

TRAUMA, DISSOCIATION AND THE JOURNEY TO SOUL HEALING

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I dedicate this work
in gratitude
to
my always patient and supportive
partner Jim
and
to
my also patient and supportive
children
Lydia and Alexander

Abstract

This research is a narrative inquiry into the immediate and long-term effects of soul loss retrieval as a way of recovering from long-term trauma and dissociation. Particular interest is placed on the ability of soul retrieval to restore wholeness and power balance to a person's life.

I inquired into the lived experiences of soul healing, as described by four women who participated in a soul loss recovery journey, part of the Trauma Recovery Certification Program developed and taught by Dr. Jane A. Simington. I chose this method because it is a pioneering attempt to blend modern psychoanalytic techniques with ancient shamanic approaches that are still being used in traditional cultures all over the world.

This particular therapeutic approach to Trauma Recovery addresses healing at a soul level. It is consistent with a growing interest in the spiritual, and in particular, in the journey of the soul. Shamanism is one form within the spiritual domain that weaves in ancient spiritual healing techniques, thus enriching and gathering together old and modern understandings of how we heal at a soul level.

This research is also responsive to the context of our ethnically conscious and diverse society. It raises awareness and invites conversation about different paradigms of healing, and potentially offers more easily accessible choices to traumatized people.

Key words: trauma, PTSD, dissociation, soul loss, power loss, soul loss retrieval, soul healing, shamanic healing.

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Authors Note

The topic of the inquiry is soul pain, soul loss, and soul recovery. Before delving into the topic of trauma and its effects on the soul, I would like to elaborate on my beliefs about the nature of soul and soul loss due to traumatic events.

I believe that the soul is our connection with the Divine of it All. The existence of the soul is so far not scientifically provable, but for many nevertheless very real. Similar to the phenomenon of God, from a spiritual and philosophical perspective, the soul is being seen and experienced individually, on an intimate level. It can be perceived very differently, from one person to another, even when both people are from the same culture or religious orientation.

M. Villoldo mentioned in his book *Mending the Past and Healing the Future with Soul Retrieval* (2005) that soul and spirit are in the domain of the mind. I agree that the mind is the control centre for the soul, but I believe that the soul is an integral part of every cell in our body. Every cell contains a complete set of chromosomes with all the information about who we are on a biological and on a spiritual level. Our collective subconscious knowledge, which I believe goes back all the way to our beginnings, is encoded in those chromosomes in the same way as the color of our eyes and the size of our bodies. It needs a communication exchange with the mind-brain centre to become activated, but is stored in the brain and on a cellular level. Each cell is connected energetically with every other, building a matrix within and around our body. Our body is our Soul, and the vessel of the Spirit energy (Fox & Sheldrake, 1991). Our body is the temple of the Divine, and there are many layers within that temple.

I sought out the help of guided visualization and therapeutic art to inquire into my intuitive belief about soul, and soul loss, as I experience it at the moment. In a guided journey, I went to the sacred fire within me. There I invited my soul to join me and answer my questions about its nature and its role in my life. An old woman joined me in the circle and we had a long conversation, of which I do not remember much, but after the visualization, I had the desire to create a few pictures.

“*Figure 1. Soul as a vessel*”, depicts the soul as a vessel. The blue colour symbolizes for purpose and direction, and black, the energy of power.

“*Figure 2. Inside view of soul-vessel*”, depicts the vessel’s inside from the side view. The dark yellow center represents the Spirit, that which is part of, and connects us



Figure 1: Soul as a vessel.



Figure 2: Inside view of soul-vessel

with the Divine energy of the universe and with every other element of the animate and inanimate part of the Earth. The Spirit energy is surrounded by the green energy of creativity and the ability to co-create life and our future. The outer red layer, around creativity is the colour of passion which supplies fuel and motivation to our creative powers. The outer layer of blue gives passion direction, and helps it to move forward. Black is the layer of personal power and authority that protects and strengthens the creativity, passion and purpose. I found it interesting that there is also a little bit of black between every layer inside the soul. It makes sense that every layer within the soul would contain a little bit of power and authority of it's own. When parts become separated, due to a moderate traumatic situation, they are able to find their way back on their own with the help of this personal power and authority energy.

"Figure 3. Soul vessel from above", is the view of the soul from the top. In this picture one can see all the bands of colours, but the red and blue are out of place, which makes me believe that the layers are not static but fluid and interchangeable. I have the impression that the soul is flexible and adaptable depending on the character of a person, and the life situations a person finds him/herself in.



Figure 3: Soul-vessel from above

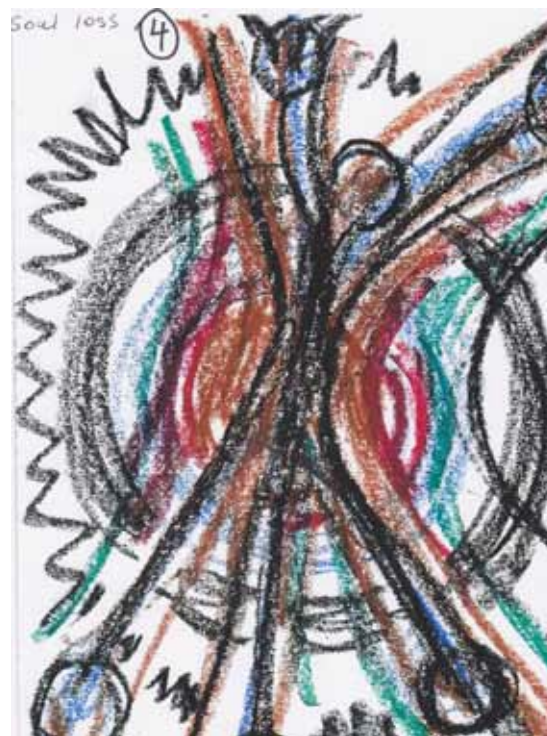


Figure 4: Violent intrusion upon soul

“Figure 4. Violent intrusion upon soul”, depicts a situation of soul loss, a moderate-to-severe traumatic event has broken through the soul’s protective shield and has pierced the soul. This event that was so stressful that parts of the soul became separated. They are still connected with the help of the long black energy strands, but are outside of the protective shield, vulnerable and exposed to further attacks. Also, the protective personal power (black colour) is leaking in the places of impact. A soul with a leaking personal power also loses its spirit, purpose and direction. I believe that this energy receives constant replenishment from other souls of this earth, and from the universe, but the constant leaking makes it weak and ineffective. That’s why the soul reminds the conscious mind, with the help of flashbacks and triggers, to do something about it. The soul cannot heal itself without the cooperation and involvement of the conscious mind. Healing requires an active decision about whether one really wants to learn and grow; that decision lies in the realm of awareness and free choice.

“Figure 5. Dissociated soul parts”, depicts what happens when the soul is violated severely and repeatedly. The whole soul has been split, or shattered into many smaller parts. The shattered parts are not like broken glass, but more like Mercury droplets.



Figure 5: Dissociated soul parts

When Mercury falls and hits a surface, tiny little droplets scatter all around. If those droplets are brought close enough together, they automatically merge again into each other. Shattered or split soul parts are similar to Mercury droplets. They are still not very far from each other, but no longer in communication. If the traumatic event happens more than once, those separated soul parts can shatter again.

This is how I imagine the soul of a person with a dissociative disorder looks like. It must take enormous energy to keep some connection between the scattered soul parts, with all the energy that is leaking out of them. As with a scattered drop of Mercury, it requires an outside force to help the little soul droplets find each other again, particularly if they have to merge more than once. I see psychological interventions, such as psychotherapy and guided soul retrievals as such forces which help severely traumatized people restore wholeness, joy, and meaning in their lives.

In the near future it is my intention to become such a psychotherapist.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
General Statement	1
Exploration of Key Words and Background Context	1
Research Question	3
Author's Personal and Professional Interest in the Topic of Trauma	4
Choice of Method	5
Summary of Results	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review into the Topic of Trauma	7
Definition of Trauma	7
A Short History of Trauma	8
Historic foundations of trauma research.	8
Post 9/11 trauma awareness.	10
Clinical focus on trauma research after 9/11.	11
Trauma and the neurophysiology of dissociation.	12
Flashbacks and triggers.	13
Clinical understandings in transition.	14
Trauma and Psychotherapeutic Theories and Techniques	15
Trauma and Spiritual Themes	18
Particular References to the Nature of Soul	20
Shamans and Traditional Soul Retrieval	22
Dr. Simington's Soul Retrieval Technique	22
Coming Full Circle	23
Chapter 3: Method and Ethical Considerations	25
The Research Question and my Ontological and Epistemological Foundation	25
Narrative Inquiry Methodology - Theory and Method	26
Historical overview.	26
Fundamental elements of narrative inquiry.	27
Why narrative inquiry for this study.	29
Ethical Considerations	32
Ethics of choosing participants	32

	33
Data collection	33 33
Ethics of relationships	33
Data analysis	34
Providing for security of the data	35
Validation of the research	35
Chapter 4: Karin: A Long Journey Home	38
Brief Historical Summary of Upper Silesia	39
Personal Family History	41
My maternal Orzechowski roots.	41
My paternal Ochmann roots.	42
Flashes of Memory: Upper Silesia	43
Flashes of Memory: Berlin	46
The Journey of an Orphan Child	47
Author's Soul Loss Recovery Experiences	49
Spiritual Development and Growth Collage	54
Short and Long-term Effects of Soul Loss Retrieval	58
Chapter 5: Mabel	61
Summary of Mabel's Transcript in Poetry Form	63
Karin's Art Response to Mabel	71
The Emergence of a Warrior Goddess	72
Mabel's Granddaughters and her Precious Little Pieces	76
Chapter 6: Robin	77
Karin's Art Response to Robin	78
Summary of Robin's Transcript in Poetry Form	82
Robin's Narrative: Content Analysis	88
Robin and Mary Magdalene: A Theological Reflection	89
Chapter 7: Apple	95
Highlights of Apple's Transcript in her Own Words	97
Apple's Narrative: Content Analysis	101
Karin's Art Response to Apple	102
Sleeping Beauty and Apple: A Fairy Tale	104
Sleeping Beauty and Apple: A Reflection	106

