"JOURNEY TO THE WELL:"

EXPLORING PERSONAL MEANING THROUGH DRAMA

by

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"JOURNEY TO THE WELL": EXPLORING PERSONAL MEANING THROUGH DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of dramatic enactment as part of personal growth. Drama is seen as a process that embodies the symbolic inner world and explicates the core beliefs or mythology underlying individual life patterns. The study includes an overview of the literature on the development of experiential drama as a pedagogic tool over the past fifty years. Its particular focus is on a workshop in which usually twenty-five to thirty participants engage in a three-day role drama using costume, story and enactment to examine issues of personal and transpersonal meaning. A detailed description is given of the steps through which the participants move in the creation of their individual and group drama and their subsequent insights and connections to past and present life experiences. The conclusions I have reached are that drama, through spontaneous but controlled symbolic enactment, allows for a mythopoetic understanding of participants' lives. Drama overcomes the dualism of body and mind functioning. It leads to an increased self-awareness and a greater sense of wholeness. As the individual enters more fully into an exploration of his or her personal meaning through dramatic enactment, a deepened appreciation and understanding is gained into the universal connectedness of all human life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. TITLE PAGE i
2. APPROVAL PAGE ii
3. ABSTRACT iii
4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv
5. INTRODUCTION 1
    - The Research Study 4
    - The Focus of the Study 6
    - The Structure of the Study 10
6. CHAPTER ONE: THE FIRST STEPS 12
    - Begin at the Beginning: the Importance of Personal History 12
    - The Bodymind 16
    - How "the Journey" Developed: the Influence of Drama-in-Education 19
7. CHAPTER TWO: FINDING A PATH 22
    - A Review of the Literature 23
8. CHAPTER THREE: "THE JOURNEY" AS A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY 44
    - The Nature of the Research 44
    - My Role in the Research 47
    - Consideration of Method 50
9. CHAPTER FOUR: THE JOURNEY 53
    - The Metaphor of Costume 54
    - Building the Campsite 58
    - Stories Around the Campfire 60
    - Building the Individual Dramas 61
    - Returning to the Group Drama 65
    - Moving Through the Journey 67
    - Reaching the Well 70
    - Drawing the Symbols 74
    - The Dance 76
    - The Last Chapter 77
    - The Discussion 79
10. CHAPTER FIVE:THE TRAVELLERS' TALES 83
    - Variations on a Mythic Theme 85
        - *Alone in the Universe* 85
        - *The Exile from Paradise* 87
        - *The Captive Soul* 88
        - *The Wanderer* 90
        - *The Heroic Quest* 91
11. CHAPTER SIX: THE SYMBOLIC JOURNEY 94
12. CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING COMMENTS 100
13. BIBLIOGRAPHY 106

INTRODUCTION

To go to the root of human ontology, its truth, essence, and nature, one must move in the fictional mode and use poetic tools. The unconscious produces dramas, poetic fictions, it is a theater.

James Hillman (1983)

A group of women come together to learn more about the difficulties they experience in their relationships with significant men in their lives. Instead of starting with discussion they are encouraged to follow their intuition and create characters who will amplify and embody their dissatisfactions. There is an almost palpable excitement as they set to the task of choosing costumes, masks, and make-up, encouraging each other with suggestions and laughter. They emerge transformed like figures from a dream, as martyrs, prom queens, dutiful do-gooders, fighters, fragile flowers, to parade before the video camera, talking about the advantages and disadvantages of their chosen roles. Later they turn to the creation of characters which express life-affirming energies long suppressed, and a brilliant cavalcade of provocative, sensuous, vulnerable, powerful, playful, goddess-like entities take the stage. In front of the long mirrors they drink in these unfamiliar images of themselves, witnessing each other with delight and awe, and then before the camera they speak to themselves as their own fairy-godmothers, their own aspects of the great goddess.

Throughout the day there has been little direct talk about relationship patterns, but later as we watch some of the video material, the women articulate their insights. The characters they have spontaneously created, humourous, flamboyant, lovably grand in their self-professed "meannesses" and their

"stucknesses," and inspiring in their beauty and strength, have brought them to a new awareness of the patterns at work in their relationships, which they have not before been able to see. They speak of feeling empowered and enlivened by this theatrical experience, led by it to a greater sense of their own inner wisdom and creativity.

At another group on another occasion a man talks of a recent traumatic experience in which he was fired at during a bank robbery. It was in his line of duty as a policeman. The bullet did not even graze him, he explains. He seems apologetic as he says that although he has debriefed this experience with a counsellor he continues to have difficulty sleeping and is puzzled at his ongoing sense of terror. He agrees to re-enact the event with the group, first as he remembers it occurring, then as a fantasy based on images that come to his mind as he thinks of the actual shooting episode. In the first version he approaches the bank, is shot at, and takes cover. The second version has the quality of a dream. At his direction members of the group, costumed in party clothes, stand in twos and threes miming animated talk and laughter. He enters the scene as though moving underwater, every move made slowly and deliberately, white greasepaint giving a frozen mask-like quality to his face. He circles close to each cluster of people and peers into their faces. But they look through him. He is mute and unseen, an eerily ghost-like observer. Even though he has talked through the scene beforehand, and everyone knows what to expect, there is a growing tension. What is being unfolded has a power and depth of feeling that was absent from the realistic version. These dream-like images make sense to us at a level we cannot explain, drawing us through the

surface to the underbelly of the event. The heartbeat throb of a drum intensifies. There is a growing sense of urgency. Suddenly he pulls out a toy-gun and, one by one shoots each person in the scene. In this climactic moment he remembers a forgotten childhood memory that seems to explain his troubled response to the shooting incident. Afterwards he says he feels shaky, but immensely relieved. Now he understands something that makes sense of his experience.

At an annual four-day workshop on self-awareness and life-meanings, fifty people think up characters and create a play which they present at the New Year's Eve celebration. Amidst shrieks of pretended shock and incredulous laughter, participants cast themselves as the characters they want to play. Our completed cast list includes a mad nun, a St. Bernard dog, a wise child, a transvestite archbishop, assorted villains, ladies of the night, good fairies, airheads, lost souls, and a hero. Waves of hilarity sweep through the group and even the normally sober and serious-minded roll on the floor like gleeful first-graders as between us we hatch a plot that will include them all. Temporarily we are released from our constraining need to conform and be rational. We find ourselves lifted by a surge of uninhibited joy, and uncensored creativity. How good it feels.

While rehearsals take place in the afternoons, mornings are spent discussing the life-related issues and feelings the participants become aware of as they deepen and explore their parts in the play. There is much talk of the missing aspects of humour, play, creativity and the willingness to risk in daily life, and a sharp appreciation of their benefits. People marvel at their enhanced

sense of confidence and willingness to "jump in" once the fear of making mistakes is let go. In this play "Whatever you do, do it big" is the rule. And this applies to missed cues, forgotten lines, premature or tardy exits and entrances. "How can we maintain this energy, this inner permission?" someone wonders. This question sets off another round of personal insights and experiences which lasts through lunch and right up to the next rehearsal.

The Research Question

Can drama lead us back to the source of our own truths and enable us to gain insights into our life patterns? Can dramatic enactment lead us into the realm of the soul, allowing us to emerge knowing more about who we are and why we act the way we do?

The word "drama" from the Greek dran means "to do" or "act," or to "make tangible." According to Hillman (1983), drama provides a form through which the inner, unknown world of the unconscious can reveal itself before our conscious gaze, leading us to a deeper understanding of our essential nature. Whitmont (1982), speaking of ritual as "a deliberate play or enacting," also underlines the value of drama as a channel of communication, not only to others, but "to the other within; to one's own self. It connects with one's inner roots and inherent powers" (p. 242). In other words, drama, like dream, can actively lead us into our mythic imagination (Larsen, 1990) where personal and transpersonal myth connect.

Writing of Jung's development of active imagination, during which interactions take place between an individual and the fantasy images presented by his or her unconscious, Hillman (1983) reminds us that it is through the process of active participation that healing occurs (p. 38) and awareness and integration of previously unidentified aspects of the self are made possible. But what is meant, in this case, by healing? From the Old English hal meaning "whole," "complete," healing is an act of deep connection between levels of the self, and between self and the world. Knowledge is presented from the core of one's being, in mythic form, and through dramatic interaction, I meet this unknown part of myself. I enter the depths of my aloneness and at the same time illuminate my place in the universal play. I experience the paradox of being at once more distinctly myself, and more closely akin to others. As I integrate this experience into my awareness, I feel more complete, more whole, more healthy.

Poet Robert Bly, speaking at the 1990 'Great Mother' Conference where the contribution of creativity to well-being was being explored, said that modern life educates us to live so much in the concrete and psychological realms, that we have almost lost touch with the mythopoetic, "the poetry of the soul." Without this contact we risk becoming unbalanced, cut off from our deeper selves. But we cannot reach our mythopoetic level of existence from a rational-logical stance; we need a metaphoric vehicle to carry us. Drama, like poetry, can serve us well in this regard. Its meaning emerges in the actual context and the fictitious one (Bolton 1979: 128). I take on a role, yet I remain myself. I "lose myself" in a part, yet I know exactly where I am. In the process I discover

feelings and thoughts of which I was unaware. Drama creates a middle ground, and in this "make-believe" world the mythopoetic aspects of our being can be realised.

The purpose of the present study is to explore the particular value of drama as a form which can embody the symbolic inner world and through enactment bring to consciousness a previously unrecognised personal mythology or collection of core beliefs on which each life is structured. Since these myths, although usually hidden from our conscious awareness, have a powerful effect on feelings, thoughts and behaviour, and since we are inevitably "drawn to live out their underlying themes" (Feinstein & Krippner, 1988: 26), a study of ways we can make them accessible seems worthwhile.

The Focus of the Study

In this study I will examine a workshop based on the use of experiental drama as a means for understanding the significance of the patterns at work in our lives. This workshop, called "Journey to the Well," was developed over the last eight years. It was presented nine times each year for groups of twenty to thirty participants of various ages and backgrounds. Their diversity sometimes poetically balanced itself, as was the case in a recent workshop which included a young man with a long criminal awaiting his next court appearance along with a retiring chief of police. For the purposes of this study I will be looking at the responses of the fifty-eight participants who took part in the two workshops held during April 1990.

The metaphorical "Journey to the Well" (also referred to as "The Journey") provides a dramatic group structure within which individual fictional dramas are brought to the surface. From around an imaginary campfire a story is told, a drama revealed, a myth unfurled. These metaphoric enactments, with their power to carry the participants beyond their conscious understanding, are then explored through discussion (Latin: quatere "to shake," dis "apart") and reflection (Latin: reflectere "to bend back" "to turn again"). It is in this threshing out of meaning, and the taking back in of a new or expanded awareness, that a further understanding takes place. "Journey to the Well" creates a doorway into the mythic imagination and drama becomes the mantle which allows us to move through this inner world and interact with its inhabitants. Group discussion and reflection hold the mirror that lets us to see ourselves within our personal myths and trace our connection to the greater myths that contain us all. The rich detail of the individual stories enhances the group's vision of itself. In this process the participants are essentially involved in a study of their lived experience within the drama, which they can then relate to their lived experience in everyday life. I am engaged with them as participant observer, asking the questions which will lead them to deepen their responses.

Consciousness usually holds our attention on the surface of life. We are identified with the demands of our roles - mother, father, wife, husband, teacher, pilot, churchgoer, golfer. Society sets standards as to how such roles are conducted and we feel safe and comfortable in knowing what is expected of us. We may even spend our lives perfecting these roles. But a life lived only on the surface leads inevitably to a state of emptiness and despair and the realization

that such roles are not enough. This hunger for something more originates in the soul. It challenges us to discover the hidden aspects of ourselves that will bring us more fully into life. But our entry into this symbolic world requires us to be open, to surrender what we already "know" for a state of "not knowing." Although sleep carries us easily over this threshhold into dream, when we are awake the conscious mind with its assumptions, logic and ready analysis finds it hard to relinquish control. We need a way to facilitate this journey into the unkown territory of ourselves.

"Journey to the Well" is one such way. The group drama offers a new lifeworld, a place apart, in which the participants create their roles afresh by following their intuitive responses. For most of the participants it is the first time they have experienced this kind of drama, but the love of play is latent in all of us, and as they recapture the pleasure and excitment of childhood make-believe, they are compelled to take part. I function in many capacities during the workshop, initially acting as a guide into the drama. My transformation from workshop leader into "Old Sara" is quickly and simply achieved. As I pull my shawl around me and warm my hands at the campfire, others will join me, adding their belief to mine until the circle is complete. Looking at the wondrously and strangely attired travellers who now sit quietly gazing into the fire, what we see confirms what we feel. A change has taken place, a new reality has been brought vividly into being.

The workshop then moves through a series of steps which lead the participants more deeply into a symbolic expression of their personal mythology. At all points the intuitive response is honoured as an expression of authenticity.

We follow body consciousness in choosing the costume, letting the eyes select whatever appeals without reference to what makes sense. Later, we are surprised when we discover the meaningfulness of what we have assembled.

My task is then to call forth each person's story through the questions I ask from within the drama. Following this I move to the position of co-director when, through the process of further questioning, I help the participants to fan out their stories into fully developed scenes which are enacted and witnessed by the group. In the choosing of costumes the body leads the way; in the storying process speech is the medium; in the dramatic scenes there is the felt satisfaction of having body, mind and feelings engaged while a part of the self stands aside and observes. From this place we can meet our darkest monsters or challenge the gods, and we will not be swept away.

In the lifeworld of the drama we feel ourselves to be in an altered state, further away from our roles in the world, but closer to who we really are. Discussion and analysis are saved for later when we have stepped out of the drama, and brought with us into the daylight of consciousness a wealth of symbolic imagery and deeply felt experiences. "The Journey" elicits the truths we were not aware of containing. It shows us something of our transformation powers - of transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary, the known into the unknown, and the unknown into the known.

During the discussion time after the drama, my function is again to become the questioner, prompting individual and group exploration into the meaning of what has taken place. Through these reflections, my own

observations and participants' written responses, I have generated a narrative portrayal of the important features of this lived experience.

The Structure of the Study

This study takes the following form. In Chapter One, called The First Steps, I look in greater detail at how "the Journey" developed and make connections between the dramatic storyline of the workshop and incidents in my own life. Here I pose the question of whether our early life experiences shape the myths we go on to live out unconsciously as truths. I explore the particular value of drama as a form which allows the embodiment of these myths and discuss the growing interest in the bodymind as a bridge between conscious and unconscious processes. Although "the Journey" is designed as a process of self-discovery-through-drama for adult participants, my interest in this work has branched off from my earlier exposure to the pedagogical concepts of drama-in-education. Therefore a review of the literature in this field is offered in Chapter Two, entitled Finding a Path. While this is intended to give a brief overview of the developments in educational drama over the past fifty years, particular focus is given to Heathcote's drama-in-role. In Chapter Three, entitled The Journey as a Phenomenological Study, I address the nature of the research, my role in it as participant-observer, and the particular method used in my study. This is followed by "The Journey" in Progress in Chapter Four. My intention at this point is to take the reader through the process of this workshop. In doing so I want to ask the questions: how does the workshop become a doorway to the mythic imagination? How does the process of this particular group drama

invoke the personal myth and provide a vessel within which it can be contained? In Chapter Five, called The Travellers' Tales, essential features of these dramas are presented. A number of dramas are described and examples given of the discussion and reflection through which the participants review their dramas and relate them to actual life experience. Finally in Chapter Six, called The Symbolic Journey, the general structure of these enactments is described. Here I suggest the larger myth common to all the dramas.

Proceeding in this narrative way I want to give the reader a feel for the dramatic workshop in question, and also to convey a sense of the depth and vitality which this kind of dramatic enactment has to contribute in the area of self-understanding.

CHAPTER ONE

The First Steps

Life leads the thoughtful man on a path of many windings.

I Ching

As I think about the creation of "the Journey" and how I came to be interested in the topic of this study, I find myself wondering where to make a beginning. In retracing my footsteps, each event seems inextricably linked to another, the past impinging on the present and personal history playing an important part in the formation of current ideas. This being so, in the following pages I will outline aspects of my personal journey which have contributed to the development of "Journey to the Well."

Begin at the Beginning: The Importance of Personal History

I was born into a situation of high drama: to an unmarried young Irish woman, alone in London, at the outbreak of World War II. A few months into my life I was evacuated to Wales, where I was taken in and cared for until I was six years old, at which point I was reclaimed by my mother. Since this was the era of "children should be seen and not heard," it was expected that I would accept whatever changes came my way and not ask for, nor need, explanations. I learned to watch and listen for clues that would help me make sense of the world. I substituted knowledge about my own past with a fascination for other people's stories and secretly mourned the loss of my Welsh home well into my adult years.

