overcoat. The images seemed to blur as I was pulled deeper into my inner world. Still holding on to the lightness, darkness eclipsed the brightness. I spiraled inward. I pulled out clear cement glue and painted random yet invisible images over each painting.*

Figure 10. Incubation Process #7.

7. *Being pulled completely under, and into the images, I dipped the paint brush into the Mars black paint and covered as many of the canvases as I could with the single dip of paint. I could not get them all covered and felt the need to shift the paintings around again. I felt as though I was covering a crypt, that I was now inside of. In the darkness, I tried to focus, though I still could not see clearly. I had a firm grip on what I wanted to see, on what I wanted to experience, but for some reason, I was not making the connection. However, to turn back was not an option. I was stuck in the middle. And then . . .*

   I was beyond the middle.

   Like Hecate at the crossroads illuminating the way, I paused to get my bearings in the sea of darkness. Still flailing haplessly in Psyche's tumultuous current, I began to acquiesce.

   I detached

   and then eased gently into its tide . . .

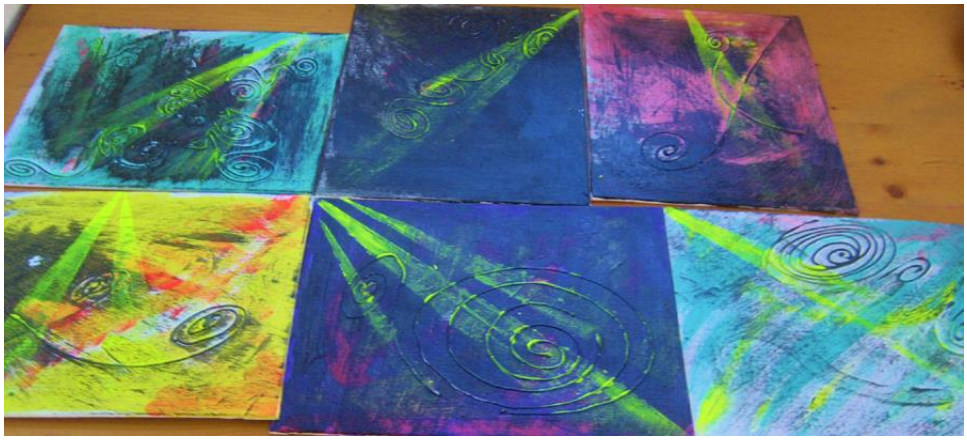

Figure 11. Incubation Process #8.

8. *I shifted the images yet again.*

   Beacons of light illuminated the small canvases. In the darkness, I reached out for the light. What was it showing me? In an effort to find my way, I rubbed the individual canvases with my fingers. As if a portal had opened, one by one the numinous images began to appear.

   I still could not make much of the images and contemplated destroying the paintings. However, to maintain full transparency with the incubation process, I included the images.

   Afterwards, I experienced a complete block in the entire research process. For several months I pondered the meaning of the individual imagery. It was not until I considered the images collectively however that illumination occurred.

Manifestation of Sol *niger*

Figure 12. Sol *niger* (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

The light of Western metaphysics has obscured darkness; sedimented reason has thrown it into the shadows, naming it only as its inferior counterpart. But darkness is also the Other that likewise shines; it is illuminated not by light but by its own intrinsic luminosity. Its glow is that of the lumen naturae, the light of nature, whose sun is not the star of heaven but Sol niger, the black sun.

(Stanton Marlan, 2005, p. 214)

Chapter 10

Illumination

In heuristic research, the openness of the researcher in elucidating the question, clarifying its terms, and pointing to its directions provides the essential beginnings of the discovery process. From there, as Kierkegaard (1965) has so aptly stated, the researcher must strive to be humble and not hold a single presupposition, so as to be in a position to learn the more. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 43)

Moustakas (1990) maintained, "Illumination opens the door to a new awareness, a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or an altogether new discovery of something that has been present for some time yet beyond immediate awareness" (p. 30). During my investigation of how reverie could lead to the numinous, and in the context of child centered play therapy I gained a deeper understanding about essential childhood psychological processes. Those creative processes included imagery; sometimes dark imagery and untoward behaviors that initiated transformation in children at a deeper and more sustainable level.

Illumination through Sol Niger: The Black Sun

Often overlooked or completely minimized in children's play activities, Sol *niger* may manifest in childhood as a precursor to psychospiritual awareness. In my own childhood sol *niger* was a precursor to such awareness. Sol *niger* manifested in the research which was an unknown and powerful connection to early childhood. Moustakas (1990, p. 30) stated, "In illumination, it is just such missed, misunderstood, or distorted realities that make their appearance and add something essential to the truth of an experience."