Chapter 8: The Researcher's Reflections on the Research Process	109
Negotiating a Narrative Inquiry	109
In the Midst of the Research Project: Research Collaboration and Relationships	109
Observations and Feelings of a Researcher as a Participant	113
The Birth of a Soulful Psychotherapist	115
Chapter 9: Summary	118
Similarities and Differences Across Four Narratives	118
Results	119
Trauma: Experience of soul pain, soul loss, and power loss	119
Dissociation: A way to cope and heal	120
Soul retrieval and Soul healing	122
Soul pain and soul recovery in a broader context	125
Artistic Expression of Collective Soul Growth	126
Discussion	129
Requirements and Cautions of Soul Retrieval Technique	129
Possibilities for further research	131
Areas of potential application	131
References	137
Appendices	
Appendix A: Letter of Invitation	148
Appendix B: Letter of Consent	150

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Soul as a vessel

Figure 2. Inside view of the soul-vessel

Figure 3. Soul-vessel from above

Figure 4. Soul loss

Figure 5. Dissociated soul parts

Figure 6. Beuthen 1919-1945

Figure 7. Bytom after 1945

Figure 8. Karin's genogram

Figure 9. Karin's safe place

Figure 10. Karin's spiritual growth collage Figure 11. Karin's interpretation of

Mabel Figure 12. Mabel the warrior goddess Figure 13. Karin's interpretation

of Robin Figure 14. Robin's Growth

Figure 15. Karin's art response to apple

Figure 16. Apple's spiral

Figure 17. Collective soul growth interpretation

Chapter 1: Introduction

General Statement

This thesis is an inquiry into the immediate and long-term experiences after a soul retrieval process. I chose narrative inquiry as my methodology because I agree with Bateson (1994), that “our species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories” (p. 11). I explored experiences of soul pain, soul loss and soul healing from the perspective of four middle-aged women through the use of their stories. The focus of these stories was the short and long-term experiences of growth following a specific soul retrieval technique. This technique was taught as part of a trauma recovery program to assist people healing from effects of long-term psychological trauma and dissociation (Simington, 2001).

I became interested in this topic because I was fascinated by the complexity of coping mechanisms and resiliency that we humans display when thrown into very difficult situations by outside forces or internal decisions. I was also fascinated by the range of human reactions when faced with traumatic situations; I wondered why some people function well, or even thrive, after such an experience, while others are not as successful.

Exploration of Key Words and Background Context

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (Updated, 2009), trauma is a serious injury, or shock to the body, from violence. It is also an emotional wound or shock that creates substantial, lasting damage to the psychological development of a person, often leading to neurosis (<http://thefreedictionary.com/trauma>, retrieved March 5, 2012). It shatters our normal and healthy daily functioning on physical, emotional and spiritual levels (Oltmanns, 2006).

Trauma, and its effect on our well-being, is an important and pressing issue because of its prevalence in our society. It is estimated that 40-70% of the general population will experience some form of trauma in their lifetime, 14-33% will develop Acute Stress Disorder, and 8%-12% will be treated for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Herman, 1992). Daily graphic media coverage of traumatic local and world events, such as natural disasters and human atrocities, contributes to the development of vicarious trauma. Such trauma has the potential to develop into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in emotionally sensitive adults and children. People already suffering

from PTSD and other trauma-induced dysfunctions find daily televised graphic reports of traumatic world events difficult to avoid, causing them great distress (Oltmanns, 2006; Williams & Banyard, 1998).

Many clinical interventions address somewhat successfully the physical symptoms of stress-related disorders - Anxiety, Depression, psychological trauma - with pharmacological medications, often in addition to psychotherapeutic techniques (Friedman & Davidson, 2007). There are many different approaches to choose from, but the process is often arduous and time consuming (Fontaine, 2000; Herbert & Wetmore, 2008). More spiritually-oriented, complementary methods of healing, such as the practice of mindfulness, meditation, energy transfer work and hypnosis, have been added to the plethora of interventions because they were discovered to also be effective (Fontaine, 2000; Rothschild, 2003, 2010).

From a spiritual point of view, traumatic events have a detrimental effect on our connection between body and Spirit. The Soul is our bodily connection with the Divine energy of the Spirit. It is where the mundane meets the Divine in us. It is the seat of what Jung called the Higher Self, the God within (Sharp, 1998), and our direct connection with the energy of the universe (Fox, 1995). Nevertheless, spirituality is still widely ignored by the modern biological and psychological fields of study and practice (Simington, 2003, 2010).

During the last two decades shamanism has resurfaced in the Western world of healing with a startling strength because people are seeking alternative and often spiritually-oriented solutions to their health problems. Shamanism embodies an ancient wisdom of health that does not distinguish between physiological diseases, such as cancer or diabetes, and psychological disorders. Shamanic healers see these conditions, and many others, as symptoms of a spiritual illness, which is the loss of a sacred oneness with the universe, Creator, or the Divine (Harner, 1990; Ingerman, 1991; Cowan, 2003; Villoldo, 2000, 2010; Deatsman & Bowersox, 2009).

From the shamanic perspective, soul loss happens when traumatic events sever pieces from a person's soul and trap them in the time and space of that event. For healing to happen on the spiritual, emotional and physical levels, all of the levels have to be addressed, and that means that the lost soul parts need to be recovered and returned to their original place in the soul, in addition to a physical treatment of the

body (Villoldo, 2000, 2010).

True to shamanic tradition, psychologist Dr. Jane A. Simington believes that at the core of trauma is a sense of disempowerment and spiritual disconnection. In order to address those issues, Dr. Simington (2003, 2010) developed a unique method of soul loss retrieval. The process is a blend of approaches based on Jungian psychology, modern discoveries in trauma-induced brain physiology, elements of contemporary clinical psychotherapeutic technique, traditional North American aboriginal wisdom, and shamanic technique.

Soul loss retrieval is an essential part of the Trauma Recovery Certification Program developed and taught by Dr. Simington (2001). The course is a three-week intensive program designed to teach professionals from diverse helping professions who are interested in an in-depth holistic approach to treatment of people suffering from long-term effects of trauma. The course has an educational and experiential component because Dr. Simington believes that, as counsellors, we can take our clients only as far as we have gone ourselves (2001). For that purpose, every course participant learns about the theory of holistic trauma processing, personally engages in all experiential components, and receives the opportunity to heal his/her personal past traumatic experiences. Considering that many participants are wounded healers, with often considerable personal past traumatic experience, it is not uncommon to observe very profound and intense healing moments.

The Research Question

In the past, I have been both a participant and an assistant instructor at the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. I experienced the effects of the treatment on myself, and observed it on others. As a developing holistic practitioner with an interest in research, I wanted to inquire into how this experience of soul loss retrieval affected other graduates' lives after the program. Did it change their worldview and their personal relationships? Did they use the techniques learned in the Trauma Recovery Certification Program in their own practices? How successful were they with using the techniques on their clients?

Out of those ponderings, my research question crystalized as:

What is a person's experience of moving from power and soul loss towards soul and power retrieval as a way of recovering from long-term effects of trauma and

dissociation after a specific treatment program of trauma recovery.

Author's Personal and Professional Interest in the Topic of Trauma

My interest in the topic of trauma processing and shamanic soul loss retrieval was both personal and professional. Personally, I understand trauma intuitively on a very deep and profound level. I was born 14 years after the end of WW II, to a German family in Upper Silesia, South Poland. This was a German territory, annexed by Poland after the Second World War. Many of my family members and neighbors were very traumatized due to the horrors of WW II and the political upheavals following the war. My experience of trauma is generational, political, social and cultural. It is a vicarious trauma experienced through living with people and surrounded by a culture that would now be diagnosed as suffering from PTSD.

Professionally, completing Dr. Simington's Trauma Recovery Certification Program in 2009 affirmed in me that trauma treatment would be the foundation of my professional career. Following the program, I spent one year counseling and supporting Edmonton's inner city homeless as part of my first practicum toward the Masters in Psychotherapy and Spirituality Program (MPS). In that practicum, I had the opportunity to be present to severely traumatized people. The experience deepened even more my desire to focus my counseling work within the trauma processing field.

In my second practicum, I assisted Dr. Simington in one of her Trauma Processing courses. As an experienced Reiki practitioner and visualization guide prior to becoming an MPS student, I was comfortable and adept with most of the techniques employed in the Program. The ease with which I embraced the shamanic techniques of soul travel confirmed in my mind that I have an aptitude for shamanic healing. Consequently, I was very interested in how successful this holistic, shamanic approach is, particularly with regard to its long-term effects.

To embrace and deepen my understanding of trauma, and its effects on the human body, mind and spirit, I explored in my literature review questions such as: How does trauma affect our physical, emotional, and spiritual functioning? How does modern clinical trauma research and practice inform and heal human conditions related to trauma? What is soul from a spiritual perspective, and how is trauma an experience of soul loss? How does soul retrieval or power retrieval work as a means of recovery from trauma and dissociation? How is dissociation viewed from a clinical versus holistic and

shamanic approach? What is the role of trance-work in the soul retrieval journey and the subsequent possible recovery? How could the co-researchers' cultural backgrounds, world views, and religious beliefs influence their soul healing experiences? Such guiding questions that crystalized out of my research question helped me to navigate the wide and rich field of trauma research and popular literature, and stay focused on my topic of soul loss and soul recovery experience.

Choice of Method

I explored my research question using qualitative inquiry as my method because I was interested in an in-depth description and analysis of life experiences. After a preliminary literature review of different types of qualitative research approaches (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Glesne, 2005; Schram, 2000), I chose the narrative methodology (Abbott, 2008; Clandinin & Connelly; Clandinin, 2007; Lieblich, 1998; Speedy, 2008). This storied format of data collection and representation proved to be very respectful and effective for my co-researcher's sharing of their life experiences before and after the journey of soul loss retrieval. It also reflected most accurately my personal preferences as a storyteller and researcher.

Chapter three delves more deeply into the topic and application of narrative inquiry. Chapter eight describes in detail my feelings and reflections with regard to my dual role as a participant and as a researcher. In chapter eight I also debrief the interactive and, at times, surprising nature of my relationship with each co-researcher, and the topic of my research.

