Neoshamanism and the Shadow: ‘the soul’s journey’.

Robert Edward Boyle

Doctor of Philosophy
2007
University of Western Sydney
Statement of Originality

This research is original research. It has not been submitted for credit toward any other degree at this or any other educational institution.

Signature………………………………………

Date: 17/3/06
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements ........................................................................... i

Abstract .......................................................................................... iv

Prologue.......................................................................................... 1

Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................. 5
  1. The topic..................................................................................... 5
  2. Neoshamanism.......................................................................... 7
  3. Personal context......................................................................... 8
  4. Overview of thesis...................................................................... 16

Chapter 2: Literature review.......................................................... 20
  1. Neoshamanism.......................................................................... 20
      a. Definitions........................................................................... 20
      b. Traditional shamanism..................................................... 23
      c. Conceptualising shamanic consciousness...................... 30
      d. Popularising or appropriating shamanism..................... 34
      e. Training to be a shaman or shamanic practitioner........ 41
      f. Questions of interest....................................................... 47
  2. The shadow............................................................................... 47
      a. Jung and the elusive shadow......................................... 47
      b. Types of shadow........................................................... 52
      c. The shadow and healing.............................................. 58
      d. Shadow integration...................................................... 60
      e. The creative shadow.................................................... 66
      f. Shadow, shamanism and religion................................. 67
      g. Shaman and shadow, the unanswered questions......  68

Chapter 3: Research methodology................................................ 69
  1. Research approach............................................................... 69
      a. Transpersonal research................................................. 69
      b. Heuristic research........................................................ 72
      c. Phenomenology............................................................ 73
d. Working with imagination and visual art......................... 75

2. Research methods
   a. Participatory research............................................ 78
   b. First person research ........................................... 86

Interlude: First person experience of workshops.................. 93

Chapter 4: Michael’s story........................................... 107

Chapter 5: Ewa’s story............................................... 124

Chapter 6: Lisa’s story ............................................... 140

Chapter 7: Kaye’s story ............................................. 158

Chapter 8: Bronwyn’s story........................................ 172

Chapter 9: Peter’s story............................................. 187

Chapter 10: First person research.................................. 205
   1. The first image................................................. 206
   2. Images of the shadow......................................... 208
   3. My shadowgraph.............................................. 220
   4. Transformation of my shadow experiences.............. 223
   5. Venture into imaginal story................................. 225
   6. Reflection....................................................... 236

Chapter 11: Discussion: A journey in meaning making......... 238
   First phase meaning making – engaging with theorists and scholars
       Transpersonal theories – Ken Wilber and Stanislav Grof. 238
   b. The Jungian approach............................................ 247
   1. Second stage meaning making – emergent themes........ 248
       a. Acceptance/rejection of spirit guides.................. 248
       b. Anxiety and self-criticism............................... 251
       c. Transformation............................................ 253
       d. Anger and rage........................................... 256
e. Qualities of spirit guides ........................................... 257
f. Relationship with shadowgraph ................................ 260
g. Comparison with my own experiences ....................... 262
h. Response to shadowgraph ...................................... 264

3. Third phase meaning making - ‘a time of doubt’ .......... 269
   a. Returning to the source: ‘deeper into the images’ .... 273
   b. The journey of the human soul .............................. 277
   c. Working with images ........................................ 280
   d. Guidance from recent dreams ............................... 284

4. Implications for the theory and practice of neoshamanism 287
   a. Motivation ....................................................... 287
   b. Ontology ........................................................ 288
   c. Significance .................................................... 290
   d. Development ................................................... 293
   e. A deeper calling? .............................................. 295

5. Revisiting the shadow ............................................. 298

6. Directions for future research .................................. 305

7. The journey continues ........................................... 309

Bibliography .......................................................... 311
I am very grateful for the many entities who encouraged and supported me during my Doctoral research.

My supervisor Dr. John Cameron was a wise and diligent mentor who gave much of himself as well as his considerable intellectual capacity in offering concise and considered critiques along the way. He was, and remains, a steadfast beacon of wise counsel. I could not have completed this thesis without his compassionate encouragement.

The participants deserve my whole-hearted thanks for their willingness to trust me and venture into an unknown exploratory process. They gave so much of their time and energy. Their stories are at the heart of this study.

Thanks to my friends and colleagues who were interested enough in me and the research project I dwelt in to ask questions, and looked forward to reading my completed thesis. Thanks as well to my family, especially my mother Billie, who always believed in my capacity to accomplish anything I put my mind towards.

The University of Western Sydney deserves my appreciation for their granting of a scholarship. I am especially thankful to the Department of Social Ecology. Their stimulating and evocative environment encouraged me to creatively engage in research.

A thank you to the many imagistic beings and the subtle guidance of soul, both inner and outer. Deserving thanks are the ancestors of this land as well as the many creatures who shared their stories with me, the elements, and this fecund, fabulous earth. My thesis is embedded in their story.

The biggest thanks goes to my marvellous partner Vicki Dean. She more than anyone understood the emotional complexities of the work I was doing. She supported me when I was down and never flagged in her belief that I would complete this project. Her soul and mine entwined along the way.
Abstract

This research investigates the shadow aspects of neoshamanic practice heuristically and phenomenologically using experiential workshops, image work and interviews. Neoshamanism, which is growing in popularity throughout Australia and the West, involves intentionally entering into Shamanic States of Consciousness (SSC) for the purposes of psycho-spiritual healing. According to neoshamans these SSC experiences are available to all.

The research asks how neoshamanic practitioners understand their journeys into SSC, what the areas of commonality and difference between neoshamanic practitioners' experiences of SSC are, how image making in a workshop setting assists in revealing shadow manifestations, and what lasting effect shadow work and neoshamanic practice has in the practitioners lives?

The study explores the lived experiences of seven participants – myself included – who engaged in a series of three experiential weekend workshops using neoshamanic practices and expressive arts. It consists of three main processes: the workshops, a series of semi-structured interviews over nine months with each participant, and individual journals used to record participant thoughts, feelings and images. The research is situated within the participants' and researcher's lives, rather than on the periphery. There is an 'expeditionary' chapter on each participant that records the deep-image work and neoshamanic journeying. The images graphically portray the trends, themes and nuances of emotionally powerful experiences. The chapter on first person phenomenology describes my deep-immersion process and produces spontaneous narratives to accompany the images drawn from SSCs.

Neoshamanic practice is an egalitarian undertaking in contrast to the hierarchical structure of some psychotherapeutic and spiritual practices. The image work revealed rich, consistent and detailed answers to the participants' deep questioning. The participants' journeys suggest that the SSC is an accessible and consistent phenomenon and is remarkably safe if approached within a positive environment. It is not a panacea for negativity nor a balm for shadow feelings of unworthiness; indeed the shadow work proved to be uncomfortable and disquieting for the ego. Neoshamanic practice is perhaps best understood as the soul's journey, providing a platform for soul recovery and living a life of authenticity.
PROLOGUE – THE PLACE OF THE RESEARCH

My place is the Yarramalong Valley; it’s the place I’m from. On maps, you’ll see that Yarramalong is situated in the shire of Wyong about twelve kilometres to the west of the Wyong township on the Central Coast of New South Wales (K. Pry and J. Fenton 1998). Maps may provide a route to Yarramalong, but won’t tell you a great deal about the place I’m from; recorded history will tell a bit more. The word Wyong is of Aboriginal origin, although the precise meaning may never be determined. The only people who knew the meaning, the indigenous peoples, were decimated; many of their stories died with them. Edward Stinson, a man who has recorded more of the local (colonial) history than any other non-indigenous person, states that they left no explanatory record. However, he is referring to ‘our’ written records. There are also numerous ‘stories’ written by the indigenous peoples in caves and under rock ledges throughout the Central Coast. We just don’t have the ability to read them… yet.¹ However, as I suggest in this thesis, new ways of ‘seeing’ are revealing stories that have previously thought to have been lost forever – stories held by the timeless caretaker soul of this land.

The earliest recorded colonial reference to the word ‘Wyong’ is reported in the Australian newspaper, August 1, 1827: “Wyong, a district so called by the Natives, about twelve miles from Brisbane Water, is destined for small fifty acre farms” (Wyong Shire Council, 1994). Speculation on its original meaning range from “place of running water”, “place of yams”; but even if either of these translations were ‘true’, its ‘story meaning’ would still remain obscured, left indeterminate and oblique. The first substantial land grant was given to William Timothy Cape, a section of five hundred acres on which Wyong Township now stands. His attitude towards the Aborigines in the area was one not uncommon at the time, of hostile resentment to their intrusion upon his property. He was reported as shooting at Aborigines who were stealing his corn. His farm manager was likewise antagonistic towards Aborigines in Dooralong Valley, shooting at them from the confines of his house. Yarramalong ‘pioneer’ Allan Waters (1848–1926) Gosford Times May 1, 1915: ‘In the early days a man named Turner lived in a log cabin built by the Government near Jilliby bridge, then called the Old Forestry Plantation, and from this cabin they used to shoot blacks’ (Ibid). William Turner was manager and overseer of the

¹ There are various Indigenous groups currently researching the Central Coast indigenous history. For instance, Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, Gibalee at University of Newcastle (Ourimbah campus).
Cape properties in the 1850s. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the local colonisers had reportedly run out of targets. The *Town and Country Journal* of March 6, 1875: ‘Old Billy Fawkner, the last of the Brisbane Water blackfellows, was drowned in Tuggerah Beach Lake about six months ago’ (Ibid).

John Mann, an English migrant interested in making an ethnological study of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Wyong area, journeyed overland to the mouth of the Wyong River to a place now known as Tacoma. Here, he met up with Aborigines; they numbered, according to his estimates, 60 to 80, and they were a remnant of what must have been at one time a very powerful tribe. Both physically and intellectually, they compared favourably with many tribes I have since seen in this and adjoining colonies. Their territory was bounded on the south by the Hawkesbury River, which separated them from Sydney, or Cammary, tribe, with whom they were on friendship; with a coast-line northerly to Lake Macquarie, or the boundary of the Newcastle, or ‘Moolabinda’ tribe with whom they were at enmity; westerly they joined the Wollombi tribe, who were their staunch friends and allies.

Edward Stinson comments that when his grandfather came to Yarramalong Valley in 1856, there were only two Aborigines left here – Bumble and Mary. They both died young and childless, and are buried in the valley. He died from infections that set in after his leg was badly smashed, the result of falling from a tree. Mary died in grief not long after. Bumble Hill, a steep hill that runs from Yarramalong village westward to Kulnura, is named after him (Ibid).

There have been many other deaths in this valley, though very few mourners. The Valley itself was once covered with immense red cedar trees and towering blue gums, many of which stretched over one-hundred-and-fifty feet skyward. As white invaders arrived, the trees were slaughtered for their wood.² Millions upon millions of trees fell under the onslaught of colonial expansionism and ‘settlement’. Some trees survived, sitting inconquously in the midst of paddocks until ringbarked; for (ironically) obscuring the light. Then deprived of nutrients, they would slowly starve to death and stand stark and leafless – skeletal reminders of what had been. As more than one old local commented (with no sense of irony), ‘waste of good money that!’ (B. Bottomly 1993).

² While the language I have used might appear provocative, what I am attempting to provide is a sense of living in a world where trees and plants all have an inspired presence; they are alive, vibrant beings. Their connection to my psyche is real.
The trees fell and orchards took their place; many of these in turn became dairy farms. Nowadays, where once tens of dairies produced milk, horse and cattle are bred. The valley floor has become hardened under cloven feet. At the Valley’s eastern entrance, there are multitudes of turf farms that truck grass and topsoil to suburban housing estates. This sacred place, this *place of the Goanna Dreaming*, has experienced much mindless disrespect.

At times, I sit on my eastern-facing verandah and relax, soften my gaze, and cast myself back into those troubled times. I visualise the valley’s traumatised soul fleeing into the steep-treed hills, or retreating into the deeper recesses of the earthen valley floor where the wombats make their homes. The wafting mist that flows along the ridgelines and cascades down boulder-strewn gullies are entities who have found solace in amongst the ancient mosses and ferns. Then towards twilight, when the human activities of the day slow, and the darkness of night unites all; the valley itself calls and the spirits come forth. They flow from their sheltered places and descend to the valley floor, screening the ground, cloaking the scarred earth, salving the wounds of days gone by; offering solace and succour, comforting the disfranchised souls that inhabit the lower reaches. ‘Take heart’ they say, ‘we watch over you; you are not alone, nor are you forgotten’. They linger through the darkness, then, as night gives over to day, the healing spirits return to the hills, flow back into the gullies, drift along the ridge-tops and settle once more, to wait ...

I, like the early European ‘settlers’, came to this valley and saw with a vision clouded by thoughts of monetary gain, of establishing a ‘better lifestyle’. And by ‘better lifestyle’, I mean better material lifestyle. If they could not see the forest for the trees, I could not see the forest for the grass; for my intention was to establish a small marijuana plantation in the obscure seclusion of the forested hills. I ‘thought’ I was reading the land in those terms; I ‘thought’ I read all bushland in those terms. I was (in my mind) separate from the land, felt no connection, and could not, would not, identify with ‘it’. Most of my experiences *in* the bush were dissociated from the bush; materialist eyes will do that. To me, bushland was not at all alive, let alone spiritual. People might be spiritual (this I doubted), but certainly not the landscape or for that matter the flora and fauna. Spirit was inaccessible, reserved for after death. Life was a punishment, so make the most of it. I could not afford to see it any other way. It was just too painful...
However, in my deeper self, I felt devoid of ‘something’, a hollowness in ‘being’ in the world – a hollowness nothing could fill, or touch. An ache I could not bear to feel ... my soul was yearning ...
whispering subtly ...
   come for me ...
       listen to me ...
           I will lead you here ...
               fetch me home ...
Shhh! Not yet ... not now ... shhhhoosh!
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1. The Topic.

This research investigates the shadow within the context of experiential neoshamanic practice. The shadow is a term used in Jungian psychological literature in reference to those elements, characteristics, traits and behaviours that are suppressed or repressed into the vast terrain of personal and cultural unconscious. These qualities are unknown to the individual and to the culture, and are often projected onto the ‘other’. They may be positive or negative. Integrating the shadow is recognised by depth psychologists and many Western spiritual teachers as a necessary aspect of spiritual development (Caplan 1999). The focus of this research is primarily on individualistic shadow work. However, the importance of our cultural and ecological shadow is immense and neoshamanism, in many instances, promotes an integration of the individual shadow within a deeper and broader cultural and ecological framework.

A neoshamanic practitioner is one who engages in spiritual/psychological/physical healing practice by intentionally entering a Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC), and while in this state becomes a healer of the human soul. Unlike traditional shamans, many neoshamans focus upon healing their own soul, and do not practise their art/craft within the broader community. Neoshamans and their ‘subjective’ experiences are derided by some academics and revered by others. Many academics do not disclose their personal neoshamanic activities or report their subjective experiences; some share their experiences within a small group of like-minded peers.

Regardless of this, and in some way because of it, neoshamanic practice has become popular in Australia. There are numerous weekend workshops available. More structured courses and training are available in New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. The Centre for Human Transformation Victoria writes:

Are you interested in the path to a uniquely Australian spirituality? A path that incorporates the spirit of our land and all who live here as well as the differing cultural heritages which come together in this land?

Learn how to enter the dreaming and to connect with spirit in nature and in ourselves. From the heart of this land to our own hearts.
We work in the lineage of *zen tantric shamanism*.

Nature Care College New South Wales, the largest alternative health training centre in Australia (3,000 students), teach a diploma course, ‘Soul Care and Shamanic Healing’. They state that:

The Diploma of Soul Care and Shamanic Healing is a unique practitioner training that focuses on creativity, soul-centred care and the soul’s alignment with nature, beauty, embodiment, feeling, intimacy, wonder, mystery and spirit for healing and wholeness. Minimum completion one year and one term.

The Spirit of the Earth Medicine Society (SOTEMS), under the direction of Dr. Ralph Locke Ph.D., offers a two-year Studies in Shamanic Practice: Certified Practitioner Course in four Australian states.

Neoshamanism is a modern cultural phenomenon, yet despite its expansive growth, the practitioners and their experiences have not been researched within the Australian context; they are under-researched worldwide.

Romantic notions of neoshamanism underpin its popularity and proliferation among people seeking alternative answers to their feelings of spiritual alienation, and meaningful healing modalities. Despite its alternative popularity, neoshamanism does not have a high public profile; it is considered – that is, when it is considered at all – as existing on the exotic fringe of the alternative medicine subculture.

Although acknowledged by many depth psychologists to be an inescapable psychological, cultural and social phenomenon, researching the shadow within the context of neoshamanic practice has never been undertaken. Nor has the relationship between the neoshamanic journey, creative expression and the shadow been experientially investigated.

This study is important, as it throws light upon methods of psychological/spiritual healing that are potentially accessible to all humanity; its implications are important for the psycho/spiritual development of Western ‘civilisation’. Neoshamanic practice experientially demonstrates a means of reconnecting to our personal and ecological soul.
2. Neoshamanism

Much of the research on neoshamanism has tended to marginalise, trivialise or recontextualise the lived reality of neoshamanic practitioners. Very little acknowledgment is given to the practitioner’s narrative ‘in its own right’. My extensive reading on neoshamanism did not reveal any substantive answers to questions concerning how neoshamans worked with their shadow or if they work with their shadow. My observations of neoshamans in New Zealand, USA and Australia suggested that there were aspects of their personal and cultural shadow that influenced their teachings and practices. While many were kind, generous and visionary, some were afflicted with hubris, inflation, arrogance, and an inability to self-reflect. I noted that shadow aspects of the powerful practices they were teaching were not addressed in any depth. My own negative neoshamanic experiences alerted me to the need for a more considered approach to neoshamanic practice.

There are questions concerning appropriation and antagonisms between those termed derisively as ‘white shamans’ or ‘plastic medicine men’ and the authenticated ‘indigenous shamans’. There are also different positions and antagonisms between Indigenous people as to who has shamanic ‘authority’ to pass on rituals and ceremony to non-Indigenous people (Wallis 2003).

Three figures have figured prominently in influencing discussion on shamanism, and all three are shrouded in ambiguity. Mercia Eliade, arguably the greatest influence upon Westernised understanding of shamanism, was foremost a religious scholar, not a spiritual scholar. He defined shamanism by the ability to willfully enter and exit spiritual realms for healing purposes. Not generally known is that he was also a writer of fiction. He wrote both as a scholar and from his imaginal world, from a consciousness that Thomas Moore terms the realm of soul.

Carlos Castaneda was similarly inspired, though he conflated the imaginal and the academic while gaining a Ph.D. in the process. The imaginal/spirit realms that Castaneda popularised were replete with allegory, metaphor, symbol, mythological entities and discrete independent beings. These realms could only be understood
through gruelling training under the tutelage of a master. The realms were both literal and imaginal. Castaneda’s literal and imaginal writing is a paradox still dividing sections of academia.

Michael Harner, the third of the major influential and popular writers influencing the popularisation of neoshamanism, writes both from an authoritative anthropological perspective, as well as through his experiences of SSC. He discovered his shamanic vocation while living within traditional shamanic cultures. Harner currently trains thousands of neophyte shamans through ‘The Foundation for Shamanic Studies’, stating online (www.shamanism.org/):

Now you can join more than 5,000 people each year who take our rigorous training in core shamanism, the near universal methods of shamanism without a specific cultural perspective. 200-plus training programs are given each year in North America, Europe and Latin America.

Dr. Harner has been recognized as a pioneer in the field of anthropology and shamanism since the early 60’s when he chose to immerse himself in tribal spiritual traditions rather than restrict his study to more traditional academic techniques.

Questions arise: How do neophyte shamans understand their SSCs? In what ways does neoshamanic practice impact upon the lives of the practitioners? What life-meaning is derived by neophyte neoshamanic practitioners and their shadow-work? What might a creative methodology combined with a neoshamanic journey reveal about the shadow?


My immersion in neoshamanism has been idiosyncratic. At the time of ‘entrance’, the desire to enter into a form of spiritual practice or ecological union was not dominant, and yet… there was, however, something, some internal niggling that had for many years prompted a search for a manner of living a meaningful life.

As someone affected by the ripples of one hundred years of psychological introspection, I believed something was not right within me, and hankered after making it right (Hillman and Ventura 1993). What that ‘right’ might be I did not know. Shame, the mainstay of the Christianised world I had grown up in, had taken up residence deep within me, and framed/defined my sense of who I was. It was the veil through which I interpreted the world. Shame was like a succubus formed by and dependent upon believing myself to
be damned in life ... by life. This negative shadow (Richo 1999) fed on the everyday insecurities and uncertainties of my childhood within a household dominated by my father’s alcoholism and my mother’s passivity. I became an actor in their drama and ‘trapped’ in their dreaming. I adapted by constructing a coping self and suppressed spontaneity.

I have felt within my alienation a distant murmuring possibility – something pulling, pushing, drawing me towards what I didn’t, and perhaps in many ways quite rightly couldn’t, know; a murmuring as soft as the caress of the night's embrace on a sleeping cheek, and as terrifying. I followed this internal insistence with an intuition born from a depth of existential pain and inexplicable transpersonal prompting.

An intuitive transpersonal research path challenges the researcher – and examiner – because it relies so heavily on data gathered through subjective experiences, through SSCs. Neoshamanic journeys into SSCs confront Western material cosmology and consensus-reality with an irrefutable flair. Voluntary participation in these ‘worlds’ by the means of spirit ‘journeys’ is a necessary research component. My interest in this research area was initially sparked by an unexpected personal initiation.

In July 1998 I had completed my undergraduate degree at Newcastle University and was undertaking a second degree in Visual Arts. My partner had enrolled in an ‘Introduction to Shamanism’ experiential weekend workshop. I thought it sounded interesting so I enrolled as well. The weekend was cruising along with the usual challenges that I tend to confront about ‘inclusion and exclusion’, ‘worthiness’ and other intra-personal dialogues. During the last neoshamanic journey of the weekend, the so-called ‘rooted self’ meditation, and to my utter amazement a large, white, radiant light-being appeared, moved towards me, and implanted a multi-spoke quartz crystal into my chest. I was flooded with a permeating bliss, a euphoric sensation cascaded throughout my body, tears of rapture streamed from my eyes. The ‘being’ receded to whence it emerged, back into the landscape, the rapture faded, the gift remained.

Which words do justice to such a magnanimous, graceful experience? Up until this moment, the weekend (and most of my life) had been an experience entirely (and rationally) explicable in terms of psychological processes, but this experience was
entirely another matter. What was I to make of this experience? How was I to understand something so otherworldly and yet incredibly ‘real’? What could this mean? It was now clear to me that there are other realities and presences existing independently of any conceptual framework I might care to impose. R. D. Laing (1999, p. 86), the doyen of antipsychiatry, comments: ‘one enters the other world by breaking a shell: or through a door: through a partition: the curtains part or rise: a veil is lifted. It is “real” in a different way from dream, imagination, perception, or fantasy’. He could easily be commenting on aspects of this neoshamanic numinous experience.

The direct experience was self-validating, as Laing suggests, but as he also suggests – as does Wilber – that the state of one’s ego determines the interpretation (and meaning thereby derived). Visual art became my experiential mediator, portraying, and at times betraying, some of the inner experiences and realms of existence that words could not bring into life. Visual art became both my spiritual illustrator and my material illuminator, bringing forth portraits and landscapes of my soul, recording moments of my journey. As Janet O’Malley (1988, p. 72) comments: ‘Shamanic art… is more concerned with connecting and making whole than with the logos values of dissecting and understanding’. As an early morning mist in a gully disappears when entered, a decisive conclusion defiantly eluded capture.

After my initial introduction and ‘opening’, I was keen to involve myself further in neoshamanism and to develop whatever spiritual capacities might be dormant. Except for some vague notion of spirit realms and spirit allies, I lacked a meaningful conceptual framework in which to place this experience. I travelled to New Zealand for further neoshamanic training in ‘soul retrieval’. In one of these journeys, I encountered a coyote teaching (Tom Brown Jr. 1994):

Figure 1: breakthrough
It’s day three of the journey – I am on a healing mission on behalf of a fellow participant. I enter a park. Neatly trimmed lawn, winding meandering path, shrubs, pond. At first I detect nothing exceptional but then I notice sitting on a park bench my deceased father. Sitting, staring blankly out into space, completely expressionless. Pale skinned and motionless he gives no sign of recognition of my being there standing in front of him. A feature that alarmed and saddened me is that his chest is opened down the centre of his ribcage and all his internal organs are gone. Heart, lungs, diaphragm, gone. I could see through to the back of his ribcage, his spinal column clearly visible. I was stunned and wanted desperately to help, to assist him in some way. I believed I had to do something but what? I did not ask for help or guidance (spiritual protocol) instead electing to take action based largely on (I realise now) sympathy. I took the crystal from my chest and other spirit gifts I had been given and stuffed them into his chest. He showed no signs of recognition or acknowledgment he just stood blankly before me. These gifts were much too large for his cavity, they would not comfortably fit. So I retrieved them and promised him I would return at another time to assist him as I had another responsibility to fulfil. I left him in the park and two days later whilst in the midst of a traumatic emotional discharge met up with him again (spirit side). This time I deposited just the crystal inside his chest and with tears streaming down my face I saw him off towards the ‘bright spirit’ realms that had been presenting themselves to me that morning. I felt quite uncertain about my actions with him. I returned to Australia psychically opened and somewhat unbounded. The massive emotional convulsions that had so racked my body left traces of a nervy, trembling vibration throughout my entire system. I internally quivered. The bliss receded and another feeling quickly took its place. I began to contemplate just what I might have opened, what were these forces I was meddling in and with? Self-doubt escalated into fear and spiraled into terror. I became gripped by an unfathomable horror of what this might mean.

Roberto Assagioli (1989, p.78) speaks rather succinctly about this process when he comments:

The difficulties produced by the stress and strife in the various stages of Self-realisation have a specifically **progressive** character. They are due to the stimulation produced by the superconscious energies, by the ‘pull from above,’ by the call of the Self, and are specifically determined by the ensuing conflict between these energies and the ‘middle’ and lower aspects of the personality.
My reaction to the psychic openings was both ecstatic and merciless. I had not been forewarned of any possible reactive consequences of my psychic engagements, for the neoshamanic trainer knew that such things could occur. An assumption within the training group seemed to be that ‘this blessed state’ was a permanent attainment. For me, the way was much like the motion of a pendulum swinging first one way then the other – bliss to terror.

Years later, when I reflected upon my actions, it occurred to me that I had given my father what had been most precious to me -- a gift from the gods. I had given away a precious gift (the quartz crystal) before I had realised its significance. There was a gap between the receiving of the crystal and integrating it into my soul; instead, my egoic-personality held sway. I ponder such an omission: ignorance is not bliss; it is a grief unrecognised. The crystal was given specifically to me by a being of light, and I speculate for a specific purpose. In giving it away, I had re-enacted a scene from my infant past, and entered into a contract that could benefit neither my father nor myself. The realisation struck hard: he had not in fact robbed me of my soul (essence) in infancy, but I had consciously given up on myself and damned him for it, paradoxically damning myself in the process. I had willingly given up on myself in order to be accepted by him. We had damned each other. His soul was not for me to save.

He, in a great act of unbridled compassion, had returned via the spirit realms, not in fact to plea for deliverance, but rather to alert me to a pattern of behaviour that I would need to recognise and come to terms with if I am to free myself, and perhaps our hereditary line, from this tendency. The communication from him was the opposite of what I originally made of it – a coyote teaching; one that tends to work in reverse.

I returned home to Australia after this Soul Retrieval training, expanded psychically and somewhat psychically permeable. In the parlance of transpersonal psychology, I had spiritually emerged, and was teetering on the edge of spiritual emergency. I threw myself into my art and into working on the land on which I lived: a rehabilitation project, both the art and the land responded. During this time, I psychologically settled back into myself, and the jitters ceased. It was to be a short respite.

---

Through my experiences during and after an Indigenous men’s camp, a related area of interest arose.

I was one of four Euro-men camped with sixteen Aboriginal men for fourteen days alongside a Shoalhaven River tributary in coastal NSW. We ‘white fellas’ became privy to ceremonies, rituals and lore that had never passed beyond their indigenous keepers. As one elder commented dryly: ‘I had to ask for ten years to get what you fellas are receiving in a weekend’. The Aboriginal men, under the directorship of a senior elder, had been instructed to treat us Euro-men with utmost respect. Through lack of sleep and physical exhaustion, my psyche became permeable. I began to see beyond the confines of material reality into an alternative reality, one that exists as a reality unto itself.

At one point, I beheld a huge ‘storm being’ slumbering on the horizon, heralding an approaching storm. I had entered a place where, as Janet Dallet (1988, p. 117) poetically puts it: ‘This is the borderland. Where spirit and nature intersect the human world, wiping out our fantasies of superhuman power, childish scratching on the cosmic blackboard’. Other communicative forces became visible to me. Movement around the campsite became a symphony of orchestrated oscillations; a greater force influenced the coming and goings of everyone. This ‘awakening’ was not lost upon my Aboriginal hosts, who commented about the privilege of my sightings. One elder commented: ‘I’ve been looking for twenty five years for that ‘storm fella’ and haven’t seen him yet’. Nothing antagonistic was said, though, upon reflection, I realise much was unsaid, unstated, oblique, and left festering.

While interaction between Aboriginal and white fellas was always cordial and respectful, the same could not be said for our behavior towards them, or between us. One white fella, the elder of the other three, was particularly dismissive, derisive of both black and white alike, sometimes with a word, but more often with a disdainful look. His contempt for the two young white guys was palpable, and they all but came to blows on a number of occasions. This behaviour was not unknown by the Elders, but was not commented upon or given ‘airtime’. The ‘truth circle’, a gathering of all the men of a night, provided the opportunity to do just that, but night after night we sat around the circle and spoke of
other things. Truthful things no doubt, but nonetheless, as Jung (1963) warns us, omission and suppression develop a life of their own, a shadow life.

The shadow life absorbed my shame, my hatred, my revulsion, my rage, my complicated guilt, my innocence, my unworthiness, and my self-righteousness. It bubbled and cooked in its own juices, and I justified murdering the arrogant white man, who had become a scapegoat. He represented (to me) all that was wrong, not just within our camp, but all that had preceded it: the two hundred years of shameful colonisation. I saw in him my complicity and tacit acceptance of our ignoble colonial history. His behaviour, and my rage/revulsion would be balanced perfectly by his bludgeoning. Retribution was at hand, in my hands.

The symphony/opera played on, and although I set out to administer ‘justice’ in a most crude, brutal and repugnant manner, it was not to be. He lived on unawares of my self-sanctified retaliation. I was terrified of my capacity to embrace such thoughts and contemplate such action. I sought relief from my torment.

On the last afternoon of the camp, I stripped off my clothing, bathed ritualistically beside the river, and then threw myself into it and drifted downstream in an effort to exorcise my demons or perish. ‘Let this be a sacrifice for reconciliation’, I called to the land. Internal reconciliation, external reconciliation, reconciliation between the land and myself, reconciliation between my spirit and my flesh, reconciliation between black and white, dark and light. I faced many personal demons as I drifted downstream over shallow rapids, scraping my body and smashing my flesh.

I limped back into camp the next morning, my body battered, bruised, and with multiple lacerations. I was tired, elated, my mind and emotions struggling to comprehend each other amidst a torrent of seething rage and blessed peace. Images of great violence arose and fell away in a cascading torrent of fear and power. ‘The spirits had looked after me’, an Aboriginal friend later commented.

But what of these demons, these shadowy figures, these elements of self that seem to lurk in the behaviour of others: the repulsion, the unexpressed and unacceptable. And what of our cultural shadows buried deep within the undisclosed, unacknowledged
colonial past, and the living history of our current relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous?

The aftermath of the camp provoked questions concerning my beliefs of permissible behaviour, my beliefs around vulnerability and virility, potency and respect, ignorance, knowledge and wisdom, scapegoating and self-responsibility. For me, the ‘visionary’ experience and ‘psychic sight’ revealed both the wonderful and the horrific elements of seeing and being. Throughout this time, there was clearly a gap between what I had experienced and its integration. I filled this gap with all manner of beliefs derived from my personal familial history and cultural upbringing, much as I had filled my father’s chest cavity. Spiritual insight casts a long shadow, and has its own shadow side. How was I to work with the disruptive and ‘unseemly’ uninvited shadow (V. J. Fedorschak 1999, p. 85)?

I voiced my concern about ‘not feeling worthy’ to Dulumunmun, an Indigenous elder. He responded: ‘Where did you get that idea?’ He was saying – I believe – that this is an unworthy idea, an unnatural implanted belief. In Aboriginal culture – as taught by Dulumunmun – being worthy is presupposed by the fact of being alive. In the Christianised culture I grew up in, quite the opposite was taught. Humanity was born sinful.

We, us white fellas at this camp, were in a culturally inverted position. The dominant, spiritually alive culture laid bare the facile sterility of pretentious European superiority. It was on the morning of the actual initiation ceremony that the psychological impact of our position became most obvious. We were out. The Indigenous men left us that morning for their initiation ceremony, and we were left to prepare food for their return – an act of service. Yet there was also a feeling of being abandoned, a feeling of isolation, of longing and the violent eruptions that occurred between us that morning bespoke of that desolate and inadvertent desertion.

The time I spent in the Indigenous camp altered the trajectory of my life. For nine days after this camp, I dreamt of being invited into a circle of Aboriginal elders to sit among them as a peer. On the tenth night, during sleep, my body was filled with ecstatic bliss and began to levitate. I began to dissolve and became terrified. I screamed ‘Stop!’, and
the experience ended instantly. Confronted and confounded in mind, body and soul, a lonely journey ensued. I had indeed entered the realms of the ecstatic ones, and had cast myself out – I felt relief, but relief at a price. Upon reflection, I was not ready for the responsibility it portended; my mind too small, my self-knowledge too limited, my logic too distorted, my cultural baggage too restrictive.

I recognise that difficulties arise when we attempt to graft any culturally derived spirituality onto another. The shamanic realms in which I roamed are independent realities, and yet oddly circumscribed by my own personal myth. An animistic shamanic cosmology is vastly different from the Anglicised Christianity I grew up within. Hence, the emotional and psychological conflict and turmoil when an influx of spiritual bliss was released within me.

Robert Assagioli (1989) describes a process whereby the energy radiating from the divine Self infuses the egoic self, and, relative to the responsiveness of the personality, a higher level of organisation may or may not stabilise. He suggests that once the energy is withdrawn, the personality reverts towards its previous state. But what is left is often a sense of direction, which one can use to complete the transformation through one's own purposeful methods. The sense of direction of which Assagioli speaks provides the impetus for this current project. There must be – I reasoned – ways and means (purposeful methods) of integrating spiritual breakthroughs and creatively incorporating shadow. Further questions arose: How do contemporary neoshamanic practitioners incorporate and reconcile the elements of their individual psychology with the traditional shamanic cosmological world of demons, possession, soul retrieval, soul theft and psychic attack? May the neoshamanic journey be utilised to facilitate shadow integration?

4. Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 consists of two major reviews of the literature. The first looks at the roots of shamanism and its journey into the modern consciousness. I review the historical anthropological antecedents of neoshamanism and its journey to the West. I review the contested areas that exist between academics, neoshamanic practitioners and some Indigenous people. Also examined are the existing conflicts between Native American people, and the question of cultural appropriation.
The second area of literature review is the Western concept of the psychological shadow. The shadow concept is tracked from its origins in the psychological writings of Dr. Carl Gustav Jung into the popular psychology of self-help books lining the shelves of bookshops.

In **Chapter 3**, the methodology and methods of my research are discussed. The qualitative approach – phenomenological, heuristic, and transpersonal – is conducive to examining the phenomena under consideration. The research is situated within the overarching paradigm of a transpersonal inquiry. The Shamanic State of Consciousness that distinguishes neoshamanism is distinctly transpersonal, as it ‘honours human experience in its fullest and most transformative expression’ (Braud and Anderson 1998, p. xxi).

The research area of neoshamanic practice and the shadow has a strong transpersonal inclination/orientation, and experiential methods were utilised to reflect this. Six participants engaged in a series of weekend workshops incorporating the theme of shadow and neoshamanic practice. A series of one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants. The first interview occurred prior to the workshops, and the final interview after the last of the workshops. Creative mediums, using visual art, dramatic expression and journaling, recorded the processes of the participants as they actively engaged during the workshops. A major image work, the shadowgraph – providing a visual continuity – began at the first workshop, and was completed at the final workshop.

What is it like to allow images from the deeper levels of the soul to manifest through dialogue and creative expression? To gain this depth of experience, immersion through self-dialogue and creative expression were entered following the heuristic approach suggested by Douglas and Moustakas (1985).

The Interlude section provides a narrative account of the series of experiential workshops I conducted at Yarramalong. It is written in the first person and brings the experiential workshops ‘alive’ through subjective engagement and reflective embodied experience. Douglas and Moustakas (1985) suggest that the essential core of heuristic
investigation is discovery through awareness and reflective research. The interlude provides the physical details of the experiential workshops, and sets the tone and spirit of the ensuing chapters.

In Chapters 4–9, I present the participants’ stories -- one chapter for each participant. These stories include extracts from our one-to-one interviews, verbatim extracts from the participants’ art journals, images from their journals, and progressive images from their shadowgraphs.

The participants graphically share their experiences of SSCs; their understandings of shadow; the importance of their shadowgraphs; and conclude with the effect the workshops and their involvement with the research project has had upon their lives.

Within these narratives, I thread my observations and subjective experience. I allow the scenes that I enter to affect me and deliberately ‘unhinge’ a rigidity of mind. Heuristic inquiry requires research to begin with immersion, self-dialogue, and self-exploration. It requires a grounding in the self, and affirms subjectivity. Viewed heuristically, the participants and I were – and still are – part of an ongoing story.

In Chapter 10, first-person research, I first follow a heuristic intuitive process of image production. I allow the experience to direct me, and trust that a natural process would reveal meaning in the chosen area of research, the shadow. This data-collection method emerged spontaneously – the sources of knowledge emerged through accessing tacit dimensions. The images, ten in all, were then explored through another immersion process, and the voices within the images were recorded.

After compiling the ten imagistic expressions and stories, I lay the images in front of myself and focused my attentiveness and internal alertness upon the images. This process yielded a story replete with emotional and psychical shadows, and a theme of ultimate liberation.

Chapter 11 is a discussion, a journey in meaning-making. I discuss the challenge of meaning-making, while holding the experiences of the participants and myself together with the ideas about neoshamanism and the shadow in an attempt to bring forth the
essential qualities of the stories and their implications. I undertook three approaches to meaning-making, each informed by the experiential position I held at different times throughout the research.

I first approached meaning-making from the perspective of two prominent transpersonal theorists – Ken Wilber and Stanislav Grof – and then considered meaning-making from the perspective of the leading depth psychologist, Carl Jung. I then considered meaning-making by comparing and contrasting the experiences of the seven participants. While these approaches were engaging and provided some valuable insight into neoshamanism and the shadow, they were ultimately unsatisfactory. Staying true to the tacit knowing inherent within heuristic inquiry, I immersed myself into the participants' shadowgraphs and felt my way through my own ‘block of knowing’. I wrote my way through this experience, and include dreams that provided vivid reminders of research being a spiritual endeavour.

The next section of this chapter explores the questions that emerged from the literature review, and answers these questions in light of the experiential data from the six participants and myself. Following this, I revisit the shadow. I explore the participant experiences and their imagistic creations from the perspective of the literature, in particular the work of depth eco-psychologist Dr. Bill Plotkin Ph.D.and his notion of the ‘Loyal Soldier’.

I follow this by a section on implications for further research, in which I outline the advantages of approaching neoshamanism in a multi-perspectival fashion. I highlight the imperative of researchers appreciating the voices of those who participate in these practices, and recommend research engaging in neohamanic practices. This thesis ends with an account of the directions the participants are now taking in their personal and professional lives.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Neoshamanism

There a number of ways in which reference is made to contemporary shamanic practice and practitioners. These terms are often used in critiques and commentary as though they have equal meaning, applicability and validity. They do not. Wallis (2003, p. 228) cautions against the tendency or assumption to perceive all neoshamanic practitioners as generic. In his view, this is ‘not only a dangerous misrepresentation but also extremely naïve’.

a. Definitions

Neo-shamanism: A movement that has grown out of a combination of environmentalism, popular anthropology and a growing desire for more open non-institutionalised forms of religion and spirituality. Each individual is believed capable of becoming their own shaman, termed neo-shamanism by Piers Vitebsky (2001), and have been influenced by popularisation of certain aspects of Native American religious practices including spirit helpers and power animals.

Core-shamanism: A term used by Michael Harner and others associated with the Foundation of Shamanic Studies (2004). Core-shamanism seeks to identify and make available to a wider contemporary audience the core techniques of the shaman as they have been used for millennia in cultures around the world.

Non-traditional shamanism: Often quite loosely based on one or more traditional shamanic systems, non-traditional shamanism is usually a hybrid of ecstatic techniques of shamanic journeying and other aspects of contemporary psychological, religious and spirituality. Rather than attempting to continue pre-existing tradition, the non-traditional practitioner focuses on utilising the ancient techniques of the shaman in ways appropriate to a modern audience. The term ‘Post-shamanic’ is intended to address such grey areas.
Techno-shamanism: The use of technology to embrace and enter into shamanic ‘altered states of consciousness’.

For the purpose of this review (following the logic of Robert Willis (2003, p.30), I shall refer to contemporary shamanic practice in the Euro-West as neoshamanism. Wallis identifies this term as preferable, as it ‘distinguishes “Western” forms from those in Indigenous communities’.

The proliferation of neoshamanism practices in the modern and postmodern world is a phenomenon that has captured the imagination of many intellectual, academic and generalist commentators. The literature provides a vast array of printed words, ranging from serious critical engagement to one-sided personal opportunism, from indulgent self-promotion to well-meaning personal histories, from gross consumerism to ecological zealotry. Western attitudes towards shamanism have been ambivalent from the beginning (von Stuckrad 2002) and remain so. Roberte Hamayan (cited in von Stuckard 1998) describes Western approaches over the past three hundred years as moving from devilisation (religious), medicalisation (scientific) to idealisation (romantic) (ibid). It is the latter perspective that has greatly influenced the practice of neoshamanism in contemporary times and sparked various reactions from Indigenous Peoples and academics (at times they may be one and the same. For instance, Leslie Gray holds a Ph.D. in psychology and is a native American and shaman).

There is considerable criticism and debate throughout academia concerning the use of language as a means of describing contemporary shamanic practitioners. The terms shaman and shamanism are constructs of the Western mind (Wallis 2003), owing their proliferate usage to anthropology and, to a lesser degree, psychology, archaeology and religion (Kremer 1998). In many instances, academia marginalises and decries neoshamans, and yet it was they who popularised the shamanic notion by in some cases ‘going native’ or becoming ‘experientially engaged’ (Wallis ibid).

Shamans in Indigenous cultures have traditionally been linked, interceded and advocated on behalf of their own particular habitation area and social system (Mike Money 2000); Roger Walsh (1990, p. 254) offers that work is underway to create a psychology of human survival, and that such an undertaking relates ‘directly to
shamanism and its view of the world’. The view of the world he refers to is one in which all forms of life are interconnected and have spiritual/transpersonal dimensions and domains. Shamanism views health as living in a balanced relationship with your immediate habitat and the ecosystem (Gray 1995). If, as many commentators detail, the world environment, and humanity with it, is in imminent danger of destruction, then what Vijaya Fedorschak (1999) terms ‘the original wound in consciousness ... where a veil is thrown over all perception, rendering the world to our senses as something other’, does need healing. John Ryan Haule (2004) speculates that the re-emergence of shamanism in our Western consciousness is a response to the depressing cultural reality of our loss of soul. In the West, we have benefited materially, but our souls have suffered and been disfranchised. The physical body and our rational ego have displaced and marginalised our eternal souls. One might say that our souls have been shunted into the shadowland of consciousness. John Ryan Haule (2004 a) comments that:

We’ve lost the imaginal and transcendent scope that belongs to the reality of soul. In a situation like this, it is often the depressives among us who are the most realistic regarding the impoverishment of our human existence.

Ralph Locke (2006) ventures that:

‘the soul stands as the energetic and meaningful foundation of our lives and all worlds. To be ensouled fully means to be vitally engaged with living, searching and creating; to experience diminishment of soul is to lose all this richness and to be separated from life so as to be dead within and to encounter the world as dead also’.

As we can see the term ‘soul’ means many things to many people in the neoshamanic and transpersonal literature. I will draw from Plotkin’s (2003) explanation. He says it is ‘the vital, mysterious, and wild core of our individual selves, an essence unique to each person, qualities found in layers of the self much deeper than our personalities’. He juxtaposes soul with spirit by defining spirit as ‘the single, great, and eternal mystery that permeates and animates everything in the universe and yet transcends all’. Plotkin extrapolates that ‘ultimately, each soul exists as an agent for spirit’.

The shaman has traditionally been a voyager of consciousness, someone who traverses through and beyond this ‘perceptual veil’ for spiritual healing and intercession. However, in what manner is shamanic intercession germane to contemporary times and notions of scientific validation, the cult of the individual, pervasive psychology and rampant secularism?
This would mean that one of the most important current historical tasks of Eurocentred cultures is to retract its attention and periodic obsession with other cultures and to focus on its own history, including the shadow of its own history (Kremer 1998, p. 249).

Kremer suggests that we have our own deep psycho-spiritual links and our own Western Shamanic traditions. It may also follow that the fascination with traditional tribal cultures is a projection of our own inner processes. One shadow of Eurocentred culture’s own history is its separation from nature through Christianity, with its patriarchal witch-hunts, inquisitions and demonisation of nature-based spirituality (heresies) and Descartes’ philosophical/scientific de-souling of nature. Does the neoshamanic perspective provide a greater adaptive advantage for our current psycho-spiritual alienation?

b. Traditional shamanism.

Shamanism has survived for thousands of years, and may, as Michael Harner (1982, p. 51) states, ‘represent the most widespread and ancient methodological system of mind-body healing known to humanity’. Evidence from archaeological and ethnographic research suggests that the methods of altering states of consciousness have a history of at least twenty to thirty thousand years. Leslie Gray (1995, p. 173) speaks of a ‘perennial shamanism’. Methods were adapted to oft times harsh, demanding environments. Joan Halifax (1982, p. 5) proposes that, while the life-way of the shaman is nearly as old as human consciousness itself, it has ‘remained vital, adapting itself to the ways of world’s cultures’. In answer to why the shamanic knowledge did not alter or change significantly over such a vast tableau of time and diverse social cultural dispositions, Harner (1982, p. 53) posits the simple acknowledgment ‘that the method works’. He says: ‘Over many thousands of years, through trial and error, people in ecological and cultural situations that were often extremely different came nonetheless to the same conclusions as to the basic methods of shamanic power and healing’ (ibid). Does that tell us anything about the manner and appropriateness of shamanic usage within our industrialised/materialist and somewhat pragmatic western culture of today? The ‘vitality’ and resilience of this vocation will be explored in the latter part of this chapter when examining Westernised contemporary shamanism. The initial section of this chapter will ‘spell out’ the prehistory of the Western shamanic phenomenon.

documented in his extensive study *Shamanism* (1974) that cultures where shamanism is practised have a consistency in their healing systems that belie their geographical separation from each other. According to Halifax (1982, p. 5): ‘In spite of cultural diversity and the migration and diffusion of peoples across the earth, the basic themes related to the art and practice of shamanism form a coherent complex’. Cultural variations exist though many deeper principles and practices appear constant.

The ecstatic state, the psycho-spiritual experiences of transcendental rapture, is, according to Eliade (cited Halifax 1982, p. 6), a primary phenomenon and fundamental to the human condition. It is the culture-bound evaluation and interpretation of these experiences that results in permutations of small or significant differences. Halifax (1982, 1992) and Eliade (1974, 1978) both acknowledge that there are, however, a certain consistency and uniformity to the symbolic contents of raptures. ‘The archetypes activated during shamanic ordeals and exaltations are astonishingly similar’ (Halifax 1982, p. 6).

Death, dismemberment, confrontations with demonic forces, communion with the worlds of spirits and creatures, assimilation of the elemental forces, ascension via the World Tree and/or Cosmic Bird, realisation of a solar identity, and return to the middle world, the world of human affairs (Ibid, p. 7).

Given its historical antecedents, shamanism is both highly adaptive and enduring, while maintaining its highly specialised and distinctive features. Commentators such as Mihaly Hoppal (1987) prefer to conceptualise shamanism as a belief system set within a particular cosmological worldview.

What or who is a shaman? Much has been written in this regard, though Roger Walsh (1990, p. 8) cautions against forming any definitive answer: ‘Practically every scholar forms his/her own opinion on what constitutes shamanism’. Caitlin Mathews (1997, p. 8), in her critique of shamanism in the West, suggests that ‘shamanism is rapidly becoming the most overused and misappropriated word of the late twentieth century’. Eliade (1974) states that the word shaman comes through Russian, from the Tungusic *saman*, whereas Walsh (1990), while not disputing the origins of ‘shamanic’ in *saman* meaning ‘one who is excited, moved, raised’, speculates that it is derived from the Tungus verb ‘to know’. Stanley Krippner (2000, p. 93) suggests that the term ‘shaman’ is of ‘uncertain derivation’.
The ‘excited, moved, raised’ refers to states of consciousness in which a shaman is the great master of ecstasy (Eliade 1974). This distinction is important as it distinguishes the title (noun) and the action (verb). In this view, if a shaman stops doing, he/she ceases to be a shaman. It is an active vocation of spiritual intercession.

This raises an issue of whether the terms themselves have any legitimacy in the West except in Western terms. In other words, if it is decontextualised, what relevance could it possibly have? Shamans in contemporary times using these terms tend to draw at least some of their authority and authenticity from the history of traditional peoples. They self-implicate and validate by association. Also important is the distinction between being an ‘expert’ of shamanism or an expert ‘in’ shamanism, or both. Eliade was surely an expert (scholar) on shamanism, but never referred to himself as a shaman. He made it perfectly clear his interest was as a scholar of religious history (Eliade 1974). Harner (1982) considers himself both an expert on and in shamanism – traditional ‘on’ through his numerous anthropological sojourns and anthropological writings, in which he established himself as a reputable scholar, and ‘in’ by actively practising as a healer/shaman.

A shaman may be of either sexual physiology or indeed hermaphrodite (Martin Pretchel, in Timothy Freke 1999); their sexual orientation may be homosexual, bisexual or transsexual (Mathews 1997, p. 6). Harner (1982, p. 55) informs us: ‘There does not seem to be any obvious difference between the sexes in terms of shamanic aptitude and potentiality’. Wallis (2003) argues that neoshamans, particularly seidr-workers, are radically reorientating their worldviews. In terms of consciousness alterations, gender conceptions, sexual orientation and community interactions, these seidr-workers are akin to some traditional shamans.

He/she may be regarded within their tribe as being a magician, medicine man, priest, mystic, poet and psychopomp, and may well be the central figure within the village, although, as Eliade (1974, p. 5) is careful to point out, ‘the presence of a shamanic complex in one region or another does not necessarily mean that the magico-religious life of the corresponding people is crystallised around shamanism’. He also alerts us that, although the aforementioned roles may be enacted by the shaman, the reverse
does not apply. In other words, a shaman is a shaman first and foremost, and is distinguished by his/her unique characteristic of intentionally entering into an ecstatic ‘trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld’ (Eliade 1974, p. 5). This is certainly not the position held by Wallis (2003, p. 242): ‘I think this singling out of soul flight or shamanic journeying as an exemplary feature of shamanism is to misleadingly reify metanarrative ... it foregrounds similarity at the expense of specific social contexts and conflicts’. Wallis further challenges that these metanarratives are a neo-colonial practice discrediting Indigenous shamanic practitioners who don’t happen to journey, but are acknowledged and recognised by their community as shamans. This is a curious and somewhat perverse twist whereby ‘experts’ outside the culture decide the grounds of authenticity within the culture. Michael Harner’s overseas exoticism is a primary case in point. ‘Whiteshamanism’ is the term Rose (1982) uses pejoratively when criticising this practice.

He or she may also be the ceremonialist, judge, sacred politician and artist, but these roles are secondary to the shaman’s primary role, that of technician of the sacred. Or, as William S. Lyon comments: ‘shamans are master technicians at altered states of consciousness’ (William Lyon 1991, p. xii). They also need to be distinguished from sorcerers, the principal difference being that shamans ‘co-operate with the spiritual worlds and their inhabitants, beseeching their appropriate help; a sorcerer manipulates the spiritual worlds and seeks to command their inhabitants without their advice’ (Mathews 1997, p. 6).

Roger Walsh (1990, p. 10) defines shamanism as ‘a family of traditions whose practitioners focus on voluntarily entering altered states of consciousness in which they experience themselves or their spirits traveling to other realms at will, and interacting with other entities in order to serve their community’ (my emphasis). The communities he refers to are primarily small and distinct. Halifax (1982, p. 7) comments on this important aspect of community function: ‘The shaman, however, has a social rather than a personal reason for opening the psyche as he or she is concerned with the community and its well being; sacred action, then, is directed towards the creation of order out of chaos’. This is a rather different orientation than many neoshamans, who Loren Cruden

---

4 Someone who conducts spirits or souls to the other world
(1995, p. 24) suggests ‘primarily use their paths for personal development rather than for mediation with the spirit worlds on behalf of the community’. Similarly Wallis states: ‘neo-Shamanists emphasise healing oneself’ (2000, p. 61). It is referred to as a spiritual path for personal empowerment utilising altered states of consciousness.

The term ‘shaman’, according to Walsh (1990) and expansively documented by Eliade (1974), was, and still is, mistakenly generalised by anthropologists to refer to medicine men, sorcerers, wizards, magicians, seers, and witch doctors. Shamans are the ‘elect’, and as such have access to a region inaccessible to other members of the community. They also differentiate themselves by their direct relationship with spirits. This relationship, unlike mediumship or being possessed by spirits, is one whereby the shaman enters into a partnership with spirits (Winkleman 1992).

Krippner (2000, p. 96) speculates that the potential for shamanic states of consciousness may be ‘neurognostic’, but not necessarily the exclusive domain of shamans. He elaborates that ‘primordial humans performed healing and divinatory functions themselves before specialisation established a hierarchy’, and gives as an example the !Kung of south-western Africa, where about half the males and a sizeable number of females shamanise, producing the ‘boiling energy’ used in healing rituals. The shamanic state(s) of consciousness are distinct and specific, different from those of schizophrenia, Buddhism and yoga, although imprecise ‘mapping’ has frequently conflated them (Walsh LXI/4).

Eliade (1974, p. 8) takes considerable care to differentiate religion from shamanism, stating that the shamanic vocation quite often expresses itself ‘through an ideology not always favorable to it’. Although indispensable at times of sickness (soul loss), death, misfortune or sacrificial rites involving ecstatic experience, these guardians of the community’s soul are not indispensable to religious life. Indeed, ‘much religious life goes on without them’. Michael Harner (cited in Walsh 1990, p. 17) alerts us that it was under the antagonism and direction of organised religion (in the West) that suppression and oppression of shamanism flourished. If this is so, then it may follow that with the diminishing influence of religious institutions and their accompanying doctrine, spiritual

---

5 Eliade (1974, p. 6) does qualify this in saying that there are some exceptions to this, but all in all these are ‘exceptional cases for which there is a particular explanation’
‘encounters’ will be understood within alternative conceptual frameworks, for instance, depth psychology (Ann Ulanov 1992). The leaning towards neoshamanism, with its personal spiritual connections in the West today, is influenced by the denunciation and shunning of religious organisations and spiritual dissatisfaction.

The cosmology of traditional shamanic cultures is one of an animistic universe. It is an enlivened spiritual domain where animals, trees, rocks, and the elements are all inspired (David Mowaljarlai 1993). Or as Migela Kavlin, a man trained in the Amazonian tradition, terms it, ‘everything is alive and you can communicate with absolutely everything’ (1993, p. 43). This confronts many Western philosophical beliefs and ontological perspectives. Westerners are more likely to view the shamanic journey and the phenomena experienced in the journey as ‘dramatic examples of vivid imagery or imagination’ (Walsh 1990, p. 155). But to a shaman, these spirit realms are real, objective and independent of his/her psychology. The implication for the industrialised West in accepting an animistic worldview are almost incomprehensible, for an animistic worldview would confront many of the economically driven environmental practices currently employed, and would therefore put much at stake.

The entering into mystical states or transcendentental realms by the neophyte shaman must be further developed as a practice that is precise and controlled. He/she must transfer a transitory state of consciousness into a resilient trait of consciousness (Walsh 1992). As Walsh comments, ‘to many anthropologists the control of spirits is one of a shaman’s defining features’. Walsh generalises, for others it is not control of spirits, but rather working in partnership with spirits. As John Mathews comments (1993, p. 9), the shaman is ‘the servant of the sacred, rather than its priest’. The shaman operates, as he or she has always done, as an agent of the numinous, plying his or her way between one world and the other’. The inclusive cosmological notion of multiple realms of consciousness, ‘spirit realms’ is the functional reality of the shaman, and his/her tribe.

There is a growing body of philosophical thought, psychological interest and ‘new physics’ documentation that attempts to explain the phenomenon of spirit realms. However, very few if any actually give credence to ‘actual spirit entities’ as anything other than a manifestation of human ‘imagination’. It would seem that endemic
individualism ensures that humanity maintains, as Horwitz puts it, ‘the crown of creation’, and self-validates this position by denying alternative non-human intelligence(s).

According to Jeanne Achterburg, modern psychological practices such as visualisation provide enormous benefits (1985). But are these visualisations ‘mimicking’ shamanic techniques when performed by Westerners? Unlike the traditional shaman, Western visualisations do not generally understand the spirit worlds to be independent, or interdependent realities. This is a primary differentiation. The methods may be, as Money (2000, p. 210) states, ‘powerful tools for manipulating imagery for healing purposes’, but are they shamanic if not ministered by a shaman?

Achterburg (1985) contributes significantly to the field of Westernised shamanic integration. However, her assertion that the ‘Shaman is Master Healer of the Imaginary Realms’, while understandable, given her intended Western audience, nevertheless displays Western bias, which she herself flags when commenting upon the shaman: ‘The symbols are the shaman’s way of distilling the journey and presenting information in a way the community can appreciate. They are not lies, but rather a system used to communicate a little understood reality (Ibid, p. 25)’. Perhaps Achterburg employs the same rationale in presenting her thesis to her medical/scientific colleagues. A ‘world of spirits’ is a very different one than an ‘imaginary world of spirits’. Her psychological/scientific explanations are cosmologically distilled, the resultant brew made clear but sterile -- distinction she herself acknowledges:

To understand this total unity it is important to realise how we are hamstrung by the limitations of English expression. The activity of consciousness and imagination is more poetry than prose, and is only imperfectly understood when language is used in its description. In describing unseen properties, the physicists resort to mathematics and visual analogies; likewise, the shaman resort to symbols and rituals ... we are bound by the limits of a language system evolved from a very specific view of reality (Achterburg 1985, p. 51)

Achterburg makes a distinction with regard to the altered states of consciousness mystics and psychic healers enter, and the role of shaman, for, as Harner (1992, p. 56) notes, the traditional/tribal/Indigenous shamans have in common the altered state of consciousness entered at will, and the utilisation of spirit helpers. However, as Achterburg (1985, p. 26) contributes, ‘the definition of shamanism implies that a social role is being served that is integral to and recognisable by the community’. 
The shaman is, in Harner’s (1992, p. 56) term, a power broker in the sense of manipulating spiritual power to help people, to put them in a healthy equilibrium. Given this definition, and with the breakdown of community in Western culture, does the role of neoshamans or notions of community need to be broadened and/or redefined? Harner mentions that shamanic initiation is ‘a never ending process of struggle and joy, and the definitive decision about your status as a shaman will be made by those you try to help’.

c. Conceptualising shamanic consciousness

Ken Wilber (1995, 1998, 2001) suggests that the universe is not only interconnected, living, and sacred, but also multi-layered. That is (he says), the physical universe is not the only domain; there are also the domains of mind and spirit. These domains are conjectured by him as forming a hierarchy, or progression, from matter to spirit, from gross to subtle, from unconscious to conscious. Traditionally, the person who would journey into and influence these realms for the sake of their community was the shaman. The neoshaman’s world (with notable exceptions Tom Brown Jr. 1991, 1994, Maureen Roberts 2000 et al.) is three-tiered – upper, middle and lower – and the upper and lower worlds may be multi-layered. These worlds are interconnected by a single axis, the *axis mundi*. Walsh (1990, p. 113) maintains the *axis mundi* may take the form of a ‘cosmic mountain at the centre of the earth or a world pillar that may hold up the sky.

A third variation is that of a world tree, the symbol of life, fertility, and sacred regeneration, which the shaman climbs to other worlds. These are not the only manner of entry into spiritual realms for a contemporary shaman. For instance, Tom Brown Jr. (1994) uses a downward stairway, with an archway at the bottom leading into a personal medicine place. Leslie Kenton (1998) uses a remembered favourite place in nature. Arnold Mindell (1993) uses what he terms ‘secondary processes’ to enter other realities. Mescaline was used by Carlos Castaneda (1974, 1975a, 1975b); percussion is the way favoured by Harner.

The comprehension within Western scholarly debate on shamanism has shifted enormously over the years. Whereas, before the 1940s, shamanism was primarily viewed as a culturally sanctioned vocation for the mentally deranged, the field of cross-cultural psychiatry increasingly belies this pathologising, pejorative categorisation (Achterburg 1985, Noll 1983). Most certainly, more self-reflexivity among
anthropologists and archaeologists has induced a less jaundiced appreciation of their ethnographic studies. Western Cartesian/dualistic reductionism, with its emphasis on mechanicalising the human and natural environment, has been severely disrupted by quantum theory, and Western thought stimulated a re-examination of mystical states and engagement with spiritual entities. Depth psychology, eco-psychology, deep ecology, transpersonal ecology (W. Fox 1995), transpersonal psychology, consciousness studies and the newer theories of personality elucidated by Ken Wilber et al., as well as consciousness studies at academic institutions such as Duke University, John F. Kennedy University, Naropa University, Schumacher College and the Easelen Institute, have redefined Altered States of Consciousness as a creditable field of research.

The poetic depth psychology propounded by James Hillman (1985, 1992, 1995, 1996) challenges the commonly accepted definitions of normality. They propose that what is accepted by Westernised authorities as ‘normal’ is very much a conservative estimate based upon values accepted and implemented by the ruling elite (Achterburg 1985: 31). Normal to whom? For what purpose? The shaman in any case is not overwhelmed by his/her experience, as in psychosis (mental derangement), but rather enters and exits willingly realms of spiritual activity (Noll 1993, Walsh 1990). Ulanov (1992) suggests that the gap between the ego and Self (God, oneness) can be a place of madness, should the ego fall in and lose its foothold in an embodied reality. The unconscious is the medium through which God speaks; however, it needs an ego to converse with. The shaman typically bridges these realms, and does not lose his/her footing.

Shamans are extremely discriminating in their psychic state, and the albeit Westernised term ‘voluntary psychosis’, coined by Maureen Roberts (2000), appears a reasonably accurate Western depiction of their decision to enter non-ordinary reality (NOR) (Castaneda 1974, 1975a, 1975b). In Western terms, the shaman’s egoic structure is incredibly sound; they know themselves, whereas the psychotic/schizophrenic sufferer’s egoic structure is permeable, fluid, ill-defined and seemingly random (Noll 1993, Walsh 1990). Western psychiatry is far from agreement on just what ascertains the norms of adaptation, which are themselves a microcosm of societal values (A. Samuels 1992).

Entry into the realms of non-ordinary reality, as Carlos Castaneda termed it, varies from culture to culture, but always involves the adaptation of a non-linear state of mind. This
is achieved by a variety of methods. The ‘sweat lodge’ is one such induction method, conducted with due ceremony and preparation. Black Elk (in J. Brown (ed) 1989), a Native American, describes some of his vivid experiences in healing rituals and their wondrous, practical benefits. He also describes in great detail the building of a sweat lodge, and justifies this ‘disclosure’ to the West by having been spiritually instructed to do so. The sweat lodge experience involves sensory deprivation as well as extreme body temperature rise, and lends itself to similarities in a variety of other cultural practices. These are sacrificial rites of passage to attain spiritual knowledge, as is the ingestion of psychotropic natural plant substances, whereby the shaman sacrifices his/her mundane egoic reality in deference to a need greater than him/herself (Harner 1982). That is a theme picked up by Leslie Kenton (1998), who states that compassion for others is like donning spiritual armour.

Compassion for oneself is also necessary, and there are those who partake of psychotropic intoxicant or ‘shamanic power plant’ who reference their experience to Western psychotherapeutics. As says Aiko Aiyana (1999, p. 32), ‘one Daima (the psychedelic ayahuasca plant) session of five hours is worth twenty or thirty therapy sessions in the amount of understanding and revelations that are experienced’. The experiences are, as she comments, transformative, but not ‘necessarily pleasant’. Nausea and vomiting or ‘cleansing’ is all part of the process.

This is not the only means of legitimising oneself as a shaman and the efficacy of the methods used. Various neoshamans advance a wide range of references. For instance, Sandra Ingerman (1991) suggests that the psychologically recognised condition of dissociation may be a Westernised parallel to shamanic notions of soul loss, although the methods employed to alleviate the dissociation/soul loss are worlds apart. Some neoshamans work directly with therapists (Harner 1982, Horwitz, 2001), and some (Ingerman 1993, Keeny 1984, Locke 1999, Mindell 1993) work as both shaman and therapist.

Miguela Kavlin (1999, p. 45), Brazilian shaman and ayahuasca practitioner, says that the inner journey deals with their demons, and traumas and skeletons, and all ‘the things we have stored in our bodies since birth or even before’ (ibid). This is a very different worldview than viewing the world of illness, disease and misfortune in terms of
intentional sorcery and psychic attack, as occurs in many Indigenous cultures (Harner 1982, Reid 1983).

‘Shamanic calling’ in traditional cultures varies somewhat from culture to culture. In some, the vocation is hereditary, in others the ‘calling’ may come in the form of a ‘big dream’ or a vision. In yet another form, the calling may come through severe illness or near-death experience. It is deemed to be a spiritual calling, and one that the ‘called’ dare not refuse. Eliade’s comment on the shamanic vocation is quite succinct: ‘hereditary or spontaneous, shamanism is a gift from the gods or spirits; viewed from a certain angle, it is hereditary only in appearance’ (1974, p. 15). However, some of the practices inherent in shamanism appear to be readily assimilated by those willing to participate and persevere; at least, this is the view of many contemporary shamans. I have not come across any comprehensive psychological or spiritual screening processes for contemporary Western shamanic training programs. Screening is cursory at best. It appears to be: pay your money, turn up and you’re in.

After the initial ‘introductory training’, which may involve anything from a non-residential weekend workshop to a 22-day residential programme (Centre for Human Transformation, Victoria), self-selection seems to guide the induction process. Western quick-fix shamanism seems to demean the years of arduous practice undertaken by traditional shamans – a point highlighted by Wallis (2003) in his critique of core-shamanism, ‘Harnerism’ as he calls it, being (re)introduced into traditional cultures. This is, as Wallis stresses, that core-shamanism is a Western view of what ‘shamanism’ should be, in other words a type of neo-colonial practice. He is not alone in his reservations. A. Geetz (1992), W. Rose (1993), along with L. Cruden (1995), also highlight the assumptive colonising practices of neoshamanism.

Entering other states of consciousness while under the supervision of traditional shamans has also enticed numerous academic researchers, and they have in turn popularised the notion of experiential shamanic practices while researching within traditional village structures. As informs us, a number of these (mainly) anthropologists have written about undergoing shamanic training, and this has ‘changed perceptions and understandings of the tradition’ Roger Walsh (1982, p. 3). Interest in shamanic practice broadened and accelerated as anthropologists such as Carlos Castaneda (1974, 1975a,
1975b, 1976, 1979) and Michael Harner (1982) wrote of their experiences in language accessible to the layperson, and popular culture appropriated it as its own.

d. Popularising or appropriating shamanism?

Castaneda’s credibility was and still is seriously challenged on the academic front (de Mille 1976, Kremer 1992). However, he tapped into a vein of populist mystical intrigue that took many of his numerous books into the top-selling echelon. His may well have been ‘a fanciful sprint through shamanism’ (Lyon 1991, p. xii), but it elicited considerable ‘lay’ interest as well as academic controversy, thus bringing shamanism and the accessing of alternative realities into the consciousness of the masses. Robert Murphy (1981, p. 714) sums up Castaneda’s influence: ‘The Castaneda books constitute a fascinating cultural phenomenon whatever their background in “reality”...’ – a theme aligned with Kremer (1992, p. 202): ‘... Castaneda succeeded in hooking his innumerable readers by way of the shimmering mythology around him, which invites and provokes them to look at the ways in which we create our world’. Kremer (1992) advances seven reasons why Castaneda captured the imagination and was so popular during the 1970s, the fourth of which is that ‘Don Juan (Castaneda’s teacher) demonstrates a mature level of identity’. This area is highlighted as being so negligible in Western culture (Washburn 1998, Wilber 1995, Bly 1988, Moore and Gillette 1993, Plotkin 2003), the central axis of Westernised identity being the ‘ego-egocentric’, rather than ‘soulcentric’ (Plotkin 2003) or world-centric (Wilber 1998, 2001).