In *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*, Marlan (2005) expanded his description of the black sun to include the nigredo when he wrote:

> This image has shown itself in relation to the darkest and most destructive situations, in what the alchemists have called the blacker-than-black dimensions of the *nigredo*. The term *nigredo* is usually thought of as a beginning process in alchemy, roughly equivalent to a descent into the unconscious. In the face of this darkness and the suffering that sometimes accompanies it, there is a natural tendency to turn away from the psyche. While this defensive process is at times necessary, it may also inhibit or bypass a hidden potential in the darkness itself. (p. 4).

The manifestation of Sol *niger* at this point in the study served as a reminder of how creative processes, however dark in appearance, also leads to and serves as an essential part of healing and transformation. In this phase of the study, alchemical symbolism was employed as a metaphor for therapeutic processes that required a breaking down or breaking apart in order to illuminate deeper psychological resources.

The manifestation of the black sun, though ominous to some, and yet welcomed to others, has been characterized in many ways. Marlan (2004) quoted Hillman when he explained:

> Hillman emphasizes that blackness has a purpose: It teaches endurance, warns, dissolves attachments, and "sophisticates the eye" so that we may not only see blackness but actually see by means of it. To see through blackness is to understand its continuous deconstructive activity as necessary for psychological change. To read alchemy this way suggests that its images are "psychic conditions [that are] always available. They do not disappear. (p. 190)

Staying with the image of Sol *niger* was the soulful means through which psychic growth and expansion of knowledge occurred. The image brought deeper understanding and clarity about a ubiquitous and dark matter that was eclipsed and out of my view.

It was the image of Sol *niger* and its manifestation within the current research process that helped to shed light on some of my own early childhood psychological processes. Those psychoactive processes that included creative and imaginal play also included the manifestation of Sol *niger* in different forms such as those presented in the

case histories. In that regard, the appearance of Sol *niger* in children's psychological material may not be viewed solely as an aberration but perhaps also as bridge towards psychospiritual awareness.

In my early childhood, which also included periods of intense psychological suffering, I had a vision that guided me through challenges and existential concerns in my youth. Sol *niger* manifested as a vision of a nighttime rainbow. At that time, the imaginal and paradoxical vision served as a precursor to psychospiritual awareness. Hart (2003) maintained:

> Sometimes suffering is the first grace precisely because it helps us to learn and pushes us to grow in some way. Suffering is transformed when we move from the illusion that this life is punishment to accepting the gift of learning. (p. 188)

It had not occurred to me that in early childhood was my true and initial encounter with the black sun. When I searched through my old paintings I could also see Sol *niger* imagery that reflected darkness and luminosity that led to ongoing transformation.

In reflecting on the 5 presented child case histories, I had not recognized the pervasive manifestations of Sol *niger* imagery that had appeared in some of the children's play therapy processes. In retrospect I could also see the darkness that led to luminosity in their play (painted black sun on stark white paper, building graves in the sand with luminous marbles, references to burying and burials) which seemed to point to a descent into the unconscious and subsequent transformation.

The appearance of Sol *niger* in art and psychology had been reported in the past. In fact, Janet Towbin (as cited in Marlan, 2005, p. 93), an artist inspired by alchemy wrote, "[B]lack is the beginning of consciousness—you cannot have light without darkness or darkness without light. The dyad of black and white sets up a diurnal rhythm

and the contrast is essential to consciousness." Children also have the capacity to access this deeper source of healing through visual artistic creations, storytelling and in creative scenarios enacted during child centered play therapy.

In my earlier perceptions about reverie leading to the numinous, I speculated about the psychospiritual nature of reverie and how the experience of the numinous might manifest during the course of child centered play therapy. I expanded the question to include what purpose the experience of reverie leading to the numinous might serve in children's psychospiritual development. Through case history review, I examined those queries and discovered a pervasive and deeply creative theme that was out of my immediate awareness—Sol *niger* in many of the children's play therapy processes. Those manifestations of Sol *niger* ultimately culminated into psychological healing and transformation at a deeper level.