Summary of the Results

All four women involved in this research are of middle age. Mabel is an aboriginal woman of Cree descent. Robin and Apple are Canadian women of European descent. I am from Berlin, Germany, and for the last twenty five years have been a Landed Immigrant in Alberta.

All four co-researchers agreed that long-term healing requires a conscious and active participation in the healing process. Based on personal experience, they believe that soul loss retrieval is an important, but not the only, aspect of that healing. Regular self-care, self-reflection and self-analysis are vital for the healing achievements to have a lasting effect. Without a decisive commitment towards change and growth on the part of the healing person, and reliable, caring support from family, friends and a

professional counsellor, soul retrieval technique, while not harmful, can be ineffective and/or disappointing.

Our stories of soul loss, soul pain and soul growth after soul retrieval are described in detail in chapters four, five, six, and seven. Each person has an entire chapter devoted to their narrative.

The following chapter is a summary of the literature that helped me to contextualize my research topic and solidify my research question. Although it is recommended for qualitative research inquiries to incorporate literature as appropriate through the telling of the story (Clandinin, 2007; Glesne, 2005), I believe that research about soul loss and soul healing with the help of soul retrieval, can be better understood when viewed within the larger context of trauma research in general. With the help of this literature review, I felt comfortable to position the present study as a bridge between the modern, clinical approaches to trauma issues (Cahill & Foa, 2007; Rothschild, 2000, 2003; Saxe, MacDonald & Ellis, 2007; Welch & Rothbaum, 2007), and traditional, holistic perspectives on soul, soul loss and soul healing (Ingerman, 1991; Harner, 1980; Villoldo, 2005, 2010).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we need to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such.

Slavoj Zizek (as quoted in Edkins, 2003, p. 1)

Definition of Trauma

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR, 2000), trauma is the experience of “an event involving actual or imagined threat of death or serious injury to self or others, or a response to intense fear, helplessness, or horror, in reaction to a traumatic event” (p. 519). The body responds to a traumatic event with Acute Stress (AS). If severe enough, this sensation can escalate into an Acute Stress Disorder (ASD). If those symptoms persist over a longer period of time, Acute Stress Disorder can become a Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This latter condition is defined by symptoms of hypo-and/or hyper-arousal, helplessness, fear, dissociation, and uncontrollable re-experiencing of the traumatic moments through flashbacks. As a result, people with PTSD invest a lot of their energy into avoiding those triggers, which in turn can significantly restrict their way of living (Oltmanns, 2006; Cahill & Foa, 2007).

When trauma is severe enough or happens repeatedly, those suffering from ASD or PTSD can develop Dissociative Disorders, which are persistent and maladaptive disruptions in the integration of memory, consciousness, and identity. These Disorders exist within a range. When the stress is relatively mild, the dissociation may simply manifest as an escape from an undesired thought or situation into a more desirable one, such as daydreaming or losing oneself in a good book. At the onset of a very stressful event, the dissociation can cause the mind to separate itself from the body in order to escape the traumatic situation. During such a Depersonalization, people often describe themselves as watching the stressful event from above or afar. As the extent of the trauma increases, one may dissociate by “forgetting”, or blocking from memory, the traumatic experience. This Dissociative Amnesia can last for a short or a long time. Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID) is the most severe Disorder in this category (Brewin 2007; DePrince & Freyd, 2007; Irwin, 1999; Oltmanns, 2006).

A Short History of Trauma

Trauma has been a consistent part of the human experience from our very beginning, though the study of trauma as a discipline in our Western World is quite recent. It is important to acknowledge the great accomplishments of modern psychological research and, in particular, trauma research. Yet, despite its great accomplishments in the last 30 years, it is also important to be aware that this research is still in its infancy stage (Herman, 1992). Studies tend to be field-specific; such as physiological, neurological, and psychological. What remains, are still largely unexplored inquiries into the nature of the soul and its connections with the above mentioned field-specific studies, as well as their interconnectedness with each other. Such interconnectedness will allow a deeper and more rounded understanding of what it is to be human.

Historic foundations of trauma research.

“Our contemporary understanding of psychological trauma is built upon the synthesis of three lines of investigation” (Herman, 1992, p. 9). They are the psychoanalytic studies of “hysterical” women, studies on the effects of war, and the attention brought by the feminist movement to the effects of violence against women and children.

The studies of “hysterical” women at the end of the 19th century, by Charcot, Janet, Freud, and Breuer, observed that unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness. In turn, those unbearable states of consciousness induced the hysterical symptoms. Janet called this alteration in consciousness *dissociation*. Breuer and Freud called it *double consciousness* (Hermann, 1992). They independently concluded that hysteria was a condition caused by psychological trauma. Janet and Freud also discovered that “*hysteria* symptoms could be alleviated when the traumatic memories as well as the intense feelings that accompanied them were recovered and put into words.” (Herman, 1992, p. 12). This method of treatment became the basis of modern psychotherapy. After these above investigations and discoveries, the topic of trauma lay dormant for almost half a century.

The second line of trauma investigation started after WWI with studies of soldiers exhibiting symptoms of *shell shock* and *combat neurosis*. It intensified after WW II and reached its peak interest after the Vietnam War (Oltmanns, 2006). The “political context of this investigation line was the collapse of a cult of war and the growth of an antiwar movement” (Herman 1992, p. 9). In the 1970s, many Vietnam Veterans Against the War, or rap *groups*, raised awareness in the civilian public about the effects

of war, and particularly about the lasting psychological and physical injuries of combat. As a direct result of that movement, the Veterans' Administration commissioned comprehensive studies tracing the impact of wartime experiences on the lives of returning veterans (Hunt, 2001; Stacewicz, 2008). "A five-volume study on the legacies of Vietnam delineated the syndrome of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt its direct relationship to combat exposure" (Herman, 1992, p. 27).

The feminist movement in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s represents the third line of psychological trauma investigation that shaped public awareness about sexual and domestic violence. This movement broke the taboo about acknowledging family violence and tried to expose the devastating effects of this violence on women and children in North America and Western Europe. (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter, 2000; Warner, 2008). Only after 1980, when the efforts of veterans legitimized the symptoms of PTSD, could the voices of the second wave of feminism be heard in the public—that the psychological syndromes observed in survivors of rape, domestic battery of women and children, and incest were the same as the syndromes experienced by survivors of war (Cox, Kershaw & Trotter, 2000; Edkins, 2003; Herman, 1992).

In addition to these three lines of investigation into trauma, the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York, September 11, 2001, changed again the way North America and the Western world came to understand trauma. This was a pivotal event that shattered the American people's illusion of invincibility—on an individual level, and as a Nation. The 9/11 attack brought to light the revelation that such an event was not only a personal, but also a collective and a national, experience (Edkins, 2003). For many immigrants who came to North America as political refugees, such as holocaust survivors, past traumatic experiences that had lain dormant for decades were suddenly awakened, triggering an avalanche of PTSD reactions. This proved consistent with the belief that the condition of PTSD, once acquired, can become dormant but not go away (Varvin 2002; Wilson, Harel & Kahana, 1988). For weeks and months after the attack, millions of people all across North America reported symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder. It brought home a realization that malicious, human-induced, traumatic events can happen anywhere and at anytime, and that life would not be the same anymore on personal, communal or national levels (Jones, 2009).

I am particularly intrigued by Kendall Johnson's (2006) observation following

the 9/11 event. For years after 9/11, his psychotherapy practice in New York became unbalanced with clients who were not direct survivors of the 9/11 attack, but who were having great psychological difficulties with personal violence being fed by the bigger emotional instability unleashed by the 9/11 attacks. “Drama begets drama. Personal crises become more serious, more poignant and more significant when they play out against larger ones” (p. 47). This confirms that trauma experienced on communal and national levels is often lived out on individual levels within relationships and family settings.

Post 9/11 trauma awareness.

Since 9/11, the study of trauma has become more broadly defined. In the field of literature, trauma became the underlying theme for many stories in adult and children’s literature. In particular, cultural, political and domestic violence was exposed, reshaping the words and images we use when describing those events and experiences. Across all genres, there has been a proliferation of stories of children coping with parental death, neglect, abandonment, and abuse. In open and honest fashion, the devastating effects of these abuses on children and on society in general are told in great depth and detail. The stories follow the children as they grow up to become angry, dysfunctional adults, unable to integrate into society, often retreating into addictions or criminal activities. The juvenile genre in general has a more hopeful tone highlighting children and young adults’ resilience and resourcefulness in surviving even the most traumatic situations (Barry, 2006; Creech, 2009; DiCamillo, 2003; Giff, 2003; Horwath, 2003; Ibbotson, 2004; Mikaelson, 2001; Spinelli, 2003). Adult literature on the other hand can be at times very heavy-handed and dark in its description of traumatic realities (Boyne, 2006).

Trauma theorists in the field of sociology and anthropology are exploring not only how violence influences individual people, but also how communities, nations, and entire regions cope with long-term effects of violent events. These theorists draw attention to how trauma shapes our culture and how we use images to make sense of, and navigate in, our world (Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser & Sztomпка, 2004; Furedi, 2003; Malesevic, 2010; Micale & Lerner, 2001; Rhoades & Sar, 2005). Since 9/11, “the language of emotionalism pervades popular culture, the world of politics, the workplace, schools, and universities and everyday life” (Furedi, 2003, p. 1). Phrases

such as, nation in trauma, cultural trauma, national self-esteem, healing and closure, have entered into popular North American vocabulary. According to Furedi (2003), this turn towards emotionalism represents one of the most significant developments in contemporary western culture:

“The belief that individuals and society suffer from an emotional deficit informs discussions of the subject of emotional intelligence and emotional literacy. The conviction that people cannot emotionally cope with a growing range of encounters, experiences and relationships informs the way that therapeutic culture makes sense of the human condition” (p. 5).

Legal and political studies are informing the practice of law, citizenship, issues of national identity, and the shaping of political visions. It is recognized that trauma disrupts our normal expectation of the lineality of life. For example, stricter laws were developed to protect national borders which had previously been more open. “Private grief was overlaid by national mourning, and blunted or eased by stories of service and duty” (Edkins, 2003, p. 2), resulting in the birthing of a very painful collective identity. Historians are looking into our society’s past violent events, trying to understand how these events continue to shape our contemporary cultural visions and practices (Jones 2009; Godwyn & Gittell, 2012; LaCarpa, 2001; Roth, 2012).