I mention this episode in my life because many of its elements are echoed in "Journey to the Well" - dramatic tension, stories about origins, and a search for meaning through metaphor, all revolving around a central motif of departure from the homeland (although when I created this workshop these thoughts were not in my conscious awareness). This illustrates my belief that the experiences of our early childhood create patterns, or personal myths, which colour and shape the rest of our lives. We can either recognize them and integrate them into our conscious world, or allow them to lead us protesting again and again to the same prickly impasse.

Alice Miller (1981) gives an example of the way the roots of a whole life are "hidden and entwined in its childhood." She refers to the sculptor Henry Moore, who

> describes in his memoirs how, as a small boy, he massaged his mother's back with an oil to soothe her rheumatism. Reading this suddenly threw light for me on Moore's sculptures: the great, reclining women with the tiny heads - I now could see in them the mother through the small boy's eyes, with the head high above, in diminishing perspective, and the back close before him and enormously enlarged...for me it demonstrates how strongly a child's experiences may endure in his unconscious and what possibilities of expression they may awaken in the adult who is free to give them reign (p. 4).

Jung recognized the unconscious to be both collective and personal, each universally manifested archetypal energy or instinctive pattern encased by a shell "largely shaped by childhood events, childhood traumas, difficulties and repressions [which] can always be reductively traced to one's personal past" (Whitmont, 1969: 66) and known as a complex. Complexes reveal themselves in an individual as affect-charged, driven responses to beings, objects, or events in

the world around. Complexes deny us the freedom of choice. Unknowingly possessed by them, we find ourselves behaving in ways we have consciously tried to change, repeatedly overwhelmed by the shyness, rage or grandiosity that we have vowed to conquer. On a larger scale we may find ourselves sabotaging our potential success, or following a life-style which we recognize as unfulfilling. But these very impasses are the places where transformation can occur if we take up the challenge at the symbolic heart of the situation. What has failed to make sense when viewed from a logical, rational approach may, when the symbolic content is understood, point very clearly to unheeded yearnings and the next step in "the symbolic quest" (Whitmont 1969). Jungians tell us that the challenge of life is to consciously participate in the individuation process by seeking out the middle road between the two poles of ego and Self, creating a condition which allows us to consciously realize and integrate all the possibilities of our individual potential. This takes place in two stages, firstly we must crystallise the ego turning our attention out towards the world, and in the second stage of life we turn inward to the self, bringing our unconscious wisdom into life (Jacobi, 1965). Joseph Campbell (1973), speaks in the same vein of the recurring mythic theme of "the hero's adventure," in which the individuals must go out into the world to overcome many obstacles before they can return triumphantly to recognition in their own kingdoms. Just as the fairy-tale hero braves the ogre in his den and solves the witch's riddles to break her spell, so must we encounter our unconscious and release ourselves from the patterns which hold power over us.

The past merges into the present leaving clues that, provided we have eyes to see them can help us on this quest. For instance, psychotherapist Alexander Lowen looks at the language of the body and reads the individual's history from infancy (Lowen, 1976: 57). In process-oriented psychology, developed by Arnold Mindell (1985; 1990), a vivid childhood dream or memory is believed to contain a key personal myth which continually seeks expression throughout the individual's lifetime. Process-oriented therapists use this early memory to illuminate the individual's present experiences. The Integrative Body Psychotherapy approach of Jack Rosenberg (1985) looks at the individual as a constellation of energy in which blocks resulting from childhood trauma are held in the body as muscular and emotional patterns. Breathing and bodywork is used to release the physical defense and enable the client to "relive" and "break the spell of the past" (pp. 28-31).

The need to break such a spell is a common motif of fairy-tale as, for example, in story of "Sleeping Beauty." The king and queen thoughtlessly incur the wrath of a powerful fairy through failing to invite her to their beautiful daughter's christening, and many years later the Princess succumbs to the spell laid upon her in her cradle, causing her and all her attendants to fall into a seemingly endless sleep within a castle hidden from the world by a high and thorny hedge. Only through the actions of a valiant Prince, who cuts his way through the thicket to find the sleeping Beauty and fall in love with her, is she and everyone in the castle restored to life. The events which occur to us in childhood can indeed remain unresolved within the unconscious, signalled only by an internal numbness, or lack of feeling, and an intricate set of defenses

against the world. If, like the prince, we have the curiousity and courage to cut through these thorny defences we may find ourselves reconnected to forgotten aspects of ourselves, and able to reclaim another piece of our story.

In the field of education the life-story is gaining new attention as research data. Richard Butt and his colleagues (Butt, Raymond & Yamagashi, 1988), study the formation of teachers' knowledge and find that autobiography is "both the means to understanding a teacher's knowledge" and "[the] symbolization of that knowledge and how it was formed" (p. 21). Both personal and professional experiences influence the individual in his or her role as teacher. In the words of Maxine Greene whom the authors above also cite, "It is important to hold in mind, therefore, that each of us achieved contact with the world from a particular vantage point, in terms of a particular biography. All of this underlies our present perspectives and affects the way we look at things and talk about things and structure our realities" (Greene 1978, 2). Butt and his colleagues recognize that we cannot separate ourselves from our stories. They are in fact a source of potential richness which we bring with us into our work. As such they have a valuable place in our field of studies.

The Bodymind

"In my beginning is my end...In my end is my beginning" (Eliot, 1976: 57). Eliot captures in these few words the way early childhood experiences set patterns which may shape our thoughts and actions throughout life. These patterns or personal myths operate for the most part at an unconscious level. But in order to know ourselves, we need to know our myths. Moreover, through

recognition and acknowledgement of our basic myths or patterns, we gain in self-understanding and open up the possibility for change; from this position we are able to achieve authenticity in our individual lives and find connection to the world around us. In other words, human beings are story-makers. The themes are familiar and archetypal but the way we live the story is unique to each one of us, weaving itself in our unconscious and expressing itself through our images and actions. If I listen and watch I may learn who I am as my story unfolds through me. It will speak to me of where I have been, where I am and where I am going.

The belief that personal history can and should be ignored in the process of professional development is a reflection of the idea that the mind can be split from the body. From childhood we are taught the importance of the mind while the body is considered more as the vehicle which gets us from place to place. We are admonished to use our brains, heads, grey matter. We are asked to "think before we act," which effectively shows how well we have succeeded in dividing what was once joined (cogitate, meaning not merely to think, but to think about deeply, and act come from the same Latin root agitere meaning drive).

There is, however, a growing awareness of the inter-relatedness of the body and the mind. The body now often receives primary focus as a reflection of one's life history, present state of being, and potential for growth. Dychtwald (1977) talks of the bodymind. Mindell uses the term "dreambody" for the ongoing process of self-revelation that is not consciously identified with but

which can be read through observation and amplification of body movements and sensations.

Body feeling or proprioception, visualization, hearing and movement or kinesthesis are identified as important communication channels that enable us to make connections between our unconscious and conscious worlds. For example, after several uninterrupted hours of work at my computer I notice that I am jiggling my foot. Instead of stopping the motion or ignoring it, I make it more pronounced. Now my whole leg follows the foot in a rhythymic motion that reminds me of running. I am aware that the rest of my body wants to join in and so I decide to take a break and go for a run. While running, many of the ideas I had been wrestling with during my morning at the computer effortlessly come together in a coherent pattern and I return to work refreshed and with a better sense of what I want to say.

The artificial mind-body split which has contributed to alienation not only within the individual, but on all levels of society, needs to be addressed. Whitmont (1982), urges us to pay attention to the wisdom of the "body ego," by which he means the wisdom which emerges when the body is allowed to lead the way. Body-enactment participation leads to a direct knowing rather than a knowing about. When I allow my body, feelings and mind to be engaged in an experience I have a sense of knowing which is quite different from simply reading or hearing about the same experience. The goal of learning through "direct knowing" is also the cornerstone of drama-in-education, as exemplified in the internationally recognized work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton,

whose teaching methods will be outlined in chapter two, and from which source "Journey to the Well" has developed.

Whitmont finds that the essential elements of drama and ritual have a transformative power and an ability to bridge the mind-body dichotomy, and he offers us a formula ("I saw," "I said," "I did") supposedly used by initiates of the Eleusinic Mysteries. "This formula lays down the ingredients of transformation: image perception and assimilation of form and symbol (I saw); expression by means of word, sacred formula, mantrum, sound, or even deliberate silence, all charged with power, awareness and meaning (I said); solemn enactment (I did)" (p. 244).

The same underlying structure is apparent as one studies "the Journey." Each stage develops out of the previous one: the choice of costume (I saw) influencing the story told around the campfire (I said), which later unfolds into the drama (I did). This progression, guided by intuitive knowing, leads us to a place of inner connection where the conscious mind can be then be invited in to perceive our life-patterns as they are being revealed.

How the "Journey" Developed: the Influence of Drama-in-Education

For many years I worked happily and successfully as a professional stage and radio actress, until I had the experience of stepping into a void, a "mid-life crisis of the spirit" (Stein, 1983: 3). Quite suddenly, or so it now seems, the challenge and excitement that had kept me absorbed was missing. I had lost my sense of meaning. Hermes, the god of journeyers and transition, was

making his presence felt (Kerenyi 1976). As a result I become very much involved in my own personal growth work and began training towards a Diploma of Counselling with Bennet Wong and Jock McKeen at their training centre for humanistic psychology in the area of personal and professional development.

Their programs offered a holistic approach to self-development. The goal was an integration of body, mind, spirit, with emphasis placed on taking responsibility for the self in health, relationships and lifestyle. Many of the techniques presented and practiced during my training, such as Virginia Satir's communication games (Satir 1972), integrated aspects of drama, and I was encouraged to pursue my own ideas for using theatre techniques for self-understanding. This is when I returned to the ideas I had learned about the use of drama-for-understanding during my time as teacher/actor with the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre-in-Education team.

When I look back on the origin of "The Journey," I am surprised at the way it seems to have unfolded. It was orginally developed as a two-hour, drama-based exercise for adults, using improvised drama, movement, fantasy and story-telling. I would take part "in role," following Heathcote's model (Wagner, 1976: 313), so that I could develop the structure from within through questioning. The drama theme took shape, following Heathcote's model of rooting it in the human condition, as I thought about the situation of those of us in the workshop. We were all strangers who had left our homes for a variety of reasons to embark upon a personal quest. We were meeting at a centre devoted to self-exploration where we hoped to find something to enrich our lives. This translated into a symbolic story: a group of travellers, strangers to

each other, who meet at a campsite and spend a few hours under the stars sharing their tales. It emerges that each traveller has been forced to leave his or her homeland. For some reason it was no longer possible to continue living there. Each traveller is seeking, for his or her own reasons, a certain well that might be located in the mountains near the campsite.

It was much later in the developmental stages of "the Journey" that I realised that I had unconsciously woven into this scenario the basic elements of my own early childhood experience. This then lead me to wonder whether autobiographical material might be revealed in each of the dramas created in the workshop. Were they, in effect, personal myths which could be read as life-texts? And if so, how could they be used to contribute to the process of self-understanding? The exploration of these questions has caused the original two-hour exercise to be expanded to a three-day workshop in which participants are engaged in a journey of self-discovery through a phenomenologically reflective process.

Since the strategies of drama-in-education have contributed so much to the structure of "Journey to the Well," a brief history of the development of drama-in-education seems appropriate. This will be covered by a review of the literature in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Finding a Path

We learn through experience and experiencing and nobody teaches anyone anything.

Viola Spolin (1963)

As I begin to trace the development of drama-in-education over the past fifty years, I think back on the uses of drama in my own education in England during the forties and fifties. A number of memories leap to mind like living tableaux. Me, draped in blue, inclining my head at the required angle to cast a beatific smile down at a plaster baby Jesus, while simultaneously rolling my eyes heavenward to our Father which art in Heaven. I had the coveted role of Virgin Mary in our 1948 convent nativity play and knew myself to be the envy of every other girl in the school as I was temporarily beamed upon by an audience of nuns and visiting dignitaries. Still, it was the kind of drama one learned little from except that such moments of personal glory are rare in life.

I see myself also in the primary school where once a week I hopped about happily at the front of the class having spirited conversation with myself as I acted out all the characters in "Wind in the Willows," which was the book we were then reading. Why no one else had a chance to join in, I do not know, but I suspect it was a case of one child doing all the parts being considered by the teacher to be marginally easier on the nerves than the cacophany of a full cast.

Another memory places me in a primary school gymnasium where the girl fairies pranced about on tip-toe to the accompaniment of tinkling notes from the piano, while the boys were rooted to the spot as mushrooms, placed far

enough away from each other to curtail pushing and fighting, and under orders to move only in an upward direction when the "growing" music was played.

Later at grammar school, we learned scenes from Moliere in our French class and performed them for the edification of the lower forms. This was considered an innovative and daring departure from the usual lesson plan, and, as our headmistress pointed out, we girls were fortunate indeed to be the beneficiaries of Mademoiselle's tireless enthusiasm for teaching.

We were less fortunate in English literature class. Here, the teacher whose job it was to engender in us a love (or even a passing knowledge) of the works of Shakespeare had a rigourously minimalist approach to the place of drama in the classroom. Randomly selected to read aloud, we droned our way, at a steady clip, through several of the great plays.

This, then, was the cutting edge of drama-in-education as I was exposed to it in the ten schools I attended during my childhood years, and it is probably representative of the use of drama in most schools at that time.

Review of the Literature

Although my early memories of drama in the schools have a somewhat stilted, comical quality, as with movies from a bygone era, they still reflect the influence of many important pioneers in the history of drama in education. The use of such drama techniques as acting in front of the class to make learning more palatable was pioneered in England at the turn of the century by Harriet Findlay Johnson, who used this strategy across the curricculum. At about the

same time Caldwell Cook developed what he called the "play-way" to teach literature to his students; he later published a book on the subject (Cook 1919). In the 1930's two theatre-trained men, Peter Slade and Brian Way, introduced the concept of "creative" or "child" drama, as distinct from the scripted, theatrical, or "adult" drama which resulted in the annual school play. They wanted to see improvised drama used in the classroom as an activity which would develop the inner resources of the individual child.

In Child Drama (1954) Slade described drama as a natural development from the child's personal and projected play. He described Personal Play as involving the whole person, usually in action, as in a rhythmic skipping game. Projected Play involves the imagination and is characterized by extreme mental absorption, as for example, in "playing house." Slade outlined four developmental stages in movement, language and dramatic play that the child passes through from birth to adolescence and he urged teachers to take an attitude of encouragment towards their students, without seeking to control.

Slade's book now reads like a delightfully quaint Victorian nursery manual. Take, for example, the following quote.

> I would say without hesitation that cleanliness, tidiness, gracefulness, politeness, cheerfulness, confidence, ability to mix, thoughtfulness for others, discrimination, moral discernment, honesty and loyality, ability to lead companions, reliability and a readiness to remain steadfast under difficulties, appear to be the result of correct and prolonged Drama training (p. 125).

Conversely we are warned: "The lad who has had little Drama at school is, quite frankly, in many instances a lout" (p. 124). And he went on to advise teachers "With girls, try to lay a firm foundation of charm, joy, cooperation,

sensible understanding of aesthetic values, and good manners; abolish contentment or satisfaction at being clumsy (p. 153).

Despite these, now dated, attitudes, Peter Slade is acknowledged as a major force in shaping the development of drama as an effective teaching tool and shifting its purpose from performance to personal development.

In the fifties, Alan Garrard braved "the struggle against tradition and prejudice" (Wiles & Garrard, 1957: 11) to bring improvised drama and movement into his work as a drama specialist in London schools and youth clubs. In Leap to Life: An Experiment in Youth Drama (1957), Garrard wrote of the importance of providing a form within which any child can successfully express the self. "Somewhere inside us lies the urge to give, to create, to express; a core of personality unique to each person. In each child there is a fund of emotional energy which must be channelled if that child is to grow up a happy and balanced individual" (p. 33).

Many of the young people Garrard worked with were illiterate, inarticulate and on the verge of delinquency. Hypothesizing that their often violent and aggressive behaviour resulted from a deep frustration at not being able to express themselves effectively in any other way, Garrard introduced them to the experience of movement to music. At first the youngsters learned to move in response to the mood of the music being played. Later they improvised from their own inner visions and created dance dramas using movement and speech. The emphasis remained always on the participant's enjoyment of the activity itself, with performance being a possible but unessential element. Like Slade,

Garrard had as his goal the promotion of personal development in the child. He believed that dance-drama in the schools could lead to an increased sense of confidence, spontaneity and receptivity to learning, and "a willing co-operation which will finally lead it [the child] to a happier acceptance of the world about it [him or her] and the social responsibilites inherent in that world" (p. 32). How radical these ideas still were at the time can be judged from the fact that a Drama Adviser who supports Garrard's work in the introduction of his book "unfortunately, for reasons of her position, must remain anonymous."