Castaneda and Harner vividly described their experiences in prose that was both provocative and enticing. They wrote to an audience familiar with altered states of consciousness, and their stories were laced with the shamanic training/teachings being facilitated by the ingestion of naturally occurring psychotropic substances. Spiritual seekers, disillusioned by the unfulfilled promises of stifled orthodox religion, responded enthusiastically. As William S. Lyon comments: ‘We live in a world nearly devoid of the sacred mystery powers that once abounded via shamans throughout humankind. It is difficult for us to imagine that perhaps we could all use a little magic in our lives’ (1991, p. xiv). He goes on to advance that, ‘in that sense, they (shamans) are advanced physicists... After all from Black Elk’s perspective, shamanism is the original technology and science’. He further comments on Native American elders’ bemusement with such narratives by Harner and Castaneda:
To Native American elders, such narratives were neither new nor interesting, nor did they believe that anyone would really want to live the life of a shaman. Shamanic training requires a great deal of personal suffering, social isolation, and the psychological fortitude to withstand great terror... The most powerful shamans often lead solitary lives full of arduous service with few personal rewards.

Much contemporary shamanism neglects to mention any such considerations, and perhaps would consider them fundamentally naive. This is a point highlighted by Dr. Maureen Roberts a Jungian analyst and shaman, in her condemnation of the ‘weekend shaman set’. To her, ‘Shamanism cannot be taught through courses: it can only be taught through direct teaching – in dreams or trance visions – by one’s own guides and god’s, by ancestral teachers, or by master shamans’. She decries the notion that our instant gratification and easy options society promote notions that for the right amount of money and minimal amount of training a shaman is ‘born’. She describes the situation in shamanic cultures (presumably traditional) that folk ‘steer clear of the shamanic vocation because of the formidable requirements ... and support and respect the uniqueness of the vocation, and revere the gift as too high a calling for most to aspire to’ (Roberts, 2000/2001). Jung observes that the shaman’s profession often puts him/her in danger of his/her life, and that shamanistic techniques often cause a great deal of discomfort (1980, p. 256).

That perspective is echoed by some other Western neoshamans, including Caitlan Mathews (1997, p. 14), who comments on the calling in eras gone by: ‘When the calling to shamanise arises it is often severely resisted, eventually the candidate submits since resistance becomes life threatening’. However, what are we to make of Native American shamanic tutors divulging their sacred knowledge with a large uninitiated non-native audience. Wallace Black Elk, as reported to William Lyon, ‘extends his scope to include all human beings...’. Wallace noted long ago that when the spirits do appear, they never lay claim to a racial identity. In fact, ‘Lakota prophecy speaks of the Sacred Pipe as going to all nations... power is seen as a gift from the Creator for all human beings’ (1991, p. xiv). This raises the possibility that Westerners in fact are being consciously recruited by the ‘subjugated’ peoples into a direct spiritual relationship favourable to Indigenous cosmology! Rather ironically, it may well be they who have the mission.

Paul Johnson misses this point when conducting his comparative study of the Jivaro and the Foundation of Shamanic Studies. He comments ‘Rather, neoshamanism should be
regarded as a basically unilineal appropriation (from them to us) which is structured by modern strategies... but which nevertheless does not preclude its potential to affect genuine healing’ (1995, p. 165). Conversely, rather, it may be that in the first instance (at least), the transmission of shamanic entry is structured by Indigenous strategies responding to spiritual initiative. While justified in his critique of Michael Harner’s Foundation of Shamanic Studies’ selective utilisation of the term ‘tradition’ as a means to claim authority, surely equally true – and more confronting – is Harner’s academically endorsed ‘authority’. Is there not a certain irony in that Harner is ‘legitimised’ by the scientific institutions he is subverting, as are (by proxy) his Indigenous teachers?

Johnson conflates Harner’s neoshamanism with the New Age and its emphasis on self-reflexivity, relativism, subjectivity and the creation of a modernist psychological universe of individual agency (1995, p. 173). It seems self-evident (as Johnson asserts) that the West does live in a particularly socially diverse and fragmented society, while the Jivaro’s socio-cultural system is in the main communal. However, is it not also evident that Harner’s claim to re-acquaint the spiritual with the individual is precisely the healing needed – a spiritual realignment or integration? It is in this sense that Harner’s core shamanism and Indigenous shamanism’s objectives are conjunct.

Neoshamanic experiences may, as Bron Taylor (2001, p. 229) notes, ‘foster spiritual communication with ‘power animals’ or other intelligences’ in nature’... they enhance the awe and love these activists feel for the earth and the cosmos’. It would seem that the ‘reading’ and meaning of the shamanic experience is a product of the individual cosmology operating in the psyche of the participant. For instance, a holistic worldview will yield a very different crop of comprehension than, say, a fundamentalist Christian worldview, even though sown from the same seed (or ritual). It is in this area that Harner (2000, p. 2) gathers both controversy and angst, when he says ‘the practice of shamanism is a method, not a religion... it is not a system of faith’. He advocates training in shamanic methods as a personal means to direct spiritual communion and healing, not as an intellectual exercise – ‘this is how I understand this to be’ – but as a means of direct personal–spiritual encounter, a phenomenological approach. ‘It is based on first-hand experience (ibid)’. But is direct experience faith? A difficulty may lie in this first-hand experience being consumed by the individual ego as though it is separate from
the larger cultural, social and environmental psyche. As Mindell comments (1985, p. 77):

It’s our ability to get beyond looking at ourselves as the centre of the universe, and our ability to change viewpoints so we can see ourselves as part of a larger personality that will determine whether or not we continue world war, destructive ambitiousness and annihilation.

Indigenous shamans and the development of their practices were embedded within a larger context, their role primarily one of cultural service.

Black Elk, the renowned Native American shaman/visionary, divulged to Joseph Epes Brown seven sacred Lakota rituals because ‘he did not wish that this sacred lore, much of which he alone knew, should pass with him’ (1989, p. x). He, like many Indigenous shamans, came from an oral storytelling tradition whose prodigious memory is honed over the course of thousands of years, and yet is illiterate (in Western terms). I’ve commented upon the adaptability of shamanism earlier in this chapter. Black Elk actively promotes many of his tribe’s sacred rituals into the consciousness of thousands of people in many countries by contact with one authoritative person (Epes Brown).

Through Black Elk’s disclosure, these rituals appear in best-seller book form, and thus presumably may be practised by anyone as a spiritual practice. Western people drawn to ecstatic experience could access these states of consciousness by following written directions. While appropriation of Indigenous cultural artefacts is a recurrent reality, I ponder whether to view first-hand shamanic teachings passed on to ‘apprentices’ is cultural respect, rather than disrespect. Rituals, we are reminded, are only as potent as their relevance to the participants (J. Achterberg, B. Dossey, L. Kolkmeier, 1994). If it is advanced that the shamans, or at least shamanic practices, have an archetypal basis that is not immutably human but only given to those humans predisposed to such influences, then ownership becomes a moot point. Shamanism may be viewed in a similar manner to the God image as providing a different content for the same archetypal potential (Lionel Carbett 2000). It is James Hillman’s (1977, p. 73) proposition that, ‘at the most basic level of reality are fantasy images. These images are the primary activity of consciousness... Images are the only reality we apprehend directly’.
In traditional cultures, people who self-select to pursue a shamanic vocation are deemed to be lesser shamans than those chosen. But in contemporary times, who determines this? Leslie Kenton – one of many – holds a different view, and remarks in her *Pathways to Freedom* that when a person journeys into an altered state of consciousness, it is the person’s ‘intention and compassion’ that generates spiritual response. Lesser or greater shamanic comparative terms are an aspect of both Indigenous and contemporary shamanism, as numerous shamanic investigators testify (Eliade 1974, 1987, Harner 1994, 1997, Pretchel 1998, Eliade 1974). However, while there does appear to be an almost blanket acceptance that Indigenous teachers in tribal settings are ‘superior’ to Anglo-born, it is the Anglos who have the largest training ‘schools’. In North America’s west coast, Michael Harner’s *Foundation of Shamanic Studies*, established in 1987, offers up to 200 courses to more than 5,000 individuals annually (webpage, 2005). On the east coast of North America, Tom Brown Jr’s *Survival and Wilderness Schools*, established in 1978, ‘teach’ thousands of neophyte shamans each year. They both have an annual revenue in the millions of dollars.

Whether this denigrates the Conibo and Jivaro (the teachers of Harner (1994, 1997) or Stalking Wolf (Apache nation) may be a moot point to all but the most rapacious critic if it alleviates personal suffering and/or harmonises psycho-spiritual relationships. Independent research – as far as I’m aware – has not verified or disproved this. Certainly Harner and Tom Brown Jr’s enormous following would suggest that they have tapped into some basic human spiritual or psychological need. This response does not necessarily indicate that their trainings are for the good of humanity, as history has shown that there have been many charismatic leaders who have been overcome with hubris and committed atrocious and barbarous acts against humanity.

Tom Brown Jr’s mission is one of ecological repair and healing, and he maintains that the work must be a spiritual one, as political and economic ‘healing’ only exacerbate the ecological problems that the earth is undergoing. Shamanism to him provides a means of becoming spiritually conscious and passing it on. He quips upon completion of his *Philosophy 1* course: ‘You are now under the tutelage of Stalking Wolf, go and teach’ (personal communication 1999), shamanic pyramid recruitment!? The School’s vision statement reads: ‘Re-educate global consciousness toward environmental awareness through native skills and philosophies. To remain politically neutral in the endeavour
toward global environmental education’ (trackerschool.com – extant link). Of note is that there is no mention of shamanic training. However, his philosophies strand (1–6) focuses on developing proficiency in SSCs, and he readily associates this with shamanic induction (personal communication 1999).

Prechtel comments that shamanism is subversive of the modern world, and that people are suspicious of neoshamans because they, ‘are not really working for the people, rather is really more in love with nature’ (1999, p. 86). This is an interesting point, raising questions concerning the ethical implications of teaching shamanic practice. Tom Brown Jr commented upon his moral dilemma when training Navy S.E.A.L.S. (armed forces commandos), as a consequence of his training, they became more efficient killers; he also alludes to some of his own radical environmental offensives. This seems to me to be not the work of a healer – more the work of a warrior. Warrior shaman, perhaps? Angeles Arrien (1993) certainly advocates and promotes, as part of her ‘four fold way’, the role of such a shamanic being. The ‘Way of the Warrior’, as she calls it; as indeed do Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette in their books, including The Magician Within (1993) and best-selling King, Warrior, Magician, Lover (1993).

The politics of shamanic ‘ownership’ continue to instigate controversy in the USA. Kenneth Meadows advances the notion that the Native American ‘Medicine Wheel’ was ‘never an invention of the American Indian mind’. It is, according to him, a ‘universal power source that was entrusted in ancient times to the Red race for keeping safe until the time arrived in human history when it would be needed to harmonise all esoteric traditions for the benefit of mankind’. He claims: ‘This was hinted at in many Amer-indian legends’ (1993, p. xix). Unfortunately (at least to me), these legends are not specified. This may be sloppy scholarship, but for his intended popular audience it is irrelevant. Von Stuckard’s understanding of Western neoshamanic orientation places it historically within a ‘movement against the mechanisation and disenchantment of nature, cosmos, and the human self’ (von Stuckard 2002, p. 791). He cautions against a master perspective.

Other writers, notably Mathew Fox and Bill Plotkin (2003), refuse to associate their work with the term ‘shaman’. Fox terms his research into human-environment connection
‘Transpersonal Ecology’. Plotkin explicitly makes mention that his work is not derived from Native American ceremonies; rather, his goal is to develop a ritual structure tailored for contemporary Westerners. He believes that it is disrespectful to employ without permission the ceremonial forms of another culture – disrespectful to both the other culture and oneself.

Bron Taylor, one of the more dispassionate voices in this ongoing debate, cites three differing views on the appropriation of Native American rituals (see below), but one must question whether neoshamanism is a ritual as such. Certainly, shamanism may be surrounded by and immersed in ritual, but ritual does not determine a shaman any more than a drawing determines an artist. Ritual may well be a culturally derived process whose deeper meaning cannot be appropriated, or for that matter denigrated, whereas shamanism is an experiential active spiritual engagement. He says

> When people believe in pure, authentic forms of religion, lurking in the shadows are tendencies to repress the unauthentic and impure forms. Religious history is replete with examples where the logic of religious purity devolves into the repression of ‘impure’ religious practice ... some native activists (unlike some intellectuals) recognise that the idea of a ‘pure’ culture is problematic (1997, p. 183).

There is a vast difference in being a shaman, being a shamanic practitioner, and utilising shamanic principles or methods. Many commentators do not differentiate. Shamans are, by virtue of their vocation, shamanic practitioners, but the inverse is not necessarily so. Researchers such as Mircea Eliade (1974), Roger Walsh (1990), Michael Winkleman (1992) and Stanley Krippner (2000, 2002) provide detailed distinctions between adaptations of shamanic practices and roles within traditional/Indigenous cultures. Roger Walsh (1990) tracks these distinctions as developing alongside the move from hunter-gatherer nomadic-semi-nomadic egalitarian cultures to ‘stable’ agricultural-domesticated-hierarchical-state-nation cultures. Winkelman (1992) provides a schema for practitioner configurations through socioeconomic conditions, hunting and gathering = shaman, agriculture = priest + shaman/healer, political integration = priest + sorcerer/witch + healer, social classes = priest + sorcerer/witch + medium. This raises questions concerning the nature of neoshamanism in today’s so-called developed, industrialised countries. Is it in some way a response to an ecosystem in peril, a calling of the natural world and its guardians?

\[^6\] Comments spoken during Philosophy 1 training, 1999.
Training to be a shaman or shamanic practitioner

In traditional Indigenous cultures, according to Lyon, ‘just to reach the first Lakota “level of power” often takes around sixteen years of training in self-control’ (1991, p. xii). In Indigenous cultures, the formal and informal training is a lifetime vocation, only ceased through death or when the spirits decide to terminate their personal interactive relationship. Black Elk (1961) tells of having his first ‘vision’ while in the throws of a severe illness. He was six at the time. Similarly, Stalking Wolf, the mentor of Tom Brown Jr (1994), began his tutorage at the age of six after visionary experiences. Our culture does not accommodate such visions, and in fact is genuinely quite aggressive towards the disclosure of them – seeking rational and medical rather than spiritual explanations.

Numerous neoshamans report the hiding of their early spiritual experiences through fear of parental or other authoritative condemnation, ridicule or psychological/psychiatric concern (Mindell). Until comparatively recently, psycho-spiritual breakthroughs, with their accompanying ‘symptoms’, were demonised by Western cultural institutions. In one of her comments regarding the traditional medical model of comprehending schizophrenia, Maureen Roberts (2000) comments: ‘Overall when we look at the stark discrepancy between the authoritarian rigidity, sterile jargon and polite rhetoric of biological psychiatry, politicians and drug companies, and the vibrantly soulful experiences, concerns, values and views of sufferers (schizophrenia), a clear pattern of opposition emerges’ (Roberts 2000).

The ‘uninitiated’ medical model cannot support a spiritually initiated crisis, and indeed, to do so would be to repudiate much of the scientific credibility they have assumed as their rite of passage to prestige and privilege. However, there is a growing body of knowledge viewing spiritual emergencies as ‘spiritual emergence’ – a term coined by one of the leading researchers in this area, Christina Grof (1989). Complementary to this view, Roger Walsh (1990, p. 89) concludes that, despite decades of attempts to pigeonhole them, shamans simply do not slip neatly into traditional psychiatric diagnosis and categories. Walsh further suggests that, if symptoms of neoshamans are suppressed by traditional medical model treatments, the potential growth process may be aborted. The initial shamanic crisis may be deemed to be a culturally specific form of
developmental crises rather than evidence of severe psychopathology. Roger Walsh (1994, p. 7) comments that ‘several shamanic techniques foreshadow ones now found in contemporary psychotherapies’.

Shamanic initiatory experiences, according to the Grofs (1989), may yet find their place within this relatively new Westernised understanding. Alternatively, other stakeholders in the area of ‘one material reality’ and the pathologising of alternative realities are the multinational drug companies, whose objective, according to Richard Gosden (2001, p. 22) is ‘to expand the market for new drugs. According to Gosden, ‘their venture into early-psychosis research and intervention programs are designed as market strategies under the banner of ‘preventative medicine’.

The extent to which these drugs inhibit is unknown, as they are mainly designed to alleviate symptoms, rather than explore human potentiality. Thomas Moore (1990, p. 22) terms these medical interventions as ‘strong willed acts in the name of health that, however well meant, are antagonistic to the soul’. Gosden (2001), Roberts (2000), along with the Grofs (1989, 2000), Thomas Szasz (1997), and John Weir Perry (1986), propose that spiritual emergency is a much more apt term for these transitional states. They further advise that the appropriate ‘treatment’ should be by those who have successfully negotiated the experience. This is reminiscent of the reports by Eliade (1974) of the second step in tribal shamanic cultures. They also caution against regarding all psychically fractured states as spiritually induced (Peter Buckley 1981, Noll 1983, David Lukoff 1987, Walsh 1990, 1994, Wilber 1998, 2001). Lukoff (1988, p. 131) suggests ‘not only is there overlap between psychopathology and transpersonal states of consciousness, but is among transpersonal states as well’.

Diagnosis of psychic disturbances is at best a haphazard affair. A reductionist approach, viewing a transpersonal (shamanic) crisis as pathological, may result in medication and/or forcible hospitalisation, while an elevationist perspective may mistake a serious pathology for a transpersonal process (Walsh and Vaughan 1993). Ken Wilber (1998) calls this confusion the pre/trans fallacy – pre-rational is confused with trans-rational and vice versa. (Wilber has been criticised extensively for his pre/trans theory: see S. Grof 1986, Ferrer 1998, also numerous reverences in D. Rothberg and S. Kelly
It is also apparent that the psychiatric community does not speak as one voice, either on the nature of religious experience or the nature of mental illness (Kemp 2000).

In order to integrate a psychic breakthrough, an initiated ‘shamanic’ intermediary is recommended by researchers such as Walsh (1990, p. 99). He suggests that the breakthrough experience ‘may entail a mix of progressive and regressive forces, signs of growth and signs of pathology’. These psychic disruptions may be the western equivalent of initiation, a process James Hillman calls ‘soul-making’ (1990, p. 266). Psycho-spiritual crisis is becoming increasingly recognised as a valid terminology. So-called psychotics, as Neville Drury questions, ‘are they not perhaps pointing to dimensions of human awareness which we have chosen to ignore?’ (1991, p. 52)

Neoshamanic schools may be choosing to ignore the potential for their trainees to ‘psychically disintegrate’. Their literature is noticeably silent on this possibility. Yet, as Hunt and McMahon pointedly comment:

> ... there are many documented cases of persons involved not only in TM (Transcendental Meditation) but in other forms of yoga and autosuggestion having extremely frightening and uncontrollable spiritual experiences. As a result, some have been driven to insanity and even suicide – but these facts are deliberately suppressed (1988, p. 49).

Shamanism is proliferating in our western consumerist marketplace. Weekend workshops and certificate courses are publicised as though shamanism were both a recreational dalliance and a professional adjunct, depending upon your socio-economic status. Shamanic healing may be conducted online (dial-a-shaman), while interactive conversations and bulletin boards proliferate. Shamanic products such as drums, rattles, audiotapes and CDs, mix easily with shamanic artists plying their limited-edition art. While the demand is certainly apparent, and capitalism thrives on just such an alliance, does this denigrate its cultural antecedents? Does the (at times) gross Westernisation of shamanism display an arrogant disregard for Indigenous cultures from which they originated? Or is this an honouring of Indigenous wisdom and philosophy? Both viewpoints are valid.

Adaptation has always been a feature of shamanism, so nowadays should there be concern that shamanism is presented as techno-shamanism, zen-tantric-shamanism, core-shamanism, neoshamanism, contemporary shamanism, as well as eco-shaman/tourism, and ‘schools’ who ply their wares in the marketplace? Do the traditional methods merely need to be adapted to our global culture and the plight of our
earth, and are they? Certainly, the world of the traditional shaman was generally one of a relatively small tribal nature, the problems faced local and immediate. Is criticism of neoshamanism justified when, as reported by authors such as Halifax, Lyon, Harner et al., some traditional shamans appreciate Western interest and pursuit of the ‘road’, and have an affinity for the ‘Medicine Way’.

Lorraine Mafia-Williams (1999, p. 139), an Australian Aboriginal shaman, tells of sharing shamanic knowledge as being imperative. ‘It was about a hundred years ago that the elders said we had to help white Australians through these changes and shifts as well’. There certainly does not seem to be consensus on such matters among Indigenous people. Objections mounted by Indigenous people generally refer to the appropriation of ceremonies and rituals, not to a means of obtaining direct Spiritual guidance through Spirit contact. However, the indirect appropriation that Johnson (1995) mentioned, that of attaching oneself to an ancient Indigenous lineage, is rampant, and yet this too may be regarded by others as paying respect to the shamanic lineage. The practice of lineage acknowledgment is common in both Eastern and the Western religious traditions.

Given that one of the defining features of a shaman is their direct relationship with spirits and spiritual allies, one would imagine that it is not a vocation that can be appropriated. However, shamanic referencing does provide, whether intentional or unintentional, a certain appropriated ancient mystique to practitioners. Of this, there is no doubt. Likewise, this ‘credibility’ provides a means of ridicule and denunciation to others. ‘White shamans’ and ‘plastic-shamans’ are two of the more notable pejoratives used (Geetz 1993, Rose 1992) to deride neoshamanic practitioners.

Shamanic practices provide a means of psychological resolution and healing to its adherents, to others a vocation, and to still others a spiritual practice. But, as Jonathon Horwitz observes in his analysis of shamanic rites, ‘if we are to understand, on the deepest levels, the shamanic rite, then we must go beyond the surface. To do this, it is necessary to accept the truth people are investigating, to see not only with their eyes as they look at the shamanic rite, but as Black Elk says, to see in a sacred manner’ (1989, p. 24). This would entail integrating psycho-spiritual phenomenological shamanic experiences into a 21st century narrative. David Barnhill (2002, p. 111) encourages this
inter-cultural project, basing it upon notions of ‘anotherness’, in which ‘difference is
affirmed but dialogue and exchange are possible’, and argues against ‘cultural
essentialism’, noting that cultures are both distinct and interwoven and ever-changing.
Barnhill qualifies this by investigating on a case-by-case basis, rather than dismissing
neoshamanism as a general phenomenon (ibid, p. 139).

The West has an abundance of mystical traditions and teachings. Humanistic,
transpersonal and Jungian views more sympathetic to spiritual experience provide an
opportunity to cast a very different perspective upon neoshamanic practitioners.
Numerous investigations validating healing effects accorded to placebo (Michael Talbot
1996, Achterberg 1985), psychedelic drugs (Grof 1984, 2000), meditations and
visualisations (Achterberg 1985) have challenged conventional medicine.
Simultaneously, the very structures of empirically validated ‘reality’ have undergone
enormous turmoil with the acceptance of quantum physics. These disruptions feature
alongside Michael Talbot’s (1996) notion of a holographic universe, the Gaia theory of
Lovelock (1995), Rupert Sheldrake’s (1990) hypothesis of morphic resonance, and Amie
Naess’s (1988) deep ecology. The blending of Eastern spirituality with Western physics
theorists, including Roger Walsh (1999) and Frances Vaughan (1993), challenge the
very notion of reducing reality to immutable physical or psychological laws.

The aforementioned transpersonal theorists do not allow for an independent,
autonomous and influential spiritual reality ‘peopled’ by spirit entities. They tend rather
to view spirit engagements as originating within the individual’s consciousness, and to
be positivist and deterministic.

Altered states of consciousness induced through powerful neoshamanic techniques
need correct understanding, and, as Jung (1980, p. 351) warned, it all depends on ‘the
correctness of this understanding whether the consequences turn out more pathological
or less’. The challenges of integrating an expanded consciousness entail an emotional
maturity beyond the individualised self-concept that has colonised the Western mentality
has stated, ‘astonishing intellectual successes have brought modern humanity to the
brink of a global catastrophe, since they were not matched by a comparable growth of
emotional and moral maturity’ (Grof 2000, p. 295). A mature outlook would involve seeing through the materialist shadows that cloud our vision of our place in the grand scheme of life (Moore and Gillette 1993).

The personal and cultural shadow of modernity is inherent within a consumerist capitalist mentality. As Aiko Aiyana (1999, p. 45), a Brazilian shaman who comes from a line fusing shamanism and Catholicism, comments: ‘There is no denying the shadow. The shadow is part of the journey in all shamanism. And what I discern is that the highs are as high as the lows are low’ – a view Hillman (1992, 1993, 1995, 1996) and Jung (1993, 1995a, 1995b) would certainly appreciate, as would many exponents of spiritual development. ‘An unexamined shadow is characteristic of charlatans and of seemingly solid teachers who, after a time, appear to “lose” their enlightenment or become involved in scandals and/or unhealthy relationships with their students’ (Mariana Caplan 1999, p. 368).

But can neoshamans within the confines of a materialist-consumerist culture avoid being party to the global ecological damage inherent within this consumerist mentality? Is it reasonable to assume that many of those embracing neoshamanism do so from within a culture that is mediated from infancy, and possible earlier (Grof 1986, 1990, Bache 2000), and by childhood traumas and the breakdown of the family structure? And what do they do with, or how do they work with, the shadows of a modernist and post-modern society? What happens to the unresolved and unintegrated ‘primal feelings’, as V J Fedorschak (1999) calls them? Are they prepared for their possible psychic dismemberment? Advertisements for ‘shamanic training’ provide no mention of this possibility. The literature provides scant attention to such questions. Nor does the literature on neoshamanism provide an appraisal or in-depth critique of neoshamanic ‘trainers’ and their ‘level’ of spiritual development; they are self-proclaimed. Instead, as Peggy Wright (1998, p. 233) notes: ‘Western followers of tribal ways look toward the visionary aspects of tribal epistemology, such as shamanism, and not the magical-thinking that abounds in all cultures’. In other words, the West has its ‘own’ archetypal/spiritual personages/representatives, who may be waiting in the realms beyond egoic consciousness. They may well form the very shadows that so infuriate and frustrate the immature ego; spirits are notoriously tricky like that...
f. Questions of interest

1. What are neoshamans seeking?

2. May neoshamanic practice be regarded as a developmental spiritual practice rather than an animistic awakening endeavour? And if so, what are the possible ramifications for societal engagement?

3. Is the proliferation of neoshamanism part of a deeper and more encompassing calling of a yet to be ontologically comprehended human–spirit communication?

4. How does shamanic engagement alter practitioners' self-consciousness over an extended period of time?

5. What of the healing work and service to the community commonly considered to be part of the shamanic vocation?

6. Through the shamanic journey, how does change occur in the way we experience ourselves and our relations with the interior imaginary worlds(s)?

7. How are we to comprehend the ontological status of spiritual guides, power animals etc.?

2. The Shadow

The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes to the deep well – Jung (1980, p. 21)

a. Jung and the elusive shadow

Carl Jung spent much of his adult life exploring the seemingly erratic and bewildering contents of the unconscious mind (Murray Stein 1995). He was passionately committed to investigating experientially and empirically the psycho-spiritual forces that dwell beneath human consciousness, and thus are beyond ‘ordinary’ awareness. He determined that these ‘energetic entities’ are influential in determining individual and collective cultural beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Jung had self-discovered, in his journey into his own unconscious, archetypal beings of great significance: ‘Philemon and other figures of my fantasies brought home to me the crucial insight that there are things in the psyche which I do not produce, but which produce themselves and have their own life’ (Jung 1995, p. 207).
Jung further deduced from his self-explorations that the psyche was a self-regulatory system, consisting of various complementary and oppositional energies, ‘complexes’ (John Battista 1996). Some of these complexes are conscious and suppressed, while others are repressed and unconscious. In Jung’s terms, the psyche is the whole of our being, conscious and unconscious, personal and impersonal. The individual self-concept (mental-ego) is constructed from the psychic ‘field’ by omission and admission (Michael Washburn 1988). ‘The self-concept provides the mental ego with a sense of solidity and substance’ (ibid). According to Jung, consolidating one’s ego identity and constructing a persona, the mask we show to the world, is the principal task of the first half of life. Thus, the ego, persona and shadow develop ‘in step with one another under the influence of societal and parental values’ (Lawrence Alschuler 1997, p. 286). Whitmont (1978) asserts that only in the second half of life, after reclaiming our projections of shadow, animus and anima, is ‘true’ relatedness possible:

Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself ... This confrontation is the first test of courage on the inner way, a test to frighten off most people ... but if we are able to see our own shadow and can bear knowing about it: we have at least brought up the personal unconscious: the shadow is a living part of the unconscious and wants to live it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalised into harmlessness. Jung (1980, p. 20)

The ‘solidity and substance’ of the individual mental-ego is developed at the expense of an inherent split in our personalities between what is acceptable and what is rejected. Jung described the rejected characteristics, traits, elements and potentials as the ‘shadow’. The personal or individual shadow is powerful psychically because it contains a pattern that has at its disposal all the energies of those things humanity has consciously despised, rejected, or ignored in their-self (van der Post 1975). These reside in the personal unconscious. Jung said rather ambiguously of humanity, ‘It is regrettable that the full value of their personalities should be contaminated by something that is less valuable’ (Jung 1990, p. 26).

The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting upon him directly or indirectly – for instance inferior traits of character and other incompatible tendencies (Jung 1980, p. 285).

In his later writings, he postulates that what is rejected in defining the individual and cultural identity lessens our respective humanity. To Jung, the shadow belonged in the wholeness of the personality. From this, he reasoned that to be ‘whole’, we – that is, humanity – need to reclaim the shadow (Steinbrecher 1983, Van der Post 1975). He
encouraged humanity to venture beyond egoic awareness and into and within the personal unconscious, to regress in the service of soul/self (Washburn 1988, Wilber 1998, 2000, Plotkin 2003), and to allow us to know ourselves as weak and strong, clever and stupid, accepting all (Washburn 1988). Jung speculated that this would enable humanity to relate to ourselves and others more as forgivable persons rather than as ‘omnipotent gods’ (Brooke 1993, p. 15).

Although Jung embraced the concept of the personal unconscious as influential in determining one’s sense of identity, he maintained that humanity was ensconced in a much broader and deeper process, the breadth being collective and the depth being archetypal (ibid). ‘The psyche to Jung is the place of conscious and unconscious processes ... it is the place of experience and meaning’ (Roger Brooke 1991, p. 14). Contrary to Freud, who viewed human psychology primarily as bleak, Jung asserted that there is a creative, purposive and non-destructive intentional basis to the human psyche (A. Samuels 1992). Sherry Salman (1999, p. 52) captures this spirit when she says: ‘For Jung the psyche was a many splendid thing: fluid, multi-dimensional, alive, and capable of creative development’.

This deeper dimension of being is the unlived ‘lifeworld’ (John Ryan Haule 2000, p. 264) and shadow when brought to awareness may be revalued as psyche’s ‘attempts to construct a unique, satisfying and authentic lifeworld’ (ibid). However, if, as Stevens (2002, p. 248) asserts, ‘the propensity for cruel, obscene and brutal acts is in all of us’, then it is perhaps inevitable or logical that many will immaturely repress and suppress their inner innate forces. The history of Christendom perpetuates the myth of original sin and the possibility of being possessed by the powers of darkness, of being possessed by evil forces (ibid).

Taking it in its deepest sense, the shadow is the invisible saurian tail that man still drags behind him. Carefully amputated, it becomes the healing serpent of the mysteries. (Jung 1938, p. 13)

The shadow is elusive even when conscious attempts are made to bring it to the fore and integrate it. Thomas Moore (1992, p. 2) asserts that ‘believing that one’s individual shadow is dealt with intellectually protects the ego from the challenges offered by shadow elements’. There is ‘deep’ shadow work and ‘shallow’ shadow work. There are any number of shallow shadow personal development books and workshops
commercially available (Jette 2000, Ford 2000, Bane, Robertson, Rich) promoting do-it-yourself shadow work. They, along with other more notable shadow writers, including Wilber, Bly, Johnson, do not take heed of Jung when he intones, ‘How the harmonising of conscious and unconscious data is to undertaken cannot be indicated in the form of a recipe. It is an irrational life process ... it may be the task of the analyst to stand by this process with all the help he can give’ (1980, p. 289). The writers have ‘good will’ upon their side, but none insist that the shadow work must be done alongside an analyst, counsellor or therapist.

The shadow exists – according to Ken Wilber (1991) – as precisely the opposite of our persona. It balances or, as Jung terms it, compensates for the socialised unauthentic self. So both Jung and Wilber argue that duality is fundamental to understanding the shadow.

Thomas Moore suggests that shadow is a major portion of soul and a constructive part of life (T. Moore 1992, p. 3). To do less than acknowledge and honour the shadow is to diminish the soul and devitalise existence in all its mystery. And worse, the shadow becomes symptom, and ‘fastens itself as a vampire battens on its prey’ (Ken Wilber 1991). T. S. Eliot (1973, pp. 83–86) grasps this in his poem Hollow Man:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the shadow.

Between the conception and the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the shadow.

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the shadow

Jung (1980) was not concerned with building a dogmatic, carefully constructed psychological system; his was not a positivist, deterministic approach. He did, however, conclude that we can understand something only if we have the conceptual premises for
doing so. He believed that the psyche is a dynamic force. Marie-Louise von Franz tells a story in which Jung, exasperated at his literal-minded students quoting him without knowing exactly what they were saying, said: ‘This is all nonsense! The shadow is simply the whole unconscious’ (von Franz 1993, p. 3). Dawson highlights this controversial statement by acknowledging that Jung refers to shadow at various times as two distinct and yet related phenomena, first, the entirety of the unconscious, i.e. everything that we fail to recognise about ourselves; and second, a specific personification of what a person ‘has no wish to be’ (1997, p. 261).

Jung speculated that the shadow lay behind humanity’s capacity to be destructive to self and ‘others’. He also commented upon the shadow making itself known personally and culturally when its existence is denied, by unredeemable actions and surprising creative acts. The shadow is ambiguous and, as Stevens (2002) asserts, it generates ambivalence, as it contains both the worst and best of the human psyche. The shadow’s influence is unlimited, and being aware of its manifestations throws light upon the inherent conflicts within humanity, and in social, political and cultural manifestations. Jung wrote preceding the First World War of 1914–18 in what may be viewed as eerily predictive:

It is a frightening thought that man also has a shadow side to him, consisting not just of little weaknesses and foibles, but of a positively demonic dynamism ... let these harmless creatures form a mass, and there emerges a raging monster; and each individual is only a tiny cell in the monster’s body, so that for better or worse he must accompany it on its bloody rampages and even assist it to the utmost. Having a dark suspicion of these grim possibilities, man turns a blind eye to the shadow-side of human nature. (1925, p. 35)

Jung was considered first and foremost a man investigating and commenting on the unconscious, and seeking the reclamation of soul, so it is no surprise that psychotherapists have adapted and adopted his observations in form if not in spirit. According to von Franz (a psychotherapist and protégé of Jung), when the shadow is spoken of, certain considerations need to be borne in mind. She lists these as the personal situation, the specific stage of consciousness and the inner awareness of the person. These shadow components consist of what is personal and what is collective. On a practical level, when first met or engaged with, these shadows are ‘simply a conglomerate of aspects’ (1993, p. 3). These aspects present themselves through projections of the disagreeable in others, or in dreams as persons that we aren’t, particularly of the same sex. Reclamation and assimilation of these characteristics is a
difficult task (Stevens 2002, p. 252); it requires, as Jung (cited in Stevens 2002) observed, insight and goodwill, as, beyond all possibility of doubt, the cause of the emotion appears to lie in the *other person*.

b. Types of Shadow

The concept of shadow is remarkably adaptive, and post-Jungians\(^7\) such as Aldolf Guggenbuhl-Graig (1979), in his efforts to understand ‘man’s destructive behaviours’, attempted to systematise Jung’s concept of the shadow. His deviation from Jung’s philosophical position provides a certain dissonance. He maintains that the ‘so-called shadow consists of three psychological structures which are closely interrelated’.

Guggenbuhl classifies subconscious shadow into three groupings – the *personal*, the *collective* and the *archetypal*. This differs from Jung, who proposed that the collective unconscious was composed of archetypes. He writes: ‘The collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give form to certain psychic contents’. It does not owe its existence to personal experience that has been repressed or forgotten, but rather owes its existence to heredity (Jung 1976, p. 60). Hillman (2004) advises that archetypal themes are everlasting, ubiquitous, emotional and unavoidable, and that they abide through time, exerting mythic influence that can only be approached through an archaeology of the mind. To Jung, the shadow is one such mythic influence.

The *personal* shadow ‘embraces images, fantasies, drives, experiences which have been repressed for personal reasons in the course of an individual’s biological history’. For example, taboos around sexuality or aspects of sexuality, which are regarded by the parents, primary caregivers or environment as unacceptable. People in positions of power often force children to repress certain feelings, thoughts and actions. The ego thus develops by adaptation to the ruling psychological atmosphere created in seeking approval and love, and repressing what is ‘wrong’ or bad in us. However, what is disowned does not go away (Zwieg and Abrams 1991, p. 47). Rather, metaphorically

---

\(^7\) A post-Jungian is someone who can plug into, be interested and energised by, and participate in post-Jungian debates, whether on the basis of clinical interests, or intellectual exploration, or a combination of both. (A. Samuels 1992, p. 46)
speaking, we place what is not accepted into an invisible bag we drag behind us throughout life (Robert Bly 1998, p. 17). As Jung maintained:

We know that the wildest and most moving dramas are played out not in the theatre but in the hearts of ordinary men and women who pass by without exiting attention, and who betray nothing of the conflicts that rage within them except possibly by a nervous breakdown ... in most cases the patients themselves have no suspicion whatever of the internecine war raging in their unconscious (1912, p. 425).

Unpleasant personal experiences (traumas) that ‘the ego or the super-ego prefers to forget’) are also submerged into the recesses of consciousness. Aldolf Guggenbuhl-Craig (1979) suggests that sex and aggression have become part of ‘the modern Western European personal shadow’, thereby suggesting our culture is representative of a personal shadow.

Jung believed that the symbols representative of the shadow, whether in reference to the dream-state or conscious reality, were always of the same sex and have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy. He said that to recognise that one’s emotion is a projection is a ‘moral achievement beyond the ordinary’ (Jung 1976, p. 140). Ken Wilber suggests that if someone or something disturbs you, emotionally affects you, rather than informing you, then it is likely that the shadow is at work (1991, p. 274). Emotion, as Marilyn Nagy contends, ‘can be transforming; it stirs the depths’ (1991, p. 31). If this is so, then it should follow that shadow can be transforming, as it stirs from the emotional depths, it has emotionally charged components (Stevens 2002). Washburn (1982, p. 132) maintains that the shadow is not ‘inherently negative or evil’; rather, many of the traits or aspects are contra-conventional and intrinsically positive.

Jung conjectured that the most accessible of the main archetypes (anima, animus, shadow) is the shadow, ‘for its nature can in large measure be inferred from the contents of the personal unconscious (ibid).’ In dream consciousness, the same-sex person (shadow) and emotion may be acknowledged as emerging from one’s own internal subjective world – ‘my dream, my subjectivity’ – while the same acknowledgment is extremely difficult to ‘own’ when it occurs in waking reality (ordinary consciousness).

Let us suppose that a certain individual shows no inclination whatever to recognise his projections. The projection making factor then has a free hand and can realise its objective – if it has one... It is not the conscious subject but the unconscious which does the projecting. Hence one meets with projections, one does not make them. The effect of the projection is to isolate the subject from the environment, since instead of a real
relation to it there is now only an illusionary one. Projection changes the world into a replica of one’s unknown face ... It is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bungles his own life and the lives of others yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself ... not consciously of course ... (Campbell 1976, p. 147)

Integrating the shadow is essential in the pot-holed road of psycho-spiritual individuation: there is no wholeness without recognition of opposites within (O’Connor 1985). The shadow is the opposite of the persona – that image one projects unto the world. Bringing the shadow into one’s consciousness is, as O’Connor (1995, p. 85) comments, ‘by and large, not a happy or easy experience’, though one that is ‘nevertheless the first task that needs to be accomplished if psychological growth is to occur’. Robert Bly (1988, p. 79–81) cautions: ‘The penalty – if one may call it such – is if the shadow’s gifts are not followed, if they are not acted upon then they will retreat and return to the earth. The shadow goes back down abandoning him and the state of the man is evidently worse than the first’ – that is, impoverished. Bringing into daily reality the shadowland, or ‘revelations from the desert’, as Marion Woodman puts it, may indeed open up barely imagined vistas of possibility. The bringing of inner and outer worlds into harmony is, in her view (and Jung’s), living one’s destiny or, in Jung’s terms, individuation. The individuation process describes the movement of psyche from the ‘initial condition of unconscious unity towards the goal of conscious wholeness’ (Alschuler 1998, p. 288).

The collective shadow is very closely linked to the personal shadow, as it contains the dark other side of the collective ideal. While the personal shadow works destructively against ego-ideals, the collective shadow rails against and tries to demolish the collective ideals. In Guggenbuhl-Craig’s (1979, p. 113) view, the expression of these shadows serves a very valuable function; they attack the one-sided idealised collective persona that seeks to stifle and rigidify human experience. These ideals must be eaten into ‘from the depths of the human soul’, or else there would be no individual or collective development.

Jeremiah Abrams, a cultural commentator, suggests that the United States has struggled from its inception with the ideal versus the reality, with, in his words, ‘the hypocrisy that is bred by extreme idealism’ (Abrams 1994, p. 30). In a somewhat prophetic vein (given the events of September 11, 2001), he continues:
Early in the perestroika era of the 1980s, Gorbachev was reported to have said to the then president Regan, ‘I’m going to do something terrible to you: I’m going to take away your enemy.’ Indeed, Gorbachev kept his promise and took away our most favoured shadow host. We find ourselves at a critical time in history. The cold war has ended and the implosions of those shadow projections that were once carried by our traditional enemy are now upon us. We can easily search for new excesses or new enemies to take up whatever we cannot bear to contain in our collective awareness. (ibid.)

Abrams continues:

‘Everything has a shadow side. By learning to see, accept and encompass the shadowy aspects of ourselves and our national identity, perhaps we can wake up and renew the promise of the American dream (ibid)’.

This would entail a three-step process towards a national and international authenticity. History is replete with examples of the folly of shadow projection. Stevens (2002, p. 252) suggests that it is ‘an intractable vice of our species: it is at the bottom of all internecine strife and suspicion, all programs and wars’. He further postulates that the only alternative to global catastrophe is a collective refusal to project shadow qualities onto social systems, political institutions and each other, and an acceptance of total moral responsibility for them in ourselves.

The collective shadow lurking in nationalist assumptions is difficult to see from within the afflicted culture. Von Franz (1995) points out we need an onlooker to speak of such things. Seeing and interpreting the poverty and starvation of people on the streets of Bengal as appalling belies their acceptance that views ‘Karma’ as an explanation for unequal social conditions. The West, on the other hand, appear to ‘them’ as naively ignorant of metaphysical facts, and are caught up in illusions. Neither of us is able to see what is obvious to the other, both views ethnocentric and anthropocentric.

The collective shadow surfaces in its truly horrific form through the events of wars and blind hatred for other nations. ‘People support each other in their blindness’, collusion proliferates. Von Franz suggests that, as long as collective demons capture the individual, then that individual has something of the demon already internalised. ‘Our psychic door would not be open to infection’ (ibid, p. 8). The strong language utilised by Francois Vaughan (1986, p. 50) captures the 21st century imperative when she insists that not only are current threats to planetary survival basically ‘psychological in origin’, but that unmasking ‘the collective shadow of self-destruction’ may be our only hope.
The collective shadow legitimises itself in groups. Sylvia Perera (1985, p. 108) proposes that creative dissent is collectively quashed because most groups ascertain and retain their sense of positive identity by coalescing against an adversary. This is fear of other races or ethnocentrism in Ken Wilber’s (2001) paradigm. Ethnic cleansing and genocidal atrocities exemplify the darker aspects of this exclusivity. Initiating the current so-called war on terror, instigated by the U.S.A., President George W. Bush stated in 2001: ‘You’re either with us or against us’, and his ‘axis of evil’ was spoken of as though ‘evil resides out there’. Jung wrote, describing some of the dynamism of the collective unconscious:

> The change of character brought about by the uprush of collective forces is amazing. A gentle and reasonable being can be transformed into a maniac or savage beast. One is always inclined to lay the blame on external circumstances, but nothing could explode in us if it had not been there ... it is certainly a good thing to preach reason and commonsense, but what if you have a lunatic asylum for an audience or a crowd in a collective frenzy? There is not much difference between them because the madman and the mob are both moved by impersonal, overwhelming forces (Jung 1969, p. 25).

Experience is edited through cultural introjects eliciting within the self-concept a matrix of meaning that works to disclose certain aspects or sectors of reality and to veil others, a socially constructed world-picture (Washburn 1982). A world-picture is but a shared interpretive structure that gives shape and meaning to experience, but limits and restricts the interpretation to the dominant, socially acquired perception (ibid).

As in its collective, mythological form, so also the individual shadow contains within it the seed of enantiodromia, of a conversion into its opposite (Jung 1990, p. 152).

The third area or kind of shadow, fundamentally different yet linking and supplying energy to the first two mentioned (personal and collective), is the archetypal shadow, an ‘inherent mode of human behaviour’ represented throughout religious history by the ‘more frightful gods and goddesses: Shiva, Loki, Beelzebub, etc’ (Guggenbuhl-Craig 1979, p. 114). Guggenbuhl states that ‘psychological development towards wholeness is only possible through increased consciousness by direct contact with evil’ (ibid 115).

---

8 Page: 56

http://atlanta.creativeloafing.com/2001-04-04/paradigms.html has the following: ‘...enantiodromia. The word, first used by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, derives from ‘enatio’ (counter) and ‘dromia’ (running). The idea is that when you start running in one direction, a counter-movement sets in. It was Heraclitus’ way of expressing the fundamentally oppositional nature of existence. ... As James Hillman argues, enantiodromia became the foundation of Carl Jung’s psychology, particularly his theory of compensation, which had as much importance to him as wish-fulfillment did to Freud.’ From Enantiodromia
There is disagreement on this, as Ken Wilber (1998), Washburn (1988), Moore and Gillette (1993) maintain that evil is an active choice, a warped, culturally acquired manifestation. While the archetype remains in the unconscious, its form is unknown; it cannot be known until it enters consciousness or the half-consciousness of dreaming. Then it manifests the double aspect, ‘for in revealing itself it throws light upon itself and thus must cast a shadow’ (Von Franz 1979, p. 35).

Archetypes are undefined energies that take on form according to their own perplexing inclinations, and, as Jung said, they are mysterious. Ken Wilber agrees with Jung on the ‘importance of coming to terms with the forms in both the personal and collective mythic unconscious’ (Wilber 1998; 148). However, he qualifies his position by suggesting that Jung ‘does not differentiate with clarity the collective prepersonal, collective personal, and collective transpersonal elements and this skews his entire understanding of the spiritual process’ (Wilber 1998, p. 149).

Wilber postulates that Jung incorrectly conflates archetypal forms with existential mythic figures. Basing his critique upon mystics such as Shankara, Augustine, Eckhart and Plato, Wilber states that ‘archetypes are the first subtle forms out of formless and unmanifest Spirit’ (ibid, p. 148). In Wilber’s opinion, the shadow is an existential phenomenon and should not be regarded as transpersonal, at least in the way he uses the term ‘transpersonal’. Archetype, he points out, is from the Greek arche typon, original pattern: it has yet to take on form (ibid). Jung himself said ‘the archetypes are the primordial vessels in which you express anything mental or psychological’ (1995, p. 133). Wilber’s (1988) point is essentially correct, and does not merit dispute. However, the term ‘archetype’ in popular and professional usage – and mine throughout the remainder of this review – refers to Jung’s (1995) application, ‘primordial vessels’, and Wilber’s term ‘existential mythic figures’ as essentially the same.

Wilber’s point regarding the usage of the term ‘transpersonal’ as a state of consciousness beyond the personal ‘I’ contrasts sharply with Jung, who maintains that there always remains a subjective ‘I’, that is, the one who phenomenologically experiences. Wilber has also been criticised for his ascensionist philosophising and theorising, drawn mainly from male-dominated yogic and Buddhist traditions.
Conceptualisation, inadequate though it is, must apply, as James Hillman (1999, p. 38) says. Whether Gods or archetypes, it is best (necessary) to speak in metaphorical terms: ‘Both can be grasped best as persons’, and yet neither can be grasped adequately: ‘as metaphysical principles they elude our knowledge’ (ibid). Hillman also suggests that all images – and to Hillman, images precede thinking, reasoning and conceptualisation – are metaphorical, insofar as they point to something other than that which they are understood as being.

Wilber has been severely criticised for his developmental theory and its underlying bias towards an ascending hierarchical model of humanity. He borrows freely from the traditions of the East, and has done arguably more than any other philosopher to advance a perennial philosophy. Eco-feminists have particularly challenged what they deem to be his androcentric bias. His hierarchical model of development clearly views indigenous knowledge as inferior to, or predating, a more evolved understanding of the structures of consciousness. Thomas Moore (1992, p. 302) on the other hand reminds us that the word ‘primitive’ derives from ‘primary’, not necessarily ‘underdeveloped’, and that from our primary, uninterrupted sensations, we may detect the holy.

c. The shadow and healing
Healing, as opposed to curing, is making whole, while before it was only fragments held together (Jung 1995, p. 128). Jung emphasised the analytical process as a mutual endeavour, lest the ‘client’ become the ‘other’, the carrier of shadow. Jung has been referred to as a ‘wounded healer’, in so much as his psychic wounds became a liberating force (Jung 1995a). Jung also alerted us that the ‘the wounded wounder is the agent of healing’ (Jung 1980, p. 256). This is a term Joan Halifax (1988) uses in her investigation of the traditional shaman. It is also a link suggested by Guggenbuhl (1979, p. 130), Sylvia Perera (1985), Michael Smith (1997, p. 63) and Sander and Wong (1997). Healing the shadow-ego split occurs when ‘the shadow is consciously differentiated, transcended, and eventually integrated in a more broadly encompassing self-concept’ (Vaughan 1985, p. 51) However, it is the very egoic-self-concept, with its fears of existential death, that inhibits this occurring (ibid).

Sylvia Perera (1985, p. 98) postulates that one’s personal wounds and the accompanying vulnerability may assist in one pursuing a life of service. Such a person
recognises ‘time and time again how the patient’s difficulties consolidate his own problems, and vice versa ... He remains forever a patient as well as a healer rather than adopting the roles of false prophet and charlatan so discernible in the objective psychotherapist, psychologist, psychiatrist’ (Guggenbuhl 1979, p. 130). ‘Know thy self’, and ‘know thy self well’ pervade their thesis.

The current pharmacological approach to healing, with scientifically trained experts dispensing diagnosis and remedies, does nothing to heal the shadow–ego split. The shadowy ramifications of objectifying people in psychiatry are noted by an increasing number of critiques. In Dr Maureen Roberts’ view, ‘there are within our rationalist/materialist paradigm archetypal biases that underlie and prescribe ‘pronouncements of normal, sick, sane and healthy’. She advocates the engagement of ‘reflective deconstruction’ as an alternative to being ‘unwittingly ruled by unstated assumptions’ (2000/2001, p. 1). These socially constructed assumptions shield the shadow from consciousness and legitimise the status quo. Similarly, academics and intellectuals, such as Richard Gosden (2001), Thomas Szasz (1997), R. D. Laing (1982), John Weir-Perry (1953, 1974, 1980) and David Lukoff (1985), confront the circular thinking that keeps the shadow of the psychiatric establishment from being recognised.

There is a sacrificial element in admitting shadow to consciousness. Sacrifice as a means of accommodating the shadow is as old as recorded history itself. The Bible carries the tales of scapegoating; the conscious taking of the tribe’s sins and darkness out into the wilderness; the black sheep that carries the entire community’s shame and misdeeds expelled by the people. According to Sylvia Perera (1985), we as a civilisation have forgotten that the chosen victim was a ‘healing agent’, a pharmakon. It functioned ‘to bring the transpersonal dimension to aid and renew the community, for the community acknowledged that it was embedded in and dependent on transpersonal forces’. The ‘bogey man’ of ancient Indian culture was ritually sacrificed/slaughtered at the end of the year and took the evil deeds of the community with him. In the Indian culture, the scapegoat was treated as a representative of the next world and was feted the entire year. Perera traces the travails of the scapegoat from its revered position to its bastardisation by a Christianised belief that God is only good, and that the Devil brings evil into the world. Jung himself was fascinated by this dichotomy (M. Stein 1995).
d. Shadow integration

The shadow although by definition a negative figure, sometimes has certain discernible traits and associations which point to a quite different background. It is as though he were hiding meaningful contents under an unprepossessing exterior ... and what is more important, the things that are hidden usually consist of increasingly numinous figures. (Jung 1990, p. 150)

Wilber (1998, p. 88–91) has gone to considerable length to elucidate the pre/trans fallacy, which is pre-rational and trans-rational. Trans-rational includes rationality, and transcends it whereas pre-rational precedes the development of rational thought and excludes it. Shadow, when it is in the ascendant, is pre-rational – emotion and the thought derived are totally identified with one’s ego or persona ('that's a narcissist'). In the trans-rational consciousness, one witnesses the arising and falling away of experience without identifying with it (Grof 1996, 2000, Wilber 1998).

Sylvia Perera (1985) advances the view that holding consciously the opposites – the ideal and its antagonist – one’s self-image expands, perhaps into a Christ consciousness; one’s own personal crucifixion. By ‘crucifixion’, Perera is referring to the death of a rigid ego (self-concept) and a birth into a more expanded consciousness – a ‘de-centred self’, in Wilber’s terminology (1995, p. 38–39), or the ‘transcendent function’ in Jung’s. This involves both psychic contraction and expansion while maintaining a ‘witness’ state. Jung preferred the analogy of alchemy for this process: ‘fragments of things are thrown together (by the alchemist) which do not ordinarily mix, but they ignite in the fire and produce the gold, the new man’ (Jung 1995a, p. 108). It must be, as David Hart instructs, a ‘continuous process throughout one’s life’ (1992, p. 92).

According to Perera (1985), these archetypal energies are associated with ecstatic depths. She comments on this: ‘They compel, and sometimes mediate, the awesome truth of reality through passionate encounter with affect states that grip the soul and are experienced as transpersonal dismemberment and renewal’ (1985, p. 89). In other cultures, these experiences might be termed shamanic initiatory rites of passage, a suggestion espoused by Eliade (1978), Walsh (1990, 1994). This turmoil of the soul is a psychic maturation process, a strange and unique path that may lead the person through illness or health, joy or misfortune. The inhibiting factors hostile to this process are closed-mindedness and rigidity (Roberts 2001).
Guggenbuhl-Craig highlights the ‘supreme importance of ambivalence’, not to eliminate anything, but instead to

unite the opposites on a higher plane. A confrontation with death must take place and the shadow’s fundamental destructiveness be seen. Modern man’s great adventure is not merely to explore the outer world; to an even greater extent it is to plumb the depths of the human soul … It is only through ever-repeated confrontations that he can fulfill this task.

Typically, in traditional cultures it was the shaman who would balance the world of the soul, who would die to themselves and be reborn with the ability to walk between the worlds of conscious and unconscious, or in their terms, the spirit world (Eliade 1974, Drury 1991, Harner 1982). This is a point highlighted by writers such as analytical psychologist TePaske (1997, p. 21), who notes that ‘the shaman is equipped to penetrate the darkness of the soul and battle disease precisely as a result of having encountered the shadow in his own initiation’.

Psychotherapists’ ability to mediate these worlds is necessary, as von Franz suggests: ‘it is unhealthy not to see it, but just as unhealthy to take too much of it’. Jung reflects on just this challenge: ‘The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well’ (Jung 1980). The theme continues in Jung’s autobiographical Memories, Dreams, Reflections (1995, p. 203):

In order to grasp the fantasies which were stirring in me ‘underground’, I knew I had to let myself plummet down into them, as it were. I felt not only violent resistance to this, but a distinct fear. For I was afraid of losing command of myself and becoming prey to the fantasies – and as a practicing psychiatrist I realised only too well what that meant. After prolonged hesitation, however, I saw that there was no other way out … A cognitive motive for my making the attempt was the conviction that I could not expect of my patients something I did not dare to do myself … This idea – that I was committing myself to a dangerous enterprise for the sake of my patients – helped me over several critical phases.

Jung’s intention is obvious. By plunging into the depths of his own unconscious, he was attempting to recover his own soul (Michael Smith 1997, p. 48). Smith likens this to a shamanic journey, whereby Jung’s soul recovery ‘constituted a self-healing of heroic proportions … since it contributed to an understanding of the self-healing tendencies of the psyche to his tribe of western man’. It is the fearful, immature ego that resists this self-healing propensity (R. Moore and D. Gillette 1993). The immature ego mistakenly takes the images and the descent into death literally as in physical obliteration, and
violently resists the inclination to initiate into a more mature psychic/spiritual reality, death and rebirth.

Perera (1986, p. 100) tells of a patient of hers who spontaneously picks up a piece of driftwood in her office and ‘using it like a dagger she began to dance and move. With increasing fury she danced. When she was done, she glowed, her own life energy had returned.’ Perera continues: ‘by connecting to an archetypal image (Jael, the Kenite heroine in the Old Testament) of murderousness and expressing its dark affect, she was able to carry forward the dream and contain the collective shadow impulse within ritual and aesthetic form’.

Marian Woodman is eloquent on this theme: ‘Vegetation in the wasteland depends on the feminine capacity to overcome personal fear and become open to the inner fountains ... the body moves from its archetypal centre. It no longer dances. It is being danced’ (1985, p. 188). For art to live and breathe, it must not only be brought to life, but must change the person’s life. They can no longer continue to live their life in the same manner, or else they will die or, rather, their artistic expressions will die (Robert Bly 1988, p. 77).

Projection comes from the word ‘projicere’: something that is thrown unconsciously out of oneself into another object. Citing Plato as a source, von Franz (1986, p. 322) said if one looks at something evil, something evil falls into one’s own soul. When one perceives evil, there is always something aroused in response. Von Franz suggests that this is because evil is an archetype, and that every archetype has an infectious impact upon people. People can’t help getting involved. Ken Wilber (1991) suggests that one way of appreciating the shadow is by one’s response. According to Wilber, if one is affected instead of informed by someone’s actions, then the shadow is at work. Jung comments on the task of recognising one’s projections: ‘If you imagine someone brave enough to withdraw all these projections, then you get an individual who is conscious of a considerable shadow’ (Jung, cited in Campbell 1976, p. 83). Similarly, the society ‘changes’ when projections are withdrawn, for, as Terence Dawson (1997, p. 260) comments, all our ideas about society represent a projection of ‘our concerns into the world around us’.
The Bible, with its undercurrent of original sin overlaid by the perfection of Jesus Christ, created a cult of idealism in the Western mind whereby the shadow is exiled to the underworld and kept penned in by an insistence – and illusion – of perfect truth (Robert Bly 1988, Murray Stein 1995). Religious dogma, essential truths and ideology, when challenged and found wanting, may bring forth, as Jung comments, much soul-searching: ‘Such a man has saddled himself with new problems and complexes ... Such a man knows that whatever is wrong in the world is wrong in himself’ (1969, p. 83). Bradley TePaske (1997, p. 19) goes so far as to speculate that ‘the inner development of the modern individual may involve psychic experiences as intense, varied, and exotic as those known to indigenous shamanism’. Joseph Campbell called this undertaking the ‘hero’s journey’, and chronicled such undertakings as occurring throughout recorded history, and indeed from oral history as well. His book, The Hero with a Thousand Faces, compiles story after story of this psychological/spiritual journey.

Von Franz (1995a, p. 12) proposes that when shadow intentionally displays itself through our dreams, these are often the shadow’s way of letting the dreamer know that they will not go away. Fairy stories are another form of social and cultural shadow-tales. These are a superior form of presentation to that of ancient myth, ‘for myth in general is more embedded in civilisation’, whereas fairy tales are ‘so reduced to its basic structural elements that it appeals to everybody’. Critics such as Jack Zipes would no doubt disagree with so blatant a supposition, but nevertheless let us follow von Franz’s thread for a ways. In other words, the fairytales and the characters therein are archetypal; they are timeless figures of the psyche, and thus deal with the problems of humanity. Von Franz (1995, p. 34) says that everyone in a fairy tale is everybody’s shadow: ‘the whole cluster of figures is compared to one another, and the figures all have a compensatory function’.

Robert Johnson asserts that ‘It (shadow work) is whole-making and thus holy and the most important experience of a lifetime’ (1993, p. ix). Jeremiah Abrams (1994, p. 15) calls on humanity to honour shadow and make it a part of us, and by doing this we ‘add to the critical mass of awareness that is helping to create a compassionate culture’. Johnson’s focus is on ‘whole-making’ rather than transmuting, changing, altering, transcending, surrendering to a higher power, moving on, healing or any other psychological or ‘new-age’ dictums.
Further to this, collectively the shadow of one culture is the tinderbox of another. In Reeves’ (2000, p. 1982) evaluation of this phenomenon, when the dominant segment of society refuses to see a disowned aspect of its own nature, they will see it in a racial or cultural minority, then allow harm to befall that minority. He brings an interesting twist to our discussion of shadow, in that the ordinary stays and is accepted into the ruling/dominant culture, and anything less and anything better goes into the shadow (my emphasis)! The ‘pure gold of being’ may become relegated to the shadow because the nature of culture is conservative.

Human characteristics cannot be discarded. Reeves goes so far as to say that it is an inexorable law that no characteristic can be discarded; it can only be moved to unconsciousness; nothing may be left out. Citing Jung, Reeves (2000) states that the projection process still emerges from the unconscious as an escape from self-awareness. Robert Johnson (1993, p. 76) advocates balance: he suggests that it is important to see creation and destruction as allies, though not necessarily comfortable ones; to be at the fulcrum point of a see-saw, recognising and thus honouring both sides of our selves, the light and dark, the good and evil; not to confuse goodness with the sentimentalising view of goodness stemming from a Godly and impossible ideal. He poses the question of ‘how can we speak of dark and give it the same dignity and value as light?’.

Becoming aware of and accepting one’s shadow frees oneself up to respond from a position of a more grounded position of equality. Reeves (2000, 1986, p. 86) recommends that all therapists should explore their shadows so as to generate trust by being at ease with oneself, and he stresses that this entails accepting one’s shadow. He sites the importance of this, particularly in cross-cultural interactions, where power is so manifestly uneven. ‘Soul Searching’, hunting up subtly ingrained cultural beliefs, is, according to Reeves, a prerequisite for cross-cultural interaction, as minority groups can pick up a shadow ‘vibe’. The demonising of black, according to Hillman, stems from the literalising of the archetypal preference for light. Racists confuse physical reality with psychical reality, and misapply the black-white opposition for prejudicial and discriminatory purposes. Hillman suggests that racism is a failure of the imagination (cited in Adams 1990).
Projections often target minorities, and manifest as racism. The disowned aspects of oneself find expression in the behaviour and characteristics of ‘others’ (Jung, cited in Campbell). In this assorted pile of disowned and relegated self lie attitudes and fears that result in homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, fundamentalism, fanaticism, and their duplicitous justifications. The characteristics in oneself that one feels revulsion towards are attributed to another. This is an unconscious effort to banish the inferior characteristics from one’s nationality (Jung, cited in Campbell 1976). As already stated, emotions play a powerful role in this process and political and charismatic leaders may exploit this tendency. Kenneth Reeves (2000, p. 81) alerts us to the truth that: ‘projections involve emotions. If an individual feels a painful emotion, without accepting that emotion as one’s own, one can project the cause of pain onto another’. This is not a conscious process; it is generally not only unmediated but unintended.

On a national level, the scapegoating of the enemy is dependent upon it displaying or exhibiting the parts that have been disowned. As Alan Briskin (1988, p. 53) comments, ‘denying shadow, however, is fruitless; the consequence, so often, is the psychological need to scapegoat, to see the long shadow of evil looming only in others’. A war mentality is dependent upon just such a denial/projection.

Further to this, commentators such as Diamond (1996) ascribe violence to the suppression of anger and rage, and designate the present and previous century as an era of rage precipitated by our cultures demonising these emotions. As regards aggression, he comments that aggression is not an emotion, but rather is indicative of an ‘individual’s attitude towards others or towards life in general, or to describe a certain quality of behaviour. Violence is aggression in extremis.’ (op. cit., p. 12). The daimon (person’s attendant spirit) symbolises the perennial conflict between the cultural pressures of repression, rationality, adjustment and conformity on one side, and the vital forces of freedom, individuality, integrity, passion, and creativity on the other (op. cit., p. 310). Male mythic archetypes corresponding with Apollo and Eros (Hillman 1992, 1995, Roberts 2000), if viewed metaphorically, impart a means of self-recognition deeper than the individual ego-concept. The deeper psychic structures were recognised by Jung to impart to humanity not just the more sophisticated and evolved of human artistic and
cultural creations, but were also the source of the most primitive and violent feelings and
behaviours of which human beings are capable (Solomon 1990).

e. The creative shadow

The arts and creativity have long been an outlet for these internal dramas. In the story
of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the substance of shadow denied for so long takes on a life of
its own; it develops its own manifest personality. Angel Heart and Fightclub are
contemporary examples of this theme. In a less self-aware way, all contemporary
Superheroes have their alter egos: Superman has Clark Kent, Batman has Bruce
Wayne.

When the ego refuses to cooperate, we may become attacked by the shadow, which
may arise in the form of complexes, diseases, or depression (David Richo 1993, p. 30).
Peter O’Connor (1985, p. 53) offers that shadow characters turn up on a regular basis in
literature and film, as true creative works spring from the unconscious mind, and this is
where the shadow lurks. One’s identity is maintained by denying the disturbing thoughts
and feelings pressing for recognition, and in so doing they become hostile to us.

Natalie Goldberg (1995, p. 54) describes painting as ‘mining the uncensored self, that
part of us that is our life’s blood, the true foundation of creativity ... (to display) what it
means to be alive and to express one’s true being’. Painting taps into ‘that hidden wave
of passion that lies just below the surface ... daring to let that passion speak.’ Much like
Gollum finding the ring on the bottom of the stream (The Lord of the Rings), we must be
willing to explore the depths of shadow in order to know the fullness of our creativity
(Rosanne Bane 1999).

f. Shadow, shamanism and religion

Religion stems from the Latin roots re, meaning again and ligare meaning to bind, bond
or bridge, to bind together again. Jung (1998, p. 84) comments on being moved rather
than moving, as though a force or power beyond his readily available consciousness
was involved.

There was always, deep in the background, the feeling that something other than myself
was involved. It was as though a breath of the great world of stars and endless space
had touched me, or as if a spirit had invisibly entered the room ... denouements of this sort were wreathed with the halo of a *numen* (Jung 1994, p. 84).

Every human being casts a shadow (Jung 1963, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1995a, 1995b, Hillman 1992, 1995), but does God (Christian) have a shadow? This theological question drove the curious mind of Jung from an early age (Jung 1994). He later speculated that if the feeling is not linked to the god consciously, then it hides in the unconscious and becomes demonic (cited in O’Dallet 1988, p. 137). We are as Christ pinned by ignorance upon the cross, a thief on either side, one thief taking responsibility for his actions, the other denying his complicity and thereby his redemption.

One cannot get ‘rid’ of the shadow, and condemnation does not work (Briskin 1988, p. 54). Alan Briskin investigated the shadow within organisations, and cautions: ‘The danger of our times is that we will read the warnings ... as signals for harsher and more repressive policies; or as a superficial call for virtues and values that are viewed as singularly good’ (ibid). He surmises that organisations ‘reflect and refract the light of the larger society’. The consequence of denial is that part of the self (small s) is disfranchised and conceals itself in the psychic underworld, fomenting fantasies of rebellion, violence and revenge. Humanity becomes possessed by the very shadows we seek to distance (ibid). Stevens (2000, p. 250) postulates that here is ‘an urgent biological imperative to make the shadow conscious’. He continues that it is ‘only by coming consciously to terms with our nature – and in particular with the nature of the shadow – can we hope to avert a total catastrophe’ (2000, p. 251).

It would be ironic indeed if the indigenous people who have suffered so greatly under the dominance of imperialism, religionism, colonialism, and corporate globalisation, and who have been so alienated and demeaned by scientism were to provide a means of dealing with this problem. Jung has been compared to a shaman (Smith 1997, D. Sandner, S. Wong et. al.), and the shaman has been viewed (B. TePaske 1997, p. 23) as the person ‘best equipped to penetrate the darkness of the soul and battle disease precisely as a result of having encountered the shadow in his own initiation’. The shaman is traditionally the friend and valiant protector of the natural world.

Thus, questions about the role of the neoshaman and the function of the shadow come together again. Is the neoshaman the best equipped to deal with shadow material in our
culture, or does the contemporary practice of neoshamanism itself create shadow material that is not addressed? How could one research shadow aspects of the neoshamanic journey? It is to this last question that we now turn.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research approach

I employed a multi-methodological approach in this research project – transpersonal, heuristic and phenomenological. I intended to research, through a variety of expressive research methods, the subjective ‘realities’ of shamanic practitioners pertaining to their personal shadow. I was interested in the participants’ subjective experience and the sense they made of their experiential shadow encounters and engagements. I was also interested in the manner in which this investigation affected myself as a researcher and the efficacy of the methods I employed.

There is a very real dilemma in researching the shadow. The observational and intellectual focused light beam generally employed throughout the research endeavour is capable of creating more shadow, thus creating an array of ‘facts’ that beguile rather than reveal, and seductively re-enforce the very projections the researcher is attempting to circumvent. As Hillman observes, when investigating an image, it is all too easy to ‘skitter away from it sideways, (taking) an elliptical jump over the shadow’ (1978, p. 164).