Clinical focus on trauma research after 9/11

In the 10 years since the 9/11 catastrophe, following Western society’s awareness of, and interest in, the effects of trauma on our well being, a wealth of research has been conducted and published on the physical and psychological manifestations of trauma. I highlight some major accomplishments of this research, because it situates the present study at the crossroads between the scientific knowledge of traumatic processes in the body and mind on one side, and the more spiritually-oriented healing approaches on the other.

Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), in particular, are receiving intense interest in the clinical and research fields of psychology, neurology, medicine, and in the psychological self-help literature. One of the findings of the research is that mind and body are interconnected and should not be looked at, or treated, separately (Burstow, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Daniels, 2004; Olthmanns, 2006; Herbert & Wetmore, 2008; Craig, 2008; Jones, 2009; Schiraldi, 2009; McGraw, 2010).

Another advance made by this research is the importance of a *priori* traumatic

experience to a present diagnosis. Differentiation can be made based on past exposure to other trauma, mitigating life circumstances, if and when previous treatment occurred, and the capacity of previous treatment to build resilience. It is important to inquire about such factors in determining a best approach to present therapy (Burstow, 2003; Kaplan, 2003; Oltmanns, 2006).

Post 9/11 research also brought special attention to the impact of different sources of trauma; intentional human malicious acts, unintentional technological disasters, and natural disasters. It was discovered that of all the traumatic events, intentionally inflicted, man-made, deliberate, and malicious transgressions are the most difficult to deal with in the healing process (Edkins, 2003; Herman, 1992; Rothschild, 2000; 2003, 2006). During a natural disaster or an unintentional accident, people band together for support and comfort. On the other hand, malicious acts of violence, such as terrorist attacks, rape, or domestic physical and sexual abuse, are much harder on the human psyche, because they shatter our trust in ourselves and in other people. People suffering from prolonged trauma are also more likely to dissociate from those events. (Enns, 2004; Hughes, 2002; Loumeau-May, 2008; Malchiodi & Ginns-Gruenberg, 2008; Oltmanns, 2006, Roth, 2012).

Trauma and the neurophysiology of dissociation.

Dissociation is an integral part of ASD, PTSD, and other stress-related disorders. It is also a key component in the holistic and shamanic healing of trauma experiences. Clinical research on the phenomenon of dissociation is important because the discoveries of dissociation's biological, neurological and psychological mechanisms also complement and enrich the holistic understandings of this phenomenon.

During dissociations, people cope with difficult situations by manipulating their ability to experience, process and/or remember the traumatic events. Neuroscientists have made incredible strides in understanding memory and its functioning in the human brain, allowing for a better understanding of the complex memory blocking that occurs during dissociation (Rothschild, 2000; Oltmanns, 2006; Roth, 2012; Simington, 2008).

The brain consists of two separate hemispheres, the right and the left. The two hemispheres are connected in the centre by a large bundle of thick nerves called the corpus callosum. The corpus callosum is believed to transfer information to enhance

memory and learning. The left brain is verbal, analytical, abstract, temporal, rational, digital, logical and linear. This is the area of language and language-related abilities. Scientific approaches and their methods of deduction, as well as our education system, primarily engage the attention of the left brain hemisphere. The right brain, on the other hand, is non-verbal, synthetic, non-temporal, non-rational, spatial, intuitive, and holistic. The right hemisphere is the seat of creativity, visualization and journey work. It lacks words and therefore it simply experiences, without conscious thoughts, awareness or judgement. It is twice as fast as the left brain in processing information. By the time a person understands words, an emotional reaction to those words has already been established. The right brain can also switch into a survival mode before the left brain becomes aware of it, hence the saying “I just did it automatically”. In normal circumstances, both hemispheres work together. Following trauma, that ability is weakened and they function as separate units, resulting in a cognitive dissonance, where frightful emotions or pictures get stuck and come back to haunt our consciousness in the form of flashbacks and triggers (DePrince & Freyd, 2007; Van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth, 1996).

Flashbacks and triggers.

Flashbacks and triggers are also integral parts of PTSD as a clinical disorder, and are important elements in holistic healing. Shamans would see flashbacks and triggers as the lost soul parts’ cries for help, to be remembered and retrieved. They are the shaman’s tracking signals to the lost soul parts (Simington, 2003; Villoldo, 2000, 2005). Scientifically, they are best explained with the help of the brain function.

The amygdala and hippocampus, which are part of the limbic system, are involved in response to, and memory of, traumatic events. The amygdala, located in the mid-brain, first registers charged emotions along with the body’s sensations that accompany the emotions. This is the part of the body that signals alarm and leads the body to prepare to fight, flee or freeze. Memories of terror and its corresponding bodily sensations are not stored in the amygdala, but have to be processed by it in order to be recorded as implicit memories in the brain’s cortex. From there, traumatic memories can be accessed by the hippocampus, where they are made cognitive sense of, and put in a proper perspective and time frame. Only then can this information be permanently stored as explicit memory in the cortex, and registered as a past event (Rothschild, 2000).

During a high arousal of the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS) in the body, the amygdala records all the emotions and sensations, but the hippocampus can become overcharged and shut down. As a result, the traumatic event is prevented from becoming a conscious or explicit memory. Instead, these elements of the past experience float freely in the amygdala, invading the present as implicit memories without being able to be narrated or understood. The aroused person is triggered by an external stimulus, which can be almost anything that is reminiscent of the traumatic event; the person is forced to relive the trauma involuntarily as if it was happening now. These flashbacks are unwelcome and very distressing because the frightful events play themselves out without being able to be stopped or controlled (Herman, 1992; Rothschild, 2000, 2010; Simington, 2003).

The body can manage a traumatic reaction when the threatened person is able to fight back or flee. Serious complications occur when fight or flight is impossible and the body goes into a freeze. In this case, the human somatic system of self-defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized; time slows down, and body sensations and emotions are numbed. The mind dissociates from the body, which reduces the physical pain and the emotion of terror, at least for a while. People who survive a traumatic event with a freeze reaction find it the hardest to recover from it. They feel totally violated and guilty for not having fought back. Trauma is a psychological experience that exacts a toll on the body and mind (Rothschild, 2003; Simington, 2003; van der Kolk, 1996).

Clinical understandings in transition.

In spite of the increased amount of research confirming that dissociation can be, and often is, a direct reaction to trauma of any kind (Frewen & Lanius, 2006; Lanius, Vermetten, & Pain, 2010), it continues to be the topic of conflicting theories. A recent positive outcome of the controversy is the increased awareness of dissociation's key role in trauma development and processing, which in turn is contributing to a new assessment of dissociation in DSM5. According to Spiegel (2010), "Dissociation will be integrated into the DSM5, more closely tied to other stress and trauma-related disorders, and more clearly and simply defined" (<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/section?content=a923566964&fulltext=713240928>, Oct. 5, 2010).

Trauma and Psychotherapeutic Theories and Techniques

The field of psychology is graced with a diverse range of psychological theories and techniques. The following is a review of a few popular, mainstream psychological theories and techniques that are widely used to treat traumatized people, and are compatible with the soul retrieval technique as an integrative model (Simington, 2001, 2003, 2010).

Psychodynamic psychotherapy is based on the idea that behavior is influenced by subconscious feelings and motivations. Therapy is based on gaining insights into that unconscious material. This principle of making the unconscious conscious is the basis of psychoanalysis and many other psychotherapeutic approaches. Existential Therapy, by comparison, centers on clients making meaning from the trauma (Yalom, 2002). The focus is on lived experience in the here-and-now, versus analyzing the past. The greatest contribution of Person-Centered Therapy to understanding trauma is that by using the depth of the therapeutic relationship, we are empowered to face the trauma with new meaning (Rogers, 1980).

Body psychotherapy considers the body as part of the psychotherapy process, by paying attention to the intricate function of the nervous system, muscular anatomy and visceral system. The ultimate goal is an integration of body, mind and emotions through the entry point of the body. Some examples of body psychotherapies are described below.

Somatic Trauma Therapy, as developed by Rothschild (2003), is an integration of diverse theories and models, with “bits of original thinking and a liberal amount of common sense” (p. 26). The basis for Somatic Trauma Therapy is Rothschild’s concept of “putting on the brakes” (Rothschild, 2003, 2010) before and during work with traumatic memories.

Levine’s SIBAM model is a theoretical construct, that helps us to understand the phenomenon of dissociation. SIBAM stands for the several aspects of any experience as identified by Lavine: sensation (S), images (I), behaviors (B), affects (A), and meaning/cognitive understanding (M). Levine believed that traumatized people are likely to have one or more of these elements dissociated from the memories of the traumatic incidences. The goal of this trauma therapy is to bring all elements of a traumatic experience into consciousness and create a cohesive narrative (Levine, 1992, as quoted

in Rothschild, 2003, p. 31).

Bodydynamic Running Technique, was developed as a way to awaken or re-awaken the flight reflex, and to create internally the impression of being able to run away from the trauma. This latter technique is particularly helpful for clients who could not flee in their traumatic real life experience.

Eye Movement Desensitization Reprograming (EMDR) (Shapiro, 1995), and Thought Field Therapy (Callahan, 2001) could also fit into this category because they involve manipulating eye movement and bodily sensation to recondition emotions connected with memories (Rothschild, 2003, 2010). Elements of EMDR (Shapiro 1995) and TFT (Callahan, 2001) are taught in the Trauma Recovery Program to mental health professionals as options to deal with the maladaptive trauma coping mechanisms after a successful soul retrieval journey. (Simington, 2001).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CTB), as originally developed by Albert Ellis (Cory, 2005), is based on the principle that how we think has a great influence on how we feel and behave. It is a psycho-educational model which emphasizes therapy as a learning process, including learning new ways of thinking, acquiring and practicing new sets of skills, and developing more effective ways of coping with problems. It is believed that once traumatized people change the way they think about their problems or traumatic events, then changes in emotion and behavior will follow. Most modern counseling and psychotherapy approaches have roots in one or more aspects of CBT. This includes Prolonged Exposure Therapy (Foa, Hemmer & Rothbaum, 2002), a form of behavioral therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy designed to treat PTSD and other trauma related disorders with the help of “imaginal exposure” as a form of desensitization from the troubling or traumatic event (Rothschild, 2003).