Brian Way, writing ten years later, (1967) still emphasized that drama is concerned primarily with the uniqueness of the individual. He devoted a great deal of attention to the development of intuition "through coordination of body, mind, heart and soul" (p. 112), recommending exercises to build concentration and sensory awareness. But he referred also to what he called social drama: "comprehension and understanding of people of every kind as might be studied in history and geography, religious instruction, English literature, science - indeed of any subject" (p. 182). In Development through Drama, Way used improvisation to achieve the "simple, direct experience" as, for example, the experience of working in a coal mine. Working individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a whole class, scenes are created, the action often being halted to hold a discussion through which new questions and new awarenesses can emerge. "What is it really like in a coal mine?" "What sort of light did they use before batteries were invented?" From this point the children re-enter the drama process, and the simple improvisation is "stretched" by the inclusion of added detail or completely new factors.

Way pointed out the importance of "conflict" in transforming the straightforward into the dramatic. This can range from a subtle change in the story from "a man goes to work" to "an angry man goes to work," to the more obvious challenge of a fight or explosion being introduced into the drama. Way, writing specifically to the drama teacher, describes the learning experience that takes place through the development of this kind of improvised drama. From the unconscious early stages where the child goes through the actions as required by the teacher, there is a movement to "full awareness that 'this is me and I am making it happen'" (p. 211), when a sense of autonomy is achieved.

When I compare my mental snapshots influenced by the earlier pioneers in educational drama to those collected during my experience with the Vancouver Playhouse Theatre-in-Education team in the late nineteen-seventies, a significant shift is noticeable. Role-drama emerges as an effective teaching strategy which allows learning to take place on many levels at once, often in quite unpredictable ways. For example, one of our Theatre-in-Education presentations was intended to teach grade school students about the functions of city hall. The drama revolved around an area of land that was wanted by several different interest groups. The children worked in groups as developers, city-planners, concerned citizens, and members of city hall, and as we expected they learned a great deal about the functions of city-hall and were stimulated to go and find out more. But the incident I remember most vividly involved one fifth grader whom we were told would probably not get involved. "Just send him out if he gets too disruptive," his teacher warned us.

Terry was a small, native Indian child who kept his eyes to the ground and did not respond to our approaches. Instead of joining in with the others, he walked around the edges of the gymnasium running his hand across the bars and ignoring everyone. In role, as a newspaper reporter, I was able to walk along with him for a while and ask him if he had any information on "the battles going on over this piece of land." Although he was not verbally responsive he seemed to like being asked for his opinion and, as "a reporter," I could let him know that I thought he probably had a lot to say that I would be interested in hearing. Meanwhile, in another part of the gym, a group was collecting signatures on a petition. I suggested they ask the "gentleman" I had just been talking to, which they did. A short while later a beaming-faced Terry was at my side. "My name's on a petition" he said. "My name's on that."

Terry spent the rest of the session going round to people and letting them know about his achievement. He was enabled, at least for the duration of the drama, to move from the role of "outsider" to a person of value within the class, and thus to enjoy a felt experience of increased self-esteem and connection to others. Indeed each of the forty children in the class engaged with the drama at a personal, meaningful level from which significant learning took place. As Heathcote (1984) has stated, "Role-taking is so flexible in its application in education that it will work for all personalities and under all teaching circumstances" (p. 52).

Dorothy Heathcote is still the most influential leader in the drama-in-education field, although she resists being classified as a drama teacher because, like the earlier pioneer, Harriet Findlay Johnson, she believes in the

fruitfulness of looking at drama across the curriculum. In this regard, Heathcote brought a new direction to drama-in-education. For her, drama is essentially a path to knowledge, a tool that all teachers can use in whatever subject they wish to teach, and with students of all ages and capabilities. She uses drama in the classroom to expand awareness and to create a make-believe world through which the child can look more closely at reality. Whereas Way and Slade emphasised the action, as for example in the coal-mining drama where the children first went through the actions of working at the coal face, then built a scene adding in new things as they learned about them in their discussion period, Heathcote's intention is to have the children find the human meaning inherent in the moment. In building a drama about a ship at sea in the year 1610, she first ensures that the children, when acting as sailors, reflect on what it means to them to be on such a voyage. As they go through the physical motions of pulling up anchor and unfurling the sails, she has them consider all they are leaving and what may be lying ahead.

Heathcote's work has been ably described and analysed by a former student of hers in Dorothy Heathcote - Drama as a Learning Medium (Wagner 1976). "Her power is like that of a medium, bringing into the present the distant in time and space, making it come alive in our consciousness through imagined group experience" (p. 14). Heathcote constantly uses the elements of theatre in her interaction with the class. She is acutely aware of the signalling power of tone of voice, facial expression, body stance and gesture, as well as the exact choice of word. She attunes herself to the mood of incoming students as they first enter the room to meet her. She assesses their movement, the noise level,

the way they position themselves around her, and uses this information to select the approach that she thinks will best work to achieve the learning goals she has determined for the group. In the process of "edging in" (Wagner, 1976: 34-47), she selects her words and gestures to convey an attitude, or what she calls a register. For example, in the "one-who-knows" register, which she seldom selects, she uses her authority as teacher to take control of the group; in the "I-have-no-idea" register, her favourite mode, she offers no answers, allowing herself to wonder and explore along with the class and freeing them to discover their own possibilities. In effect, she is signalling with her whole body and tone of voice for a response from those she is interacting with, just as the actor does from the stage. In this way she is able to "meet" the class where it is and immediately start the process of building belief.

When the drama theme has been agreed upon and the children are engaged in the process, they work in role. They enter into make-believe and play it out as if the experiences were really happening. Heathcote emphasises that the important aspect of being in role is to take on an attitude, not to create a character. Throughout the drama she intervenes to deepen the experience, focus reflection, or introduce dramatic tension.

Heathcote advocates drama as a process for change She wants the participants to be transformed in some way by their experience. At the heart of her approach are three fundamentals which she describes as "the human condition," "distortion," and "form." Her work is grounded in human emotion, she uses analogy and metaphor rather than factual simulation, and there is a definite dramatic structure within which she works. For example, when once

asked to lecture to the staff of an exclusive boys school, Heathcote instead asked for eight of the boys to take the roles of members of a primitive tribe. The boys took up their chosen tasks as boat-builder, fisherman and so on. Heathcote put the teachers in the role of a Royal Commission charged with the task of examining the tribe's concepts of the world, finding ways to teach the tribe about the larger world outside their knowledge, and coming up with proposals for the integration of the tribe into the "civilized world." As the drama proceeded, the tribe members became frustrated with the Commission. And the Commission itself quickly became aware that it didn't know how to "reach" the tribespeople. From this "lived" experience, the staff were in a position to fruitfully explore questions related to student-teacher interactions in their own pedagogical practice (Wagner, 1976: 976-220).

Heathcote talks of the two aspects of any classroom drama: the drama framework as the teacher shapes it to achieve certain goals, and the drama as it is created and experienced by the children. The teacher may act as a director from outside the drama, creating the structure, picking up on the participants interests, questioning to evoke deeper involvement, adding elements of tension. But the same goals can also be achieved from inside the drama by taking on one or more roles. This is called "being in role." The teacher moves in and out of role to clarify, organise, present decisions, or promote reflection on what has been done, as the drama proceeds. In the T.I.E. city hall drama referred to at the beginning of this chapter, I was able to open a discussion with the children about what kind of work took place in a city planning office, and then enter into role as a member of that office conducting a meeting with colleagues. Similarly I

might encourage them to reflect on the desirablity, or otherwise, of publicity to the scheme we were working on, and then take on the role of a reporter.

Other important techniques which Heathcote introduced and which have become the foundations of drama-in-education as it is used by today's teachers include "building belief," "the brotherhood's code," "mantle of the expert," "analogy" and "dropping to the universal."

When "building belief" Heathcote emphasises that everyone involved in the drama, including the teacher, must be willing to accept "the one Big Lie" which is that although we know the drama is a fantasy we agree to participate in it as if it were really happening. From the beginning of the drama, questioning is her most important tool. Heathcote uses questions to seek or supply information, to define, to control, to establish mood, feeling and belief, to deepen insight. Each response is seriously received. Heathcote upgrades the language as she repeats the students' statements and/or writes them on the blackboard. Throughout the drama she stops to reflect on what is happening internally in response to the external structure. She uses movement, the miming of actions, actual props, costumes, photographs, artwork and drawing to help children become personally involved in the drama (Wagner, 1976: 65-67).

Heathcote has given the label of "the brotherhood's code" to her method of finding the common ground between seemingly different material. For example, sitting at my computer at this moment I can identify myself in the following brotherhoods: all those who have to visually focus on something; those who are pursuing an enquiry; those who use their hands to send signals;

those who work at home; the list could go on and on. Following this method, new ideas for drama are inherent in every situation. And the same internal experience can be explored under completely different circumstances. It also means that whatever material the class suggests, for example "pirates," can be deepened into a learning experience through a recognition of the human relationships and challenges it potentially offers for exploration (Wagner, 1976: 45-59).

A further technique, called "mantle of the expert," pertains to the class drama I conducted with fifth-graders in which we were planning a zoo. I called a meeting of "world-famous zoologists" to help in the selection of animals which would best utilize our limited space and budget. Another group of students from the same class took on the role of architects. Their job was to design animal habitats accommodating each species' particular requirements, based on their own research and information gathered in their consultations with the "wildlife specialists." A wide selection of topical books were available in the classroom for reference. The classroom buzzed with intense but focussed activity as "the experts" applied themselves to their work. Later in the drama, tension was introduced when it was revealed that the zoo project might have to be abandoned due to an extended funding requirement for a city housing development. The children were called upon to consider the various implications of the two projects: should it be a zoo or more housing? In pairs, they experienced arguing for both sides of the question. They then chose the project they wanted to support by writing letters and poems and speaking out at a "public forum." When the drama was over energy and interest still ran high

and the students planned to repeat the debate and invite in another class as "the public" to vote on the issues under discussion. As can be gathered from this brief example, donning the "mantle of the expert" leads very naturally to research, reading, writing and reporting.

"Analogy" is used where one problem, a real one, is revealed by an exact parallel to it. Heathcote (1984) says "Analogy is the best way of making something fresh and worthy of consideration when it has become too cliche-ridden, too familiar, too full of prejudice because of memory and past weariness. It provides a new face for old material" (p. 207). Using this strategy, I developed a drama revolving around a legend in which three groups of people lived on an island, separated from each other by tall mountains. Each community was organised around their own particular symbol. During the course of the drama the participants identified for themselves, and showed through acted scenes, the distinctive elements of their particular community. Then something happened on the island (in this case, the students decided on an earthquake), which caused a great meeting of all the people to take place. In role as the narrator I then informed the assembled group: "legend says that although at the beginning of this meeting three symbols were represented, at the end of it only one symbol remained." This statement was deliberately left open to their interpretation. After a short conference with the members of their own communities, the elected leaders spoke out passionately for their own symbols to be retained. This seemed to result only in each group becoming more entrenched in its own cause. Individuals then began to approach each other to continue the campaign on a one-to-one basis, and this resulted in a few new alliances and a

lot of hostility as voices were raised in argument. One of the groups, noting the escalating tension, urged that all three of the original symbols be dropped and a new one chosen. They offered the symbol of the newborn baby (which belonged to a women in their group) as one which could meaningfully unite them. The noise level in the room soared once more as people hotly debated this new idea. As the bell sounded to signal the end of the drama, people were asked to stay in role and reflect for a moment on their feelings. Then, keeping their eyes closed, they were asked to share, in a simple sentence or two, the thoughts that were in their minds. The anger gave way to compassion and understanding as they spoke one after another of their confusion, their longing, their fear and yearning in the ongoing struggle to maintain a sense of identity. During the discussion period that followed, students used their experience in the drama to bring new perspectives to analagous situations in the world and they expressed particular appreciation for their increased understanding of the difficulties being faced in the Meech Lake accord meetings then taking place.

"Dropping to the universal" moves the individual to consider where their experience connects them to the experience of others. Heathcote says: "If you cannot increase reflective power in people, you might as well not teach, because reflection is the only thing that in the long run changes anybody" (Wagner, 1976: 77). And it is in these reflective moments that she asks the question "In what way are you like all people who have faced this situation?" She takes a plumb line from the drama to the universal. In this way, and whenever possible, Heathcote promotes an experiential enquiry extending the children's awareness out towards a greater understanding of the human condition.

As well as stopping the drama to reflect on what has transpired, Heathcote uses five other strategies to deepen the significance of the learning experience. She suggests slowing the pace - perhaps through freezing the action, or asking for a group "photograph" to be composed in tableau form. A second strategy is to impose ritual so that the form and dignity of an occasion is heightened. Another strategy is to classify the responses a class gives in terms of categories that illuminate their implications. For example, possesions might be classified into personal and community - for private use or for the good of the all. A fourth strategy, probing for depth, means asking the students "How are you feeling now?" or pressing them to express those feelings with a request such as "can you find language or words to tell us what you were feeling?". The fifth strategy uses symbol to transcend the actual and to tap into the universal implication of the moment. For example, in the island legend I talked about earlier, at one point the "islanders" gathered around "a woman and her baby," and they talked about the baby as a possible symbol for all the things they hoped for - a rebirth of the spirit, a place to grow, trust and acceptance of each other. And they acknowledged how hard it was to return to such a state of openness.

Reading Heathcote's papers and articles, one is aware of her attitude of continual inquiry, her wide range of interests and attention to minute detail. The work she has become famous for is a process of her own exploration into what constitutes excellence in teaching. In the notes to her collected writings edited by Johnson and O'Neill, she writes: "It is not the doing - it is the considerations underlying the doing. It is not the saying - it is the effect of the saying. It is not

merely telling people what you want them to learn, it is the experience arising out of the action which enables them to learn (1984: 209).

That education be life-related is very much Heathcote's theme in an article called The authentic teacher and the future (1984). She makes an urgent plea that the whole system of schooling be reviewed to redress the growing rift between the world the students live in, and the knowledge that is offered to them under the guise of education. In her training of student teachers she emphasises the need for their personal authenticity - the need for them to know what they believe in, and to teach from this personal philosophy. Authentic schooling, she believes, must connect the child to the social, political and global issues that confront us. Heathcote sees drama as a vital force in this process.

The writings of Gavin Bolton, a contemporary and colleague of Heathcote, have contributed a scholarly analysis of drama and learning in a historical perspective from the the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. Like Heathcote, Bolton argues that while the power of drama relies on its concrete form of experiencing, the action and its potential for meaning lies in symbolisation. Expanding on this theme, he describes the improvised play-making experience as "a shared process of searching for symbolic action" with the teacher acting as a playwright who helps the group to find a focus that will reflect as many connotations as possible. "The meanings must accrue for the children, not for the teacher. The teacher, however, by seeing all kinds of possibilities in things and actions will anticipate and structure sensitively so that symbolic opportunities are made available" (Bolton, 1986: 145-149).

Bolton's work is marked by his willingness to acknowledge the changes that have occurred in his theoretical position as he has continued his inquiry in the classroom situation. For example, in Towards a Theory of Drama in Education (1979) Bolton classifies drama into four categories which he decribes as, Type A: drama exercise and games, such as miming an action and having the others guess your occupation; activities in this category are short-term, task-oriented and follow specific rules. Type B: dramatic playing or make-believe play. This requires three elements: external plot, context, and the hidden theme or motivation brought to it by the participants. Type C: performance or theatre, which implies a showing, presenting and sharing with an audience. Type D: drama for understanding, concerned with learning at a subjective level, involving an insightful change in the participant. And he expresses a clear bias towards the serious-toned Type D role drama, as the desirable learning mode

> All the energies of the children in this kind of work resemble most normal curriculum activities; the class is reading, recording, discussing, planning, selecting, checking, evaluating; all the common educational skills are practiced and a great deal of objective knowledge is obtained. Any skills to do with playing a role or creating a play are almost non-existent (p. 69).