Perhaps an aspect of overlooking or minimizing Sol *niger* in the work of children was because of how differently unconscious activities may manifest. Additionally, no research on children and their unconscious connections leading to transformation or towards initial psychospiritual awareness had been studied or reported. When I reviewed Marlan's (2005) description I could also see where it might be difficult to imagine such profound occurrences in early childhood:

> In the face of such a devastating vision, analysis stands still—shocked. Salvationist fires are fanned but are held back; the heart is wrenched. Job's comforters are quieted, and no platitudes or new analytic techniques will do. Biological remedies, primal screams, and spiritual fantasies are hollow. There is no rush to cure; perhaps there is no cure at all. Silence is in the soul of patient and analyst alike: a quiet pair sitting in the grip of Sol *niger*, dark and light, burning and ice cold, standing on ground that is no ground, a self that is no self and that has been devoured by a green lion or a black hole. (p. 66)

Though Marlan was referring to adults in his graphic depiction of Sol *niger* and psychotherapy, I believe that children also experience suffering and psychological anguish. Like adults, children in their unique transformative processes can and do heal.

My perspectives and knowledge about reverie and the numinous; and about the efficacy of reverie and the numinous pertaining to children and their overall psychospiritual awareness and development expanded. Deeper understanding involved the inclusion of possible intra-psychic activities germane to children's unique transformative processes—often based on an element of early childhood suffering.

Suffering takes on many forms and is often overlooked in child psychotherapy. It was not until Sol *niger* materialized in my own work during the process of this investigation, that I reviewed its pertinence and manifestation in the presented case histories. I was not fully aware that the transformative process for children could have been precipitated by suffering in a different, yet similar way that adults experience anguish. The manifestation of Sol *niger* in the research helped me to reflect on its appearances in my early childhood and to correlate those experiences to the genesis of psychospiritual awareness in youth.

Previous Confrontations with Sol *Niger*

In my own childhood, at the age of seven, I had a vision that guided me through challenges in my youth; Sol *niger* as a vision of a rainbow—in the night and moonless sky. At that time, the numinous vision served as a source of salvation and as a bridge towards spiritual understanding for me. In Hart's (2003) groundbreaking book on children and spirituality, he suggested, "children have a secret spiritual life. They have spiritual capacities and experiences—profound moments that shape their lives in

enduring ways. These are sometimes stunning, often tender, and reveal a remarkable spiritual world that has been kept largely secret" (p. 1). My initial experience with illuminated darkness, as experienced in childhood, served as a bridge to a deeper source of meaning. It had not occurred to me that perhaps this was my true and initial encounter with the black sun and the *nigredo* in my own childhood.

Another encounter with Sol *niger* was when a little girl named Nekyia who was under my therapeutic care slowly dipped her paintbrush into the tiny cup of water, and then painstakingly painted a black circle, filled it in with black paint and then added black spikes. In that particular moment, I was overcome with sadness. The paradox of the image, which appeared to be a black sun, was dramatic. In fact, the vision of the image was so striking that any time I had the opportunity for case presentation, I inquired about this specific dark image. Even at that time, it was the darkness, the *nigredo* that was most alluring to me.

After seven years of inquiry, I posed the question during my doctoral studies in depth psychology at the Pacifica Graduate Institute. I was referred to Marlan's (2005) book, *The Black Sun: the Alchemy and Art of Darkness*. Several years later, I purchased the book. It would be an additional two years and during the process of this research before I opened it. What actually drew me to Marlan's work was the dark image on the book cover. There was something eerily drawing me deeper into the contents of his writing.

The Nigredo

I was not aware that much of my resistance emanated from a place of darkness within me. The closer I got to the core of this darkness; I was again overcome with deep

reveries that lead to blackness and to a dark mood. As I randomly reached into my expansive bookcase for a way out of it, I pulled out 3 books; Jung's (1934/1959) *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* Romanyshyn's (2007) *The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind,* and finally, Marlan's (2005) *The Black Sun: The Alchemy and Art of Darkness*. On a visceral level, the image on the cover of Marlan's book immediately resonated with me. At that point, I had not yet made the connection to the images I had created during the incubation phase of this research.

I had been mostly fearful and resistant about uncovering a darkness or "irresolution" in my personal analytic work that had escaped me. In that resistance, I intellectualized that the analytic work could never really be completely done, but on the other hand, I also believed sometimes the analytic work was done enough; that my work in a sense was "done enough" and not related to the hypothesis under review.

I was wrong on both accounts.

Reverie as a portal to the numinous was and is a way that I bridged consciousness to unconscious material; an internal psychic and self regulating mechanism I learned in early childhood. Play activities (sandplay, painting and storytelling) were often an impetus to deep reveries; reveries aimed towards uncovering existential meaning. This internal process is what I ultimately witnessed in my professional, child centered play therapy sessions with children.