Experiential therapies such as Gestalt Therapy, founded in the 1940s by Fredrik (Fritz) S. Pearls (Pearls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1994) is also used in trauma therapy because it focuses on the here-and-now rather than on the roots of personal problems. Its emphasis is on personal choice and responsibility. The most widely known aspect of Gestalt Therapy is the “empty chair” technique. This technique is useful for engaging with internal conflicts and dialogues in a concrete way. These conflicts are projected outward, where they can be viewed, assessed and changed (Houston, 2003).

Postmodern approaches such as Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) and

Narrative Therapy are particularly compatible with the holistic and spiritual soul retrieval philosophy. The common premise is that there are multiple realities and multiple truths outside of our experience or relationship with what is or has been apparent. Both theories reject the idea that reality is external and can only be understood, not constructed. Postmodern and shamanic approaches avoid pathologizing clients and place a high value on discovering and nurturing clients' strengths and resources, all elements vital in trauma treatment (de Shazer, 1988; Simington, 2003, 2007; White & Epston, 1990).

Many contemporary therapists use more than one approach to counseling. Kottler (2010) describes very appropriately the eclectic and multi-dimensional orientation of the present day psychotherapist when he states:

We could once easily identify ourselves as a strong follower of one particular persuasion—as psychodynamic, existential, cognitive-behavioral, or whatever the case might be. Nowadays almost everyone is eclectic or pragmatic, or at least interactive, no matter what the espoused ideology. We might call ourselves constructivist, feminist, or humanist, and we might describe ourselves as psychodynamic, cognitive, Gestalt, narrative or relational therapists; but the reality is that we now borrow concepts and ideas from a variety of approaches, depending on the context, and presenting complaints of our clients, not to mention our own mood (p. IX).

All of the above-mentioned methods and techniques proved to be equally valuable in helping traumatized clients regain control over their lives and emotions, and function satisfactorily in their everyday activities (Hubble, Duncan, & Miller, 1999). Yet, regrettably, with the exception of body therapy, the majority of these methods still concentrate mostly on gaining the attention of the left hemisphere, ignoring the needs and gifts of the right hemisphere where most of the traumatic material is stuck (Rothschild, 2003, 2010). Babette Rothschild (2003) believes that it is necessary to combine whatever therapies meet each client's needs. She does however suggest that once the implicit somatic memory is released and made explicit, left brain-friendly, cognitive and behavioral therapies can be more effectively employed to process and integrate those memories as part of one's life experiences. Linda Hartley (2005, 2008), a dancer, movement therapist and bodywork practitioner, uses transpersonal psychotherapy, particularly Psychosynthesis and Process-Oriented Psychology, to build bridges between the once separate processes of psyche, soma and spirit.

Art therapy, Play Therapy, and other creative expressive methods—music, dance and drama—are a breakthrough in the therapy world; these therapies access directly the content of the right brain hemisphere. Once the emotions are on paper, or embodied with the help of music or movement, they can be accessed and processed verbally and analytically, and integrated as past memories (Goodyear-Brown, 2010; Khalighi, 1989; Malchiodi, 2008; Moon, 1998; Schnetz, 2004).

Mainstream psychotherapists now also combine modern methods with traditional holistic approaches, such as the practices of mindfulness and meditation, as in Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Therapy, (MBRS) (Stall, Goldstein, 2009), energy work, and clinical hypnosis. However, these practices are usually stripped of their original spiritual nature and used more as relaxation tools (Carlson & Shield, 1989; Herbert & Wetmore, 2008; Pecarve, 2001; Yapko, 2003; Lynn & Kirsch, 2006; Sharon, Wilkens & Kakatsos, 2010).

Trauma and Spirituality Themes

Despite the wealth of trauma research, and flexibility in therapeutic approaches (as described above), trauma therapy is slow work. The goal is to help traumatized clients manage their symptoms by improving their sense of well-being, including management of difficult emotions that arise from triggers. In general, trauma therapy helps limit the interference of past trauma on everyday living; healing is often elusive or partial (Henrie, 2010).

I believe that part of the reason modern psychological approaches are limited in healing trauma is because of their reluctance to include spirituality and theology in the healing process. Considering that the majority (97%) of North Americans report to be religious or spiritual (<http://www.americanreligionsurvey-airs.org/2010/2>, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2006001/9181-eng>, Mar. 20, 2011), one would expect that the addition of a spiritual component to the trauma healing process would be of great benefit. The need for such a component also becomes evident when examining the wealth of autobiographical publications of survivors of diverse diseases, both physical and psychological. Questions that appear very commonly in such publications are: Why did it happen to me? What is the meaning of my life? What am I to learn from my disorder or disease? These questions are existential in nature and beg a spiritual answer, or at least a spiritual inquiry (Bloomquist, 1994; Douglas, 2010; Farrington,

2001; Gilmore, 2001). As a budding spiritual psychotherapist I cannot imagine engaging in a deep therapeutic relationship with traumatized people without inviting the Divine Energy to be witness and mediator of this process (Lartey, 2003; Dayringer, 1998).

The Jungian approach to trauma processing has a very interesting spiritual, but non-religious, perspective. Jung's suggestion is to draw on the wisdom and strength of archetypal characters and situations to guide traumatized people out of their dark and fearful places. Using the metaphor of archetype, when a person is struck in a traumatic experience, the response of a soul or psyche draws on images from the individual's history and culture (Sharp 1998). For example, in the German culture, the traumatized person could identify with traumatized fairytale characters like Hansel or Gretel, and use the successful journey of these characters out of danger as a symbol of their own road out of trauma. In some North American Aboriginal cultures, Raven is a trickster and a messenger between our world and the world of darkness. When asked, Raven has the ability to take the trauma away from the overwhelmed person, eat it, and make sense of it (Early, 1993).

Authorities from contemporary organized religions try to address soul pain in similar fashion by turning to the themes of a classical Christian doctrine. They use biblical stories to make meaning out of traumatic events; i.e., looking at Christ's suffering and resurrection—crucified God—as a way to companion with our human sufferings (Jones, 2009). The intention is not to escape the pain, but “remain” in it and use it as a way to become closer to the Divine (Keller, 2010, p. 170).

This approach is certainly helpful to many believers, but we are also living in times of disillusionment with the large traditional churches. Church memberships have been steadily declining, and there are many “Christians in exile” (Spong, 1989); for them traditional church doctrines have lost their meaning and power (Simington, 2003). Being in exile can mean that despite the pain of the unknown and the loss of a spiritual home, one is free to explore and find different ways of living out one's own connection to the Divine. Trauma has the tendency to test our lifestyle, beliefs and world views (Simington 2010). It is often accompanied by other disorders, such as depression, that throw us into an emotional darkness, and force us to spend considerable time in the “dark night of the soul” (Farrington, 2009). There we are surrounded by, and unable to escape from, our deepest fears, doubts and insecurities. We are forced to be present to the moment and to face whatever is at the root of these fears and insecurities.

Pastoral counsellors are trained professionals in spiritual matters; they can be of great assistance to “believers in exile” who are in emotional and spiritual crisis. Under spiritual guidance, one can be present to what has become dissociated, engage the signal of pain when it comes, and give the pain one’s full attention. Pain is provocative; it pushes people to the edge; it strips away all the illusions required to maintain the status quo; it begs for change; it makes theologians of us all. Pain is the soul’s cry for help and change (Taylor, 2009).

In the context of our Canadian multicultural society, where people worship within a wide variety of faith expressions, I believe that the shamanic worldview complements a spiritual counseling modality that could embrace all of the present religious expressions in a very hopeful and soulful way. According to Mister Eckhart (Fox, 1984), religion is like a great underground river with many above-ground springs in different locations, that adapt to their local landscapes. I see soul as the essence of this great underground river. It does not matter where it comes up; the essence of this Divine water will always be nourishing and life-transforming, responding to our own inner soul.

Particular References to the Nature of Soul

In the author’s note at the beginning of this document, I describe and illustrate my personal insights into the nature of the soul and soul loss. I also expanded my search of the literature to look into other ways of understanding the nature of soul, to broaden my field of inquiry.

Soul is described as our spiritual essence, the earthly vessel that contains our life force, or spirit energy (Grossinger, 1991). Villoldo considers the soul to be the domain of the mind (2005), while others believe that every part of our body is also part of our soul (Fontaine, 2000; Simington, 2010). Through the power of the Spirit, the soul is connected with the Divine, and all other animate and inanimate souls on this earth. According to Simington (2003), Grossinger (1991), and Villoldo (2005), the soul and our body is protected by an energetic shield called the aura. Severe trauma has the ability to fracture the aura, fragment the soul, and weaken the spirit of the life force. During a traumatic event our mind dissociates, for example, in the form of a Depersonalization, and parts of our soul escape from our conscious awareness.

Subconsciously those parts might still be connected, but they get trapped in the place and time of the traumatic event. The soul is trying to heal the fracture by triggering the traumatized person back into that time and place to retrieve those parts.

If trauma has not been too severe, this is often enough to draw the distanced parts back, and to restore balance and unity in the soul. When trauma is very severe, or happens repeatedly, fractured parts, which look like mirror representations of us at the time of the incident, are too afraid to come back on their own, and our soul needs help in retrieving and integrating them (Villoldo, 2005; Brockman, 2006; Simington, 2010). If soul and aura are not sealed and restored to their original state, emotionally and spiritually wounded people will eventually become disconnected from the energy of the Divine.