In Drama as Education, An argument for placing drama at the centre of the curriculum (1984), Bolton goes on to examine the importance of "the game" as the common underlying structure of all four of the previously outlined categories. Games are akin to art, rituals and celebrations as second-order experiences, which are "bracketed off" from the practical aspects of our daily life. They are play experiences which we choose to enter into and through which we create order in our lives. In this way, drama is able to engage students in a

learning process whereby they learn from the "inside" without consciously applying themselves to the acquisition of knowledge.

Play, game and creative drama are facets of the same rule-based structure "embedded in our real social interactions" (p. 81) and offering a powerful potential for natural learning. Bolton describes the possibility of a flow between dramatic playing and performance, seeing elements of each within the other. The tension in the former being that of finding the form to communicate personal expression to the other participants; the tension of the latter being to describe an experience while actually submitting to "being in" the experience (p. 124).

Bolton also returns to Peter Slade's theory of projected and personal play. He points out the many protections that dramatic play offers, which allow participants to move in the "once-removed" (projected) mode until they feel ready for the more visible, active (personal play) involvement. He gives the example of children working for several sessions designing their Norman village, before moving into the non-projected in-role activity of being the villagers. The protection of knowing that what is happening is not reality also allows the participants to become emotionally involved, to <u>feel</u> the experience at a deep level, and at the same time to stand back and reflect on the universal implications of their experience. It is in this dialectic, where opposing conditions are present at the same time, that the possibility of a change of understanding occurs. Here lies the power of drama as a teaching tool.

Bolton sees drama as an art form which also functions to teach about life. This double aspect separates drama from other art forms and puts it in a unique position where it can be used to teach all areas of the curriculum. He also refers to the "other face" of drama - the celebration - where a group joins together in an activity, the purpose of which is not to provide learning, but to celebrate the community's existence.

Bolton reminds teachers that, though he makes "serious claims" for drama as a medium for learning, "The essential feature is its immediate appeal as a fun thing to do. If we do not allow this fun then we are in danger of depriving our pupils of the chance to take their fun seriously" (p. 188). Similarly, according to psychiatrist Alexander Lowen, founder of bioenergetics, one of the root causes of the basic discontent experienced in our Western culture is that we take seriously that which is intrinsically ridiculous, such as political rhetoric, and make fun of what it would serve us well to take seriously, such as the need for child-like play in our lives. And he emphasises the essential role of pleasure to creative self-expression: "Without pleasure, there can be no creativity. Without a creative attitude to life, there will be no pleasure" (Lowen 1970, 33).

Bolton makes reference to the work of Cecily O'Neill and Alan Lambert, whose book Drama Guidelines (1976) co-written with Rosemary Linnell and Janet Warr-Wood, "is a statement of the objectives of drama teaching by the Inner London Education Authority drama advisory service." This book sets out very clearly the method and objectives in using drama in the classroom. Strategies are given for the use of role-play, teacher-in-role, storytelling, and text-related improvisation.

Drama Structures by O'Neill and Lambert appeared in 1982. In this book the theoretical basis of educational drama is again covered and detailed suggestions are given for setting up the lesson structure to explore a theme over a number of weeks. The approach integrates drama exercise, dramatic playing and theatre, and examples are given of activities in each category, with possible problems that might be encountered in using them. The teacher's function, both in the planning and as part of the group, is central to the learning experience. O'Neill and Lambert recognise the primary aim of drama in education as "a growth in the pupil's understanding about human behaviour, themselves and the world they live in... which will involve changes in customary ways of thinking and feeling" (p. 13). They discuss its potential value within the curriculum as a medium which promotes, in Tom Stabler's words, "a synthesis between language, feeling and thought" (p. 20).

The "structures" O'Neill and Lambert talk about are built on a variety of short-term activities (all exploring the same theme) through which the participants' understanding are gradually deepened. The teacher constantly assesses the energy, interest and involvement of the group and steers the course of the class by his or her selection of the next strategy to be used. In this way, the drama is shaped by the group as they respond to each activity. Often the opening lesson will start with the examination of an object or photograph and lead to questions which can then be explored through discussion as a means of building belief and interest in the unfolding drama. "The Way West," dealing with the movement of settlers across America in the nineteenth century, one of the fifteen suggested structures, opens with a photograph to be studied, followed by

twenty-six possible strategies. Over the course of several weeks the children work in pairs, small groups and as a whole group, exploring the topic from the viewpoint of the travelling settlers and the native Indian tribes whose territory they pass through. Strategies such as teacher-in-role, tableaux, movement, role-play, presentation of scenes, narrative link, reflection and discussion, are used throughout. The students are immersed in a learning experience which activates them to think about and explore the topic at a deep and personal level. One can say that teacher and class are engaged on a voyage of discovery and there is a sense of vitality and relevance to their exploration. This creates the kind of teaching environment where "natural learning" can take place.

Through the work of educators such as these, educational drama has slowly emerged over the past fifty years as a powerful learning medium. Its earlier objectives of communication, coordination, creativity, cooperation and concentration have been expanded. Drama for understanding is now regarded as a socially interactive process involving speaking, listening, thinking, feeling, moving, writing, drawing, reading and researching. The celebratory aspect of drama is seen as a way of acknowledging and honoring community. Most importantly, drama is regarded as a process through which participants can gain an understanding of themselves and the world in which they live.

All of which leads us to "the Journey" and the question of what kind of learning it can be said to promote. Unlike the classroom situation or training workshop, there is no specific learning objective attached to "the Journey" beyond the participants having the opportunity to be immersed in a shared mythopoetic experience from which they can reflect on the happenings in their

lives. However learning does take place at many levels, and has a profound effect on the way participants relate to themselves and each other.

CHAPTER THREE

"The Journey" as Phenomenological Research Data

The journey renders visible, it removes the self and others from their hiding places.

(Bernd Jager)

In this chapter I address three dimensions of the research process. First of all, I look at the nature of the research and the kind of phenomenological approach that is required. Second, I consider the role of the researcher in this endeavour and the ways in which I, as the researcher, am implicated in any findings that come from this study. And third, I explicate the steps taken to gather the research data for this study, making clear the procedures which I followed.

The nature of the research

Phenomenological research addresses itself to the study of the human significance of our lived experiences. The research question becomes a lens through which attention can be focused, magnifying what might otherwise be overlooked or taken for granted.

In "Journey to the Well" we are very much involved in this exploration of the human experience, but instead of focusing on the concrete reality of everyday life directly, we follow Heathcote's method and use metaphor as our mode of exploration. The drama lifts us into another time, another place, another identity - we find ourselves travellers around a campfire responding to questions about the land we came from and why we left. This distortion from the

actual acts as a prism taking us into the heart of our hidden myths, from where we can make them visible to the world in all their colours and intensity. Entering the drama we step out of our everyday roles to allow these unknown aspects of ourselves to be embodied in a landscape created by our mythic imagination.

Jager (1975), investigating the theme of journey, writes that "leaving behind the world of ordinary forgetfulness the journey effects a separation which renders available in a new way the self, the world, the divine" (p. 235). In this "leaving behind" of what I consciously identify with, I give myself the opportunity to expand my awareness, to see myself and my world afresh.

Participants are encouraged to create their costumes, dwellings and stories from this "empty place," and without prior thought. For many, the idea of expressing their spontaneous responses in this way is unusual and causes initial anxiety, they want to plan, to have some sort of answer "fixed" in mind. However, as they discover the ease with which their responses flow they begin to trust themselves, and gain a sense a creative freedom.

Speaking of the value of this form of spontaneous expression, drama teacher Viola Spolin (1963) says:

> Through spontaneity we are re-formed into ourselves. It creates an explosion that for the moment frees us from handed-down frames of reference, memory choked with old facts and information and undigested theories of other people's findings. Spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly. In this reality the bits and pieces of ourselves function as an organic whole (p. 4).

Jack, 35, a lawyer, talks about his participation in this process: "I tried to script it in my mind, because I am predominantly a left-brain thinker, but I would reach a point of confusion and then I more or less let the story unfold because I was not sure what we were doing." This seemingly small experience led Jack to realise the degree of control he usually tried to maintain in all aspects of his life, how little room this left for spontaneity, and the effect this had on his personal and business relationships. Another participant says, similarly, "I tried to plan it, but then there were questions you asked me I hadn't been able to plan for because I didn't know what you would ask me". The need to "be safe" and "have the right answers" stands in the way of any kind of new discovery. The outer-directed "What am I supposed to answer?" takes precedence over the self-reflective "What does this mean to me? What do *I* think, or feel in this situation?".

In this study I address the participants thoughts and feelings about the dramatic workshp. Using their own words I describe what it is like for them and what meanings they derive from the dramatic enactments. From these individual meanings a number of themes emerge, themes which, in turn, lead us to the metathemes or general structures underlying the experiences of the participants and that reflect a shared, common, life experience. Just as "Husserl's essences are destined to bring back all the living relationships of experience, as the fisherman's net draws up from the depths of the ocean quivering fish and seaweed" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: xv), my intention is also to provide an analysis which gives a sense of the depth and richness of the participants' experience in this workshop.

My role in the research

As participant-observer, I use a process of questioning and writing to gather and clarify participant responses. The resultant text, attempting as it does to illuminate the felt experience of what we may think of as the ordinary, then provides a glimpse of the richness and complexity of the dramatic experience in which we have engaged. In role in the drama as "Old Sara" I am able to relinquish my overt position as workshop leader and control the pace from within the drama. Sara is merely one of the travellers, old, somewhat deaf, but interested in everyone. Some see her as wise, although she says she has lived too long to think that she has any answers. Some see her as a threat and she is always curious to know why this should be. Whatever the participants' responses may be, they are honoured and reflected back in way that leads deeper into the drama. Through this initial example of acceptance and mirroring, potential power struggles are avoided and the participants gain confidence in their ability to "just be" in the drama. "Old Sara" approaches her fellow travellers with a sense of respect for their privacy, acknowledging that her love of stories might lead her to ask too many questions, and assuring them that she will understand if they do not wish to respond. She tells them: "I myself often feel wary when first I am come among strangers." Or, to a participant who looks blank when asked his name: "Sir, I understand. You do not wish to share your name at this moment, perhaps you may even have forgotten, in my travels I have met many over whom the veil of forgetfulness has descended while they travelled in the desert."

In role I gather people around the campfire and set the tone for the story-telling that is to come. Sara's language is somewhat stylised. Things are said in what Heathcote calls "the classic mode" (Wagner, 1976: 174). In this way a distinction is made between our everyday life and the world we are now entering within the drama. I speak slowly and distinctly, often reframing a response to give dignity to what has been said, and to encourage a deeper commitment to the drama. Thus, to a participant who has repeatedly made underhand, disruptive comments when others have shared their stories, Sara says: "Sir, I am curious, I have not heard you speak except to mock others. From whence comes such distrust?" He tells us that men who believe in magic wells are fools, he believes only in the law of the gun. Eventually he reveals, in role, that his family were all shot down when he was a boy, and he has spent his life seeking revenge by killing anyone connected with the original gang of bandits. In telling his story he finds his place at the campfire.

"What is your land like?" "I wonder what would make you leave such a place?" "Have you heard of the well?" In responding to Sara's questions the travellers find themselves drawn into the group drama and telling their own stories without thinking. Princes and princesses, beings from other planets, bandits, dancers, monks, wise women, magicians, and wanderers all emerge from the shadows, their intuitive answers leading them deeper into the creation of their personal myths. We hear of kingdoms lost, families torn asunder, treachery, war, plague, and evil spells.

We hear, too, of colourful adventures, mysterious guides, sacred quests and strange predictions. Some leap in eagerly and with assuredness. But

others reveal their stories haltingly in a series of elusive and delicate images. When asked her name, a traveller who has as yet said nothing around the campfire, responds with a whispered: "I don't know." Asked about her land she says she cannot remember. Asked if there was ever a time when she could remember something, she says that once she knew who she was, but a great mist descended and since then she has wandered alone. The mist always encases her and separates her from others. When Sara asks her if she knows of the well, she says she has heard it spoken of around the campfire and it is her great longing to go there because she believes it may have the power to free her from the mist.

As participant/observer I must commit myself fully to the lifeworld of the drama, in order that the participants find their own belief deepening. As I become "Old Sara," so they give themselves permission to believe in their own emerging characters. It is not something we have to talk about - it happens. Later Jerry says "I would never have thought I could get into play-acting, but old Sara was so real, it never occurred to me to resist." I must remain intensely curious, watching and listening, so that I can offer the question which waits to be asked, enabling each participant to take the next step in his or her own exploration. I must move smoothly between the concrete, psychological and mythopoetic realms acting as guide, seeker, director and midwife to enable the myths to be born in a form that can be recognized as belonging to us all. Finally, returning to my role as listener/questioner, I encourage participants to put into spoken or written words the connections between the mythopoetic realm of "The Journey" and the psychological and concrete worlds of their everyday lives.

Consideration of method

Phenomenological methodology does not seek to fix answers, but rather attempts to free us from a state of previous unawareness. There are no rigid findings, only a sense of something identified which contributes to our understanding of what it means to be alive.

For the purpose of this study, at the end of two "Journey to the Well" workshops, after the customary discussion period, the fifty participants provided me with their written responses. They were asked to give the storyline of their drama, noting any connections between this mythic creation and their actual life events, and to detail any new insights into life patterns which may have occurred. They were also asked to describe what it had been like for them to participate in the drama experience. Additional taped interviews were conducted with twelve of these participants. This provided the data for this study, from here the task was explicate the themes imbedded in the drama.

Tesch (1987) defines the process whereby a researcher works with data material in a phenomenological way as "a flow" or "a cycling and spiraling motion that has no clearly distinguishable steps or phases," yet requires a profound engagement on the part of the researcher. It requires a willingness to live and breathe with the material, until distinctive themes are recognized and articulated in a meaningful way. An attempt is then made to identify the metathemes or the particular essence of these human experiences.

As stated earlier, the growth of "Journey to the Well" has been a gradual one, taking place over many years. My discovery of the personal mythology

contained in the dramas occupied and fascinated me for some time. I then gradually noticed the similarities between certain dramatic storylines. Although I acknowledged that these samenesses existed in the dramas, it was not until undertaking this study that I attempted to identify and name the themes.

As I read through participants' written descriptions their dramas appeared again in my mind's eye and I found myself particularly aware of the mood evoked by their stories. It was as if I knew the various themes in my bones, I had a felt sense of the underlying pattern, but could not yet articulate this knowledge.

I read and reread the data, and tried to include so many of my notes from previous workshops, that I felt overwhelmed. Sometimes it seemed as though the data operated like a distorting mirror, looked at in one way there appeared to be as many themes as there were dramas, yet looked at another way I could see no themes at all. The richness and variety of the dramas dazzled me. I found myself lost in the profusion of detail, and I was reminded of something I had read about the impossibility of classifying dreams because of their highly personal imagery. I continued to reread the data and wondered if my intuitive sense of "knowing" would ever bear fruit.

I then focussed not only on content, but allowed my felt sense of what it had been like to watch the dramas, to influence the sorting process. I remembered particularly the "feeling" quality of the opening and closing segments. Some dramas showed us a bleakness and loneliness from which departure was experienced as liberation. Others opened to scenes of loving harmony which deteriorated into tragedy.

Working in this way, themes eventually presented themselves and I experienced something which previously I had only sensed to be there, coming sharply into focus as stages of the hero or heroine's journey. At this point I was puzzled by my earlier feeling of confusion, since the emergent themes now seemed so completely self-evident. My task was then one of naming these themes and my attempt has been to articulate them in ways that resonate with the participants' experience.

Once the themes were identified, the meta-themes were clear. Our contemplation of the individual myths curled at the centre of our lives has lead us to an unfolding of transpersonal meaning. This study seeks to confirm what we as participants have already experienced - that "The Journey" leads to a deepened sense of personal meaning because it shows us ourselves and each other, separate yet connected, alone and yet together, engaged on the journey of life.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Journey

"True drama for discovery is not about ends; it is about journeys and not knowing how the journey may end."

Dorothy Heathcote (1974)

Since first being presented as a two-hour exercise "Journey to the Well" has expanded into a three-day workshop during which people express themselves spontaneously in costume-creation, story, drama, art and dance. Participants develop their individual myths, and within the group drama the personal myths are woven together to contribute to a deeper understanding of our shared collective experience. What is it like to be a participant in these activities? To answer this question, this chapter contains a description of "The Journey."