One way through this dilemma is to move into the area of creativity and expressive arts, and approach the shadow imaginatively. Jeremiah Abrams (1994, p. 14) contends that ‘it isn’t enough to merely have insight into the shadow’, for to ‘understand can be the kiss of death. One cannot just know the ideas, and turn this psychological approach into an intellectual game’. He cautions: ‘Otherwise, shadow awareness just creates more shadow’. Imaginative methods are required, and through these methods creative expression is paramount, while spontaneity is encouraged.

a. Transpersonal research

My research may be viewed as transpersonal or spiritual in nature, and thus research methods must be employed that honour a multi-dimensional ontology. Transpersonal research methods, as suggested by Braud and Anderson (1998, p. xxx), are as diverse as the researcher’s subject matter; it is subjective experiences that are primary. Intuition, direct knowing, creative expression, alternative states of consciousness (ASC), dream-work, storytelling, meditation, imagery, emotional and bodily cues, and other
internal events are explorative methods stemming from an appreciation of human diversity and uniqueness.

Transpersonal research is concerned with mystical and peak experiences, unitive consciousness and the transcendence of self. It may also extend into the psycho-spiritual, which embodies the notion of other-than-human direction. It presupposes that humanity is on a path of unfoldment, and that direction invariably comes from a spiritual dimension (Irving and Williams 2001). Transpersonal research may also be viewed as an approach reliant upon imaginal engagements being a reflection of different and differing archetypal patterns (Reason and Marshal 2001) – ‘primordial psychic processes transformed into images’ (Hampden-Turner 1981, p. 46, cited in Reason and Marshal 2001, p. 414). It refrains from causal connections, and advocates openness to a ‘variety of patterns through which imaginal knowing can emerge and take shape’ (Ibid). It is wary of literalism that may ‘trap the psyche’; rather, it sanctifies the honouring of one’s inner daimon or spirit (Hillman 1977; 1978; 1996) and views research through multiple imaginal perspectives (Reason and Marshal 2001).

As I’ve outlined in the literature review, neoshamanism draws its uniqueness from practitioners wilfully and purposefully entering a state of altered consciousness, and in this altered state of consciousness (ASC) communicating with ‘other than human beings’, spirit entities (Braud and Anderson 1998). The neoshamanic journey (alternative state of consciousness) may alternatively be viewed as an excursion into the collective unconscious (Jung). This places my research well within the sphere of a transpersonal inquiry. A shamanic perspective, by its very nature, may be termed transpersonal, for it relies upon experiences gained through and in ASC.⁹ Contemporary shamanic practitioners by definition delve into what Braud and Anderson term Exceptional Human Experience (EHE), and so this inquiry fits well within the rubric of transpersonal research. They write:

Indeed, from its inception in the late 1960’s, one of the distinguishing characteristics of transpersonal psychology has been a keen desire, even an urgency, to integrate the learning and spiritual practices of indigenous and ancient spiritual traditions, especially forms of shamanism around the world, Buddhism, Hinduism (Braud and Anderson 1998, p. 27).

⁹ This is not always the case within indigenous shamanisms.
Much like an artist, the shaman prepares the space and lets the controlling mind step aside (McNiff 1992, p. 60).

Trans and personal both have their etymological roots in Latin, trans meaning beyond or through, and persona, a mask, façade or personality (Wittine 1989). A transpersonal approach reflects the intention to go beyond or through personally identified guises of self, the ego. It refers to states of consciousness ‘beyond the customary ego boundaries and the ordinary limitations of time and space’ (ibid, p. 269). The transpersonal inquiry and exploration seeks to investigate deeply the most profound aspects of human experience; ‘aspects and experiences that lie beyond the rational and material’ (Braud and Anderson 1998, p. 32). Transpersonal research and investigation developed as a response, or reaction, to the limitations that became apparent to those in the forefront of the humanistic psychology movement.

Braud (1998, p. xxvii) suggests that the transpersonal approach honours the ‘full measure and depth of human experience ... however it presents itself to awareness’. The approach involves proceeding with a beginner’s mind, not setting out to prove anything, and carrying an open attitude into the inquiry. He advises to carry the hope that it proves to be liberating for all involved. The transpersonal orientation and perspective is most suitable to the subject of this research project, for it embraces the mysterious internalised realms of shamanic journeying in its own right. The transpersonal approach is, by its very nature, a cross-disciplinary foray, and as such lends itself to a mixed or combined methodological approach.

It may well be that it is impossible to convey and do justice to the vast potential of transpersonal human experience by any means, no matter what the approach or method used (Braud and Anderson 1998). And yet, ironically, to venture into the realms of uncommon experiences and transcendent realities honours them with recognition, and presents possibilities that they may become more integral, and whole, to both the participants and the researcher.

My approach within this inquiry was to a large degree the accumulation of data through experiential means and methods. Experiential knowledge, as Reason and Heron suggest, is gained through direct face-to-face encounters with persons, places, or things.
The experiential component within this inquiry covers all of these areas in material/personal form, as well as in the transpersonal ethic, psycho-spiritual form. A second form of knowledge is what Reason and Heron (cited in Braud and Anderson 1998, p. 49) term ‘presentational knowledge’, ‘through which tacit knowing is translated into imagery and then symbolically expressed through sound, colour, poetry, drama, movement, in short the creative arts’. However, what does the knowledge mean to those who acquire it and mediate it into form? How do they incorporate this knowledge into their lives? What meaning do they extract from their experience? What is their emergent story?

The people engaged in this research inquiry were familiar with the neoshamanic journey; they had all previously voluntarily experienced altered states of consciousness. The three experiential weekend workshops they committed to expanded on those experiences. What they ‘made’ of those experiences was an area I wanted to investigate. I was interested in their new story, the one emerging as a result of our engagements.

b. Heuristic research

While being sensitive to the stories emerging, I also engaged deeply in a process of what is termed in heuristic research ‘immersion’ – seeking an ever-deepening appreciation of that which reveals itself; research as art, an artistic process, the researcher an artist. According to Clark Moustakas (1990, p. 9), heuristic comes from the Greek word heuriskein, meaning to discover or to find. He writes:

It 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. The self as the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the process with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries (Moustakas 1990, 9).

One must be prepared in a heuristic research project for an allowance of self-as-subject exploration. Environment and researcher fuse, meld, become as one, simmer, boil, erupt, rest, then separate, reflect, draw, write, express, immerse within the immersion. This willingness to allow is an essential component: ‘to be able to swim one must enter the water’ (Moustakas 1990, p. 43). Braud and Anderson (1998, p. 47) comment that this form of research is not for the faint-hearted, for heuristic research involves self-
search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery – an honest, reflective, personal engagement. This seems perfectly suited with the subject area of shadow, for the shadow appears in dreams, in fantasy, and in uncomfortable feelings and projections. The personal shadow is subjectively experienced, and then framed, defined and conceptualised by the reasoned mind. The heuristic research approach allows experience to gestate before flourishing and fertilising the conceptual mind.

Moustakas’ (1990, p. 13) metaphoric language describes heuristic research in similar terms to a shamanic calling: ‘I know little of the territory through which I must travel. But one thing is certain, the mystery summons me ... to let go of the known and swim in an unknown current’. Heuristic research is an intentional allowance of ‘what is, to be’, and to become what is, in being. It is thus that the researcher, the researchee or co-researcher, and the subject under investigation become (at times) an integrated unity of exploration (Ibid).

Moustakas (1990, p. 20) promotes the notion of tacit knowing, a knowing beyond the egoic confines of personality, ‘formless insights’ that arise from places unknown. These may then take material or mental form and give rise to what he terms the ‘power of revelation’. The co-researchers derive, or make meaning from their experiences. They infuse their experiences into stories, their stories. What meaning will they make of their art; how will the art affect them, each other, or me? What difference will and does shamanic experiences have upon their lives?

c. Phenomenology

My research was interested in what shamanic practitioners experience, or rather their understanding and expression of their subjective experience – a depth approach. A phenomenological approach that seeks to go deeply into the experience itself excited me. If anything, this research was based upon a ‘theory of the unique’, as Max Van Manen (1990) terms it. However, the unique he is referring to also has a universal applicability to it, much like Michael Talbert’s (1991) holographic universe: a fragment displays the whole. And it is what neoshamanic practitioners make of their experiences – the meaning they attain from it, and the sense that they make of it in their personal and professional lives – that called to me.
My passion stemmed from my own blissful and traumatic experiences in neoshamanic practice, and my personal explorations of shadow thoughts and manifestations. I am intimately connected with the subject area and the questions at the heart of the matter. Van Manen (1990, p. 43) states that this is an imperative in phenomenological research. He says that in order to investigate fully, and understand it as fully as possible, it is necessary to journey into, and then from, ‘the heart of our existence, from the centre of our being’. To do this, we need to ‘keep ourselves open in such a way that in the abiding concern of our questioning we find ourselves deeply interested’ (Ibid); to be deeply animated by the question in the very life one lives. Similarly, intuitive transpersonal inquiry advances the notion that ‘living thoroughly the experience studied, the researcher looks around from inside the experience and notes what is there’ (Anderson 1998, p. 81).

I have been deeply involved in neoshamanic training and practices since 1998, and the experience of the shadow has involved me in an intensely rich and challenging relationship with my lived experience. This is right in line with Von Manen’s (1998) suggestion that a phenomenological question must be lived by the researcher and, I add (drawing from heuristics), in the researcher. During the research project, I embedded myself in the questions, and this evoked a rich source of material. There are considerations within this approach, for to enter subjectively into an investigation, one must be wary of becoming ‘arbitrary, self indulgent, or of getting carried away by unreflected preconceptions’ (Van Manen 1990, p. 20); or sidetracked, misled or enchanted by extraneous elements. Rather, one must remember that subjectivity means to be perceptive, discerning, insightful, so as to disclose the experience in its full richness and at its greatest depth: to be strong to the area of investigation in a personal and unique manner; or, to use Van Manen’s language (1990, p. 23), to mediate ‘in a personal way the anatomy of particularity (being interested in concrete difference and what is unique) and universality (being interested in the essential, in difference that makes a difference)’.

The neoshamanic practitioner’s world is one in which alternative states of consciousness are the defining feature (Mercia Eliade 1974), and it was this lived experience I sought to explore. My preliminary investigation suggested quite strongly that a defining feature of contemporary neoshamanic practice is the unique manifestation of the neoshamanic
healing journey. But how to elicit such material and gain the required depth? Rich
descriptions – as Van Manen (1990, p. 152) alerts us – ‘that explore the meaning
structures beyond what is immediately experienced’ provide a ‘gain in the dimension of
depth’.

Rich descriptions of shadow or neoshamanic practice need not be reduced to the written
or spoken word, for much is woven between the spaces of such communication. It is
here that the arts come into play, for they provide a different means of bringing forth an
evocative and perhaps primal and/or otherworldly intelligence. As David Abram
comments: ‘Only by affirming the animateness of perceived things do we allow our
words to emerge directly from the depths of our ongoing reciprocity with the world’

This is significant, for it provides a means of shedding light on what has been, and,
according to Braud and Anderson (1998, p. 23), brings ‘the future more luminously
present’, thus providing a sense that the ‘threads of the future [are] pulling us into the
possibilities of the future ... not in a deterministic manner, but imaginatively’.

d. Working with imagination and visual art

I entered this project with the view that the shadow is an insoluble mystery that exerts a
powerful influence personally and collectively. I was not seeking to explain it or pin it
down, or to reduce it to something concrete; after all, the shadow’s very nature is
something that eludes direct examination (Bane 1999). Rather, I sought to create
conditions whereby it might be manifested, brought forward into consciousness, given
visual or dramatic utterance. Creative expression was central to this exploration as it
provided a means of presenting shadow material, of manifesting and bringing forward
the subjective experience, giving it a tangible and visible form. From my own
experiences of self-as-subject, I found agreement with Plotkin (2003, p. 219) that there
‘is much to learn of our soul’s purpose from the creations that spontaneously flow from
us’. Creativity is a recognised method of providing a means for non-intellectual
engagement. It is, as is the neoshamanic journey, an encounter with wonder (Braud and
Anderson 1993).
Intuitive visual art, as suggested by Cassou and Cubley (1995), is a particularly helpful manner of exploration and expression. It provides an avenue for what they term ‘an expansive intelligence that is nonlinear and nonlogical (Cassou and Cubley 1995, p. 23). The shadow, almost by definition, is elusive, and may very well stealthily creep behind words rather than be revealed in them. At such times, the mysterious process and form of visual art conveyed an essence of experience that exposed itself in the act of production. These visual representations behaved in a manner of spontaneous graphic illumination. When the spoken word, my usual form of articulation, was sidelined, time and time again I was surprised at what visual art revealed. Jung was himself very keen on using techniques such as painting, drawing, and active imagination to express symbolic images (Salman 1992). A deepening appreciation revealed itself through a process that irrevocably altered who I believed myself to be, and by what the shadow wanted to bring forth. Bill Plotkin (2003, p. 41) expresses this beautifully as a mission to bring forth ‘soul images, unique to each person, provide the direction, wisdom, and inspiration for sharing one’s deepest gift with the world and thereby realising the greatest fulfilment that life can offer’. Upon reflection on some of these pieces, I was both intrigued and surprised, not only by what I had included, but also by what I had left out.

Ulanov (Samuels 1992) states that this is a far from easy process, for our ego loses control of its usual secure frames of reference. She says that we float and drift, and seem to know nothing. It destabilises our comfortable egoic-centre by dropping down into the unconscious. In order for this to occur, we renounce the certainties that we have so long depended upon (Ulanov 1992, p. 310). It in essence involves making an egoic sacrifice. Hillman (1977, p. 74) captures the spirit of this well: ‘There is no objective, no scientific, no pure work with images. We are always ourselves in the image and unconscious of it’. It is in this sense again, as Hillman asserts, that images are souls, and he invites us to meet them on the soul level. The effort I made with the image-work was an attempt to engage in this manner; not in an attempt to interpret it, but more to understand it within my life. Hillman is adamant when he says that images do not want to be interpreted, as interpretation is devoid of love. ‘We cannot get to the soul of an image without love for the image’ (1977, p. 81).

Active imagination involves deliberately experiencing one’s own unconscious by lowering the threshold of consciousness while awake, and it is characterised by its
entirely autonomous nature (D. Hart 1992). In attempting this venture, Jung pointed towards a more creative relationship with the unconscious (S. Salman 1992). It was in this spirit that I partook of the process described hereafter. It was important and yet challenging in the extreme to place these images within a context of a conventional narrative structure, as though they were leading somewhere in a linear manner. And yet that is the nature of a narrative approach. I wanted to acknowledge the propriety of image work to stand alone, bold and stark, worthy of their place within this material world, not having to prove their worth by atonement or appeasement within tempered and definitive reason. The images are, and were, worthy in their own right, expressing what Rudolf Ritsema has called a syntax of the imaginal: ‘parts of speech freed from their narrational obligations which link them into time sequences for storytelling’ (Hillman 1978, p. 165). The images in this way would be freed from having to submit to logical reason and operational definition. This eternalises the image, engaging with it in a move of value by not treating it as a statement of fact (Hillman 1978). There is also the point made by Hillman that images ‘behave’ in accord with their own timeless inclinations, and by paying attention with delight and enjoyment, insights disclose themselves, though not for the sake of consciousness (ibid). To Hillman, as shape emerges, meaning emerges, and image-making = meaning. This occurs ‘without interpretive moves’ (Hillman 1977, p. 75). Kugler (1992) stresses the importance of images to evoke a knowing that cannot be designated a priori. They provide a bridge to the sublime, pointing to something unknown, beyond subjectivity, and pertinent to my project, images are the language of the shaman’s journey (Noel 1997, 1998).

Symbols lend themselves to reflection and exploration, so that creative means and spontaneity become activated. Salman (1992, p. 65) alerts us that ‘symbols speak the language of archetypes par excellence. They originate in the archaic magical layer of the psyche, where they are potentially healing, destructive, or prophetic’. Michael Smith speculates that ‘most of what takes place in shamanic ritual is effective without much of it being consciously understood’ (1997, p. 30). Salman (1992), operating from within a psychological depth model, speaks a similar language when suggesting that ‘images evoke the aim and motivation of instincts through the psychoid nature of the archetype. This holds true whether or not they are rationally understood’.
It is the trust in the images themselves that is paramount. Whether the image is viewed as originating from the deep personal or collective psyche or from the realms of spirits, the image emerging is deemed to be apt for the occasion of its emergence. It carries within its depiction a quite specific metaphorical purpose, and that purpose is individually phenomenological (Adams 1990). The imagination is primary and constitutive rather than secondary and derivative (ibid). Imaginary figures are metaphorical personifications of psychic forces rather than literal historical or religious entities.

The experiential workshop environment enables a participatory approach – one of inclusiveness, where the space between researcher and researchee becomes less well defined, and may at times even dissolve. Rosemarie Anderson reports that, within this environment, ‘Aspects of the experience that do not belong to the depth of the experience fall away’ (1998, p. 81). The intimacy of a small group and the intensity of a workshop environment provided the holding for this to occur.

Another way of viewing the utilisation of creative arts is letting that which is being talked about be seen; it is a way of subverting the self-conscious ego, and adds enormously to the art of perception and perspective (Bane 1995). Visual and other forms of artistic expression fit within the frame of being animated ‘in a full and human sense (Van Manen, p. 33), and not settling for superficialities and falsities. It orientates one to what Braud refers to as research that is enlivening and risky if approached with a beginner’s mind and an attitude of wonder, enjoyment, surprise, playfulness, awe and deep appreciation (Braud 1998, p. xxvii).

2. Research Methods

I conducted two primary explorations. One was with a number of participants utilising a combination of one-on-one interviews and group experiential weekend workshops. The other was with myself as subject.

a. Participatory research.

There were three main parts of this aspect of my research:

1. Small group of eight participants meeting three times bi-monthly, exploring, through creative arts and the shamanic journey, aspects of shadow and shamanism as it arises in their personal, social and cultural experiences.
2. Four one-on-one conversational, audio recorded interviews. The first interview preceded the workshops. Another was held after the second workshop, and the final one-on-one interview was completed after the completion of the workshop series.

3. Twelve months after the initial workshop, an email listing a series of questions was sent out to the participants. All duly replied.

A diagram of the participatory research process is presented in figure 1, which shows how the process progressed. Figure 1 highlights that all areas of engagement fed back into the overall envelopment of the researcher, and that I myself absorbed these experiences and evoked an enveloped narrative. This narrative sat within a greater field, the transpersonal.

The literature review revealed a number of areas that I was keen to investigate with the participants. It was clear that there are a considerable number of neoshamanic practitioners and trainees; globally, thousands are being trained each year to access Altered States of Consciousness (ASC), or, as Harner and his cohorts name this process, the Shamanic State of Consciousness (SSC). It was equally clear that many engaged in this training as a venture in self-development rather than a vocational ‘calling’. Was this the case with my participants? I arranged a series of questions as an entry point into the participants’ subjective understanding of just what they understood they were doing in their shadow explorations and what sense they made of their shamanic experiences. How did they incorporate their shadow expressions and encounters into their lives?
FIGURE 1
The Participatory research process
(i) Interviews

As already stated, shadow (a primary area of investigation), by definition is not accessible by direct interview. I did, however, engage in a series of interviews with the participants over a twelve-month period for the following reasons:

- To pose a series of questions designed to provide an environment whereby they could discuss in a confidential one-on-one situation their personal subjective experience.
- To establish a base understanding of their intellectual grasp of shadow, whereby I could later compare their pre- and post-project understanding of shadow. What has the experience brought with it? What were its outcomes? How might they have changed as a result of having had such experiences?
- How is my experience similar to and different from their experience (Braud and Anderson, 1998)?

The majority of the interviews were conducted in the participants’ households – some were conducted at my house at Yarramalong. The interviews were semi-structured, conversational, and varied in length from forty minutes to one-and-a-half hours. Although these interviews were semi-structured, there were certain consistent questions asked at each interview.

First interview questions

- What is your understanding of the shadow? (What are your ideas about the shadow?)
- How and why might shadow be personally significant to you?
- What role does creativity play in your life?
- Is there a relationship between creativity and shadow? And if so, how do you see that or manifest it?
- Is there an instance when you’ve actually found something in that bag and been able to integrate it or bring it to consciousness?
- Is there a relationship between creativity and destruction?
- Has the shadow found a way into your creative process?
- What is it about your shadow object that represents the shadow?
- What did you make of the shadow? How might see it in your life?
- What sort of form would that take?
- How do you express your creativity?
• The exploration you’ve been undergoing, how have you found that in your expression in life?

Second interview questions
• How do you experience a (shamanic) journey? What is it like for you physically, emotionally, visually?
• What is the feeling when beings (spirit entities on shamanic journeys) present themselves?
• Have the workshops and journeys had any impact upon your life?
• What have you learned about yourself through your journeys and visualisations?
• What has been translated over in your drawings?
• How do you understand your experience of the journeys, and what actually occurs? What is that about? How do you conceptualise your experience?
• What is the experience of a shamanic journey like for you? How do you experience that in your body and being?
• How do you understand this other place?
• Does the interpretation come from what is presented or does it come from what is already there, waiting for you to see?
• What does the intention of the journey mean to you?
• How is it possible that you can do this, I mean journey on someone else’s behalf? From your own experience, how do you make sense of that?
• In the context of the shadow being represented creatively, what have you noticed about yourself, and what have you noticed about the group that is flowing or is holding the group?
• Have you felt any fear on a shamanic journey?
• How do you understand these journeys?
• What was that experience actually like? Was it visual or bodily, or both?
• How did you experience those messages that came?
• How do you understand the messages and purpose? Are there intentions and purpose in the messages that come through?

Third interview questions
(A photo of their completed shadowgraph is shown to the participants)
• What is your response to your shadowgraph? (What is your first response to your shadowgraph?)
• What is the shadowgraph’s story?
• You went on the journey with a particular purpose and intention, and you reject what presents itself ‘this just doesn’t fit, or makes me a bit afraid’. What is your understanding of your process?
• How do you understand that you include and exclude certain symbols and encounters in your artwork?
• What has been the effect of your involvement in this research project?
• Is there a connection with this project and your understanding of how shadow works in your life?
• Did the process you were engaged in within the workshops and in your journeying and journals assist you with shadow concerns?
• How has this work and the workshops benefited you?
• In some way, has it benefited your primary relationships?
(In reference to their shadowgraphs). What is your first impression, what is your experience? Does it have an effect within your being? Were there surprises in your journeying? How has getting involved in this project benefited you? Those (shamanic) experiences that you spoke about, did they find their way into your picture? What do you think this being (shadowgraph) would say to you? How has being involved in this process benefited your work and/or your relationships? How has it benefited your community? What have you learnt as regards yourself and your position in life? Do you continue on with any shamanic practice? Is there one specific moment of insight, either on your journey or in your interactions within the group, that stands out for you?

Email questions
After the completion of the three interviews, the transcripts were provided to the participants and they were invited to comment on the accuracy of the transcriptions.

I was interested as to what influence the participants’ involvement in altered states of consciousness, the shadow and creativity contributed to their lives over a period of time. One year after the final workshop, the participants were contacted by phone and asked if they would be willing to answer some follow-up questions. I sent them a number of questions via email. Over the following four months, they all responded. Four responded via email, one in a person-to-person interview at my house, and the other sent a written reply.

How do you understand the shadow now? To what extent is it different? And if it is different, to what do you attribute the changes in your understanding of the shadow? How has (if at all) the process you engaged in with me affected the way you engage in life? Have you noticed any difference in the way you have engaged with nature? Are you still engaged with shamanic journeying? To what degree is this formalised or informal? Given the demands of contemporary times, what does it mean (to you) to be engaged on a shamanic path?
• How has your understanding of the shamanic journey and shadow processes altered since our workshops?

(ii) Experiential workshops

The participants committed to engaging in four weekend workshops, set approximately two months apart, at Yarramalong Hall in Yarramalong Valley, on the Central Coast of New South Wales. The two-month period between workshops was to allow the participants time for reflection and integration.

Experiential methods – expressive arts

Visual art – One of the main creative methods I employed was artistic expression, using visual art as a data enunciation, a textual medium. This consisted of supplying free visual art material to the participants and establishing experiential exercises designed to stimulate subjective experiences and creative expression. The participants were encouraged to express themselves through the maintaining of visual diaries and also through the ongoing production of a shadowgraph.

A shadowgraph is a life-size representation of their bodily outline on a large sheet of art paper. The shadowgraph renditions originated in the first weekend workshop. The participants did not have access to their shadowgraph between workshops. I stored them at my residence, allowing them to influence my thoughts feelings and emotions. During the course of each workshop, time and opportunities were provided during which participants continued adding to their shadowgraphs using a variety of artistic media. They were completed on the last afternoon of our last weekend together.

Action Methods – Games were employed in ‘warming up’ participants to the dynamism of physical action and encouraging their imaginative facilities. These activities were also an attempt to circumvent their intellectual habituations. They were roused to display their body knowledge through interactive movement. Lightness and play were encouraged. I will give two examples of the physical imaginal activities.

1. In the midst of the hall, I placed a chair and announced that the chair represented the hall in which we were now ensconced; it not only represented the hall, it was the hall. The walls, ceiling and floor represented the earth. We established the cardinal directions – north, south, east and west – and they were asked to place themselves in their place of birth, relative to the chair (hall). They needed to negotiate with each other
to do this. [If two were born north of the hall, one in Brisbane, one in Townsville, the Townsville person would be further away from the chair than the one born in Brisbane] I then interviewed them as to the family circumstances that they were born into, as well as the historical circumstances. I encouraged them to conduct their own interviews with each other, to ‘ask questions’.

2. In pairs, they were to walk around the room and find a rhythm that suited them both. I would from time to time call out a variety of ways of walking: ‘being led by your nose’; ‘let your knees lead you’; ‘walk grumpy’; ‘walk tall’. Once they were in the spirit of play, I then asked them to work as pairs, and called out a pairing. For instance, ‘salt and pepper’, ‘a flower in a vase’. These pairings became increasingly emotionally evocative and challenging. ‘The Devil and Christ’, ‘anger and sadness’, ‘mother and child’. They were not to talk to each other or to me during these challenges. They would be reliant upon their observational and intuitive sensing.

Sociometry and psychodrama were also employed as a means of having the participants physically engage with each other and visibly display their own inner beliefs. An imaginary line was drawn upon the floor of the hall, from one end to the other. One end of the line represented their total belief in themselves as artistic people; the other end represented themselves as inartistic, unimaginative people. They placed themselves along this imaginary line according to how they saw themselves. They were then interviewed by me as to why they placed themselves in the position they had. They were also encouraged to alter their positions as the interviews proceeded, from moment to moment.

Psychic-spiritual explorations – I utilised two main methods of psycho-spiritual exploration:

1. The shamanic journey is a means of intentionally gaining subjective access to Shamanic States of Consciousness (SSC). The entry into the SSC is induced by bodily relaxation in a prone position and drumming accompaniment (audio tape). Shamanic journeys are undertaken with a specific intention in mind, and the shamanic practitioner is always accompanied, guided and protected by their spirit guide.

2. The second was through semi-guided visualisation. The semi-guided visualisations were directed by me, and consisted of the participants lying prone while music played and I conducted the participants through a relaxation process. I then invoked their
imaginative faculty and led them on an imaginative journey, allowing their own creative response to provide the elaboration of their experience. These were conducted upon the lawn outside the hall.

Whereas the shamanic journey is driven by the intentional engagement of the question posed, and the response deemed to be spiritual, the visualisation is regarded as being a more creative imaginative exploration, a venture into metaphorical realms. They both may be seen as providing answers to questions beyond the range of human understanding (Tedlock 2001). They both may be deemed to be a process of enchantment, as Thomas Moore (1992, p. 381) has articulated: ‘Enchantment is a condition of unending suspension of disbelief, the willingness to live in a bungalow of stories rather than a warehouse of facts’.

These techniques allowed access to otherwise inaccessible psychic domains. These ‘meditative’ techniques were interspersed throughout the weekend workshops. The participants were encouraged to transfer these experiences into their visual diaries and onto their shadowgraphs.

b. First-person research

I began my self-as-subject exploration by creatively engaging with media that were not at all familiar to me: dreams, poetising, automatic writing, and visual expressions. I intentionally ventured into unfamiliar realms of expression, seeking out a manner of spontaneous, creative exposition, and giving it a tangible form. I wanted to give shape to the inner landscape, to allow it to emerge, to feel it, to express it, to make it visible, to liberate it; whatever it might be.

(i) Dreams

As Jung (1995) and many neo-Jungians (O’Connor 1986, P. R. Johnson 1986; Richo 1999) attest, the personal and collective shadow appear in dreams. This is an area I have pursued in my self-as-subject research over the course of this project. The remembering and writing up of dreams has revealed aspects of my being – that is, my inner world – that no amount of discussion could uncover. Dreams, as Francais
Vaughan asserts, ‘transcend the ordinary limitations of time and space and reveal subtle realms of consciousness where the power of the mind in creating experience is uncontested’ (1986, p. 175). The exploration of dream images utilising the mediums of visual art, sculpture, storytelling, and psychodrama (enactment) is central to answering the research questions, for dreams emerge from the interior world that houses shadow.

Peter O’Connor (1986, p. 35) tells us that a dream ‘describes a situation in terms of psychic inner truths, and as such are a vital avenue for discovering mythical understanding, discovering plots of our inner story’. Another thing dreams do is circumvent the ego/persona – at least while in the dream state – they are a valuable resource and possible springboard into further explorations. Honouring the dream by its intentional remembering and expression in various ways provides a platform of possibilities. It also allows for the images to serve as guides (Sewall 1995). Realms of potentiality open, and perspective becomes a multi-dimensional excursion; these are all essential components of shamanic practice (Mindell 1993). The aforementioned artistic media of expression both complement and extend ways of narration not reliant upon the spoken and written word. This is vital, for the ways of shadow are elusive. I’m interested in how and if shamanic practitioners ‘work’ (understand and experience) their dream material, both personally and in their healing practices?

When dream investigation is introduced into their shamanic practice, how do they respond? How does the passage of time affect their understanding of their dream expression? Where does the dream experience fit within their contemporary shamanic practice? In my self-as-subject, the literal artistic expression of my dream-world appeared dead; it was lifeless. The same dream expressed through feeling onto the page was liberating. A wonder presented itself to me, from me, my sense-of-self expanded with and within the new expression. I did not need to intellectually understand my expression; expression was truth manifested from within. Or as Cubley suggests, ‘spontaneous expression has an expansive intelligence that is nonlinear and nonlogical ... New understanding will always spring from not knowing (Cassou and Cubley 1995, p. 37)’.
(ii) Poetising

Poetic expression through automatic writing is another self-as-subject research tool I explored when I was emotionally disrupted. Uncomfortable feelings poetised themselves into being. I was shocked at what I wrote, as indeed was my supervisor when he read some of these writings. But a curious thing occurred in the aftermath of these writings. When I had expressed them in poetic form, it was as if they had become freed; the feelings no longer screamed for my attention in frenzied anxiety. As (relatively) grotesque as my expression appeared to be, in my bearing witness to its/my pain and anguish, it became, just as the Beast in ‘Beauty and the Beast’, transformed into a compassionate form. Jung terms this a ‘compensatory factor’: ‘Viable progress only comes from the co-operation of both’ (1980, p. 164).

(iii) Visual expression

I was freed from some of my deepest fears, which had lain in repressed and distorted form below my consciousness. My fears may well have been protecting my shadow, or creating it. However, it was as if, once allowed to breathe the life of expression as they are, the depth of their pain and sorrow became a grace bestowed. Jung alerts us that ‘our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, with the age-old unforgotten wisdom stored up in us’ (cited in O’Connor 1986, p. 102). My instincts insisted I maintain the integrity of my emotional experience by accepting it and giving it a creative form.

These examples of methods of research differ enormously from many conventional inductive procedures or quantitative surveys, but they are specific to the questions asked, and the depth sought. I think it is fair to comment that this research will change the participants, and I alerted them of this likelihood. Open communication with the participants was imperative, as was back-up psychological supervision. Certainly, the research project with my self-as-subject has irrevocably altered how I know and understand myself. I feel more authentic, more accepting of myself, more accepting of others, more conscious.

There is a feeling that throughout the remainder of my research I will continue to be challenged by the complexities of living within both a sacred and human nature. Van
Manen alerts researchers to the possibility of what he calls the ‘transformative effect’ performing itself upon the researcher. He goes so far as to suggest that an inherent dimension of phenomenological research for the researcher is ‘a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact’ (Van Manen 1990, p. 163).

(iv) The process

I immersed myself in the exposition of intuitive process by using pastels and art paper. I would lay out the paper and pastels and then begin by casting my hand over the box of pastels, being sensitive to my intuitive knowing. My bodily responses were my guide in this process. Generally, there would be an inner tension in my solar plexus that would subtly release when my hand passed over a certain colour. After a certain amount of refinement, the colour would be selected and I would begin to draw, essentially making a mark related to either an emerging imaginative image or a physical prompt. At other times, I would respond from severe emotional catharsis, allowing the emotion to direct its expression onto the paper or to dance and music, drawing as I danced and swayed. Some of the images took days or even weeks to complete, while others were completed quite swiftly. I attempted to remain alert for inner prompting and impulses.

During the course of the initial two-year research process, I produced more than thirty images. The pictures I produced were pinned up on the walls of my working/bedroom area. At times, I would lay them out upon the floor and sit or lie amongst them, and meditate with them, feeling into how and if they affected me, mentally, emotionally, bodily.

During the next round or stage of this process, I selected the most responsive of these pictures, six in all, and sat with them intending to write their individual production process. To my surprise, as I began to write, they (the artworks) spontaneously began to interact with me, at times conversationally. I recorded these interactions and conversations, and have included them with the pictures that brought the conversations into being.
In the next step of this process, I gave each of these pictures a title. My supervisor suggested that these titles and the pictures seemed to be chapters in a story. His spontaneous observation stimulated my imagination, and I then sat at my writing desk with the pictures and set about writing a story that proved to be a journey of emotional and psychic ferocity that culminated in personal liberation. I have included the resultant imaginative foray.

(v) Personal shadowgraph

My shadowgraph emerged from my bodily response to a deep meditation (journey). Prior to the mediation, I had laid out the large sheet of paper and placed a black texta beside it. The intention of this journey was to gain a bodily appreciation of my shadow body shape. Once I had gained this physical indication, I lay upon the paper and my partner Vicki drew my bodily outline. The resultant image was very much akin to the police markings of a body at a crime scene – an empty outline. During the course of the next three years, I worked the paper with a variety of media, adding colour, collage and symbols as they imaginatively appeared.

I continued working upon this shadowgraph throughout and after the collective workshop experiences. This was, by and large, a home project not subject to participant contribution or as part of the workshop environment. It was not until the last day of the workshop series that I presented my shadowgraph at the workshop, wherein I worked alongside the participants, becoming for a short period a fellow experiential journeyer. After the workshop, I continued to add to my shadowgraph at home.

(vi) Final immersion

The final phase of the experiential process was a self-immersion into the entire process – the artwork, the participant shadowgraphs, the participants’ stories, and my story – and allowed the immersion process to dictate its narrative. I literally surrounded myself with all the creative pieces. I then asked for inner guidance and assistance, and began to write. The resultant imaginative story provides an overarching heuristic/phenomenological narrative. A diagrammatic form of my self-as-subject research process is presented in Figure 2.
Entire research process

Participant’s stories

Myself in altered state of consciousness – inclusive expansion

My story

All shadowgraphs

My image/art pieces

Automatic writing

Immersion-story (final chapter)

Figure 2 – self-as-subject research process
What follows is my account of running the workshops with the participants in Yarramalong. It sets the scene and gives a feeling for the circumstances in which the shadowgraphs were created. I call it an ‘interlude’ because it comes between the setting out of the research methods and the resultant participant stories.

The interlude is followed by an account of each participant’s journey into the shadow. It is a phenomenological/heuristic articulation, attempting to convey in the participant’s own words, in interviews, and in journals, the experience of the workshops, and most importantly the images that expressed these experiences.
The first and subsequent workshops were held at Yarramalong Hall in Yarramalong Valley, a five minute drive from my place of residence.

The first workshop was focused on familiarising the participants to the many ways the personal shadow might be accessed. By using action methods the group were encouraged to explore their bodily response to certain provocation. I drew on the work of Carl Jung and post Jungians in playing with opposites, and on the work of Moreno to bring this into engaged form. Essentially having fun whilst warming people up to the theme and each other, their playmates. I encouraged the use of body as a means of working alongside and through any intellectualisation of shadow. Establishing that there are multi-faceted ways of seeing and comprehending and expressing their lived experience.

The creative expression methods, meditations and visualisations were developed over the previous two and a half years through my self-research. They had proven to be very effective in making manifest inexplicable experiences; rendering visible the imaginal realms.

The participants were encouraged to ‘journal’ using colours, drawings, impressions, poems, and written text throughout their workshop experience, self-creating an alternative narrative. Throughout the workshop process spontaneity of creative expression was encouraged.

Workshop one
I arrive early, early enough to set up the hall for our time together as a group. The hall is quiet, expectant. It has been host to many events over its hundred-year history. Dances, weddings, celebrations and gatherings of all types. Its stage area has hosted plays, music recitals, art and sculpture exhibitions, choirs. The vaulted ceiling towers twenty foot above the floor. It has looked down upon generations of Valley residents throughout
a century of activities. The floor, I was told, was once a fantastic surface to dance upon, strong polished cedar; a springy surface made to respond to lively movement. The entire building is built from Valley woods, cut from some of the marvellous great cedars that once festooned the valley. The floor now looks somewhat forlorn. The magnificent cedar has been covered by a masonite surface, practical enough in keeping out the draft that eventually made itself known through cracks in the original floor, but lifeless. It is characterless much like withered flowers suffering from drought. And it is dirty, very dirty, dirt and dusty.

I sweep, and sweep some more - preparation has begun. I set the altar. Clothe, candles, healing stone, a crystal, a lyrebird feather. This will be our temenos, our sacred space marking out a place appropriate for a certain spirit that will breathe life into our activity (Moore 1992: 290). I say a prayer to Grandfather, my spirit guide/ally to watch over us and guide me in the work I am about to undertake. Winter light streams through the side windows warming the wooden flooring. I lay out the art materials, put the hot water jug on, and wait.

They arrive one by one. Nervous, excited, laughing, eyeing each other, expectant... We began the group in a circle up on the stage/platform area and everyone introduced themselves in their own unique way, ‘A gesture of introduction’ as I put it. We light the candles, one each. They have been asked to bring something that represents the shadow to them, an object, a picture. They check in one by one telling the story of their object. Froth bubbles, Queen Victoria, a knife, a feather, a bursting star, all have tales to tell...
We move off the stage onto the main hall. The group after the intimacy of the enclosed circular space seem somewhat vulnerable entering a new and open area, and yet this too is a sacred space made so by our being there, and our reason for being there. They walk with small steps once they are upon the lower floor. They had already spoken, voicing their inner worlds of shadow and now I was inviting them into a more expressive means of communication, an action orientated approach. “Today you will explore our shadow bodies,” I announce. The energy heightens. The action begins. Following instructions they form a line indicating where they see themselves to be creatively. A sociograph. I ask the group to imagine that the length of the hall represents their creative expression in life. One end representing not being creative at all, and the other end being entirely comfortable with their creative output. I ask them to place themselves in the position on this imaginary line that represents where they are with their creativity at this time in their lives. I interview them, they alter their positions. There is a somewhat large clump of participants below the half way mark.

The morning proceeds with much fun and challenge as the group warms up to each other and to their own internal worlds. I had placed large rolls of paper just under the lip of the stage where it had lain since the early morning. It had lain visible, apparently dormant yet exerting a powerful influence over the proceedings, for all knew the time would come when it would be uncoiled and extend its influence up and down the hall.

We move into working in couples. They walk around the large hall in pairs. I break up their rhythm by calling out instructions. ‘Faster, slower, walk stiff, exaggerate any tightness you feel, walk tall, scrunch your face up’ they follow instructions and begin to loosen up. ‘Working in these pairs form action couplets of relationship’. Starting with the material mundane world - cup and saucer – bacon and egg – they move into the emotional and conceptual world. Love and hate, attraction and jealousy, anger and acceptance. They work as pairs, interacting, sometimes touching. Ian inquires as to if he doesn’t want to play ‘I’m finding this really challenging’ he says. ‘Do as much as you want,’ I reply. He continues to participate in every activity. Ewa confronts me. ‘I’m getting fed up with following your instructions.’ she says. ‘It’s up to you,’ I reply. She continues to follow directions.
The mood of expectation envelops them, affects me. I stand at the end of the room watchful, alert to the subtleties of movement, allowing the feel of this place, of these people, to impress itself upon my being. Time is painfully, exquisitely, an allowance of a multitude of almost indiscernible and permeable feelings, a vibrational, ethereal, intangible alignment. The instructions are clear and yet find their clarity in the telling, in the action of expression. The intention is to disrupt the predetermined disposition, to unsettle a prescribed script enactment.

The body, their bodies, are encouraged to find their own way into relationship with another body, another being. They move faster, slower. Closer to each other, further away. Together in pairs weaving a story, a new story, a unique story. A story that begins anew, and yet continues with each new and vital interaction. They are at times stiff, awkward, as if trying on some new-sprung form. Some giggle self-consciously. Some behave as if this were an examination, a test to be judged and marked by unseen forces, their faces line with concentration and at times consternation.

In the afternoon the stretch is greater, the challenges more evocative. The group is encouraged to be seen by one another, to display more of themselves, the group is encouraged to treat it all as a game of exploration, to work from one foot in the known and the other outside their comfort zone.

The semi-circle forms, chairs all facing into the open space as though an invitation has been ushered. I ask for volunteers, and one by one each person performs a solitary expression of shadow as I direct the action. They are truly out on their own, exposed, vulnerable, their lives (at least to some degree) entrusted to me. They enact psychodramatically their internal shadow dynamic. The afternoon passes, the window closes, all have presented themselves, all that is except Bronwyn. She looks much younger than her actual age, a little sheepish when she realises that because of time constraints she will not get an opportunity to enact her internal world. She rather stoically volunteers to participate next opportunity ... if there should be one. There won’t be. The day ends.
Workshop one – Day 2

Two participants, Bronwyn and Lisa stay over at my place. Its great having them around but . . . I could have done with a bit more time with myself. Weatherwise the day is another beauty. The mist lingers in the valley wafting up the gullies on the other side of the valley after blanketing the valley floor. The arrival of muted sunlight streaming through trees create sparkling diamonds where dewdrops once were. The day is warming; it is full of promise.

I leave well before the others for I have tasks to perform. I open the door of the hall and enter. The atmosphere is very different, a little chilly, I expected that. No, it is decidedly different. It looks and feels inhabited. There is sense of presence, here, now. As though it has awoke from slumber, as though life has returned and is flowing through its woody veins. I realise that its story is now part of mine, and me part of its. We have a history, we are now part and parcel of each others history. It has in Thomas Moore’s idea, become enchanted, it is a place inhabited by nonhuman figures who perform the enchantment, they ‘sing and speak, and make their presence felt’ (T. Moore 1992: 292).

I move to the circle/alter area crouch down and tidy up the cushions, placing them fleshly fluffed in as near as I can make it, a circle. There is a hint of something calling my awareness down off the stage away from the printed cushion placement and into the body of the hall. What . . . ? I stand and look down into the open space . . . there is nothing there . . . and yet there is. I see through memory traces, everyone. Peter, Ewa, Michael, Lisa, Kaye, Ian, Bronwyn, Cath and myself. We are all there. We left, but we stayed, or at least left imprints of ourselves in the memory of this grand old place. This place is imbued with remnants of all of us. Tears make themselves known as I emotively well up. Beats me why I am teary but I am. It feels good to feel into being here, being here now. The participants are arriving so I move back into task orientation.

When all have arrived we commence the day with a circle check in and establishing the temenos once again. They then flow down into the main body of the hall and commence some games, fun games. I am encouraging them to form and work in pairs once more. I want them to become familiar with each other, so as to feel at ease with close physical contact. For closer physical contact is looming. I am also encouraging them to move
from an internal impetus, to follow their bodily inclination. Their body, their intuition, it knows in a way the intellect does not. ‘Let the internal knowing guide you’ I instruct.

There is a palpable electricity in the air as the group unfurls the long coiled, white paper down either side of the hall. The paper frames either side of the floor space, white, virginal, blank, expectant, intimidating, frightening, stark, inviting. There’s an air of excited expectation in the room.

‘You’re embarking on an unknown journey to a place where few have ventured. Working in pairs, one person at a time allow your body to form onto the paper a shadow shape and the other person will draw the outline of this shape using the markers. Lay stand, sit, feel your body guide you’. The body work and physical interactions they had immersed themselves in earlier in the day had, I hoped, loosened them up to the possibility of being directed from their internal initiative. They work in pairs. My provocation to them was to call upon their shadow self to direct their movement, their shape, to allow themselves to be internally directed. While one shaped their shadow self upon the paper the other stood back with Texta in hand, and then when the shadow shaper had settled, their partner moved forward and drew a line around their body creating a body outline.

They quickly decide who will be first to embrace the paper with their body. They lay, squirm, jiggle about, stretch, and scrunch themselves into the shape that announces it through them. Their partners wait patiently, expectantly. One by one they settle. Their partners move to them carefully detailing their outlines. And then to my surprise (Ewa, Cath, Bronwyn) begin to move again, to form another body outline on top of their first, forming a much more complex interactive association.
At the completion of the second day I ask them to comment on their shadowgraph. They tell stories of bewilderment, surprise, delight, awe, sensuality, wonder, mystery. Only one person mentions a characteristic that I or arguably this culture would deem ‘shadow’\(^{10}\). I reason the shadow may only be detected indirectly that was the purpose of the games and the body shadow work \(^{11}\). I also reflect upon my reluctance to embrace my shadow outline when he first appeared in my self-as-subject work. They seemed to have no such reservations.

As we walk around the various portraits I ask for a word or two to describe just what they feel in response as they stood before their fellow portraits. ‘Dancing, joy, confusion, sensual, anus-revulsion’.

The group re-formed at the end of the second day much as we had started. Comments were invited from all group members. Surprising to me was one member apologised to another for being ‘insensitive’. Unnecessary I thought, somewhat puzzling and an incitement to speculate on shadow dynamics. The ‘aggrieved’ party ‘graciously’ accepted the apology.

Oddly enough, the affronted one had behaved with a disregard (unconscious) for the sanctity of her fellow’s portraits by boldly treading on their paper when going in search of art materials. No one complained yet each time this occurred I inwardly cringed. What goes on here? I voiced to all to be mindful and respectful of each other’s portrait space. From then on they were.

We finish the day with a self-reflective sharing and at Bronwyn’s suggestion a standing circle (mandala) of hands overlapping in the circle centre and a huge hoy!, as we flung our hands skywards and disengaged the circle.

The group made to leave to go their ways home. I tidied up. One group member, the apologist, returned and surreptitiously chastised me for not ‘protecting her’ when she felt under attack. And not following through with one of her disclosures. Putting

\(^{10}\) Bronwyn mentioned a few times envy of Cath’s artwork. She was wistful rather than malicious, self-reflective rather than projective.

\(^{11}\) I ponder the significance of this. I mentioned at our warm up session that we would not only look at shadow in its so-called negative sense but in light of the so-called golden shadow. Did this elicit a romantised, situational shadow, or its interpretation. Does, as some post-Jungian interpret, the shadow have a Janus nature? The opposite is always there?
her experience into her art was ‘what we were about’. ‘Seek your answers there’, I encourage.

I reflect upon the many dynamics operating within the group. Has the group been sufficiently warmed up to enable transpersonal explorations? Is the individual and group container strong enough to handle a shamanic engagement/experience? I envisaged a gentle ‘way in’ via play, sociometry, the body, the freedom to express the unspoken and unknown through the body. I also had been going much slower than I anticipated due in some measure to the inter-personal group dynamics. I had set up (in my mind) the weekend to be one whereby they would all have shamanic journeyed well before the end of the workshop.

I evaluated these unfolding developments. Even at this adjusted pace it was not safe enough to proceed. I doubted whether we could get the transpersonal work under way within this environment. Ewa and Cath’s remarks and behaviours challenge whether they ‘get it’. ‘It’ being the self-responsibility involved. There are two months before the next gathering, time for healing or moving on? For me, for us.

I’d had thoughts about creating a co-researcher environment and not taking on the role of ‘expert’ in areas of self-discovery, or not to be seen in this way by the group. This proved to be impossible as I was the designer, the producer, the designated leader, the director, and although I resisted it, the authority figure. I was by design and implication the most powerful and knowledgeable group member.

I anticipated keeping in contact with the group and set up a means of contact. I would contact them via e-mail and sent numerous e-mails to the creativeshadow group. These e-mails would have short quotes from some of the books I was reading at any one time. I would select quotes that would ‘grab’ me,. These included the primary areas of exploration - shadow, shamanism or creativity. Researching and sending these e-mails I found were an excellent way of focusing my quite often-errant mind and on occasions I would receive a response from one or other of the adventurers and an e-mail conversation would ensue.
Workshop two

The second workshop begins as has become the custom with a sharing circle up on the stage area. A check in. There is a buzz in the air, an excitement, an expectation. This group is not the same as the last as Ian and Cath are not here. We are no longer nine. The path each has taken to arrive is similar to the last workshop, so is the external environment and yet we/they are a new group forming. They share their response to Ian and Cath’s absence, anger, sadness, relief, consternation, benign acceptance. It is a long check-in, long enough I hope. I assist them in setting up an internal environment in which to journey. A semi-guided visualisation is one of the means of accomplishing this. After sharing we adjourn to the outside area ...

We leave the hall and meander around to the grass at its rear. The group, some preceding me, some following, gather outside the hall on the back lawn. The grass, lush and verdant, slopes ever so gently down to the permanent creek that threads its meandering path along the valley floor. The hall, our hall, sits between two very different and distinct boundaries, the creek on one side, and the main road of Yarramalong on the other. The road and creek both unseen, invisible frames, they lie in the shadows influencing ... us. Neither is visible from where we are, yet they very much physically frame our situation. Vangeles wafts through the air, a solitary crow wails as our group find their place to lay. They settle, some shuffling into place, into their space, squirming onto and into the earth. I begin the semi-guided visualisation.

‘Feel the earth supporting you, holding you in its embrace, as it has always done, as it always will ...’ I become aware as I speak that there seems to be a significance in what I am saying that lends itself to meanings beyond the actual words. ‘The earth supporting you ... as it has always done’. I allow the words to carry me, to flow with their impact, they bear on my being. I am supported! By this earth!

The visualisation continues, they become seeds floating through the air, they land in a place chosen by the elements. They nestle into the earth. The seasons pass, the sun, the heat, the wind the cold, dark becomes light, light becomes dark. The rains come. They feel the moisture seeping through the earth approaching them. The wetness touches them, they respond. Their bodies begin to swell, their casing splits, they burst into another form, they begin to sprout. Their shoots go both down into the
earth and up through the soil seeking the light. They grow into who they were meant
to be, into their natural becoming.

The visualisation complete. I gently soften the music until it is barely audible. They
feel their way back into their bodies from wherever they have imaginary been. Some
begin to stretch their limbs and open their eyes. Some look around soft eyed at the
others. ‘When your ready come inside and record in whatever way draws you, some
of your experience’. Bronwyn does not move. She lies as though deep in slumber, as
though movement would disrupt some treasured place of being. I watch and wait as
each person stirs themselves into their bodies, into the environment. Michael walks
past me with a kind of dreamy, dazed look about him, he smiles in a gentle bovine
way, as though still encased in a dream. One by one they rise and make their way
back into the hall. All except Bronwyn. I settle on my haunches, the minutes pass.
Bronwyn shows signs of coming back. She stretches her arms, then hunches her
shoulder, a prolonged shrug. Her back arches ever so slightly and she raises herself
onto her elbows. Grinning at no-one or nothing in particular she is still for a moment.
She rises and grins at me as she passes. I bide my time, give thanks to the earth and
make my way back inside.

After they have all contributed something of their visualisation to their diaries and to
each other via a circle-sharing we venture on. The visualisation was in preparation
for the forthcoming journey. There is an anticipatory vibe in the air. It is time to
journey.

The Journey

The atmosphere had been soft, until the mats were unrolled and then an pervading
tide of anxiousness and excitement enveloped the hall as they settled themselves
upon the floor. Then stillness; a pervasive quietude seems to envelop the group as
they lay expectantly upon the floor before me. I silently ask for guidance from the
spirits as the group lie side-by-side and do their final bodily adjustments. It is hushed,
deadly quiet. The sun streams in the window making elongated and irregular
patterns over and through the stillness. All seems amplified, the hall boomingly
cavernous, the group settled and expectant. I invoke guidance and protection from
my ally, Grandfather Stalking Wolf. I talk the group through a progressive relaxation
and tension release sequence, the ‘command breath’ of Tom Brown Jr.
When I speak I am somewhat surprised at the deepness of my voice. I lead them through a journey to locate or have come to them, someone, a helper, that will assist them with their shadow work. Once I finish the instructions I turn on the CD with its insistent drumming beat and prowl the edge of the edge of the hall like a protective panther, alert, aware, watchful . . .

Everyone received something from their journey and all shared in a group circle some of their experience. They were then encouraged to record in some creative manner their thoughts and/or experience.

We completed the day in circle with everyone speaking of what they had gathered unto themselves from the weekend. All were somewhat positive, all except Ewa. She was decidedly not satisfied.

Workshop three

The workshop commenced after the familiar wait for the arrival of Michael and Ewa and a sharing in circle. We sat in the circle and began the workshop by each participant drawing a Rune. There was something of a skittishness about people as they turn by turn dipped their hands into the small drawstring bag and brought forth their Rune. Their visual diaries records the many and varied responses to this divination. The day was to be devoted in the main to their finishing off their shadowgraphs although Kaye and Bronwyn ventured into the realm of mask making. The general feeling in the hall was one of involved and centred excitation.

At the end of the day after we had downed brushes and walked around perusing each other’s work. I invited them to view their handiwork from the stage area, venturing that a different perception would offer itself. The group were encouraged (by me) to make a one or two word caption on their experience as they looked down upon so much creative expression.

Words that they voiced were *magnificence, incredible, honesty.* It sounded great but after all these are supposed to be shadowgraphs? What gives? After this general sharing we walked back down into the hall and formed a circle. I then asked them about there own portraits, to comment on their work. Michael was one of the first to share. His comments both surprised and shocked the group. He was unrelentingly disparaging of his shadowgraph. It had in his revised reflection, become a lifeless
affectation, he had overdone it, its vibrancy was gone. On and on the tirade went with not a positive adjective passing his lips. I felt aghast and at the same time somewhat compassionate towards him. I, as well as the others kept our own counsel. After the completion of everyone revealing their thoughts and feelings about their own projects. Michael commented again. This time he was able to say that he could now see some life in his portrait, it was colourful. The group offered a collective sigh as though releasing tension that had been held and had accrued interest could finally be spent . . .

They all assist to a larger or lessor degree to the cleaning clearing up and one by one they leave. Peter is the last to depart. The hall is empty once more although in a very real sense what has been will remain. The wooden floor remembers our footfall, our-socked caresses, the sweep of brooms, the running, skipping, pounding, sneaking; it has felt the splashed paint, the spilt water. The rafters and walls have known our shouting, whispering, whingeing, exuberant, laughing, certain and uncertain voices our songs and laments. The grasses and earth have felt our bodily embraces, we have inhaled this place with every breathe, every movement, every utterance, and as we exhaled it absorbed us. A fanciful notion? Well perhaps to some . . . each time I drive past this hall I feel the resonances of those workshops reverberating through me, shaking loose memories of those times, they live. They continue to influence me. I carry them with me.
Figures 6–7: completed shadowgraphs, workshop 3
I arrived at Michael’s house in the early afternoon. His house, built in the 1950s, sits on an eastern facing cliff-top on a flat patch of land high above the Pacific Ocean. His backyard fence is set back marginally from the vertical, sheer-faced sandstone ocean-cliff interface. I imagine the ocean and the sky playing out all their moods while Michael goes about his daily tasks and chores, sometimes attentive, sometime oblivious to their displays.

Michael greets me warmly, we hug. He not being as tall as I, nestles his head in the hollow under my chin. His lush, black wavey hair, brushed back off his face, is soft and in stark contrast to my somewhat wiry beard. Our follicles meet and mingle as I allow myself to relax, and my head slightly droops forward. Michael and I walk through the house, out through the back French windows and into the backyard. He is eager to show me around his patch of turf. He is proud of his small vegetable patch, which has thrived despite the salt air and high winds that are inescapable in such an environment. He plucks a beautiful-looking, and rather long, white radish, and offers it to me. It has a translucent radiance to it, and tiny bits of soil cling, or rather sit, upon its sides. I feel oddly touched, peculiarly moved, and yet it is the most natural thing in the world, this gesture. Two men meeting and sharing time, sharing a special place, and in a real sense it is a sacred place. Made sacred by the love this man, Michael, has imbued it with.

The backyard is newly planted with a great variety of native plants. The thick, shredded lucerne mulch separates the lawn from the stalks and trunks of the new planting. This, in turn, adds to the creation of an atmosphere of environmental benevolence. The realisation that this is a much-loved garden is inescapable; its rehabilitation, although at the toddler stage, seems assured. We re-enter the house. Michael, an ever-gracious host, busies himself alongside Ewa, his wife, in preparing some tea and nibblies. We then, the three of us, sit together and catch up, warming up to each other. I hear some of their and this house’s story. A tiny dog appears, reappears, and makes its intention known by looking longingly at anyone with a biscuit in their fingers. I get the sense that this ploy has worked many times, although, as I have said, it is a tiny dog. It has a frenetic energy about it, possibly because of its diet.
Michael and Ewa are both professionally trained as medical practitioners – Michael a paediatrician, and Ewa a generalist. Michael continues in his practice, while Ewa completed further training in psychotherapy and began a new career. They had both fled to Australia from oppressive regimes, Michael from South Africa, Ewa from Europe, and had met in Australia while undertaking medical training. They have two children, both of whom are living at home. Rueben, the first born, is a talented composer and musician, although, from what I can gather, he is reluctant to embrace that vocation, at least in a conventional sense. Lara, their daughter, is a vibrant early teenager, full of exuberance and curiosity. But back to Michael: on the surface, he seems to have attained, and be living out the aspirations of, the Australian dream: stable marriage, two healthy children, physically healthy, professionally trained and highly regarded in esteemed profession, high assured income, home with fabulous position overlooking the ocean, vegetable patch, reasonably obedient dog with personality.

We sat down in his dining area overlooking the budding garden, and commenced our interview.

1. First interview

Michael understood shadow as being ‘those split off parts of myself that undermine and interfere with my capacity to relate with myself and others’. He gave as an example a time when he was feverish and quite ill, and had gone to the beach where he sat on some rocks and looked out to sea: ‘I would formulate positive affirmations, but the powerful voice underneath all of that was ‘you’re going to get sick and you’re going to die’. I thought it is really a self-attack. It’s really a murderous self-attack. It’s me attacking myself trying to kill me’.

He then spoke about allowing free association to influence his imaginal engagement, and visualising being a wild primitive with an insatiable violent blood lust and coming into contact with a ‘very, very violent part of myself’. When in latter times, he allowed himself to meditate on the rage, the thoughts he had were murderous and incredibly violent. He developed an understanding of the behaviour of murderous mobs. ‘I was aware of that capacity and I think allowing myself to actually go into it, to actually feel it, act it out in fantasy, helped me to get over it much, much, more
quickly. And not act it out in any way whatsoever’. He understood these thoughts as being of his shadow, something that until recent times he had disowned.

It was a bit scary the first time, I was a bit shocked ... a bit judgmental at some level. I was able to reach a more vital core instead of being a victim. I feel as if I’m in control of the situation for myself... now I’m less of a nice boy and I can tolerate not being liked by people whereas previously I would bend over backwards to make myself thoughtful and understanding. I was desperate to be seen as nice and caretaking other people’s emotions. I now have a greater ability to tolerate other people being angry with me.

When reflecting upon expressing his creativity, he related ‘The shadow was the crux of creativity’.

In his work with people, he felt he could be:

Very creative with a big capacity for love ... mixed in with creative thinking. Expressive dance has been very liberating for me. Instead of holding myself in tightly. So to do something that enables me to do the total opposite to that, to open myself out to leap, to jump, to stretch, in a very vital way. To be bigger than, to exaggerate ... something in that was very invigorating for me. ... Creativity is just expression of self. ... I think creativity is the capacity to be in touch with one’s essence. With one’s soul... my essence ... sensuous interaction ... in ideas ... in bed ... in gardening ...

He had been exploring new expressions:

Dance is a new language, for me to learn to express that language. So that I could experience within that language which of the words I liked most. To enter into a process where the untamed, the unruly, the undigested, intellectually undigested material can find a way of expression. The opposite of this is a fear of failure, the fear of not being good enough, the fear of being frozen or ... those sort of judgements or critical eyes ... there’s also another part of me wanting to expand my boundaries, my horizons, my languages. I think the more I can, the richer my life will be.

For a shadow object, he chose a rock. It was:

Something destructive ... something that represented violence. Not a gun, something organic. A rock has weight and power and may be used for attack; it would represent all those other bits of my shadow that I’ve been talking about. Or possibly a stick of just the right size and weight. Club size.

He became incapacitated when I asked him to go and find his shadow object. ‘I don’t want to be stupid, silly or wrong. I want to be clear that I understand and am understood. Something a bit like that really. And also not giving myself the freedom to act on an impulse.’

2. First workshop

Michael and Ewa arrive somewhat late. Everyone else has arrived, and are standing around chatting, punctuated with tea sips and biscuits munches. He and Ewa hurry in, their hands full of what I take to be their luncheon contribution. His face is tense, his shoulders hunched. They’d missed the Yarramalong turn-off and had careered
along the dual-carriage freeway for kilometre after kilometre, debating (heatedly) just where they might be and how to rectify their ever-worsening situation.

The group is sympathetic, and I come to terms with my now obsolete and perhaps idealised view of how things were going to proceed. We form a seated circle around an altar I had prepared. I had previously asked the group to bring their shadow object, and encouraged those who wished to do so, to contribute their object to the altar, to place it there. They all did, well, all except Peter; for some reason, he hadn’t brought his.

As part of the warm-up to themselves and to each other, I asked the group to share just why they had chosen their object.

He had not produced an object at the time of our interview, and had related his thoughts about what the object might be and his imagined response about it. By the time of the workshop, he had located his shadow object – a rock. He shares some of his excitement of discovering his rock while planting an Old Man Banksia tree in his garden. And indeed, much of his initial sharing is of an excited quality. He appears keen to get into action, his eyes sparkle, and the transformation from his frazzled arrival and the vibrant energy he now exudes is startling.

He relates to us (and later records in his visual journal) his surprise, that instead of his rock (shadow object) representing

* a weapon, something hard, weighty, an object to crack open skulls, to defend himself with, a weapon of aggression, to express my rage, my anger, however as I picked it up & started talking about it I became imbued with its sensuality, the roughness of its sandstone surface, and a desire to stroke it and feel its hard edges. I also became aware of how it grounded me & connected me with the earth, how it could be used as an implement & a tool not just a weapon & its Exquisite Weightiness. I became aware that I AM IN LOVE WITH ROCKS.*
In the socio-metric creativity line-out, Michael places himself somewhat below the halfway mark, as indeed did most of the participants. And yet, in the games that follow, he exhibits a joy and spontaneous delight in his participation. He has an enthusiastic approach over the course of the weekend that seems to belie his self-belief. However, later he records in his journal some of the internal dilemma he undergoes when utilising a non-action-based expressive medium, the shadowgraph.

Michael, keen as ever, thrust himself into this process. He worked with great gusto in contrast to Kaye, his partner, who was much more introspective and reserved in her movements. He quickly found his shape, and Kaye drew him in. Once he was ‘on the paper’, he bounded up and studied his outline for what seemed a considerable time. Some of his thoughts are captured in his visual diary.

He writes:

When I originally saw the outline of my body on the paper I was horrified because my head looked too small and my legs looked puny and thin. I’ve always had a great sense of vulnerability around being stupid not clever having a small head & about having puny arms & legs. It felt really important to me to fill out the legs, to enlarge the gesture to make the head bigger & to express the great energy surging around the inside of me. I want to leap on strong powerful legs, roar, make love & for that energy to expand out from my edges.

Michael and the others drew in and creatively expressed themselves while their shadowgraphs were lying on the floor of the hall. He associated this with Aboriginality. He comments further on this: ‘I was also aware of working on the ground on a long surface like Aborigines do their art & for the art to tell a story. It felt important to me to express my Aboriginality & to be powerful in my gestures’.

And it was to this task he applied himself. He worked the rest of the day with a focused intensity. He selected his acrylic paints in their smallish pots and placed them judiciously around his large canvas, and trekked, with paintbrush in hand, many
laps, up and down the length and breadth of his increasingly lively portrait. And so his expressive story evolved from his initial horror.

3. Second workshop

The visualisation

Michael writes that he felt:

*a great yearning* as he floated above the earth. *a great sense of awe ... a magical story ... contained within the tiny seed floating in the wind. He found he was an enormous and solitary tree on a hill overlooking and surveying the countryside ... a landmark surrounded by grasslands ... not an Australian tree and so changed it into an Angophra ... a home to a wide range of animals. What it would be like to be a small delicate mature bush covered in small white flowers.*

Journey one asking ‘who will assist me with my shadow work? What qualities do you bring?’

I lead the journey audibly and systematically, taking the group through a physical relaxation technique exercise, and then into the journey proper. I gradually turn up the volume on the drumming CD and stand at the end of the room watching over the group. Michael raises one of his hands as if gesturing to an unseen, at least to me, person or being. Great, I think. At another time, he seems to be moving his pelvic area in tiny undulations. Great again, I think. But let’s hear from Michael. He writes in his journal that he at first struggles to find his place in nature. And then has a memory of South Africa, large rocks besides the Bracadil River. He then floats over the countryside, he begins to contract his buttocks to the beat of the drum.

I was then transported to a clearing with a group of powerful black men standing in a semicircle and beating the drums. I become young black boy, lithe, athletic, thin ... not yet a man and began dancing with such energy, such freedom, such passion that I thought I would burst ... I wanted to cry, scream ... my young black body whirled and beat out its own rhythm.

After this journey, we had a group sharing in our sacred circle. Michael’s ebullient being is impossible to encapsulate in these written words, but perhaps suffice to say that he seemed ecstatic and enthused with a liveliness that appeared to emanate from his upper body. He was BIG. His eyes were like crystals, his hands, and arms and upper body gesticulated excitedly, and it occurred to me that he was on the verge
of leaping up at any moment and careening around. The group appeared to be in some shock or at the least, stunned by his sharing, or more correct to say, by the manner of his being when sharing. To say he was impassioned risks understatement ... but he was, well, impassioned.

4. Interview two

Michael comments more on this journey in our second interview. This interview took place at his cliff-top house. The plants have all grown, the eucalypts are in glorious flower. The fruit trees planted in large pots squat on the front concrete verandah are beginning to show fruit. Lemons and oranges begin their change from bud to flower to fruit, they like this place. So do I. The lounge room has been transformed into an art studio as Michael’s wife Ewa devotes more of her energy into a passion that has nagged at her soul since childhood. Michael, or at least his household presence, seems to be disappearing. Were it not for his being in front of me, I would not known he lived here; there are no clues to him anywhere to be seen. What is happening here, I wonder, seems to be disappearing. He once again takes me to his vegetable patch, and it is with a certain inexplicable sadness that I stand with him now. Well, sadness and anger. I don’t mention my internal state to Michael. After all, this is shadow work we’re engaged in. We sit, and the interview begins with a question that has been on my mind since the end of the second workshop.

I ask him to describe one of his neoshamanic journeys in as much detail as possible.

He couldn’t remember the instructions I had given for the journey. The first memory he had was the drumming music (tape). He commented upon the previous mediation (visualisation), and that he felt in a very receptive state of being. He continued:

*From the moment the drumming music came on there was this incredible urge to move to the rhythm of the music. The longer the music went the more intense this feeling became and then suddenly I became this young black boy who was – I remember him quite well – even though it was quite a long time (ago) now, he was very lean, very thin, very, very black about thirteen, fourteen something like that. Pre puberty really and he started dancing, I was this person, and I started dancing and I danced with a freedom and a lack of inhibition and an open spontaneity that I can’t ever remember having had myself.*

*The goal that I would like to achieve, that total sense of being myself, and responding to the music was my essence. And it was just a magical feeling, a wonderful feeling, a very exiting experience and the more the music persisted the more free and open and passionate and spontaneous was the dancing and the intensity of the experience became so great that lying on the mat felt as if I was going to burst with the emotion and that I needed somehow to express the emotion I needed to scream, to shout, to verbalise, to cry, to move my arms, to somehow articulate, to find some way of*
embodying the feelings. I think I remember crying a little, I think I remember moving a little, moving a little on the mat.

This experience was to him undeniable and authentic. He then differentiates between the intensity of the initial experience, and challenges other aspects, as to whether they were things that he had created:

Or were true parts of the visualisation ... this, the black boy dancing just came out of nowhere, was totally unexpected and didn’t have anything to do with the instructions for the visualisation. It just was a very spontaneous creation that appeared. So what were the feelings and what do I experience? I mean that, I’ve never experienced anything like that in an awake form other than possible intense sexual experiences come close to that sort, to match that. The feelings were one of great joy, great sense of ecstatic joy and somehow a wonderful freedom at being myself, and not being, because for a large part of ... I think less so now ... but still very powerful but very much through my formative years ... and adult years a hugely critical and judgmental eye kind of watching over me and judging me and editing me and preventing me from being in touch with that spontaneous self, the essence, my essence ... and for the period of that journey I was free of that. There was that wonderful sense of being free.