Lumen Naturae

Figure 13. Lumen Naturae(used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

> The clear moonlight of the albedo leads the adept out of the black night of the soul (the nigredo). (Abraham, 1998, p. 5)

Chapter 11

Explication

Explication expands on the themes and nuances uncovered during the illumination stage. Those themes included the suffering in childhood and in the manner in which children manifest their challenges in child centered play therapy. If we look closely, manifestations of Sol niger often appear in unique ways that are germane to children. Similar behaviors and objects that reflect children's inner world seemed to be universal.

Axline (1964) initially brought attention to Dibs in her groundbreaking book, "*Dibs in Search of Self*," the case study of a little boy who struggled in his classroom and in his complex home life. Along with themes of Sol *niger* embedded in the unique psychotherapeutic processes of the presented child case histories, I included excerpts from Axline's and Dib's psychotherapeutic interactions that reflected similarities in child centered play therapy themes. These excerpts were included to shed light on perhaps the universal processes that children use to engage the therapeutic process and to heal at a deeper level.

To some degree, many of the children had themes of darkness and suffering in their young lives. These themes manifested in either their explicit dialogues with me or materialized in the maternal transference. Grave building and burying games seemed to signify a deeper connection to unconscious activities. Some of the children insisted on burying items deep in the sand. In this process, the children typically spiraled into deep reverie. Each child appeared to have gone through their own transformative process that was ultimately reflected in the way they transmuted new or modified behaviors in the sessions, classroom and as reported by family members.

In the following pages, a comparison of the 5 case histories with brief excerpts from the renowned *Dibs* case written by Axline (1964) was used in the creative synthesis to explicate glimpses of early childhood psychospiritual awareness in therapy sessions. Axline and Dibs' interactions are italicized.

Nekyia—Do you have a Mother?

Figure 14. Sustenance (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

"I can't figure this all out," he said.

"What can't you figure out?" I asked

"All this. And you. You're not a mother. You're not a teacher. You're not a member of mother's bridge club. What are you?"

"You can't quite figure out just what kind of a person I am, h'm?" I said.

"No I can't," Dibs said. He shrugged his shoulders. "But it really doesn't matter," he said, slowly gazing straight into my eyes. "You are the lady of the wonderful playroom." He suddenly knelt down and ran his fingers down my leg and looked closely at my mesh hose. "You're the lady with the hundreds of tiny holes in your stockings," he said with a shout of laughter.

He jumped up, ran over to the table and picked up the nursing bottle. "Baby bottle," he said. "Dear comforting baby bottle. When I need you, you bring me comfort." He sucked on the nursing bottle for several minutes. "I was a baby again and I loved the

nursing bottle. But six-year-old Dibs does not need you now. Goodbye, baby bottle, goodbye." (Axline, 1964, p. 204)

The black sun appeared for Nekyia in our initial session when she made her first declaration and said, "I want to paint something." After taking a few deep breaths, Nekyia slowly painted a large black filled in circle at the upper edge of the stark white paper. She then made small lines around it that pointed outward. We both sat in silence. After a period time, Nekyia slowly walked out of the room.

Subsequent sessions went in a similar fashion where Nekyia made the same one sentence declaration that progressed to, "I want to cut something." She seemed to be searching in earnest for a way to express her sorrow. Cutting paper seemed to ground Nekyia in some way. The slow cutting of the paper into halves again caused her to spiral into deep reverie where she seemed to be contemplating some deep meaning.

After several sessions, Nekyia broke her silence by asking, "Do you have a mother?" This direct query was equally as heart wrenching as the appearance of Sol niger in our initial session. From that point on, Nekyia had begun to make art creations where she labeled figures with the title, "Mom." In one painting she included my name next to "Mom." I believe it was perhaps her attempt to discern the true nature of our developing relationship and her associated emotions. As our bond increased, Nekyia took more risks in her sessions in terms of crawling around the floor and engaging in infantile behavior as she gazed at me. In our ongoing sessions, Nekyia was more confident, playful and interactive.

In our final session she made several gestures to signify transformation and a new sense of freedom. Whatever challenges Nekyia had in her home life and in her classroom

seemed to have been resolved. Before Nekyia terminated her sessions she made a final declaration when she stated, “These are the monsters. The little nice monster is my little brother. The big mean monster is anger and the big sad monster is my neighbor. You can keep these.”