It is 9:07 a.m. on the first morning of our workshop. I sit on the floor and watch as the thirty participants gradually enter the room and choose a place in the circle of cushions. I have met them all the evening before and I go over their names in my mind. I am aware of a nervousness and an excitement. I turn to look at my notes and realize I have not brought them. I have been leading this workshop for so long the notes are unnecessary. My instinctive reach to find them is towards something concrete and formalized outside myself - something to hold on to. I remind myself to breathe and stay centered. I look around the room again and smile a greeting. Most of the participants are talking to each other. Some are looking at the big selection of costumes, scarves, fabrics and jewellery laid out along one side of the room. From their tight expressions and

shallow breathing, I guess at their anxieties. "Will I have to perform?" "What if I'm just not creative?" I hear later, "I felt so nervous I had a migraine" and "My allergies started as soon as I walked in the room." The very thought of participating in "creative activities" generates a flood of memories of previous "humiliations" and "failures." Others are obviously excited and look at me with eager anticipation.

9.15 a.m. We begin. I tell them we are going on a journey together. It is a game of the kind we played when we were children. We will make things up as we go along. All we need to know is the general theme, which is that we are strangers meeting for the first time in the camp site, one day's journey from a well in the mountains. Each of us has left our homeland for a reason. It was no longer possible for us to stay there, and each of us has heard something about the well. We may have travelled for days, months, or years. We may have come from any part of this earth or from the stars. I urge them not to plan anything, but to trust that their stories will emerge. It only matters that they be willing to accept that we are now leaving behind our usual roles to become travellers, unknown to each other, entering the campsite where we intend to spend the night before resuming our journey to the well on the next day. I assure people that they will know where they are in the drama, because I will give directions as we go. This I do in the role of "Old Sara."

The Metaphor of Costume

Wearing a ragged shawl over my head and shoulders and supporting myself with a gnarled wood staff, I bring them to the first task of creating of costumes. This takes place in silence. Choosing the costumes is a threshold activity leading into the symbolic world of the dramatic. Like the donning of a mask, costume allows the wearer to shed one persona and present another. The silence extends from the time the costume selection starts until the dwellings have been built and the participants start to speak in role. Participants are encouraged to make intuitive choices from the selection of costume

materials and to "allow the costume to build itself." A woman who is struggling with issues of gender identity says later, "I chose something that I tucked in to have as a skirt. What was interesting was that it only had a front. I didn't have enough material to go all the way round. So, from the back I was wearing pants, and from the front I was wearing a skirt." Someone else puts on a striped caftan. Later she says, "my search has been to develop, create and identify the parts of myself - my coat of many colours?" A woman covers the lower half of her face with dark fabric and from this, develops a character who cannot speak. This leads her to realize that "all my life I've resented the fact that the women in my family had no voice in the world." A man puts on a monk's robe and then finds a dagger. Since he cannot reconcile himself to carrying the dagger openly he hides it inside his sleeve. From this seed action he later discusses the pressure he feels to present a caring, self-effacing image in his work and how his denied feelings of anger leak out in the form of sarcasm or "back-stabbing." He also says, "It was important for me to have a band over my eyes under the hood, to be in hiding. Sometimes I wonder why I left Malaysia, or London to go Winnipeg. I've been escaping all my life, what am I avoiding? Maybe it's when I get a bit too close, too visible, I get afraid."

The desire to avoid or attract attention surfaces again and again in our subsequent discussion of costumes. We talk of the ways we find in life to merge into the background while inwardly fuming when we sense ourselves ignored. Cathy says, "I had a strong sense that I wanted to be black, mysterious and hidden. I didn't realise that in that role I would also be unrecognizable; and I was

struck by how many people didn't know me. I had chosen to hide, but I did not realise that that meant I would be unnoticed."

The deep symbolic significance of each item of the seeming randomly chosen costume sometimes takes days or even months to become apparent. For example, one woman wearing a long black robe, top hat and a short white tutu round her neck, had very much identified with the harshness and banishment experienced in her drama, but at the end of three days, she could still make no sense of her costume until one of the other participants remarked she looked like an old-time presbyterian minister. "My God, that's my grandfather!" Erica exclaimed. "He came over from Scotland as a missionary. He was a miserable tyrant and none of his kids or us grandkids liked him". From this connection Erica began to trace a strong influence from her grandfather that continued in her own attitude to life, including an overbearing and moralistic righteousness which others had pointed out but she had been unable to see. Several months after a workshop, Jean writes

> I chose the sequinned dress because I thought it looked sexy and I wanted to be noticed, but it was so prickly to touch no-one wanted to sit too close or touch me, and it was really uncomfortable to wear. I wanted to change it after the first morning, but decided to keep it on as you suggested. Since then I've thought about that costume almost every day - it's such a symbol of the way I keep people at a distance with my image.

During costume selection the bodymind leads the way, the intuitive expressing itself through action without the constraint of having to "make sense at a rational level. Creating a costume in this way allows dominant but usually unrecognised life themes to be symbolically expressed and these same themes are expanded and elaborated on during the stories and dramas. Lakoff and

Johnson (1980) remind us that "metaphor is in language, thought and action" (p. 3) the metaphor of costume offers a fascinating, but mainly ignored, field for study. Irwin Marcus, clinicial professor of psychiatry at Louisiana State University Medical School, and supervising analyst is one of the few academics currently exploring the value of "the costume technique" in his work with disturbed children. He also refers to the experience of a nursery school teacher who has introduced costumes into her classroom. Each day the children rush to choose the costume they want for the day, and their teacher has noted "a cluster of qualities" attached to each costume. For example, children who are usually easily frightened and inhibited display an immediate sense of confidence and assertiveness when dressed in the superman costume. The noisy and rambunctious are transformed by the quieting effects of the angel outfit. As they experience wearing all the different costumes, the children learn to identify within themselves the possibility of expressing a wide range of responses (Marcus, 1981: 251-263). The same "cluster of qualities", or what we might call archetypal energies are associated with masks. Illustrating his observations of the way a mask seems to develop an identity which then expresses itself through the different people who wear it, Keith Johnson writes:

> We had a mask that had a thick droopy nose and angry eyebrows. It was a deep, congested red in colour, and it liked to pick up sticks and hit people. It was quite safe as long as the teacher knew this and said 'Take that mask off!' sharply at the critical moment. Someone borrowed it once - Pauline Melville, who had taken over my classes at Morley College. Next day she returned the Masks and said that someone had been hit on the arm. I had to explain that it was my fault for not warning her" (Johnson, 1979: 165).

From these small, domestic examples, we can turn to the awe-inspiring masked trance dancing and ceremonies where the personality is overpowered by an archetypal spirit, familiar in the religious traditions of many cultures where masks are revered (Kirby, 1975). The costume, like the mask allows the wearer to come into possession of an essential but unknown archetypal aspect of him or herself.

Building the Campsite

Quickly the room is transformed into a campsite by using chairs and bedspreads to create tents or shelters. The lights are lowered because we are entering the region of the imagination. Things dimly seen blend with the images we hold in our mind and take us into another realm of experience where ritual, play and drama are interwoven. In Return to the Goddess Whitmont points out the inter-relatedness and power of these three elements

> Ritual, fundamentally is psychodrama; it is a conscious, earnest and devoted play...Play moblizes and structures the powers of the unconscious psyche. It gives form to raw energy; it civilizes. Through the symbolic, as if enactment, play moves and transforms the player...Ritual then is a deliberate play or enacting, within a formalized context of over-charged impulses, feelings, archetypal visions or fantasies...it opens doors of communication to others, but also to the other within; to one's own self. It connects with one's inner roots and inherent powers (Whitmont, 1982: 240).

Later we take time out from the drama as people describe their dwellings and relate them to the suggestion that "this is how I take my space in the world." For example, an individual camp-dwelling made of a circle of overturned chairs covered with a cloth and lined with cushions is "my home, made of thorned branches to keep animals out. When I'm inside I can close off the opening and

no-one can get in, or see me." Responding to questions, "Zohar" says that he sees potential danger from all directions and only feels really safe when he is curled up in his dwelling with all exits closed. For a moment the rest of the group is able to see before them what this man's actual experience is like. Someone points out that the spiked branches would keep everyone away. Another says "it looks so cosy inside, I could imagine getting stuck there." The medium of visual metaphor has enabled "Zohar" the man to reveal an aspect of himself and feel recognized by the group. He is then asked to reflect on what this means to him in his life. He tells us how he copes with feelings of inadequacy and anxiety by withdrawing into himself while maintaining a facade of "thorny aloofness." All of which leads to a sense of isolation and depression. Having a tangible form to work from means that others are more readily able to share their experiences of previous interactions with him. A friend says, "Sometimes I've felt there was something around you keeping me away, but I couldn't put my finger on it. This makes sense to me now." A point of reference is established for future interactions.

The dwellings provide a rich source of information as the experience of being inside them is verbalised by the owners and the experience of being outside them is described by the surrounding community. Several categories become apparent. There are dwellings like "Zohar's" with rigidly-defined boundaries and hidden entrances within which people feel protected but alienated. There are dwellings with such ill-defined boundaries that the owners often had the experience of being invaded. "People kept taking my dwelling!" says one irate traveller referring to a pillow on the floor which several people

have attempted to remove, assuming it to be unclaimed. And there are dwellings with flexible but identifiable boundaries, described by one participant, who built a tent with chairs and fabric, as being "open to sun, but offering good shelter from the night-cold or rain." This leads to a later discussion outside the drama of what personal space means to each of us and how it is defined.

Stories Around the Campfire

Old Sara hobbles around collecting wood for a fire in the centre of the campsite and invites the travellers to join the circle around the fire "and perhaps share a tale or two while the night holds fine." Through voice and gesture I create a mood of mystery and expectation which sets the tone for the forthcoming story-telling sequence. As Heathcote says, "You signal across space meaningfully, to get a response which will have been born from your own signal, as the person/s alongside you read the sign. So of course you listen with all your body for the messages" (Heathcote, 1984: 160). As I poke at the fire with my stick and check the night sky for portents of the weather, I ask the travellers to tell us why they left their homelands and what they have heard of the well. The questions provide what Spolin (1963) has called the all-important point of concentration: "The magical focus that preoccupies and blanks the mind (the known), cleans the slate and acts as a plumb-bob into our very own centers (the intuitive), breaking through the walls that keep us from the unknown, ourselves, and each other" (p. 24).

The stories that surface at this stage provide the foundations of the dramas which are to follow. One participant responds "I am a prince. A

sickness has fallen on my land. My father is dying. I have heard there is a well which has special water which will cure him and all my people." Another says "I was a healer in my village. They came to me for my wisdom. They demanded more and more from me until I was exhausted. I had to escape. I must find the well to restore my spirit." Old Sara registers her reaction to each line of each story. She is awed and delighted to meet a prince, deeply saddened by his grief and curious about what he knows of the well. She welcomes the healer tenderly, rousing the fire with her stick and bidding her to find warmth and comfort in the circle. Then she turns a questioning gaze to the young woman beside her who now says "I have no name. I have no memory of home or family. My companion was the river and one day it, too, disappeared. Then in a dream, a bird told me I must find the well to remember who I am."

These brief stories have a compelling fascination for each of us as we listen. They have the lure of myth and contain a depth of human experience that resonates deep within us. As we sit in the circle and participate in this ritual, the age-old power of story works to deepen a sense of truly beginning a journey into greater knowledge of ourselves and each other. When the last story has been told and a thoughtful silence has stilled to a hush, it is time for the dramas to begin.

Building the individual dramas

Sara tells the travellers how much their stories have meant to her. She then invites them to take part in a wondrous custom she once learned, whereby such stories could be "carved in the air" so they allow us to enter them as

though in life. As the participants come forward one by one to act out their drama, I move out of role to become their advisor. Together we review the traveller's story line by line until the few sentences spoken around the campfire are extended into a miniature play.

Through questioning, even the slightest storyline expands to offer a full picture of a major theme in the individual's life experience. For example, when it came to his turn, Peter, a quiet, seemingly complacent person who up to this point seemed to have made little connection with others in the group, said he could find no drama in his story:-

> P: I had everything I wanted in my land. It was quiet and peaceful and happy.
> TG: Why would you leave such a beautiful place?
> P: I wanted other people to know about it.
> TG: So something was missing?
> P: I was alone.
> TG: Was it hard to leave?
> P: Yes

As we explore the character's aloneness, the scene takes shape. Through my questions I want to ascertain the point of tension, the moment when the decision to leave is made, and how and why it is made. Without this struggle there is no drama. Heathcote says

> Drama needs moments of tension to be felt, seen and experienced...[it is] a matter of finding a lever from within the situation which is capable of laying on pressure, in the way that sore places can develop on the skin as a result of abrasion. This has the effect of making the most hackneyed situations spring into new focus and create new awareness" (1984: 35).

What moves and interests us as audience is the human tension. We want to know what drives Peter to go through the pain of separation. We want to see

him make his decision to move in a new direction, because this is a struggle we can recognize in our own lives.

As the scene is acted out, Peter's character changes his meditative chanting to a roar of anger and then into a moan of despair. He speaks his thoughts as he leaves his perfect island, fearful of what may befall him, yet realizing he will wither and die if he stays. In his drama Peter conveys to us what he has not yet found a way to put into words, namely, his loneliness and yearning to make contact with people. And in reflecting on his drama, Peter is able to identify for himself the way he has tried to deny these needs by isolating himself in a "perfect" world.

Props and fabrics are used to capture the mood of the setting which varies with each person's drama. Whether the traveller describes "a palace," "underground caves," "a far planet made of crystals," "a mountain peak in the clouds," or "a desert," an attempt is made to reproduce the tone of "the homeland," because here we have another metaphor describing the landscape of the individual's myth, and most often, the feeling-tone of his or her early environment.

In turn, each participant chooses his or her cast and gives them the attitudes they are to hold in their roles. They are also given appropriate costume pieces. The drama may be staged as a realistic scene or with stylized movement and sound, but in all cases it has as its climax the point at which the traveller decided, or is forced, to leave and begin his or her journey to the well. "That's the basic motif of the universal hero's journey - leaving one condition and

finding the source of life to bring you forth into a richer or mature condition" (Campbell, 1988: 124). And even though we see this climactic moment portrayed again and again with each person's story, it is always fresh and uniquely expressive, because what we are involved in is not a performance given by people we recognize under their odd assortment of costumes, but the revelation of a personal life drama. And it moves us to laughter, tears and wonder at the depth and breadth of the human experience. We see Gerry, a confident-looking land surveyor, as Alejandro, a drifter wandering though small desert towns. He makes acquaintances in bars, but always moves on. Sometimes he visits a woman who loves him, but he never stays long. A shaman offers to take him on a search for the well, but "Alejandro" refuses his offer. Eventually no-one is left to greet him. He stands there alone, lost and desperate. Gerry says later: "This is my personal life story in that I have always felt myself to be adrift, alone and unsettled inside. During the acting out of my story I was surprised to see myself as the architect of my own isolation. I felt sadness and fear as I began to understand my own proactive role during the course of my story. I felt myself grow small and distanced from the moment I chose to let the fear and sadness dominate me. This is a familiar feeling and a new insight into how I can deal with it." We see Dierdre, a young teacher pregnant with her first child, as an aged Celt called "Bridie." For her, the old ways are threatened by a new order - the flame of knowledge and the wisdom of women must be hidden. We watch as her companions lose their light and turn to stone as the invaders impose their rule. She tries to rescue her friends but the dark presence is all around her and she has to escape. Dierdre says: " I am from Ireland and this story spoke to me on so many levels. I think the wisdom of

the Celts has been buried. And in my family my parents seemed to get more and more withdrawn. I remember being light and free as a child and then became bound by home, school and church. I buried my energy and feelings so deep and felt I would become dark, dead and lifeless if I didn't break away. I want to keep that flame alive for my child."

As we watch we have the sense of being present in each person's life. We gain an understanding of life themes in a way that words alone could not convey. The stories spring from an unconscious source, clothed in metaphorical images, and are received in an equally deep way. The authenticity of the exchange has a healing effect.

The very sharing of stories around the fire is an ancient ritual still remembered in our blood, connecting us with every generation of our ancestors from earliest times. It draws us into a process of "twilight imagery" of "inward beholding" (Progoff, 1975: 77-85). It leads us back to the dreamtime, to a place where the imagistic brain can weave its magic, reminding us of the truths we have forgotten.

Returning to the Group Drama

We leave the individual dramas and return to our roles as travellers around the campfire. The group becomes very close. A new element of tension is needed to shift the energy and re-focus our attention on the next stage of the journey. Without this added tension we would find ourselves out of the dramatic mode and into reflective discussion on the preceding pieces. This will in fact

come later but at this stage the group drama needs to move towards its own conclusion.

In role again as Old Sara I tell the group that I have met a strange old woman at the edge of the campsite. She has given me a warning to pass on to all would-be travellers to the well, that many obstacles will impede our journey, including loss of sight and loss of speech, and loss of travelling companions. So once again the travellers are faced with a decision. They must choose to go forward alone to meet possible danger, or to lose their chance to reach the well.