He had not been alone in his dance, and he stated enthusiastically that:

No, no there were other parts which I said but those parts ... I can’t remember at what stage of the journey that the other people appeared or whether they were there right from the beginning, but there were a semi-circle of big black men beating on drums creating the music. Kind of bare from the waist up, kind of shining glistening, a bit like I remember from Papua New Guinea, we went to many sing sings and seeing the men there covered in pig grease and glistening but it wasn’t a Papua New Guinea experience it was definitely an African experience and it was large black men in a semi-circle very solemn and serious beating on drums that were creating the music in a semi-circle and I was dancing but it was almost that I wasn’t dancing for them. I’m not sure what role they played in it all, what the interaction between me and them was ... almost like they just held the space ... as if they held the space for me ... so they were important at some level, they were obviously very important ... but I was so caught up in the experience so it’s as if they were there but not there ... it was not being done for them it was being done for myself. But they undoubtedly held, made the music, and were a big powerful strong force that held the space.

He differentiates an authentic experience from wish-fulfilment or fanciful projections by the element of being surprised:

I went down an underground sloping tunnel that opened into a cave, it was like a big cavern, and then there were like fingers leading out of tunnels, finger like tunnels leading out of the cavern and going further deeper down into the earth ... and at the end of each of these tunnels was a shamanic figure ... from all the different continents of the world. So down at the end of one would be an Aboriginal elder shamanic figure, down at another one an American Indian, down at another one a Siberian, down another one an African Sanguma, and there was the sense that I could call on any of these depending upon what the need was or where I was which country I was in or which part of the world I was in.

This part of his journey did not have the intensity of the dancing, and he has since challenged the authenticity of his experience.

At times, there was a qualitative difference: [He differentiated between]
The highly imaginal, spontaneous free experience of a wakeful dream ... instead struggling to follow a set of instructions and was almost very conscious and as part of that conscious effort. I didn't want it to become too much of a fantasy ... that I was creating ... and I am also judgmental around my desire to please ... I didn't want to please you or please myself, do the right thing by ... I didn't want to be false, I didn't want to be false, I wanted to be authentic in the experience.

He reported that, subsequent to this experience, he was challenged to integrate it. The experience seriously subverted his previous inductive scientific orientation. He related that his childhood had been dominated by,

A very materialistic family experience where there had been no exploration of ideas or myth or imagination ... a part of me knows and has always known that the most important thing to have is not ... material wealth but spiritual wealth to have a great spiritual richness and um have a great human capacity ... being a rich human being ... and after this experience I was much more aware of this it was ... instead of it being an idea it was something that I knew about at a more fundamental level ... I was clearer about and still think that it has left that impact on me, that I am much clearer at a level of my inner being. That, that is where great riches lie.

I need to dance or I'd die and I haven't danced and I haven't picked it up and I haven't run with it. Even although in my work life I was highly creative and out of all that, during that period I put together a talk at a conference that was very special and was very well received and that I know that I am going to use in a powerful way in my professional life and that I think that that journey had something to do with it. Yeah.

I asked him whether he had ever experienced fear when journeying. He responded that he was now pondering whether he didn't go down those tunnels because of fear, and speculated:

That I stopped myself because I didn't know what I would find or would I find nothing or would there be no one there for me? Is that really what I was frightened of, that I would ultimately find no spiritual figure? For my support that I would be alone. And it may be that was the great fear. The black figures were a bit foreboding but I wasn't frightened of them.

When asked about discovering a spiritual guide on his journey, he related his struggle with his expectation and the reality of his actual experience:

I've heard people talk about their spirit figures, you know they're always some great elder or some great big bear or lion or this or that. They're always some, you know, wise, wonderful person who takes them by the hand, and people talk about these highly experienced wise kind of people who have lived great lives and how can this little boy, this young passionate boy, be my spirit guide, you know? So it didn't fit, so it didn't fit with what I had heard so I discarded it. And that I had to find something else, that there had to something different, wiser, bigger.

He recounted that he's been having very powerful dreams and had fallen in love with the creative process. A particular dream 'had led up to that workshop'.

There were Aboriginal dancers up on a stage and I was down in the audience and they were calling me up onto the stage. To come up and dance with them, and I was kind of shy and withdrawing, and somehow they grabbed me and pulled me up onto the stage. And I danced and there was didgeridoo music and other music and I just danced, and it was just wonderful, and I didn't want to wake up from the dream.
and when I woke up from the dream I kind of didn’t want it to stop. I kind of wanted to close my eyes and go back into it.

And it had when I think back about it a little bit of that same quality. But it was more being part of a group. There were other people dancing and there was music. It was more interactive experience, a less personal experience, and the whole experience was very rich, but I shied away from it. I didn’t want to. I had to be encouraged, pulled to it and then when I did it opened up for me, but it was not something I spontaneously joined in. I needed a lot of encouragement and almost to be dragged into it. And maybe that’s what is happening now I’m shying away to make the commitment to do it. To going to explore it. It’s just a matter of finding it and doing it.

5. Final workshop

At the commencement of this third and last workshop, we gathered once more in what had become the sacred sharing circle space – the elevated small landing at the far end of the hall. The altar had been set up, and as we took our places in the circle, I brought out a bag of Nordic divination tools, the Runes. I invited each of them to take a Rune.

Michael drew the rune RAIDO

The rune held significance for him. In excerpts from his journal, he writes: ‘I love my Rune which described the JOURNEY towards the unobstructed discovery of the SELF’. It represented to him strongly his own ‘struggle to let go of a MATERIAL view of life ... to go deep and explore and VALUE, a spiritual life’.

He drew a rather beautiful representation of this Rune (see figure 4). He understood the Rune to be indicating to him, to be ‘CLEAR about my own [journey]’ and encouraging of him to ‘have courage, strength and conviction to FOLLOW it’.

The majority of the day is spent with the group working on their shadowgraph. Michael is engrossed in his own world. He wanders around his portrait, viewing it from a variety of positions, intently examining it before gathering up materials to put a splotch, here, a dab there. He uses a variety of brushes, both large and small, with a distinct inclination for the larger. He selects primary colours and applies these with an intensity that at times furrows his brow and at other times offers a concentrated delicacy.
At the close of the day, he seems very relaxed, and in the closing circle says that he is very satisfied with his work. He feels enthused and exultant, proclaiming that ‘every dab of paint is like a universe in and by itself’.

On the second day, his arrival is preceded by a traumatic drive from Sydney. They had been rushing because Ewa decided to make a last-minute phone call on Michael’s behalf, but not at his request. Ewa believed she had been booked for speeding by radar on the way. She was speeding on Michael’s behalf, but not at his request, so as to arrive on time. Michael, the last to share in our by now ritual commencement sharing, was ready to ‘bite anyone and everyone’s head off’. He says he feels so different to the previous day’s ‘awe and excitement’. He reminisces about ‘[his] excitement with the mystery and magic of playing with the paints. The joy of the marks ... each fresh and different ... the wonder of experimenting ... [his search for] AESTHETIC BEAUTY ... [while not] losing connection with the PROCESS ... staying true’. [He ponders his investment in] ‘LOOKNG GOOD instead of expressing who and what I am at each successive moment ...’

The group seemed to take his forbearance in their stride, and we adjourned to the process of finishing off their portraits. Their shadowgraphs became the main creative expression for the day, although Kaye and Bronwyn ventured into the realm of mask making.

At the end of the day, after we had downed brushes and walked around perusing each other’s work, I invited them to view their handiwork from the stage area, venturing that a different perception would offer itself. The group were encouraged (by me) to make a one- or two-word caption on their experience as they looked down upon so much creative expression.

Words that they voiced were ‘magnificence, incredible, honesty’. It sounded great, but, after all, these are supposed to be shadowgraphs? What gives? After this general sharing, we walked back down into the hall and formed a circle. I then asked them about their own portraits, to comment on their work. Michael was one of the first to share. His comments both surprised and shocked the group. He was unrelentingly disparaging of his shadowgraph. It had, in his revised reflection, become a lifeless affectation; he had overdone it; its vibrancy was gone. On and on the tirade went with nary a positive adjective passing his lips. I felt aghast and at the
same time somewhat compassionate towards him. I and the others kept our own counsel.

When everyone had revealed their thoughts and feelings about their own projects, Michael commented again. This time he said that he could now see some life in his portrait; it was colourful. The group offered a collective sigh, as though releasing tension that had been held, and accrued interest could finally be spent.

We met once more for what proved to be our last interview. The footpath outside their house was resplendent with cascading colour. Flowers gushed forth from their front fence line and spilled onto the pathway. Their front yard was festooned with many, many flowers. My limited vocabulary could name only some, and yet to focus on such a pursuit would detract from the pleasure of being with them, and they with me. There was a sense of abundance extruding from this once arid and neglected plot. From the street, it stood in such stark contrast to its parched and aesthetically bland neighbours. It showed what was possible to accomplish with love and commitment, and as such somehow exposed the sterility of wealth and prestige. It had soul. All this passed in a moment as I made my way to the side door entrance, knocked and was met by Ewa and her broad, expansive smile. Michael and I commenced our interview soon after.

**Final interview**

At our final interview, I showed Michael a photograph of his completed shadowgraph, and asked for his response. His eyes wide in excitation, he was:

*Excited seeing it again ... its vibrancy, full of energy, full of colour, full of life, vitality ... As if it had been ejaculated out of the earth ... with the explosive energy of the planet we live on ... the molten cauldron that bursts forth from the earth. I am the product of that love affair, the magic interaction between the earth and sun. The energy, the power, the fecundity of the earth is filling me and I feel very rich with an enormous amount of energy in the heart and in the groin ... and this crown of light above my head an um ... and it somehow reminds me of the light I see in my eyes sometimes I see often when I meditate and sometimes when I awake at night and turn in bed, there is this blinding light in my eyes, it is almost so bright that it is too bright and I open my eyes imagining that there is going to be bright light all around me and it is pitch black and as I look at that now it feels as though it is that energy, I struggle with saying that divine light, but that magical energy that somehow is in my body that I am seeing that moment and is depicted there [indicating the picture].*

It was very important to Michael to convey a strong sense of being in this country and of working upon the ground.

*To capture a feeling of being someone shaped by living here in this land. Being totally immersed ... part of the energy of the trees, the earth, the sky swirling through and around me ... It's not something that I have seen myself before but now I see myself reaching up dancing almost with arms above my head, strong muscular*
‘And I don’t know why but there is a very strong ejaculatory image there ... a strong sexual energy’. He was reminded of a time when he had been in a cabin in the Australian bush, surrounded by tall trees, eucalyptus:

And at some level that the eucalyptus represented the erection of the earth. The life-force of the earth flowing up ... and something like that comes to mind looking at this ... a lot of the journey that I did the journey of that young black boy dancing with exuberance and vitality and spontaneity and lack of judgement ... a freedom, an excitement of just being in the moment there totally present with the process. An excitement with making the marks, with playing with colour, with seeing this thing evolve ... to my surprise, to my amazement. I’ve never done anything like this ever before.

There are two energy centres, three energy centres really, well four energy centres when I look at it now all in a line. The powerful ejaculatory force of the earth, then an energy centre around my groin, around my heart and above my head. Four big energy centres. (these) energy centres ... the loving heart, the sexual energy of the groin and this huge kind of golden orb around my head, the emotional, intellectual.

Michael was thrilled that he was able to bring to the surface and make visible his unseen energy. ‘It’s taking off the skin and um there’s something about the power, the force, the mystery of the brain, its filling the whole skull, the whole face, the whole head and um and I yearn to be back there. I yearn to be back in that space’. He experienced his time throughout the workshop period as one of significant creativity.

A hugely creative time for me in many different ways my work developed and I did big things ... gathered together other people’s thoughts and much to my amazement now people are phoning me and wanting to organise conferences with me as the main speaker ... it kinda surprises me. Who are they really talking to and what is that about? ... when I see that energy there and I realise wow! ... in flashes presented them in a fresh new way that I know is exciting and has huge potential find my way back to that place and to live my life more from that place, for it feels very exciting.

He had benefited from the surprising and undeniable shadowgraph. It represented a pictorial vision of myself that I didn’t really know was there ... a very graphic picture of my potential ... of what I am capable of ... a picture of where I can live ... a huge sadness not being able to live there most of the time or chose not to ... created and a freedom to experiment with paint and colour. It allowed me to suspend judgement around play and colour.

My painting was a transpersonal experience as well ... the journey gave me a window into a transpersonal experience for want of another word I don’t know how else to describe it, a spiritual experience. In that something remarkable happened whereby I was me but I was not me, and I was outside of me watching me, or something that was beyond me. And ah, so that um was a very powerful event ... how to hold onto those experiences and allow them to shape my life. How to use those experiences to shape my life. To be more active in shaping my own life. Of not forgetting, for I can see myself as something much less than that. The impetus was coming from another place that had nothing to do with a desire to create for anybody else.

There was a flow-on effect that benefited his family:

... the energy, incorporates everybody into it and ... no-one can escape it, I mean in a positive sense. Specifically, he became closer with his son Rueben. Lara
blossomed. I was able to be there for my partner Ewa without getting enmeshed ... whereas in the past I lost myself in trying to help her. I’m able to get on with my own life. I think that I maintain the capacity to hold onto my sense of self in trying to help her in her struggle. And she’s rising from the ashes and that’s exciting ...

I’ve found a way of having them recognise and their family to recognise the repressed rage that these two boys are struggling with. One a totally collapsed boy, soiling himself and the other a very strong boy soiling himself. And something happened when I saw this collapsed boy sitting there seemingly disinterested in what was going on, something just came to me that I saw in him, and it must be something that I see in myself as well. I saw in him a huge repressed rage, and as I explored this my intuition became validated. They both made through having these one or two sessions where the family have been able to listen to these things they’ve made huge changes. In a management sense, I’ve been able to set things in motion that are potentially going to be very important as the year unfolds. In some funny way at the height of my creative existence and I was referring to my work in particular that I feel at the height of my creative existence and believe the experiences in the workshop have played a big part in that.

It seemed to happen at a time in my life when I was ready for something like this ... a certain sadness pervades my appreciation in that I am not able to maintain or incorporate more of my newfound powerful sexual life-force into my everyday life, my sexual life, my creative life ...

He was experiencing himself so differently in his work life than in his home life, ‘and I’m not sure whether it’s me, whether it’s my relationships, but that scares me a bit, it scares me. Energy has felt so torpid, for a while ...’

While conversing at the conclusion of this interview, he reflected on the volcanic eruption in his shadowgraph. He voiced the possibility that the eruption and lava flow could also be interpreted as his own rage, his own molten core. How might he get in contact with this?
Completed shadowgraph
6. Final Email

Hi Robert,

I have read through your description of our interactions as part of your exploration of the shadow and shamanism and am once again reminded of what a gift you gave me by inviting me to participate in your workshops. They opened me up to new and more expanded possibilities and left me fascinated and confused as to what ‘it’s’ all about and very interested in finding ways of accessing this bigger story, this transpersonal reality.

Last night I was grovelling on the kitchen floor with brush and pan in hand sweeping up my mess after cooking dinner and feeling satisfied with a job well done and having added some cleanliness to the kitchen area when I suddenly had this very strong sense that my father who has been dead now 23 years was in the house. For a moment I was convinced he was there until my rational mind kicked in and I wondered what had triggered that thought. At the same time my dog Mushka became very agitated sniffing around the kitchen as if she was trying to find a mouse or animal in the kitchen. This has never happened to me before and so was my father really in the house or more importantly for me how can I use this experience to enrich and enhance my life? How can I engage and work with this experience to create meaning? I went to bed and asked for a dream to help me understand this experience. This morning a long dream which I cannot remember culminated with the very dramatic and frightening image of Norman an old school friend who now lives in Israel at the top of an incredibly tall eucalypt in the bush trying to sling a thick rope across a clearing to tie onto another tree when someone calls out that Norman is falling. I look up and I see Norman falling out of the sky silhouetted against the sky twirling hands out in front of him in free fall. I am horrified and even more so when I realise that he, he is going to fall almost on top of me. He crashes to earth with a terrible thud behind me and I know he is dead. At this moment I wake up a bit shaken. Is this dream connected with my request on going to sleep? Is my father trying to warn me of an imminent disaster or is he communicating that he was trying to connect with me before he died trying to sling a rope across the chasm of our earlier relationship and that now he has returned to take up where he left off. I will ask for another dream tonight from that mysterious and fascinating world of dreams that swirling highly creative world that seems much bigger and more vast than me. The challenge in all these experiences is not to let them slip away but to work with them, engage with them to enliven enrich and enhance this life in this body now.

Robert I think this story is a part answer to some of your questions.

I have just looked up a dictionary definition of shadow “darkness cast on a surface by intercepting the direct rays of light”. This is very apt for I think that my shadow is the darkness I cast around me by blocking out the divine rays of light or the divine energy. The darkness I create for myself and all around me when I am shut down to love and don’t let the light in, when through fear I close down and bring up my shields rather than opening up my chest and arms and letting the light in and through and around me enlightening enlivening and shining brilliantly. As I write this I get the image that shade or shadow is also important for too much light and brilliance can burn everything around one, however “intercepting the rays of light” needs I think to be a controlled and conscious act brought on as a form of rest or protection for self and one’s immediate environment rather than an unconscious uncontrolled event that can last for ages or for ever wherein everything withers and dies starved of light and energy. In this place the shadow becomes a devouring darkness.

My engagement with nature has been an evolving experience these past few years. I am unable to say what part your workshops have played in this. I am more and more amazed at the reciprocity of my senses, my vision, smell, touch and hearing and nature’s capacity to stimulate them. Why am I able to have such an exquisite relationship or love affair with nature for what purpose? Is it to strip away my defences and open me up to love and or is it to remind me of the divine and magical universe I am part of or is it to reflect back through my consciousness to nature its beauty and splendour. Living in this house on the edge of Australia with spouting
whales, the swirling heaving seas, the rising sun and moon and the wonderful magical birds has played a big part in my richer engagement with nature. The shadow diagram was also a very important part of opening me up to playing with colour shape and form and realising that I can manipulate and engage with nature in whatever way I want. All it takes is the intention and the imagination and someone to hold the space. Your holding of the space was a very important part. I have engaged briefly with this medium from time to time since then and usually get a sniff of the possibilities but I have not engaged with the experience fully as yet.

It is late and I am tired and a little anxious so time to head off to meditate before bed.

Robert I was touched by your open hearted and loving descriptions of our encounters over the time of the interviews and workshops.

I wish you well in this project and hope that these responses are helpful.

A big hug from me
Michael
CHAPTER 5

EWA’S STORY

I had known Ewa for a considerable time prior to the implementation of the research project. She was a participant at the Drama Action Centre, where I was a trainer. I would see her at social gatherings. She is a highly intelligent person who has a great and sincere appreciation of her subjective world. Trained in a scientific tradition as a medical practitioner, and later embarking upon training and practice as a psychotherapist, she was an accomplished and respected professional in the conventional sense of the term. Middle-aged, long married, with two children, a boy and a girl, living in an eastern-facing cliff-top house overlooking the Pacific Ocean at prestigious Dover Heights, Ewa was in many ways a classic example of urbane success. Ewa was a budding artist and gardener. Tempestuous, demanding, naive, tender, vulnerable, with an acute sensitivity to the vicissitudes of her internal dramas, Ewa had explored much of her subjective world, but had so far not found a contextual framework in which to place her experiences. At the time of our first interview, Ewa’s husband Michael was also considering participating in the research project. I planned on interviewing them sequentially.

I arrived at their place, parked my car and made my way down their side path, knocked at the door and was greeted by both Ewa and Michael. Ewa’s broad face opened itself into a smile that radiated a genuine affection for me, her body held an ever-so-slight and somewhat disquieting urgency. I had been driving for quite a while and needed to stretch my legs. I walked down the narrow hallway and into their long and quite spacious lounge room. The end of the room opened onto their backyard, with uninterrupted views stretching out over the Pacific Ocean to a hazy horizon that was almost indistinguishable from the sky. I kept walking, somehow drawn to the open spaces beyond the somewhat sterile and understated yard. On my way to the outer limits, I glimpsed many freshly planted of what looked like native trees and shrubs, heavily mulched around their bases. There had been work commenced, transformational work.

Michael excitedly displayed his compact vegetable patch, and it was hard not to be thoroughly touched by the warmth and depth of their welcome. We meandered over to the edge of the precipice, and I felt the well-known rush of adrenal fluid course
through me, tightening my scrotum and sending my testicles scurrying up into safer territory. I had the image of flinging myself off the cliff and realising too late that I could not go back to safe ground. Chilling, electric, exciting, frightening, and as I reflect upon it now, an accurate metaphor for the research project that lay ahead.

We stepped back from the edge, re-entered the house, sat at a table overlooking the backyard and ocean, and whilst nibbling on savouries, began our interview.

1. First interview

When I asked her about her understanding of the shadow and its significance in her life, she said that, to her, there were two aspects: ‘One the part that I don’t like about myself and the other thing is the part that I don’t know about. That is actually unconscious’. They were significant, in that they would interfere with her achieving her goals and they were opponents that she wrestled with, as they interfered with her happiness. She experienced difficulties because, the harder she pushed, the more they would come. Other than push them away, she did not know what to do with them. She suspected that they were crucial to having a deep understanding of herself, and so would like to know them better.

Creativity is important to her. She believes that it is:

Stepping into the unknown ... and it's in my stepping into the unknown that I think I step into a bigger part of me. And that's tremendously exciting stepping into the unknown bits ... it is a wrestle ... a wrestle with the opposites. At the moment that creativity is allowed to exist there is hope. There is something comes alive, there is growth. Something is given birth too, yeah.

Her shadow object was a knife, and it represented the desire to kill. ‘The first thing that comes to mind is new life, killing new life. New born. Killing children. I suppose that is the area I have a big shadow’. She felt that she was probably doing something similar to her inner child, giving it little time to play, and felt shame around her ‘Kali’ stuff. She felt revulsion about human imperfection. Being an artist, she felt that she held the emotional memory of the community, the stuff that everyone else might deny.

When I asked her about any concerns she might have, she responded that she wondered about her capacity to ‘hold the group together’, and that she might be called upon to fulfil her role as ‘a professional caregiver’.
After years of chronic fatigue, cancer and non-stop physical pain, she had begun to express herself creatively following an inner prompting:

*The moment I started drawing I started weeping ... I started weeping and every bit of body pain and dissociation disappeared, I came back into body. Fragmentation disappeared. And body pain totally disappeared; the first time in about two years. And whilst I was drawing I was just weeping and there was this tree. And I couldn’t figure out what does this mean? I started drawing and the pain disappeared*. 

She had been in seclusion for two years and saw this project as an opportunity to move back out into the world, and believed that creativity would expand out from her shadow, and had already developed an interest in neoshamanism.

The next time we met was at the first weekend workshop.

2. First workshop

Ewa and Michael were the last of the group of eight to arrive. They came scurrying in loaded with food packages, looking and sounding both excited and somewhat sheepishly apologetic. They deposited their foodstuffs in the kitchen and re-entered the main hall. We began the group in a circle up on the stage area, and everyone introduced themselves in their own unique way.

She records in her diary some of her first experiences:

*I was seen as “The mother” – seemed ironical to me
The star is borne – darkness is necessary for the light to appear
In the resistance – In the struggle creation/birth occurs

My gesture of self-introduction was to look into everyone’s eyes & then to stretch my body, arms above my head & bowing.*

After the completion of the introductions, we left the stage area and ventured down into the main body of the hall, and began doing some introduction games, warming up body and soul while revealing aspects of self to other. Expanding and displaying a repertoire of roles while exploring their own and other’s bodies, bodies in motion, in relationship, in company. I led this section, offering instruction, interrupting the tempo and coherence of movement; selectively disrupting body and mind in an attempt to untangle habitual ways of being, moving and thinking. She records her discomfort:

*Being told what to do all the time became a problem – belly frozen and & hard –
When to speak
When to move
When to answer
When to walk & how quickly being constantly controlled*

There came a time in the workshop where the participants need to team up with someone for “pair work” in preparation for the shadowgraphs. This was not without
some fraught internal dilemma for her. I asked the participants to allow their inner
director to guide them into relationship. One person (Bronwyn) went for a comfort
break after my instructions were spoken, while the remainder milled around
somewhat awkwardly, and chose or were chosen; all, that is, except Ewa. She
records in her visual diary:

Not being selected for a partner – sad / dejected / unwanted
All the men chose other women – I waited for my partner to come out of the toilet –
did she want me? did she like me? she is beautiful – what if she thinks I want her too
much – she may not want to be with me – how do I behave to be OK, to be liked by
her – freeze in belly – sadness – want to curl up in a ball because I’m ugly – but must
keep going – don’t look at her beautiful eyes because they are mesmerising and she
may not want me – I will pretend I am cool, not interested at all for fear that she will
be revolted by my desire for her.

They made a perfect coupling Ewa
and Bronwyn, both artists, both
secretly admiring the other, both
passionate, sensual, unpredictable
and different enough; they wore very
different masks. Ewa, the shyer of
the two, coy in her first meeting.
Bronwyn, expansive wide eyes,
open-breasted. They moved into
shadow bodies on paper, and
seemed to work well together.

She chose two very different poses for her outline. A surprise development to me; a
spontaneous expression capturing and honouring her internal inclination. She writes
of her inner images:

I saw two figures diving into the water & swimming, so I painted blue all around the
figures using turquoise – exciting to cover such large area – then decided to cut
pictures from (indecipherable) of animals, beautiful women, birds then called to lunch

The lunch break triggered a crisis of confidence, for:

Upon returning I experienced a familiar “artistic block” – didn’t know where to start,
what materials to use, would it be good enough, so many to choose from – what to
about colour? If I use black then immediately I will restrict the expression to
monochrome & no I don’t want that – I want to keep it open as Robert said we will be
working on it all year – so I chose golden colours in chalk pastel to quickly cover the
body – he said to STOP but I did not want to leave the bodies empty – had to fill them
in some way quickly

Her artistic work had urgency to it, there seemed to be a disquieting desperation in
her physicality, verging on frantic. And yet her image was at odds with frenetic
movement. It seemed to flow, float in an ocean of ethereality. Her command of space was breathtaking in its audacity, she moved and edged her way down the paper as if oblivious to Bronwyn. Bronwyn seemed oblivious to any territorial intrusion; it was as if they inhabited two different universes, and perhaps I, a third.

At the end of the weekend, I invited the group to share some of their responses, a not altogether pleasant experience for her. She wrote in her diary:

**Responses to the work of others**

1. I esp. liked Ian’s work – ... Zorba the Greek dancing in deep connection with self – fiery colours all around
2. Repelled by Cath’s figure – strong fish and snake – anus – dismembered angry red hands, foot and club – green sick looking face – Robert asks us to comment if we are repelled however I feel that my comment is not taken up for discussion – my fear of offending Cath for the second time today

**Responses to my work**

Lisa says that she is drawn to it – it makes her feel calm, fluid

Robert contrasts it with Michael’s – mine is sensate, feeling state. Whereas Michael’s is full of stories – I am happy for that is my golden shadow

In looking at my two floating, swimming figures I see the FOETUS in the womb however I am struggling a lot with FEAR at the moment because Cath confronted me re naming her as brittle & finding her image repulsive but Robert did invite us to name our repulsion to anything – I feel frightened & unsupported – Robert ignores this exchange from Cath to me as he did when I said the above statements – should I raise it as an issue or just stay with it? I am frightened to raise it as I fear Robert wants to avoid conflict at any cost maybe because he knows Cath & her propensity for discord. So I shall just stay with the fear & discomfort of having spoken my truth and yet staying with it without being hurt. The truth is Cath’s image does give me the heebie-jeebies & my first impression of her was disastrous – she created a big conflict at Chardi’s and then just walked out. So I shall have to continue speaking my truth & see if I can stay with the discomfort.

The workshop closed and, after everyone had departed, Ewa returned and confronted me with her feelings of abandonment by me. She seemed very aggrieved, surreptitiously blaming me for her experience. We exchanged a few words and then, the encore completed, she finally left; I wondered if she would return.
3. Second workshop

a. Visualisation

Journal entry from Ewa’s Journal – she demonstrates the wondrous images of new life that are evoked when she relaxes, but struggles to accept their significance, focusing instead upon getting it right.

Guided meditation (outside) – much upper pain to start with took a while getting comfortable – head up or down? ... Last word I heard from Robert were about the seed – then fell asleep – can’t remember the dreams – next when I became aware that I was sleeping I wondered if I had been listening at an unconscious level to Robert’s guidance – I heard him say that now we could be the very thing we came here to be – our full potential – then I saw a tree – tall tree with the bird’s nest in the tree trunk – first I saw the woman’s belly with the nest & then the tree with the nest.

I thought I got it wrong – because I fell asleep weren’t original enough (a tree) and wasn’t present for most of the guided meditation – many eggs – that’s ... fecundity.

For me today is going much too slowly – I heard thunder & rain – that’s great!

After an opportunity for the group to share and record in their visual diaries, I prepared the area for their first journey. She records her memory of this event:

b. Journey 1  3. 8. 2002

2 questions
Who is to assist me with my shadow work?
What qualities do you bring to help me?

Rockpool & on a big rock on the left a big cat (jaguar?) is lounging as I approach – I feel good about all the wild animals around – snake, jaguar (or female lioness). I go for a swim and upon emerging on the other side put on fresh clothes (soft skin) – the jaguar appears on left, lion on right – then I lift my left arm and a falcon or eagle lands on my hand. I am worried as to whether I should find a human being – I ask who is here to assist me in my shadow work?

The path ahead goes into the darkness – from the right side a young virile black man appears – I am worried that my encounter with him will be too sexual – so I wave him out of my sight. Then another few similar figures dive out on the path – they are all male and virile & I am scared of their sexuality.

I decide that the only safe figure would be an old man – a Siberian shaman – grey hair, wizened wrinkled face ... face and body (stout and sturdy but shapely). I go to hug him but also am worried about sexuality – mine – that I will want him.

During the final afternoon sharing, she voiced some of her frustration and discontent with the pace of the day. The following morning, Ewa and Michael were again late, and entered as though emerging from two different worlds. Ewa agitated and breathy, and Michael quiet, simmering and resentful. They had been speeding, Ewa driving, and Ewa believed that she had been caught by a police radar. If this were
the case, she would lose her driving licence. She was angry with herself, with Michael, and with life in general. The journey later in the day was, in retrospect, rather confronting.

What do I love about life? And then find its opposite
I was feeling irritable because lunch was taking way too long & I felt not enough was happening – I wanted some exercises involving body or something but nothing other than constantly sharing our experiences for me it was totally dead and boring! This time I decided for the journey I would wait and see if a “sacred place” appeared without my creating it – nothing happened – although right at the start 2 symbols appeared

Dryness and wetness/water

No sacred place appeared, not did anyone appear to meet me. However, for a very brief moment I came upon a scene of 3 or more women – strong, sturdy women in their 60’s or 70’s – they were wrapping a big cloth around their legs & body (like a sarong) – I heard the voice saying “this is the new brand of woman” – Then they disappeared – very brief – they seemed to be standing on the edge of a park or stadium.

Her frustration spilled out into the closing circle, where she stated her opinion that the constant sharing was tedious, repetitious and boring. I couldn’t help but think that what she was in fact saying was that everyone in the group who had valued their experiences during the previous two days were tedious, repetitious and boring. And probably more accurately that I, being the designated leader, had created this tedious, repetitious and boring workshop. The group certainly didn’t seem to take it personally. Oh well, my demon! More shadows peeking out, I think. Both Ewa’s and mine.

4. Second interview

The household grounds had changed extraordinarily since our last interview. New growth was springing from all corners of their front garden. The fruit trees, once so small and fragile, were now lush and green; they had made it, taken root, and buds had appeared. The foliage was verdant, and the branches, although spindly, had a decidedly strong, determined presence. The lounge room, too, was somehow transformed: Ewa was everywhere. Her art commanded centre and peripheral stage. Michael, her husband, was somehow peculiarly not present, or at least not in a form that I could recognise. The back garden was a wonder to behold, let alone venture into. The new growth was astonishing. Their neighbours informed them upon their arrival that nothing would grow – it was too windy, too sunny, poor soil, not enough rain, and so on. How wrong they proven their neighbours to be! And how right they had proven themselves to be! She positively beamed as she and Michael walked me
around their garden. We went back inside, and over tea and snacks we commenced our second interview.

She had experienced a neoshamanic journey at our workshop, and she reflected upon that experience:

*The bit that I remember was about the theme of sexuality, sensuality. Where as I emerged from the sacred place the place that is my sacred place near a water hole (in the) bush. That as I journeyed there were all these young men appearing out of bushes along the path, presenting themselves as it were for sexual contact ... my response at the time was that I thought I ought not to engage with them because it would somehow be disloyal to my current life ... the feeling was surprise, some attraction to the idea and at the same time some recoiling from it, some fear, and then recoiling from it.*

She had been questioning her relationship with her soul, and was reading the signs of nature. She had been visited by two unusual birds, one of whom she had caged. ‘I felt that she was unsafe unless I put her in a cage’. However, she soon saw ‘how incredibly angry she was’, and that she was ‘desperately unhappy in the cage’. So she ‘took her outside, spoke to her, and she came out, and she gradually walked along my shoulder and arm and we looked at each other, and I said it was time to go, and away she flew’.

*The lesson that came from that bird. it came at a time when I was looking at how do I treat my soul? What relationship do I have with my soul? My learning from that was I cannot cage it, it cannot be caged, even if it looks like it is the safest place to be, it is actually an unhappy place to be ... And not long after that another bird arrived, quite out of this field, from West Australia, and I decided it may not be safe for it, the cats may get it but I cannot cage it. So this bird would come and go as I was doing my work, my drawing.*

The first workshop was both exciting and frightening. She had become frightened because of an interaction with another group member. She became frustrated in the second workshop as not enough was happening.

*In terms of the process, the drawing, I was also struggling in the second workshop to actually allow ... Not an easy place I know ... and how do you work from that place of difficulty of the shadow? Of the rage, of the destructiveness, the frustration, how do I work from that place? It was much easier to create in the first workshop when there was a lot of pleasure in doing it. My drawing is of two figures interacting and its um, I’m pretty sure my feelings were of pleasure and sensuality and their two fluid figures in a sort of watery environment. So it felt very like a sensate, emotional sensuous interaction which was pleasurable. When it came to the second workshop for which I was also feeling a bit afraid anticipating that the person I was having the conflict with was going to be there ... I’m no longer feeling sensuous. I’m feeling frustrated, cranky, irritable, fed up, and so I wasn’t quite sure how to handle ... I was no longer in this beautiful space at all. How do I bring this one into this one? And for me I didn’t quite resolve it. And yet I did ... you pointed it out, “why didn’t you work from that place?”* so I wish you had said...
that to me earlier – blame you (laughs) – I wish you’d said that to me earlier. So I found too much time talking about other things. But um, how to bring in the shadow, bring in the feelings that are not so nice into the work.

When she talks about her creative process, she becomes quite animated, and lively.¹

And then I brought colour into it then I attacked it with colour and it was a transformative experience for me very much. At times it was hellish and then it became ecstatic. It really became ecstatic, I felt exuberance, ecstatic experiences listening to music, singing, while I was doing this.

She said that she could easily go into altered states of consciousness, and appreciated and participated in other realities:

By looking at something in a particular way I’m able no longer to see what is there but see something quite different. And ... it’s as if there is a parallel reality that exists all the time, at least one, probably more ... I think they exist all the time. As to what I see during that journey, I don’t know whether it is presented to us or part of us create our own language for understanding what we see there? ... it’s a mystery. 

(long pause) there’s a part of me that I am still rejecting that, that communication from the other world, and that I can’t fully trust it. Is this actually a safe way to go? Can I really do that? Does that other world, those communications, are they safe in this world? How do I work with that? Is it literal? Is it literal or is it something else or ... not sure ... and there’s a part of me that judges, that I must of created that, and that’s not a nice thing to do.

Her expectation of encountering an old, wise shaman on her journey was confounded by being enticed with these young, sexy, sensual guys. Where there is no other intention other than the sensuous. She emphasises, ‘Whereas if it was an older, wise shaman that would be ok. Because there’s a more noble pursuit, pure sensuality doesn’t feel noble enough in my judgment, in my kind of thinking’.

5. Final workshop

We commenced the workshop with each of the participants drawing a Rune. Ewa drew Berkana, and becomes aware of her lusting over other Runes. She writes in her journal:

¹ As I write about Ewa and her animal encounters, I hear behind me a kafuffle as a yellow-breasted robin attempts to escape my room through the closed rear window. I walk as relaxed as possible to the rear window, reach out, and the robin perches itself on the bulb just below my thumb. I then slowly walk to the front doors and the robin flies off into the vegetation on the opposite side of our clearing. I glance down at my hand and notice that it has left behind a small dropping of excrement. A “holy turd”, as Maureen Roberts terms it.

Initially, I didn’t write about this incident, didn’t think too much about it. However, a few minutes later another bird, this time a wren, flew into my room, and when I went to assist it out, it flew instead into the room next door, the art room. It attempted to escape through a small closed window. I went to its aid, opened the window, it flew out. The wren is Ewa’s husband Michael’s favourite bird, one he has an intimate affinity with.
I feel jealous of other people’s runes – so much so that I can barely remember my own – no I’ll look up the book – I recall something growth may occur in affairs of the world, family matters one’s relationship to self or the Divine flow of things into their new forms.

Berkana – growth, rebirth, A Birch Tree
Leads to blossoming & ripening –
gentle penetrating and pervasive
called to go into things deeply with care and awareness – first dispense resistance then accomplish the work – for this to happen – your will must be clear & controlled, your motives correct. Any dark corners should be cleansed, this must be carried out diligently – sometimes with expert help once resistance is dispensed and rectification carried out and seen to hold firm, then, through steadfastness and right attitude, the blossoming can occur. Modesty, Patience, Fairness & Generosity are called for here.
Not sure what this means – more therapy? Voice Dialogue to identify the obstacles, the resistance, the critic?

When the time arrives for entering into the arena of creative engagement with her shadowgraph, she appears reluctant and disgruntled. She prowls around her shadowgraph with shoulders hunched and lines of pain furrowed into her brow. She begins collage work, cutting and pasting pictures onto her body outline, but her heart is not in it. Her despondency is accentuated by her husband Michael’s ebullience.

She records:

Doing the painting – I feel frustrated because Michael tells me he is delighting in every mark he makes – he says he knows how Emily Kungwarrye feels – each mark is exciting to him so I realise I have been rushing & sticking pictures on not daring to paint – so then I hate mine – stupid – he’s the artist not me – it’s bullshit – I am not an artist – I’m not involved in the process.

She shares some of her thoughts at the closing circle. She is clearly distressed, in fact quite the reverse of her husband Michael, who is radiating self-confidence and acceptance. The following day, she begins with an honest and difficult account of her previous night’s personal desolation.
I shared the experience of being self-critical re my appearance – last night seeing my bum as wobbly in a shop window, then this morning at home my “dowager’s hump” – I was shocked and full of self-hatred: ugly grotesque, deserving of contempt & annihilation. Death and extermination is the only solution.

The parallel with my work – the liking & then the hating of it to such an extent that I want to destroy it – beauty turns to ugliness unpredictably & instantaneously & seems that she deserves utmost contempt.

Journal entry

Her denigrating perspective dominates her morning. At one time, she picks up a pair of scissors and stands poised over her work. At this point, I experience a deep horror, for I can almost read her thoughts as to what she is contemplating doing, cutting up her work. I encourage her to be true to her inner world, to bring that into her work. I then sit back and watch fascinated as, after some more pacing, she picks up a corner of her work and begins to cut into it. She dissects with what looks like indiscriminate abandonment. Many, many pieces are made from her original one. I physically and emotionally feel each cut as I observe her actions. After a while, the dissection is complete enough for her. She stands back and peruses her handiwork. A pile of much smaller pieces has taken the place of her one-piece original. She looks over at me and I feel a wave of compassion towards her. She begins to arrange the pieces in a new order. I walk over to her with a large piece of paper off-cut, a backing piece. After locating glue, she begins to stick the pieces in their new locations, their new home.

At the completion of the day, all share their impressions of the their own work and the work of others. She provides a scathing and somehow poignant account of her own process and work, evoking both a sense of compassion and revulsion almost in equal measure. I was not to meet up again with her until what I anticipated would be our final interview.

6. Final interview

I arranged to interview Michael and Ewa on the same day at the same place, their house at Dover Heights. I managed to record Michael without a hitch, but Ewa’s interview did not record. I conducted the third and final interview two months after
this setback. The house and garden had continued to flourish and metamorphose into something resembling a cliff-top oasis. Birds were flocking there from all over Australia. The internal rooms were now under the spell of her art. She had transformed her being into one of lightness, she was physically and emotionally soft. Her edginess was no longer apparent.

We began our interview in the dining area of the house, our usual place. I unfurled her full shadowgraph on the floor, and Ewa walked around it several times, deeply peering into it. Her open, intense scrutiny was captivating. After a few minutes, I asked her what her response was to her shadowgraph.

She was touched by the softness and vulnerability:

> Whereas I'm also aware that I've got a lot of imagery of strength and power ... it's the soft that draws me. And I notice that I wasn't really aware till I made myself aware of the form that I painted ... yeah I guess I feel touched by the bits, the pictures I cut and put in there of the vulnerable the soft. Of the child swimming in water.

> I remember putting them there but I don’t remember feeling them much ... I feel them, I feel them now and I feel tenderness towards them ... I feel some tenderness for the whole thing ... mostly to the water images the picture of the waterfall, child swimming in water. [She mentioned that] my whole journey over the past three years has been falling apart really. I’m just beginning to come together so maybe ... this cutting up into pieces, dismembering, that’s been my experience in the past three years, dismemberment and the last experience of that and I feel I’m in a new place at the moment. It feels quite different.

> I was quite close to my daughter until she was six. When she went to school it triggered me into my own trauma I began to reject her. I didn’t know at the time. And how it has in my relationships. The natural world I’ve been in love with for a while but the human world and my relationship to my child ...

The research had affected her in two ways, one direct, the other indirect. ‘The direct one was one of the journeys towards the end. I asked the question “what am I here to do? Who’s here to help me / what is my life path to be? What is my work to be?” She was surprised when a disembodied vagina appeared. Another image was one of a huge head sculpture with paintbrushes in its mouth. She uses this image when her inner critic plagues her about being “a self-indulgent artist”. ‘I often ask do I have the right to do this? The answer will come when I go down the beach a paint brush will wash up, all the time this is happening. So that image I come back to as a confirmation for me’.

When she reflected upon shadow, she had been surprised that:

> Initially when I thought of shadow I thought it was all in terms of negative shadow like all the bad ... but actually what I feel is ... the aggressive parts of me there’re pretty conscious yeah so I used to think “oh there’s aggression there”. But actually what has
been in the shadow are two things that I’m only beginning to be aware of ... and I think that’s the part that ... I mean how many still lifes are have been painted in the world? What’s the point of painting (them) and I say I don’t know the point, but I paint them.

What had also been of benefit to her was the difference it had made in her relationship with her husband Michael. ‘That has been of tremendous value ... watching him (Michael) having very big experiences I was absolutely delighted ... it really has opened him up to that other reality’. She had altered in her appreciation of intellectually disabled people, and had – by staying true to her process – painted a picture of a Down’s Syndrome man:

Now, this image came of this retarded man. And after the process with you I had this image of this retarded man’s head, it was still a difficult time, so I painted on one sheet of paper. Part of my shadow.

(Ewa sounds delighted). She concluded that it is far better to accept whatever emerges than to reject, deny, justify or intellectualise it. She felt it was far better to express it artistically.
Completed shadowgraph
1. The shadow for me now is probably expanding as I begin to get a feel of what has been missing from my repertoire of life – I had a mainly dark view of it before viz. the child killer, the man killer, the Kali goddess of destruction as I was pretty conscious of huge anger, rage in me towards all those who threatened me either through ravenous hunger or potential violence. However there is a new set of characters and characteristics that are emerging from my unconscious shadow and they are the terrified abused child, the naive unknowing maiden, the sensuous soft woman and the woman who does not know nor understand what is going on oscillating between hope and hopelessness. None of these are well established but they are appearing in brief glimpses from the shadows. I would love to engage in a dance with these parts but they are barely accessible to me.

You ask to what I attribute these changes. Well I must acknowledge the work we did together as being of particular importance in giving these images a visual expression. In your encouraging us to give expression to whatever was going on – especially when it was difficult and where I could not find any other voice I began to draw or paint and express my state of body-mind. It led to my working in a very new way artistically – rather than from an external subject the image came from within – this is very new for me. It led to my drawing images of a "Burning woman", "Retarded man", "Shamanic woman", "Divine child" – each emerging as processes in stages that had a life of their own. Each of these works felt deeply satisfying to make – most of them emerging out of a painful state often giving relief to the pain. Unfortunately though I submitted these works for major art competitions they were rejected which is difficult for me to deal with – can I value them as valid and important?

I have also chosen to continue on the path of introspection and isolation, choosing not to return to paid work, which is very tempting for financial and self-esteem reasons. This decision to dive deeper into myself is revealing another layer of wounding and hopefully of further parts in the shadow.

2. The processes that we engaged in with you that were particularly helpful was the one I just mentioned i.e. valuing and giving expression to whatever is, and the other very important processes were the journeys which I still return to as major guidelines in my life viz. the question I asked in one journey was what was my path to be as far as work was concerned and I received a very clear picture of a large stone sculpture of a head with paint brushes emerging from its mouth. That continues to sustain me when I am tempted to return to paid psychotherapy work and put down my brushes and the struggle with the unknown and unstructured.

The other journey which contained a free floating vagina (as a response to my question of who will help me) followed by my walking along a path and being met by virile black youths jumping out of the surrounding bushes ready to engage in what feels like sensual-sexual adventures (from which I retreat for fear of being unfaithful to my marriage and creating insecurity in my husband). This last one I still have not integrated however it continues to come into my awareness inviting insight.

3. Nature – my relationship with nature has been one of dialogue and intimacy for the past 8 years since a profound series of experiences followed a diagnosis of breast cancer. That relationship continues to be profound and sacred. It is the path of my connection with the divine and the lessons and support have been enormous and life-saving. Being involved in the work with Robert was affirming of that relationship. I did not feel so alone.

4. Shamanic journeying – I regret that I have not been involved in formal journeying which in fact I would like to do on a regular basis. I have tried to set it up for my husband and myself however with limited success. Informally various animals have
appeared in dreams and I often record and work with the dreams through drawing and writing. However I would like to be guided through the journey by someone else. I guess I need to develop some more discipline around this.

5. The shamanic path – well though I am living in an urban setting I am actually living a hermitic way at present and actually am committed to being in dialogue with my inner self and the dialogue with nature and the mystery however it manifests itself. I am going in and out of very painful states of mind and body and relying largely on myself to stay with these states in order to fully feel them and embrace them. I look for meaning in the various visits I get from animals that come to see me. At present as I am dealing with dissociative states I have decided to ground myself by working close to and with the earth. I am trusting intuitive impulses which initially may seem irrational and impractical e.g. I have just created a 5 metre diameter circle in my garden where I am removing the grass and planting flowering red native plants at the periphery — there is a path leading out from this circle to a lower level and then out to the sea. As I am working on this structure I hear an unusual bird call. I look up and see a most unusual bird for these parts: the sacred kingfisher. I go onto the Internet to make contact with a woman who I hope can help me with the debilitating and bizarre symptoms that I am struggling with (Maureen Roberts). As I look on her website I press a section on Princess Di and what is revealed to me is the myth of Parsifal and the Fisher King — and the Holy Grail — and suddenly to my amazement I realise that I have been creating the grail in my backyard and the kingfisher has come to let me know!

I guess more than anything at present I am living the shamanic path — trusting the inner voice, refusing to be swayed by well-wishing and concerned friends and relatives who suggest all kinds of ways to relieve or escape my pain and trusting the dialogue with the mystery, with nature. However it is lonely and scary and painful and I wonder if I am doing something wrong that it’s taking so long. And ultimately how can I serve the community — will I ever be part of it again?

6. Journeying – nothing very new here as I haven’t been doing any formal journeying however many dreams come as well as daytime visions which I try to capture with sketches and contemplate them.

7. Shadow – in drawing and painting images from within I am revealing to myself a child that is being sexually abused even though I have no conscious memories of such events. It is hard to accept these as truth however there they are and I am saying to myself that surely like all the other images they must have meaning. This is the next phase of work for me at the body-mind level. The lizard appears both in dream and in reality at my doorstep (blue-tongue). As I read about trauma and the familiar symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder I learn that they reside in and are mediated by the ‘primitive’ or reptilian brain. I go to the zoo and I weep as I see the lizards. There is a deep recognition.

I guess what has not surfaced yet in my dreams or drawings are the playful unwounded child nor the fully sensual feminine woman. I await them with great anticipation.

warm regards, Ewa.
Kaye and I had initially met at a shamanic workshop that Vicki Dean and I co-facilitated in 1999. She had booked into the workshop alongside three of her cronies from Wild Women. For the most part, the four of them were engaging, lively and effervescent. They would also display a determined earnestness and respect for the nature of their internal world. They were sincere, respectful and open to potentialities outside the conventional — after all, they were participating in a workshop entitled ‘Introduction to Shamanism’.

Kaye, bright-eyed, middle-aged, thrice married mother of four girls, held an optimistic enthusiasm towards life: ‘Every cloud has a silver lining, but sometimes it takes a bit of locating’; ‘the cup is half full not half empty’. I met up with Kaye at her house at Terrigal on the Central Coast NSW. Terrigal is an affluent, beachside, holiday haven blessed with a safe, sandy beach with a natural ‘toddler friendly’ rock pool at its southern end. It is close enough to Sydney to attract day-trippers. At its northern end is a lagoon for canoeing. The water provides an ever-present fluid identity, a backdrop. The promenade of Terrigal is festooned with newly renovated cafes and restaurants, dominated at its southern extremity by a rather out-of-sync eight-storey hotel/motel extravaganza.

She and her husband Nick own a split-level, partly renovated house nestled on more than an acre of land tucked away from main roads. The block slopes, has a multitude of trees, and views over other small acreages littered about the hills and valley basin beneath. As I pulled into the driveway, a lawn maintenance man was mowing one of their multi-decked lawns.

Kaye greeted me at the door and led me into her lounge-cum-office area. She was as sparkly and bright-eyed as I remembered. After exchanging pleasantries and a cup of tea, we settled down and commenced our interview.
1. First interview

Kaye understood her shadow as being:

> Very much a part that part of me within my psyche that I don’t address and that I suppress ... It can be things like rage and anger and hurt and those things that often in the world that seem to be negative ... for me the concept of shadow is a catalyst for me to work on me.

The ‘work’ she referred to was exploring her beliefs stemming from childhood. She had been instructed as a child that she was either really good or was a really terrible person; one or the other. She had also been instructed that being angry was not acceptable as it was not ladylike. Since her personal explorations had begun she had made new and different friends. Her relationship with her family had also changed, they had more responsible conversations.

She went on to talk about her improved relationship with her four daughters. She admitted that while it is difficult for her to assess the impact of her new explorations on her younger ones, she had made the following observation of her relationship with her sixteen- year-old Alex:

> I’ve found a change in her in that she is rebellious, and she is reacting to what is going on within her body and the changes she can see coming up in the world, when she completes the HSC and all those things. However, her anger at us for simply being her parents dissipates very quickly. So it isn’t a long-term sort of bubbling along horrible pot of yuck, it is ah “I’m sixteen why can’t I just be out there doing the things I want to do why do I have to live here? Why do I have to conform? Why do I have to?” And then it passes and we have beautiful times and we’ll find that there’ll be a conflict of some description and Alex ... and in some measure, in some way it will be resolved, and we’ll move along. So for me the impact is that I can get out of the way.

She now has a different relationship with anger, that for her has been a catalyst for change. ‘So even in the yucky parts of anger is this enormous beautiful life’. For Kaye, it was incredibly important to be able to have the vocabulary to express her inner world, and that with this new-found ability, she is sending out an authentic ripple:

> My authentic self is my way of getting to my soul. So the authentic self for me is the part that jumps up and says “you’re not being authentic”... a name to give to that part of me that is leading the way back to soul that jumps up ... it isn’t the critic, and it isn’t the inner child. And it is actually a core part of me that is like a conduit back to my soul. So it’s like the speaking part of my soul.

> I’m working at the moment on creativity in my thinking within my being.

She reflected that sorting out what came first, her creativity or the shadow, is a little like asking about which came first, the chicken or the egg?

> And maybe they were both born in me at the same moment.
She further commented:

But they certainly are interactive for me now. I can now understand it, acknowledge it and accept it. I can move forward and integrate it.

My only way to connect completely, authentically and congruently with my soul is to acknowledge and accept myself as I am at this moment, there is nothing else, of accepting it in every sense of my being. I’m enough.

Her shadow object was a mandala:

It’s simply what came out after a particular meditation. And in the very centre is … a mother. What came into my um meditation was that beautiful Mexican mumma. Very round and big and giddy and joyful and all of that. And she’s ended up half in shadow as well. The reality is that as beautiful and wonderful and great that entity is, half of that lies in the shadow. So whether it is acknowledged, integrated or not, it’s still there. So that was my thing. I have a heart in shadow and I have a heart in the light.

She was quite excited about joining the research:

And I don’t have a test after it, and I don’t feel as if I having to perform in that sense, I think that’s just magic.

Kaye was fine with the issue of being photographed throughout the project. She felt that the timing of the workshop series was fortuitous, like joining the flow of a river. She reflected:

I get quite lost if I lose that sense of that. And some of my journeys have been around losing that sense. And knowing then that I’ve strayed. So it’s this huge imagery that also allows me to stay on my path. I love myths and stories and that’s been a huge learning for me. For I’ve denied that in myself for so long.
2. First workshop
Kaye arrived as bright-eyed as she was at our last meeting. Her sharing in our first circle was one of enthusiasm and optimism. She expresses as much in her journal:

Drive here, I found myself smiling, a big release for me to be participating in a group with no exam or expectation from others or myself.

She was particularly affected by the initiation ceremony I conducted outside, whereby I revealed some of the history of this hall, of this land.

Honouring the land & being thankful for its history evoked a huge reverence in me. Robert was the priest in that moment. Bless the land & all its people.

The experience of entering into the centre of the group circle, doing a gesture and being enthusiastically applauded was significant for her:

Stepping into the circle, sitting on the floor & momentarily holding the space for all of us was strong for me – to be applauded strangely interesting. Acknowledging my ancestors & the connection with them I hold. The pain of their struggles in my body. A compassion for their courage in my heart.

She notes a paradox, she writes:

My light – Death, Pain, Fear, Love
Shadow – Death, Pain, Fear, Love

In the Walking and Sculpting couples work, Kaye worked with one of the men. At first, a somewhat confronting experience for her:

My man hater was present had bubbled up prior to starting & my energy was low. As I walked with my male partner & sculpted him, his allowing produced a feeling of safety in me ... I felt O. K. walking with my partner I then felt safe as we proceeded in the exercise. I could sense what direction to go in or I felt the urge to lead & I did. I felt in partnership in the relationship. When my partner held my hand it felt so right, an exchange of heart felt emotion. Being sculptured was good. I felt at peace & could really allow.

There was one other confrontational moment for her, an inexplicable resistance:

Voicing courage did not happen for me, I felt it well up inside me but couldn’t be voiced. I am so tired, so exhausted this weekend has been so big for me – is this weekend a good idea? I found myself to be quite emotional around the pain of others. I identified with their pain. I am asking myself why have I again attracted a “first time” situation? I am O. K. with working through & see what comes, but today I felt like I wanted something organised and structured. This is my stuff. Late in the
day & I found myself too tired to think. Going with my emotions was not good either as I would of cried a river.

My inner child really needed to know she was safe. My parent came forward and held her. I gave myself permission to be human and my humanness bubbled forth. I am grateful for the honesty of the group, for being a part of it and for the process. I am no more happy with the outcome. I am no more comfortable with acting, but I feel I allowed my process. Whether that was admitting & owning my fragility or allowing my self to feel safe.

Given her discomfort with the games and acting, she nevertheless never shirked the following day. Her edginess was obvious, but she fully participated in all activities, she records her internal world:

Beautiful Morning feeling ok after last night more connection with the others. Whatever happens today is OK – feelings of expansion & contraction, knowing & not knowing. Games fun & nice way to connect to the others. A cohesion & an extension an honesty & warmth of yesterday.

When we moved on to doing the body outlines, she notes:

![Body Shadow Drawing](image)

**Body Shadow Drawing**

An intimate sacred process, holding and being held. An outline, some colour more for me a sense of sacred within whatever its face or shape or the word evoked. Shadow is not shown, not clear, not acknowledged. Sometimes watery or transparent. Sometimes dynamic in its expression but elusive in its meaning is then no longer a shadow but an ally, a friend. A new way of holding that aspect of me.

Outline & beginning to work on my Body Shadow is a process of unfolding, unearthing & some understanding as that which I have no words for comes from my inner world. It looks unfamiliar, unknown in this form.

Not completing today seems odd as I feel it is complete today – simply more to come.

**Shadowgraph, workshop 1**

Towards the end of the day, the participants were invited to comment on their own process and on the work of others, how it affected them:

Commenting on my drawing were very close to how I see it/feel it. Soft outer ~ love, roses, emotion, movement, inner the seed growing, change happening, new life, new energy ~ through grief & understanding.
Looking at all the drawings I feel a sense of knowing intuitively – in my solar plexus – that each painting really belongs to its owner – the essence, the pain, the experience, the love.

An artist's day, evoking the child to play to be, to see. How incredibly, divinely delicious.

We finished the workshop and did not meet up again until the second workshop in August.

3. Workshop two
The group got under way and after our by now usual delay awaiting the arrival of Michael and Ewa; an annoyance, it seems, only experienced by me.

Kaye begins her visual journal thus:

Group Process.
Discussion Time
shared feelings & insights
absent friends, evocative & human
Great to be together
to share our journey
to tell our stories
Chatting & sharing
listening, loving, being
experiencing, knowing
I am happy to be
to embrace the
reality of our humanity
Cath, I wish you well,
I honour your decision, I
am grateful to have met you. I thank you for your humanness.

Kaye also records in her diary her thoughts and experiences she has had in regard to her daughter Alex:

Since we were last together I have experienced a great shift in the relationship between my 16 y.o. daughter and myself. Together we have faced the ending of a long-standing friendship with the mother of a girl who we as a family have nurtured & and had live with us on & off for years. We have also talked and cried a together over a challenge in my daughter's relationship with her boyfriend.

I honour Alex's need to be herself & now it is so wonderful to feel a strong connection once more'.

The group completed a guided visualisation, a process Kaye intimately records:

Guided Meditation

Where is the line between visualisation & dream state?
My experience was both meditation & dream.
voices, music, ~ sound
colour, experience
Flow of life, nature, energy
emotions
Gaia
Forest
community of roots
complex yet simple
I experienced what
was going on beneath
me as a seed floating
~ lives in progress
~ music, song
~ talk, chatter, yelling
~ emotions ~ anger, fear, love
~ death, dieing, birth, rebirth
life
ironies in the tree roots are
greater and more complex than
the tree – Roots are part of the tree but I know not much about
them

Rich loamy soil ~

The afternoon was the group’s time for their first journey. They journeyed to find out,
“Who will assist me in my journey into shadow?” and “What characteristics will they
bring that will help me?”

She wrote in her journal:

Panther – stayed close
Felt right, good
As it should be.

Two panthers – one black
One white
The black one stayed.

Strong – in
mind, body &
spirit

Strong
Swift
Energetic
Swift in knowing
Energetic ~ emotionally.

I wore a bracelet
Panther would take
it in his mouth as
if to lead me.

Commotion, fire
Drumming, singing
Dancing, chanting
My journey very separate
Grandfather
Shooed me away
to explore
I felt rejected, he
opened his arms &
embraced me &
shooed me away again

I felt a great sense of comfort with panther.

3a second day second workshop

The second day of the workshop allowed time for the participants to focus primarily on their “Body Print”, as Kaye termed it. She writes of her experience:

Internal journey, design focus.
I felt connected & could hear drums & children playing. I was aware of smoke & a sense of having done this before in very sacred journey. ~ Linked with recurring flashes of having been a medicine woman ~ this usually comes to me when I work with someone else – in this instance the other person is my body print.

Standing back & looking at my work I see an outer world of “A bed of Roses” & an inner world of differing design ~ much as my real world is.

The next journey asked the questions “What do you love about life? What is a symbol for its opposite”. Kaye records her journey thus:

What I love about life is hope, the opposite for me is no hope. The symbols that came for me were an arrowhead being hope and dust being no hope. My symbols came the moment the word symbol was spoken. I walked down a stairway with Panther to my sacred place, there was drumming and dancing. I received the information (as a personal insight) that by adding a rod to the arrowhead it became no hope for the animal it killed, by adding water to the dust it became hope for plant life.

I understand this as the fine line between the two. Interesting to me are the elements of rock ~ arrowhead & earth, ~ dust wood ~ rock & water.

I found my journey to be peaceful and unfolded at its own pace.

In her journal, she records:

For me for this weekend one of my observation is my lack of belief in absolutes. Robert at one point you said “if you know (something?) before (the process?) then you were kidding yourself” – badly quoted by me but at the time it disturbed something in me & it was my lack of belief in absolutes.

The exception is birth & death there is no absolute about when death may occur however there are a few exceptions, how death may occur – however there are exceptions ... m m m m m m!

I have enjoyed the weekend
I love the honesty I hear
I honour all of our processes

I enjoyed the laughter & chatter at lunch.

I am conscious of being quieter ~

I have felt a connection
With everyone – no one
In particular.
I love the teas, & food & breaks. Time to write & explore the processes – our talking circle and the space in between the talking

I have felt annoyed at times, unappreciated, frustrated as well as loved, accepting, trusting & very grateful
I have allowed my emotions to well up & really feel them and own them. I have not shared them as they are mine And are for me to gauge how I am & under what conditions I feel them.
I have trusted and loved myself enough to roll with all that happened for me.

Oh The Space

Shadowgraph, workshop 2
Kaye and I met up for our second interview at my home in Yarramalong Valley.

4. Second interview

Between the second workshop and the second interview, life had intervened in Kaye’s life with a severity of indescribable intensity. Alex, Kaye’s beloved eldest daughter, after suffering severe headaches and other physical symptoms, was medically examined and a swelling on her brain was detected. Alex was admitted to hospital in Sydney for exploratory surgery, and Kaye went into residence to be by her side. The operation revealed an aggressive tumour and the prognosis was grim. The hospital advised Alex to remain in hospital. Alex decided to return to her home, and be with her family. Alex determined to fill her time in as normal a manner as
possible. Kaye and her family fully supported her in her resolve. After consulting with Kaye, I informed the group as to Kaye and her family’s circumstances.

I was to discover post interview that much of what was spoken and taken for granted as being recorded was inaudible. This interview was somewhat different in structure, as I commenced the interview with two participants (Kaye and Lisa) present. I also incorporated a journey into the process. The interviews continued immediately after the journey.

Lisa had moved onto Kaye’s property at Terrigal and was living in a caravan down the back of the land, in amongst the trees. To hear them talk, I got the impression that they were getting on very well together.

Kaye understood her journeys as entering an altered state of consciousness that was an altered state of being:

I find I like going with the visualisation, I find that that’s when I go to the place that is ... for me altered consciousness it is like another state of being, and for me I can’t pin down what is specifically internal or external, it is just simply there ... What I find I do is I tend to slip into a different state of consciousness within my waking time and it can happen in an instant for me.

Altered states of consciousness would at times quite literally tap her on the shoulder in her everyday life:

On the beach the other day I was walking and I had Alex and a girlfriend friend walking behind me and Angel our puppy. And I was walking in front and I felt a tap on my shoulder and I realised it wasn’t a human tap and I sort of hesitated, because I’m at that place where “oh my goodness what’s next?” And I had to consciously think, “ok if someone taps me on the shoulder what would I normally do? I’d turn”. So I turned around and I had this very intense sense of changing consciousness and having this knowing that this is the way it’s going to be for a really long time. That it is going to be Alex and Dawn, Angel and I walking on the beach, and we’re going to walk on the beach all over the world for a really long time. And so it was like being lightened and being told that everything is going to be fine.

These experiences had great significance for her:

A big part of me believes that I am open for it even though there is that little corner of me that is still caught in old belief systems and old habits, and old ways of thinking, and caught up in the medical world and all that.

Kaye related that the specific journeys were sometimes so relaxing and she was living in a very taxing time that she would simply doze, but that she felt she didn’t miss anything:

It’s like it happened anyway. I found that I slipped into it very easily and the altered states of consciousness came with the drawing, with the writing. Sometimes in the
group, especially if someone talked for a bit of time about their journey and their process and there was a connection and that would take me with it.

For Kaye, the journey was ‘a total thing’, a feeling she could feel as we spoke and she recollected:

I can feel it now it is in my hands it's a sensation in my body, it’s a feeling. I used to always feeling in my solar plexus back then it’s sort of a third eye thing. I could see when people were describing things using visual words I often could see a flash of something or an image or it's not an aura for I don't seem to connect that way but it’s almost a sense of a presence in and around the individual ... They’re like gentle voices and I couldn’t even tell you if it was a male or female voice. Something like the words drifting but they’re drifting, but it's like I hear them, but their words they don’t seem to have a picture a sound or a tone it’s simply that they’re very gentle ...

Interview Journey question – “What is it I need to know about my fear & the wisdom to know the difference between fear & caution?”

There were many responses. The first was the scales & was received immediately – there was so much more to come.

I was met by my brother & taken to the castle to meet the Merlin. Being with my brother again was wonderful & I held on to him all the time. A very regal horse accompanied us.

My brother & the Merlin took me on a journey into my future & there was Alex holding her babies ~ I was afraid to believe this & I was brought back & laid down with furs to cover me & my bear laid beside me. I was given a cup of tea ~ warmth and love. As I left the eagle flew with us ~ I parted from my brother at the gates ~ as I looked into his eyes I saw myself.

My journey was big & I don’t understand it all as yet. Many symbols & links past & future. A knowing that I have a real chance of helping Alex survive this time – as my mother died in 1492. Charles also died ~ around 1510, his essence has always been with me – he was reborn in 1953 but died 40 mins later – he has always been with me – I let him go only recently.

We completed the interview and met up again at the third and final weekend workshop.

5. Final workshop

The workshop began with each participant drawing a Rune. Kay drew Odin – the unknowable. She remarked that she had ‘known’ this Rune would be hers:

I had a real knowing ...
The blank was calling me.

So true, so where I am
death is very real to me
all things known are unknown
the unknown is becoming known.

The participants worked for much of the day on their shadowgraphs. Kaye carried on with much the same energy that she had displayed during the initial workshops. She writes:
Shadowgraph T.M.

Soulscapes
black ~ represents shadow
things denied
otherwise unknown

Black like Blank, Void, unknown
not knowable, absence of light
bringing out the shadows

Black in my painting
is for me the opportunities I have
to know myself – always present
always changing as I choose to embrace
my shadow – my unknown self.

Transformation of
roses into light & dark

Bed of roses
~ hiding behind happiness.

Colourful shadows
protectors, friends
Angels, opportunity info & assistance.

Shadows
struggles with life & death
unknown

Bodily Emotion
Very open heart, a desire
to lie within the work (paint still wet though)
an embracing of meaning, understanding, knowledge & lack of all these
a deep sense of honouring all this in me.

So much goes on within me – as I am – fear in my belly.
a bed of roses, now revealed with shadows & pain as well as love and support.
Angels, beings & transformation.
The shadows giving definition.

End of day one

Second day –

Tears of Honour
honouring of the Tears

Pain & guilt, Anger, despair
anxiety, joy, love, happiness
concern, regard, connecting.

Our soul will not be tamed

A. You are loved, & held – grandfather
Alex in my cave – furs covering
& my bear – Her spirit is raging
her soul is safe. She looks peaceful
& well.

The spear – a plant

Soulscape

Finished ~ never
Blurred are the lines of my physical shape
-memories still held of past experiences ~ an
opportunity for expansion in the physical world ~
& also in the spiritual & emotional worlds

Who am I ~ I have no answer that
defines me for I am undefinable
ever changing ~ I recognise aspects
from long ago struggles, who will I
be tomorrow? What is tomorrow?

A releasing of what was known & healed
yet a tension that reminds me of
responsibility.
I am mother & embrace mother
but I am other also

True colours? Authentic Self
In this moment

The arrow & G’father
have appeared also a plant
arrived as a gift

An ending,
a new beginning

A lovely, big, great, horrible
experience for me
I don’t know lots of intimate details about
everyone in the usual way, but feel
I have felt the essentialness of everyone
in some way.

Fare ... well
go forth and be ...

Creating new stories for
our time together will
show me how I am
at that moment

An honouring of our time
is in the farewell.
I thank you all for your
patience, open hearts
generosity of spirit, sense of humour
& willingness of soul'

Mask, final workshop

6. Final interview

When her shadowgraph was laid out on the floor, Kaye said she felt her connection
was at a different level than before, and that she had ‘moved on from it’.
The shadowgraph was evocative: ‘it certainly stirs memories, and for me because it evolved over a course of time when so much happened for me over the course of doing this painting so much happened to me’.

The workshops had been about:

*Discovery, creation and invention and recycling never ever believing anything enormously big would come out of it. I think (life) it is a process of unlocking the doors of who I really am and how I really am in the world. And I feel on that level really challenged.*

I asked Kaye about her the first workshop, when she had drawn herself in a bed of roses:

*mmm mmm that was really how I saw my life ... everything that had befallen me had always turned out ok and I have a life and the chaos and turmoil; and that but externally life’s pretty sweet. And Alex’s illness ripped that away a little bit, it certainly put a warp through the fabric at the time period of working through it ... what I learnt was there are challenges some bigger than others that are allowing me to grow, to really find out who I am.*

Using the creative mediums was a delightful surprise, where Kaye could allow herself to be spontaneous and act as if she was ‘back in kindy’ where ‘every pen mark, every crayon, every splot of paint was a surprise’. She entered a place where it was all right to let her inhibitions go. ‘Of just what is it that moves me at that time and allowing myself to do that’.