To inquire deeper into what soul pain and soul healing is, I looked at healing philosophies that would acknowledge and describe these aspects of soul (Brockman, 2006; Cowan, 2003; Deatsman, 2009; Grossinger, 1990; Ingerman, 1991; Kinsley, 1996; Villoldo, 2000, 2005, 2009). Ancient, traditional healing philosophies from almost every culture are based on the premise that illness, whether physiological or psychological, is rooted in spiritual distress, and is of a spiritual nature. Until recently, healers in most societies were religious or spiritual specialists (Grossinger, 1990). Healing was a central concern for most ancient religions because it asked questions about our existence on earth and our place in the cosmos. Healing practices then often rose from religious ritual. Illness was seen as a symptom of disharmony between the sick person and his/her wider universe of relationships; healing was meant to restore harmony, correct behavior, and rebuild broken relationships with the Gods, the ancestors, the environment or other humans (Grossinger, 1991; Hunt, 2002; Kinsley, 1996).

In the Earth-centered, traditional cultures, spirits of the dead are believed to exist in bodiless form and are very interested and active in helping in the healing process of the living, particularly if they are their descendants. Some ghosts and demons are also believed to cause illnesses of physical and psychological form. Envy and inconsiderate behavior towards other humans is considered a cause of disharmony, pain and disease. In many of these cultures, illness is believed to be caused by object intrusion, spirit intrusion, disease sorcery, and soul loss (Grossinger, 1990; Plotkin, 1993; Villoldo, 2000, 2005). Believing in the power of prayer to help heal, as most modern religious organizations do, I find it logical to also believe in the power of curses to cause illness. When afflicted by a spiritual or physical illness or disharmony, people from traditional

cultures would seek the assistance of a shaman, who is a soul specialist.

Shamans and Traditional Soul Retrieval

Shamans are usually very charismatic individuals, male or female, with a gift for healing. In many cases, shamans acquire their powers by going through an initiatory ordeal that symbolizes death and rebirth, or are survivors of a serious illness. They are experts in understanding interpersonal relationships, tribal customs, spiritual teachings and religious knowledge. While in a trance, shamans have the ability to go on a journey “outside of themselves,” where they undertake soul travel and wander in the spirit world, the place where lost souls escape. On those travels they are often accompanied and helped by personal spirits from the human, animal and plant world that strengthen their healing powers. They can communicate and negotiate directly with spirits and gods, and go to the land of the dead, where they communicate with the spirits of the ancestors and others who have died.

When asked for a soul healing, shamans in their soul journey seek and retrieve lost soul parts, and bring them back to the traumatized and soul-fractured person. The final act of healing is the integration of the lost parts and a sealing of the soul and aura. Shamanic healing is a community activity. The whole community gathers around the healing, supporting it with drumming, dancing, chanting and burning incense, while the shaman travels the spirit world to recover lost soul parts (Kinsley, 1996, Plotkin, 1993; Villoldo, 2010).

Dr. Simington’s Soul Retrieval Technique

Dr. Jane Simington, who developed, and is instructing, the Trauma Recovery Certification Program, shares many elements with a traditional shaman. She has a gentle but very charismatic personality. She too was initiated into the art of traditional healing through personal tragedy and loss. On her journey to find healing she acquired degrees in nursing, psychology, sociology, and anthropology, but her soul was still crying for help. During her doctoral work, her search for personal healing led her to discover more ancient practices. She received healing and teachings from indigenous peoples of North and South America, from the Kahuna healers in Hawaii and from the traditional healers in China and Japan. In spite of holding four degrees, Dr. Simington has “built a personal theology from an accumulation of 1/4 formal learning and 3/4 lived experience” (Simington, 2003, p.12).

Dr. Simington’s integrated shamanic practice differs from the traditional shamanic

approach. She does not travel in the spirit world on behalf of the client to recover his/her lost parts because she shares Herman's (1992) belief that trauma is an affliction of the powerless. She believes that recovery of personal power is as important as the recovery of lost soul parts. A strong sense of personal power heals the wound of victimization and makes victimized people more resilient to future traumatic experiences. Dr. Simington prepares her students for the soul recovery journey by teaching them how to find and acquaint themselves with the personal spirit animals and humans who will be their helpers on the soul recovery journey. She shows them how to heal and strengthen their auras to protect their newly healing souls, and how to stay firmly grounded in case there are complications on the journey. The technique of "putting on the brakes" (Rothschild, 2003) is also introduced and practiced as a way to protect the participants from too much "flooding" (Foa, Hembree & Rothbaum, 2007) as they journey. Only then does she guide them into a trance. Under her watchful supervision, students travel to their personal past events, recover the soul parts that fled and became trapped in the time and place of the traumatic event, bring them back, and integrate them firmly within their soul. Dr. Simington also believes in the power of communal healing, and prefers to conduct and teach her healing method in a group setting. Here participants can support each other, adding to their feeling of self-control and self-empowerment (Simington, 2001, 2003, 2010).

Coming Full Circle

I am examining the life experiences of four people after a soul retrieval healing because the Earthbound philosophy of shamanism and ancient people resonates with my understanding of spirituality, the Divine, and my place in it. This belief is not a contradiction of my Christian faith. Matthew Fox, my favorite contemporary Christian philosopher, endorses the above-stated concepts with his "Original Blessing" theory (1983). I agree with his beliefs that we are older than our physical, present-time body indicates. Every atom in our body is billions of years old, and its energy is always transforming in the circle from death to birth. This energy is very old; it was first put in motion by the Big Bang as the result of God's creative powers, because in the beginning there was not the word but pure creativity. Following that thought, all of God's creation is infused with God's spirit, has a soul, and possesses healing powers. With a little assistance, and mindful attention, it is often easy for humans to access the spirit power and soul energy of animals and plants, and receive their help in healing (Andrews,

1993; Macfarland, 2008).

Although intangible to our concrete senses, the spiritual dimension holds great power in how people perceive, interpret, grow, and develop in a very personal way. Shamanic soul retrieval technique has the potential to greatly enhance modern psychotherapeutic approaches, and in the process, raise the success rate for healing from traumatic experiences of all kinds (Simington, 2010).

The word 'soul' pervades every aspect of human existence. Its meaning transcends time. As such, whether we study it in past or present, we find ourselves coming back full circle to traditional or archaic understandings with new wisdoms and discoveries. The next chapter introduces the principles of my epistemological world view and the methodological and ethical considerations that are the foundations of the present narrative research project. Chapter three closes with a detailed description of the methods of data collection and data analysis.

Chapter 3: Methodological and Ethical Considerations Methodology is the bridge that brings theory and method, perspective and tools together. It is a bridge that the researcher travels throughout the research process.

Hesse-Biber & Levy (2006, p. 21)

This thesis is concerned with narrative inquiry and shamanic-inspired psychology, where my co-researchers and I tell and retell stories of our experiences about healing from soul trauma. In the process, we re-shape the lives that we live by, and share them with others within our community and society.

The Research Question and my Ontological and Epistemological Foundation

I chose a qualitative approach to present this research project because such an approach supports my ontological belief that reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing. “What is ‘real’ becomes relative to the specific time, location, and people involved” (ibid. p. 6). I also subscribe to the qualitative research epistemology. It holds that, through engaging in subjectivist interactions and relationships with research participants, we come to know the realities about their perceptions and experiences. Those realities must be seen as a whole, rather than divided into variables that can be studied separately (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Further and within that conceptual framework, the social constructivist-interpretative paradigm (Glesne, 2005) holds that human beings construct their perceptions of the world in a subjective way, and that no one perception is right or more real than another. There is an inherent belief that we exist within contexts that provide shared meaning, even as we personally make our own sense of that meaning.

This combined orientation, that reality is socially and subjectively constructed, while responsive to my research question, also deeply resonates with my personal foundation and understandings. I am shaped by the postmodern and feminist perceptions of reality that strongly influence how I perceive, analyze and present my research topics and the research process. I strongly agree with Diaz when he states:

I accept the postmodern notion that an author can never be truly objective, ... nor can the descriptions, events, people, places and situations be entirely “true”, concretely factual, or objectively representative. ... I make my presence in the study explicit and will respond to occurrences and evoke emotions and thoughts rather than try to define a given event or situation (Diaz, as cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 46).

From a post-structuralist perspective, I also believe that as social creatures we create our identities and world views while living within a hierarchy of larger social and political systems that strongly influence our perception of ourselves and the world around us (Gergen, 2000). As a global citizen, I spend most of my life in borderlands between two different, and often opposing, and even mutually hostile, cultures and political systems on local, communal and national levels. As a woman, with a disadvantaged position within both social and political systems, I have become aware of, and sensitized to, power struggles and imbalances within these systems. These experiences shape my postmodern and feminist sensitivities as a research participant and as a researcher. I have learned to be very aware and critical of dominant ideologies, and the discourses of power that normalize those ideologies for the justification and maintenance of dominant political systems (Speedy, 2008). Considering that my research participants were four women, I could not ignore issues of gender and power inequality within their private lives and the larger circles of their cultural and political systems.

I found in narrative inquiry a qualitative methodology that best accommodated my research question and my ontological and epistemological beliefs. It is therefore a trustworthy way to represent and analyze the lived experiences of the four women's soul loss and soul retrieval (Glesne, 2005; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Schram, 2006).

Narrative Inquiry Methodology - Theory and Method

Before explaining why I chose the narrative approach to represent and understand soul loss recovery experience, I would like to give an introduction into the historical background and fundamental principals of this research method. The introduction is helpful to place narrative inquiry within the larger historical picture of qualitative research as part of the human sciences.

Historical overview.

Bruner stated in his "pocket history" overview of narrative scholarship that narrative was first developed by Aristotle as a way to interpret stories. For hundreds of years, narrative was neglected outside of literary scholarship until the second half of the twentieth century. The Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp (as cited in Lyons, 2007) deserves recognition for launching the modern study of narrative. It took another fifteen to twenty years for the "interpretative turn" (Rabbinic & Sullivan, as quoted in Lyons, 2007) to be firmly established. "In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist scholars

especially advanced narrative inquiry. They made narrative research crucial to the idea of giving voice to those excluded from the mainstream psychological research” (Lyons, 2007, p. 614).

In the last twenty years, narrative methods have grown steadily in popularity across the field of human sciences. Personally, I cannot understand why it was ignored for so long, and why there are still controversies with regard to narrative inquiry’s validity as a serious scientific research approach (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). Narrative exists as long as humans are able to recollect and make sense of events. It existed long before people gave it a name and tried to figure out how it worked (Payne, 2000).