In Nekyia’s final painting, she had found a way to fully incorporate the therapeutic experience for her when she explained, “This is a rainbow. This is a flower. This is your mom and me. This is your mom and my friend.”

Lorenzo—It's a Grave

Figure 15. Numen (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

> *"He got buried," Dibs told me, leaning towards me as he spoke. "And not only did he get buried, but I will build another big, high, powerful hill on the top of that grave. He will never, never, never get out of that grave. He will never, never, never have a chance to climb any hill again!" He scooped up the sand with broad sweeps of his hands and built a hill over the grave he had made—over the grave of the buried toy soldier. When the hill was completed, he brushed the sand from his hands, sat there cross-legged, looking at it. "That one was Papa," he said quietly, climbing out of the sandbox.* (Axline, 1964, p. 105)

"Don't worry Miss Victoria, God is with us," was one of Lorenzo's initial and most memorable comments he made to me. It caused me to take pause. However what was most compelling about my sessions with Lorenzo was how he seemed to have a compulsion for building graves. These were not ordinary graves, but beautiful, colorful

and luminous graves built with numerous sparkling glass marbles. In one moment they looked like intricate mandalas and in another like and intricate 3 dimensional art creation.

In the same sandtray, Lorenzo would also climb into it, lie motionless in a fetal position and then stare at me in deep reverie. His activities in the sand were always a soulful and visceral experience to witness. Many times I spiraled into my own reveries about my own early childhood and about suffering and sadness.

Not only was Lorenzo creative in the sandtray, but also with his storytelling. He created his own healing fiction about how he imagined his life with the mother in his reveries—perfect and devoted mother who desired to spend time with him. I was impressed with Lorenzo's ability to see light in the darkened space where his mother had once occupied. He had found a creative way to frame and to work through his deeper challenges.

Harriet—Moon Sand Exchange

Figure 16. Exchange (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

"I know you don't want to go, Dibs. But you and I only have one hour every week to spend together here in this playroom. And when that hour is over, no matter how you feel about it, no matter how I feel about it, it is over for that day and we both leave the playroom. Now it is time for us to go. In fact, it is a little past the time." (Axline, 1964, p. 57)

Harriet suffered greatly after the birth of her new brother. At the time, having to share her parent's affections with her brother was not an option Harriet could imagine. In our sessions, those same anxieties manifested for her. Harriet had difficulty ending our sessions. Sometimes, I secretly shared her affections and desire to extend our sessions. She reminded me of myself during those difficult grade school experiences.

Harriet's burying numerous items in the sand was a way she had invented to extend her time and to perhaps explore her attachment angst. In grappling with her relationship and attachment anxiety, Harriet was ultimately able to face her concerns in

our developing therapeutic relationship. As our bond grew, so did Harriet's anxiety. She had effectively transferred the intensity of the relationship she had with her parents into our therapeutic relationship. Harriet enjoyed feeling connected in some way and struggled with how to cope with separation anxiety and perhaps about how she functions independently and in relation to others. Both proved to be a deep source of anguish and suffering for Harriet.

In the end, Harriet never really resolved her feelings about her new sibling but seemed to have come to a new understanding about the complex nature of relationships in general. Realizing that she also had the capacity to extend her affections to others seemed to be enough to initiate Harriet's transformative process and at a deeper level.

Thomas—The Hypnotist

Figure 17. Portal (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

> *Sometimes one thing works out very well with one child, but not at all with another child. We don't give up easily. We don't write off a case as "hopeless" without trying just one more thing. Some people think this is very bad—to keep hope alive when there is no basis for hope. But we are not looking for a miracle. We are seeking understanding, believing that understanding will lead us to the threshold of more effective ways of helping the person to develop and utilize his capacities more constructively. The inquiry goes on and on and we will continue to seek a way out of the wilderness of our ignorance*. (Axline, 1964, p. 22)

"When will it be my turn?" Thomas lamented. Even though Thomas' question was related to his personal request for play therapy, his question seemed to emanate from a deeper source of anguish. Thomas wanted to form a connection with his peers, but had great difficulty achieving this goal. Where most of his peers rejoiced in expressive play

activity, Thomas was more didactic in his interactions. Those social skills transferred into our play therapy sessions. This way of trying to relate to his peers had been unsuccessful for Thomas. Initially, and in the countertransference, it had been equally difficult for me to relate to Thomas in a playful or maternal manner.