She also felt supported ‘through my journey with Alex’. The weekends were a safe haven and provided care and compassion. It was a release from the demands and expectations of being a mother whose daughter is dying from cancer.

When she viewed her shadowgraph again, she realised that she had not included a ‘great deal of intense trauma and pain that I did feel at that time, not the anguish ... though she had included the edginess in her jagged yellow zigzags’. Her shadowgraph said to her that she was on the right road, and progressing towards authenticity.

Working on the project had allowed her to accept the variances in the emotional life of her children as a positive. Shadow was not a bad word and she knew that it did flow and does flow through every aspect of what she does. It enriches relationships.
The journeys had alerted her to being supported on spiritual levels of existence as well as the physical.

I am not alone and that was very important to me at this time. I was not alone on this physical plane but also not alone in my dream state, not alone in my spiritual awareness so that on this plane I did actually have more available to me.

I asked her if in her day-to-day life she did neoshamanic practices, and she replied:

Since that very first time of relating to spirit guides and having a particular totem animals it has actually become part of the weave in the fabric of how I am, how I live. I don’t consciously go “I am on a shamanic journey now as I’m sitting under the trees”, because my life doesn’t accommodate that and/or I don’t make time for that. And it becomes like ‘oh my goodness there’s an eagle’ and I feel a connection to my soul with that. It’s been that sort of process and it’s been an inter-weaving and a specific setting aside and a segregating of the time, and it happens in my dreams, and it happens with a symbol or a sign. And I know when I’m shut off from that, the intensity of the emotion and what is being asked of me. That there has been an even deeper, it’s hard to explain, there were times when I couldn’t feel my body so where I’d normally draw on my intuition and I knew exactly how that felt, I had a body sense about that. I got to a place where I had no body sense any more. I couldn’t feel anything and so because I had to relate, I had to, because I had to move through this.

There was a power greater than me that allowed me to do it in a knowing way without a body/physical sensation and for me a lot of that was available because of all the work I had done. The work I had done with you, the work I had done at college, my own basic belief that things generally turn out the way they’re meant to. And I think the shamanic journey work that I’ve done with you Robert, and Vicki over the years has really been a big influence in being able to come through that.

She concluded our interview with a reflection on her participation in the project:

To me it has been a very beautiful way to explore certain aspects of myself that I may not of taken to explore so it allowed me space and time in a very, very hectic life and what turned out to be a very, very painful part of my journey as a human being. I’m just hugely grateful and though it would of come about but not when I really need it. So from that perspective I’m really grateful that you have chosen this aspect of your education to progress through and that it involved me. Why it happened and why I was chosen I don’t know and I don’t need to know, I’m just very grateful.

An interpersonal clash with Cath stood out markedly for her and she reflected upon the significance of this:

Trying to understand what was going on for her, what my reaction was, and what was my projection onto her was. And I thought about over time, she was obviously sent to us as we all were as a group for specific reasons. And for me it was ... it is ok to have your own opinions, it’s how we deal with the process of someone who is more of an individual. It is triggered within my psyche of parts of me that are not quite complete ... So I guess it has allowed me to sit with a difference of consciousness around those sort of things.
Completed shadowgraph
7. Final email

Hi Robert,
I have completed the reading and the thinking and here is the writing. Generally I think you have done a great job understanding, interpreting & scribing. Reading through the notes, I can see a marked difference between my spoken and written words. I did not always make a lot of sense when I spoke to you the essence was there but it was not very clearly said.
I have answered your questions SS (see below). Let me know of anything further you may need.

Thank you for inviting me to participate in your work and for your support during Alex’s illness.

Email questions and answers

Q: How do you understand the shadow now?
A: The shadow is what is suppressed – whatever that may be. Whatever I don’t give expression to. Whatever is unspoken, dishonoured, disbeliefed about myself. Only in the presence of love can my shadow be honoured, then I can grow emotionally & spiritually.

Q: To what extent is it different?
A: Perhaps in my relationship to my shadow. I now have an appreciation of what enormous stores of courage I hid in my shadow and called it "following the rules“ rules I put in place to keep me safe from confrontation. I broke those rules during Alex’s illness as those rules were not serving me – they were stopping me from getting what I needed for Alex. By owning the breaking of my rules – confronting my fears – my stores of courage allowed me to achieve amazing things for Alex.

Q: To what do you attribute the changes in your understanding of the shadow?
A: I attribute the changes to working with you, experiencing the process of Alex’s diagnosis & death, my studies & personal attention to my spiritual growth.

Q: How has the process you engaged with me affected the way you engage in life?
A: As the process of participating in Shamanism & the Shadow coincided with the most life-changing situation in my life – Alex’s diagnosis & death – the effect on me has been significant. I felt supported as I shared my experiences, supported by you and by the others in the group. I also know the meditations and exercises, art, talk & subtle exchanges all assisted me to separate from the overwhelming nature of my life, take a break and have a look from a distance – observe what was happening. Grounding me and keeping me in touch with my life source, with my soul. Also reminding me & teaching me ways the shadow can help & hinder. Of course during this time I also had an amazing amount of love and support from my community, friends & family. So today I would say the effects of my work with you are woven into the fabric of my daily life, my process of grieving, of dismantling the life I had and rebuilding the life that is before me.

Q: Have you noticed any difference in the way you engage with nature?
A: I am more appreciative of the wildlife and the land and how grateful I am to be surrounded by such beauty. I am more conscious and aware of my surroundings. Planting a garden for Alex and knowing how sacred this space is, yet allowing the weeds and wildness to have a place is a change in me. I am not caught up in the worry of not maintaining the garden & what people think – I am comfortable with the garden taking its own course, the weeds will be culled if the time is right, the flowers will bloom, the trees will grow, the bird bath will hold water S. If the time is right. The birds & lizards & snails & bugs will do their own thing in their own time. I am an observer not a controller now.

Q: Are you still engaged with shamanic journeying? To what degree is this formalised or informal?
A. I find myself drawn on a shamanic journey not by choice directly but by allowing whatever I need to present itself. When I am feeling acutely the loss of my precious daughter or like last weekend when I was engaged in meditation during my Reiki training, my spirit guides, totem animals & Grandfather present themselves. I now have a Japanese guide who has been vetted by Grandfather & given the nod! My grieving process is certainly aided by the arrival of an image or the interpretation of an object, obviously shamanic, at a time of need. My spirit cards are also a great help to me.

Q: Given the demands of contemporary times what does it mean to be engaged on a shamanic path?
A: To be conscious of the environment. To be conscious of the wisdom that is available through journeying. To know the peace and stress relief that comes from consistent and daily meditation. To glimpse and begin to understand through nature and journeying, signs & messages, who one really is authentically. To walk the daily path of one connected to nature and the realm of humanity in a very open and centred way. To be soulfully connected to all things – animate & inanimate. Because of the demands of the times we have chosen to live in, choice is what makes the difference in how engaged on a shamanic path we are. I believe it is possible to meld the worlds and it is a challenge to do so. Consciously my choice is to allow what I need, sometimes asking, sometimes practicing, sometimes receiving without asking.

S. Well that’s it from me.
I am sending lots of love and gratitude to you for this amazing opportunity.

Kaye x
CHAPTER 7
LISA’S STORY

Lisa and I had initially met one year previous at an introductory shamanic workshop facilitated by neoshaman Vicki Dean (my partner). I knew from our conversations over the past year that she was interested in furthering her neoshamanic practice and that self-development figured prominently in her life. I believed that she might welcome the opportunity to participate in the project. I was right. She accepted the participatory invitation. We arranged our interview time and place through a phone conversation. She was very enthusiastic about us meeting at my home in Yarramalong as she has a great love for the Australian bush. Our house is set on a chiselled ledge high above the valley floor, in the midst of an abundance of native animal life, and a profusion of eucalypt trees. She had driven up from Sydney [1 ½ hrs.] in what she described as a ‘none too reliable car’.

Lisa is a single, tall, blonde woman in her late thirties, no children. She is a qualified masseuse, although much of her current working life is centred on providing home care to the elderly.

We commenced our interview.

1. First interview

I asked her about her ideas of shadow, and she replied that shadow was an experience rather than a concept. Shadow was related to her astrology studies, and to the Archetype Kali. At first, she had been very fearful of what she might experience. She had ‘worked through’ her Pluto squares Pluto. ‘Which is all about the dark side, and it was basically an opportunity to bring all that out and heal it the best that I can’.

A relationship with her shadow had developed over a couple of years, and it had been important for her to work with her shadow consciously; it had taken her to the edge of sanity: ‘shall I live or die, it was just that bad. It was very intense, very intense time ... and I was given great guidance, really fabulous guidance’. She had set up a Kali altar and spent time in front of it asking for help and guidance.
For the past ten years, she had kept to a promise of letting her emotions flow rather than stuffing them down, as she had been brought up to do. 'To make that a literal experience rather than something that was a concept or something that was in my head.'

Her shadow was expressed creatively, through writing, drawings and paintings. ‘Anger was a big thing for me, I expressed a lot of anger (laughs)’. Astrology also assisted her; it was ‘like an artwork in itself’:

\[
I \text{ love getting what was in me out into the physical and it was soothing to me ... I was in touch with my true self when I was doing that and it allowed everything else to come out safely. To me it created a safe haven where I could just be who I am and not worry about the judgments of others; it was a very private thing.}
\]

She had ‘beings’
\[
\text{that are around who look out for me and they can give me information I might need when necessary, when I’m in trouble. They are compassionate and wise ... come across the animals I needed to be around for protection at the time ... I regressed in some other time and space where that was a normal thing to do.}
\]

The shadow representation was for Lisa an obsidian crystal. She had brought a small piece with her. ‘The first time I set eyes on a piece of obsidian it upset me on a very ... it rocked my foundations ... it would bring out my shadow and I was really afraid of that’.

It was important for her to be ‘spiritually authentic’ because she had seen and experienced so much that was inauthentic and pseudo-spiritual. She laughed, \[
\text{But it’s all a journey, and people do things and I’m sure I’ve done things in the past that I thought were the authentic thing, and then you go I was stupid (laughs) or just silly. It was just an ego thing going on. But I think its all ok sometimes you’ve got to try that out to understand it ... But there is a line too between the authentic and the crap ... I think discernment is a really important thing to learn for everyone.}
\]

We finished the interview and she went over the back of the land, to walk the Labyrinth.

2. First workshop

I was standing at the open doorway to the hall when Lisa arrived by car. No sooner had her feet touched the ground and her body straightened, than Lisa commented on her feelings of expansion at being in the valley. The horses she had driven past on her way to the hall were still with her, galloping and cavorting in her memory, doing what they naturally are inclined to do. Her eyes were sparkling. When she entered the hall, her body became somewhat wary, a little stiff in movement.
In the morning circle, she shared excitedly, whereas her voice was soft as though held back in her throat; it didn’t carry to the other side of the circle. I asked her to speak up and she looked nonplussed to hear that she was so velvet-voiced.

When we moved into the games and exercises, she became more and more aware of her feeling state and its connectivity to her body posture. She is at the start a tad ungainly in her movements, but her enthusiastic responses mark her as someone willing to venture beyond comfort. Of her experiences in the “postures of shadow”, she later writes:

> I noticed a bit of a barrier from me (in retrospect) a tension. But I was in safe hands. Finally in the end, when the barrier was down, was when I felt totally what the other person was feeling. And it was very painful (cowardly pose). I felt it in my heart, it went tight and dark.

Saturday evening Lisa stayed at my home situated five minutes drive from the Hall. We shared a meal together and then I adjourned to my sanctuary. Lisa spent some time writing in her journal, reflecting upon the day:

> The postures of shadow were great. To visually see the embodiment of shadow was profound. It exemplifies all that has been happening to me in the last month. To go from crouching, axe wielding Kali type ‘being’ is a big turning point. It is easier to be centred than to be axe-wielding. I was pleased with the person I partnered in this exercise, because he is very intense, and throws himself into it completely.

> I was surprised that I was so eager to do the acting side of these exercises as I have never done anything like this before. I have become aware of limitations in myself and am beginning to overcome them with these exercises. This process all began with my 1st interview with Robert. It is all about heart – love – and how I do or don’t connect with men. A topic I have locked away for years.

> Also, the experience of embodying someone else’s shadow was incredible – I felt another person’s ‘deepest darkest’ for the first time ever. I wonder, is it because we all connected that at some level we all knew each other’s Shadow.

I had asked the group to note their dreams. She related a dream that she had had the previous evening. She elaborated on her dream in her journal. She wrote:

> Last night I dreamed I was at work (in someone’s house) and I was sitting on the customer’s bed. I was changing my clothes and basically not doing my job, when the customer (a male) walked by in the passage and saw me semi-naked and not doing my job. I thought “I’m bound to lose my job for this”, but I couldn’t make myself do what I was supposed to do, I just didn’t want to. I felt vulnerable and guilty. I also dreamed of a sky – something to do with an astronomy class. I was in bliss looking up at the sky that had clouds moving across it very quickly.

She displays a certain innocence, a naivety in her expression and sharing, and appears devoid of guile or artifice. I notice some in the group are having difficulty in hearing what she has to say, both literally and metaphorically. She sees things in a
unique way. Her psychic abilities are yet to be integrated; they lack a cohesive meaningful frame. I can see that she is herself somewhat disconcerted by what she observes and shares with others, and their reactions and responses.

Her focus today appears to be upon her ‘portrait’, as she calls it. She is acutely aware of her inner emotional state. She writes of her approach to her ‘portrait’:

*The next time I work on it, I want to show how I am breaking through the previous boundaries I set on myself. I feel a sense of frustration, because normally I finish artwork soon after I begin it. I felt myself close up a bit because I knew there was not going to be a ‘finishing’ I am accustomed to having inspiring music as a trigger for reaching inner worlds, so to do so in that music was an effort. Perhaps I need to find an “inner trigger”.*

Working on her ‘portrait’, she (for the first time) displayed her personal power symbols. She located them within her work. She also placed representations of her fear/shadow aspects.

*It shows me as I am now, what I have been, and what I am becoming – the promise of the golden shadow represented by the golden heart. Rabbit is for the fear – Lynx is for the power I possess, but sometimes forget to keep my mouth shut about what I see. Lynx is my greatest undoing and my greatest talent. I balance the picture of Lynx between my hands – to me my hands hold so much – healing, ancestry, old knowledge, old memories, my personal imprint in the world of shadow and light.*

The naivety I mentioned before is born of her impetuous nature or, as she puts it, her ‘Lynx power’. When the sharing of reactions/responses to each other’s work at the completion of the day arrived, her openness to her experience is reflected in her diary.

*Viewing everyone’s paintings was interesting because two people can have such a different reaction to the same painting. To hear the words of another person who sees what you see, and to bend my mind around how another person sees it.*

*When someone commented on my painting I felt relief, because I didn’t feel that it was that good an effort on my part, yet some of what I wanted to convey had been seen by another, recognized ... it was delightful to see someone moved by something that has come out of me.*

*Shadowgraph, workshop 1*

*After doing the ceremony to Honour my painting – I now LOVE it!! This is the first time I have put all these things into physical form by way of Art.
My Heart is full.*
The workshop concluded.

3. Second workshop

The workshop opened with a check-in circle, a smaller gathering now that Ian and Cath were not in attendance. We moved from there into some warm-up games, and then into a guided visualisation on the grass behind the hall. Some of the visualisers fell asleep during parts of the visualisation. Lisa was one of them. Unlike the others, Lisa remembered her dream:

“I dreamed there was a programme on the TV that wasn’t transmitting properly. Then I was driving down an expressway, and Channel 10 was on the left. I told someone to knock the building to adjust the programme transmission. In the dream I thought this was funny ... I felt I should move soon otherwise I would lie there all day quite happily!”

The visualisation revealed some familiar experiences, and some surprises.

Journal entry

I became a seed floating on a breeze high above the land, I was happy. It was a very familiar sensation to be flying through the air. I have always known I can fly; I just have the wrong body for flying this time. The descent to the earth through the clouds was beautiful ... much to my surprise I landed in a suburban backyard on a cement path at the back of the house. I rolled off the cement into the crack in the ground right next to the cement. Granules of dirt came in and covered me when the wind blew. I felt the moisture on my (seed) body when it rained. I felt very excited when my seed opened and I grew up to the surface of the ground. The sun was shining, and felt the bliss of being brand new, totally fresh and new with red flowers. I felt the seasons go by and enjoyed a sense of peace with this.

All of the group had received positive affirmation from their visualisations. The visualisation was in essence a prelude to a journey in the afternoon. I needed to be as certain as I could be that everyone was sound enough in their self-belief to handle any unexpected arrivals in their journey state. The stage was set, the warm-up complete, they laid out their mats and settled down for the journey. The questions that were posed were, “Who will help me with my shadow?” and “What qualities do they bring?” She reports:

A black wolf appeared immediately from over the hill. He stood before me looking right at me. I asked what qualities he had that would help me. He said “SKILL, PATIENCE, AND DEDICATION TO ME”. My attention began to wander. He pulled me back very quickly and strangely by rushing off through the forest as I raced to
keep up with him. We came out at a lake. He told me to look in at the reflection. I saw his black wolf face. I looked at my reflection to see a white wolf staring back at me. He said that everyone has the light and dark and I should understand that. I look up to see the lake surrounded by black and white wolfs.

Again my attention began to wander and again he pulled my attention back by dashing off. To the left I saw a very old person dressed in skins sitting by a tree. I went over and saw a rock that was smooth at the front with symbols on it. The person said it was my rock, my language and my symbols. I GOT THE NAME OAK-TREE WOLF (oak maybe my mind making that so). I looked closely for a moment, then began to back away. Then this person (the old one) said loudly – DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHO YOU ARE? I said ‘yes I do’. At this point I was thrown into the tree trunk all was darkness. I could feel energy rushing past me, and I wanted to scream my lungs out. Suddenly I whooshed out of the top of the tree – into the universe. Supreme silence – oneness – stars dotted about. The Old One’s voice said ‘THIS IS YOU’. And I knew this to be true. I thought of my life on earth and saw what a speck it is in the scheme of things.

Then Robert spoke, and I went back down the tree to find myself sitting with Black wolf. Then he started jumping around very angrily and aggressively – totally losing it. Then he sat very still and quietly. He said this was 2 faces of the shadow. One that is destructive and out of control, and another that sits quietly with the shadow. Be like this is possible. I feel that the wolf is the disguise of the Old One, as I saw this being emerge from the Black Wolf at the end of the Journey.

We completed the day with a sharing circle on the stage. She enthusiastically told her journey in detail and shared her uncertainty in some areas. We broke for the day and met up again the next morning.

3a. Second workshop, day two

After a fairly lengthy check-in circle and some games, the group settled into articulating their previous day’s experiences into and onto their portraits. She seemed engrossed in her work. She continued to work on her portrait throughout the morning. After a shared lunch and room tidy-up, the group embarked upon another journey.

This journey’s purpose was to retrieve a symbol for ‘what you love about life’ and a ‘symbol for its opposite’.

Here I met with Black Wolf. It was so hard to stay awake. He told me I am tired because I have done more than I realise over the past 24 hours. He took me along a forest path. Next thing we were going down an underground tunnel. I noticed moss, damp earth/water smell. At the end of the tunnel sat the old one from yesterday’s journey. I told them I needed symbols for what I love about life and the opposite of that. The Old One offered me a crystal ball to look into. I was afraid to, because I knew I would see something beautiful. – I love how you can walk out your front door and go and have all the experiences in life that you want. The opposite is sitting in your own home and never leaving it, as it’s ‘safety’. I got the nerve up to look in the ball. I saw like a map – life experiences, and that the driving energy of that is LOVE. The opposite was a little black hole. I said to them that I need actual symbols and the Old One said “a seed compared to a tree”. A seed has potential but does nothing – a tree grows and dies and grows, and lives out its potential. I asked how I could give
thanks, and the Old One asked that I fill the area up with love from my heart. So I did this and left with Wolf.

‘End of Journey’

Pondering the significance of her journey, she writes.

I was really shocked when I couldn’t think of anything that I loved about life – I really had to think about that. What a disturbing revelation about myself.

Synchronicity also plays a role in her reflections:

Last night I picked a video to watch that was about a woman living inside her own safe square, and never went outside the square. When she did, her life opened up in unexpected and wonderful ways. But she had to take that first frightening step. I know this is also me. And this journey epitomised this for me.

Lisa spent the remainder of the day sharing, drawing and writing. We concluded the day and the workshop with a group sharing.
4. Second interview

Lisa arrived with another participant, Kaye. Lisa had moved her place of residence, her caravan, to the backyard of Kaye’s house at Terrigal. They were buddies. For the first part of the interview, they were both present. They then separated and I interviewed each one separately.

I did a sound check before the commencement of the interviews and the recorder was recording beautifully. However, when it came time for transcribing, certain parts of the interview, particularly with Lisa, were barely audible or inaudible.

I commenced the interviews by asking her about journeying:

*For me in the meditation the landscape just appears before my eyes. It is something that is internal. It is as though I go to another place. My body’s here but I go to another place. The closer I am to nature ... it has its own existence; it is like it is there always. The beings are eternal. I feel that they are connected to me in one form or another. [Lisa speculated that] They might be someone I knew from another lifetime, a guide, or something ... things like guides are just a part of you. Whereas I feel that they are simply beings in that special place that I go to, that I journey to. I mean the process of meditation is to (me) just like going home. I remember as a child thinking which is the reality? When I was a child I would go off to that place just naturally. There was a time in my life when this here (was) 3D was a dream, or the meditating place was a dream, and I had a confusion about that for a while as a child. Because to me both places were completely real.*

I asked her if there was a notable consistency or rather a randomness in her place.

She replied that:

*The consistency is the feeling that I get when I’m there. And the sensation I get inside of me of being really strong, and a feeling of incredible wellbeing. If I’m going through a tough time and I go to that place it has a certain quality about it, and if I’m feeling pretty good and I go to that place then it feels really beautiful. It feels very familiar; I know I’ve done it before millions of times in past lives.*

I was interested in her understanding of intentionality with journeying, and its significance in her approach to journeying. Did she always journey intentionally?

She answered:

*Not always, no. I don’t know why it is, but every time I get together with you I go to some other zone. And its like um, I don’t know if its because I’m not grounded or if I’m already somewhere when I start to talk with you I feel as if I’m somewhere. Not exactly off the planet but just with a peculiar sensation and I know that the general theme is has got to do with the shadow, and my psyche knows that, and my spirit knows that. So that would be my intention. So I don’t have to think, it just happens. And the symbols that I get are usually consistent with my previous experience of what to me represents the shadow. The animals, the places, the things and beings that turn up.*
Semi-guided visualisations were experienced differently to the neoshamanic journeys. She said:

*It was amazing how different it was. I think the unusual thing for me was to turn up in someone’s back yard and I don’t usually go to the suburbs when I’m journeying. I usually go off to places in nature so that would be a major difference.*

She preferred being outdoors to the indoor meditations. She would lie on the ground to relieve stress in her being and become refreshed.

She commented that at times when in certain company she would go into an altered state of consciousness, and that at times she would communicate on a soul level without words. ‘Just in my head an upper body ... it’s like I actually lose all sensation of my body because all this stuff is happening’.

I facilitated a journey for Lisa. After the journey, I interviewed her and asked if anything new had emerged. She said for the first time in a journey she had met up with a man who was very persistent and wouldn’t depart – the feeling she experienced was benign:

*Yeah, that I am always going to have this guy around (laughs). I was able to see this energy grid and how it’s all connected.*

I enquired if this experience going to be useful, and she answered:

*Yeah I can see something has settled in my heart that I’ve been fighting.*

She felt her heart was soft and open, whereas before she had felt fear in her heart. She had been without a partner for twelve years, and speculated that when her father passed on – he was very ill at this time – she would have space in her heart for a partner.

*That’s what I love of these sessions; it just points things out to me. It makes things conscious for me.*
5. Final workshop

The third workshop was mainly devoted to the completion of the shadowgraphs, although I also incorporated a number of journeys and sharing. At the commencement, all the participants drew a Rune. Lisa drew Mannaz reversed. She comments in her journal:

*Figure 5: journal entry*

Well, well, well. Blocked, eh? Look at those I frown on and KNOW it’s about me. Mm. I’ll have to look at that one. I was thinking, when I draw the rune, of how Bronwyn was spending her time skipping off to the outback to talk to Aboriginal women about ‘stuff’ for God’s sake, and I’m pushing to go and work in an old people’s home, for God’s sake. What am I DOING?

However I have felt, or rather noticed, my block in relationships lately, so at first I thought it was about that.

After the Rune draw and sharing, the group move off the stage area and into the main body of the hall, where they settle into working on their shadowgraphs. She throws herself into her shadowgraph pursuits. She works diligently and purposively. Her thoughts of this time she records in her journal.

*Saturday reflections*

I noticed as soon as I realised this was the last weekend together, I put my ‘all’ into it – which is what I have done in relationships. I wait until it is virtually over before I give my all. This was a new “noticing what my pattern of behaviour” is.

As I was getting to the end of my artwork for the day I FELT that I have so much POTENTIAL, and I am limiting myself in life. It was a great moment, because I am something of a restrained person in many ways, and this was a moment of EXPANSION.

I am really pleased with my artwork. At first I didn’t like it as it seemed scattered and bitsy. But now it has come together, and looking at it my body reaction is one of pleasure and fulfilment. Except to me it looks a bit too orderly and controlled. I like what’s in it, and the colours, but it’s a bit like I can’t help myself – it has to look ‘balanced’ by being thoughtful about what I put where, although sometimes it has a life of its own, I put things somewhere quite different to where I intended.

The day completes with a group sharing, and then Lisa departs with Kaye. She is now living on Kaye’s property.

The Sunday is to be devoted in the main to the participants concluding their portraits. There was one concluding journey. The group prepared for this and lay down in the
hall. The question was, “What do I need to do to complete my artwork?” She records her journey:

This was an unusual Journey in that it seemed fragmented, and I fell asleep in parts and had bizarre dreams. When I asked what I could do to my artwork – the answer was “nothing”. I have expressed myself beautifully. The presence of snake was very strong from the start. I realised I was in Africa. I saw myself sitting on a chair in front of a shack that I came ‘to’ for a few moments. I went off into the Jungle – came across a lake – went to look in the reflection to ‘see’ who I was, and couldn’t. That’s when I really got it, that it’s not how I look, but how I feel. I dreamed of bear – just the eyes. 5 eyes, and the bottom one was the one I put a piece of something clear over. Then I woke up.

I saw and felt myself as snake shedding about 6 layers of skin, and how it felt to move as a glistening new snake, and how my skin then grew into a beautiful, strong, all-knowing snake.

For me this Journey was about how it feels to be me, really me. I liked it, it felt wonderful, I felt wonderful.

We concluded the workshop with the group standing in a circle, sharing in 2 words what their experience had been like for them.

7. Final interview

Lisa’s relationship with her spirit guides and protectors is important to her, and they appear when she is in trouble:

For instance if I feel I am physically in danger, I notice that I have a couple of wolves around me. Wolves take care of me, and they patrol around me and make sure I’m ok.

She relates to the animals’ characteristics: eagle is about getting a bigger perspective and looking at things in life as they really are, instead of getting tied up in tiny, little, messy situation(s).

The appearance of animals in her day-to-day life was meaningful to her, as was her consultations with animals in her inner imaginal realms. She no longer asks them for personal advice, but for spiritual advice. Although ‘they just volunteer information anyway’. A jaguar repeatedly appeared when she was going through her darkest Pluto phase. These relationships were very important to her: ‘I even noticed that in a healing that Jaguar turned up just to check out the person who was doing the healing with me’.
After initially finding her shadowgraph difficult to connect with, she was now very pleased with it.

*By the time I finished I was very pleased with it. Aesthetically speaking, it looks kind of strange, like it's a bit bitsy, and all that sort of thing. There was somebody else who was next to me and doing their drawing, and [he] was someone who was able to connect, he very physically got into it. Whereas for me, it was a different way of connecting for me. Whereas just looking at the photo now, I think wow! ... I can see I really had to come out with shadow stuff in order to be able to even draw it in the first place.*

What she had produced mystified her. She had felt an incredible release upon finishing it:

*I felt it just completely flowed from the bottom to the top like it was some kind of story from the bottom to the top. The story is like coming from deep down in the darkest fears and being actually able to release them, and being able to create something beautiful.*

The animal pictures that she had placed in her shadowgraph had meaning for her; they were the elements she worked with.

*There's Jaguar in there, there's snake and there's the heart, I have been trying to work with my heart for a long time. There is actually rabbit in there too. I associate rabbit with fear, and that is really the base, whether I was squashing initially fear was really right at the base and there's the dark colours. There's the murky stuff, there's the fear stuff, pictures of money, there is the security, it would be nice to have the security of my own home. I mean that is shadow stuff as well if you want to look at it that way. Frog is important in cleansing, and the water lapping at the sides that was ... The flow of spontaneity was significant ... I just seem to be drawing things and they just seemed to be coming out.*

Her shadowgraph was understood as the physical manifestation of what had lain unexpressed and dormant in her gut, and she felt great relief in allowing the forms to take shape on her shadowgraph. She said:

*It was like what I had started was finally managed to manifest out into the physical. I managed to get it on paper, something in me, in my gut, connected with it, and as I finished it off at the top, there was just this whoosh of energy that just went through the paper and everything on the paper and it just felt great. I don't know how else to explain it. It became an energetic thing, rather than just drawing things thinking with my head, “what could I be doing” it finally became a gut thing.*

When she compared her drawing with others, she could become dissatisfied with her own; it was a ‘fatal mistake’.

*But it was good in that it reminded me that you just can’t look at yourself or what you create through another person’s eyes because that’s just pointless, because everyone creates something different. I’ve always been fairly artistic and I’m not used to people looking and going “I don’t know about that”, so that was really shadow stuff for me.*

Understanding herself to be artistic was important for her:

*So this was my little hidey-hole, was my little safe area, was at least if all goes I have this for me. To have people standing around saying what they thought about it, that made me uncomfortable.*
She related that being among people was great for her as it was not something that she experienced often in her life. These days, she was seeking out others at her work to work alongside, and this was very new to her. She felt able to access a greater depth of experience and understanding. It also enabled her to work through shadow issues as they arose from her immediate interactions.

She was surprisingly confronted by issues of her self-esteem. She understood this to be of benefit to her.

*Because I can learn from it and I can get over it or try to find ways to deal with it. And do something about it, otherwise I'm just flopping along in the universe doing my usual thing and not getting anywhere really.*

She realised that now she could enter a process after her self-esteem realisation that was active.

*The process had been challenging and had provided an opportunity to ‘lighten up’.*

She had generally had a great time having fun with art stuff. A challenge for her was the pace of the journeying, as she was a quick journeyer, and used to journeying alone.
Completed shadowgraph
CHAPTER 8
BRONWYN’S STORY

The street is crowded with a mixture of new light-coloured units, and older style, dark brick, flats notable for their leadlight, featured windows and doors. Bronwyn’s is one of the latter. The day is temperate, early autumn, the atmosphere somewhat muted. An atmosphere that seems at odds with the lively speed and ethos of the Bondi I have just driven through. I locate her building relatively easily, find easy parking, knock at her door, and am welcomed by her. We shake hands, her hand is small, delicate, thin fingers. We discuss some general topics, the weather, the view. Discussion of the view warms her up to her more specific council dilemmas. Feisty, passionate, intelligent, self-reflective. These are some of her attributes I notice within minutes of our first meeting.

Bronwyn lives in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney in her own unit overlooking parkland. At the time of the first interview, she was revving up to participate in community action aimed at overturning a local council planning decision. The council had approved development plans that would result in her parkland vista being severely and permanently obstructed. Her income is gained through her own video production business. Our only contact before our interview has been through a phone interview the week before when we chatted for about 45 minutes.  

She is a fairly straight shooter, she doesn’t mince her words; nor is she overtly affectionate. She exudes a self-reliant attitude and is apt to laugh or giggle when she realises some of her paradoxical moments. A woman in her mid-thirties, she thinks deeply before responding to many of my questions, and then (at times) surprises, by answering in ways that seem at odds with the question I have (attempted) to ask. She comments that she is quite self-confident in her creative abilities, but at times appears (to me) to doubt her creative ability.

---

2 It is not until later that I realise Bronwyn was expecting this to be an interview to gauge her acceptability for a place in the research project. Whereas, for me, I had more or less made up my mind that she was suitable after our telephone conversation.
1. First interview

Bronwyn relates her knowledge of the shadow to her training in astrology. She understood the shadow as being a part of her personality that she didn’t want to own, so it was something that she would project out to people, and that was acted out unconsciously. She found it difficult to recall when she had become aware of acting out her shadow. She had been told by people that she was controlling, which amazed her. She would berate herself for being weak, but also considered herself to be very strong. She did not associate her castigating critic as her shadow. She was afraid of confrontation and said ‘I have a shadow of being a woman in authority’. She could become anxious around women in authority.

She recalled a time when her shadow was in operation:

A mixture of being in grief and feeling victimised, and using the feeling of being victimised to justify some bad behaviour. But I wouldn’t at the time been conscious of that as the shadow working or not or becoming consumed by the shadow an archetype of rage that came up and had me act badly. I wouldn’t at that time put it into that context or looked at in that way. It actually took a long time for perspective to move past that and actually take responsibility for the fact that yeah I had acted badly. ‘Cause at the time you don’t see that. You’re just angry.

Being angry and upset were drives for her creativity, along with ‘a fairly selfish competitiveness ... I think that the discomfort I feel when I’m in the shadow can be a real drive for my creativity ... When I’m not like this woman in authority in that and I feel victimised or cut off from that, then I feel very resentful, pathetic and jealous and angry’. Her shadow, contrary to her appearance, ‘churned underneath’:

That’s just the part of the stuff I go through. And that as well as inspiration and hope, and vision, and joy, that is also quite inspiring, and drive ... ‘cause then, I just think then, I just need to do something, and it pushes me forward, so it’s a drive, so whether that’s the shadow or whether that’s the anger, I’m not sure.

Being powerful, and being critical were intermingled in her understanding of herself and others.

I’d say my woman power is also very critical, so I think she also hinders creativity sometimes too. I think it goes both ways. I keep calling her she, ‘cause I’ve objectified her now, made her a person. (She was) a bit older and black, a bit like a witch. (The other side of this shadow power) is the really pathetic one ... a two-edged thing, like this shadow that has a fear of power, but the power looks at the disempowered and looks at them and it’s the shadow as well ... it is dynamic.

She observed that when she was in her shadow, she was not aware of the impact she was having. Awareness was liberating and provided choices. Becoming aware ‘helps you move towards objectivity and away from being in the subjectivity of it ... I think that’s why it is empowering’.
She had selected two objects as representations of her shadow. One was a Kundalini stone that had sat on her windowsill and was covered in dust, and was ‘a bit forgotten’.

It represented to her that:

'*I’m not accessing my power ... my power is being forgotten and underutilised. It is like it is not really nourished, it’s not really fed ... I guess the thing with the shadow is it is with being completely comfortable with power and assertion is then to also feel love within that ... ’cause you know she might be a very high achiever but is she lovable?*

She had been self-reflecting throughout this interview, and she ventures:

'*I realise I am a little bit confused about the shadow. I think I’m getting an understanding of it in terms of ... I get confused about whether that’s the shadow or whether that’s just me being, you know, the general lack of fulfilment we have in life, and is it the shadow or is just kicking against how you feel.*

At the conclusion to our interview, I ask Bronwyn if she is still interested in being part of the research exploration. She is very positive and keen to be in. I’m very glad to hear this. We part company and next meet again at the first weekend workshop.

2. Workshop one

For some in the group, it is their first meeting. Bronwyn was introduced to me by another participant, Cath. They have known each other for many years. She is as unknown to everyone else as they are to her. From the first, I notice that Bronwyn is excited to be here, and yet somehow reserved in her being. The initial check-in provides an opportunity for the group members to tell some of their story around their shadow objects. She displays much more reserve than at our initial meeting.

Bronwyn tells of some of her thoughts regarding her Queen Victoria (shadow) association. After all have shared something of their reason for being there, we move down into the large hall area and into action methods.

The following is an extract from Bronwyn's first writing in her ‘experience journal'.

*Experience Log*

*Fear – rose & gulped in my mouth*

*What the hell is a shadow?*

*No definitions here*

*With so many walking, talking*

*Shadow touchers.*

*I feel unenlightened,*
She later writes in her diary:

Felt slightly bored with the theatre group-type games.

I don’t know if this is because of the many years I spent in theatre group.

I felt unsure how this was leading me towards my shadow – was it merely bonding the group & unleashing creativity, I suppose it was.

Journal entry

Day 1 Reflection

Funnily enough – after this break we went on to action work directly related to shadow & I held back & missed out as we ran out of time – ha ha

Sunday – The paper is unfurled. The pairs have either been chosen or have chosen. Each will alternatively draw the other’s outline as they recline on the paper in shadow-inspired postures. Ewa and Bronwyn work together. Ewa sprawls herself over the paper, luxuriating in her sensuous encounter with her body and form. Bronwyn stands mute by the side, seemingly engrossed in Ewa’s movements. She stands eyes transfixed, barely blinking as Ewa at last comes to rest. Bronwyn moves in and marks Ewa’s space. Then Ewa surprises us both by moving into another position and being still once more. Bronwyn marks this overlapping outline. And then stands back while Ewa stands and, seemingly oblivious of Bronwyn, peruses where she has lain. Bronwyn lays herself down and, with some small movements, finds her shadow pose. Ewa rather briskly, with long movements, marks this outline. Then Bronwyn stands and, with a fluidity of movement, stands over her work, and Ewa marks this overlaid posture. She records:

In The Beginning
The Desire to Withdraw
Was all
I knew
My dream was to be alone

Stuck In the middle
like a puddle
I tried to spread

By the end I sat in the damp
& let the water oil my bones
Bronwyn and Ewa begin to add colour and shade to their soulscape. Ewa works with a single-minded passion, fast and focused. Her edges expand out, and out, and out. Her border stretches into an area that I have mentally defined as Bronwyn’s space. She appears not to notice any ‘border jumping’. My guts churn as her space is reduced to a fraction of its original designation. She physically seems smaller and more contained in direct proportion to Ewa’s expressive physical expansion.

Bronwyn records in her diary at the close of the day.

*Today I painted strong, vibrant colours in the constraintsof my boundaries. I felt very particular not to cross those lines ... yet (draws a smiling face). This felt right as I sat with the darkness.*

Towards the end of the day, the group members are invited to comment upon their response and reactions to other soulscape. Bronwyn comments a number of times that she is feeling and experiencing envy. She is the only one to state a way of being that is culturally negative. One of the seven deadly sins. From her diary:

*It seems today I am having a day of envy. I envy this I envy that.*

*Other than that – people responded to the diatribe on my foot and otherwise kept quiet. I wanted to tell them how brilliant it was.*

*Felt strange verbalising my interpretations of others work as it felt like we were taking liberties – yet it occurs to me that this is what you do silently in galleries all the time. Intriguing to come back to a social perspective.*
Her last diary entry from this weekend workshop is a letter to Elizabeth, her soulmate:

Dear Elizabeth, You can’t share like that, you know that. SSSH! Time to retire. Time for Bronwyn to be ... full today I painted strong, vibrant colours in the constraints of my boundaries. I felt very particular not to cross those lines ... yet. This felt right as I sat with the darkness.

Without much further to do, Bronwyn succinctly departed. We were not to meet again until the second weekend workshop.

3. Second workshop

Bronwyn records her visualisation:

Lying down on the ground, Flying through the earth (sky)
Coming to land in the sweet, warm, moist earth
but not wanting to be a seed because I am a nature spirit and my friends are here
... in our enchanted world.
Oh, ... “you are falling between the cracks & planting underground” so I come back and impatiently sprout
A peach tree?
but I don’t like peaches
but peach trees are peachy, bountiful
maybe I should be a fir tree & stand tall?

On my gentle sloping hill
In the summer afternoon sun
With the world at peace
Or with my peach, stay here?

Bronwyn’s journaling image of the experience:

Was I not accepting myself? Trying to be something else – oh, what a boring place the world would be if all the trees are the same. The world is more beautiful with a variety of trees.

Shamanic journey one –

Who will help me with my shadow work? What qualities do you bring?

Bronwyn records:

The journey
My healing place is the night sky
I am joined by Elizabeth 1. She brings her strength, as before, but more this time – for she comes with a vision of healing for me to paint/draw/remember. Elizabeth warm, Elizabeth healed. A warm pulsing womb, an
open and joyous heart and a suckling at her breast. Her hair is tousled and her smile is real: Being a woman doesn’t impoverish her but enlivens her strength.

Also come is panther. Blue black, strong, primal, courageous & aggressive. Joined by an American Indian shaman – quiet but wise, dancing to the music he beckons us to join him & we do – dancing in the stars like a new constellation. And then, my gift – a star – to light up the night?!

After the journey, we form a circle around the altar. The group members share some of their journey experience, and Bronwyn seems excited to tell her journey story. She’s lively, animated. Her words tumble forth as if they will no longer be contained in her mouth. We move onto the ‘body print’, as she calls it. She approaches this work with an exuberance and purpose. She later records:

*Working on my body print*

This week I added a layer of collage. It was very powerful and intuitive. I didn’t consciously plan where I wanted things to go just very easily followed my instincts. Unlike last time where I had no desire to paint outside the boundaries, the pieces begged to be placed wherever they would fall and one even went off the page (the dick image of course). I felt eager to start on the work and gleefully began cutting and pasting the images I had gathered from the previous workshop. The more I went on, the heavier I became as a very powerful & painful figure emerged – a frightening vicious face. A chastity belt around my hermaphrodite genitals. There was energy and joyousness ready to burst forth – like a wild cat ready to lunge forward. Despite the emotional blackness, I remained pleased with the work & happy with its process. It feels important to give this vision expression & allow it to be rather than rushing in to heal it straight away. It is clearly reminiscent of an Elizabeth 1 archetype to me. Next workshop I do hope to start work ‘healing’ the image. Although I have absolutely no idea how I might go about doing that and feel fearful of the attempt.

The weekend comes to a close, and she, somewhat oblivious to social niceties or sentimentality, leaves almost immediately, a cheery wave her departing gesture.

Between the second workshop and the third, I planned to conduct a second audio-recorded interview with all the participants. Bronwyn, for a variety of reasons, was
unavailable until just prior to our third and final workshop. We arranged for our interview to be held at my home at Yarramalong the night before the workshop. I received a phone call approximately the time of our scheduled interview. It was Bronwyn. She had missed the Yarramalong turn-off, and was motoring frustratingly northward. She sounded anxious and stressed with her predicament. We cancelled the appointment at her suggestion and met up with each other at the workshop the following morning.

4. Final workshop

The initial sharing is punctuated with each of the participants withdrawing an ancient divination stone, a Rune. Bronwyn draws Fehu – possessions. Between workshops, she had been researching a video production up in the north-west of Western Australia. She returned to discover that her live-in partner had formed an intimate relationship with a born-again Christian-woman. He, too, was born again. Bronwyn was still emotionally reeling from this. She told us this incredible turn of events in a (to me) remarkably light manner, breezy even. The group seemed to respect her space and not pry, but I couldn’t help but wonder as to our (the group’s) capacity to empathically respond to her. It did seem that events had taken a series of incredible turns in each person’s life since we had last met. Perhaps this was reflected in the way we all were with each other – all islands.

The rest of the morning provided time for them to catch up with their shadowgraphs, should they so desire, or, alternatively, find another manner of expression. The group appears settled, although excitation and frustration are also apparent with some. The afternoon provides another opportunity to journey

Final journey – they have worked hard, this odd assortment of people, and for them a journey of completion, a journey to bring back a symbol; well, two symbols actually. They ask for a symbol to represent ‘What do I love about life?’ And another symbol to represent its opposite. Bronwyn records:

*Take the mask off?*

*Back to the stars this afternoon.*

*What do I love about life? Why passion & love & laughter, music song and merriment. The Greek family feasting, drinking & laughing SYMBOL – A fiery red spiral pulsating outwards. What is the opposite? A puritan quaker family in starched grey smock with stiff collars & expressionless faces sitting rigidly & lifelessly in high back chair SYMBOL A greying spiral turning inwards to black.*
My American Indian shaman guide returned & told me his name was “Harold”. We were in the stars & then went to visit Elizabeth in her time and sent her healing. I started to see her with her own family & there was something about healing her arrogance – but I forget the details now.

What I do remember is Harold painting some type of stripes on my forehead & then placing a mask on my face – only to tell me it needed to come off. I didn’t necessarily see the image on the mask. I felt a face move from grey and lifeless to pulsing & blushing.

Mmmm?

In our sharing circle, she relates that her American Indian shaman-guide returned and told her that his name was ‘Harold’ – she told us this with great merriment, obviously tickled by the absurdity of such a moniker. ‘Harold! Of all names!’, she laughs.

The group is encouraged to continue with their shadowgraphs, and Bronwyn works seemingly oblivious to others. Throughout the remainder of the day, she is concurrently painting one of the masks and then returning to her shadowgraph, backwards and forwards. Her body and movements shift from one of concentration on fine detail in her mask adornment to an expressive passionate lash and splash of acrylics on the shadowgraph. From time to time, Bronwyn steps back from her shadowgraph, cocks her head to one side quizzically, and leaves it, then walks over to sit quietly by herself and focus intently upon fine dot-and-line work with her mask.

She journals –

Well – phew – that felt good working on that “Shadowgraph”. It may not be the best picture in the world but I really loved making it. She exploded – all her RAGE came out of her head like a volcano. I honoured her & decorated her with stars and flowers & then I had the strongest urge to put a boundary around her again – to honour her locks and bounds, her creaky doors.

P.S. when working on the mask again, all I could think was that it was the inauthentic self.

P.P.S. – I leaned over and marked myself with paint by mistake. When I looked as my wrist the shape left by the paints was F – the same rune I had chosen.

In her final journal notes, Bronwyn displays a critical self-reflection. She seeks meaning from her mask, and sees that her mask was about needing to steel herself for power. She previously had believed that she had to be overbearing & domineering to be powerful. She disliked the mask of pretend authority and sought deep, inner strength. She also disliked – ‘the mask of weakness & gentleness because clearly I am not that either’.
And then exuberantly, ‘She escaped – her mask / her restraint was lifted. By the end, she looked like she was a force jumping out of the page – A A A H H !’

5. Final interview

I arrive a little earlier than anticipated. Bronwyn greets me, and as I enter, I remove my shoes and place them beside a line of shoes, all women’s, just inside the doorway. The unit has a sunny disposition, somewhat different from the last time I was here. It seems lighter in feel, the atmosphere breezy. I unfurl her shadowgraph and weight it on either end so that it remains reasonably flat on the floor. Bronwyn peers intently, her eyes travelling over the surface, stopping here and there, lingering a moment, moving on, and then coming to rest in another area. A few minutes pass and I ask what it is she is experiencing as she looks at this portrait once more:

_The feeling is as I look at this that on the last day I probably didn’t need to pretty the face up as the face was pretty beautiful in its own right, as it was. It didn’t need to be made up, or dusted with powder. It had its own integrity and beauty as it had been and it’s been obscured a bit by the prettying._

_The first time around I hadn’t had a powerful thing about this process because the first time I remember feeling unhappy with my image and depressed and contained, it was too contained. (Bronwyn had compared her portrait unfavourably with other participants’ contributions) ...they seemed to be flowing, and I just felt that’s hiding some of my own personal themes, so it was good in a way. It was like a kind of powerful kind of click into something on a deep level, and the next time I just expressed it. Like I didn’t censor anything and it came out beyond the boundaries I think without me planning on anything. It even went off the page. It just sort of went through this emotional expression. There is the history of its making the third time, because I was consciously working with it by this time, I was integrating it a bit more. Wanting to come back and heal and integrate and soothing myself ’cause I was going through some stuff personally at the time ... I was thinking I deserve the prettiness because I think I am an attractive and interesting person. You know I deserve these flowers, they are true to me, but looking at the mask I mean I like the fiery hair and everything that containment coming out, the volcano. But I think just looking at it that I could have just left that face. And it had its own glory and beauty as a shadow image and it didn’t need to be touched up._

She commented upon her reclaiming her power and not repressing it because others thought it was ugly. This had shifted over time and had been helped by her journaling and her shadowgraph. She went from a sense of envy on the first day to one of being proud of her completed shadowgraph. She also could see lots of tensions in her shadowgraph. These ‘were internal to me and I’m not sure that they were about the workshop environment. Stuff I was going through ...’

She had returned from a trip away to her partner Peter, who had entered another relationship and ended theirs. The shadowgraph instigated
more of a determination to take on and be proud of this figure and reclaim it. And see its beauty. Peter was being challenged greatly in relationship, and I guess it was a reclaiming of that on my own, in my own terms, that I was honouring it. Trying to honour it. My anger and passion.

The concentrated stuff that was there kind of went [Bronwyn indicates with her hands and arms an outward movement from the head of the power being]. That was great to paint that out.

She recalled:

I remember saying that none of us really knew what the shadow was (laughs). We had no idea what we were dealing with. There was times when I wasn’t sure what the process was. It kinda felt like we were dealing with the shadow from the second workshop on. Because I was consciously dealing with stuff, it was there on the page. And I remember being shocked at the first workshop that some of other people’s body things seemed to be so light and breezy and beautiful. I’m going ‘is that really a shadow?’ and I was getting a bit confused as to what was happening.

Her experience was understood as follows:

I felt they weren’t quite at that stage sure what they were doing and accessing it. That’s what I felt at the time. You know. But I did see events took on things and deeper emotions came up over time, definitely, over time.

Bronwyn mentioned her feelings of integrity when she initially began her shadowgraph, and how important it was that she maintained her integrity throughout the process. ’I was different because I was consciously working with what image I wanted to work with. I was right there and I was a strong and powerful being. But then, when I did the outline, it didn’t look like that, it just looked like that. It just looked like it was held in, and it was really distressing’.

I quite liked Ewa, so it was kinda like … it was all bit weird, too … but I wasn’t consciously thinking “this is interesting: I’m with an older woman who is quite powerful,” because I think Ewa’s quite powerful, but I wasn’t thinking about that at all. But you’re right, now that I think about (it) because I was. I mean, being with Ewa empowered me in some ways because she was going through issues with creatively feeling blocked. Like this all about feeling blocked, I was feeling blocked in my power, she was feeling blocked in her creativity, and it reaffirmed to me that I was creatively flowing, which was really good feedback for me. That was good to get that feedback for me.

There are things upon her shadowgraph that remained mysterious to her, and she finds that both intriguing and humourous. ’There is some reptilian thing there,’ she says, pointing at her shadowgraph. There were also ambiguous images and messages she had received from her journeys:

There was that one “take the mask off’ it was time to take the mask off. Well going and working on the mask did actually help bring that out for me, it may have if I’d actually spent more time and actually made something. I’m still a bit bemused by that one. What it actually meant. Does that mean it’s time to take … You see the mask I’m trying to take off you see it was just after making this (indicates image on Shadowgraph) which was this powerful image. Now does that mean it’s time to take off … it’s time to stop putting that mask on my power and allowing the power out as it is not with that view on it. Or is it … I mean the gentleness and love is part of who I am, but that is not all; that’s a tiny bit.
The symbols. The stars I had twinkling stars. In any of those journeys I didn’t have you know like Ewa’s husband ... like one journey that was so powerful that took him somewhere and it really connected. I didn’t have that. I think because already I was so consciously working with something. So nothing was of any big surprise to me. ... take off your mask was a bit odd. Yeah. so the other stuff was probably ... I’m trying to think. I really was looking forward to the journeys but I don’t remember them for me being as impactful and powerful as some of the other things were. Like having a journal and doing the painting and things like that. I’m glad that journeys were part of the process though. I really enjoyed them... Yeah, I really loved it. Emotions if they are twirling around just go and grab a pen. So I think I’ll take up a journal, definitely. The image that I worked with is ongoing.

She had really enjoyed the process of accessing art materials and doing her art. And also that:

I was so distressed with that image that’s when I came home and suddenly everything I was looking at that image ... where that came from ... spoken to me and it said to me from someone with a very negative point of view. So it was all about points of view and I could see very clearly how I was having a very negative point of view on myself. An added addition to what I was going through in my relationship at the time. An expression for that. But the synchronicity I remember for that one was shocking, so that through the process of the workshops I was sort of working through that, reflecting on that, and of course in the last one with the born-again Christian thing (laughs).

We part.
Completed Shadowgraph
Hi Robert,
I ran into Eva on Sat. night at a launch of a new documentary called “Dances in Ecstasy” showing trance practice as it is expressed through dance in various cultures around the world. She told me that she’d just written to you and was relieved that I had also been taking forever. I am grateful to her for the reminder.

Here are some answers to your questions.

1) I’m still not sure that I understand the shadow. My abstract, analytical appraisal still sounds plausible but if anything it’s been muddied, confused by my involvement in the workshops.

During the workshops I was working to recast my own negative images of myself. Whether these negative demons and marks of self-flagellation are or are not my shadow I am not sure. One of the things I remember is your definition of the shadow being unconscious, by its very nature. Now I look curiously at things that repel me – like coldness, selfishness. Failure. The anxious seeking of approval. Arrogance. Anger. Bitterness, hateful, brutality, ruthless.

Personally, I found that during the series of workshops I experienced some startling and disturbing synchronicities. I think I spoke in one session about my experience returning home from the first workshop where I had painted a shadow-image I had disliked. It felt overly contained and restricted, and I felt like I was suffocating looking at it. This of course was the start of a very dynamic process for me. I arrived home to be met a crazed outburst, an attack describing me in similar terms to the way that I had seen that very image. It was as if unconscious toxins were swimming around in my life and I was being cast as restrictive, cold and hard and repressive myself – not the gentle, loving “me” working with my shadow to free my power, but me, sitting in my lounge room fighting for my sense of self-belief. I like to understand that experience as a process to help me love, approve of and believe in myself and not take on other people’s shit. That was finding my power through strengthening my commitment to self-care. Then, this negativity escaped and shadowed my own view of myself.

I had been working very consciously with the image of Elizabeth 1st. She represented to me the hard and cold side of myself, the unlovable and brittle shadow I placed around power and self-confidence. There in my lounge room I was unlovable. This was a drama unfolding in my life which fed into my picture. From that point on, whenever I was at the workshop, my picture became my relief, my solace, my inspiration. To love it was incredibly nourishing. To get excited by it, to believe in it, rewarding and renewing.

From your notes, I felt that you understood my shadow to be different to the way that I had seen it. It seemed that my shadow was about being cold and alone – unable or unwilling to connect deeply. (Wow, I felt vulnerable to read that but feel at ease about it now. It is such an odd process to be observed, but also, in many ways – when in delicate and loving hands – enlightening) I think this is another aspect of the same archetype of Elizabeth – clipped, reserved and withdrawn from warmth and affection. I do own this aspect of myself. It was much stronger when I was younger, and although I’ve grown beyond its boundaries very much in recent years, it still returns to claim me at odd moments. When I read your notes, I realised that there are still many times in my daily routine now that I don’t bother to make the deep connections, I walk by quickly. But, I feel OK about this part of my character, so I don’t know if that’s my shadow or not. It might simply be my comfort zone.

So, does that answer your question – do I understand the shadow? Who knows?

2) The process has affected me in two ways.
Firstly, it strongly affirmed my creativity. I realised that I flowed, that I was able to easily express myself, and that I deserved to be confident about that. It has inspired me to buy a journal and begin to fill its pages — it may even lead me to dabble further in drawing and art in the future. Really, those weekends were just fun time — RUN to the paints, crayons and pens, GRASP for them and SCRIBBLE.

Secondly, reading your notes has left its mark. I sometimes remember that I can give more time to stop and talk to people more — if I feel like it. I have also become very sensitive about people stepping over my boundaries. It’s funny you know — the incident where you were reacting in horror to your observation that Eva was invading my space I was so unaware of her. So engrossed in my own drawing was I at that stage that it didn’t even register what she was doing. I have wondered since — is this just because this is something that I accept. My mother, who I love and sometimes resent, is a very overwhelming character, so I seem to know and accept a few domineering women in my life. This dynamic reflection, tension, attraction etc. continues and unfolds. I noticed for a while after reading back your notes I did however become very prickly about my boundaries.

Beyond that, it is hard to separate the process of the workshops from the evolution of my life during that time. As I mentioned above, the workshops complemented and partnered a very challenging and difficult time for me in my personal life — a process which I like to believe is about rescuing my own self-love from the shadows of self-doubt — well, at least realising that I deserved to be with a partner who loved, appreciated and nurtured me for who I am, not for who they want me to be. These events did not occur because of the workshops — but the workshops helped these events to get worked through creatively and consciously.

3) No, no difference in the way that I have engaged with nature because of the workshops, not that I’ve noticed. I have since however picked up a book on magic and feel a very strong desire to start growing herbs and engaging in the power of life. Again, I am not sure that I can credit the workshops with this.

4) Shamanic journeying? I don’t know if it’s shamanic journeying, but I am now trancing regularly. Usually I channel a couple of entities through in each session. As you know I have been sitting with the spiritualist church for a number of years now and this year started trancing which — although demanding both physically and emotionally — is also very rewarding. I channel through messages and creative works — both written and spoken.

5) I am currently re-reading a book called ‘the art of effortless living’ by Ingrid Bacci which is a total inspiration — all about how to release from the crazy, stress-driven, product-driven urban cycle and reconnect with a commitment to harmonious process, balance and peace. I find that I increasingly seek refuge from the demands of modern time. Sydney has less and less fascination for me and I am more and more considering moving up north to the Kimberley or Darwin to get some space and continue my journeying.

6) I think I probably answered this question in my answer to the first question. Beyond that, I can’t really say for sure.

When faced with negativity, an awareness of shadow play can help you to reassess your own self-limiting beliefs. Creative shadow work can, by celebrating your dark corners, protect you and empower you to shine mirrors right back where they belong.

Thanks for a fascinating and rewarding experience. I hope that these notes give you some useful feedback.

Cheers, Bronwyn
CHAPTER 9

PETER’S STORY

Peter and I had met at a neoshamanic training workshop approximately six months before. We were both participants. We got along very well and had much to discuss. We both had an interest in Carl Jung, and had both been involved in a spontaneous drama form, Playback Theatre. When my initial research project had progressed to the stage of selecting participants, he was one of the first who came to mind. When I flagged the idea to him, he was most keen to be involved. He is a bright, vibrant and intellectually stimulating man of dapper appearance. In fact, to me he appears as someone who has never had a hair out of place, though there is no affectation. A middle-aged man, of shortish stature, his lush, greying hair is always impeccably cut and brushed and frames his unlined face. He is interested in life, the paradoxes, the intrigues; he gives the impression that some part of him will remain eternally young.

Peter is tertiary educated and was a highly skilled metallurgist before undertaking a mid-life career and life reorientation. At the time of the research engagement, he worked in health research and promotion, and resided for most of the week near his work location, Newcastle. His wife, holder of a Doctorate in statistical analysis, worked in inner Sydney, and they commuted frequently between these two bases. They have been married for more than twenty years. At the time of our first interview, he is weighing up his options regarding relocating his home and work base to Sydney, and living full time with his wife.

I conducted our first interview at my house in Yarramalong Valley. On this morning, the sun was shining with its diffused warmth, as it does in late autumn, and the elongated shadows of the trees created marvellous midmorning silhouettes. I had busied myself in preparation, setting up the interview environment and checking the tape recorder. “One, two, three, testing; one, two three.” I had placed it where it would remain throughout the interview, resting on the base of a chair between the two chairs I envisaged Peter and I would occupy. The recorder looked somewhat insignificant, so I increased its prestige by placing a pillow underneath it. I set the cups and tea-making implements out and awoke the biscuits from their hibernation. All set.
1. First interview

Peter arrived a few minutes early, a habit of respect I was later to discover. He was thankful for a cup of tea and, after exchanging some pleasantries, we took our respective positions for the interview. The recorder was engaged and began its monotonous spiralling journey; we got under way.

He was conversant with Robert Bly’s writings on the shadow and the bag we drag behind us. He recalled.

*The bag was*] full of stuff we don’t like about ourselves and hide away. But in doing that it is still there and its still following you along. It’s a curious thing; it’s a mixture of something you’re attempting to disown, but you can never really disown it. It’s there, you’ve shoved it away, you’ve hidden it, but it’s still there and you drag it along behind. It gets fuller and fuller … the other aspect that I’ve been a bit curious about is re-exploring the reasons why you’ve stuffed that, put that stuff in that bag. And maybe trying to re-explore that and seeing what is salvageable. But the choice or the filters you use to select or reject what’s become part of you and what’s publicly become part of you and what’s gone into the bag. How have they changed over time and what sort of positive values can you see to that stuff that you didn’t see positive values in before, that you tended to push it away and push it behind?

He had begun his personal investigation when he had entered a ‘transitional age’, his mid-forties. He related his life to Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey model, a life-model both for himself and his work in the community. His recent work with a group of people was just like the heroic journey of Frodo from the movie *The Lord of the Rings*.

*This stuff is tricky and difficult to get a handle on. It is, hard to discriminate and ... objectivity may be impossible ... like having a light shining on your face and the shadow being behind you, impossible to see; no matter how fast you turn around, it’s moved somewhere else.*

His life was somewhat governed by his avoidance of overt violence and aggression, and he reasoned that this had affected his ability to be more assertive: he had developed into a ‘classic peacemaker’. He now believed he could reclaim his assertiveness without aggression, whereas before he had inadvertently ‘disowned the whole bundle’.

He expressed his creativity through Playback Theatre and Psychodrama, whereas in an earlier period of his life he had primarily focused upon intellectual pursuits. He loved the fact that Playback and Psychodrama led him into unexamined territory. He said:
I like to play with ideas in an intellectual rather than a physical or emotional response … do that creativity’.

He had gone from a straight narrative textual approach to story to one where he would use his body, symbols, music and song.

He chose two photographs from his professional ‘photo language set’ to represent shadow:

I’m always intrigued by this picture; it’s the interface between the beach and the ocean. And I always find that it’s a really disorienting photo.

He expressed delight in being unsure of the image:

Whether it’s sky or what angle is it taken along the beach … there’s this two very different almost intersecting planes. There was also ambiguity in defining what was water and what was sand. Why I chose this one is that it is about an interface and it’s about the two parts … the shadow, just like his photo, was neither black nor white This is the bit that is interesting for me, it’s this foamy zone down the middle, you think about what foam is: it’s fluffy and it’s light and it’s bubbly.

It’s about the relativities, that when you talk about the shadow, there’s an initial response that the shadow is dark. But the fact that light and dark co-exist, that they’re not distinct, that they’re two elements of the one … one doesn’t exist without the other. And so one is not good and one is not bad. They are. And then we put our own value choices around those. And I think if you can bring the recognition of that together, then this bubbly foamy stuff happens in the middle where the discovery is and the interface between the two.

I got the impression that he had thought quite considerably about this.
He continued on to share his thoughts on his picture of a man and a mask. He was briefer in his story, which he mingled with a sprinkling of theory. He related to the personage, what was behind the mask.

Behind the personality, behind the public face we put on ... (but) there is something else coming out. Some knarled ugliness, probably aggression ... what actually happens if you pull that mask back, what is actually behind it?

Well, yes, what indeed? Perhaps the creative processes in our upcoming workshops will shed some light on this very question. Peter leaves the pictures with me.

2. First workshop

The hall, which has recorded within its walls so much Yarramalong history, has been preparing itself for our arrival for months. It is as though it has lain dormant in anticipation, much like myself. I have some time by myself before they arrive, and I need it: the floor is filthy, the altar must be set, and I must be set.

Peter is the first to arrive, and walks with echoing footsteps into its expectant, hollowed-out belly. I am very pleased to see him; there is a palpable relief that someone has physically shown themselves, that someone is here. His sparkling eyes briefly scan the interior and then lock in on me. He is not intrusive in his visual engagement. I note with relief that it is a look of someone who is sensitive to my needs. He is assessing the relational situation. I greet him warmly and, after brief pleasantries, direct him to the kitchen and the tea-making equipment. He graciously takes the cue and wanders off, leaving me to my own preparations.

He records in his diary:

The Currawongs are here. They greet me on arrival as soon as I open the door of my car at the hall: This IS THE RIGHT Place to be. Just realised that they are a BLACK & WHITE Bird – SHADOW AND LIGHT IN ONE – The Currawongs are to play a further part in his day for later on when he is participating in the creativity socio-graph
they appear again and he draws confirmation from this – I glance through the window in the sociometric line-out: There is a Currawong again in the tree. YES.

But let's go back a bit.

I have set up a sacred circle space on the elevated stage section at the far end of the hall, and have placed in its midst a number of objects that are special to me: a lyrebird feather, a crystal quartz, a rose crystal, a healing stone, candles, and a small bowl of water. The participants are invited to contribute their shadow objects to the midst if they are so inclined. They have been invited to bring along their shadow objects and comment upon them. Peter shares some of his thoughts and feelings about his objects. I ask the group to state what might hold them back from participating fully in this series of workshops. He says that his tendency to intellectualise might get in his way, and that he aspires to go deeper into his bodily knowledge, the wisdom of his internal world.

And so he does, throwing himself fully into the games and the provocation, he gives the appearance of someone who is eager to stretch himself, to stretch his boundaries. And stretch himself he does, but not without some reservations. Although initially not aware to my observation, he records some of the questions he is self-posing, and particularly in the area of the interface between states of being. His visual diary records some of his dilemma. After his active participation in the body sculpture work, he asks himself:

Who sets the boundaries? I Do! But did I or did I abide by Robert's rules? Are the boundaries Hard or Clear or Fuzzy? Soft? Another manifestation of light and shadow duality. Time and space the critical ingredients.

At the end of day one, the group have shared many intimacies. They have played with one another, been boisterous, laughed, solemn, skittish, honest, keen, reluctant, set limits – broken them, retreated, advanced. I have been their director and have witnessed much, but much more is going on than I have seen or comprehended. Seemingly unflappable, he reveals in his journal some of his internal dramatic conflicts:

Two elements immediately apparent to me were the hurtful, spiteful, easily offended aspect that hides behind the conservative face keeper – tightly bound up (tension in the arms & shoulder) – Compliant, meek faced.

He reflects on his process more during his early morning shower. He examines himself in more detail, and then comments:
Shadowgraph, workshop 1

aha! Another two aspects struck me. The one behind is the expressive playful trickster while the one in front is the conservative face the regulator, the ear whisperer, the controller of the playful one. This is the risk averse one – play it safe, don’t take the chances. He relates this to his search for a new job. Why not, he challenged himself, find a position whereby he can incorporate elements of playback, action methods etc.?

Day two –

He does not miss a beat; he throws himself into the process, walking briskly to the mediums and returning with a number of offerings. He sets about his drawings with it seems a knowing of what and where he is going to place his photographs.

He works methodically and with great purpose. He uses text among other things, and names appear; just what they mean to him is revealed in his journal notes.

*Papagano – Bird Catcher. Everyday man, Everyman. Being more human or humane about failings, foibles and struggles.*


In our closing circle at the end of our second day together, he speaks of the magic sparking from his fingertips giving rise and life to Icarus. He ponders reflectively and speaks slowly, choosing his words as if each utterance by him needs to be validated through his internal knowing.

3. Second workshop

The second workshop gets underway two months later. I have not seen him since the first workshop concluded. He is punctual, and this certainly suits me. He banters with me briefly, and then, as if a ritual had been enacted, he adjourns to the kitchen area for an arrival cuppa. The others arrive, and after a by now familiar wait, Michael and Ewa arrive and the circle is formed for our introductory sharing.
The visualisation – They move to where they feel right, edging themselves closer or further from their compatriots, shuffling into the lush grass. They lie upon the grass, these trusting souls stretching out their bodies, embracing the earth with their full length. He settles quickly, his arm bent at right angles to his body, flopping across his eyes, blocking out the glare of the sun. The music commences and I talk them through a visualisation.

He later writes:

_Close section of big tree trunk – no real sense of how big or how small the tree was just full field of vision of the trunk and the bark._

_Labyrinth!!! (a word from no-where) – as I look at the pattern I have formed above to represent the bark, this has the form of a labyrinth._

_I have a sense of stillness – of plastic time being stretched & slowed. Gradual, gradual passing & each sensation – sun, breeze, ants – on my skin (tree trunk) is amplified by the slow progression of time. Animated, amplified stillness – focussing my attention of the sensations of the moment, but also feeling vast and timeless ... it passes but there is much to be experienced. The sensation is neither pleasant not unpleasant – simply very different from my usual experience of time passing. There is no threat – the path and its passing is already defined. Just like the labyrinth a fixed path in – the same way out – and stillness at its centre point. I am still sitting in the stillness of the centre point, intimately in touch with the elements that come into contact with me._

After the visualisation, the atmosphere in the hall has altered markedly. It is still, quiet, reflective. After a sharing of experiences, it is time to journey.

_The journey they will undertake is one in which they ask the question, “Who will assist me in my shadow work?”_

After the journey, the group are invited to express themselves in their journals. Peter writes:

_Owl Arrives_

_Swiftly & Silently – I have waited for what seems a long time in my medicine place. Owl came early as a glimpse in my journey, going to the medicine place. Am I forcing this second meeting after waiting so long – I call three times & owl comes each time. It is right._
The message that the owl has for me is not "spoken" but rather modelled – Eyes, large, watchful, piercing – and an attentive silence: a knowing silence. The owl is a bird of the night & night seeing.

“What sort of owl is Peter’s Owl?” Robert asks.