Old Sara makes her decision. She is too old to be turned back by the thought of danger - she clenches her fist and brings it to the ground as a signal of her determination to go forward. Others join her in making their own pledges, some quickly with spirit, others more slowly and with fear. Symbolically we assert the worthwhileness of life in the face of whatever difficulties it may bring us. Over the years, a few have said they could not face the thought of journeying through peril alone, and others have offered to help them. But Sara echoes the crone's words, "Each must be willing to go alone." This point in the drama leads to fruitful discussion at a later stage when we contemplate the profound sense of human connectedness experienced while sharing our stories around the fire, and also consider the sense of existential aloneness that seems a necessary step towards taking responsibility for one's own life and the movement towards individuation.

Are we always moving between one state and the other? Do we trap ourselves in one state out of fear of the other? Or does the one give us the

courage to experience the other? Although we reach no definitive answers, we feel empowered by our sharing, and agree that this is perhaps an answer in itself.

Moving through the Journey

Blindfolded and silent except for the use of the names they have given themselves as travellers, the participants are lead through a kinesthetic fantasy in which they are sometimes together, moving in a chain with hands linked or when they are seated in a close circle, and at other times alone. "Go forward into the Plains of Despair" a voice whispers as one by one the participants are propelled forward into the unseen space. "Halt. Beware the swamp," hisses another. "Find a hand you can trust," counsels a third. There is rushing confusion as the sightless travellers try to locate a place of safety in the dangerous terrain. Finally, gathered into a group, they murmur their names and rest against each other while Old Sara describes what is ahead. She too speaks in an urgent whisper as though fearful of drawing attention from menacing forces and anxious to tell all she can in as little time as possible. "Ahead of us is a great ravine. The rock face drops sheer. The wind is needle-sharp. And flocks of giant bats live here. There is only one way to cross. A narrow ledge no more than nine inches wide. When your turn comes place your back against the cliff face and inch your way along the ledge. Beware the bats who will try to fly in your face and make you fall into the chasm. Remember, your name will protect you." In turn the sightless travellers make their way across the perilous ledge which has now become so real to their minds-eye.

With this danger faced and overcome, the group is re-assembled. Gathered close again, they seek to assure themselves that everyone is there. They reach out gently to touch faces and hands, to reconnect with each other. And next they hear, "We have taken strength from being together, but it is time to separate once again. We must pass through a tunnel so deep and dark, who knows where it will lead? But legend says it is guarded by a venomous snake. We must face it alone on hands and knees, for the tunnel is low and narrow. Remember, your name will protect you." Having crawled through the seemingly endless tunnel and escaped from the poisonous snake the travellers find themselves running through the darkness to join the others. When the group is once more formed, they sit in a circle taking comfort in the whispered litany of names and the warmth of their companions' hands. But Old Sara again has frightening words. She tells them they are in the Land of the Evil Spirits, and should this malevolent force attack, the travellers must remember to keep their circle unbroken and find a harmonizing sound which will seal them inside a ring of protection. Silence follows Sara's warning. Even the murmur of names is stilled. The circle sits very close, arms interlaced, hands clasped, barely breathing, listening and waiting. From what seems like a great distance comes the first cackle of sound heralding the attack, then wave after wave the inhuman shrieking and screeching breaks around the travellers and tries to sweep through their circle. The travellers respond with their own swell of sound, throats open to release a harmonic richness and fullness that seems to rim the circle and resonate out in all directions. Even after the attack has ceased they continue to sing as if lost in the pleasure of their newly discovered unity of voice.

It is another moment in "The Journey" when we feel transported by the numinous. A participant says later, "I learned how beautiful my voice is, I felt I was singing as I hadn't in a long time; and instead of the voice coming from here (touches his throat), it was coming from deep inside me and I felt wonderful." This satisfaction and pleasure is expressed by many. Another replies, "Suddenly there was song, and we were all carried into it - it was indescribably beautiful and harmonious." When the singing has ceased and quiet descends, Old Sara has more to say. "Ahead of us is a mountain so tall its peaks are lost in the dark clouds. I do not know if it is of mud, steel, or stone, but its paths are bleak and lonely. Legend says that to cross this mountain we must be willing to face our greatest obstacle, but those who reach the other side will find themselves almost at the well." Again the travellers take leave of each other, pressing the hands they can feel but not see, conveying with touch what they cannot say and one by one they approach whatever challenge awaits them at the mountain.

The making of this part of the journey into a "living reality" requires two essential factors: one is the willingness of the participants to play, that is to suspend their disbelief, and the other is a team of assistants, who join me in this phase of the workshop to help physically lead the blindfolded travellers through the "landscape" and manipulate the props. In this way the physical clues provided by a tunnel of chairs, or a mound of cushions, are taken in by the imagination and transformed into the deepest and darkest of winding tunnels, and a mountain that requires every ounce of strength and courage to cross. The participants know at one level they have not left the large hall we started in, while at the same time they have the felt experience of having travelled far

through dangerous terrain and having faced the challenges and trials of an epic, heroic journey.

Reaching the Well

Consulting the ancient Chinese book of wisdom, the I Ching, we find hexagram 48 refers to "The Well." "The well means union"..."The well from which water is drawn conveys the further idea of an inexhaustible dispensing of nourishment."

At the beginning of the Journey Sara asks the travellers what they have heard of the well. The most frequent responses are: "it contains the water of life," "it has healing properties," "its water gives truth and knowledge," "the fountain of everlasting youth," and "it will restore what has been lost." The symbol is known and cherished by us without our conscious knowledge. "I didn't have to think, I just knew." In Jungian terms, "the water of life" or "the elixir of immortality which requires the pilgrimage or dangerous quest" (Whitmont, 1969: 222) is symbolic of the self. It is a wholeness towards which we yearn but can experience only in glimpses.

As the participants are lead one by one towards the well they hear the following story: "We are walking along a narrow path that spirals up the mountain. There is indeed an old well at top, but I do not know if there is even any water in it any more. But legend says this is the place where a crystal spring once came forth from the centre of the earth and legend says that a traveller who reaches this place may lay down that which he no longer needs in his life

and take up that which refreshes his spirit. I do not know the truth of any of this. But I can tell you there is an ancient tree at the top of this mountain, so vast it reaches to the clouds, so old its branches hang like a curtain to the ground. And under this tree there is indeed an old brick well. I will part the curtain of leaves, and here, if you lean into the well, I will guide your hand to where they say the spring once flowed."

And here the participant finds actual cold, fresh water in the well and is given some time to spend there. To be present with someone at this point is to be witness to a deeply significant ritual. As stated earlier, even though the participants are fully aware that the journey is at one level imaginary, it is at a mythological level a real experience. Even participants who showed little emotion during other parts of the journey, will break into sobs as their hands touch the water. That this can be a numinous and redemptive experience is attested to afterwords during our discussions. In the words of Roger, "I put the water on my face and lips. I wanted to take in all of life and get rid of some of the roles, and old baggage and the fears." And Rob says "putting my hand in the water was very moving, I experienced self-love and forgiveness." This is echoed by Beth who says "When I reached the well, I really felt a shift take place in me. I really forgave myself." Another participant says, "It seemed like such a brief, beautiful moment - but so powerful. Hard to put into words."

What is it about reaching the well that promotes such transformative experiences? Does this ritual enactment embody a blessing whereby we receive ourselves back into ourselves, easing for a while a sense of separation?

For those of us who are helping create the journey by leading participants through the various phases, reverence and mystery are invoked by what people do at the well. We hear their sobbing. We see them cup the water and drink, or bring their moistened fingers to their eyes and lips. Sometimes they kneel and pray. They leave behind symbols of what they no longer want in their lives, such as jewellery, swords and daggers, or parts of a costume that had become cumbersome during the journey. One says, "I don't need so many possessions." Another says, "I want to give up fighting." Yet another talks of the significance of having chosen a cloak that kept tripping her up and impeding her progress. "My work is like that, I hate being a lawyer but I hang on it. I really want to be a writer, but the law keeps getting in the way." Afterwards they talk about having given up pride, anger, fear, doubt and tell us of the equal importance of what they "took up to refresh their spirit." Participants who have not previously chosen individual names, using "Traveller," or "No-Name," during the journey, often will discover at this point the names they want. Others take up "self-forgiveness," "inner strength," "acceptance," and many report feeling a peacefulness and clarity as if, for a short while, they stand centred in their lives and find a sense of meaningfulness.

In her fascinating study on the symbolism of alchemy, Marie-Louise von Franz (1980), refers to "the union of opposites" leading to the "mystical divine water," which she likens to knowledge from the unconscious being brought into conscious awareness, resulting in "a vivifying knowledge, a sense of understanding" (p. 102). Eidinger finds that this conscious discovery of the reality and value of the inner symbolic world is our most urgent need, being the

redemption of the hidden self that is "imprisoned in matter, in the immature personality" and ruled by the ego. Through conscious attention to symbolic imagery we bridge the ego and self, and create an experience of the union of opposites. Eidinger says

> the ego, while clearly separated from the archetypal psyche, is open and receptive to the effects of symbolic imagery. A kind of conscious dialogue between the ego and emerging symbols becomes possible. The symbol is then able to perform its proper function as the releaser and transformer of psychic energy with full participation of conscious understanding (1973: 110).

Perhaps this leads us closer to an understanding of why the ritual of reaching the well has such profound affects. At a symbolic level the traveller at the well has reached the heart of the mandala, the constantly unfolding mystery of life, where in the "laying down" and "taking up," a brief experience of the possibility of the union of opposites exists and where for a moment the "water of life" is deeply known as a living reality.

Over the many years I have been leading this workshop only a few occasions stand out where the well was not experienced as a positive symbol. In one the participant was a twenty-five-year-old who had spent the previous seven years in and out of jail. He was very reluctant to put his hand in the water, because, as he told me later, he was sure "it was a bucket of piss." Jim, who described himself as having been in trouble all his life, faced each day as something to be survived, by staying alert, on guard, "one step ahead." This was clearly illustrated by his choosing the character of "a man on the run," and a non-existent dwelling - "I just like to get a rock with a good look-out in all directions." While the others were building their campsites, Jim crouched

against a series of such rocks, his gun supported on his drawn up knees, watching. To use Erikson's eight-stage model of childhood development, Jim constantly struggled with the very first issue of basic trust versus mistrust at every level of his interaction with the world.

When the Journey was first planned the well stood alone, and it was only later that I added the image of a huge old tree. On a practical level this was because the water container which serves as the well was located for safety behind a curtained-off section of the room (twenty-five blindfolded people moving in all directions requires attention to the possibility of mishap), and to explain the sense of moving through curtains, when individuals were taken to the well, I decided to include the ancient tree in my story. On a mythopoetic level we can say that the tree called itself into existence because it belongs there. Its presence answering a deeper call, reminding us of the Yggdrasil, the World Ash of Norse legend. The Tree of Life, with the Fount of Wisdom springing from its roots which, like an axle, supports heaven and earth and all the worlds between, reminded us that at the centre of each of our individual journeys we find ourselves faced with the profound mystery of life itself. And in such fleeting moments we know that to search for answers is to spend one's life looking for fool's gold. It is the ever deepening of the question that leads toward home.

Drawing the symbols

Participants are asked to "carve two symbols on the rock face that future travellers to the well may learn from. One symbol will signify the most fearful part of your journey, the other will show what made the journey worthwhile." Using

crayons and a long sheet of paper the participants return to the language of symbol, this time consciously encoding their experience into a sign that will carry their message to others. This ritual allows participants a moment to reflect on what provokes fear and what provides strength in their lives. It is often a moment of surprise as one person finds that his or her particular fear was another person's comfort. "The mountain was so high," says one woman, "I could feel the wind whistling around me and I was terrified." While one of her companions says, "The mountain was the most exhilarating part for me. I stood at the top and let the wind blow through me, I felt so strong." For many people the greatest comfort is the hands that reach out to them, and the warm presence of other bodies as they sit blindfolded in a circle waiting for the next move forward. Yet, as Brenda's response indicates, for others this is the most terrifying part "As long as I was sitting alone I felt all right, but when people tried to take my hand I wanted to run."

The leaving of a mark on the stone also signifies a rite of passage. The travellers have gone through an "ordeal" and survived. They are at this moment heroes. They have dared to travel alone in the face of danger to a desired goal and they have something to share with future travellers. As they draw their symbols they reflect on the way they deal with fear in real life and compare it to their experiences in the journey. Jan, a forty-five year old teacher battling cancer says,

> "I was so afraid, I thought I would die. I remembered you (Old Sara) saying that our names would give us strength. (The only speech allowed during the blindfolded journey is the saying of their traveller's name.). At first I just whispered it. But everyone else was making so much noise saying theirs, I couldn't hear my own voice. So I almost gave up. But then I just felt filled with rage. It's

> like all my life its been so hard to make a space for myself, I've just given up. And I bellowed out my name over and over and I felt wonderful. And I stopped being afraid. I almost welcomed the sense of danger, because I felt so strong. You know, I'm still shaking with excitement. I really feel alive."

Her symbol of fear is a dark tunnel from which she will never re-emerge. Her symbol of strength is a spiral, which she tells us is her voice calling out her name, expressing her will to live. Such drawn symbols are tangible records of insights that the participants can take with them after the journey is over.

The Dance

This is a celebration of community. We join together to mark our shared experiences of the journey, the fears we faced and overcame, the bonds between us. The dance is a container for our joy as we leap and turn, encouraging each other with singing and cheering. We move in a circle raising our voices to the rythym of drums and cymbals. Each traveller takes a turn to enter the circle and create a personal dance, recollecting through the body significant aspects of his or her journey. Cathy says, "So much of my role was about disconnection. Even during the dance at the end I suddenly realised I had my hands turned inward with my arms crossed on my chest. Then I turned them out and started opening my arms to people. I opened up - that was my dance.

In these brief, individual dances each person is affirmed, separate and distinct, before returning to the communal circle. Our dance also marks a transition. We know the journey will soon be over. We feel nostalgia for what has been and an increased zest for participation while we are still together. Voices rise to a crescendo and the drums quicken as the few remaining

members of the group are wordlessly urged to enter the empty space and let their dance flow through them. As the last solo dancer rejoins the circle we surge several times toward to the centre in a final burst of energy and the dance ends. We rest on the floor, glowing, panting, beaming, in communion with our bodies, our spirits, with ourselves and with each other.

The Last Chapter

The travellers gather once more in a circle to complete their individual stories. It is the final ritual of "the Journey" when the participants acknowledge themselves as the authors of their own stories. They are able to choose how they view the past, and what they will select for their future. As the travellers speak they take off a costume piece and lay it before them in the circle to signify they are putting aside their character and returning to their real-life identities. A participant later says "I liked casting off the garment at the end. It was like an emergence into a new life, shedding one's skin and feeling reborn." Old Sara sets the form by leading off with her "Last Chapter." She says: "Old Sara travelled through the terrible dangers and managed to reach the well, and when she reached it she realised that what she had been looking for all those years she had found in the companionship of other travellers, sharing their stories around the campfire. And so she decided to travel back to the campsite to sit under the stars and hear wondrous new tales. And there you will find her to this day, if you should ever travel that way again."

Here the participant as story-teller has the opportunity to turn the story in a new direction, releasing the central character from the entrapments of the

past, and opening up the possibility of new images and scripts for the future in an act of self-affirmation. As Polkinghorne (1988) reminds us, "Identity consists not simply of a self-narrative that integrates one's past events into a coherent story...it also includes the construction of a future story that continues the 'I' of the person" (pp. 106-107).

The stories at this point often tell of the travellers returning to the homeland imbued with a new sense of purpose. Gerry says: "At the well Alejandro drank deeply of the water and realised he was not a drifter at all but a warrior on the path of knowledge, and he returned to the shaman in the desert to continue his training." Dierdre identifies herself through a hero myth as she speaks slowly and reflectively. "Bridie reached the well and realised the strength and love she had not only for her coming child but for her people. And she took a small phial of water and returned to them to release them from the darkness. And that was just the beginning of her new adventures." Sometimes the traveller keeps travelling. "When No-Name reached the well she remembered her name was Dancer and she joined up with a group of gypsies she met there and travelled the world with them." There is a sense of satisfaction with the choices made. "The Healer never returned to her village. She looked in the well and saw she had much to learn about healing herself, so she wandered on studying plants and natural healing as she went, until she became a wise and happy old woman." Even Jim, who feared finding the "bucket of piss" instead of the clear water of the crystal spring, is able to close his story on a positive note: "Bandito thought about the good times he had shared with people around the campfire and decided that maybe not everyone was out to get him."