We are all narrators, though we may rarely be aware of it. We are also the constant recipients of narrative: from newspapers and television, from books and films, and from friends and relatives. It is a human phenomenon that is not restricted to literature, film, or theatre, but is found in all activities that involve the representation of events in time. (Abbott, 2008, p. XII)

Therefore, if we as humans understand the world through narrative, as I certainly do, then it is logical to me to study our personal and collective stories in this rich way.

Fundamental elements of narrative inquiry.

Clandinin et al. (2007) understand narrative research as a broader concept, where narrative text is incorporated within a wider spectrum of qualitative methodologies. “Narrative inquiry is a more specialized term that refers to the more relational forms of this inquiry, but is often used in literature interchangeably with the term narrative research” (p. XIII).

Narrative inquiry embraces narrative as both the method and phenomena of study. It is a very compelling and appropriate method to study human interaction. For narrative researchers there are four “turns” in their thinking and actions that guide them towards narrative inquiry (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007).

The four turns are: a change in the relationship between the researcher and the researched; a move from the use of numbers towards the use of words as data; a change from the focus on the general and universal towards the local and specific; and a widening in acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of thinking. (Clandinin, 2007, p. 1)

The view of experience as the fundamental ontological category from which all

inquiry proceeds is the foundation for narrative inquiry, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 2007). It has its ontological roots in John Dewey's (1938) pragmatic philosophy of relationship and experience. The pragmatic ontology of experience also emphasizes continuity--the idea that experiences grow out of other experiences, and these lead to further experiences (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

For us (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), life-as we come to it and as it comes to others-is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected upon and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities. ... We saw our research problem as trying to think of the continuity and wholeness of an individual's life experience. ... This brought us to narrative. ... For social scientists, and consequently for us, experience is the key term ... it is what we study and narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it. (p. 17)

Winterson believes that one does not need to know everything when engaging in a narrative inquiry into a person's life story. "There is no everything. The stories themselves make the meaning. The continuous narrative is a lie. There is no continuous narrative. There are lit-up moments, and the rest is in the dark" (as cited in Speedy, 2008, p. XIII). Speedy (2008) supports that opinion, and adds her understanding of narrative inquiry as broad, messy and inconclusive. Certainly, elements of a life story that are not explored and analyzed could feel like an accumulation of disjointed episodes without meaning or purpose. That is why a reflexive narrative inquiry is so important to the construction of a person's identity, and its historical or thematic continuity.

For Abbott (2008), narrative is the representation of events consisting of story and narrative discourse. Story describes an event or a sequence of events. A narrative discourse is the event as represented and subdivided into plot and style. A narrative story is always mediated through the narrative discourse: a voice, a style of writing, camera angles, the actor's interpretation.

Analysis of narrative studies interrogates language. The content is important, but also significant is how and why the stories are being told in a particular way. Interpretation of stories and the form of the telling is always tentative and highly reflective. It offers an intuitive way of describing and interpreting life experience. Memory and imagination are an important aspect in the description and interpretation of our stories (Clandinin,

2007). Story tellers require a well-developed memory to retrieve important elements from the past that are relevant to the present. They also require a well-developed imagination to envision future possibilities within those present and past events. What the co-researchers say, and how they say it, is the stuff of narrative inquiry.

Why narrative inquiry for this study.

My study of experiences following the soul loss retrieval process are based on the storied accounts of four women's healing from past personal traumas which had made them feel powerless, invisible and marginalized. Narrative inquiry allowed me to access and describe the rich life experience of a marginalized person (Speedy, 2008). It also complies with my ontological belief that reality is socially constructed, complex and always changing. Reality does not exist externally, but is specific to the location, time and the people involved. It also allowed me to stay true to my epistemological sensitivities, and gave me permission to "trouble the edges" (Speedy, 2008, p. 7) between the "narrative turn" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 1) and post-structuralist and post-modern world-views.

Narrative inquiry's methodological flexibility makes it ideally suited for this research project. The fact that ... "there are as many versions of narrative inquiry as there are people engaged in it" (Speedy, 2008, p. 44) allowed me to find my own narrative inquiry approach. Life is never black or white. I am thankful that, as a researcher, I was able to find my own 'shade of gray' within the narrative methodology, and was able to express my own, and my co-researcher's narrative understanding of our experiences after soul loss retrieval.

My life-long infatuation with narrative started in my early childhood when I was introduced to fairy tales, Bible stories, and oral re-tellings of my family history. As soon as I learned how to read, I became a voracious reader of stories across all genres, but fairy tales, myth, legends, and stories from within the fantasy genre always were, and still are, my favorite.

My introduction to Carl Jung's concept of archetypes and the collective subconscious (Campbell, 1976; Sharp, 1998) deepened my understanding of this genre (in which I include Bible stories). I learned to see fairy tales, myths, and legends as religious and cultural wisdom teachings that awaken the wisdom from within our collective subconscious. They are creative, imaginative and soulful interpretations

of our ancestors' collective experiences, and are still being told and retold from one generation to another; the truth within these stories is timeless and universal. Myth and legend use fantasy and imagination to capture our interest and to stir our soul. As inherently meaning-making, spiritual beings, we are drawn to soulful stories that create a soulful awareness. A soulful awareness and a soulful lifestyle connects us with the Divine Energy of the Universe and add richness and depth to our existence.

The key of seeing the world's soul, and in the process of awakening our own, is to get over the confusion, by which we think that fact is real, and imagination an illusion. It is the other way around. Fact is an illusion, because every fact is part of a story and riddled with imagination. Imagination is real because every perception of the world around us is absolutely colored by the narrative, or image filled lens through which we perceive reality. (Moore, 2000, p, 100)

Narrative method allowed me to describe and analyze the soul healing narratives of my co-researchers, and my own, with the help of imagination, metaphors and archetypes. It also accommodated my preference for a more art-based and literary style of data representation and analysis in the form of pictures and poetry.

Narrative inquiry's foundation in an oral retelling of stories, and its emphasis on memory and imagination, makes it ideally suited to the description and interpretation of soul retrieval stories and shamanic worldviews. Traditional soul retrieval techniques are based on an ancient, holistic, and shamanic practice where imagination and magic play an important part in the soul healing process. Both narrative inquiry and shamanic healing practices are speaking the same language, one that is rooted in imagination and magic (Clandinin, 2007).

As a story teller and literature graduate, I understand the three-dimensional construct of narrative as a form of discourse taking place over time, within space and in context. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Temporality is of great significance to the issue of soul loss. I am interested in my co-researchers' life experiences after soul loss retrieval as it happens now, but also as it is experienced in a continuum of their past and future. In narrative inquiry, as in literature, temporality is not just about time within a linear continuum. "It is also about different kinds of time, and the ways that autobiographical time, magical time, mythical time and narrative time, for instance, would support different tellings of the same story" (Freeman, as cited in Speedy, 2008, p. 7), and

each one would be valued equally. I was able to weave the narrative dimensions of time and space into a sense of continuity of context. I did so by connecting contemporary narratives of soul pain and soul healing with ancient holistic shamanic journeys into alternative planes of existence, as a way to describe and analyze my co-researchers' experiences.

Narrative inquiry allowed me to learn about my research participants' lives from their perspective. By looking at these stories, I could analyze not only meanings and motives, but also how these meanings and motives were connected to the ways my co-researchers structured their experiences (Schram, 2006). I did not analyze them in their separate parts, because the sum of the parts is not necessarily equal to the whole story. A partial analysis could distort my interpretation of the story.

It was important to me to be able to enter into a relationship with my co-researchers, within which we could compare our experiences with soul loss recovery, and make our discoveries a collaborative effort. It was a reflexive relationship between living my life story, telling and retelling their life stories, and re-living those life stories reflectively from my own perspective. My principal interest in these experiences was looking for the possible growth and transformation in the life stories that I co-authored with my co-researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

In addition to the appropriateness of narrative inquiry to my research inquiry, I chose it because it is a method that closely reflects the counseling process; it thereby increases the practical relevance of the research (Henkelman, 2005). As an emerging therapist with a strong affinity for narrative therapy, I agree with Speedy (2008), that research "in-process" (p. 1) is only relevant when it informs practice, and practice stays current only if it motivates research (Speedy, 2008). Both should sustain and inform each other.

Narrative inquiry is a profoundly relational and in-depth form of inquiry. The emotionally laden topics of trauma experience and trauma processing, and the level of intimacy between myself and my co-researchers, made it clear from the start of this project that ethical considerations were of uttermost importance to this research inquiry. Ethics permeated the entire thesis project. It started from the first conceptualization of my research question, to composing the letter of invitation and consent, to soliciting research participants, to living in the field, to composing field texts, and to the ways

that I interpreted and composed the narrative research text (Clandinin, 2007). The following section introduces the ethical foundation for this research endeavor. Additional ethical considerations are to be found throughout the text as part of each co-researcher's narrative, and in chapter eight, which describes the researcher's feelings with regard to the research process as a researcher and a participant.

Ethical Considerations

The gap between engaging others where they are and representing them where they aren't, always immense but not much noticed, has suddenly become extremely visible. What once had seemed only technically difficult, getting "their" lives into "our" works, has turned morally, politically, even epistemologically delicate.

Geertz (as cited in Josselson, 2007, p. 537)

Ethical practice is based on ethical principles. Both were developed to assure the free consent of participants to participate, to guard the confidentiality of the participants and the material, and to protect the participants from any harm that might arise from their participation (Josselson, 2007).

Acknowledging this responsibility, I considered, and attempted to address, all of the ethical considerations I could possibly think of that were relevant to this study. For this purpose, I adhered to the ethical research standards as outlined by St. Stephen's College (2011). My ethical considerations were also directed and inspired by the qualitative research textbooks of Clandinin (2007), Glesne (2005), Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006), and Schram (2006). Prior to participant solicitation or data collection, ethics approval was obtained from the St. Stephen's College Ethics Committee.

Ethics of choosing participants.

Participants were solicited through a letter of invitation to the research process (Appendix.A). This letter was composed by me, but sent out by Dr. Simington to past graduates of the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. Graduates interested in the research project responded directly to me. After a thorough selection process, as outlined in the ethics proposal, three participants were welcomed to the project and sent a consent letter (Appendix B) outlining the scope of the research project, their rights as co-researchers, and their proposed roles in it. In particular, it contained a statement of their right to withdraw from the project at any time without any adverse consequences to them. Lastly, a time-table for the interview and follow-up meetings were negotiated and mutually agreed upon.