The group members share in circle, and then are invited to work upon their shadowgraph in whatever manner suits them, or draw them.

I watch as he draws his impression from the journey. He appears absorbed in the process, barely present to others, mesmerised, mesmerising, his movements both loose and intense. His hands smear, blacken, yellow, he, seemingly oblivious to my interest, concentrated upon, and, I think to myself absorbed in, his process. He seems to pour something of himself into his creation, his hands immersed to his wrists in charcoal. As he applies himself, his hands seemingly disappear into the drawing. When they emerge and he emerges, what appears on his shadowgraph are two sets of huge intent, benevolent eyes. We finish for the day.
The second day of the workshop arrives, and after sharing, the group are invited once more to apply themselves to their creations. He seems to be somewhat different today, somewhat reflective; he does not share as thoroughly in the warm-up circle. He has come with a mission.

I need to affix the clipping of El Pajaro – Birdman ... I have been holding & thinking of this image for most of the time between the two workshops. The stunning aspect about these photos are the eyes – Miranda Critica – the critical gaze – like the eyes of the owl. The critical watching – the knowing look. The eyes watching over me from the outside ... as I work with the must haves my mind has slowed to enjoy the act of creating & during this quiet time other elements & recollection from the work we've done so far are given space to come through. The three stages of the fireweed (is it a weed or a flower) that has been placed on our altar – bud, flower & seed.

He takes some of the fire seeds and affixes them to his shadowgraph, into his verse. He rather poetically records in his journal a recollection from the previous day’s visualisation.

>a moment in time, hanging suspended, extended – a sense of timelessness and the timing from another place where the need for rushing is unnecessary and the passage of time is measured by the transitions of the sun, & wind & small creatures around me ... a sense of waiting, potential, & a time scale that doesn’t answer to a clock.

Time figures prominently for him; he writes of his mind slowing down to enjoy the act of creating and the allowance this invites for other elements to come through. He asks his Spirit guide about proceeding, no answer other than to wait. The bridge is not yet ready.
He reflected upon his painting being a labyrinth:

A metaphor for my life; a journey; a winding yet established journey, from the everyday and ordinary into the magic. Halfway through, with many twists and turns already encountered and many more to come.

That pretty well sums up the research experience for me. We complete the second workshop. I plan on interviewing each of the participants before the next workshop.

4. Second interview

For the second interview, we met again at Yarramalong. He was still commuting between Newcastle and Sydney, although the consideration of full-time Sydney living was becoming more of a certainty than a possibility. His Newcastle house was on the market, and he and his wife were looking in earnest for a Sydney residence.

He arrived a few minutes prior to our scheduled meeting time. We chatted amicably on the veranda and then adjourned to the lounge room and commenced our interview. His experience of a shamanic journey was that he experienced ‘a duality’:

Aware of the space I was in as well as the space that I was journeying too ... a sense of “I’m here but I’m also there”.

He compared the neoshamanic healing journey with his role as an actor in Playback Theatre, journeying on behalf of someone else, journeying into their story, journeying into their landscape, and maybe bringing something into their landscape that they hadn’t realised before.

He reflected upon Eliade

What distinguishes the shaman from the ordinary person or the person presented to them, is that the shaman has been in that landscape before and they understand it and they also respect it. It is not a matter of familiarity breeding contempt. It is a respected understanding of what is in that other landscape and moving into that landscape so as not to become so overwhelmed by the experiences that you lose your way.

He had had one frightening experience in this area while acting

I felt myself slipping across, it was almost as if I had got ... I had become disoriented in the landscape. I had moved out of the me and not me existing simultaneously and it was more into the not me.

He believes that the other landscape has been created out of him, or reflects something about him.
So if it's a journey that I've initiated in some way, it's reflecting something that is sitting inside, something that is drawn up from inside me.

He differentiates between hearing a story told by someone and the external stimuli involved in interpreting this story, and his own shamanic journeys; the internal stepping into the journey, one difference being that it is something that is already there. He moves without any preconceptions, although he qualifies this by saying that he moves into this internal landscape down familiar paths to his medicine place. What happens, he says, is different each time; he gets surprised and needs to be receptive to what might come through.

He understood that the ‘intention’ of the journey is a directive force. He likened it to purpose in that the intention doesn’t predetermine the experience or the response that comes from the journey. To journey,

You need to drop the mental filters and relax into the process so that what happens is unknown, to be receptive to what might come through. If that wasn’t achieved then you become susceptible to a contrived response.

He believed that he needed to drop the internal chatter and relax into the process; to just drop the mental filters and internal chatter:

And in some journeys I find you will you’ll come to these dead ends ... and maybe they’re about expectations of what may or may not happen or if you want to encounter a particular animal or essence within the journey but what I find is that runs out of puff. You get into (the journey) but you get to a point where there is a sort of stuckness. And you say let it go, go back don’t keep trying to drive through that and get some resolution because this is the first encounter that you’ve had, so this must be the one.

He said he might become anxious for an outcome and grab anything that comes along; you’ll grab it. He also discriminates by testing the entity, asking it for assurance or moving away to see if he will encounter it again; he also relies on his senses, on whether it is right. In this, he relies on his own bodily feelings in the top of gut, centre of chest. If it doesn’t feel right, he moves away from it, although at times the entity is encountered again and he reappraises the situation, questions his initial negative response.

I was interested in how he understood the journeying on someone else’s behalf, and asked him. He replied:

The journey allowed him to drop into the bigger ether that we float in and believed that in a group the experience is intensified. It is not an intellectual experience but rather it’s the essence of the encounter, and it’s each individual’s energies that are brought into that space ... somehow you’ve found the thing that binds everyone together. The expectation binds everyone together.
Although he felt more comfortable with the drama focus of the first workshop and didn’t regard himself as an artist, he was nevertheless keen to get back to my portrait that awaited him in the second workshop. He desired to get into his intuitive self, but became puzzled about processing experience as to how much does he intellectualise it? He became concerned as to whether he could respond immediately when he was building this laundry list of things:

Putting the photo of the birdman in the face was really important that once I got the birdman pasted on there I was still in this what should I do now? What should I do now? 3

Being bodily aware and physically involved was important, as was creating his images intuitively:

It’s a physical thing that is being driven by the head so its arms and upper body driven by the head ... allowing the materials to appeal to me ... sort of run my eye over them and pick them up without really knowing why. Its like what’s there? Oh there’s something, look at that! And I bring them back and I’m not sure what I’m going to do with them. So that’s been a real shift for me whereas I think that ordinarily if I’d constructed something like that I would think what I was trying to convey I would get the steps in my head understanding what I was going to do, what materials I was going to use and when I found myself doing that I wanted to move telling myself to stop and go and stand with the materials and see what came from that.

Something new emerged by being into this process of just putting the colour down and just rubbing it with my hands.

He became absorbed. And in that his intellectual processes slowed down. This came when he was doing the owl eyes, an image he “brought back” from a shamanic journey. He spoke of an absorption in a spontaneous expression. He had also considered the role of expectations upon his expressions:

It’s about setting expectations and having set the expectation and starting to immediately construct a response around it rather than seeing what response emerges.

When he spoke of his experience with the neoshamanic journey and visualisation, he said the thing that struck him most was his sense of time, and another area was spatial:

How you can move from point to point effortlessly if necessary. The time-space continuum was breached. An example of that is coming back at the end of the journey where I usually enter after I go through the archway I usually go through this field of reeds or tall grasses of some sort and I actually walk across to this rise of ground so it’s almost like a little island in a sea of reeds. So sometimes when I enter

3 Synchronistically, as I write this section, a movement from outside my window catches my eye ... a female lyrebird somewhat anxiously struts across the open ground and heads up the hill beside my office. This is the first time in my experience that a lyrebird has shown itself on our ledge. I had just completed the section on Peter’s power animal retrieval. The lyrebird figured prominently in Peter’s understanding of his shadowgraph.
and I’m walking through this I get the sensation of walking through it and I can feel this grasses and reeds it’s almost like walking through water but it’s grassy water if you like. So I think of this as like an island in a sea but it’s a vegetation sea. So I walk through that and I come up onto the island onto this rise and there is a number of paths that I take around the space. When the journey ends I can be back at the arch really quickly and I sometimes have this sense that I glide over the top of the ... I rarely walk back through those reeds. But I can be there (snaps fingers) but I can actually glide over the top and so the space sense and distances in there are quite strange. I still don’t have a sense of how large or small this space is. I’ve seen it from above and I know the shape of it but how big or small it is I don’t know. I’ve moved through certain landscapes within it but I can’t tell you whether it is a hundred yards and trees or two kilometres and trees it’s almost like it is immaterial but I need to be there and I pass through a landscape and I’m there. So distances are quite plastic in journeys but in that visualisation it was the sense of time that was quite plastic and I’d not had that sense before but in effect I suppose the two are linked as I talk about them now.

I asked him if he had ever experienced fear on a neoshamanic journey? He described one journey where he had flown on the back of a bird from one place, within the space on the island, to another.

We ended up flying up and up and up and suddenly we ended up in this vast blackness it was way up into the sky. It was black it was cold it was windy so there was this sense that it was quite a hostile environment ... We were going into this vastness and it was a bit where is it going to finish?

He realised that though it was cold and dark, and he felt out of control, it was not a hostile environment; that there was nothing there to harm him.

So the purpose of the journey was to prepare myself for the performance that evening and if there was any message. To be able to respond to the space. And what I took from that is that often the stories and what your require to take you to a place where you’re called upon to do something that’s not where you would normally go. And what I suppose my initial sensations around the discomforts of the environment the coldness, the darkness, the speed and the wind associated with it and the unknowing of where it was going to go. But then the other way to look was at it was go to the stars, shoot for the stars if you will. Play in the expanse. Because there was no harm there, initially when I looked I thought this is horrible, I don’t want to be here.

He said that the metaphorical nature of journeys is common for him:

Ordinarily in my journeys I never seem to get direct answers … that while you might want a yes or a no so that the question for the journey would need to be as open as you are and what I find with it that it also gives you something to keep chewing on, and it’s not that's that! Its something that will continue to unfold, no simple yes or no answers, almost always symbols, not words.

At the completion of our interview, he walked over to the Labyrinth at the back of our land. I walked over with him to orientate him and then departed, leaving him to walk in company with the land. He stayed there for about an hour, returned, and then drove away.
5. Final workshop

When they had all arrived, we settled into the ritual circle and shared our warm-ups to being there at this our final weekend together. There was a certain urgency in the air, a hunger. I broke the news that Ian would not be attending, which was my decision. There was disappointment that he would not be joining us. The warm-up was one whereby I invited the group to work towards completion of their shadowgraphs and, in a sense, to allow the shadowgraph to direct them.

I had brought a set of Runes, and invited each of the participants to draw a Rune and then to read either aloud or to themselves the relevant passage from the Book of Runes.\(^4\)

At the commencement of the third workshop, Peter drew the Rune Nauthiz, Constraint. He drew this symbol in his journal and remarked that it indicated for him to undergo the dark side of your passage and bring it into the light: ‘Cycle of SUFFERING = UNDERGOING initiation’.

The group moved down into the main body of the hall and shifted into creativity mode. Peter walked around his work area with his head cocked to one side, as though inviting a different perspective to call him. He appeared to be in a different mood than in his previous weekends. He wrote:

> Today feels more ground – focused – The light airy birdman is not as strong – I feel the need to walk with my figure, to walk the circle (the shaman’s walk??) around the image & the rough the space, the field in which the birdman has been floating. Solid, feeling the ground under my feet. As I walk around the figure there is a sense of springiness on the side where the hand reaches out – but as I navigate back behind the figure.

He is notable in this workshop for the amount of time he spends circumnavigating his shadowgraph. At one point, he sits and studiously paints his feet with paint and then walks upon his shadowgraph. His steps are measured and concise. His balance at times seems to teeter on the edge of tumbling. It is not a conventional path he is marking although it is deliberate. He walks, he sits, he peers at where he has trodden. He wipes the paint from his feet, chooses another colour, then paints his feet and steps with precision once more upon the surrounding area of his body print.

\(^4\) The Runes are an ancient Nordic divination tool devoted to a Spiritual warrior’s path. They consist of 25 thumbnail-sized, flat stones with a symbol engraved on one side. 16 of these symbols have a
Over and over he repeats this process, until satisfied or perhaps satiated. Then he sits legs akimbo, feet wiped but by no means clean, peering into his creation.

After lunch on the second day, he begins smudging a darkness onto and into the lower half of the surface. He works intensely, the charcoal smearing his arms and the portrait at the same time, in the same instant the charcoal merging them, the charcoal acting as an agent, a medium lost in their confluence, its essential nature fusing the three of them into one. I, watching this, feel a peace enveloping me, a release. My solar plexus lets go of something I didn’t know I had held.

He continues to work throughout the day, adding symbols, standing on chairs viewing down at his creation, smudging other areas in other colours. His work is coming to life, life is coming to his work. Towards the end of the day, I invite the participants to pose with their creations. He walks onto his shadowgraph and stands upon the balls of his feet outside the circular area of his footprints. He reaches up, barely able to maintain his balance though not giving the impression that he will tumble.

We finish the workshop with comments from all in the group about their shadowgraphs and their process. Peter is generous with his appreciation of his learning, and comments that he believes his learning will continue long after he leaves the hall.

We meet for our third and final interview at his place, an apartment he and his wife have recently purchased in the heart of Sydney. Peter has embarked upon a new and exciting career as a community development officer for a local council. Their place is immaculate with not a spec of dust or anything out of place. It is decorated with tastefully selected furnishing displaying a love of Asian culture and artefacts. This is my first meeting with Dianne. We sit on their patio overlooking a beautifully laid our courtyard. I feel remarkably relaxed in their company. Dianne is arranging dinner, so comes in and out of our conversation. They are very relaxed in each other’s presence. Pre-dinner, he and I adjourn to the spare room to hold our interview.
6. Final interview

His shadowgraph lain out before him, he says that the first thing that strikes him is
the colours, the reds, the blacks, yellows, and blues and not a lot of paint on the
surface, and looking like a Miro painting. He was also taken by the fact that he had
believed himself to be finished and then Spanish words came into his head. He
recalled with delight making the dark smudgy parts down the bottom, and comments
that they are almost like black flames, with black smoke rising.

When he describes his shadowgraphs’ coming into being, he becomes excited and
animated:

This is my outline in the centre of the piece, this [is] where I started the work, an odd
kind of character. I didn’t know at the beginning which way the character went. I
know that early on I suspended the character not in a vertical way but here almost the
character flying, so putting the character horizontal. So here I was in either a floating
or a flying shape. And also the images that came to me around that time were all bird
images. The Icarus fly too high and potentially fall. Pupagano, the birdman. Hermes
was there. At that point I was very much the light, the airy character. And as a result
of this what kept coming to me again (were) some bird characters. But in the last part
I had a sense of ... and what very much changed the dynamic in this, was I moved
away from this light and airy character into a more grounded character. And I actually
wanted to walk around the figure. I had this sense that I needed more contact with
this work that in some way was no longer airy. That there was something more solid
starting to emerge from it.

He explained that he experienced a sense of moving from a sparseness of being into
a more grounded, earthy interactive way of engagement. He said he needed to
interact more with the work and put his footsteps on it. In the last workshop, he felt
more and more that he was on a pilgrimage:

This was my story, my creation, and there was a pathway around it. There was a
journey as I moved around it, and that is where this image the Campenello Capiella,
this shell image, the pilgrim and ultimately maybe, that’s where this Spanish came
from, the scallop shell following the path.

I asked Peter how this had benefited him in his everyday life. He replied:

The benefit in doing that is that it’s like the stuff that I’ve been doing but haven’t
articulated it. I have had a sense I have been working on this stuff, I’ve also got a
sense that I’m not sure where it’s going, or how it’s unfolding, but it is. And the fact
that I was able to articulate it in this way gives me a snapshot. The benefit to me is
some comfort in that I am starting to get a recognition and name it, and recognise (it)
To work with this. There are also elements in this of where it’s going, or how I am to
respond to it. So it is this idea that the breathing in and the breathing out and the
repeating of the cycle. That it is a cycle. There is an element in there of a labyrinth ...
the last time we did an interview when I went down and walked that (labyrinth) there
is a path in, and a path out. And it’s not a maze, there is a path. The path is fixed
and it’s not necessarily not dangerous, but it can be confusing. That maturity or
growing maturity, and be able to sit with that.
Doing the shadowgraph and the journey workshops had assisted him to settle into himself, and reflect on his life’s journey and where he is heading. He was in the process of putting together a new training course and felt more confident in allowing himself to be vulnerable within his facilitation, to get ‘his interior stuff right’. He had talked with another presenter about his concerns and fears:

> I still have those fears but to do this work really means to put yourself out in a very exposed way, and I’m not really sure that they share those same views. And it is how I will be judged. And the degree ... my own interior stuff that I’m putting out there. And I would say probably and I wouldn’t done this last year. And it’s not exclusively around this (shadowgraph research) but this has been a very significant step.

He indicated he now had a greater degree of comfort with his own interior world and a greater understanding of it. He related the work in terms of the shaman:

> You come into a space and experience the space, or the initiation rights ... and you come back from that space it doesn’t make it any less fear or doubt inducing, but you know the geography of it. So you can say to people come into that space and we’ll be OK.

When he reflected upon the workshops, his main feedback was that it shifted him into a different space. The shadowgraph was a point of reference to go back to and think about. I gave him a photograph and he commented that it acted as a trigger; he didn’t need to have the whole thing, that looking at the elements brought the whole thing alive:

> The thing about that space is the unexpectedness of it. Learning to sit with what is felt but not understood. To know that, even if he had an insight, there was still mystery involved, that this knowing from my insight was like the tip of an iceberg.
Completed shadowgraph
CHAPTER 10
FIRST-PERSON RESEARCH
CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND THE IMAGINAL

What else is imagination, if not the inner sun? – Paracelsus

Using active imagination, as discussed in the methodology chapter, I embarked upon my personal journey into the shadow. The process began each time with my intent to allow an altered state of consciousness to guide the image-making and the dialogue, while witnessing the process from a stable state of consciousness. It involved my trusting that a response from an inner guidance would direct my process towards expression. The first process occurred spontaneously at a neoshamanic workshop Vicki Dean and I facilitated at Mangrove Mountain.

After the emergence of this first image, it was clear that my intuitive body could guide me into areas of my unconscious that were otherwise inaccessible, and totally unknown. The images mysteriously revealed themselves as though they had awaited an invitation. I became intrigued by their emergence and embarked on further exploration using a similar body-art medium-orientated approach.

The following images appeared from the shadows of my consciousness, and demonstrated that if I allowed images access to expression, they would take form. I include these images and their commentaries as examples of the irresistible creative opportunism of the shadow in making itself conscious. The images provided a dilemma – I was puzzled – if this was shadow, and shadow is the unacceptable, why did I feel so satisfied and delighted? It became clear that shadow is capable of being ego-self-transformative through wilful engagement and expression.

The creative media I used throughout these shadow excursions were pastels, coloured pencils and blank white paper – the first image production was accompanied by music and dance.
1. The first image:

I was co-leading a neoshamanic workshop set in a bush retreat. The first night of the weekend I had laid out on a table an unused box of pastels and a blank piece of paper. I was feeling mildly anxious and self-conscious.

I spread out sheets of paper on a table alongside crayons and coloured pencils. There were six of us. The two men pull out musical instruments, a guitar and a flute. Vicki plays the flute and draws; the music lingers in the air like internal clouds. I approach the paper warily and shy; it presents its blank face to me – white, barren, inviting. But inviting what? The crayons lie unused in their cardboard box. The lid is off; they lie exposed – an unused gift from Vicki, given in celebration of my completion of my honours thesis the previous year. They are stiff, lined up in hue and shade, neatly balancing each other’s complementary colour contribution. I am keen, yet fearful, unsure yet determined. But where to start? And what is there to draw, anyway? Numbing thoughts meet a subtle gut prompting. I am somewhat paralysed by the conflicting inner tensions; the music plays on. I stand poised, unnoticed by all except the disquieting babble of voices long since dead and the yet to be born demands of what wants to become SEEN. The journey, my journey, how to bring it to life? Into life? This life?

I have a scant visual recollection of an etheric encounter from my previous neoshamanic journey, a spirit being, faint, indistinct, wafty in appearance. ‘What is your name?’ I asked. ‘Celeron’ came to me, not spoken, just appearing as a vibration wafting into my mind: Celeron. This name, this meaning beyond the word becomes my starting point. I feel the word in my body, I let this guide me; I almost laugh at myself with this notion of surrender. I write the word. The guitars and flutes play oblivious to the internal drama of the emerging artist. My body sways some more, feeling more and more into the movement of the surrounding space. My hand floats over the virginal boxed crayons: ‘Let the colour find you. They know. Let their knowing come to you.’ Yes, yes, ridiculous, absurd, sensitive, sensitise, yes, yes. Ah, the pull is over here, stronger, insistent, subtle. My fingers alight upon the right colour, the internal tension eases. A light blue, no doubt. A resting place.

Celeron, the word is loose, the letters run and flow ... my body loose and pliable is moving in sinuous delight, swaying sensuously; my feet lift, one after the other and hang in the vibrant air, suspended crane-like for a fleeting moment, then descend to
the floor as a dance flows in me, through me. My entire body is in a delightful reality that is beyond and yet present with the swirling inner and outer domains of its calling. And my arms flow, sweeping up and down. They are delighted to be allowed their freedom; they revel in it; they are feminine, I am feminine. This is a calling answered, a beckoning surrendered unto. My sex, my gender sidelined to the insinuations of a more immediate demand, a demand to be as I am, right now. This is it, now, live it, breathe, allow, dance, sway. Feel the pull of the spirit, the soul; they are one, right now, with me ... This timeless and timely ecstasy passes, returns, passes, returns, over and over again, in lesser and greater intensity.

My arms move with a grace and intimation of an embodied feminine beauty, my fingers flicker over the crayons, the crayons attract them, I pick up colours as they allure me to them. They flow their way onto the paper, at first somewhat hesitantly, self-consciously, then with unconscious delight. The dance plays its way onto the paper. Yes, this must have movement, must have flow. The colours stream into one another, rubbing up, out and into each other; they merge, becoming another in the process. Two becomes three, four five, more ... They swirl into vortexes as my body swirls and dips. A figure appears: it is Celeron, his/her arms outstretched, floats on a cushion of darkness, arms lifted, fingers unfurled. Another figure appears: he is joyously running through the dark towards Celeron. He strides towards his spirit guide, leaping from the blackness, exuberant, ecstatic, arms lifted high. There is a story here, a tale in the making.

One of the women points out to me that a figure has emerged from the negative space. This figure is black, dark, somewhat featureless; he/she pours out the darkness from an urn. The darkness from which I emerge? I dance on, feeling a
certain satisfaction and camaraderie with the picture. I feel satisfied something has been answered inside, a nagging question laid to rest. I complete this expression on paper and I feel a certain self-assurance, a liberation, and, dare I say it, a certain pride. So this is what is inside! Doubts niggle and gnaw, but I have the drawing, I have danced my own dance (or it me).

Through this process, it became apparent that there is an inner guide and guidance within, and if I but trust, what will be, will be ... revealed. The guidance will make itself known in and through me. I am a vehicle, my body has a knowledge well beyond the generally stage-managed manner of being that so constricts and inhibits spontaneous expression. What is clear is that I feel generally larger, or rather expanded. The inner beings that have revealed themselves are not only benign but positively supportive of my inner forays. They are liberated as they take form on paper, but more than that, they are now in my consciousness, and I might add whoever looks upon these drawings, these works of art, they become part of their consciousness. They, it, I, co-create and in so doing liberate an impulse to be, to be realised in form. The shadows, those unknown forms that have so bedevilled me are being emancipated, and with their emancipation comes mine.

I know I have endured much to reach this place. I am not willing to allow complacency. I have not known, at least in my immediate recollection, any time of mental/emotional stability, nor do I feel it now. What I do know is that my identity has expanded and some ghosts been laid to rest. My expansion is founded upon the beauty of the produced image that lay before me. Astounding as this is, it is nevertheless undeniable. I stand beside this image, slowly and almost imperceptibly nodding my head in humble acceptance.

The imaginal/spiritual worlds I have visited and emerged from are stunningly beautiful when given manifest form. They are in fact more vibrant and distinct when physically engaged with than when passively ‘imagined’. I feel confident that I am engaged in a progressive process.

2. Images of the shadow

What follows is an account of my using this intuitive drawing process to engage imaginatively with the internal promptings of my soul. I drew these images in response to dreams or other subjective stimuli. I kept a journal of intimations and
subjective imaginings, and wrote responses to the images that were produced. The responses were initiated through a process of deep reflection, and the dialogue-stories flowed from a steam of consciousness. This was an open-ended process, one I intuitively followed. Reflecting upon the emotional intensity – the rage, anger, frustration, grief, shame, joy, jubilation and splendid wonder – that accompanied many of these images alerted me to their intimate association with shadow.

I began by reflecting back over my recent experiences of shadow:

I reflect upon my previous two years, the years of shuddering uncertainty, of fears, terrors and ecstasy. The graphic attempts I made to express and bring into this life the turmoil and beauty of my shamanic journeys into and from other realms. Answering the beckoning call that drew me to them, that cried desperately from inside my soul to bring forth the hidden, to show that which was secreted from view. I sink into their worlds and review their energetic qualities; they impact upon me. Some I love. Some I feel a peculiar distance from. Some I reject coldheartedly. But, with all, I admire my tenacity, my gumption with their efforts to bring forth resonance of intra-psychic phenomenon. In this manner, I love them, I love them all (but do I?). I'm also uneasy. I think to myself that with all these pictures there is something missing, something untold, something intentionally hidden, rather than inadvertently obscured. I reflect upon what was not brought forward in those times of confusion and fear, my crises of being or becoming. And I realise that much was omitted, much was held in abeyance, much that I couldn't or wouldn't allow conscious expression.

The dark, always the dark, this was what I wouldn't allow to possess me, but accommodate me it did. There in residence deep inside, well not too deep, lay my fears; desperate and festering, they hovered at times on the verges of consciousness to be stifled and stillborn before rising into artistic relief. So no relief was gained or attained, and the pressure grew.

But love me
tell me I have done marvellous things
tell me you are moved
compliment me
so that I might, so that I will
take your words inside me
and share them with the ravenous and insatiable hordes

I now asked myself. 'What about that which was subdued in the name of stability, of conformity, of appropriateness, of cultural and social acceptability?' What of my demons in the dark? Had they gone away overpowered by my rationalised
arguments as to their inappropriate displays? And if I had really shunted them from my being, where do they now dwell? If they are ‘energies’, can they simply disappear when I keep shining my ever-brighter light upon, them forcing them deeper and deeper into the darkness? I began to grow increasingly curious, and uneasy. I had settled into a very new appreciation of ‘who I am’, and began to discover that I was incredibly subject to ‘whims of being’. Sometimes centred, self-assured, sometimes nervous and uncertain, I also realised that I gave greater merit to those ways of being that accorded with acceptance by ‘others’ – a lyrebird – I was quite adept at conforming to whatever social group I was in.

Many behaviours, thoughts and actions were predicated upon the rules of acceptable social engagement – feelings, thoughts, and actions circumscribed by relationships of acceptance and denial. The strange (at least to me at the time) thing was that, no matter how much I behaved as if I were a centred, wonderful person, more often than not macabre thoughts and images would infiltrate my thoughts. Whereas once I would be somewhat alarmed and even horrified, I now could observe these flashed images with a certain detached bemusement, as they would suddenly come and go. Violent images were not uncommon, scenes of stabbing being a recurring snapshot. I never entertained enacting these scenes, but still they did unsettle me as they inexplicably erupted into view. I reflected upon my art and I noticed that I had a strong fear verging on and into abhorrence, of using the colour black, as if somehow black would conjure up a darkness of my soul that would destroy, incapacitate or overwhelm me. Silly perhaps, superstitious certainly, but nevertheless it was there and couldn’t be conquered by any amount of my self-talk.

‘I picked up the crayons:’

2 a.
The dark, the beckoning dark. Black, mysterious, enticing, repelling, it was into this I decided to venture. A colour no more, no less, an absence of colour no more, no less. What is there? What lies beneath, within?

The image of a tree presents itself. The tree jumps onto the page, flowing with acute angular inclination, it reaches out and up. It comes from stillness, blackness; it is born from darkness and presents itself upon the virginal white paper. Other swirls take form to fill the blankness, to interrupt, to confront. Colours, yes, this will be colourful.
They caress my fingertips as my hand glides over the crayons. Gently, gently calling... I must give back the blackness, must take it back, bring it forth, give it air, give it light, give it a chance to breathe. The dark surrounds the figures: it is so dark, so devoid of the faintest flickering spark. And yet it does not take from or of life; it is not a succubus. Rather, it seems to accentuate and give relief to the colours it surrounds. The black gives of itself, not seeking anything from anyone, and yet without it nothing would stand out with distinction, nothing would shine forth in individuation, nothing would capture the eye of the beholder. The black pulls itself away, and paradoxically (maybe) it discretely presents itself as being other than that which deserves attention; it is a phantom being, not negating anything, but rather providing the means of being seen. It presents as a lifeless form, and yet all life is surrounded by it, encased within its negative space. By its lifelessness, it brings life forward.

The colours significantly take on their own shapes, hues and vibrations. The tree, rather peculiar to me, demands to be blue, a primary colour; inverted, the tree becomes a cross, a primary symbol. At the base of the tree, a circle, a swirling spiral, takes itself seriously with overlay upon overlay, and eventually consumes itself; it is born into an egg. The egg, when inverted, becomes the head of Jesus, the great and noble healer in his most forlorn moment: “Why have you forsaken me”?

The blackness, the dark, those attributes that I have archived in the recesses of my soul, seem to echo and resonate with this question. I am overcome with an explicable and pervasive sadness.

I am committed to liberation, to redeeming from my darkened recesses the abandoned, the repressed, the shadowy ones I have made ‘other’. Fear, that gaoler of intimacy and honesty, accompanies me, will be my companion, will be a travelling
mate, will be a guide into these less than known waters. Art will be my medium, my vessel.

Sweeping beings arrive and illuminate the page, ones that before their arrival were unknown to me; they appear in process. They have qualities of vibrancy, of verve, they are in a process of transformation; I can see that, but from what? To what? They are somewhat stilted, but how can this not be the case when for so long they have languished on the fringes? They float, cascading brilliance in their wake. And then another smaller cocoon and foetal shape being that floats in the fluid of darkness; no, there are two of them. They promise much as yet unborn. I love them so, but am intimidated by their appearance. This ambivalence does not make sense; perhaps it is not meant to.

2 b.
It stirs, now awoken from its slumber, spilling forth unto the world, my world – the world of manners, of niceties or decorum, of superfluous politeness. It consumes; there is no more Mr. nice guy, no more Mr. pleasant, no more humbleness. There is only destruction and fury. Scenes of mayhem erupt into the valleys, spill forth on the plains. It is intoxicating, liberating, exciting, frightening. I stand beside myself, within myself. Who am I? Who is this tyrannical destroyer? Settling, settling barely under control, barely apparent; well, apparent to those who seek to spew forth their niceties; no, not so much their niceties; it is their humiliations, spilled forth over me. And now, before me, the weeping result, pathetic before my wrath, my bombardments of invective. And I torn as ever, torn as never, stand wanting to smash her, smash anything, destroy and rip, dismember and wreak mayhem. Body alive, tingling, calming, barely calming, he rests, ever ready; if ever need be, he has...
made himself known to me, this shadowy fury. Tingling, alive, vibrating at a frequency of excited intensity. A dragon’s rage at an assault upon his castle, an intruder into the depths of secreted treasure. A roaring, soaring power of annihilation, afraid of nothing but itself. The rushing, gushing, ripping, tearing, gorging itself on the flesh of a cringing heart.

It passes, but remains. And I, in a non-man’s-land of mitigated incredulousness, stand as if surveying the aftermath of some wondrous and fantastic emotional tornado. Carnage? No? Destruction? No. And yes, destruction of a world of masks, and initiation into a world of unmitigated being. The destroyer has awoken and burst forth into life, my life. The energy surge is electric. No deaths, except my own, nor any destruction, except my own. My loved one’s ok, my loved one rejoices; she says she knows that place of raging fury. She feels safe that it is acknowledged. She bigger, me bigger.

I awake at night a little fearful; I call in my grandfather (spirit guide) to ensure a degree of safety sorely needed. I tremble and have a minor convulsion. The front of my body is electric, vibrating, tingling, gently tingling. I ask to know this energy, to own it. No, that’s not quite right; not to own it, but to bring it into a relationship of awareness; I have held it away for too long. No wonder it is enraged.

The depths are indeed deep, and the engagements diverse and alive. And oddly, peculiarly, the destruction was of an idea, a self-conception or more probably a self-deception. The rage, the fury, this that was in me and was of me, had proven to be not destructive at all, but liberating. I felt as though I had thrown off an ill-fitting, constricting suit, and then, raw and naked, screamed a howl of primal urgency. A vital and necessary purging had occurred, but not of anything that was essentially me; no, not that. A purging of an idea of my inner experience, my emotional world being a dangerous place to visit, let alone dwell in. This was clearly not the case; in fact, it was the opposite. The depths of my ‘darker self’ filled me with a pulsating, passionate aliveness. Yes, I was somewhat frightened. It seems fear and exhilaration are bedfellows, oddly compatible.
2 c.
I’ve been dancing alone. And still I feel myself as if dancing to an audience, as if there are beings who watch, not just over me but at me. This time, they do hold sway, they do not inhibit what must come into being. I like the way I dance – loose, rhythmic, unique, flowing, sensuous.

The genie is out of the bottle
He appears on the page, central – a stick man with heart. He wears the crown of the fool (although he does not desire it); he looks somewhat bemused, which is news to me. His genitals dangle; I rather shyly try to camouflage them, but I love them, I must say. Colours, vibrancy the exotic embellishments of life, swirl around them, giving them a comical look. I feel for this being; he is unsure of himself, his sexuality, his expression of individuality; so used is he to being judged by others, he now interrupts the nature of his being. I feel compassion for him. But there is more: I also feel somewhat dismissive and contemptuous. A snake finds its way to the light; it looks on with what? Benevolence, hostility, judgment?

Stripped of flesh, heart exposed, he glances, frightened, unsure of the snake witness. His dance is, no was, one of freedom, of unadulterated ecstasy. White light surrounds him, protecting him, shielding him, imprisoning him. The beauty of oblivious birds, their flightless company beside him. The snake watches, waiting impatiently. It is not the company he desires, not yet, not now, and yet it is the company that desires him. Welcome ...
The self-scrutiny continues, sometimes abated, sometimes unnoticed. The shadow, father, mother, grandparents, as though my entire history has been one of putting on a show, seeking approval on their terms, whoever they are. I like this dancing one; he dances in spite of the scrutiny, but not as a reaction to it; rather as a response to something larger than any exterior critique can be. He has courage, this one. I remember that snakes are potent symbols of regeneration; I am also reminded that fools or jesters were the ones allowed to take the micky out of Kings and Queens as a counterbalance to hubris. The humour continues, for his penis and testicles sway in counter-rhythm to his body; they are a counter-weight. Another name for these wonderful accoutrements of masculinity is the ‘Crown Jewels’.

2 d.
I commence with an intention of making circles. From the spirals, from the passion and yet so gentle does she appear, so tender and serene, that I am somewhat taken aback. I was not expecting such gentle and tranquil emergence.

A snake, a lizard entwining the throat, nesting where others fear. Let others be as they are, for they are not I, not I them. For snakes and lizards are healers, are they not? They hold a primitive energy that at the same time is completely here, present now, dynamic and archaic. Enemies of each other, predators of each other, and yet companions to each other since forever. They have survived beside one another, co-existing in their own peculiar way. Now they balance her central and steady slumber. They move towards each other, each one at ease with the other; the lizard blends itself into the colours that it will add to.
And she, that one central to the comings and goings of her world, blissfully and gently sends out her little ones into the night, into the dream worlds. They take form as they rove from her solar plexus, the place of emotion, of feelings. These little ones take on many forms, for they shape, are shifters extraordinaire. They come and go in a myriad of guises; each one selected for reasons unknown to the dreamer, unknown to themselves, for their mission is not to know; it is to respond to whatever is, whatever presents itself at any given moment. Not for these beings a script to be followed, oh no. Their cue is a vibration, a feeling, a disquiet to appease and respond to.

And the eyes, what, of you who appear so frequently – I was going to say ‘relentlessly’, and perhaps this is also true, for would the word appear without validity? – what of your eyes that seem to be constantly viewing ... what? You never come closed, and rarely in profile. It is like this, is it not? The observer being observed; is this my social world? The censor, the critic, the “cop in the head”, the moraliser, the voyeur, and hopefully the self-reflective eye of liberation.

There are vaginas; they appear with a frequency as well. They the bringers of discomfort of a certain belied injunction. Yes, they fascinate me, intrigue me, excite me, titillate me. But surely this is a private matter, one unseen, unspoken, hidden away in the recesses of one’s mind? So what is it that must be hidden even from oneself? The anatomy of pleasure is what. It is not surely the sacredness that is spoken about by Malidoma Some. Oh no, I do not hide surreptitious pleasure (and shame) of this for for that reason. It is hardly a sacred orifice to me. There is something more basic to my reluctance to speak or show my interest. Something perhaps even more primitive. Perhaps plain and simple lust motivates me. But let’s not beat around the bush; there is lust in my interest. Subdued by shameful thoughts and memories, this curiosity of mine perhaps, but nevertheless alive upon the page in counterpoint to these self-same memories and uncomfortable feelings. I feel both a freedom and an anxiety in bringing forth images that demand to be seen, come what may. I am living within a tension of ‘ought’ and ‘should’ vs. ‘be’ and ‘express’.

What a marvellous journey I am on!. The beauty, the surprise, the delight, the inhibition, the exhibition, the fears and exultations cascading before me. Me, the mediator, or perhaps the vehicle. Tales of colour, other people’s stories taken on board, becoming mine; layers of stories, a multi-storied edifice to convention.
Arms outstretched, he hangs centre stage, his head drooped, a martyr, a victim.
Flanked by the unrepentant, the thieves, the redeemed and the unredeemed.

Coming from the deep green vortex, suspended, awaiting life, giving life, suspended in life. Who goes there? Who dwells in the darkness but I? What awaits me there?

Wounded healer
What is it I reach for and into? What is it I hope to draw forth, to pull from the dark? Must I enter your mysterious realm to reclaim my heart? And who shall accompany me? Who will risk their life to reclaim their heart? Who will risk their life to free their soul? Who will walk the death walk for the sake of another who seeks help, when the other is oneself? Transformation, the butterfly tells its tale of liberation, but only upon pain of death, and so does the Jesus man. All of life, if observed closely enough, tells of something similar, death onto rebirth. But who shall go willingly into that realm where the unknown dwell? It seems messy; it is messy in all its surrounding mix of darkness and emergent forms – forms unrepentant, forgiven, unforgiven, leaping, prancing, free, transfixed. And all the time, the figures’ impaled cling to immobility as if there is no other way of being. ‘You have hung around for long enough’, I say; ‘it is time to move off. Unclench your grip on the bones of what has been; move, damn it, move!’

And there, offstage, is the dark. Always the darkness on the periphery, occupying the fringes. The dark foreboding, the dark inviting. Ominous, present, chilling. And what lingers in you? And why do you linger? Fringe dweller, holder of what once was, and what might one day be again. What say you to the man upon whom so many have pinned their fate (as he has been pinned)? What is it you have to bring
forth into this world? The bugs and birds, the dancing man – are these your contribution? What need I of those beings, the primitives? What may they bring other than a niggling uncertainty? They speak.

I bring to you a freedom of the unknown adventure of being. The dance of freedom from all constraints of body, a wildness. An unfettered abandon, an exuberance and delight in movement. I am from a place that few might enter, but surely all should. The world, that place in whom so many place their trust, is not where I dwell, nor should you. Sing me into being, move me into being, herald my coming and weep should I leave, as all should weep for their remembered forgotten. Your tears will lead you back to places where your true self lies awaiting. What is this, you say? My true self? Is there a self that is true, beyond deception, beyond illusion? If so, then it must be deep indeed. Was brother Jesus his true self? Is this that which is on offer? If this be the case, then one should enter upon such a path with respect, and I imagine with more than a little trepidation. I have the trepidation. Should I die unto all I have been, unto all I knowest myself as being? Is this the price?

Your drama is your own; I have mentioned none of that which you imagine as being asked of you. Embrace yourself, embrace me, this is all I say. Leave the complications to others; there are many to wear that mantle.

Picture me as one who emerges with a prompt. A nudge, and here I be. Picture me as colours that grab attention and won’t let you be. I will attract you and demand my life into form. Picture me as etheric; picture me as floating forward, receding backwards; spreading outwards and inwards, embracing and remaining aloof. Reach for whatever colours call you, and they will be the right colours. Make a line and it will be the right line. A shape cannot be anything other than perfect or a step in that direction, and a step in any direction is a movement away from the death of stasis. The eye, the soul – no, my eye, my soul – awaits, expectantly. My move, your move, what now? Leave me be ... but you’re not here, yet your story is yet to be. LEAVE ME BE ... for now. Visit, revisit, churning, burning, dissatisfaction. Hollow men do not feel this. What is this? Paper turning, portrait, ahhh!!! Life fragment, flagrant life emerging, receding, satisfying, exasperating. Bats, birds, what are you wanting of me? There is more, yes always – no, not always; now, only now. Passion, wherefore art thou? Gnawing teeth. A dumbness, an emotional dumbness. Do not visit me now. Turn towards, turn away, agitation. Steady strokes, purposeful, intentional. Blackbirds emerging from her, through her, on her. Defining, defining
suggestive. Incomplete, seeds, feathers, incomplete. White eyes, dancing spirits, incomplete. Arrange, rearrange. Gifted bones from a zebra crossing, legs, claws, crushed, fine, exquisite. Thoughts of previous owner, none – until now. Life gone to live again. Romantic notions of eternity conspiring to be with me, romance? Perhaps, but perhaps some other meaning, some other pressing need answered through and by responding to a yes from within the imperative breast.

2 f.

Red earth moving, drawing broken bones unto itself with sweeping timeless expectancy. Eye of slumbering fish headed home to spirit dance. Ancient frogs and bats curiously begin their lives side by side. No up, no down, no height, only depth. Live again. Thus, this extraordinary period came to an end. I was left with an incredible understanding of the shadow. Its nuances and peculiar ways were fathomable through lived, felt experience. Manifesting these sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrifying eruptive experiences into form, whether through movement-dance, creative art, dialogue, while maintaining a witness state of consciousness, integrated the feelings into a broader and deeper acceptance of one’s self. I had come to understand the shadow is an agent of healing. It left me wondering what this intuitive process might reveal.
about the deeper aspects of one’s soul in regard to the shadowgraphs I and the other participants had produced.

3. My shadowgraph

Along with the other participants, during the intervals between workshops, I began a shadowgraph. I followed the path of allowing my instinctive body to lead the way into manifesting a deeper expression of the ‘hidden’. I viewed it as an instinctive attempt to follow my bodily inclination to align itself with my intuitive self.

The method I used was to intentionally relax by breathing deeply and consciously.

After bodily feeling into the shape of my shadow and outlining it upon the paper, I filled in the outline of it in black. As I stood back and looked down upon it, I experienced a cringing within me; a gross, disturbing unease occupied my upper body. I felt an acute vulnerability and embarrassment at the foetal-like, curled-up figure. I was loath to view this representation, and felt a raw emotional revulsion towards it. A significant part of me did not want to show it to anyone or display it in any circumstance, and soon after I felt torn between my rational mind and my emotional response. I wanted similarly to present it to the world as some heroic being. As if to show the world that internally I was a much greater presence than they could see. And yet here was my shadow: dark, scrunched up, seemingly defenceless, and subject to my (and others) scrutiny and ridicule. (The realisation that it was I who was doing the ridiculing came later.)
In the immediacy of the experience, objectivity was temporarily unavailable, for my emotional reaction was overwhelming; it momentarily dominated my being and stifled reflectivity.

A bare moment later, I was aware of a conflict within me. I was split. Rationally, I knew what I was doing (persecuting myself), for I was the only one present. It was I, passing harsh judgment upon myself. I had a little distance between myself and my reactive state. I realised that I was acting as both persecutor and prosecuted, but the reaction was nevertheless powerful enough to evoke a need to hide or disguise what I had presented. Rationally, I knew it was just a pictorial depiction., a lifeless, filled-in outline, and yet I wanted to start again, do another one, create one with a more heroic and dynamic posture. Unlike Ewa, I refrained from damaging or significantly altering the image.

I reasoned that it would be unethical to destroy the image, as I was about to lead a group in shadow exploration using the same technique. It alerted me to the power of this manner of working with shadow. In order to lead this group, I needed to be prepared to honestly depict and investigate my own shadowgraph, noting but not succumbing to the intensity of my experience. I would show my shadowgraph and deal with the emotions and their aftermath, and work it into image form.

It was not until towards the end of the final workshop that I brought my shadowgraph into the group and presented it. The timing had more to do with my supervisor’s direction than hiding it away through shame. However, even though I had significantly altered and added to the shadowgraph, I still felt a residual shame of the vulnerable foetal figure lying upon the paper before me. I was also determined not to succumb to the feeling.

After producing my shadowgraph and having the group walk around it and comment, I then lay down upon it in another posture, and a fellow participant drew another outlined figure. After placing the second figure overlaying the first, I felt a sense of relief. This was a truer depiction of my internal state. There was not one figure, but two, not one primary state of being, but two. The effect upon me was profound; I psychically relaxed.

Ewa and Bronwyn had commenced their shadowgraphs with two different shadow outlines overlapping each other. Michael, in altering his original shadowgraph, had extended the boundaries of his first outline, as he said it was unrepresentative of his inner experience.
Completed shadowgraph
4. Transformation of a shadow experience.

The emotional realms into which I had entered were bodily convulsive, and I became aware that the emotions were in and by themselves harmless. They were not by any means pleasant. However, when they were understood as liberating agents, I could accept and witness their transformative power. The longer I allowed these emotions their expression, the more accepting I became of myself; the more acceptable I became of myself, the more acceptable I became of others.

Rage and anger, emotions mentioned by several of the participants, became an area of exploration for myself. Drawing with pastels, I attempted to portray these emotions in a visual expression, creating a visual epitaph. No sooner did I start the drawing than I stifled myself by imagining how others might perceive the image. I felt inhibited and felt deeply into the bodily experience. I asked myself, ‘What does it feel like to experience my own critical saboteur?’ I plunged into the ‘inner critic’ through a deep self-reflective process that entailed the experience of confronting the limitation I was imposing upon myself and my image-making. The very make-up of the critic was allowed to surface along with the associated feelings. I became wrought with angst as I realised that even attempting to stop myself watching resulted in a self-consciousness and inhibition of expression. I was nothing except the being shaped by the social systems. There was no ‘real’ freedom, and no liberation was possible. The emotional charge at one point became an existential crisis as I was coming to a realisation that I was nothing but a construction of stifling social and political inhibitions. Every movement was under scrutiny by beliefs and attitudes that had fixed themselves, limpet-like, upon, upon ... what? There was no ‘I’ to be found. This was a horrifying discovery, and the horror drove me deeper into catharsis. The experience was extraordinarily powerful, both physically and emotionally. By allowing my body to dictate and lead the experience, I underwent massive bodily convulsions and shuddering gut-wrenching sorrow. In between the convulsions, and sometimes co-existent with them, I drew using pastels. By allowing these feelings and emotions their expression, they transformed into quite beatific feelings.

Throughout this experience, another conscious appreciation occurred simultaneously. I (paradoxically) was witnessing the process and reassuring myself that everything was fine, that this, while raw and messy, nevertheless was real and authentic. I was a supportive witness to the process. The acceptance of these
cathartic experiences and myself within them was not traumatic; rather, it was liberating.

I had been recording my dreams throughout the research process. I will highlight a dream, as it exemplifies two different approaches I used to work with dream images. The dream was one that had emotionally affected and disconcerted me. It typifies a phenomenological-heuristic transformative process.

In the dream – it is a moonless night – I stand in a darkened landscape observing a faint glow emanating from a small sphere-like object on the horizon. There is a two-storey farmhouse where my cousin and his partner live, faintly lit in the near distance. As I stare into the distance, from the sky behind me comes an incredibly large, glowing planet, emanating and pulsing with luminosity. It travels over my head and slowly traverses the sky until it recedes into the distance. I am awestruck with wonder. I call out to my nephew, but by the time he arrives the planet has disappeared into the distance. I attempt to describe to him the experience, but to no avail. Words cannot adequately do justice to this occurrence. He goes inside and, as he does, the sphere from the horizon zooms towards the area in which I stand, and as it passes overhead, a small star is dislodged from its side and falls down upon the roof of the farmhouse. I am again flabbergasted and delighted.

In a process of transformation, I drew the dream twice. The first was in deference to the literal narrative, the second in deference to my instinctual body and intuitive sensibility. The first tells the dream story in a literal narrative form using pictorial forms. In the second depictive image, the story is told through a heuristic aesthetic image production. The second rendition resonated from within to the form without. The literal dream narrative transforms the literal narrative by allowing the phenomenological experience to dictate the expression. The first image production felt sterile, and I was dissatisfied with it. The second expressive image felt alive and vital; it felt satisfactory. I relaxed internally upon its completion. I felt expanded by it.
5. Venture into imaginal story

My life was, and is, contained in the images that I produced, or which produced themselves through me. The images were independent narratives in their own right, and yet they also displayed, when held side by side, the invitation to venture into them as a collective narrative. I pondered what they would evoke if I allowed myself to intuitively enter the phenomenology of their shadowy story. Hillman (1977, p. 81) encourages us to meet images on their own level; he says that ‘images are souls’, and further, that our job with them is to meet them on their own level. He speculates that we find in the ‘unfathomable depth in the image, love, or at least that we cannot get to the soul of the image without love for the image’.

I was also led by what Wilber terms ‘faith’, a knowing beyond belief. Wilber says faith soldiers on when belief becomes unbelievable, for faith hears the faint but direct calling of a higher reality. Wilber (1999, p. 179) suggests that because faith has not yet had direct experience, it has no sense of certainty, but nevertheless possesses a dogged determination to find its spiritual abode, and is pulled on by its own hidden intuition. Wilber’s understanding is also useful in comprehending what motivated the neoshamanic practitioners in this project.

I tested these hypotheses with the images I had produced.

I displayed the images from section 2 in front of myself and took a few long, deep, breaths; breathing slowly in and out and relaxing my mind. I entered an altered state of consciousness and began to write the story of these images without any idea where the story might lead. The imaginal story seemed to write itself, and yet, as the story unfolded I had many memories of previous existential crises, of grief, ecstasy, great joy, relentless sorrow and vivid remembered images of numinous, transpersonal experiences stretching back into a past that seemed to be immediately available. As McNiff (1992, p. 38) says, ‘It is the artistic imagination, and not the wilfulmind, that effortlessly transforms the torturing demon into an inspirational daimon’.

The story begins:

Once upon a time, there lived a man who lived alone. He lived alone in a one-roomed house perched on a hill. He lived in a one-roomed house perched on a hill
and he spent most of his time in the living room. He lived alone in the living room in his house on the hill; he at times could hear murmuring voices that shouldn’t be there. They shouldn’t be there for he lived alone in his one-roomed house on the hill. At other times he would catch glimpses of movement out of his peripheral vision of movement, though when he turned to look there was no one or nothing there. Although he had lived in his one-roomed house on the hill for as long as he could remember and never answered the door, had no phone and rarely went out, he began to suspect that somehow he was not as alone as he believed himself to be. He put bars on the windows and deadlocked the doors, but the murmuring and fleeting glimpses continued. He considered that perhaps he was going insane, or perhaps, and even more horrifying, that he was insane.

One day when the murmuring and the glimpses became too much, he unlocked the door and went outside into the yard and walked away from his house on the hill. He had not gone far when he began to feel increasingly uncomfortable, the murmuring grew in intensity with every step he took, his spine began to tingle and his footfalls grew heavy. He blinked his eyes and when they opened he was back inside the house on the hill. He was frightened and perplexed; he walked to the door, opened it and walked out again, a little quicker this time. He walked down the path, down the hill, grew uneasy, blinked, and was back inside the house. Over and over, with increasing fear and anxiety, he would attempt to flee the house, but no matter how far he would go and what he would do, as soon as he blinked, he would be back inside his house on the hill. Desperate and increasingly forlorn, he prayed that one day he might be free to wander wherever his heart might lead him.

‘If I cannot leave this place, then I might as well tidy it up’, and he set about rearranging the furnishings. He ordered some paint and painted straight on top of the dusty, smudgy walls; he told himself that he didn’t have time to clean them. Pretty soon, his lounge room was freshly painted and he went to sleep. When he awoke, to his horror, he saw that the fresh paint was dusty and smudged, and when he looked in the mirror he saw that he was many years older than when he had lain down to sleep. There was one wall that he not painted. He had not painted this wall as it was covered in wallpaper. The wallpaper that covered this wall was covered in flowers and vines.

He decided to paint this wall, and not wanting to make the same mistake as he had made with his first painting, he began to strip away the wallpaper. As he stripped
away the wallpaper, he noticed that he could smell the scent of the flowers and the aroma of the vines. He also noticed that the vines had very sharp thorns that scratched at his hands until they bled. They bled onto the flowers, and the flowers produced an assortment of red berries, some of which fell upon the floor and grew into tall flowering plants. They grew into tall flowering plants that quickly surrounded him and scratched at his body and face. Where they had scratched at his body and face, more blood would fall and more berries would appear.

He began to get very frightened, for he was being engulfed within this beautiful flagrant garden that was bleeding him to death. He turned to flee back into a far recess of his room, but became tangled up in the plant’s many tendrils and crashed to the floor, smashing the back of his head on the bare boards. Stunned, he lay there, mouth agape. One multi-thorned plant appeared to bend towards his face, and just as it seemed it would scratch his eyes, it stopped and dropped some berries into his open mouth. He gagged and swallowed; they tasted bitter, they tasted sweet. He blinked in horror, he blinked in delight, and when he blinked the third time, he was back on his feet pulling the wallpaper off in strips and there was not a plant in sight.

The last few strips of wallpaper to be pulled away revealed a doorway that should not of been there. It should not of been there, for he lived in a one-roomed house and his one-roomed house had only one door, and did not have a rear entrance or exit. He attempted to open the door, but the handle would not turn. He tried to push on the door, but it would not open; he kicked and pounded, but still it would not budge. He faced the door and told it that he gave up, then slumped to the floor; leaning back against the door, it creaked open and he fell backwards into a long hallway.

He stood up and peered down the hallway. There were three doors on either side and one at the far end. The far end of the corridor appeared alternatively very close and very far away each time he blinked. He attempted to hold the far-end door close by blinking and then not blinking. He walked towards the door, but the distance did not get any closer. He tried to run, but again, no matter how close he could see the door as being and no matter how speedily he ran, he could not get any closer. When he turned to go back the way he had come, the door through which he had entered was no longer there. He was very frightened: he began to cry, he began to sob. Tears ran down his face and onto the floor. They ran onto the floor and began to pool. He looked down at the pool of tears and saw himself crying, and cried some
more. When he had cried enough, he stopped crying. He heard some murmuring from behind a door in the corridor; the door did not have a handle and he knocked and pushed, but it would not budge. He put his ear up to the door to hear what he could hear, but all he could hear was what he heard before he put his ear up to the door. He pressed himself closer to the door and the door opened, and he fell ear-first into the room. The door closed behind him.

The room was empty and completely dark. It was so dark that he couldn't tell if he was in a room or not. He stumbled around, trying to find a wall, but there didn't seem to be any. He felt under his feet, but there didn't seem to be any floor. It was so dark that after a while he did not know if he had his eyes open or closed. There were no sides, no up, no down. He wondered if he might be asleep, but when he went to pinch himself he found that he could not locate himself to pinch. He wept, and then wept some more. When his sobbing subsided, he could hear the faint sound of music, and he walked towards where he thought he could hear it coming from, but as he walked he was not sure if he was going anywhere, as he could not feel any ground under his feet, he could not feel his feet.

He stopped walking towards the sound and said, 'I give up'. The music surrounded him and his body began to sway, he felt himself move, but he was not himself any more. His body, the body that had always been his was not the body, the body that swayed. The swaying body that was not his body began to leap around and he leaped with it. The darkness began to throb with subtle bursts of colour. The bursts became spurts, the colours blended with the arms and legs that were his and not his arms and legs. Over and over, he saw, he felt, he became, he disappeared until what had been and what were becoming became indiscernible. He cried, 'I am home!' ... he was back in the hallway.

The tears he had shed and the tears he had bled were under his feet, and as he looked down upon them, the corridor tilted away from him. He looked around for something to hold himself in place, but there was nothing he could grab onto. He began to slide on the tears he had shed and the blood he had shed. He slid for aways, and then he slid some more; the hall tilted to the left and he slid through a door. He was in a huge cavern. The cavern was illuminated by a faint red glow. The light would come on, and the light would go.
He could see a bit, and then a bit more as his sight adjusted to the light. To his horror and dismay, he saw very little of comfort; there was nowhere to sit and nowhere to lie. He turned around quickly, hoping to catch a glimpse of where he had come from, but could see only a blackness of where he had been. He spun his head around to the front, for he thought he heard a noise, and as he faced the area in front of him, he could feel a slight breeze; he walked towards the place he felt the breeze was coming from. He rounded a bend in the cavern path and stopped stark still. His body became rigid, as rigid as stone. In front of him there stood a dragon, huge and green, with reddened eyes. When the dragon blinked, the light would go out, and when it opened its eyes, the light would come on. The dragon stared at him as he stared at the dragon. The dragon lunged forward with its mouth agape, and as it did so, the man ran forward into its mouth, past its teeth, down its throat and into its belly. He kept on running and the light behind him grew fainter and fainter, as the path he was on became narrower and narrower. He began to crawl and then slither, with his hands held out in front of himself. He became stuck, he could not go forward, he could not go back.

His feet began to feel warm; he liked the feeling. His feet began to feel hot, and then hotter still. He hated the feeling. He hated the feeling so much that he began to yell and thrash around. He could not thrash around as much as he felt like, for he was stuck; he could not free himself. The heat rose up his legs and into his bowels. He screamed some more, and yelled and bellowed. The heat rose up into his stomach and radiated out in all directions. The darkness around him began to glow a faint red. The heat rose even higher until it filled his chest and his shoulders, and then his head. His whole body pulsated, throbbed and convulsed. He screamed and bellowed, he hooted, he shuddered, and as he did so his entire body radiated from orange to red, from red to white until all about him began to melt. He threw his arms wide and spread his legs: he was a white-hot radiating sphere of incandescent heat. He tilted back his head and screamed, emptying his lungs for the sheer pleasure of the feeling. “I am, this is I” a thought from nowhere. The glow slowly and then rapidly diminished. Shades began to appear, forms took shape. And there he stood in the corridor once more, tingling from head to toe.

He looks down the corridor once, and once more. There are five doors before him and two behind. He breathed deeply and evenly, deeply and unevenly. He stops breathing altogether and begins to count to himself, one thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three. As each number is counted, he feels a
corresponding beat of his heart – one thousand and thirty-three, one thousand and thirty-four – his heart beat increases in volume, it pounds in his ears. He continues to hold his breath, he becomes clear, and then he takes in an enormous breath. He feels the breath travel up his nostrils, down his throat and into his lungs; his chest cavity fills up, his ribs expand. He holds this breath until he feels like he will burst; he exhales in one great gush, and as he does so, the door closest to him bursts inwards off its hinges and, as though sucked in by a vacuum, he is whisked inside.

He stands in the centre of an enormous room; the vacuum sucks at him, pulling him simultaneously in all directions; he begins to levitate as the vacuum from above and the vacuum from below equalise. He is suspended in space, above the floor, below the ceiling, central to the room. His body distorts as the suction intensifies; much to his bemusement and alarm, his flesh is torn from his body; he feels no pain as his muscles, arteries, sinews unfurl and are torn away. All is ripped, sucked away. And still the intensity increases. He opens his mouth to scream, but it is not in pain he screams but in intense pleasure; the pleasure becomes exquisite, increasing to an unbearable degree, and then, just as inexplicably as it started, it subsides and the absurdity of it all dawns upon him.

He begins to laugh, and laughs some more; he laughs until tears flow from his eyes; he convulses with merriment; cascading hilarity rips through him, wave after wave, until a thought enters that he might very well die of laughter. The absurdity of this sends him deeper into spasms, rastering his skeleton frame in a dance of suspended animation. ‘Please, please, please,’ he pleads, as his panic increasingly grows, ‘make it stop’. His stomach begins to ache, and as he feels this occurring, he spins into more laughter, as he no longer has a stomach to ache. But ache it does. It aches and aches until the pain is so intense that he sobs the sobs of someone to whom pain is an unknown and unwelcome stranger.

He sobs and he wails, the pain so engulfing that it occupies his entire being; he is one, throbbing, pulsating pain. He sobs and then sobs some more. ‘No one knows the pain I have,’ he offers to the room of suspension, ‘no one’. His words reverberate in his empty skull: ‘no one knows, no one. It is mine alone. All mine’. The pain is as intense as ever, and yet again intensifies: ‘No one knows,’ he wails, ‘no one’. This becomes a repetitive mantra as he sobs over and over again: ‘No one knows, no one knows’. His pain focus shifts to his left shoulder, to a very small, concentrated point in his shoulder. It is excruciating, and yet he begins to experience it differently; he
begins to enjoy it, he begins to luxuriate in it; wave after wave of pleasure flows through him as he embraces his pain. It is excruciatingly pleasurable; he wallows, staying with wave after wave of painful pleasure.

He thinks this is a ridiculous situation, ludicrous, absolutely ludicrous; the pain eases, the pleasure subsides. The folly of it all strikes him and he laughs, and again he laughs until he is laughing convulsively once more. Wave after wave of uproarious laughter engulf him. He notices something somewhat different, though. He is watching himself laugh, he is not laughing and yet he is laughing. He notices that when the laughter stops and is replaced by pain and sobbing, he is in pain, and yet he watches and observes himself in pain. This happens while he is in ecstasy as well. He is in ecstasy while simultaneously watching himself in ecstasy. This continues for quite some time as he goes from one extreme feeling to another, a merry-go-round: he experiences and observes himself experiencing it.

After a while, which could have been a long or short time, the emotions subside, the vacuum lessens, and he is lowered to the floor. As his feet touch the floor, he sees that the room has no walls. It has no ceiling; it does have a door, though. The door stands unsupported; the door is open. As he walks towards the open door, he feels himself walking towards the door; an amusing thought, he thinks. He walks through the doorway and is not surprised that he is back in the corridor. He hears the door close behind him and knows that, should he turn around to look, it will no longer be there. He grins and realises that he is grinning; this makes him smile.

He stands, a little bemused, a little amused. A snake slithers by, a white snake. Somewhere he registers that it has an imperious demeanour, much like his maternal grandmother: it passes in front of the nearest remaining door. The door opens, the snake slithers by. He stands stock-still and then walks the few paces towards and through the open doorway.

He enters a vibrant forest of lush, verdant, vegetation. The trees are massive, with intricate, exposed root systems. He glances up through the canopy, but cannot make out the sky, so thick and intertwined are the branches, vines, and leaves. There is a path that stretches out before him and, with a slight shrug of his shoulders, he ventures forth. The path winds so much so that, should he turn around, he would not be able to make out much of the territory he has traversed. After an indeterminate amount of time, he emerges into an open space, in the middle of which
is a pool of water. The colours of all his surroundings are hyper-coloured and emanating something essentially ... them. He glances down at his hands, and sees that he too is clear and distinct.

As he reaches the pool, he notices, seated besides it, a very beautiful woman; she has a snake wrapped around her neck. This woman is shimmering, no, emanating. Emanating clarity, she is clear. As he realises this, she moves her arms, and indicates the pool; he sees that her arms are arms, but also wings. Not one or the other but both, one or the other manifesting, dependent upon her gesture. He peers into the pool and sees her looking back at him. His reflection is not there; not his, hers..

He blinks, she blinks. He slowly shakes his head, she slowly shakes her head. He quizzically inclines his head, and so does she. She is mirroring him. He feels a sense of wonder and gratitude. He looks away from the pool at her and she smiles lovingly towards him. She then reaches out and, dipping her hand into the water at its edge, somehow grips hold of the water as though it were a piece of lank cloth. And, much like a magician with a tablecloth, whisks it away, and crumpling it into a ball between her two hands, tosses it over her shoulder.

When he looks into the pool again, he sees his own well-known reflection and, deeper still, millions upon millions of stars. He glances up from the pool, looking overhead, and sees the sparkling wonder of a moonless night sky twinkling its sparkling presence back at him. He rises to his feet alone in the glade and walks back from whence he had come. Back up the path and back through the doorway, full and empty, he steps once more into the corridor.

His stature, he notices his stature, his chest, his heart ... red, raw. No, not raw, what then? What is it he feels? He clenches and unclenches his hands, making and unmaking fists. Giving, taking. The corridor is white, luminous, brighter and getting brighter; his eyes are tending to slit. He won’t let them. He forces them open, wide open, and then his mouth open ... wide open. His nostrils, wide open. The whiteness is hurting him, his head aches, his jaw hurts, he, hurts. And then all goes black. Black as pitch. A door opens to his right; muted light shifts onto him dimly, faintly illuminating his right side. He feels relief as he enters the room.
The light appears to be emanating from somewhere distant, and yet distance is oddly omnipresent; there is no distance, and yet he walks towards something, from something, and it seems that he is getting somewhere. He hears whispers, yells, shouts; niggling, unseen voices seem to pester him every step of the way; snatches of conversations heard in other places, other times. They seem like intrusive mosquitoes stinging his mind. The light appears to be getting closer or he closer to the light. And there, on a small rise, are three crosses; three men hang there. The centre one is by far the largest, and as he shifts his awareness to the smaller crosses, he notices that the men who hang there vanish. When he looks away from them they appear once more. They do not look unhappy. He shifts his gaze to the central figure, who hangs on the cross with his head bowed down, and as he stares at this figure, the man lifts his head up and looks directly at him. With a start, he realises that the man is he, himself.

The start reverberates through him, a shudder, a spasm. His heartbeat thumps against his chest, against his ribs; he gulps for air, closes his eyes and turns his head away. When he opens his eyes, he peers at himself again, though this time not standing in front of the man on the cross, but looking down upon the man he knew himself as being. It is he who now hangs upon the cross. It is he who now extends and envelops himself with a pain so great it threatens to consume his very being. He is rent asunder with a convulsive, forlorn compassion, his sorrow boundless. He tumbles forward, pleading, beseeching the pain to end, to stop. He is filled with an all-enveloping horror of his own frail and failing humanity.

Arrogance, hypocrisy, superiority, and pretence: their faces were his faces. He was horrified by what he had become. The betrayal of his soul howled as it ripped through him. He, in open-mouthed, silent screaming, wailed the wail of the godforsaken. The betrayer he, the betrayed he, the martyr he, the abuser he; and there, observing himself, he stood and gently placed his hand upon the sobbing, gushing man. And he felt his hand placed upon his head as he placed the hand. Forgiver, forgiven as one. He turned and, as one, they walked towards and through the doorway.

The corridor was now somewhat muted; it was softer, he was softer. He turned to look behind him, although he was aware that he wasn’t exactly turning his body. His body, ‘my body’ he thought, was conscious of being in the corridor, and yet there was no need to turn to look behind or up or down, for that matter, to be in the corridor; he
was there anyway. He heard himself laugh, and felt his body laughing. He was laughing, he was aware of it, and yet the laughter, his laughter, was not his laughter at all; it washed itself through him.

He knew he must move, and so stepped towards the doorway at the end of the corridor. It opened. He stepped into a vast red-orange desert, and oddly enough, though not too oddly, the sky was an emerald green. He began to walk, and he walked as though he knew where he was going, and he did know where he was going. He was going forward, towards something; he was moving, and at the same time being moved. As he walked, he became aware of his body tingling; it commenced at his periphery. His fingers, his toes, the top of his head, all began to tingle. It was neither pleasant nor unpleasant. He stopped and the tingling stopped.

He lifted up his hand and peered at its back. It was not the hand that he knew to be his, and yet it was his; ‘This is my hand,’ he muttered to himself. The hand he beheld was older than the one he remembered; there were parallel wrinkles and smallish brown splotches. He rolled his hands over and peered at his palms. Again, the sensation was one whereby he knew it was his hand, and yet it was somehow distinctly different. It was aged. His hand had the many scars he knew. The many memories and stories were etched distinctly, and there were ones whose origin he did not know. The lines were more numerous, and his hands had weathered. He rubbed the top of his head and felt a sparseness; he liked the feeling. He walked on.

He was no longer alone, though he could not really discern anyone’s presence. There were two of them. He could not see them directly, and yet they were ‘clearly’ there. They danced at the edges of his peripheral vision. First, one lightly took his hand, then the other. He walked past skeletal remains. ‘Birds,’ he thought; ‘wings,’ he thought. He bent down and picked up the small, delicate skeletons, and went to put them in his pocket, then realised he was completely naked. He took the claws of the birds and pierced them through his upper chest. Instantaneously, he was whisked into the air in the claws of a huge eagle. Higher and higher he was carried, and mountaintops appeared far below. He was frightened and thrilled. The eagle flew to the horizon to what was either a rising or setting sun. The eagle descended in a gentle glide until he felt his feet touch the earth; he was released from the eagle’s grip. He stood as if upon the horizon, at the place where the emerald sky and the red-orange desert met.
A hum, gentle and insistent, surrounded him, infiltrated his body, and with a whoosh erupted from his chest area, up though his head, and exploded through the top of his head, although, oddly, was contained within his head. He was flooded with bodily bliss and mental clarity. Simultaneously, a huge winged being, dark and feminine, appeared before him. She exuded great awe, beauty and terror. Bats, black and screeching, flew from behind her; no, flew from her. Bones, skeletal remains, were strewn before and around her. A massive fish that stretched from one side of the horizon to the other, and seemed to be both part of the desert and apart from it, drifted in and out of his vision, appearing and then blending back into the desert as if it had never been. She was accompanied by two much smaller beings, and he thought these were the two who had accompanied him until his eagle encounter. ‘Small world,’ he thought, and laughed out loud.