This ritual separation from the created character, while remaining within the story-telling mode, allows a further level of insight to take place. Participants can now stand back and observe themselves in the process of choosing a future into which the past has been accepted as an integral part. In this moment they see themselves consciously within myth. They hear the story being told and acknowledge the choices that can be made. They wake up to more vivid experiences of the way of structuring the world.

The discussion

During the discussion time that follows "The Journey," the mythopoetic experience of the drama is called upon to illuminate concrete and psychological aspects of the individual's life. Jeanne, a 5l-year-old graphic artist reflects on her drama in which as a young revolutionary fighter, she is turned out of the village and called a murderer by the anguished parents of the slain youth she led into battle. Sheila, a 36-year-old counsellor, likes the character of "Strongwind." Her drama takes place in a desert town where she realises the water is polluted. The people sicken but will not listen to her warnings. She dreams of finding a new well whose water might cleanse her people and this becomes on her quest. Dennis, 26, a musician is encouraged to talk by his girl-friend. We remember the chilling quality of his drama in which he, as a white-coated scientist, systematically brain-washes his human subjects with the use of electric shock. He comes to the well to study its effects after one subject who has been there arouses his scientific curiousity.

When we turn our attention to early life events which may have activated these myths, Jeanne tells us of how when she was eight years old living in war-torn East Prussia, she urged her mother to plan an escape for them. She and her brothers and sisters reached East Germany but her mother was killed. The family blamed Jeanne for this death and she took on the responsibility and subsequent sense of guilt. Sheila talks of being an only child in a family of alcoholics and remembers her dread as the adults became drunk. She prayed that they might stop drinking, but felt that God never listened to her prayers. Dennis relates his drama to being the only child of older parents, both of whom were absorbed in their research careers. Childhood pursuits and play were belittled as "time-wasting" and at school he was nicknamed "the little professor." All three are surprised that these autobiographical circumstances seem inherent in the stories that they so randomly created.

Can these myths be linked to patterns manifesting themselves in the concrete and psychological patterns levels of day-to-day life? Jeanne responds, "I am repeatedly taking on a degree of the organizational responsibility that I find myself unable to fulfill. When I fail, I fall into a kind of debilitating, guilty depression." She sees the revolutionary leader as an aspect of herself when she is "fired with excitement and energy" in the act of convincing herself and others to take on a new project. Then like the slain youth "I feel part of myself die when it fails," and "blame myself" (like the villagers) "until I retreat into a depression."

Sheila describes her "political battle" in the church where she ministers as lay preacher. She wants to turn the "poisonous" patriarchal system in a new, more "enlivening" direction, but feels frustrated and angry because her message

"is not being properly heard." Reflecting on her drama, Sheila acknowledges how important it is to her to bring new energy into the congregation, and wonders whether she "poisons" herself with "bitterness" when she feels unheard, so that in turn she refuses to listen to "the opposition." Dennis is at first reluctant to consider his drama in terms of himself, but with the assistance of his girlfriend we learn that he composes music for synthesizer, and works alone. He admits to being seen as "cynical and aloof" and having trouble joining in, but he admires his girlfriend's "playfulness and spontaneity" and has agreed to come to the workshop with her "to observe." Dennis later talks of controlling his world through a "clinical detachment," but he often feels cut off from his feelings and even from life itself.

What is to be gained through this process of tracing personal myth through drama and then locating it in life? Turning again to Whitmont:

> When we work on our personal problems we mold the stuff of which our lives are made. Enacting rather than acting out personal complexes enables us to become conscious and cooperative participant-spectators rather than unconscious victims of the drama of our lives...As the martyr discovers himself and becomes witness to his feelings he changes his question from "Why me?" "How did I deserve that?" to the Grail questions: "What is the meaning of this?" What can it lead to?" "What can it teach me?" and "What is it to serve?" (pp. 256-257).

Participants repeatedly express surprise at the meaningfulness of their stories, having no conscious awareness of this during the process of making it up. The discovery of this connection to the personal life story is experienced as empowering. "Alejandro" says: "It's as though a light went on as I saw the amazing interweaving of my fantasy and my reality. It seemed that almost every choice I made - my name, my costume, story, had some message for me

regarding my life patterns, my self-image and my aspirations." And Dierdre adds, "what impacted me so much was realising how closely my story resembled important parts of my life." In the written responses of other participants we read: "This is my story!" "I acted out my life, and I didn't know it." "I could never have told it verbally with such intensity. It just happened." "I find it so powerful to see my life in that drama." In Way's words (as quoted in Chapter 2 of this thesis), there is the conscious thrill of "this is me and I am making it happen." With this sense of discovery comes a sense of relief.

The drama, with its clear beginning, middle and end and its larger-than-life quality gives a form to our archetypal energies, which we can then stand back from and comprehend. The intangible past shaping the present starts to emerge, just as a "magic" picture in a child's colouring book surfaces when the blank page is brushed with water. Through this felt experience of the mythopoetic embodied in their drama, participants report feeling affirmed, more complete, and in touch with life. Perhaps this is what Jung meant when he said: "It is not the part which can be externally or biographically dated that constitutes the real life of a person, but its myth - the fateful, spiritual inner side of life" (Jung, 1956: XXV). Contact with this level leads to a sense of recognition. The self is known again through a surrender to the unknown. A remembering takes place which connects me not only to myself but to all of life.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Travellers' Tales

The whole world, all human life, is one long story.

Isaac Bashevis Singer

My story, is your story, is the world's story. From a sharing of what is intensely personal to each of us we are in a position to discover our common humanity. To our surprise we find that the inward exploration into the symbolic world of the self leads outward into an expanded understanding of others. In this way, the individual personal dramas shaped in "The Journey" contribute to our recognition of universal meaning like so many beads threaded into a necklace.

The travellers meeting around the campfire have a common bond. They have left their homeland and each seeks, for whatever reason, a certain well. Here we have the elements of what Campbell (1972), calls the universal "monomyth" coming to expression through narrative and ritual throughout the world. Calling for "a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life enhancing return" (p. 35), the monomyth beckons to us as a hero's quest, spirit quest, religious pilgrimage, voyage of discovery, soul's journey, or search for the Grail.

We see the pattern on a cosmonogical scale in myths that tell us of the world's evolution, through cycles of destruction and renewal, which Eliade classifies as "the most frequent mythico-ritual scenario in the religious history of humanity" (1962: 158). From unknown bliss we tumble into chaos, and out of

chaos we painfully seek to knowingly regain our bliss. The "tragedy of separation" accompanies us from birth to death, as well as every developmental stage in between. It is not surprising, then, when the travellers respond to this theme in "The Journey." Their stories seem to spring from the very core of their being, and as we listen and watch we experience the mystery of "his story" and "her story" being "our story."

Whitmont, writing of Jung's symbolic approach to the understanding of the human psyche, refers to the connectedness of personal meaning and the collective myth:

> Unless we can deal with the mythological core in personal terms we have nothing real to deal with. Unless, however, we deal with the personal history in mythological terms we do not touch its driving power and meaning, nor do we reach that which is to be transformed; we do not reach the source of its energy, the 'pool of water', or the wellspring of renewal, in order to be able to restore or rechannel this energy (Whitmont, 1969: 69).

We are challenged to confront our personal mythology, revealed through its symbolic images, and to consciously integrate it into our daily lives. "Life is [the] story of the self-realization of the unconscious" (Jung, 1965: 3). It is this quest to grasp the essential central meaning of our individual lives that leads us to uncover the universality of symbolic expression, the samenesses underlying all human experience. "We confront the ultimate border line of our place in transcendental meaning" (Whitmont, 1969: 84). And in this we find a clue as to why the dramas enacted in "The Journey" continue to be remembered, bringing new meaning to light in the individual lives of the participants years after the actual experience, while at the same time they connect us so profoundly as a group.

Variations on a mythic theme

Within the collective myth of separation and unity, presented by the group drama in "The Journey," what kinds of personal stories emerge? And do they lead us, as Whitmont has suggested, not only to our own personal history, but to an expanded sense of community with others? And what does the "archetypal myth" which, according to Whitmont encompasses all of "human experiencing," look like when spontaneously brought to life through story and drama during "Journey to the Well?" To examine these questions, we will look at the themes which have emerged through story and drama.

Alone in the universe

These are poignant tales casting a quiet upon us that is different from the expectant hush attending more peopled dramas. Here our traveller lives as a solitary being who has little or no memory of things ever having been different. The world is still and muted, an island, a river, a cocoon, or a crystalline structure. There is a rhythymic pattern to life, as if climbing the mountain, rowing up and down the mist-shrouded river, turning slowly in the coccoon or the crystal. All sounds seem absorbed by an enclosing membrane of silence and the slow repetitive movements cast their own hypnotic spell. As we watch, a growing awareness of emptiness becalms us in deep loneliness, yet we, too, half long to stay in this unchanging state.

Susan later writes, "At first some kind of memory seemed to be around me like a dream - large noises, sudden roars, red and powerful. Terror in my veins, my heart raced. And then I was safely in the cocoon and all was calm and

peaceful for a long, long time." But as she becomes aware of time sifting past her, leaving her untouched, Susan experiences herself as "COLD, dead, gone." From this point a realisation grows in her that she must "unwind, unravel, unwrap and begin to flex my stiff and bloodless wings." She says "I want to reach out. I know there is danger, noise and risk, but I want to be alive, sensuous and moving." Similarly Neil says "Somewhere in the dark world each of us is trapped in fear, shyness, unwillingness to reveal the cold, lifeless, frozen, stonelike places inside. I retreat into exile to contain the pain, control the energy. I've cut off so many parts of myself to avoid the fullness of my grief." Exploring her experience in a cocooned state Leigh says

> What surprised me most was that it felt so comfortable. I thought 'I could stay here for a long time'. And I do withdraw. I go away deep inside. All the senses seems to shut down into a little tiny, still spot. I've recently joined a women-in-writing group and I think it's part of what will help me to connect that place with the outside world...so I don't have to get locked into one place or the other. I don't want to give it up entirely. I think in some ways it's rich in there.

But in the drama the decision to leave is reached. We hear a voice crying out to the world. We see the cocoon breaking, or the crystal shattering as another journey begins. We find ourselves thinking of birth and death. Perhaps there is no difference. Is it part of our human experience to resist the inner stirrings which signal our next phase of growth? And we are briefly aware of the countless ways we play out this struggle in our lives.

The Exile from Paradise

The prince, princess, favourite daughter or son remember when life was perfect and they were loved and protected in their parents' castle, palace, or village. Invariably the drama opens with the child at play, beamed upon by approving parents. They tell each other how happy they are and how much they love each other. But the bliss does not last, the queen dies and a new, cruel queen takes her place, or the loving queen gradually "turns to ice" and cannot see or hear. The king becomes a tyrant, angry and punitive, or he fades away, unwilling to protect his kingdom. "Blackness" descends in the form of "invaders," " sickness," "drought." Our hearts pound with the drumbeats and gongs as we witness betrayal, banishment and abandonment. Conspirators undermine the family unity. Bandits enter the home and kill everyone except the child who watches from a hidden place and then escapes. One by one those surrounding the protagonist fall silent, drape themselves in black, and leave. Abandonment and rejection are enacted again and again as parents turn their backs, or villagers drive the travellers out of their homes. New punishments and ordeals are met with at every turn. And yet the very enactment of these terrible mythic events that might initially seem to be unconnected to reality reaches deep within to the forgotten place of a long-held pain.

Michael says,

> The biggest insight for me was the deep sort of visceral confirmation of my wound of abandonment. I've talked about it and known about it and it's been a kind of theory and I've intellectualized it, but through the process of "the Journey" I tapped a place in me that felt bottomless. And as I am speaking now I can reconnect with that place. In some way it confirmed to me that I am not crazy; that I wasn't making it up about the pain. That pain

> was somehow real and it was mine and it was okay. It wasn't manufactured or bogus. It had integrity.

And Beth looks at what she has labelled her own "weird," "irrational," behaviour and sees with a sense of relief that it is in fact part of a pattern which she can now recognize. "Seeing that I've done it consistently really gives me the grounding to say 'Yes, when I'm in a situation where I don't get enough nourishment and I don't find meaning in it I don't stay.' And now I really believe that's why I left my marriage. Because I never knew."

As witnesses, we share a sense of loss as we remember the vivacity of the opening scenes. We know, as adults, the transitory nature of childhood bliss, yet something within still grieves its passing, and we are stirred by the enacted sense of violence and outrage so often accompanying this human rite of passage.

The Captive Soul

In dramas with this theme the individual yearns for separation, but is enthralled, enslaved, or held fast by a web of love. He or she is often known as the "wise one" or "the healer," the essential source of well-being for the village. Serena talks of the life patterns she has become aware of through enacting her role.

> The feeling of being seen as a 'healer' and only loved in that role is very familiar. My parents both nearly died in two separate Japanese prison camps. Their first two babies died. They wanted to start their lives all over when I was born and I could make them forget their pain. I have always felt responsible for their happiness. Now I'm a therapist. I often think that I would not be seen or valued unless I somehow take care of someone.

We see the web being woven. In one drama it is the parents who claim they cannot work the fields without their son. In another an intricate dance will cease to exist if she leaves. Each time the would-be travellers announce their intention to go in search of adventure, they are warned of the "dangers out there." In Rick's drama, "Boffo, the most wonderful and talented son in the world" tells his parents that he wants to go out into the world and learn to be "a real entertainer." But they cajole him into showing them again all the clever tricks he already knows and they laugh so much, praise him so highly, and lament so much at the thought of his leaving, so that each day he agrees to stay a little longer. Again and again we see the difficulty of escape from this kind of enmeshment. Even at the point where a captive soul has turned away to leave, the villagers grasp her hands, or implore his help; silken cords entwine her; laughing dancers surround her and sweep her back into their midst or the enchantress caresses his cheek and whispers another spell. Later Rick writes

> I saw my confinement mirrored over and over. The two dozen ways I let myself be entrapped. I'm still in the trance, in the land of enchantment, waking up from a spell cast upon me long ago when I was too young to think but old enough to wonder, when I was told "this is how it is and will always be," when the longing inside began to dwindle and when my imagination began to grow thin and untrustworthy.

We silently urge the hero to escape, to tear himself free from his captive state, to break the spell and assert his autonomy. As he reels to the wizard's command, spins faster in the dance, is pulled this way and that by the silken bonds, he seems about to collapse and succumb, and in the last moment gathers all his resolve and cries out from his soul. "No!" "Enough!" "Stop!" rends the air and this time there is no turning back.

As audience we find ourselves holding our breath, suffocating, something in us corresponding to the tragedy of an unlived life. While urging the captive soul to take courage, to embrace the uncertainty, to risk the adventure, the message is also for us. There is a time to rebel, we remind ourselves, to dare to stand apart.

The Wanderer

They are the drifters, sea voyagers, journeyers, belonging nowhere, moving from place to place, through desert, across oceans, from town to town, avoiding commitment, driven by an inner restlessness for something that cannot be named. There is no sense of past or future. Although offered love, money, a future, if they will settle down, they are always "moving on," alone or accompanied by a faithful horse or dog. One day the animal companion dies, the traveller leaves the sea forever, or returns to a place once known only to find it a ghost town. And at last these "wanderers" recognize their state of utter isolation, alone in the world, marooned in a spiritual wasteland. Finally facing their grief and loneliness they start to seek some meaning in their lives, to find a way to make contact with others. Often a "wise man," "a shaman," or "an old woman," appears to tell them they will find answers at the well.

"Grey's" story illustrates the underplayed yet strangely haunting quality that is typical of this theme:

> A boy leaves a barren land. As he moves throughout the world he has repeated opportunities to create a sense of community, the contact and intimacy he longs for. Despite this he stays within himself, quietly searching, but always uncertain. One night, alone at his campfire, he is joined by another solitary figure, a man

> returning from the well. This stranger knows Grey, but Grey doesn't recognize the stranger. Grey finds himself interested but uncertain when the stranger tells him of a well that slakes any thirst. Finally Grey asks the stranger to guide him there. At this the stranger walks off into the night but leaves behind his black cloak for Grey to wear if he decides to seek the well. Grey looks at the cloak for a long time before making his decision.

Watching, we contemplate the significance of the wanderers' desolate aimless seeking. We know what it is to lack purpose. We recall our bleakness of heart when life's meaning seemed gone. Is commitment to the search perhaps the meaning in itself?