In other words, the way in which Thomas engaged in play was in the same detached manner in which he struggled to engage his peers and me in our sessions. However, once I acknowledged his strengths as a teacher and as gifted creatively, our connection deepened. Thomas' creative abilities in fact, turned out to the one way he engaged his peers in a unique way, through the art of origami. He made miniature replicas of various items and then handed them out. This was Thomas' unique way in which he initiated dialogue and curiosity about his creations and about himself.

I learned that play comes in all forms and that the process and drive towards healing manifest in different ways. Being humble and open to those unique learning moments can and does facilitate great change—in the patient and in the therapist.

Sophia—"The Sister is Buried"

Figure 18. Rainbow (used with permission by author/artist from private collection).

> *He picked up the metal shovel and quietly and intently dug a deep hole in the sand. Then I noticed that he had selected and set apart one of the toy soldiers. When he had finished digging the hole, he carefully placed that soldier in the bottom of the hole and shoveled sand in on top of it. When the grave was filled in, he slapped the top of it with the back of the shovel. "This one just got buried," he announced. "This one did not get a chance to even try to climb that hill. And of course, he did not get to the top. Oh he wanted to. He wanted to be with the others. He wanted to hope too. He wanted to try. But he didn't get a chance. He got buried."* (Axline, 1964, p. 109)

Sophia's suffering may have begun before she was born. Her womb mate perished in utero. Sophia's grief ultimately materialized in her sand play therapy where she compulsively paired numerous objects in the sand. Even though Sophia spoke openly

about other losses in her young life, such as grief for her grandfather, she never directly verbalized feelings or engaged in discussion about her twin sister.

In her grief work, Sophia could never bring herself to bury the paired objects. She would simply place the numerous and duplicate objects side by side. She also requested that the objects remain undisturbed until she returned. In explaining to Sophia that I could not accommodate her request because other children played with the toys, she offered a unique compromise—to photograph her sandtrays. The photographs seemed even more therapeutic in that it was more of a unique and creative abstract twin portrait. Sophia had ultimately found a way to memorialize her sister.

The sandtray portrait seemed to initiate healing and transformation at a deeper level. In our final session, Sophia proclaimed, "The sister is buried!" Before leaving the play therapy room for the last time, Sophia turned around before opening the door, pointed and shouted, "It's a grave!"

Conclusion and Implications

Our ability to be unsettled by depth psychology is one of depth psychology's merits. It is a psychology that propels us beyond the barriers of our usual presumptions, and compels us to gaze anew at phenomena thought to be neatly reconciled on the one hand, yet destined for further and more imaginative exploration on the other. It is from a depth psychological perspective, that this study explored 3 questions: (a) How may reverie lead to the numinous? (b) How may reverie lead to the numinous in Child Centered Play Therapy? and (c) What role does the manifestation of reverie, as it can lead to the numinous play in early childhood psychospiritual awareness and development?

In the case histories, reverie that led to the numinous was an unscripted and spontaneous occurrence. Reverie was a natural way the children engaged their intra psychic life which also occurred naturally during the quiet moments leading to self-directed play therapy. The children activated their own unique intra psychic processes by way of reverie. Once the children accessed their innermost concerns, conscious manifestations in the form of artwork and soulful narratives took form. These manifestations often took on a numinous quality, particularly when associated with imagery (Black Sun) and other visual references (Graves) that may reflect initial psychospiritual awareness.

In his earlier work with children, Moustakas (1959) brought attention to children's internal processes and how we as therapist can respectfully witness those processes without impinging upon such deeply transformational work when he asserted:

> The therapist must be courageous enough to live through the suffering and unknown factors in the confrontation with the child, trusting enough to let the breach heal through silent presence and communion when words and dialogue fail, strong enough to maintain his love and respect for the child/whatever else may be canceled out in the issue or dispute. The therapist never loses sight of the fact that the child is seeking in his own way, however fragmentary or futile or destructive it may appear, to find an authentic existence, to find a life of meaning and value, and to express the truth as he sees it. (p. 5)

M. L. von Franz (1964) imparted similar wisdom about children's psychological capacities and their transformative processes when over 50 years ago she suggested:

> When a child reaches school age, the phase of building up the ego and of adapting to the outer world begins. This phase generally brings a number of painful shocks. At the same time, some children begin to feel very different from others, and this feeling of being unique brings a certain sadness that is part of the loneliness of many youngsters. The imperfections of the world, and the evil within oneself as well as outside, become conscious problems; the child must try to cope with urgent (but not yet understood) inner impulses as well as the demands of the outer world. (p. 166)

M. L. von Franz briefly wrote about children in relation to Jung's individuation process but neither she nor Jung expanded on the notion that children also engage in the transformative process in some way in early childhood. Outside of early child analysts writing about the child's unconscious as it relates to the parents; there are minimal accounts or references to children and their early unconscious experiences in depth psychology.