He felt small and, although she made no overt hostile gestures, somehow he felt inundated with fear. Fear seemed to be emanating from him through the pores of his skin; he exuded fear. He watched, somewhat mesmerised by the wafty outpouring. He could see the fear, he could feel the fear, but as he focused his attention upon the sensation, he oddly did not really feel the fear; he was, rather, with it. It was there, he was there, and yet he was of the fear. He glanced at his skin and was simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by the appearance of an oozing, white-yellow substance excreting from his pores. He became aware of a dull, persistent sound, a sound he thought he had known for as long as he could remember, as though it had always accompanied him, and he it. The oozing viscose appeared to be somehow tied to this sound, for, as he concentrated upon the sound, it grew more distinct and shrill-like, and the oozing increased its tempo. The thin, worm-like tendrils grew longer as the pace of their extraction increased. The shrill sound reverberated through him, louder and louder. He focused upon its sensation in his body as he kept his eyes locked upon the awesome woman-like figure in front of him.

As the shrieking threatened to become intolerable, he stared straight ahead at her. She began to change, to alter; she became beautiful, soft, angelic, white, luminous; her face melded into his mother, grandmother, seductress: wanton, sensual, orgasmic; his whole body erupted into an orgasmic shuddering climax; his shoulders convulsed as wave after wave of orgasmic pulsations erupted from every pore of his body. The sound, the sound that had accompanied him, screamed its way through him; he was that sound; that vibration was him. His eyes seemed to bulge forth from his head as the top of his cranium exploded in a dazzling brightness, and there,
before him, was a castle made of crystal, dazzling to behold. A pathway, luminous to the point of incandescence, wound its way through shafts of air upwards towards the castle's crystal outcrops. A longing surged from his solar plexus and spilled forth from his mouth; he screamed in pleasure, he screamed in pain; the scream erupted as though from a wound long denied.

The vision faded and he found himself looking into the eyes of compassion; she spread her enormous arm-wings and engulfed him as he wept and sobbed tears long forgotten. He sobbed and cried in great, racking bursts that felt as though they would never end. She held him. Gently, firmly held him for the eternity of grief that had so imprisoned him. He closed his eyes and felt her with him. Warm, secure, protected; and this made him weep some more. He wasn't sure if he slept or not, but when he opened his eyes, he was crouched back in the corridor with his arms encircling his body. He stood up and walked to the end of the corridor, and stopped briefly in front of the door. He reached down and turned the handle, then walked straight through. He did not exactly open the door, he just walked straight through, as if it were an insubstantial apparition, or he was.

He emerged in a field, and looked, and felt: flowers, weeds, trees, birds, insects, clouds, hills, and the wind on his cheeks. It was all so ordinary, so wonderfully, wonderfully ordinary. “I am so ordinary!” he proclaimed, and laughed at his proclamation.

6. Reflection

Bringing forth this story led to a profound and lasting liberation in my ‘being in the world’. I realised that I was not a victim of forces beyond my control within a social and cultural context, but rather that I was being guided through a multi-perspectival universe by an intuitive process that was profoundly well-meaning and liberating. The story is allegorical and encourages a willingness to trust the experience per se. Jung suggested that our experience was all there is, and that an integrative individuation process would operate if we trust and express our experience. Jung believed that combining conscious effort with creative expression mediates the integration process; this was borne out by my experience.

Hillman’s hypothesis is that meeting images on their own terms is to encourage love to manifest in our being. The depth of these images proved to be unfathomable, as he suggests. He is correct in that accepting, that is, loving, the image, reveals its
soul level, and that is our soul level. His suggestion resounds with truth. The images had many hidden connections, but it was not the connections and the interpretative story that was most significant. It was the experience of the images, of being in the images, and trusting that the ‘connections are there a priori in my person’. (Hillman 81). By loving the image – that is, by accepting the image as it is – the image revealed its soul presence. Love gave birth to the image, the image led to soul. Images within dreams have a similar purpose, a similar intention. Similarly, we could view the participants’ stories from the preceding chapters as expressive images of love:

But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is. For what comes after the door, is surprisingly enough, a boundless expanse of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and thine, no good and no bad. (Jung 1980, p. 21)

The pathways the research participants and I took into the shadow were clearly different, although they and I had both used the shadowgraph and the neoshamanic processes of journeying to explore our interior consciousness’. Our task now is to make sense of their extraordinary journeys, something that proved to be a journey itself – a journey into meaning-making.
CHAPTER 11
DISCUSSION: A JOURNEY IN MEANING-MAKING

Life is – or has – meaning and meaninglessness. I cherish the hope that meaningfulness will predominate and win the battle. (Carl Jung 1995, p. 339)

The process of meaning-making with such profound and varied material is far from straightforward. What are we to make of these stories? And of the tellers? How might we best understand their experiences and their image-making? What are we to make of the shadow within their visual narratives and shadowgraphs? The exploration in this thesis has allowed and encouraged a narrative depth to emerge. There are many ways of understanding these imaginal experiences and image-making expressions. But are there common themes, and if so, how are they to be discerned? How do we maintain the potency of these images and honour the imaginal journeys? Are there unifying stories? How do they relate to the views of the scholars of shamanism and the shadow?

Meaning-making in the sort of phenomenological and heuristic approach I used is a complex process involving holding the experiences of the participants together with the ideas about shamanism and the shadow in an attempt to bring forth the essential qualities of the stories and their implications. I journeyed through three phases in my attempts to garner the essence of what these experiences were revealing. Each phase led me deeper, from areas of uncertainty into certainty, then back into uncertainty, until, in the last of these phases, I settled into a profound resonant understanding of what these journeys illuminated.

Research methods consistent with a multiple meaning-making perspective were utilised. A number of different ways of making sense of the material were examined. Meaning-making in the final chapter was threefold.

1. An encounter with leading transpersonal thinkers.
2. Reengagement of stories in cognitive compare and contrast mode.
3. Consistent with a heuristic approach personal encounter and reengagement with the images and with the soul of all the stories deepened. This is written as a deep narrative of intense personal engagement.

The first approach looked at the experiences in the light of various theoretical perspectives.
1. First phase meaning-making – engaging with theorists and scholars

   a. Transpersonal theories

Transpersonal theorists were initially more helpful in meaning-making than the neoshamanic scholars. By providing a developmental schema of understanding, they provided grounding for my own and the other participants’ experiences by placing them in terms of Western humanity’s development of consciousness. Ken Wilber was particularly useful in this regard, as he provided the most comprehensive blueprint of developmental experience. Upon reflection, Wilber, with his abundant confidence, was a rock upon which I could anchor the turbulent emotional states encountered by the research participants and me. I will engage with the questions raised by my review of the neoshamanic scholarship in section 4 when I consider what my research means for Western practice and research into neoshamanism.

Many times throughout this research, I leant heavily upon Wilberian theory, particularly when I felt emotionally vulnerable, raw and uncertain. My sojourns in the spirit realms had stimulated these experiences, and at times I was awash with severe emotional disorientation. Wilber’s hierarchy of spiritual development provided an explanation for my existential anguish as a necessary progression on the path to a higher functioning consciousness. Wilber says:

   Each level of self development has different types of defences. The self, at every level, will attempt to defend itself against pain, disruption, and ultimately death. ... the level of defences, the level of self development, the level of pathology – are all migratory, unfolding across the qualitatively distinct waves of the Great Nest. (2000, pp. 94–5)

The previous chapter, the self-research story, was, in Wilber’s (and Washburn’s 1988) terms, a ‘regression in service of the ego’, whereby I temporarily returned consciousness to an earlier trauma in order to befriend and reintegrate the alienated feelings, or, in Wilber’s integral psychology schema, uncover and reintegrate the shadow. As I had indicated, I had instinctively allowed this process to unfold; Wilber’s concept was comforting and reassuring, as it framed further explorations.

Wilber’s ideas were also valuable in understanding the images produced in this thesis. He posits that artistic expression may be understood and expressed in three modes (1998, p. 141). He lists these as the art of the matter/body realm (naturalism, realism), the art of the mental realm (surrealistic, conceptual, abstract), and the art of the soul and spirit realm (contemplative, transformative):

   For authentic transformation is not a matter of belief but of the death of the believer; not a matter of translating the world but of transforming the world; not a matter of
finding solace but of finding infinity on the other side of death. The self is not made content; the self is made toast.

Pondering his pre/trans theorem precipitated the evolution of an objective - albeit temporal - understanding. Wilber lays out conceptually the various stages of the 'great chain of being' and mentions that, at any time, one may have various mystical experiences and then interpret these from superstitious or mythical levels (religious-dogma) rather than from (higher/deeper) psychic or subtle appreciations:

The essence of pre/trans fallacy is itself fairly simple: since prerational and transrational states are, in their own ways, nonrational, they appear similar or even identical to the untutored eye. And once pre and trans are confused, then one or two fallacies occurs: in the first, all higher transrational states are reduced to lower and prerational states. Genuine mystical or contemplative experiences, for example, are seen as regressive or throw backs to states of narcissism, oceanic adualism, indissociation, and even primitive autism (Wilber 1995, p. 207).

He further informs us that spirit is not rational: but that it is trans, not pre. Spirit transcends, but includes reason. Numerous experiences and conflicts entered by the participants and myself are understandable when seen from this perspective. Michael's 'transpersonal' experience is one whereby he has a transpersonal experience that he is able to rationalise and integrate. He has an intense peak experience, or, as Wilber wisecracks, a 'peek' experience – a peek into the transpersonal, supramental level of his own higher potentials. This was – as it was with me years earlier – 'brief, intense, unbidden', and, as Wilber indicates, 'frequently life-changing' (1999, p. 178).

The participants had varied understandings of their spiritual encounters and experiences, supporting Wilber's observation that 'every human being, no matter at what stage or structure or level of development, has available the general spectrum of consciousness – ego to soul to spirit' (2000, p. 14). He elaborates further that 'the way in which those states or realms are experienced and interpreted depends to some degree on the stage of development of the person'. Ewa's sees her experience, and her reaction to it, in terms of her earlier sexual repression. Her reaction during the journey, where she rejects the 'virile young black men', was in one sense irrational and based upon a fallacious belief in shame and irrational morality, but it is understandable in Wilber's construct, as 'spiritual experiences are interpreted according to the general stage of development of the individual having the experience'. Michael's experience was trans–rational, Ewa's experience was pre–rational. More accurately, though, is that they understood their experiences in post-rational and pre-rational ways.
Grof’s (2000) schema of consciousness and his sequential ‘birthing’ notions certainly explained the bodily contractions and convulsions that had expressed themselves through the participants and myself so strongly. Understanding Grof’s schema brought a confidence to allow the energy flows to continue, even though they were incredibly uncomfortable and psychically disruptive. He elaborates that in a holotropic state (altered state of consciousness induced through deep continuous breathing and/or psychedelic drugs) one experiences the original emotions, physical sensations, and even sensory perceptions. One actually has the body image, the naïve perception of the world, the sensations, and the emotions corresponding to the age he or she was at the time of repression. It is at these disorienting times that projections are likely to surface. The cause of the disturbance is attributed to the ‘other’.

The shadowgraphs brought this ‘state of being’ to the fore for some of the participants. For instance, when I viewed my first ‘foetal’ shadowgraph, I felt an acute shame that stemmed from my experiences of being shamed about sexuality when I was an infant. I projected that shameful experience onto the participant group and imagined that they were condemning my shadowgraph expression, contrary to all evidence – as they were interested and appreciative. In Wilber’s terms, the bodily experience was pre-rational, as it originally occurred before I had developed a rational understanding of the experience. Similarly, Ewa’s emotional and bodily agitation is projected onto me for being bossy, too slow. It is only when she allows herself to experience the freedom of sensuality in her initial shadowgraph that she feels satisfaction. This is obvious in her first shadowgraph expression, where her initial expression is one of sensuous, flowing, soft pastels blended together; they merge and swim with the flowing current of life.
It is evident that when Michael adds his experience of this first journey and his encounter with his ‘dancing youth’, he feels satisfied with his representation; he has recovered, in Grof’s terms, his original natural flow. The shadow in Michael’s case has been freed. We can also see that Michael’s intense struggle after the workshops is to keep this energy flowing. He ‘struggles’ because he is fighting himself.

Grof indicates that these projections form internalised complex dynamic constellations, a structure he calls ‘systems of condensed experience or CODEX’ (2000, p. 21). CODEX is guided by a ‘supreme principle’ that overlays and underlays all that is (p. 276). Grof highlights the transformative power of knowledge gained through deep personal experience that is authentic and convincing (p.318). Michael spoke about the difference between experience that was ‘authentic and convincing’ and other types of experiences. His allowing embodied experience of transpersonal activation was transformative. Resistance can arise when the experience is insufficient to shift existing cultural belief. Eric Neumann (1974) comments that when a tension between the transpersonal unconscious and the ego is endured – and this always calls forth a state of suffering – a third body is born that combines both parts into an unknown, third creation.

Both Wilber and Grof assert that by using their schemas, it is possible to plot and map transpersonal experience. The danger is that, if categorised, the experience can become straitjacketed. Human consciousness may be evolving – and Wilber and Grof present abundant evidence that this is so – but does this help us to explain and understand what neoshamans are seeking, and what neoshamanic experiences entail? Certainly many of the reactions and responses from the participants and myself can be understood in Wilberian terms of pre-personal and trans-personal, but this seems relevant only on a level disconnected from the experience per se. The participants demonstrated that when we view their shadowgraphs or hear their stories of their journeys, we are taken – if we allow ourselves – to a place of exceptional possibility. We go to a place within our being where allies await to invigorate or nurture, and we come back expanded in our beings. These were not deemed by the participants or myself as ever being regressive – except in the sense of being archetypal - they were invigorating, enlivening and transformative.

Wilber and Grof both argue for inclusion of emergent experience, whether in the relived birthing experience (Grof) or in meditative states (Wilber). The difficulty I have with them, and a point confirmed by the experiences within our neoshamanism
experiences, is in their viewing these experiences as regressive. Neoshamanism challenges this assumption phenomenologically. The immediacy of neoshamanic journeying experience is not regression. When Kaye journeys and encounters her brother in another historical period, she does not journey ‘back in time’ to a ‘bygone’; rather, in her altered state of consciousness (ASC), she emerges in a ‘time’ that is ever-present. She experiences herself in her embodied self and in a past life simultaneously. Time, in the sense that we define it in the Western linear mindset, is irrelevant in such circumstances; it is transpersonal, not pre-personal, as defined by Wilber. Peter, when relating his journeying experiences, comments that time becomes ‘plastic’, as does space. Time and space within the journey are irrelevant and constrictive impositions. John Haule comments that the experience of soul is an encounter whereby a contrast between time versus eternity and deterioration versus constancy is experienced (2004 c). Kaye understands her experience as one in which she and her brother are eternal beings, timeless entities. The journey establishes a realisation that she and he will continue on long after her physical form has ceased its existence. This resonates with the view of time experienced by the Eagle Wing shamanic group:

In the shamanic worldview, creation exists outside of time and our everyday perception. Instead of a linear perspective, time is one vast ever-moving moment where all that has happened is still happening, and the energetic source or creative matrix of the physical world is outside of ordinary awareness. (Eagle Wing 2004)

This view challenges the ruling concept that represents humanity as being in history, rather than history as being in humanity (Corbin, cited in Henderson 1990, Broomfield, 1997). The experience for Kaye is very significant and reassuring. Life and death of her physical form are understood as an eternal, ongoing process. There is no psychic death; an existential question is resolved.

In my own experience of (re)living my previous night’s dream the following day, I am not ‘re-living’ it in a repetitious sense. I consciously and intentionally enter into a different state of consciousness where the dream is told in the present tense while conscious attention is paid to the emergent images, the emotional feeling tone, and bodily sensations. The emergent imagistic impressions of my relationship with my father are not regressions; they are an ever-present reality. I do not regress into the experience, but rather allow an ever-present field of consciousness to emerge in its own way. As Peter, Kaye and I demonstrate, time is relative to states of appreciation. Examples of this are:
Peter: But I can be there (snaps fingers), but I can actually glide over the top and so the space sense and distances in there are quite strange.

Kaye: As my mother died in 1492. Charles also died – around 1510, his essence has always been with me – he was reborn in 1953 but died 40 minutes later – he has always been with me.

The neoshamanism that we participated in proved to be both egalitarian and pragmatic. Our sojourns into neoshamanic practice demonstrated that, given the ‘right’ setting, relatively ordinary people may enter and leave psychic realms without traditionally advocated meditative or contemplative practice. Nor did we need expert mediation or intervention through a traditional spiritual or religious sect or order.

Wilfully and willingly entering Shamanic States of Consciousness (SSC) and having a question answered by imagistic entities did not guarantee resolution or even acceptance. Wilber is useful in helping me understand why. He theorises that ethics and moral development may seriously lag behind abilities of a psychic nature. This phenomenon was apparent in my journeys into SSC and in completing soul retrievals – which is psychically advanced in nature – and my later emotionally, Christian-inspired beliefs that I was damned and a candidate for evil possession. Similarly, Ewa, while in SSC, could alter her spirit guide’s appearance – though not its sensual/sexual essence – when it appeared threatening to her moral code. Our encounters with ‘other entities’ in other realms demonstrated the rich diversity and complexity of possible understandings.

Wilber provides a way of understanding the ready availability of these psychic abilities within neoshamanic practice and their subsequent repression. He maintains that evolutionary consciousness does not necessarily entail consciousness evolving along a one-dimensional linear trail. He enumerates developmental lines, and maintains that just because one line is accessible does not necessarily mean that all lines are developed. In numerous instances, the participants accessed archetypal entities, but their understanding and integration of these experiences was limited by their literal interpretations. Michael understood his embodied black youth dancing as not being his inner guide:
I become young black boy, lithe, athletic, thin ... not yet a man and began dancing with such energy, such freedom, such passion that I thought I would burst ... I wanted to cry, scream ... my young black body whirled and beat out its own rhythm.

His preconceptions of what an inner guide might look like inhibited his understanding. Repressive moral injunctions interfered with Ewa's acceptance of spiritual guidance. Sexual repression, as numerous writers have expressed, is one of the more significant aspects of the Western cultural shadow, as are violence and rage.

The transpersonal theorists offered a conceptual and theoretical understanding of what occurred to the participants and myself. Their theoretical constructs were useful perspectives, and they influenced my making of a meaning of what occurred. I felt in control. Yet their theoretical understanding, when applied too stiffly to these remarkable stories and images, all sat rather aridly within me. They were too prosaic. Their theories, applied to our experiences, lacked the vibrancy, the passion, the turmoil, the essence of sensuality, and the unadulterated emotionality that enlivened and shaped these imaged stories. The meaning I derived in this manner felt stilted, defunct of the shades, tones, colours, unpredictability, anger, torment and sheer delight that accompanied us throughout this journey. The theory detracted itself from the experience.

The neoshamanic journey may be understood in these terms. The entities that emerge within these journeys are indeed condensed experience writ large; these encounters are dynamic manifestations of spiritual intention and guidance; they are naturally occurring. Neumann comments that a living symbol cannot come to birth in an inert or poorly developed mind, for such a person will rest content within the already existing symbols offered by established tradition (1974). The difficulty with this approach is that it reduces the experience to a prescribed idea, and renders the experience subservient to a theoretical imposition.

b. The Jungian approach

I turned to Jung in order to comprehend many of the dreams, emotions and journeys that may otherwise have been bewildering, nonsensical or terrifying. As he writes of his own experience, 'To the extent that I managed to translate these emotions into images – that is to say, to find the images which were confined in the emotions – I was inwardly calmed and reassured ... there is a chance that I might have succeeded
in splitting them off; but in that case I would have inexorably have fallen into a neurosis and so been ultimately destroyed by them anyway’ (1995, p. 201). And so it was with myself when allowing narratives with their accompanying emotions to reveal themselves. Ewa demonstrated the distress of projecting emotions onto others where they cannot be resolved. Later, Ewa projected her turmoil onto her shadowgraph image that previously had been so liberating, and literalised her fragmentation by cutting up her shadowgraph and pasting it back together in a new and unsatisfying arrangement.

Ewa’s shadowgraph reassembled

Understanding the unconscious as having an integrative and autonomous intention to assist in the individuation process allowed myself and the participants consolation and hope in times of turmoil and distress. Our imaginal encounters with beings while on journeys were foreshadowed by Jung’s own exploratory encounters, detailed in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*. Elijah, Salome and Philemon appeared in Jung’s ‘fantasies’, and he believed that they were not produced by him, but had their own life (p. 207).

Jung modelled a way of trusting experience, and believed that experience itself would provide guidance. He wrote that he had to ‘abandon the idea of the superordinate position of the ego’ (p. 222). Jung provided gentle guidance and evoked confidence in me for he had walked this road himself. ‘The years when I was pursuing my inner images were the most important of my life – in them everything essential was decided’ (p. 225). All the participants and I followed his directive, with great positive effect for us all.

Jung’s schema of the shadow also proved to be a valuable construct. Numerous times when the ego-persona was confronted with images or feelings outside of its comfort zone, emotions would arise, fear would be experienced, and images rejected or altered. This most notably occurred with Ewa, Michael and myself. Michael rejected his physically delineated attributes as they appeared in his shadowgraph. To Michael, his head was ‘too small’, his legs were ‘too skinny’. He exaggerated these features to be more in keeping with his egoic ideal. His legs became muscular,
his head larger. I rejected the vulnerability portrayed in my foetal positioning. I placed a towering figure behind the foetal outline to pose heroically. Ewa’s sensuality in her shadowgraph was rejected and literally cut to pieces.

One can see in these examples a dynamic triad of shadow sub-personalities: the vulnerable one, the severe critic, and the protector. They depend upon each other for their survival.

The projection of positive shadow attributes – or Golden Shadow – mentioned frequently by neo-Jungians (Richo 1999, Robertson 1999, Ford 1998, Miller 1989) was evident in Ewa, Michael and Bronwyn. Bronwyn projected onto Ewa much of her own unrecognised artistic merit and strength. Michael projected onto me his own ability to be both gentle and firm, and Ewa projected onto me her attributes of firmly setting personal limits.

Jung promoted the idea of allowing the individuation process to proceed unhindered, and this encouraged me to repeatedly enter the same images and gain fresh insight into their meaning. His exasperation with his ideas being concretised into doctrine was highlighted by the response of all the participants – with the exception of Michael, Peter and myself – to revisit the images after the cessation of the workshops.

Post-Jungians do not stress the benefits of the extreme feeling/emotional states that precipitated integration of ‘negative’ shadow material as evidenced by Michael (dancing youth), Ewa (sensual flow) and myself (cathartic story). Jungian analytical theory as practiced by some Jungian analysts is dependent upon there being a third party who acts as the arbitrator of story, the analyst. In our workshops it was in the telling of the story and the resonance of the accepting relationship that created meaning, and assisted integration.

The internal guides, Philemon and Salome, that Jung wrote about in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (1995) all had their counterparts in the journeys of the participants. Jung regarded these guides and companions as benign autonomous beings, as did most of the participants – the exception being Bronwyn. All guides and symbols bore positive gifts for the participants. Jung revealed his mental and emotional quandary and anguish in coming into contact with psychic realms where reality behaved differently than his waking day reality. This was seen in the
quandary of Ewa when the sensual entities that appeared were incongruent with her socialised moral conceptions.
1. Second stage meaning-making – emergent themes

After applying these useful theoretical models to the participant’s experiences, I felt a need to re-engage with the narratives collectively. Their stories are idiosyncratic, and yet there are similarities. How might these narratives be better comprehended, in what manner do they differ, and what meaning might the differences infer? By reviewing the participants and their stories in a comparative way, what might reveal itself? When the similarities and differences between their experiences and their narratives are examined, what themes might reveal themselves? Are there discrepancies between their spoken interviews, their written narratives and their image production, and if so, what does this reveal about neoshamanism and the shadow? In my second attempt at meaning-making, I compared and contrasted the participants’ interviews and their journeys, and found a number of emergent themes based on re-engaging with each participant’s experience. Van Manen (1990, p. 78) comments that in order to come to grips with the structure of meaning in the text, it is useful to think of the phenomenon described as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes.

a. Acceptance/rejection of spirit guides

In their first journeys, five of the participants accepted their spirit guides in the form that they presented themselves. Ewa had difficulty in accepting her spirit guide until she successfully altered its form from a zestful and virile young black man into an old (though virile) man, and then maintained a disquieting and uncertain relationship with him. She sought to control the imaginal form, and succeeded, only to realise that its qualities remained essentially the same.

Peter highlights that the neoshamanic path is puzzling, for its metaphorical nature reveals layers of meaning. He enters into his first workshop journey with an understanding that objectivity may be impossible; his concern is that he may force things to occur:

_Swiftly & Silently – I have waited for what seems a long time in my medicine place. Owl came early as a glimpse in my journey, going to the medicine place. Am I forcing this second meeting after waiting so long – I call three times & owl comes each time. It is right._

This owl may be understood as displaying archetypal Animas (feminine) traits which as O’Connor suggests are ‘passive, receptive’ (1986, p. 85). We remember that Peter in his initial interview commented on his over-developed thinking facility; an
Animus (masculine) trait. Animas/owl is a figure Peter is not familiar with, it plays a compensatory role. Jung’s comments on the shadow are particularly helpful in understanding Peter’s owl: ‘It usually represents a fundamental contrast to the conscious personality’ (1997, p. 168). We witness this ‘fundamental contrast’ with Peter’s ‘spotless’ cleanliness personality smudging-dirtying itself in applying crayons and pastels. His Animas revels in it.

... the message that the owl has for me is not ‘spoken’ but rather modelled – Eyes, large, watchful, piercing – and an attentive silence: a knowing silence. The owl is a bird of the night & night seeing.

We see that Peter has incorporated his totemic ‘owl eyes’ into his text [figure 3]. He is indicating that they belong seamlessly together. The text is legible and is derived from his experience – just as Hillman suggests: without image there is no text. Peter takes this process of imaginal integration into his shadowgraph [figure 4] and immerses himself in its application.

---

1 In this role as mediator between consciousness and unconsciousness, the anima/animus image is conveying messages to consciousness from the collective unconscious. This is the level that we tend to resort to when required to seek wisdom concerning major transitions in life (O’Connor; 1986, p. 127).
Michael’s acceptance of his actual experience alters his appreciation as he bodily engages with the rock. [figure 5] He realises that the rock is able to alter him: his perspective changes from an egocentric orientation into a much larger and interrelated one of being connected to the earth. His idea of the rock and its utilisation as a weapon becomes subsumed by his experience of the rock until his realisation that he is in love with rocks. The rock is animated, not by a projective process from him, but rather by Michael respecting the fluidity of his relationship with it. The rock may be seen as ‘one of the stone people coming as an ally to a person seeking help’ (Gray 1995, p. 178). The love he speaks of is reciprocal: the rock ally loves him. The healing image/experience Michael is involved in is a gift from the rock. The rock shape-shifts in Michael’s consciousness: it is both metaphorical and actual.

The rock, in O’Connor’s terms, transcends ordinary human qualities and points to archetypal issues. It mediates between consciousness and unconsciousness (1986, p.127). The resistance and tension Michael at first experiences is understandable and indeed necessary for a synthesis to occur. As Jung says: ‘Confrontation with the shadow produces at first a dead balance, a standstill that hampers moral decisions and makes convictions ineffective or even impossible’ (1997, p. 168). Michael’s unconscious generates anger/rage, represented by berserk primitive tribesmen into his awareness, he revels in this. Michael deepens his sensuality later with the rock and then has the sensuous ‘dancing black youth’ experience during a journey.

Rejection of imaginal representation is experienced by both Michael and Ewa, although the responses are also different. Ewa intentionally rejects her inner shaman – the black, vibrant, sensual man – for one that is wizened and old. Michael rejects what he terms his ‘skinny legs and small head’ for a ‘truer’ representation of his internal experience. Ewa writes:

*I decide that the only safe figure would be an old man – a Siberian shaman – grey hair, wizened wrinkled face ... face and body (stout and sturdy but shapely). I go to hug him but also am worried about sexuality – mine – that I will want him.*

In the individuation process as described by Jung, the medicine man is ‘like the Anima, an immortal daemon that pieces the chaotic darkness of brute life with the
light of meaning’ (1980, p. 37). Jung tells us about lust and Ewa’s fear: ‘We do not like to be reminded of this [our sensuality], but prefer to think of ourselves as heroes who are beyond good and evil’ (1980, p. 21). Ewa continues to inform us as to her relationship with the unconscious:

By looking at something in a particular way I’m able no longer to see what is there but see something quite different. And ... it’s as if there is a parallel reality that exists all the time, at least one, probably more. And that I can switch into another reality, that other reality is mysterious.

It has positive aspects. Ewa loves to view and experience the world in this way, it can be seen as the soul of artistry or the artistry of soul.

Ewa is unsure and uncertain whether to trust these spiritual images:

There’s a part of me that I am still rejecting, that communication from the other world, and that I can’t fully trust it. Is this actually a safe way to go? Can I really do that? Does that other world, those communications, are they safe in this world?

She shows discrimination in pacing her venture according to her current understanding and the available assistance. She allows the questions she is posing to herself to remain with her and returns to them in a subsequent interview.

Michael also has difficulty accepting what the psyche or spirits present, and, when confronted with an image that is disagreeable to him, relates his resistance to his early childhood upbringing, and actively changes the image. During his visualisation, he becomes an ‘enormous and solitary tree on a hill overlooking and surveying the countryside ... a landmark surrounded by grasslands ... not an Australian tree and so changed it into an Angophora ... a home to a wide range of animals. What it would be like to be a small delicate mature bush covered in small white flowers’.

Michael does not allow himself to engage with and understand the intricacies and purpose of the presenting image of ‘an enormous and solitary tree overlooking and
surveying the countryside’. Instead of accepting what is presented, he alters the image for one that has meaning to his view of how things ‘should’ appear. He alters it again following his curiosity about ‘what it would be like to be a small delicate mature bush covered in small white flowers’. In so doing, the deep image becomes phantasmic. He does not reflect upon whether the image maintained its integrity, as Ewa’s did – virile black man into virile shaman.

Peter readily accepts the owl not communicating in an immediately understandable form. Peter concludes that it is up to him to interpret the actions of the messenger. He approaches his encounter with interest and curiosity. Unlike Ewa and Michael, Peter accepts what is presented in his encounter: he does not attempt to alter anything. Also unlike Ewa, Peter attempts to incorporate his spirit encounter into his shadowgraph. He mobilises his body when he applies the pastels, his application one of sensual curiosity. Peter attempts to see his journey in a larger ongoing story; he notices a synchronicity (Jung) between the Owl eyes of his journey and the eyes of El Pajaro – the Birdman from an art exhibition he has attended during the break between workshops:

*I need to affix the clipping of El Pajaro – Birdman ... I have been holding & thinking of this image for most of the time between the two workshops. The stunning aspect about these photos are the eyes – Miranda Critica – the critical gaze – like the eyes of the owl. The critical watching – the knowing look. The eyes watching over me from the outside ... *

Peter is fascinated by his dawning awareness, what he terms ‘the knowing look’. He works it into his shadowgraph; he values it.

b. Anxiety and self-criticism

Paradoxically, it is a critical gaze in its condemningatory form that has so immobilised Ewa. The critical gaze is a theme that Bronwyn speaks of in our initial interview. However, her approach is one of curiosity, and an acknowledgment that it is a dynamic: it does not operate in isolation. It is a two-edged sword, cutting both ways:

*I’d say my woman power is also very critical so I think she also hinders creativity sometimes too. I keep calling her she, ‘cause I’ve objectified her now, made her a person. She was a bit older and black a bit like a witch. The other side of this shadow power is the really pathetic one ... a two edged thing like this shadow that has a fear of power but the power looks at the disempowered and looks at them and it’s the shadow as well ... it is dynamic. *

Michael’s approach to self-criticism is one of purposeful action; he does not passively accept, but intentionally alters, his shadowgraph when it doesn’t fit his felt experience:
When I originally saw the outline of my body on the paper I was horrified because my head looked too small and my legs looked puny and thin. I’ve always had a great sense of vulnerability around being stupid not clever having a small head & about having puny arms & legs.

He determines to allow his inner experience to motivate his actions into image form. The body he inhabits and whose outline he has drawn appears totally inadequate in form to convey the energetic feeling of his experience, and he determines to alter and extend his representative body outline. He responds to his inner-world prompting rather than be constrained by the physicality and literalising of his material form:

It felt really important to me to fill out the legs, to enlarge the gesture to make the head bigger & to express the great energy surging around the inside of me. I want to leap on strong powerful legs, roar, make love & for that energy to expand out from my edges.

Michael, through engaging with his imaginative realm, transforms his body image into an expression of his internal experience.

Ewa responds in a variety of imagistic ways to her self-criticism:

I’m ugly – but must keep going – don’t look at her beautiful eyes because they are mesmerising and she may not want me – I will pretend I am cool, not interested at all for fear that she will be revolted by my desire for her.

She displays this darker aspect of her inner process as a dark intense being in her journal.

And yet, later, when she imagines herself in her shadowgraph, a vastly different image emerges. She urgently brings into form two beings of fluid, sensuous, interactive engagement; they float in and through one another neither one dominant, both of them lying and moving with a lightness of form and shape. She is at first thrilled with her shadowgraph outline, and seeks to represent a world of sensual flow and watery peace. She is flamboyant in her application, using large, sweeping brushstrokes, and is initially delighted by her creation:
I saw two figures diving into the water & swimming, so I painted blue all around the figures using turquoise – exciting to cover such large area – then decided to cut pictures from (indecipherable) of animals, beautiful women, birds then called to lunch.

Ewa has said that she knows these inner voices; these are her debilitating dragons. However, by venturing into this dark and dank world, and bringing it into form through imagistic expression, her dark picture has returned with a deeper image, one devoid of anxiety. The fluidity and scale of her initial shadowgraph suggest a creative flow from a source of immense proportions. Jung says that:

Psychologically, water means spirit that has become unconscious. Water is earthy and tangible, it is the fluid of the instinct-driven body, carnality heavy with passion (1980, p.19)

The unconscious individuation water-process continues in Ewa’s visualisation. She enters a pool of water, disrobes and emerges to be greeted by numerous black sensuous men.

c. Transformation

Bronwyn’s first journey brings a revamped shadow being as her guide. Initially, [Queen] Elizabeth I was her shadow object, but, in her first journey, Elizabeth I returns as one who can help her with her shadow-work. Her shadow object has transformed from its original powerful and dominating figure – a being frightening and resisted by her – into someone warm, someone with a vision for her to express. She states: ‘Being a woman doesn’t impoverish her but enlivens her strength’. Elizabeth 1 has assisted Bronwyn toward a new and enlivening self-appreciation, and, instead of gathering dust in a corner of her room, she begins ‘dancing in the stars like a new constellation’.

In a later journey Bronwyn engages with Elizabeth once more – their relationship has undergone a ripening of expression and understanding:
I am joined by Elizabeth 1 [sic]. She brings her strength, as before, but more this time – for she comes with a vision of healing for me to paint/draw/remember. Elizabeth warm, Elizabeth healed. A warm pulsing womb, an open and joyous heart and a suckling at her breast. Her hair is tousled and her smile is real: Being a woman doesn’t impoverish her but enlivens her strength.

Elizabeth 1, Bronwyn’s shadowgraph [detail]

It is apparent in these contrasting expressions that the journey Bronwyn has undertaken has been towards a more complex and colourful understanding of the person she is, or is becoming.

At the first workshop, Kaye recognises her internalised ‘man hater’ emerging within her as teaming up with a male partner, a man she has teamed up with to explore body-shadow forms. She realises, even as she is experiencing this, that the ‘man hater’ has nothing to do with the particular man she is walking and body sculpturing with. She has never met this man before. She intentionally stays with her process and finds that the ‘man-hater shadow’ alters. Seemingly miraculously, the ‘man hater’ within her transforms into a feeling of safety, then partnership, then peace. She allows him to sculpt her body, physically manipulating her limbs and posture.
This picture from Kaye's journal is emblematic of a young person's interpretation of the world [figure 9]. Distinct, simple lines. We can see in her first weekend shadowgraph [figure 1 Chapter 6] a similar tentative, adaptive expression, almost devoid of complexity and spontaneity.

She later writes:

My man hater was present had bubbled up prior to starting & my energy was low. As I walked with my male partner & sculpted him, his allowing produced a feeling of safety in me.

The internalised shadow ‘man hater’ transformed through her acceptance of its legitimate ‘right to be’ and her creatively engaging with a process of expression, with a ‘real’ man.

The sculpture games were important to Lisa as well, though for different reasons. The postures represent a visual embodiment of her inner developmental history and the transitional nature of one of her shadow beings:

The postures of shadow were great. To visually see the embodiment of shadow was profound. It exemplifies all that has been happening to me in the last month. To go from crouching, axe wielding Kali type ‘being’ is a big turning point. It is easier to be centred than to be axe wielding. I was pleased with the person I partnered in this exercise, because he is very intense, and throws himself into it complete.

The metamorphosis of shadow objects occurs with Michael in his engagement with his shadow object, a rock. At first, when he conceptualises this object, he says he wants the rock as it is:

Something destructive ... a rock ... something that represented violence. Not a gun, something organic. A rock has weight and power and may be used for attack it would represent all those other bits of my shadow that I’ve been talking about.

When Michael actually picks out his rock, his organic object, and begins to interact with it sensually, he is surprised at what emerges. What had initially began as

a weapon, something hard, weighty, an object to crack open skulls, to defend himself with, a weapon of aggression, to express my rage, my anger. However as I picked it up & started talking about it I became imbued with its sensuality, the roughness of its sandstone surface, and a desire to stroke it and feel its hard edges. I also became aware of how it grounded me & connected me with the earth, how it could be used as an implement & a tool not just a weapon & its Exquisite Weightiness. I became aware that I AM IN LOVE WITH ROCKS.
d. Anger and rage

Common to all the participants except Peter was a deep feeling of rage and violence. Michael expresses this as a murderous rage towards his partner, Ewa, and, when fantasising, becomes aware of being in a collective primitive imaginary realm. While in this imagistic realm, he participates and enjoys horrendous acts of barbarism and mutilation. During our first interview, Ewa comments on her feelings of murderous rage towards small girls who behave as princesses who are insatiable in their gluttony. She abhors their expectation and demand. Ewa, later full of uncertainty and frustration, mutilates her shadowgraph by chopping it up into many pieces with scissors. Kaye’s ‘man hater’ rages against men per se, while Lisa relates personally to images of Kali the destroyer.

Lisa builds a ‘shadow altar in an attempt to sanctify her fears and concerns. Kaye takes her angry reactions as signs of an area within her that needs healing. Bronwyn views her anger and rage as manifesting in indirect and subtle ways. She notices this through feedback from her peers telling her she is ‘controlling and domineering’.

Peter, on the other hand, comments upon his avoidance of anger and conflict, and yet thrusts himself into the thick of conflict management work as an occupation. One of his original shadow images is of the interface between the ocean and shoreline, and in his original interview he reflects upon the importance of the ‘frothy stuff in between’. He lives in this ‘frothy’ position both in his paid professional work and in his recreational ‘hobby’ as a Playback Theatre conductor.

None of the participants mentioned any ‘raging’ outbursts directed towards other people in their lives. The visual expression of rage was also absent from the participants’ shadowgraphs and from their journals, except for a single mention in Kaye’s.
Both Ewa and Michael expressed surprise at the spirit guides who appeared on their journeys. They both expected someone more in keeping with an Indigenous shaman stereotype. Michael expressed it thus:

_"I've heard people talk about their spirit figures, you know they're always some great elder or some great big bear or lion or this or that, they're always some you know wise wonderful person who takes them by the hand and people talk about these highly experienced wise kind of people who have lived great lives and how can this little boy, this young passionate boy be my spirit guide, you know? This very passionate boy, so it didn't fit, so it didn't fit with what I had heard so I discarded it. As that I had to find something else, that there had to be something different, wiser, bigger."_

Ewa reflected:

_"I decide that the only safe figure would be an old man – a Siberian shaman – grey hair, wizened wrinkled face ... face and body (stout and sturdy but shapely). I go to hug him but also am worried about sexuality – mine – that I will want him."_

Ewa remarked, in an interview after this journey, that in the preceding years she had been saying an ongoing prayer for a reconnection to her sensuality. Was this journey, in its own metaphorical way, an answer to her prayer, and also an answer to her journey question, "Who will help me in my shadow-work?" If the shadow is the compensatory factor to persona, then the answer would be yes! Her spirit guide is her sensual liberator. He is instinctual sexuality, which compensates a rigidly moralistic ego (belief). She meets him after her immersion in the lagoon. Jung writes ‘therefore the way of the soul in search of its lost father – like Sophia seeking Bythos – leads to water, to the dark mirror that reposes at its bottom (1980, p. 17)’.

Similarly with Michael, his youthful black dancing spirit guide may also be viewed as his liberating shadow. The unconscious/spirit realms portray shadow and spirit guide as one and the same; there is an economy of image. After her journey, Ewa does not bring these experiences into her shadowgraph, though, in her first weekend workshop, a fluid sensuality was activated within her shadowgraph. The spirit guide journey is a continuation of this process, though one that was incomprehensible to her at the time.

In a similar manner, Michael, a man who comments upon his conservative working persona and his lack of connection to his vital life-force, except in fantasies of carnage and brutality, is met by a spirit-being that is the opposite of his persona. Here we have, in his journey, a young, vibrant black youth who is supported in his dance of frenetic ecstasy by older males. Michael feels the energy in his being, he
becomes, in effect, the black youth. Michael attempts to portray the expanded vitality of his embodied youth in his shadowgraph.

Numerous Jungian-influenced writers (Bane 1999, Breese, Ford 2000) comment that for Caucasians, black, same-sex people represent the personal shadow in dreams. They also refer to these black shadow beings as being ominous or frightening, and seeking to be noticed by crude or terrifying means. The persona-ego in the dream state is invariably scared or terrified, and seeks to get away, but is pursued relentlessly. In the journey states, a similar mentality emerges in a subtler manner. The black figures are not in themselves frightening until Ewa projects her shadow upon them.

A variation of this black ‘image’ pursuit is experienced by Lisa. She is confronted by a black wolf that begins teaching her about her shadow, and about shadow as a manifestation of humanity. But she has to follow the spirit shadow in order to receive its teachings: it rushes off through the forest; she races to keep up; it leads her to a reflective lake. He instructs her to view her own reflection. She sees at first his reflection, and then a white wolf looking back at her. ‘He said that everyone has the light and dark and I should understand that. I look up to see the lake surrounded by black and white wolfs (a mandala)’. Black wolf shows Lisa by demonstration that there are two ways of relating to shadow. One way is destructive and out of control, and the other way is to sit quietly with the shadow. He tells her that sitting quietly with the shadow is possible for her. The qualities he brings are ‘SKILL, PATIENCE, AND DEDICATION TO ME’. These qualities have a universal appeal for anyone undertaking shadow work.

A black animal guide greets Kaye in her journey. She meets first one panther and then a second, one black, one white. She greets them with trust and acceptance, allowing herself to be led by the remaining black panther. She felt a ‘great sense of comfort with panther’. The qualities panther brings are: ‘Strong; Swift; Energetic; Swift in knowing; Energetic (emotionally)’.

A black panther arrives in answer to Bronwyn’s question as well, though the panther’s qualities are different: ‘Also come is panther. Blue black, strong, primal, courageous & aggressive.’

Lisa, Kaye, and Bronwyn all encounter Native American shamans on their journeys. Ewa also meets up with a Native American shaman, though her meeting is mitigated
through her rejection of her first spirit guide’s physical form. The men do not meet Native American inner guides or shamans.

Everyone, with the exception of Peter, meets spirit guides in ‘human’ manifestations. All except Michael meet with animals. All the women are accompanied at one time or another by wild cats: jaguar/lion (Ewa); and panther (Lisa and Bronwyn). Peter has the only journey-bird, an owl. Peter had previously recounted his flight on the back of an eagle prior to the workshop series, and remarked in his visual diary that currawongs held meaning for him.

Many of the beings whom they encountered did not behave in accord with the participants’ expectations; instead, they displayed autonomy. The spirit guides and their behaviour surprised the participants, who were at other times flabbergasted or frightened.

Peter’s owl would not ‘speak’, Michael’s black boy ‘danced’ him, Ewa’s black men were frighteningly sexual and vital; Kaye was shooed away by one of her guides; Lisa ‘exploded’ from a tree; and Bronwyn became a dancing star constellation.

Michael commented that he was conscious of a desire to be authentic. He differentiated enveloping imagination from fantasy:

*There’s a qualitative difference yes. [He differentiated between] the highly imaginal, spontaneous free experience of a wakeful dream ... instead struggling to follow a set of instructions and was almost very conscious and as part of that conscious effort. I didn’t want it to become too much of a fantasy ... that I was creating.*

Peter’s attitude to his shamanic guide (the owl) was one of quiet patience and acceptance. He was attentive to the situation as it is. He sought answers to his questions from his spirit guide (owl) only once. None of the participants engaged in a conversation or seek clarification once their questions are asked. In their journeys, they all, with the exception of Ewa, trust that the answer is given by the spirit guide, either by word, action, look or symbol, and sometimes a combination of all these means. They assume that it is up to themselves to garner meaning from the interaction.

All the participants write in their image-journals of their initial journey and their spirit guide encounters. Peter draws the image of the spirit guides’ eyes in his image-journal, and elaborates on this in his shadowgraph. Bronwyn collages one of her spirit guides (Queen Elizabeth I) into her shadowgraph. Up until the third and final
workshop, no one else incorporates in figurative form either their spirit guide(s) or shadow helpers into their journals or shadowgraphs. At the final workshop, Kaye draws in Grandfather, her shamanic guide.

Although Michael does not paint his black pubescent spirit guide, he attempts to display his journey experience through his shadowgraph by the use of colour and symbols. He expands his original outline into one more indicative of his phenomenological experience:

*A sense of this expansiveness in both my journey and my painting. I had had my first transpersonal experience that I was fully aware of, my first spiritual experience that I was fully aware of and it was irrefutable...*

**f. Relationship with shadowgraph**

There was a mix of pre-planning, spontaneity, intuitive responsiveness and deep image reproduction in the shadowgraphs. Peter had in mind adding certain collage pictures to his shadowgraph before arriving at the second workshop. He did so. He later allowed the colours to lead him deeper into his image, letting them pick him – a process I also utilised in my pastel series of images. Bronwyn put aside cut-out images from the first workshop, and collaged them into her shadowgraph in the second workshop, allowing her intuition to dictate their placement. The images found their own territory. Ewa used her first workshop pictures in her second shadowgraph, but discovered that they were at odds with her second workshop ‘felt’ state. They belonged to the first workshop experience and, when used in the second workshop, appeared to her forced and artificial. This was distressing for her.

Kaye felt after the first workshop that her shadowgraph was done and complete, although to me it appeared stark and unfulfilled. Over the course of the following workshops, she placed within and around her shadowgraph the richness of her changing and altering subjective world. The second workshop shadowgraph showed many parallel lines and light within her. The third workshop displayed darkness surrounding her form, and much more vibrancy and vivid colours. Her shadowgraph depicted the thorns of life as well as the roses. Grandfather, her spirit guide and mentor are depicted above her, watching over her, protecting her.

The participants at various times were attracted or repulsed by their shadowgraphs. Ewa initially was delighted by her shadowgraph: ‘It felt very like a sensate, emotional sensuous interaction which was pleasurable’. However, in the midst of the final
workshop, she became emotionally distressed, and cuts up her shadowgraph into many pieces before gluing it back together in an altogether different design and shape.

Up until the last weekend workshop session, Michael loved both the process and the resulting image of his shadowgraph. He frequently expressed this in the group sharing and in his journal:

_I fell in love with the creative process. With doing that drawing I connected very deeply with the drawing that I couldn’t wait to get back to and there was a sense of urgency wanting to get in to it._

After the last workshop session, he pilloried his shadowgraph as being a lifeless affectation: ‘I had overdone it, its vibrancy was gone’.

Lisa was disappointed with her shadowgraph, as she believed her effort fell short of representing what she wanted to convey. Subsequent to this self-deprecation, she was affected by the positive feedback of others commenting upon how her work affected them. Their feedback and her enactment in an ‘honouring’ ceremony altered her acceptance at what she had created. She later wrote in her journal:

_I didn’t feel that it was that good an effort on my part ...

After doing the ceremony to Honour my painting – I now LOVE it!!
This is the first time I have put all these things into physical form by way of Art.
My Heart is full._

Bronwyn traverses numerous emotional plains throughout the creation of her shadowgraph. She relates in her journal that, as she approaches and begins to interact with her shadowgraph at the commencement of the second workshop, she is excited and vibrant. Then, as she adds collage material, she inexplicably becomes darker and darker in herself. Notwithstanding her discomfort, she stays connected with her emergent mood, and expresses it into her shadowgraph, thereby transferring her felt experience onto the paper and into creative expression. She trusts the direction of her own process, letting it lead her. Later, she records:

_Despite the emotional blackness I remained pleased with the work & happy with it’s [sic] process. It feels important to give this vision expression & allow it to be rather than rushing in to heal it straight away._

Similarly, Bronwyn does not seek immediate resolution, and trusts that she will heal: ‘Although I have absolutely no idea how I might go about doing that and feel fearful of the attempt.’
Kaye treats the production of her shadowgraph as an adventure of discovery that evolves over the course of the workshops, reflecting her sojourn through the dramatic events of her family life. Her first workshop is one in which a tentative exploration commences:

"Outline & beginning to work on my Body Shadow is a process of unfolding, unearthing & some understanding as that which I have no words for comes from my inner world. It looks unfamiliar, unknown in this form. An artists day, evoking the child to play to be, to see. How incredibly, divinely delicious."

Kaye comments, when she is presented with her completed shadowgraph during our last person-to-person interview, that she ‘feels no ownership issues’. The shadowgraph presents a memory diary to her, in which roses develop thorns, and the thorns are deemed to be prompts for a deeper appreciation of the beauty of her life.

Peter, in our first workshop, is intrigued by his shadowgraph, and attempts to gather meaning from it as he goes. He is the only participant other than Bronwyn (Elizabeth 1) to introduce recognisable mythological/archetypal characters (Hermes, Ariadne). He is the only participant to include in his shadowgraph a labyrinth (archetypal symbol), implying a journey to be undertaken, with entry and exit by the same path. Similar to Bronwyn, though different from Ewa, Peter settles into allowing an alternative way of being to emerge into his consciousness:

"As I work with the must haves my mind has slowed to enjoy the act of creating & during this quiet time other elements & recollection from the work we’ve done so far are given space to come through."

In garnering meaning from their experiences within the imaginal realms, the participants draw from a variety of sources. Lisa draws on her knowledge of the zodiac, and later on her knowledge of Hinduism. Kali, the Hindu goddess, is an archetypal presence, an energy force Lisa is initially frightened to internally contact. It is her shadow self, a self beyond her known identity.

g. Comparison with my own experiences

My process was somewhat different from that of the participants, though the methods I utilised, such as the journey, creative visualisation, shadowgraph and visual expression, were similar. Some differences in methods were necessary, and were made possible by my immersion in the process throughout my ongoing daily life. The research was a heuristic process within my life.
My experiences while in an altered state of consciousness (journeys, visualisations) had similarities with and differences from the participants’. Common to my experiences was the surprising nature of the encounters with guides, and the (guides’) reluctance to provide direct linear rational guidance. Metaphorical and allegorical references were the most likely form of communication.

Unlike the other participants, I had the time and motivation to subject myself to rigorous self-examination throughout the research process. Therefore, my exploration through phenomenological and heuristic immersion into the images and bodily sensation was fundamentally different from theirs. There were, however, similarities in a number of emergent themes. I first note the common themes, after which I relate in greater detail the method of self-exploration I employed, and the phenomena of the process. I include several visual images in order to highlight pertinent points and engage the reader intellectually and emotionally.

Ewa, Bronwyn, Michael, Lisa, and Peter all experienced anger and rage, and felt that it was a negative shadow emotion. This was a very different understanding from my own, as I found that anger and rage had a liberating effect upon me. It was and continues to be a very important component of my process, as it invariably entailed a transformation. Michael also experienced his anger and rage as a liberating phenomenon, although there were significant differences between our processes and experiences. We understood our experiences differently.

For instance, Michael detailed in his interview that his anger and rage was triggered by his partner Ewa’s intractability. He separated himself from her and, while feeling into his emotions, allowed images to form in his imagination. Visions of wild and out-of-control black men massacring other black men appeared in his imagination. He felt their blood lust coursing through him, and relished the feeling of unmitigated primal power flowing through his body. From this, he gained an insight into a previously unknown power accessed through his ‘darker’ emotion, his visceral sensations, his physical body, and his imagination.

This encounter with black men is a theme that is ongoing in Michael’s narrative. During his first workshop journey, Michael had an experience with black men, whereby he allowed the experience to unfold, and became possessed by a young black youth and danced ecstatically while other, older, black men formed a circle around them. Further to this theme, he related a ‘powerful’ dream where he was in
an audience watching black Aboriginal men perform a sacred dance, and was invited by them to join them.

In a similar vein, after completing a ‘bush camp’ with Aboriginal men, I dreamed on ten consecutive nights of walking into a circled gathering of Aboriginal Elders and sitting amongst them. These were incredibly powerful dreams, which climaxed on the tenth night when I experienced being filled with a dynamic energy and my body levitating from my bed. I became frightened and called out ‘Stop!’, and the energy ceased. After this experience, I had no recurrence of these dreams.

Shame and punishing self-criticism was another commonly experienced shadow phenomena for many of the participants (Ewa, Michael, and Bronwyn). These two themes arose with a vengeance in my own shadow investigation.

My processes of engaging in shadow exploration had similarities and differences. I was venturing on my own and at my own direction, whereas the group was responding to my suggested activities. Replication of the participants’ environment was impossible. However, I was able to produce a shadowgraph, and I did complete the various altered consciousness explorations that they undertook, albeit in my own home.

h. Response to my shadowgraph

Similar to myself, at various stages all the participants, with the exception of Peter, declared their aversion and rejection of their shadowgraph. They also experienced negative emotional upheavals when confronted with what they had initially produced. The emotional intensity and conflict varied between participants, as did its manner of resolution. My shadowgraph aversion was triggered by feeling vulnerable and exposed by the presentation of a foetal dark form. Vulnerability was likewise evident in Bronwyn’s envy, Michael’s ‘puny legs and small head’ self-critique, Ewa’s desperation in hurriedly filling in the shadowgraph blank space before lunch on the first weekend workshop, and Lisa’s (albeit brief) condemnation of her artistic merit.

Of the participant responses to their negative self-appraisal, Michael’s was most similar to my response. I eventually added a second tall, erect outline, standing behind my foetal one. My reaction was initiated by my foetal figure being alone and exposed to an unformed environment. By creating another figure, the existential
tension ended. Ewa, Bronwyn and Lisa also included another body outline, though this occurred at the commencement of their exploration.

Michael at no stage mentioned feeling ashamed in his response, but shame was evident in his reflections on his personal history of being ridiculed for having a tiny head and legs. My shame was a terrible insecurity of being worthy of being a man: it was like an ancient calling of failure. My vulnerability was different from Michael’s, and more deeply experienced as a state of acute shame. My conflict stemmed from shame, and this emotion was almost instantaneously triggered upon my first viewing of my shadowgraph.

ii. Images and transformation

The images below are alternative responses to a dream I had while beginning the process of immersion. In the images below, one can see that they are entirely different expressions of the one experience. So what was transformed, and how did this happen?

Response 1 depicts the story of the dream, with its significant symbols literally reproduced. A man (me), a house, a planet passing close overhead, a spaceship, the terrain, and a falling silver star. This image satisfies the literal storied narrative. There is a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Response 2 is the felt luminosity of the dream. It is an altogether different expression, as there is no beginning, middle, or end. This image resonates with something intangible and mysterious. Its expression is one of coloured energies engaging with each other and overlapping. It tells a story of no blank spaces, of shapes giving form, not only to themselves, but also defining each other’s form. It also indicates that, paradoxically, colours and shapes rely on their individuality being defined by their relationship to one another. The image reveals that there is no
emptiness, and that all shape, colour, and form are interconnected and interdependent.

In the transformation of this image, tentity alters. The second image has vastly more energy in it, with more colour and vibrancy. The figure in the second image dances in the midst of the moving planet. Different from the first rendition, the figure is no longer an observer: he is an active participant. The feeling tone of engagement as a reciprocation of being is much more obvious in the second rendition. The figure is not being ‘done to’ as a passive recipient, but rather he is interacted with.

These two images suggest that being separate and discrete entities is but one perspective. They alert us to the possibility and probability that creative psychic/spiritual energy infuses the entirety of all expressions of being. Hence, we are not determined by any one narrative of being, but rather can direct our beingness into a variety of alternative perspectives. The ‘I’ that has the dream is also in the dream. The ‘I’ that drew Response 1 is the ‘I’ that drew Response 2, while paradoxically not at all within the same realm of consciousness, just as the ‘I’ who is awake and the ‘I’ who is the dreamer are in alternative realms of consciousness.

In the dream, I retain an identity consistent with my waking identity while phenomenal unearthly events occur. In the making of the Response 2 image, something similar occurs. I surrender to the feel of the images, and shift my consciousness into a field of creative experience. The pastels and paper dictate the form based upon the feeling that flows after I soften my hard-edged, literal mind.

One result is that Dream response 1 elicits the insatiable shadow critic, the internalised harping, carping, never satisfied one and its mirror, as Plotkin conceptualises it the ‘Lone Soldier’. The Lone Soldier’s job is to protect the untainted soul from damage from the critic, but paradoxically becomes the critic. Dream response 2 is deeply satisfying, though not understood, and is brought forth by the emotionally charged shadow.

What happened in the transformation of this image is strikingly resonant, as it parallels the transformation of Bronwyn’s Elizabeth 1 and 2 [figures 8 & 9] visual representations. When Bronwyn’s and my images are held up alongside one another, there appears to be not only a consistency in colour and form, but also,
more importantly, of feeling and emotional impact. The static becomes animated in an emotional and evocative way.

Both my first dream picture and Bronwyn's Elizabeth 1 appear to simply tell a narrative. Bronwyn's second Elizabeth and my second planetary dream transform the narrative into a much more complex and interactive image. There is an embodied resonance that evokes and promotes an emotional curiosity rather than an intellectual and abstract response. There is no clear cut or obvious storyline. There is a dissonance between felt experience and conceptualisation. An uncomfortable subjective stance with possibly no resolution is evoked.

Eliciting this creative expression demonstrates the evocative power of emotional language and subjective engagement. Bronwyn's and my first renditions are devoid of all but the simplest literal expression; they are sterile in comparison with their later counterparts. In both cases, the transformation of the images brings energy, strength and zest into relationship with the viewer. There is a simplicity in both our first renditions, a childlike ‘this is the world of form’: they please conformity. Both the second renditions, hers and mine, carry within their expressions subjectiveness and form; they do not seek to please, but seek to express for expression’s sake, and hence they are immensely satisfying for the creator.

As I was involved in writing this discussion about the theme of transformation, I had an astonishing dream that reinforced the importance of returning to the actual experience and not being subsumed by abstract conceptualisation.

There are reasons for my inclusion of primary material in this discussion chapter. First, the dream is synchronistic and indicative of a larger meta-process operating throughout this search-for-meaning segment. The dream occurs when I begin focusing upon the area of transformation. It occurs when I am involved in a weekend workshop environment with a James Hillman/Jungian-influenced workshop leader.

The timing of this dream demonstrates an active process, dictated by an opportunistic spiritual ‘force’ that is beyond waking consciousness. I did not intentionally seek further guidance or understanding of my thesis area. It occurred when transformation was a primary investigation in my writing:

I’m standing upon a rock weir looking down at the rocks about two metres below and in particular the intersection of the rocks and water. I look just beyond the rocks into the water and feel an impulse to leap into the water. I realise that this would be a
dangerous thing to do as the water is opaque and I cannot see beneath its surface. There are likely to be rocks just below the surface and more than likely injure myself, possibly seriously. The impulse to leap is very strong in spite of my rational understanding of the risks involved. The pull from my lower chest is considerable and I impulsively leap. I land unharmed in the water and float relaxed in the water with my arms at my side. Suddenly I am grabbed from behind by the hips and pulled through the water completely powerless and subject to an irresistible force. I am terrified of what might happen. As suddenly as this occurs it ceases. And I am once again in the water floating unhindered. I look to the shoreline endeavouring to locate a point of exit from the water but see only slippery moss coated steep jagged rocks. As I look the force grabs me unexpectedly again and once more whips me through the water. I am very frightened though not harmed in any way. It ceases once again and I look towards the shoreline dreading that the force will return. End of dream.

Dream process consisted in locating within my body the various feeling and emotional states while relating the narrative of the dream. The dream narrative is related twice: the first time in straight narrative form; the second time with interruptions at emotional moments, and phenomenologically exploring and examining the accompanying bodily sensations. The dream is narrated using the first-person viewpoint.

When I recounted the force grabbing me the second time and then releasing me into still waters, I was filled with fear and dread. While treading water, I felt the dread of being subject to the force grabbing me again, and the fear and danger of leaving the place of dread. While considering the slippery rocks of exit from the water, I began to feel a heat generating from my solar plexus. It increased in intensity until it was as if a sun was building towards supernova status. The heat of the fire radiated out into my shoulders and down my arms, igniting my fingers and emanating a radiance from the entire upper half of my body. I felt as though an indestructible and irrepressible force was irradiating me from within.

Near the peak of this excitation, scenes of frustration and impotence from my early childhood erupted into my imagination. The persuasive and dreaded impotence I felt around my father, with his incoherent alcoholic ramblings, and the uncertainty I experienced around his unpredictability, flashed into view. I had felt incredibly powerless around his erratic behaviour, and trapped in a relationship with him. I did not feel powerless now. These images were incendiary; they stoked the inferno. The red-hot rage became nuclear, with images of nuclear fusion erupting into my imagination. Gradually, the images and the feelings decreased in intensity, and I focused my awareness upon where in my body the feeling resonated.
I then focused my attention upon the submerged force that had so whipped me around the surface of the water. I focused upon what it looked and felt like. To my surprise, it was very beautiful and illuminated by an iridescence. Many light pastel colours in bubbly forms mingled together; it was incredibly wondrous and awesome. As I allowed the experience to influence me, it became clear that this force did not want anything from me other than to connect, to be known by me. It wanted Robert. I felt flooded with a realisation that this wondrous, irresistible and indestructible beauty was seeking me out because it wanted to connect. This wonderful entity wanted to engage with me; it had intentionality, a purpose; it sought me out.

I pondered this irrepressible power later. By focusing my awareness upon the experience itself, the phenomenon was revealed to me. What had originally terrified me in my fantasising about what this might ‘mean’ was transformed through actually experiencing the phenomena. There is a sense in this of being informed by something transpersonal; something that exists well outside my own egoistic self, beyond my personal psychology, and beyond humanity’s collective psychology.

The dream that had begun as a ‘nightmare’ of being powerless had revealed in its phenomenological appreciation a much deeper layer of powerlessness that was not confining, but liberating, transformational.

3. Third phase meaning-making: a ‘time of doubt’

Despite the power of this dream, the ‘compare and contrast’ process of the second meaning-making slowly and methodically eroded my interest to the point of a pervasive depression. The process itself lacked the experiential resonance that sang in the imagination, and the poetic nuances that had initially so captivated my writing. The process became a meaningless exercise and felt devoid of the spirit that had instigated my enquiry.

From time to time, I doubted the authenticity of some aspects of the participants’ experiences. Was their experience the result of wishful thinking and sentimentally-induced imagination, or, as Larsen terms it, ‘man’s illusion susceptible tendencies’(1977, p. 17)? I questioned whether they had sufficient discernment. I doubted whether they could be relied upon to accurately relay their experiences.

Robertson (1999) comments that shadow workers inevitably experience a great deal of depression, and what keeps one going is the realisation that one is doing something important, not only for oneself, but for some deeper power within.
without embellishment or omission. There were times when I would pathologise their reported experiences as a lack of a movement, or an invention instead of a visitation. The irony of my thinking in this way came much, much later. The underlying assumption I unconsciously adopted was that they were ‘having themselves on’. The assumption was based upon a mechanistic model of sickness and a certain scepticism that awoke my damaging/punishing inner critic. I at times considered them to be self-indulgent and obsessed navel-gazers, unable and unwilling to accept their privileged socio-economic status. Upon reflection, I realise that I became a victim of my own projections.

Jung (1992) wrote about just such a paradox, whereby one is utterly convinced that the trouble lies outside of oneself. Here I was researching shadow projection, and was so immersed in the process that I was more than half convinced that the problem lay outside myself. I was blinded by my own ‘illuminated’ knowledge. The ‘other’ was to blame. It was I in fact who was ‘having myself on’ and ‘expertly’ sidestepping responsibility. I am referring to certain ways of approaching the material that occurred on the research journey while I wrestled with reducing the material to something acceptable to my supervisor and the future examiners. I would bounce from one to the other of these approaches, linger awhile, and then shuffle or leap on. I was attempting to firm my stance on what was essentially shifting sand. It was, however, just as much my shifting sand as theirs.

This was not all that was occurring within my mental world. There was another ‘reality’ nudging itself into my consciousness, yet I was not ready to articulate just what this ‘other’ journey was. I was alternating between conceptualisation and deeply immersed experience; one would not allow the other to dominate. I had expressed the phenomenology of this process in my picture stories. What would occur if, instead of using reason to explain and analyse, I rather (similar to Larsen’s 1977 approach) celebrated and experienced its meaning? Larsen cautions against assigning meaning, cognitively, to our felt meaning. They are two separate engagements, which need to be treated as such. Felt meaning is primary; it is a priori, and as such a sacred mode of comprehension (Larsen 1977, p. 28).

The reductionist approaches lacked the liberty that I had felt so often throughout the research journey. None of these approaches were in keeping with the spirit of the enquiry, nor were they aligned with my own process. And yet I felt trapped within my own disciplinary mythology, stuck within a myth of Ph.D. expectation. This Ph.D.
myth ensnared me into a web of my own making, and slowly and relentlessly drained away any sense of meaning that had been activated during the exploration. I became deeply depressed and virtually stopped writing. I muddled along, avoiding re-reading anything I had previously written, and avoided answering any well-meaning Ph.D. enquiries by friends, relatives and peers. It was within this stifling internal environment that I decide to quit my Ph.D. and ‘concentrate on other worthwhile pursuits’.

I contacted my supervisor and arranged to meet up with him at our forthcoming post-graduate residential at Hawkesbury campus, I did not alert him as to my internal state of affairs:

We sit on two old chairs in my supervisor’s office. He is in the process of moving into another office at another campus. His desk once alive with an assortment of manuscripts, documents and sculptural pieces sits mute in a barren corner. The bookshelves that line one wall once filled to overflowing with odd shaped and brightly coloured books and journals are empty. It is late afternoon and low hanging storm clouds have gathered in the sky outside. The room once so bright and energetic is now sterile, austere and somewhat depressing. The surroundings match my inner world for I have been vacillating between dropping out from my thesis or carrying on and completing it as a gesture in pragmatism; meeting the exterior academic and intellectual criteria whilst steering further away from any authentic voice I had found during the journey. For the first time in four years and tens of meetings [neither] John nor I have any recording equipment. I have already flagged my lack of meaning in what I have been doing in order to complete this chapter. I am deeply depressed about it, my spirit is low. My work seems devoid of soul. My work just isn’t working, for me.

I tell my supervisor of my dilemma. I say that writing this chapter in a formalised ‘compare and contrast’ is not providing me with any satisfaction. I say I am doing this for reasons disconnected from the spirit and soul of the journey I have undertaken with the land, with the participants and importantly with myself. I tell him that in all probability I will not complete my Ph.D. I don’t know how to proceed with out [sic] further corrupting my inner being (for that is what I have been doing). I also tell him that I feel I owe a debt to him and to the Social Ecology Department for their unbridled support of me throughout the last four years. He replies that I don’t owe him anything and that it has
been a pleasure being on a journey with me over the past four years. We both pause and allow the feeling of what we have just conversed about to wash over us.

A massive clap of thunder erupts and shakes the building, followed almost simultaneously by a flash of lightning. The flourescent lighting that lights the room shorts out as the lightning blasts its way into a substation fifty metres or so away. We sit in silent awe and then peer through the gloom at each other. My supervisor says, ‘well, looks like we’re in the dark together’. He’s stating the way it is. He is instructed by the metaphor and the embodied experience. He recognises and makes known the grounded metaphor. He goes on to say that he too will need to let go of his ‘knowing how to proceed’ and what will best serve my interests. He recognises and acknowledges that his best interests (on my behalf) were not necessarily mine.

In allowing the experience of the moment, the crisis of meaning passed. I was left pondering what would come if I set aside the theoretician, the analyst, the critic, and let the experience lead me deeper into its own revelation.

Jerome Brumer (1969, p. 34) says:

When the myths no longer fit the internal plights of those who acquire them, the transition to newly created myths may take the form of a chaotic voyage to the interior: the certitudes of externalisation are replaced by the anguish of the internal voyage.