The Heroic Quest

Here we meet the traditional hero, self-elected or more often chosen on the basis of his or her bravery and courage. Upon these protagonists rests the task of saving their people. The planet is dying, everyone in the kingdom or village is falling sick, drought and famine plague the land. The "chosen one" is charged with the honour and duty of finding the well and bringing back the precious water which will restore the land and people to health. Formal speeches, blessings and amulets are bestowed on these heroes in solemn and loving leave-taking rituals. They in turn express the deep love and concern they feel towards their community and their willingness to face all obstacles in order to bring back what is needed. In this moment we understand the nobleness and purpose that fires the heart to accomplish such deeds, the "original good" into which we all are born. Other travellers speak of their "initiation quests," the time for young men or maidens to set forth alone to find the well "as is the way of our people." It is a rite of passage, a challenge which marks entry into the adult

realm of the community. "I do not know if you will return" an elder tells the hero, "the way is dangerous and you must face it alone." But not all heroes are recognized as such by their community, there are also travellers like "Strongwind" who, in concern for their people, take on the heroic quest to return with "life-renewing water," even though the people themselves are unaware of their plight.

As audience we find ourselves touched by the simplicity and dignity of Sui Ma's drama. She is in real-life a member of a religious teaching order in Hong Kong and we know that while enjoying her trip to Canada, she greatly misses her community and convent life. In her drama the village has decided it needs a new well and someone must be sent to study the construction of a particularly fine well that has been heard of in the West. Sui Ma is chosen since she has the best command of English, and she reluctantly accepts the quest. While she sweeps her room in preparation for leaving, members of the village drop by in turn to offer small mementoes, a photograph, box of tea, a poem, along with messages of encouragment. Sui Ma speaks a few words to each person: "I will come back quickly." "I will think of you each day." "Do not forget me." As she makes her farewells, we are struck by her gentleness and courage. And we are reminded once again that, as Campbell (1949) has pointed out, the hero does indeed have a thousand faces.

I have seen almost a thousand dramas enacted in "the Journey" over the years, and while this text is not offered as definitive, in looking back through my notes, I am content that all these dramas would find their place in the themes which have emerged in this study. In naming the themes we articulate the steps

that lead us to the metathemes, or general structures, through which we seek to understand and share something of our lived experience of life's meaning. And this is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

The Symbolic Journey

The longest journey
Is the journey inwards
Of him who has chosen his destiny
Who has started upon his quest
For the source of his being
(Is there a source?)

(Dag Hammerskjold)

The dramas group themselves like a series of stained glass windows illuminating aspects of a single journey. We spiral through the same stages again and again - the leave-taking, the trials, and the return. Bliss gives way to conflict, separation leads to unity in an endless cycle of letting go and coming together. And now we see that going away, while often seeming so painful and final, is really just the dawn of another time for coming together, and in the celebration that marks our return we will find the seeds of our future separation.

We left behind our everyday world when we gathered at the campfire, each of us venturing step by step into the unknown place within. And the stories came to meet us in their own time, word by word, guiding us along paths we did not recognize. Like travellers in a strange land we gathered the images to bring back to the group around the fire. And as we unfolded our dramas to entertain each other under the stars, our personal life myths were revealed in all their richness, distinctness and separateness - the forgotten strands of our life histories embroidered by the mythopoetic into recognisable motifs. What we previously thought of as random or erratic in our behaviour now reveals itself as

part of a pattern, and this awareness brings a sense of relief. And where we previously felt ourselves to be alone we now find ourselves feeling connected.

Could we have reached this place so readily without the use of drama? We sit and try to encapsulate in words what has made this experience come about. We are still in a state of wonder. It was so rich a feast. As we look around the group we see people in a new way. Sam, now unexceptional in his jeans and T-shirt, we know better as the turbanned "El-Hazid" who was saved from death in his burning palace by the call of a golden bird, and who was near death again, this time of thirst, as he crawled his way into the campsite only a few days before. And in Jean's drama we remember him as the angry father, in Jeff's as a child. So much has happened in these few days. We think of our anxiety at the first thought of doing drama. And yet how easily we were caught up in its flow.

The costumes seemed to choose us. And then we built our dwellings and gathered round the campfire. It was important to create our own special space, our own world... a place where we could separate from the judgments and inhibitions of our everyday selves. We feel somehow released and free in here, as if our carefully created masks of appropriateness are left outside with our coats and outdoor shoes. How important it was to surrender into the story, not to control, plan or analyse, or play intellectual games. It was quite magical just because we did not know how we got there, but so much information was gathered that was not available on a conscious level. It bubbled up, releasing passion, intensity, aliveness, energy in both actors and watchers.

We talk about our newly aware value of symbolism. Our symbolic journey has enabled us to transcend the boundary of cognitive thought. We have found our way to the deepest layers of our being where images and feelings make healing connections and where we find ourselves connected to each other. In the same way, the dramas which began with the individual, have lead us to the universal themes, or metathemes, of separation, trials and return, of pain and love longing for expression. "The fullness of my grief is the entrance back to the humanity from which I have cut off so many parts." Neil's words remind us of how little permission we give ourselves to embody any part of the fullness of our mythopoetic nature. Our world is controlled by the rational. And while my energy is absorbed in suppressing my own existence, can I possibily allow you to fully live? Safer and easier to "sit tight" letting the conscious mind control.

Over the past few days we have tried to be aware of this division between body and mind as it occurred. It is accompanied by a shallowness of breath, a tight "armoured" feeling in the body, a closing of the mind, as though we have retreated for safety to some tiny look-out post in the brain, where we remain super-vigilant against anyone who might threaten to discover the humanness behind our defence. Alternatively, the mind can seem to float away, leaving the body to act as if we were still present and involved, but completely untouched by what is happening around us. We are particularly aware of these states when they happen because during the sharing of our dramas we have experienced feeling whole, complete, "full of ourselves."

Strange that many of us remember this phrase as a caustic comment from childhood. Who else should we be full of? Surely a mark of authenticity is

the willingness to be oneself and to express oneself fully in one's life. The taboo against this seems somehow based on the idea that self-expression leads to selfish indulgence and the first downward steps to the path to hell. And yet we have felt spiritually enriched and filled with compassion and understanding for each other. We are grateful that "Thor" after eighteen years of stoic resentment, raged and grieved for his dead father, pouring out a fullness of love that he never was able to express to him in life. In doing so, he allowed so many of us to heal. And we feel an acceptance for Connie who could not quite make it to the edge. She now says "I feel I missed out on an experience that would be capable of deepening me emotionally. Perhaps I am protecting myself as I have for most of my life, denying the existence of feelings that I fear would hurt too much."

We talk of the learning that came through being in other people's dramas, the range of characters played seeming to activate parts of ourselves that we had long ago forgotten or never known. We are surprised at the energy and zest released in giving operatic dimensions to contempt, jealousy, vengefulness, rage - emotions we find hard to own. Drama has given us a form in which to fruitfully shape these feelings. For instance, what happens to anger in our lives? It gets leaked out in spiteful ways, or buried under addictions, or turns into disease. We find ourselves recognising truths about ourselves that have lain unexpressed for years. We acknowledge the importance of both being witnessed and of witnessing. That you have cared enough to watch and be with me in my story has eased an old ache. That you have trusted me enough to bring me into your story and let me share your experience has opened my heart.

We start to talk of what it means to share from the depths of our souls and then we stop and no-one speaks for a long while. Words will not say it. We sit with gently focussed eyes, listening with all our bodies. The air moves between us like a connecting ocean, breathed out by one, breathed in by another. The silence is full to brimming. We are content just to be. At last a shift of mood, unspoken but agreed upon, and someone remembers the image of Gary in the "good fairy" costume and we start to laugh until some of us are rolling backwards, sputtering and snorting as we fail to get the words out to add to the memory. "Oh my God, when he..." unfinished due to total body collapse. Mary gets as far as "And those boots he was wearing...."and then abandons herself to a series of wordless squeals which add to our delight. Our joy seems true companion of the pain we have shared. It washes over us with the same cleansing power. We rejoice in our creativity. We marvel at the uniqueness of each of us. We are amazed at our sameness. We have shared our pain, longings, fears, and joys. And in acknowledging our aloneness we have found communion. As we look around our closing circle with a renewed sense of compassion and understanding for ourselves and each other we are at this moment in touch with the mystery of life.

So let ask again the question with which we started this study. Can drama lead us back to the source of our own truths and enable us to gain insight into our life patterns? Our investigation into the experience of the participants in "Journey to the Well," leads us to conclude that, yes, drama can be the medium for such personal learning. As Whitmont so clearly describes, what the mind

can only struggle to know, the lived body participating in the ritual enactment of drama, can know and integrate.

> By connecting with body activity, then, we link our awareness with the activated magical dimension of the unconscious psyche...What we have come to call an altered state of consciousness ensues whenever emotionally charged imagery connects with bodily experience or activity. This 'magically' altered state of consciousness can bring forth changes on the biological and psychological level which could not be accomplished by mere willing or reflecting (Whitmont, 1982: 242).

We need not only the rational approach to life, but also a mythopoetic rendering of life's meaning.

If we answer this call to find meaning, we will journey throughout our lives in a heroic search of our true selves, and only through this symbolic search can we hope to find each other.

> The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas and inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn (Campbell, 1949: 29).

"True to its origins in the L. deus "god," "the shining one," linked to dies "the luminous sky," "the light of day," and to acta diurna "things done daily - and recorded, " through to diurnata "a day's work or travel," "the Journey" has led us to experience what it might mean to be "a splinter of the infinite deity" (Jung, 1965: 4). We have discovered within us the power to dissolve our outward divisions. We have gathered insights and understanding and shared in a refreshment of the spirit. And the journey continues.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Concluding Comments

The entire world comes together in the homeward journey.

Bernd Jager

My thesis examined the question of what we can discover about ourselves through drama. Specifically I looked at how story can be a container for the deeper truths of our existence and how enactment of the story can revitalise awareness of our underlying beliefs. It is interesting, but not too surprising, that it is the kind of enquiry that many people regard as "a bit off the beaten track" by which I think they mean "can we take it seriously?"

Recently, a friend who acts as lawyer for native Indian land claims told me about a case she was involved in where the witness wanted to sing a song in court as evidence. The woman was in the midst of telling her adaawk. Which in her particular First Nation people is the name given to the traditional stories handed down within families. These metaphorical stories are not only spiritually significant to the individual families, but they contain the oral history of the people and their territory. The witness had reached the part in her story when traditionally a dirge is to be sung. The judge, who had difficulty in accepting that story could be held as admissable evidence in the first place, completely balked at the idea of having to listen to a song. He demurred in every way possible. He reminded counsel that this was a trial and not a "performance." He professed himself "embarrassed" and asked if the witness could not simply write down the words of the song without having to sing them. His discomfort was obvious. He was a man with years of experience in a position of power, he was used to being

deferred to as authority, dealing with facts, to being in control. And here a witness was asking him to enter another realm of knowing - to share in her experience of lived feeling for her land, her people and her history - through story and song. I can imagine the judge's resistance as he was asked to leave the seemingly solid ground of his rational/logical approach and to enter the world of the mythopoetic. What for the witness was an offering of great significance, was for the judge an inappropriate performance.

This story exemplifies for me the artificial mind/body split which we are faced with in Western society. We are focussed on going for the facts, getting results, gaining control over, rather than surrendering, to our own experience. Like the judge, we are ruled by cause and effect in a world where everything can be reduced to a black and white fact on paper and there is no room for intuition, feeling, or symbolic imagery, in other words, the world of the mythopoetic. In the preksent I have referred frequently to Edward C. Whitmont because he writes so urgently about this growing alienation which is apparent in the individual and at all levels of society, which has resulted from our attempt to separate ourselves from our 'gut' feelings, our intuitive wisdom, our fear of not having a ready answer. Poet Robert Bly offers a similar warning when he says that we have become so identified with our rational-logical response to daily life that we have lost touch with our soul. Dorothy Heathcote referring specifically to problems of education asks how we can expect our young people to respond enthusiastically to learning when what we offer them are dry facts that have little relevance to a felt experience of the world around them and that do nothing to awaken their spirit. Each of us has felt at some level the longing to engage with

life, to find our own personal meaning, to experience a feeling of wholeness, to know ourselves as more than the sum of our parts, which, after all, are finally reducible to just a handful of ashes.

Laurens van der Post, (1958), tells how the Bushmen of the Kalahari generously shared with him and his film crew all the secrets of their ability to survive in the desert, in effect the refined technology they had developed in order to sustain life in such barren conditions. But the things they kept back from him until they truly trusted him were the dances, the songs and the stories. In these they kept alive the spirit and soul of their people. And van der Post (speaks with regret of the damage that we are capable of doing to them by what he refers to as "our radio-active intellect" (p. 244).

It is not that we should dismiss the value of the rational-logical mind, but that we need a balance. In order to experience a sense of wholeness we must give as much attention to our inner symbolic world, as we have shown to the development of linear, orderly thought. As Heathcote says, we must be willing to understand emotionally as well as intellectually. We must recognize the limitations of our neatly ordered "right-handed" knowledge and learn to value the left-handed way of knowing. We must learn to tell our stories and sing our songs.

This it seems to me is the very real value of the kind of experience offered in "Journey to the Well" as described in this study. Symbolic story and drama bring us to the left-handed way of knowing. It opens up to us the deep truths of

our mythopoetic nature where personal meaning lies curled in randomly chosen forms. It is a paradoxical world this symbolic realm. It demands a surrender. Although it brings us in touch with our inner wisdom, we can't go into it thinking we have the answers. Symbol is not consciously created. Only after it has been formed can we stand back and find its meaning.

It is a journey to the self, that centre of being which Jacobi (1959) describes as embracing "our whole living organism, [and which] not only contains the deposit and totality of all past life, but is also a point of departure, the fertile soil from which all future life will spring" (p. 64). While we may gain knowledge of parts of the self, its totality remains ever a mystery leading us, as Jacobi (1965) says, to know more. "Actually the Self is everywhere and behind everything. It is as though, all his life, man were circling round it, ever drawing closer in narrower and narrower circles, perceiving its effects and its actuality ever more clearly, but without ever unveiling its ultimate secret" (p. 56). Along the way we will be hindered or helped by our personal mythology, by which term I refer to those beliefs, assumptions, and expectations, collected and shaped through past experience and cultural influence, which become organized into our unconscious infrastructure. Feinstein and Krippner (1988) point out the importance of finding a way to become acquainted with these myths, in order to let go of the ones that may be limiting

> Very early in your life, you began to create a mythology to cope with your unique circumstances. If you came to believe that the world is a loveless place, you may for self-protection, have sensibly avoided intimacy. If, as an adult, you are able to recognize that you are living a mythology that is keeping you emotionally isolated, you then have a choice. (p. 34)

So we may say that one of the purposes of the symbolic enactments in "The Journey" is to acquaint us with our choices.

The development of "Journey to the Well" took place in much the same way that participants now take part in it. The story came to me in an intuitive way. It seemed right. But I had no idea when I first created it of the significance of the story to my own life. The material itself has gradually lead me to an understanding of my own story, my own mythology. And as I have recognized this, so my understanding and appreciation for the nature and value of story and drama as a medium for self-understanding has grown.

Undertaking this study has both increased my grasp on the material and raised new questions. I have enjoyed the challenge of trying to describe the workshop in words that also conveyed the shared felt experience. The themes that I previously recognized in an unarticulated way now stand clearly visible and seem to beckon me. Where they will lead I do not know, but I am interested to follow them further.

And my contemplation of the metathemes has brought another aspect of my individual story to mind. At the beginning of this study I mentioned that as a child I was a war evacuee and spent my first six years with a family in Wales, from whom I was one day removed without explanation when the war was over. The sadness and uncomprehension of this sudden separation from everything familiar to me became a central part of my primary scenario, or personal mythology. Three years ago just before I applied to the graduate program at

S.F.U. I made a journey back to the village in Wales where I had been evacuated and found that the people there still remembered me and talked about me. They welcomed me back as if they had been saving a place for me all this time and after forty-odd years I had finally come home. My presence was the occasion for much story-telling at every house I visited. They told of my separation from the village, my travels around the world (which is how they explained my living in Canada) and the wonder of my return. And there was something so powerful and healing in the telling of these stories. I think now that through my return a cycle had been completed which spoke to each one of us about the ongoing nature and rythym of life. So now I am drawn to wonder about the importance of home-coming. What would it look like if we explored it through a workshop?

This is what I find to be the power of the kind of drama described in this study. It can take us where the spirit wants to go. It gives voice to the call of unknown yearnings. It is the drama of coming home to oneself. And within it we can find not only our own story and our own song, but we come to a profound understanding that in finding ourselves, we find each other.

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