The initial research premise included the positive and outwardly therapeutic aspects of reverie as it may lead to the numinous in terms of psychotherapeutic "processes." On that account, my primary focus was on the "way" the therapeutic material was engaged—through reverie. What I had not "fully" appreciated was from where those reveries may have emanated, and to where those reveries may ultimately lead. In retrospect, I believe reverie was a way into and a way out of the *nigredo*; the darkness and the suffering in the children's intra-psychic material—for them and for me.

In those instances, I focused on the immediate here-and-now therapeutic situation because it was difficult for me to consider such suffering and darkness in the lives of children. Minimizing or dismissing the possibility of deep suffering in the lives of children was perhaps my secret koan. How does a child experience suffering?

However, when I reflected on periods during my own childhood that were darkened by the sometimes harsh and inexplicable realities of life, and my own childhood trauma, I could also see how such darkened times informed my budding personhood and spirituality in youth. I can now reflect on how resilient the children were once they faced certain challenges that caused them to suffer. Hart (2003) maintained:

> Children have a secret spiritual life. They have spiritual capacities and experiences—profound moments that shape their lives in enduring ways. These

> are sometimes stunning, often tender, and reveal a remarkable spiritual world that has been kept largely secret. (p. 1.)

Reverie, as it can lead to the numinous, particularly in early childhood, was a natural and spontaneous portal through which children engaged their psyches. Their unconscious activities usually manifested in the form of archetypal imagery, creative storytelling, and spontaneous dialogue. Some of those manifestations could be interpreted as numinous within the context of the child's individual play. All five cases involved periods of reverie. Four of the five cases included ephemeral manifestations that could be interpreted as numinous.

For Depth Psychotherapy, understanding and validating early childhood psycho-spirituality is an opportunity to begin to give a voice to and to make a space for children and the unique ways they access deeper dimensions of their psyche. To minimize or to exclude these essential and early childhood unconscious activities would be to deny these primary and essential experiences that inform our *Weltanschauung.*

Epilogue

I began this research as an initial exploration into reverie as it can lead to the numinous. I discovered that there was an element of suffering that was paramount to self awareness and deep insight. On that account, Miguel de Unamano's (2013) perspective on suffering resonated:

> The cure for suffering—which is the collision of consciousness with unconsciousness—is not to be submerged in unconsciousness, but to be raised to consciousness and to suffer more. The evil of suffering is cured by more suffering. Do not take opium, but put salt and vinegar in the soul's wound, for when you sleep and no longer feel the suffering, are not. And to be, that is imperative. Do not then close your eyes to the agonizing Sphinx, but look her in the face, and let her seize you in her mouth, and crunch you with her hundred thousand poisonous teeth, and swallow you. And when she has swallowed you, you will know the sweetness of the taste of suffering. (p. 175)

The manifestation of Sol *niger* in the research emanated from a place of suffering that ultimately led to insight about what may be the impetus to earlyn psychospiritual awareness. This process may likely begin in early childhood and continues to be developed throughout life.

The capacity to engage in reverie as it can lead to the numinous begins in early childhood. Unfortunately, those essential early childhood experiences have been minimized or even denied in depth psychology literature. The genesis of one's psychospiritual awareness does not begin in adulthood. Psychospiritual awareness begins at an early developmental stage. Just how early is debatable. Other studies will be required to continue to shed light on and to understand psychospiritual milestones in addition to other developmental milestones that have been heavily examined. The fact that much credence has not been given to early childhood in depth psychology is yet another form of illuminated darkness that may need to be examined more closely.

Creative Synthesis

A Child's Reverie

In the days and in the nights I allow my mind to take flight.
Curious about life's up and downs, I wish I may I wish I might.
From above and from below I meet in the middle where there is a glow
Curious about life's darkness and lightness, I wish I may, I wish I might.
Now safe in the middle I find solace and joy, waiting for insight like some new toy
Curious about good and bad, I wish I may I wish I might

Feelings of aloneness I don't understand. In a world full of people in a crowded land
Curious about happiness and about sadness, I wish I may I wish I might
I don't understand this thing this fleeting ping. Makes me want to dance. Makes me want to sing.
Curious about life in the midst of death, I wish I may I wish I might
Who is God and who is the devil? I often ponder the two from my windowsill
Curious about that place called heaven and hell, I wish I may I wish I might

Tall and short, long and small; do we need these sizes at all?
Curious about what makes us different and what makes us the same, I wish I may, I wish I might.
Mother, father, sister, brother why do we need these others?
Curious about belonging and longings, I wish I may I wish I might
Mother Mother Mother Mother, my everything my non-thing
Curious about the warmth of your embrace, I wish I may I wish I might

Toiling neither above or below, floating effortlessly into the tow
I'm putting pieces to the puzzle together.
I may
I might…
now begin to know.