To understand our experiences as chaotic, anguished internal voyages, or journeys of the soul, emerges as both logical and reasonable. This view of our experiences best captures a major theme that flows through this thesis. When viewed as the soul's journey, then our SSCs, visualisations, synchronistic occurrences, dreams, and art all resonate with important meaning. They are soul speak. I realised that to be true to our experiences, I needed to return to the source. I returned with opened heart and fresh eyes.

At the completion of the previous meaning-making processes, I felt unsatisfied. Holding the images at arm's length while engaged in a comparative analysis had revealed much, and yet a pervasive internal unease persisted, and I felt unsettled. I decided to go deeper into the images through direct re-engagement.

I now beckon the reader further into this metaphorical and imaginary realm with a request that you engage in a resonant way and allow your psyche to enter the field of
the discussion along a path of – as Kaye terms it – soulful engagement. It is with a certain excitement that I undertook this next stage of [the] meaning-making venture but it is not without disquiet for I undertook to engage with the ineffable, I might not be the same person when I emerged. This journey into the ‘untrodden, untreadable’ region whose precincts should not be entered by force, ‘which will brook no human intervention’ as Jung (1998) put it; it is soul territory. An area traditionally associated with the shaman. I do not have Jung to assist, I do not have Don Juan to instruct me. However, I do have an intuitive sense that there is an inspirited soul awaiting to lead me to wherever I need to venture.

a. Returning to the source: ‘deeper into the images’

And what is it that these vibrant creations call to us? What is it they are attempting to communicate? Do they call out to be heard and understood on their own terms? What are their evocations, their enticement? They were born of a time together. They came into being in a collective environment, so their story is inexorably linked by the thread of the time and place of their creation; the shadow and neoshamanic impetus is emboldened in visual form. What is it that animates these incredible pieces? It is as though there awaits the essence of something slumbering and potentially liberating. It lies barely a minor shift in conscious appreciation from our view. But that minor shift is a world away from a hard-eyed glare, and cannot be evoked by critical analysis. Rather, the eyes must soft-focus and the heart open; only then will these images reveal their essential nature; only then the meaning travelling through these images might reveal itself.

In order to better grasp the meaning the shadowgraphs collectively contribute, I go back to the source and arrange them side by side. (The juxtaposed images are presented on the following page). I sit before my computer keyboard with them before me on the screen and allow the experience its ‘voice’. I place the shadowgraphs before me and sink into the experience without expectation. It is not an easy thing to sink once more into an uncomfortable and disorienting way back into these images; they have a singularly powerful effect upon me; together, what might they bring? Although I have distanced myself from these images, they have never entirely left me. They lingered just beyond consciousness, just beyond where I care to go, or go frequently. I think of the many times I have derided certain aspects of these shadowgraphs, the sheer irony of it – all that I disparaged, all the disquieting moments that I unconsciously or secretly blamed them for. I reflect that my
responses to these shadowgraphs, my likes and dislikes, bear witness to the strength of the unknown in my life: to the acceptable and unacceptable; to life and death. They derive their meaning through me. I was part of their coming into being and they were and are part of me coming into being.

I lay them before me and sink into their realm of being...
Figure 14: all completed shadowgraphs
I feel the tears of a deep sorrow welling up from a gut-clutching and stomach-wrenching place of seclusion. I need to feel into what I have been part of and what is part of me. It is liberating this sorrow, this grief beyond reckoning. It is surprising, for I have not cried in so long. And when I see the valour and courage with all its contradictions and paradoxes displayed side by side I am overcome with not joy, not happiness but a peculiar sorrow. I feel humbled when I see these attributes in their images for I at times have judged these people much as an idealist judges imperfection and knows no internal rest because of it.

These are beautiful people, represented by beautiful images. These are images profoundly different and yet joined in an heroic and epic journey of shadow and soul. These are contradictory stories as incoherent and coherent as the story of humanity itself. These are images born of an indomitable spirit and a restless turbulent soul. These are shadowy and illusive narratives bound to one another just as the earth and the sky seem separate until viewed from a perspective removed from both.

When I step back and feel into these remarkable images I am transported to a place that has existed for millennia. A place that existed long before my life began. These images connect me with all people’s stories, with all those who have sought meaning since time began. It places me in a greater story, an ongoing yarn that will never be fully told and exists alongside and within every other person who has sought a creative life. It places me and my fellow image makers within and paradoxically beyond the spacetime continuum. It is this I have sought and is this I continue to seek. It is this that bears itself restless within my guts.

I see their triumphs and frustrations. I feel their pain and dismay. I ride with their gardening, their group work. I lie within their thorny rose bushes and suffer the crushing defeats of impotency in the face of overwhelming and capricious mortality. It is me they take their scissors to and me they cut up. I am with them as they encounter the panthers and lions. They take me down into the bowels of the earth and I sit watching their dances of ecstatic abandonment. I am besides them, with them closely. They are separate and yet we are one. It is not an association- it is more a merging and an emerging- a waiting for what is to come and yet is eternally there. Not anywhere but here, right now, this moment and then the next. Eternally now and also flowing.

I face these images and implant myself within their moody and vibrant colours. Their shapes and forms dispel mordant detachment - they insinuate themselves into me. My shoulder hurts as if sharpened stainless steel needles are penetrating assuredly into sinew and muscle. Penetrating through my shoulder and exiting through my back just to the right of my shoulder blade. It is an eagle’s talon forward and rear biting in gripping my shoulder with pinpoint precision. It is an eagle’s biting lesson of seeing far and being here present in this moment. These sharp, sharp talons will not let me stray or drift too far tonight. The tales these story-images tell are tales from experience and are part of a continuous developing narrative that seeks to connect with an essence of being (Kremer, 1988).
This mood, this shift in consciousness passes; I feel emotionally flat and uninspired. Time to depart, at least for now.

I take a spell and return to the images later that day.

I see in Ewa’s image the liberating freedom of sensual movement and its counterpoint of utter despair. My need to hang onto the liberating outward flow of sensuality and the desperation when it ebbs. I see what I do to myself when Ewa takes to her image with scissors, an act of frustration at what had been and was no longer. I see and feel a compassion towards her actions of mutilation. Meaning departed is savage when recognized. I hated Ewa’s cutting up of her art for that is what I do oh so frequently. I see myself as a young sensual baby boy delighting in spontaneous expression and then inexorably compromising myself as the powers of authority bear down upon me. It is painful, it is distressing and yet in terms of soulwork it is not irredeemable. Michael demonstrates this in his journey. Ewa turns to me for direction, to the authority figure I am, and I turn her back towards that from which she has fled. Is not my story and humanity’s story replete with examples of just such a dynamic?

I am with Michael as he journeys along his path [and] meets and merges with the young black dancing boy. His dance is one of the soul, liberating, energised and spontaneous. I feel the tension of choosing one path over others and imagining what and who was at the end of these untrodden paths. Life, this life presents these sorts of compromises time after time. These are choices I made every moment of this thesis. Sometimes I chose safety over adventure, chose the known over the unknown. Michael shows in his journey that at the end of every path is a different form of the same shaman. He shows that all paths lead to a spiritual connection with one’s destiny and with one’s [sic] wiser self, but he does not venture down any of these paths. Michael demonstrates with his shadowgraph that his soul is so much larger than his body can contain.

b. The journey of the human soul

In seeking a satisfying meaning from this process, I have found that the strongest resonance in viewing these experiences is as a journey of the soul. Soul has many guises. It is in this spirit that I continue. Carl Jung in his memoirs reflected that, despite his remarkable scholarship, he remained incontrovertibly aligned to the fact that his experiences were all he knew; they were what determined him. Soul, when allowed its expression, is what determines us.

Thomas Berry (1988) comments that no community can exist without a unifying story. Our community of neoshamanic practitioners were united in our quest for soul reclamation. The roots of neoshamanism are earthed in this practice. This is in essence the driving motivation of all the participants; it is what brought us together and kept us going. The participants and I believed that our souls had been
compromised in our early development, that we had deviated from our soul’s expressive destiny. Our families and culture had impacted upon us, and we had contracted into accommodating shadows of who we ‘really’ were.

It was this turbulence of soul that flowed through these stories. When I look back on them, they all carry a sense of being swept along. Examples of this process appear numerous times when soul is given reign. In my own story, this is illustrated in the experience of an agony embraced and liberty following. A baffling cathartic liberation is taking place, and keeps taking place. It is a messy situation, but a natural occurrence when allowed to be. It has its own life and expression; the body becomes the vehicle of expression. This is exemplified in Michael’s rage, and later in his dancing. And again with Ewa and her paint/draw or be incapacitated.

Soulful expression with its own rationality is liberating. Rationality takes on a core nucleus of meaning derived by and through the experience and its resonant knowing. Bill Plotkin comments: ‘To encounter the soul is to discover the mystical image you were born with, which reveals the path to your greatest personal fulfilment as well as the essence of your true service to society’ (Plotkin 2005, p. 45). Plotkin states that soul encounter is a life-shifting experience. Your soul is your true self, those qualities that most deeply define and express who you are and the unique gift that you were born to bring to the world, a world so much in need of the socially transforming contributions of initiated, actively engaged adults.

When interpreted through the lens of neoshamanism being a soul journey with shadow-beings as guides, all our experiences and our images make sense. The images and experiences need to be understood on their own terms, not imposed upon by theoretical abstractions. It is then that they reveal themselves; they are not revealed by me or anyone else. Meaning-making evolves through the actuality of the phenomenon. The knowing emerges from a place of rightness; it makes itself known through an experience of interior satisfaction and emotional contentedness. Soulful knowing permeates outwardly and makes itself known in a totality of being right at that moment of its emanation. In this way, there is something in sync between creative expression and soul. This relationship inevitably unsettles the status quo and creates a new identity; the new identity emerges out of holding the tension of the known and the unknown. This is the soulful equivalent of what Thomas Berry terms – in reference to the relationship between earth and humanity:
The tenuous balance between collapse and explosion that contains the larger mystery of functional cosmology which provides our most profound understanding of our human situation, even if it does not bring it within reach of our rational processes (1988, p. 84).

I felt this soulful knowing in my supervisor’s office when he said that he would have to let go. A wave of emotion accompanied this liberation and I became quite teary. The shadow I had carried was liberated. The compromise of acceptance in the eyes of others was no longer tenable and the marvellous freedom of integration was lubricated with tears of freedom gained. Ewa experienced something similar: when she returned to her sensual shadowgraph and was possessed by her shadow critic, she became fraught and conflicted. So too did Michael in our last weekend workshop.

The meaning is in the narratives, and the narratives are in the images. In the shadowgraphs lay what Kremer (1988) terms ‘tales of power’. Our journeys are ventures into realms of expansion, realms where the soul expresses itself, where it yearns for acceptance. Every image bespeaks of power. Power embraced or power rejected – these choices presented time and time again.

The imaginal realms are complex, their expression is often metaphoric, symbolic, allegorical. They dance between a number of different perspectives; it is as though these images intentionally confront and confound the ego. At various times, the imaginal realms probe, stretch and break the bonds of a limited self-centred ego. This is the imaginal realm’s objective: soulful reconnection and integration is its purpose. It is when this imaginal stretch becomes too taught that shadows begin whispering, shouting and screaming to abandon the process. At these times, doubts became rampant, and insecurities mounted. One can witness this with Ewa, Michael and myself.

In reviewing my writings and images, I have discerned quite distinct differences between when I read or view the images and when I review the emotional and psychic life that brought them into being. They look and feel distinctly different from each other, as though they were spawned and born from different worlds. These differences have become central to the core of this thesis. My thesis points in the direction of one’s soul having a subjective resonance that, when expressed, is satisfying and fulfilling. We see this in Peter’s work with the owl’s eyes, Ewa’s work with her original images, Bronwyn’s immense satisfaction with her completed
shadowgraph, and my satisfaction at the completion of many of my smaller works. This, at times, is opposed by the ego-self that adaptively preserves the conventional persona; for instance, when Ewa, Michael and my own severe, judgmental critic decry our imagistic expressions. When soul is distorted, adaptive images of oneself become one's identity. Soul survives surrounded by repressive shadows. The imagistic entities called forth in neoshamanic practice – the journey – are intent upon healing this rift of being. These imagistic shadow beings, when reclaimed into our being, lubricate our spiritual capacity for compassion, self-love. That is why the pain is so great when refusing their invitation (Ewa Michael, myself). The pain is also paradoxically great at other times when accepting their invitation. Joy and grief were not so far apart, and there was no way of knowing which one would come visiting.

Capturing the flavour and essence of these experiences throughout the text was always going to be a difficult task, given the richness they deserve. I have wanted the readers to have a sensate bodily and imaginal experience while immersed within the storytelling of this thesis, and accede their hearts and minds to the flow of the narrative. I have wanted the reader to enter the plastic and elastic time and space that Peter commented upon.

c. Working with images

In interviews with Ewa, she related that between workshops she had experienced a crippling pain-wracked body, and had become immobilised and bedridden. She had allowed herself to immerse into her experience, and received an intuitive message to paint a certain tree. When she completed the painting, she became free from pain. She later stopped painting, and the pain returned. At our second interview, she showed me numerous paintings of pumpkin leaves, and told me she was besotted with her painting of these simple leaves. She had previously painted to receive acclaim for her technique and virtuosity. Ewa’s need to produce art for critical acclaim is absent from these simple pictures. She was inner-driven, she is soul-driven. She had accepted an invitation to connect with something beyond her egocentric mind, and it freed her from pain.

Michael was another who knew that he had strayed from the essence of his soul work. His comment in the last session of the workshops, that he felt that his work had become mechanical and lacked life. I could not stand this interpretation, and bowing to peer pressure, he re-storied his interpretation to meet the group's demands that he view his shadowgraph in a positive light. But he knew it wasn't
right; it didn’t resonate. He, like Ewa, had felt the resonance, so he knew when it wasn’t there.

To know that soulful expression is difficult to embrace does not lessen its influence. The tendency to abandon the soul is acculturated, and is extremely difficult to dislodge.

I expressed something similar in my shadowgraph. When I first produced it, I cringed at its vulnerability – or the vulnerability I bore – but the soul is not vulnerable; it is impervious to criticism, but the infant’s developing personality is not; nor is the adaptive adult personality. The disquiet I felt was my egoic censoring: my dominating persona did not like or even accept what I had exposed; the shadowgraph revealed a vulnerable core that it had the duty to protect. My persona had a vested interest in obscuring or hiding the very thing that gave it a reason for being. My soul, in contrast, had a vested interest in being liberated.

The soul does not so much breathe life as express it, make it into an undeniable experience. Michael exemplifies this in his encounter with the spirit of dance, and being danced. Peter experiences his soul when he becomes consumed by his shadowgraph and the application of crayons; he merges into another place, one not occupied by his intellectual prohibitions. Peter also realises early, when he first arrives, that he is in the right place, for he recognises the grounded metaphor of the arrival at the same time of a currawong – a bird of black and white. This is soulful knowing, a recognising of living in a metaphorical world and being affirmed by its special knowledge.

Metaphor is one language of the soul’s journey. All neoshamans are artists, in that they make the internal/subjective experience visible. We can see this in Ewa’s garden. She transforms it from a wasteland into a staggeringly beautiful oasis where stray birds come to visit. She attempts to make a stunningly beautiful cage for the wild bird, and fails. This is metaphor for other artistic expression. It demonstrates that the world will keep responding to the ailments of soul, attempting time and time again to make itself known. Soul is always seeking a relationship. We may, as Hillman suggests, need to acknowledge a world soul much in keeping with indigenous teachings such as those of Malidoma Some.
Kaye, in her initial interview, mentions her determination to become soulful; she says to do so is to become authentic. She wants to connect with all her ways of experience, and sees her inner child as her pathway to a more soulful connection. The soul is there for her lifetime; she wants to get to know it, and must become as a child to do so. Ewa and, to a lesser extent, Michael both reveal this childlike propensity; they seek (at times) to be validated from without as though their soulful expression needs to be recognised and valued, and mirrored back.

There are other times when they experience congruency in a transpersonal way – that is beyond their personality – and the connection is so strong that it is irrefutable, and the ego can integrate it without question. Bronwyn displays this quality in her acceptance of her shadowgraph. It has been a difficult journey for her, although she has consistently stayed true to her imaginative world. Hers has been a soulful journey, one of uncomfortable and quizzical inquiry. We get the sense of relief and satisfaction she expresses when she sees her soul guide Elizabeth in her full expression. It has also been a time, throughout this process, when Bronwyn has faced great discomfort in her personal, most intimate relationship with her partner. Parallel with her acceptance of her great and noble Elizabeth has been the estrangement from her partner.

The pathway of soul is not an easy or comfortable one, and its turns are labyrinthine and frequently surprising. Lisa tells of her surprise when, upon a journey, she meets up with an aged shaman who indicates to her that a relationship with a man is at hand. She is flabbergasted, as she has sworn off men until she ‘gets her act together’; the shaman is, in his Coyote way, telling her that she has ‘got her act together’. I bumped into Lisa six months after our last weekend, and, sure enough, she was with her man-friend, a masculine fireman. I see here a metaphor, as firemen extinguish dangerous wildfires by the use of water. Lisa has said that she had an abundance of energy, and had been concerned with its misuse through her wild and untamed emotions.

Peter demonstrates that, as puzzling as the journey might be, given its metaphorical nature, it reveals layers of meaning when engaged with in an open manner. He enters into his first journey with an understanding that objectivity may be impossible; he is concerned that he may force things to occur.
The images and entities met in SSC are, by their ambiguous nature, intended to baffle rationality. They are poetic, and their resonance assists in their integration. They are at times discounted or altered because they upset the status quo. They disrupt in order to dislodge the compromised personality from its throne of mediocrity. The images of soul intend to deepen and fulfill the soul’s mission of maturation within the emotional earthed body and spiritual connectiveness. Many traditional shamans undertook to do this work on their communities’ behalf. All the participants, including myself, were similarly motivated. We all knew we were detached from living life in a meaningful enough way. We also knew and ‘proved’ that, through the shamanic journey, we were able to enter into the poetic aspect of ourselves.

d. Guidance from recent dreams

Calling for advice from the guides and steerage through the limiting ego/mind, calling forth the images onto the page, has lead me into very unfamiliar territory, and so it should be. I chronicle some of the themes that circle my dream world as I write this chapter and show the passage of soul to consciousness.

10 January 2005:

A baby is absolutely furious with a rage of immense intensity its face contorted and reddened. Screams beyond words, beyond tears. It is a torrent of undiminished intensity.

7 February 2005:

I stand upon our back veranda and see a baby lamb walk in front of the veranda. It walks up towards the house and after Vicki enters the house leaving the door somewhat ajar the sheep walks across its entrance way. I yell out to Vicki to close the door as there is a small lamb wandering about.

14 March 2005:

I hold a small baby in my hands looking into its eyes. It is a beautiful child with blond wispy hair sticking up from the top of its head. He is very happy and delighted to be with me.

15 March 2005:

A small baby perhaps two and a half years of age is with me. The baby is contented.

19 March 2005:

I stand and watch a new born baby come into the world. I hold it aloft, head up. The baby is still covered in the streaks of blood and mucus from its mother. I stand close and look in appreciative awe at this new life.
The metaphor of the baby covers at least four major areas in my life. The journey of soul into egoic-consciousness; my thesis; my newly acquired position as a Community Worker; my relationship with my partner, Vicki. The economy of the soul image is remarkable. The soul image is not to be taken literally. I was not about to literally have a child.

The place of darkness, of deep shadow, is excruciating for all concerned; it is like being in a dark and foreboding forest or, worse, realising that you have awoken in a forest where all previous familiar landmarks have been removed and the only certainty is a dread of obliteration; or, for some, it is a certainty that what you are, what you have created, is not just without merit but is without meaning – at least in the terms of ego/self; all that has been sustaining you, all the voices of encouragement, are silent, and voices that have whispered and undermined come trampling into consciousness. In a group, it means the whole group is involved to move you out of this place of purgatory, but to do so aborts a process that ultimately is liberating. The huge, muscled dream men are archetypal forces, and, as such, are indestructible.

When I began this project, I had frequent dreams of being chased by a well-muscled man who, despite all my efforts and brutal violence to him, would not be stopped. He did not attempt to harm me, but I did everything to harm him. As the research project developed, another equally indestructible man appeared, and these two would fight it out, using increasingly violent means to destroy each other. Neither could win, no matter what the other was subjected to. These dreams continued until one of the men ran from the other and, in order to escape, hurled a baby at his pursuer. The baby crashed headfirst into a doorway. This new life (baby) was intervening in the titanic and interminable struggle. The dream suggests that what is needed is not to expect one force to overcome the other by physical might, but rather that new life will alter the dynamic between seemingly irreconcilable forces. There is also the clue that a baby coming into existence while these two tremendous beings are grappling with each other is in danger of being hurled into the entranceway between them.

Following the suggestion of Jung that same-sex entities in dreams are shadow beings – that is, repressed energies – these are most encouraging dreams, even though, upon awakening from them, I was emotionally disturbed and fearful. When viewed in hindsight, they indicate that I have, in my unconscious, forces or beings beyond destruction. They also indicate that these forces, at this time, were very
primitive and not well developed intellectually; they act on blind and brutal instinct. The baby being hurled headfirst into a doorway perhaps indicates that this split occurred very early in my development.

A significant difference from the neoshamanic journey is that the sleep-dream is not entered into with an intentional purpose. I have been shanghaied by soulful forces into foreign territory for reasons known only by the spirits themselves. When this is conceptualised within progressive and intentional spirituality, then a similar hypothesis is formed. Dreams are landscapes of soul reclamation. To record these shadowgraphs in some waking form is to honour them, and to render them accessible to soul making, and not to the building of egoic control (Hillman, 1992).

If this speculation is taken into the waking world where, as many say, we are still asleep and dreaming – meaning that we project our fragmented internal landscape onto the world at large – then soul becomes all there is. The problem with this is that ego relies upon its existence by believing it is separate. When Ewa and Michael spoke of losing meaning in their work, we rallied to find meaning for them. We each scrambled to impose another reality upon one that we saw as threatening our sense of being. It was as if we couldn’t bear to have in our company a depressive voice. It was excruciating, and it is extremely difficult to maintain composure in such circumstances. Neither the group nor I was mature enough to trust our soul process and to guide or ‘hold’ it when we needed it. Nor at that time – and the timing didn’t really allow it – did our spirit guides come to the fore. It was as if in our alienation we were also devoid of trusting our own inner processes and the guidance, which, until these moments of fear, had fared so well.

So often in my own experience, when the turmoil of soul was at its zenith, the anguish was so totally consuming that it wholly enveloped me. It wracked me bodily and convulsed me. It was in those times of emotional and bodily anguish that a sense of meaning needed to be sustained so as to make the journey of soul bearable. This is paradox extremis. One needs to embrace the anguish and trust it to do its liberating work. Its power resides in the acceptance of whatever is happening from the perspective of being immersed within an integrating spiritual process. This is soul work. It is the deepening acceptance of all of the very human emotional and physical frailties, while being sustained by something devoid of attachment.
4. Implications for the theory and practice of neoshamanism

The literature review highlighted and revealed many unresolved and contestable questions of academic interest. The following section will answer those questions, drawing from the experiences of the participants.

a. Motivation

One of the questions I asked myself at the end of the literature review was, ‘What are neoshamans seeking?’ There was a mixture of stated motivations underpinning the neoshamanic practitioner’s engagement. Some (Ewa, Michael, Lisa and myself) sought psychological healing. Ewa spoke about this in her understanding that, early in her life, she had been shamed when she began exploring her sensuality/sexuality. Michael spoke of his early traumas in his family of origin. Lisa believed she had been repressed in her early childhood upbringing, and I had grown up in a family traumatised by my father’s experiences of the Second World War. Neoshamanic practice offered an opportunity to participate in an alternative story, one whereby we actively engage in creating our lives instead of having them defined by our childhood traumas.

Michael’s encounter with ecstasy radically altered his worldview. This was reflected in his altering of his shadowgraph to encompass his experience in a visual form. Michael was expecting a fundamentally psychological encounter, but instead – in this instance (the dancing youth) – experienced a transpersonal/spiritual engagement. Similarly in my first weekend neoshamanic exploration, I had been somewhat blasé about spirits (and would psychologise any internal experience in those terms) until, totally unexpected, I had a numinous experience with a ‘being of light’.

The question then becomes more interesting, as it may be not so much as what neoshamans are seeking, but rather that neoshamans are being sought – a consideration encountered in the literature with reference to traditional shamanic illness eliciting spiritual engagement. My life altered significantly after this illumination – my old lifestyle died. Instead of pursuing self-interest, I became more and more involved in men’s work in the community. Michael, another who was ‘sought out’ by the spirits, altered his life from one of depressive scientific investigation to one whereby he now actively views life through a spiritual lens while working with children. Our alienation from our vital life-force, which is referred to in neoshamanic literature as soul-loss (Harner 1988, Ingerman 1991) was bridged. We
had cognitively set the scene whereby a spirit-soul-self connection became possible, but essentially did not really believe that anything would occur other than of a psychological nature. It was spirit that moved towards us. It was soul that led us through the shadows of ego that made this possible. Fundamentally, neoshamanism provided a means for this to occur. It was an unexpected consequence of seeking a psychological healing. The spirit realm responded in a completely unexpected manner, as though it had lain in wait for our arrival. In a sense, we were spiritually waylaid.

The sub-text is that they realised they were in fact not living their lives as fully as they might. Kaye spoke about a desire to live a more soulful life. The participants viewed neoshamanism as a means of establishing a connection with something larger than themselves, and establishing a spiritual partnership. They are psychic adventurers adapting ancient methods and technologies to ameliorate healing of their souls. The practitioners believed that they had suffered soul loss, and were seeking soul reunion. Soul loss is the basis upon which neoshamanism rests. Sandra Ingerman (1991) comments that soul loss always involves childlike qualities such as wonderment. This childlike wonder was apparent regularly with the participants.

b. Ontology

A key question from the literature was, ‘How are we to comprehend the ontological status of spiritual guides and power animals?’ It is clear from the previous segment that the participants and myself had some deep engagements with ‘other than ego’ images and entities. The literature review foreshadowed a number of possible understandings of how these experiences may be interpreted and/or understood, such as transpersonal, psychological, spiritual and imaginative. Which, if any, of these ways best explains and does justice to the journeys that the participants and myself embarked upon?

Whether these entities were autonomous spirits or dissociated psychological manifestations is in encounters impossible to determine absolutely. Suffice to say that the participants viewed these manifestations as benign, helpful, expansive, surprising and confronting.

What mattered to the participants was that these were methods that worked for them and allowed their self-reverential personas to be sidelined! Michael Harner
comments that this is the essence of shamanism's longevity: it works. It also seems possible that these states of consciousness are available for all. Empirical evidence bears this out. As the participants displayed, their experiences are vivid and convincing. Harner, Wolf, Castaneda and numerous others testify to the life-altering qualities of these experiences, as do Michael Z. and myself from our own research journeys.

Michael's encounter with a dynamic, young, black youth, his intense physical and emotional response, and his intellectual understanding (meaning-making?) that this was transpersonal and spiritual lends itself to ponder the significance of this, not just for Michael, but for humanity. Michael's understanding of this experience in his own terms as an indisputable transpersonal/spiritual encounter is significant. His firsthand experience is of inestimable value. Its importance to him and his eagerness to understand this experience in terms of his contribution to the community cannot be underestimated. First, Michael's experience was not mediated through previous training in neoshamanism. Michael's experience demonstrates that spiritual entity contact through SSCs is life-changing, and is not dependent upon a recognisable spiritual orientation. Second, it demonstrates that lack of experience is not necessarily a barrier to a deep, life-changing SSC encounter. This was his first foray into a SSC.

Michael's encounter and the process that he underwent were qualitatively different to any he had previously experienced. It was validated by both total surprise and wondrous engagement. Michael had previously stated that he was a person who can be seduced by wishful thinking, and was acutely aware of this propensity. He discerned that, in his previous imaginal meandering, he was unearthing shadow images and scenes, and that those scenes were from his personal shadow consciousness or from a collective consciousness. His appreciation of the difference between what had gone before and the black boy dancing were worlds apart.

The participants displayed a profound appreciation and acceptance of their internal imaginal journeys. The presenting images and entities were congruent in terms of their journeying intentions. However, this did not mean that they readily embraced or accepted the presenting imaginal being. They did allow guidance to emerge from SSC.
During the journeys, the seeking of assistance beyond our limited egos was responded to every time, and was verified as authentic – that is, beyond our controlling ego – by the surprising nature of the response. The SSC effectively asks for engagement with entities not conjured up by an arbitrary act of will. This appeared most obviously in Michael’s ‘black boy dancing’ SSC. Jung writes that these occurrences may be called – in deference to Rudolf Otto – numinosum, ‘a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness’. These experiences were of a numinous nature insomuch as they were definitively autonomous in form and function.

c. Significance

Some of the major questions emerging from the literature review had to do with appropriation verses adaptation. Is neoshamanic practice appropriation of indigenous spirituality or not? Or is it partly appropriation, but for a good cause? Or is it a universal phenomenon? Is neoshamanic proliferation another consumerist item derivative of the new age, or does it have deeper significance? Another question that emerged in my reflection was whether or not I was perpetuating what Maureen Roberts called the ‘weekend workshop shaman’ culture by ‘branding’ this research ‘neoshamanic’? The participants had been previously schooled in the practices of neoshamanism, and, as part of that induction, six of them had trained in a Native American lineage. While on journeys in the spirit worlds, Grandfather Stalking Wolf – a deceased Native American Apache – was their spiritual guide. Interestingly enough, while on their journeys, the two who had not trained in this way (Bronwyn and Michael) did not encounter a Native American guide. Because of no-preconception, their journeys were open to whatever beings might appear. This is not to say that preconceptions were always fulfilled. In fact, on many occasions they were not. For instance, Ewa expected to meet up with an aged shamanic guide, and instead met with virile young men. This implies that the journey realms operate independently of expectation and preconception. So, in terms of appropriation, we need to differentiate the actual experiential practice, the internalised impetus that motivates participants, and the discomfort and disquiet of the critics – both indigenous and non-indigenous.

The lived experience of the practitioners exists independently of questions of appropriation. For instance, Michael’s guide in the spiritual/imaginal realms was a dark-skinned youth, and occurred in the midst of a number of older tribal men. His
spiritual guide did not conform to the ‘appropriated’ Native American lineage from which the neoshamanic practice was borrowed. However, what are we to make of the guide who appeared being from a non-Native American exotic culture using a Native American practice? If we take the view that the spirit world cannot be ‘really’ appropriated – except on an egoic level – and the purpose of the journeying practice is to circumvent the ego, then does appropriation within spiritual realms becomes a mute point? Well, yes and no.

We see that, yes, I as the practitioner did establish – at least in part – my credibility upon a Native American ‘selling point’. I was trained by a non-traditional shaman – Tom Brown Jnr. – who in turn was passing on his knowledge gained from a Native American – Stalking Wolf. Stalking Wolf does represent a way of life that has been romanticised and is deemed to be ‘purer’ than our Western culture. However, it is the experience itself, the phenomena laid bare through the journey, that provides the images and/or the experience of psycho-spiritual healing. This appropriation of exotica serves a useful purpose for humanity if it opens its adherents up to guidance beyond the limitations of a compromised Westernised egoic-state. Ward Churchill (1996, p.2), in deriding neoshamanism, may be partly correct when he asserts that ‘white people are so alienated from their own lives and so hungry for some sort of real life that they’ll grasp at any straw to save themselves’. But even his strident criticism must allow for those of us prepared or unprepared for ordeals of a spiritual nature when they manifest.

Neoshamanism certainly offers glimpses of possibility, but does not circumvent the challenges that need to be faced when shadow appears, or when indisputable spiritual entities converse. For Michael and myself, these encounters markedly altered the trajectories of our lives. For myself, this encounter embroiled me in a transformative process that has taken more than seven years to integrate. Even if believing that a quick fix were possible, the lived experience has been something altogether different. If I had known just what I was getting myself into, I doubt very much if I would have agreed to begin. This is not dissimilar to advice given in Indigenous literature outlining shamanism as not being something that people volunteer themselves for, as it can be an ordeal.

This is not to say that I am a shaman, for clearly I am not, nor claim to be, and neither does Michael or any of the other participants. However, it does highlight the opportunism of spiritual entities and the propensity of the soul to intrude upon the
not-so-wary spiritual adventurer. Whether one should qualify one's workshops with a proviso that psycho-spiritual breakdowns are as possible as breakthroughs is beyond the scope of this research. The practitioners who participated in this research project were touched in many ways by the work they undertook. They confronted the colonising practice of alienating and demonising their inner worlds that is rampant in our material culture. Neoshamanism gave each of us in our own way a vehicle to enter into the world of soul, and an opportunity to open a dialogue with what Plotkin (2003, p. 17) calls ‘our essential nature’; that which is beyond our everyday mind.

Ingerman (1991, p. 4) asserts that bringing the child home is:

> Ultimately not very hard. The difficult and exciting work is the partnership between adult and child, with its curiosity and imagination, and allow it to see for us adults and tell us what is true. Then the adult can act on the child’s vision to bring them to fruition and yet use mature discretion in knowing the appropriate timing – the union of complementary modes of existence.

When the experiences of the participants is viewed through Ingerman's lens, an exciting idea emerges. The shadow may be viewed as protective psychic beliefs based upon the early traumatic event that precipitated the soul loss in the first instance. The shadow’s psychic task is to protect the ego’s stability by projecting its emotional disturbances onto people in particular and the world at large.

Neoshamans develop a certain way of being in the environment that adds deeper significance to everyday life – the world becomes enchanted, mystical, mysterious, and psychologically and spiritually significant. It resonates with their soul. Time and again these meaningful coincidences manifested while I wrote this chapter. One example:

> I ponder my writing as I stand on the linoed floor in the kitchen of my house. I turn from the kitchen to face towards the lounge room and see in the carpeted area barely six feet in front of me a fully extended snake. The snake turns its head towards me and stares at my face. I stand stock still and stare back. I’m uncertain whether this snake is poisonous or harmless. We lock eyes for what seems an eternity but is actually a minute or so. It then turns away and glides towards the bookcase directly in front of it. It slides effortlessly into the depths of the books and is lost to sight. The books are coffee table books of the natural world. I phone WIRES the wildlife gatherers and leave a message describing the circumstances and leaving my address and contact details.

The situation aptly describes my writing predicament and also provides a resolution. The snake is my intuitive self. I stand transfixed, neither going towards it or away from it. My preformed and rational knowledge is insufficient for direct action to be taken. The snake then glides into the book repository, seeking shelter. It rests not among them, but in a cavity under them. It improvises. This is what I do when I
relate back to the literature review and the written and visual texts. I go into them and rest beneath them in my own space, incubating the knowledge. The snake and I are components of a nexus of consciousness. We are an interactive waking dream or a waking journey responding to the life situation as if a question had been posed concerning my writing impasse. The snake in the Old Testament brings earthly human self-consciousness to Adam and Eve. The snake or Rainbow Serpent is, in Indigenous culture, the being who creates the rivers, gullies and landscapes of Australia. In some yogic practices, the snake is envisaged residing at the base of the spine, and the bringer of Spiritual energy to consciousness.

d. Development

At the end of the literature review, I posed the questions: ‘May neoshamanic practice be regarded as a developmental spiritual practice rather than a psychological venture? And if so, what are the possible ramifications for societal engagement?’ The neoshamanic experiences were primarily of a psychological nature, and, for the most part, the participants understood them as such. However, a certain caution needs to be exercised when we use the term ‘psychological’. We see with all the participants that at times they understood their experiences in terms of their own personal psychopathology, that is, in terms of their egoic makeup, oppressed by early childhood adaptive patterning. They understood that these patterns of self-belief ruled and limited their lives; they wanted a means of relief from their experience of suffering and alienation. The healing or reconnection they sought was conditioned by being drenched in a Western psychologised mentality. However, it is also a developmental spiritual practice, as it reaches beyond the confines of the known egoic state and illuminates the participants’ relationship with their own soul (Cagan 1998). This occurred frequently throughout the project; the neoshamanic journey proved to be an exciting and unpredictable soulful practice.

Neoshamans may never have an encounter that is irrefutably spiritual – in the numinous sense. Bronwyn and Ewa comment upon this – Bronwyn says that she never had ‘a deep life altering experience like Michael’. Michael’s experience may be viewed as soulful – that is, infused with spirit, but earthed in his biological body – it was intimately connected and earthed, rather than strictly transcendent. Ewa comments that her relationship with her husband Michael has been irreversibly enhanced, as she can now converse with him about some of her own profound transpersonal experiences, and he she feels he can truly empathise with these
experiences, whereas before he would reduce her experiences to his understanding of personal neurosis/psychology.

The participants in this project reported regularly that animals appeared as guides and teachers in their SSCs. In a similar vein, Peter, Ewa, Michael and myself drew knowledge, wisdom, affirmation and confirmation by noticing the behaviour and appearance of animals in our daily life. A reconnection with interior animal totems became established through the journey state, and then aligned itself with wisdom and teaching, being on offer in the waking state. Peter, Ewa, and Lisa all commented upon how they engaged with animals in the waking state as allies and teachers. The animal environment providing guidance to humanity is enhanced. Demonising of nature is lessened.

Peter relates an instance when he arrives at the hall and spies a currawong, and from this deduces that this is the right place for him to be. A term Jung uses to describe meaningful coincidence is ‘synchronicity’. It might be argued that this is an example of what Wilber terms ‘mythic thinking’ – regressive in comparison to rationally developed thought. However, this is not the case, as it is not interpreted by Peter as anything other than an environmental affirmation of his rightness of being in the right place. It is environmental affirmation. Much of contemporary society lacks this fundamental realisation. It signifies to Peter that he is being acknowledged by something outside his immediate control. It is empirical verification of a quintessential truth. Peter is seeing through the imaginal child’s eye and interpreting this through his adult self. The world Peter lives in at this moment is one of both safety and innocence.

The participants on their neoshamanic journeys felt no fear in being confronted by tigers, lions or panthers; in fact, quite the opposite, they felt affirmed and validated. Alternatively, some of the participants felt decidedly uncomfortable when confronted by spirits in human form: they did not trust the motives of their guides. Wilber, in his developmental model of consciousness, suggests that various levels of psychic attainment can be present, but pathologies and self-delusion may still persist to limit and restrict understanding of these psychic states. This is one way of understanding the participants’ reticence to embrace events that are confronting to their accepted levels of understanding while in an SSC.
Joseph Campbell (1991) remarked that, when you take a step towards your spirit, the spirit will take ten steps towards you. When you walk a path that is true to an inner calling, then doors will open to you that you never knew were there. The neoshamanic journey provides substantive evidence that this is correct.

The various environmental responses that the participants received were not confined to their inner journeying state of consciousness. Ewa remarked upon her encounters with birds and their synchronistic appearances. She was able to accept these engagements within the context of manifesting spirit, as life lessons sent from the natural material environment – the creatures and their engagements brought a deeper appreciation of her place in the world at large. She believed it placed her in a much larger and mysterious context. To use a term coined by Plotkin, she moved with them into a more ‘soul centred’ world. (I use the term ‘natural environment’ to highlight and differentiate it from conceptual, abstract and fantasy environments (mental) rather than the material reality.)

e. A deeper calling?

I also wondered whether there was a more profound aspect of the growth of neoshamanism. Is the proliferation of neoshamanism part of a deeper and more encompassing calling of a yet-to-be-comprehended human-spirit communication?

Neoshamanism opens up the possibility of connecting with ‘Immanent love, the hidden steersman who dwells in our midst’ (Underhill 1995, p. 450). There is a mystery entailed as to why one person would encounter such an entity– Why me and not the other participants? Why Michael and not the others? It may be impossible to understand why these ‘gifts of grace’ occurred. However, the techniques of neoshamanism set the scene for spirit to reveal itself in, and for mysterious events to take place. Whether other neoshamanic practitioners have encountered such numinous occurrences is unknown to this researcher. I have not read about such visitations in neoshamanic literature except in terms of dismemberment, death and renewal ordeals (Eliade 1974, 1978; Walsh 1990). My ‘pain and splendour’ (Underhill 1995, p. 448) ordeal came after my spirit encounter, not before, as often reported in the literature on shamanism.

All the participants had responses of various intensity and impact. If neoshamanic encounters are open to all, as claimed by Michael Harner (1988) – and subsequently validated through this research – then guidance in matters of environmental
importance does not have to rely purely upon reason and human-based rational knowledge. The difficulty lies in interpreting these engagements while drenched in our self-interested cultural shadows. The shadowgraphs prove useful in this regard, for they convey in their pictorial form images that display the paradoxes of life – possibility and difficulty, inclusion and omission, restriction and liberation, spiritual and mundane, shadow and soul. They do not portray one simple answer; they challenge us to accept the unacceptable in ourselves, and to heal.

The shadowgraphs reveal that we, as humans – if we allow ourselves – are capable of great compassion and self-love. The love revealed to us is undeniably spiritual, and it came to Michael and myself regardless of our past indiscretions, selfish behaviours or feelings of worthiness. The spiritual encounters challenge us to see human suffering as being embedded within the illusion of identifying with a ‘self’ that is comprehensibly invalid. It asks us to embrace and accept our connection with entities that are capable of unconditional love. Neoshamanism asks us to recognise that we as humans are not spiritually isolated and that our suffering is based upon a false presumption of being separate from spiritual influences. Humanity's self-esteem cannot be but a shadow of itself while ever we believe we are so estranged. Neoshamanic practice provides an opportunity for spirit-initiated contact.

Why this is so is not revealed in this research. However, that it is so was revealed numerous times. Ego-spiritual connection occurred for all participants, as did ego-soul communication. Neoshamanism allows access to imaginal healing realms without the arduous practices of yoga, Buddhism, monasticism or sensory denial.

Deep, exquisite, undeniable experiences during neoshamanic practice are enticing, and when they occur, they are life-altering events. Evelyn Underhill (1995, p. 450) writes:

So too for us the Transcendent life for which we crave is revealed, and our living within it, not on some remote and arid plane of being, in the cunning explanations of philosophy; but in the normal acts of our diurnal experience, suddenly made significant for us. Not in the backwaters of existence, not amongst subtle arguments and occult doctrines, but in those places where the direct and simple life of earth goes on. It is found in the soul of man so long as that soul is alive and growing; it is not found in any sterile place.
5. Revisiting the shadow

The literature review revealed certain characteristics that indicate the presence of shadow and the ways in which it would reveal itself. Did the research bear out the assumptions made in the literature review? Were the image-making methodology and the journaling useful in exploring and revealing shadow’s mysterious manifestations?

The participants and I worked with images in an attempt to elicit shadow stories without censorship. How did this work out? This section will review the participants’ images, and from these deduce whether or not this presents a suitable means of exploring shadow’s ‘wily ways’. I will draw from Bill Plotkin’s (2003) thesis, because he combines depth psychology with an appreciation of the natural environment, the soul and spiritual practice. He does not state he is a shaman; rather that he is an ecotherapist and wilderness guide. His model of soul-image work attracted me with its elegance and resonance.

Neoshamanic journeys at other times may be viewed as allegorical in nature and presentation. The attraction of animals bringing knowledge and wisdom is particularly significant when discussing the shadow. The literature tells us that we all have a shadow, and the nature of the shadow is that it is unconscious – what better messenger than the snake? Guggenbuhl-Craig (1979), Caplan (1999) and Fedorschak (1999) alert us that helping professionals, whether they be psychotherapeutic or spiritual, are as susceptible as anyone else to being hoodwinked by their own shadows. They may have some self-serving unconscious motive behind their relating. All of the participants readily accept animals as trusted allies and teachers. This is not anthropocentrism, but a conscious decision to recognise that they are a part of a natural environment in which they and egoic-humanity are out of kilter (Broomfield, 1997).

Reflecting on the images and their creation, I was struck that the initial shadow outlines of Ewa and Bronwyn were dual images. The instructions I gave were to lie

![Workshop 1: Bronwyn’s shadowgraph](image1)

![Workshop 1: Ewa’s shadowgraph](image2)
upon the paper and have an outline drawn around their bodies. Both Bronwyn and Ewa had two outlines drawn (as did Kath, who departed the research project after the first weekend workshop). What might this mean?

I was also taken by Michael’s creating another outline over and surrounding his first outline in response to his feeling uncomfortable with his original outline, as it depicted a ‘tiny head and puny legs’. Another area of interest for me was my extreme disquiet with my initial ‘foetal’ outline. What could these reactions and responses be revealing? The shadow literature informs us that if something emotionally disturbs us rather than informs us, then shadow has been activated (Bane, Jung, Wilber, Plotkin).

Michael and myself were deeply emotionally affected by our original outlines, and responded by placing a larger, more robust figure to enclose the original one.

Michael overlaid his original figure, while I clearly delineated my second figure standing behind the first.
The literature revealed that shadow is created in the early years of our lives under the duress of societal, cultural and familial oppression of our authentic expressive being. The choice seems to the immature ego one of adapt or be annihilated. Ego formation comes at the expense of soul. Bill Plotkin (2003) provides a useful schema to comprehend this phenomena – he terms this time of egoic development one of forming a sub-personality he calls the ‘Loyal Soldier’ (ibid 103). The Loyal Soldier is a sub-personality, a constellation of behaviour, feelings, and thought within the psyche that functions more or less independently.

The Loyal Soldier is formed in early childhood, and has a mission to develop and maintain strategies to assure our social, psychological and physical survival. Plotkin maintains that each of us has a Loyal Soldier sub-personality, and it is the Loyal Soldier’s job to:

- Make us small, to suppress much of our natural exuberance, emotions, desires, and wildness so that we might be sufficiently acceptable to our parents (and/or other guardians, siblings, teachers, and authority figures (Plotkin 2003, p. 104).

One can see the functioning of the Loyal Soldier in Michael’s shadowgraph in reaction to his internalised damning critic:

> When I originally saw the outline of my body on the paper I was horrified because my head looked too small and my legs looked puny and thin. I’ve a great sense of vulnerability around being stupid not clever having a small head & about having puny arms & legs. It felt really important to me to fill out the legs, to enlarge the gesture to make the head bigger & to express the great energy surging around the inside of me. I want to leap on strong powerful legs, roar, make love & for that energy to expand out from my edges.

Michael’s original diagrammatic outline is subsumed and overlaid by his Loyal Soldier. The Loyal Soldier is activated by ‘a great sense of vulnerability’ he has always had. Michael is conscious of his early life script, but is not yet objective enough to challenge the script from an alternative egoic position. He does, however, realise that the script is not congruent with his journey experience. His exuberant spirit is surging and providing an alternative life possibility he can no longer deny – that he has natural exuberance, emotions, desires, and wildness.

Another manifestation of the Loyal Soldier is useful in understanding Ewa’s turmoil when she returned to her initial openly sensuous shadowgraph. Plotkin writes:

> Common Loyal Soldier survival strategies include harsh self-criticism (to make us the ego – feel unworthy and thus ineligible for actions that might bring further punishment, abandonment, or criticism : (Ibid, p.104).
Ewa, in her first interview, said in response to a question about her understanding of shadow:

R. And what is it about the knife that represents the shadow?
E. The desire to kill.
R. Kill what? Who?
E. (laughs) Kill, um, whoever threatens me. But it also could mean myself. The first thing that comes to mind is new life, killing new life. New born. Killing children. I suppose that is the area I have a big shadow.

Ewa’s Loyal Soldier, true to his role, does just that with her new life, her new form of sensuousness. The Loyal Soldier, believing that her sensuous expression would bring ridicule and danger, encourages her to disguise her sensuous shadowgraph expression with collaged words. When Ewa’s distress intensifies, the wounded child in Ewa (whom the Loyal Soldier is protecting) cuts it up, thereby enacting one of Ewa’s original wounds. Plotkin suggests that this entire internal drama is launched outside our awareness: ‘They often make us feel victimised (Ibid, p. 105)’.

As for myself, when I first perused the embryonic first shadowgraph I felt painfully vulnerable, and felt more pain inconsidering revealing it to others. Others became the externalisation of my inner critic. In a similar vein to Ewa and Michael, I ‘believed’ I would be victimised if I revealed myself as vulnerable. An old myth had me under its spell. I was enacting a past scenario as though it were still happening. Not until the third workshop, after I lay down and had another shadow outline drawn that overlooked the first one, did I experience a sense of relief and protection. The second outline highlights the progressive nature of the shadowgraph, as it reflects an alternative shadow, a very positive upright man that was coming into being. The second outline was a counterpoint to the first vulnerable one: it appears protective. Plotkin suggests that the Loyal Soldier came into being at around the age of two or three, before our egos were developed (Ibid., p. 106). I had included in my collaged shadowgraph a photograph of myself at twenty months of age, an age when I was assaulted by my father for expressing myself emotionally. Plotkin advises that, as we cannot get rid of the Loyal Soldier, so it is advisable to work towards transforming our relationship him/her. In doing this, it helps to have an image formed from your imagination (Ibid., p. 107). The shadowgraph – formed before my reading of Plotkin’s book – bears testimony to the progressive nature of intuitive knowing.
Plotkin’s idea that the Loyal Soldier emerges at two or three years of age is useful. However, we also have in the shadowgraphs the original foetal positions of Kaye and myself, suggesting an earlier development of this duality. Another indication of earlier soul disconnection and the formation of shadow is in Ewa’s shadowgraph (‘In looking at my two floating, swimming figures I see the FOETUS in the womb’) and the panic she experiences when instructed by me to leave her images and come to lunch. In a subsequent deep visualisation, Ewa’s image was: ‘First I saw the woman’s belly with the nest & then the tree with the nest’. This image indicates that her soul is telling her that she is in a process of gestation pre-birth, and indicates that her healing is pre-verbal in utero.

Plotkin (2003) sheds light on the relationship between the Loyal Soldier and the shadow. Stating that the relationship is self-perpetuating and circuitous, he later says that the Loyal Soldier is the shadow. The Loyal Soldier is the ‘critic’, the ‘oppressor’, the ‘tyrant’, and, perversely, the Loyal Soldier has the best of intentions in enacting these roles. In exploring this proposition, the shadowgraphs visually provide an alternative proposal, in that we have another story emerging. Plotkin (Ibid., p.107) says that the soul ‘cannot make us wake up but it can and does see to it that we project’. The shadowgraphs depict aspects of this waking-up process manifested in a visual form.

We see in the participant dialogues the conflicting myths between their actual experience and their Loyal Soldier’s insistence that what the shadowgraphs reveal is dangerous. These experiences became a protected area patrolled by the Loyal Soldier.

Interestingly enough, the so-called ‘golden shadow’ that Bane (1999), Miller (1989), Jung (1995), and Ruth (1995) speak of comes through in visual form to counteract the Loyal Soldier’s dialogue. We see this in the figure superimposed and encompassing Michael’s original image, in the upper left-hand corner of Kaye’s image, standing behind my first image, and in the footmarks Peter walked around his shadowgraph. Bronwyn’s pairing is not so easy to see, as she did one outline while crouched on the floor and the other one while standing. The impression is one that has the crouched figure watched over by the standing one. In these imagistic portrayals, dire interpretations of the Loyal Soldier are imaginally and creatively counterpointed by an impetus outside of the control of the Loyal Soldier. The golden shadow watches over the vulnerable child, creating a very different visual dynamic.
Bronwyn, while struggling with her shadowgraph, grows to love it and feel proud of it. We alternatively see in Ewa's final shadowgraph that, when the imaginal/spirit guidance is not accepted, the consequences are further fragmentation.
The shadowgraphs provide a stable point for reflection and circumspection, and so, what are we to make of the participants – with the exception of Peter and Michael – paying them scant regard at our last interview? Maybe they had ‘moved on’, as suggested by Kaye, and drew on the imaginal/psychic resources discovered within the workshops. Kaye:

*I was not alone on this physical plane but also not alone in my dream state, not alone in my spiritual awareness so that on this plane I did actually have more available to me. I guess what was re-emphasised to me was that I am not alone.*

However, I think it also reflects the tenacity of the Loyal Soldier.

Plotkin suggests that our Loyal Soldiers believe that dysfunctional relationships are a better choice than the risk of abandonment and emotional annihilation that we experienced as children in our primary relationships. Their existence relies upon this belief. Shadowgraphs graphically expose and reveal our omissions.

Kaye, when asked about her greatest gift from the workshops, said it was provided by Kath, a woman she found difficult to accept. Kaye recognised that Kath provided an opportunity to develop and own an aspect of herself that she found difficult to access. She learnt from the workshops that shadow is opportunity. Kaye began the task of seeking out those she felt awkward around so she could reclaim more of her shadow. She is following her soul path.

Ewa, on the other hand, believed that Kath was a difficult woman, and attempted to enlist me as her Loyal Soldier to protect her from Kath. Ewa also writes about her discomfort with my directing her in our initial workshop:

*Being told what to do all the time became a problem – belly frozen and & hard – When to speak When to move*

**When to answer**

*When to walk & how quickly being constantly controlled*

One may deduce from Ewa’s writing that her Loyal Soldier is being projected onto me. Later again, Ewa writes in reference to the participants choosing partners:

*All the men chose other women – I waited for my partner to come out of the toilet – did she want me? did she like me? she is beautiful – what if she thinks I want her too much – she may not want to be with me – how do I behave to be OK, to be liked by her – freeze in belly – sadness – want to curl up in a ball because I’m ugly – but must keep going – don’t look at her beautiful eyes because they are mesmerising and she may not want me – I will pretend I am cool, not interested at all for fear that she will be revolted by my desire for her.*

Ewa’s internalised Loyal Soldier is influencing her behaviour and, while attempting to stop her from feeling rejected, is attacking her.
The journals and shadowgraphs provide a vivid picture of the internal worlds of the participants, and could provide an ongoing point of reference for future shadow explorations. We see that when the participants returned to their shadowgraphs, they added layer upon layer of complexity and vibrancy. The depth of learning for Peter kept unfolding. There was for us all a sense of a journey commenced and undertaken, recorded and reflected upon. The shadowgraphs provided a vivid reminder of our abundant vibrancy and verve.

6. Directions for further research

Future investigative research into neoshamanism would benefit from the use of multi-perspectival viewpoints. A single perspective, particularly when held rigidly, will yield rigidified results, and this is the antithesis of what the imaginal realms reveal. The literature review from the leading transpersonal theorists is interesting in this respect. They give scant attention to the soul, and enormous discussion and validation to the spirit. Wilber, for instance, in all his extensive writings, barely mentions the soul. Neoshamans, on the other hand, could benefit from these transpersonal theorists, as they provide a schema of comprehending that places experience within a developmental perspective. This would undoubtedly serve the interests of neoshamanic practitioners, who become infused with purifying spiritual ‘energy’ and suffer emotionally and psychologically.

Neoshamanic practitioners, particularly teachers of these powerful methods, would benefit by being informed by the Jungian shadow concept, and developing their training accordingly. Some transpersonal learning groups already undertake shadow training as part of their curriculum; for instance, the IKON Institute in Australia and the Animas Valley Institute in the USA.

Experiential research into the imaginal realms through intentional engagement is an exciting possibility for intrepid researchers. Transpersonal neoshamanic researchers, and in particular those who follow the Wilberian developmental model, would benefit from immersion in the practices that they comment upon. They generally don’t engage in neoshamanic practice, or if they do, their descriptions are couched in terms that distance both themselves and the reader from the actual experience.
Future research should also take seriously the meaning-making endeavours of the practitioners – and allow themselves to be shaped and moulded by an empathic influence. Allowing and inviting the experience to direct and affect oneself is central to my research. Paradoxically, given the pain, the tears, the violent emotional and physical upheavals, this is the greatest gift one can give oneself. This profound and painful opening of my research led me into realms that I had documented, compartmentalised and analysed, but kept my distance from. Future researchers need to be prepared to allow themselves to engage in research as a compassionate endeavour, an enterprise of the intellect, and also an adventure into relinquishing control. It is the greatest gift a researcher can give to the research participants and to themselves, that is, to walk a path of heart. This is the greatest and most surprising finding of my research. Much traditional shamanism is simpatico with this experience, in that control is relinquished, the shaman died unto themselves, and were reborn with a very different orientation and vocation. Research, when viewed from this perspective, acquires a potent immediacy and brings a simpatico exploratory resonance to the fore.

A more generous interpretation by critics of neoshamanism would allow the research to take into account the spiritual dissonance experienced by practitioners as one interpretation of their impetus to engage in shamanic practice. If neoshamans were considered to be on soul journeys – which their actions verify – then research could accommodate alternative means of investigation as well as a variety of critical responses and analysis. As indicated above, researchers who embark upon this research area should allow and describe the impetus that propels them. Why do researchers venture into their various realms of interest? Researchers curious enough to entertain such a question would liberate themselves from creating an answer solely dependent upon theoretical constructs. They would instead interpret their research in terms of humanity's most pressing spiritual questions, and see neoshamanism as one attempt to bring our souls back home.

Soul, as demonstrated numerous times by the research participants, is given meaning through the experience. However, the meaning derived is multi-faceted, and is dependent upon the emotional and psychological state of mind at the time. The same question asked at different times may provide multiple, ambiguous answers. Evidenced throughout this research was that the soul does respond and answers in accord with the practitioner's capacity for acceptance and integration. The practitioner chooses whether to accept or reject the presentation. This is
concordant with my personal experiences of acceptance or rejection of intuitive prompts and/or imaginal engagements.

In order to enter into a research project in a multi-interpretive manner, the researcher needs to be aware that their shadow will limit and mitigate understanding of what he or she experiences. The shadow is part of the soul’s journey, and any investigation of neoshamanism must include a critical reflective process. Images produced from imaginal investigations provide a stable point of reference and reflection.

The difficulty of undertaking such a venture has been highlighted by many shadow commentators in the literature review. The journey of the soul and the journey of the shadow parallel one another. The soulful researcher is no less immune to the vagaries of shadow as any group or paradigm under investigation. It behoves the researcher to develop a compassionate sense of self prior to the project, and also to bear in mind that compassion is a natural consequence of neoshamanic practice – its embrace is full of exquisite pain.

The imaginal realms provide an extensive area for future exploration. Practitioners’ experiences need to lead investigations rather than be placed in subservience to a research agenda, and yet it is impossible to be impartial. The framing of the experience within one’s own dominant paradigm – as the research reveals – is an unavoidable consequence of being human. It is important from a supervisor’s perspective to allow the process space to breathe, and to recognise that, where soul is concerned, there is a mysterious process under way. It is incumbent upon the supervisor to understand that they will be involved on levels beyond their zone of academic accomplishment. Fighting against this understanding impoverishes the possibilities. A more open and soulful approach would allow the conversation to deepen. Soul and spirit have their own resonant field, and academia, whether in the social science field or ‘hard’ sciences, must allow for this to influence their work and findings. Academia, through the means of the neoshamanic journey, could consciously and intentionally be directed by the soul into areas of healing that are otherwise inaccessible or unintelligible.

Image work produced a rich, exploratory means of research engagement. The practice of image-making was very powerful in and by itself. Making images from excursions into SSCs proved to be a liberating, expansive experience, and the images remain as a constant source of experiential engagement for longitudinal
study. Further to this specific enquiry could be a revisitation of the images and further exploration. What new meanings might emerge? Images from the soul resonate on so many levels. I am amazed at many of the images that I produced, and the most powerful of these astound me. The ‘I’ that peers at these images is baffled that I produced their form, colour and shapes. Yet they are an undeniable and unique presence that did not exist before I picked up crayons, paints, or scissors and allowed my body and soul the liberty of expression. They added immeasurably to the ‘I’ I am now.

I see the journeys the participants undertook into the mysterious spirit inhabited realms and the stories they told upon emergence as adding greatly to our culture. In our world of uncertainty and fear, liberating – in creative form – the ever-helpful images of our deeper soulful essence is essential. Knowing that there are enspirited beings offering themselves to assist humanity is essential.

Producing an imagistic artefact that spoke through sensuality in a group created a field of common purpose. Experiential image production and its potential for making meaning out of seemingly intransient situations is fertile ground for further research.

The soul when ignored is plunged back into a shadowy ‘sterile place’ where nothing grows but the feeling of alienation. This place is the counterpart of the Hell of Christian mythology. The experience of Ewa demonstrates the pain that refusal to follow the intuitive internal direction generates. She was plunged into a ‘sterile place’.

Acknowledging that the demons encountered along this path are one’s own shadow manifestations provides test after test of one’s resolve. Our hard-earned sense of egoic-self needs to feel safe enough to allow the psycho/spiritual forces their time and space to influence and direct. It was shown on numerous occasions throughout this research that love and acceptance drive these forces. The emotion-laden shadows that continue to influence and direct many of humanity’s decisions are dangerous distortions. Emotions are our soul’s cleansing agents (Cagan 1998), and yet, paradoxically, uncomfortable emotions when unaccepted as one’s own become the demons seen in others. In the imaginal realms, guides and totems provide support and guidance from uncompromised love.

7. The journey continues
Most of the participants – Michael, Bronwyn, Ewa and Kaye – have not continued to journey or undertake further involvement with their internal guides in any disciplined way. Michael, Peter and Kaye did not pursue a recognisable neoshamanic ‘path’ after completing the workshop series, though Ewa and Lisa did just that.

Ewa has formed a neoshamanic healing circle that meets at her home in her much-loved garden; she has merged her neoshamanic understandings and her psychotherapeutic practice. She works mainly with women and has built up a thriving psychotherapy practice.

Michael sporadically engages in free-movement dance classes. He brings his self-understanding into his pediatrics practice, and also communicates with myself about issues of creativity and authenticity. Although our work lives seem remote, both geographically and professionally, we cross paths nevertheless – ‘synchronistic’, as Jung might say. My work is with men in the community, while Michael’s is with children. We both presented at Domestic Violence conference on the Central Coast. Neither of us was aware the other was attending. It seems that we are now involved in a narrative and subtly influencing each other.

Peter now works in Local Government as a community consultant. He is also deeply involved with Playback Theatre work as a conductor/performer. In both his work areas, he is pivotal in transforming individual stories into a community narrative. At my instigation, the organisation I work for – The Benevolent Society – hired his Playback Company for our end-of-year gathering.

Lisa is self-employed as a psychic healer and martial arts instructor, and is in a settled relationship with a man, her first in more than twelve years. She journeys regularly.

Bronwyn continued her journey, studying with a Christian organisation in Spiritual mediumship. She is enjoying this form of spiritual communion immensely. Kaye continues to raise her three daughters with her husband, and is studying to be a Transpersonal Art Therapist. My partner, Vicki Dean, is her tutor.

They all pursue self-development in one form or another. They know and accept that their way of engaging in the world is not a straight, clear path, devoid of obstacles. They know that they must heal the rifts inside themselves, and the healing is never ending. They also know that they have assistance from the other than human
domains, and this emboldens their journey. They willfully live within the epic undertakings of their soul's journey back home to itself.

I reflect that I have been involved in a reciprocal process. When I commenced this thesis, I entered as someone with something to contribute, and the participants entered believing that they would gain something from our engagement. They have. But it is I who has gained as well. I realise that I am part of a much greater story that continues to unfold. We all have played our roles in each other's healing process. We have been influenced by forces and entities well beyond our capacity to grasp, and hold, and call our own. I understand now that the transpersonal/spiritual story seeks to tell itself, or probably more accurately live, and express itself, through me, while I’m busily trying to tell its story as though it is my story. Come to think of it, it is our story: we seem to have moved into a more reciprocal and respectful relationship.

Wallis (2003, p. 78) writes that, for some neoshamans, ‘their life-transforming experiences empower their world views to the extent that, while they are discordant with the West, it is nevertheless socially integrated – into neoshamanic communities’. The work Michael does in the medical field; Ewa’s formation of a psycho-spiritual healing group utilising neoshamanic techniques; Lisa’s work as a martial arts instructor; Bronwyn’s current studies of Christian mysticism and channelling; Peter’s work in conflict resolution in Local Government; Kaye’s study and training to be a Transpersonal Art Counsellor; and my work with men and social change, are all examples of Wallis’s overview. Together, we form a loose-knit community – one conversant with the language and mystery of soul.
Bibliography


Adair, J. 1990, *Creative Thinking*, Talbot Adair, Surrey


___ 2000, *Dark Night Early Dawn*, State University of New York, Albany


Bachelard, G. 1988, *Air and Dreams*, The Dallas Institute

___ 1994, *Water and Dreams*, The Dallas Institute


Berry, T. 1988, *Creative Energy*, Sierra, San Francisco


Bottomly, B. 1993, *Back Then*, Bill Bottomly, Kulnura


Broomfield, J. 1997, *Other Ways of Knowing*, Inner Traditions, Vermont


Buhner, S. 1999, ‘Do earth based ceremonies belong to natives only?’ *Shaman's Drum*, 51


___ 1999, *Halfway up the Mountain*, Hohm Press, Prescott, Arizona


___ 1975 b), *The Teachings of Don Juan*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria

___ 1976, *Tales of Power*, Ringwood, Victoria


Davis, G. 1992, *Creativity is Forever*, Kendall/Hunt, Iowa

De Mille, 1976, *Castaneda's Journey: The Power of the Allegory*, Santa Barbara, California


Devall, B. 1985, Deep Ecology, Peregrine Smith, Salt Lake City

Devereux, P. 1994, Shamanism and the Mystery Lines, Llewellyn, Minnesota

___ (1995), Re-Visioning the Earth, Fireside, New York

Diamond, I. and Orenstein, G. 1990, Reweaving the World, Sierra Club Books, San Francisco


Doore, G. (ed). 1988, Shaman’s Path, Shambhala, Boston


Drury, N. 1985, Don Juan, Mescalito and Modern Magic, Arkana, 1985

___ 1991, The Visionary Human, Bantam, Sydney

___ 2001, The Shaman’s Quest, Brandl & Schlesinger, Rose Bay

Eagles Wing 2004 Newsletter, eagleswing@shamanism.co.uk

Edinger, 1992, Ego and Archetype, Shambhala, Boston


Elkin, A. P. 1994, Aboriginal Men of High Degree, Inner Traditions, Vermont

Ellis, A. 1989, Anger: How to Live With and Without It, Sunbooks, Melbourne


___ 1993, *The Feminine in Fairy Tales*, Shambhala, Boston

___ 1995 a, *Creation Myths*, Shambhala, Boston

___ 1995, *Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales*, Shambhala, Boston


Frings Keyes, M. 1990, *Emotions and the Enneagram*, Molysdatur, California


2004 a ‘Depression and Soul-Loss’, [www.jrhaule.net](http://www.jrhaule.net)

2004 b ‘Four Stages of Human Evolution’, [www.jrhaule.net](http://www.jrhaule.net)


2000, ‘Shamanic healing: we are not alone’,
[www.shamanism.org/articles/857415539.htm](http://www.shamanism.org/articles/857415539.htm)


1978, ‘Further notes of images’, *Spring*, pp. 152-182
__ 1983, ‘Healing fiction’, Spring, Woodstock

__ 1989, Blue Fire, Routledge, London


__ 1993a, Inter Views, Spring, Dallas Texas

__ 1993b, We’ve Had One Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World’s Getting Worse, HarperSanFrancisco, New York


__ 1996, The Soul’s Code, Random, Sydney

__ 1997, Archetypal Psychology, Spring, Connecticut


Houston, J. 1990, The Search For the Beloved, Tarcher, Los Angeles


Horwitz, J. 2001, ‘All life is connected: the shaman’s journey’, www.users.dircon.co.uk/-snail/SCSS/Articles/All%20Life.htm


Ingerman, S. 1991, Soul Retrieval, HarperSanFrancisco


Jamal, M. 1987, Shape Shifters, Penguin, Victoria


___ 1993, *Owning Your Own Shadow*, HarperSanFrancisco


___ 1984, *Answer to Job*, Ark, Melbourne


1998, *Coming Back to Life*, New Society, Canada


Mowaljarlai, D. and Malnic J. 1993, *Yorro Yorro*, Magabala, Broome


Myers, T. 1999, *The Soul of Creativity*, New World Library, California


Naess A. 1988, ‘The basics of deep ecology’, *Resurgence Undercurrents*, no 126, Jan/Feb, pp. 5-7


___ Interview with Joel Weishaus, www.cddc.vt.edu/host/weishaus/Interv/noel.htm


___ 1989, ‘What has really been learned about shamanism?’ *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, Vol. 21 (1)


Nuttall, J. 2000, ‘The rosarium philosophorum as a universal relational psychology Jung and object relations’, *Psychodynamic Counselling*, Vol. 6 (1) pp. 79-100

O’Connor, P. 1985, *Understanding Jung Understanding Yourself*, Methuen, North Ryde

___ 1986, *Dreams*, Methuen, North Ryde


Plotkin, B. 2003, *Soulcraft*, New World Library, California


Smith, L. T. 1999, *Decolonising Methodologies*, University of Otago Press, Dunedin


Swain T., and Rose D. B., 1988, *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions*, Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Adelaide (AASR), South Australia


___ 2001, *Jung and the New Age*, Brunner-Routledge, Canada


TePaske, B. 1997 ‘Eliade, Jung and Shamanism’ in *Sacred Heritage*, Donald Sander and Steven Wong (eds), Routledge, London, pp. 19-28


Vaughan, F. 1986, *The Inward Arc*, Shambhala, Boston
Walsh, R. 1990, *The Spirit of Shamanism*, J.P. Tarcher, Los Angeles,
Weinhold, B. and Elliott, L. 1979, Transpersonal Communication, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey


Wilber, K. 1981, ‘Reflections of the new age paradigm’, ReVision, pp. 53-74


___ 1995, Sex, Ecology, Evolution, Shambhala, Boston

___ 1998, The Essential Wilber, Shambhala, Boston

___ 2001, A Theory of Everything, Gateway, Dublin


Woodman, M. 1985, The Pregnant Virgin, Inner City Books, Toronto


Zipes, J. 1994, *Fairytale as Myth*, University of Kentucky Press