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APPENDIX A: Individual Themes

Pseudonym	Subjective (Quotes)	Objective (Behaviors)
Nekyia	• Do you have a mother? • I want to cut something. • I want to paint. • These are the monsters. The little nice monster is my little brother. The big mean monster is anger and the big sad monster is my neighbor. You can keep these. • This is a rainbow. This is a flower. This is your mom and me. This is your mom and my friend.	• Sustained gaze • Deep self regulating breathing • Trance-like state • Impromptu office visits • Painting • Crawling • Cutting Paper • Ritual (ended session by cutting paper in half)
Lorenzo	• I just want to get in there and swim! • Me and my mom lived in Australia and we always went to the beach every day, and we would have so much fun—just the two of us. • Can I come back tomorrow Miss Victoria? • Don't worry Miss Victoria, God is with us". • It's a grave. • My Grammy is sick and she can't get out of the bed anymore. My Nana takes care of her and my Nana takes care of me too. • In jail, down in the dark room • I like graves. When I'm at home, I go in the yard and I dig a big hole and then I get in it and cover myself up in it. I hide in it and nobody can find me. It's a deep hole. • Yes Miss Victoria and I'm not afraid of being in the grave either.	• Sustained gaze • Deep self regulating breathing • Trance-like state • Fetal position • Sat on my lap • Grave building in sandtray • Kneading sand • Storytelling • Took shoes off • Ritual (began and ended session by building graves)
Harriet	• I want to be a truth teller. So what I am going to tell you is the truth. I don't know how the art got cut up. I	• Cut classmates school project • Poured canister of

	promise. • I will hide them, and let's see how much you can find. I will keep track! • Can I have lunch with you?	marbles in the sand • Buried marbles in the sand for me to find • Maintained close proximity to me (knee to knee) • Impromptu office visits • Had school receptionist page me on my day off • Ritual (began and ended sessions by burying marbles in the sand.
Thomas	• When will it be my turn? • I have something for you.	• Building model helicopter • Constructed origami animals • Kicked ball • Hypertalkative • Made monotonous circles in the sand tray with toy soldiers and truck.
Sophia	• What is this? Can I pour water in it? • I want that. She reminds me of my mother when she was young • This reminds me of my grandfather who died. I really loved him a lot. • It was just a game you know. I didn't mean to hurt anybody. I just got carried away • How much time do we have? • And the sister is buried • I really like coming here. I wish I could come all the time • It's a grave	• Trance-like state • Deep self regulating breathing • Took shoes off • Paired toys in the sandtray • Buried objects in the sand • Sat in close proximity • Chose and swung skeletal toy figure in air • Poured canister of marbles in the sand

APPENDIX B: Collective Themes

(**References to Mother and states of Reverie**)

Children	Quotes	Behavior
Nekyia	• Do you have a mother? • This is a rainbow. This is a flower. This is your mom and me. This is your mom and my friend.	• Sustained gaze • Deep self regulating breathing • Trance-like state
Lorenzo	• Me and my mom lived in Australia and we always went to the beach every day, and we would have so much fun—just the two of us.	• Sustained gaze • Deep self regulating breathing • Trance-like state
Harriet		• Expressed general anxiety about break in parental bond due to new sibling
Thomas		• Did not mention mother during sessions.
Sophia	• I want that. She reminds me of my mother when she was young	• Deep self regulating breathing • Trance-like state

(**References to Graves and burying**)

Pseudonym	Quotes	Behaviors
Nekyia		
Lorenzo	It's a grave! • I like graves. When I'm at home, I go in the yard and I dig a big hole and then I get in it and cover myself up in it. I hide in it and nobody can find me. It's a deep hole. • Yes Miss Victoria and I'm not afraid of being in the grave either	Ritual (began and ended session by building graves)
Harriet		Initiated game of burying marbles
Thomas	No grave references	
Sophia	• And the sister is buried • It's a grave	Buried figurine who she identified as mother in the sand.