Data collection.

Each co-researcher engaged with me in one open-ended and unstructured one-hour-long interview, in which they were encouraged to elaborate further on their experiences of soul loss and soul healing. The interviews were videotaped to capture the nuances of the co-researchers facial and vocal expressions during the process of narrating their experiences. After the interviews, two follow-up meetings were arranged in which I shared with each co-researcher, in a one-to-one meeting, my transcript of the interview and my interpretation of their soul-healing process. Co-researchers were encouraged to give feedback with regard to their experience of the interview and the interpretation of their narrative. A few phone calls and electronic communications followed when issues of clarification arose, or certain statements needed to be explored in more depth.

The contributions of my co-researchers to my analysis were included and clearly marked as theirs in the final copy of the research inquiry. All parties were satisfied with the degree of communication and transparency of the research process. Part of the satisfaction was due to our ability to debrief the interviews and follow-up meetings by voicing how we felt about the experience and what we had learned from it in a constructive way.

Although I had made provisions for professional psychological help to be available, no psychological crisis crystallized out of the emotionally laden interviews. I believe one reason for my co-researchers' emotional stability after the interview was due to me making sure that my co-researchers always felt that they were the experts regarding their respective stories. Also, our interviews always ended on a positive and empowering note.

Ethics of the relationship.

"The nature of the relationship between the co-researchers is emergent and therefore can not be predicted at the onset of the research project, and here lie some of the murkiest and most subtle of ethical matters, realities that cannot be made explicit" (Josselson, 2007, p. 545). My co-researchers gave their consent to participate, but due to the unpredictable and open-ended relationship between us, and the volatility of the trauma topic, I felt that it was important to re-visit the consent letter content verbally on a regular basis. I wanted to know their opinions regarding their satisfaction with

our relationship, the depth of our mutual sharing, and whether they felt that they had benefited personally from our research enterprise. I also asked them whether they, at any time, felt unheard or misunderstood.

Transparency and honesty with regard to the nature and purpose of the research, in addition to good listening skills and a concerned, tolerant, non-judgmental attitude, contributed to an atmosphere of trust and safety between myself and my co-researchers. Within that atmosphere, self-revealing and emotionally-laden material was brought up and discussed. I was able to “read” not only what had been made explicit, but also observe subtle, non-verbal interpersonal cues about things that were perhaps too painful to verbalize, or were expressions from my co-researchers’ unconscious domain.

The depth of rapport, trust and mutual respect made it impossible for me to be dishonest with my co-researchers with regard to my interpretation of their stories. Transparency and full participation was the foundation of our co-research relationship. I shared with my co-researchers interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, writing drafts and the final report. Their inputs were noted and incorporated into the final draft.

The atmosphere of respect and trust was much easier and more quickly developed with Mabel and Robin because we already shared a relationship of trust before we engaged in this research project. My relationship with Apple did not reach the same depth because I had not known her prior to our first interview.

Participation in this research was voluntary, and without any monetary reward for my co-researcher’s efforts. This was clearly stated in the consent letter. I, the therapeutic community, and the interested public are beneficiaries of my co-researchers experience, time investment and trust. What I, as the primary co-researcher, offered in return was my appreciation and respect for the process, and my undivided attention in listening to their stories. By being present to those stories, I validated them and their lives. I provided my co-researchers with the opportunity to actively reflect on their experience of soul loss, soul retrieval and soul healing. This research project allowed my co-researchers to gain new and valuable insights about themselves, and the people that are important to them.

Data analysis.

The interviews were transcribed by me, and re-read numerous times to gain the

necessary depth and familiarity with each story. The anonymity and confidentiality of my co-researchers was assured by changing their names and any other identifying information.

During the narrative analysis, and from each transcript, various ways were used to capture and gain deeper insight into my co-researchers' words and experiences. I transcribed the interviews in the form of found poetry (Speedy, 2008), a method of creating verse out of verbatim text from the interview. Next, after multiple readings, I re-interpreted the transcriptions, still in a poetry form. This method helped to identify key themes in the story and highlighted emotional meanings behind the words, and the silent pauses between them.

Visual, metaphoric, and archetypal representations of the co-researchers' soul-healing experiences were created to capture and clarify my conscious and intuitive understanding of their growth and healing process. Existing visual representations created by the co-researchers prior to this research investigation added to the thick descriptions of their healing process. This inquiry also sparked theological reflections with regard to each co-researcher's journey towards their higher potential and connectedness with the Divine Energy. Writing summary statements helped me to solidify the wealth of information and highlight the most salient elements of the individual experiences.

Providing for security of the data.

The collected data, such as my field journals and notebooks, video recordings, the co-researchers' art pieces and my personal reflection journals, are stored in a locked cabinet in my home office. Written and visual material that are downloaded to my computer are kept on a portable external drive, which are also stored in my locked file cabinet. Because it is my hope to publish the findings of this research for educational purposes, this intent is stated in the letter of consent. I will remind my co-researchers of this intent before submitting research material for publication. The videotapes and any additional material, such as art work, will be returned to the respective co-researchers immediately after the acceptance of my thesis by St. Stephen's College. Alternatively, they will be destroyed.

Validation of the research.

Similar to ethical considerations, validity, or trustworthiness, was considered during the entire research process, starting with the research design, and all the way

to the data collection and presentation. Throughout the fabric of this chapter, I have spoken to ways trustworthiness was woven throughout the whole research process. To review, those ways included: open ended interviews, supplemented with the co-researchers' responses to my visual art representations of their healing process; using multiple data collection methods to enhance validity in interpretation (videotaping by replaying, freezing and slowing down observed interactions, writing field logs about my personal impressions, creating art responses to the interviews as a way access my intuitive and subconscious knowledge).

Also supporting trustworthiness, I previously detailed how I used first-person inclusion of feedback that allowed for a wider spectrum of interpretation and an assurance that I represented my co-researchers and their insights and experiences accurately. A specific request to each co-researcher was made with regard to any negative outcome of the soul retrieval technique, which allowed me to refine and substantiate my working hypothesis with regards to soul retrieval's effectiveness. In the following section, I would like to highlight a few specific elements of validity that were not mentioned in the text above.

Lieblich and Polkinghorne point out the importance of each narrative inquirer's own life experience as a ... "prerequisite for understanding the complexity of others' experiences" (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). As a middle aged woman, who has lived in a number of countries among people with diverse cultural backgrounds, my maturity, life experience, and multicultural sensitivity, were central to my ability to engage in and contribute to the validity of this research endeavor.

At the same time, I am aware that I have biases, and blind-spots that might surface during any part of the research process. To be more conscious of them and their influence on my research, and to increase the trustworthiness of the research process, I met regularly with my supervisor and a few peer researchers, to share in, and receive feedback on my investigations and findings. I was honest, open-minded, and receptive to their comments to ensure rigor and depth of the research data analysis, and to become aware of my personal biases. In particular, I was mindful not to interpret and judge my co-researcher's experiences solely from a possible victimization perspective. To curtail this tendency, I also shared elements of my ontological and epistemological worldview with my co-researchers as was appropriate to their respective narratives, and only after presenting them with my interpretation of their interview transcript. I

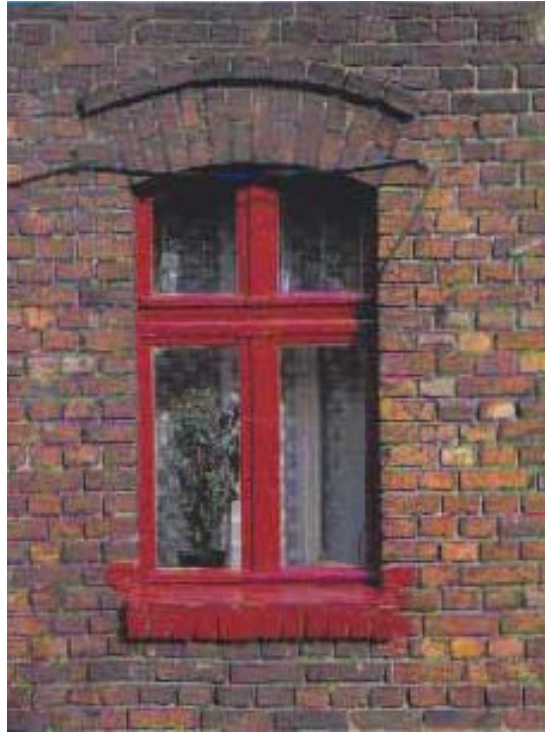
particularly asked them to be vigilant and make comments if my worldview did not fit with the way they saw their story.

Furthermore, regular personal counseling, extensive journaling, and engagements in artistic explorations of my emotional processing, provided an outlet for personal discovery and healing of situations that came up during my research investigation and processing. Self-knowledge and self-reflection helped me to be more conscious of my biases and tease out which aspect of what I had observed derived from me, which from my co-researchers, and which from the interaction between us (Josselson, 2007). It also helped to deepen my insights with regard to our individual and collective soul loss recovery experiences.

Telling a research story is an integral part of this thesis. By establishing the validity of the stories, I hoped to establish the validity of my value-informed narrative text with regard to those stories. I will also judge my work in terms of how good a story I was able to tell of each of my co-researchers, including how powerfully readers will be able to connect their personal life experiences, to the stories I told. My work will be judged by its relevance to the wider contemporary psychoanalytical body of knowledge where similar everyday life experiences are brought into the therapeutic setting.

The next four chapters are narrative interpretations of four women's experiences after the soul loss retrieval technique as instructed by Dr. Jane Simington in her Trauma Recovery Certification Program. The series of stories opens with Karin's (my own), followed by Mabel's, Robins's and Apple's. The sequence corresponds to the order in which the stories were gathered.

Chapter 4: Karin



A glimpse through the window into my past,
 A glimpse through the window into my soul.
 Come in, and share in the tasting of my experiences.
 Come in, and share in the feast of my life.

Karin, (December 12, 2011, picture, Blajer, 1995)

I am a middle aged Caucasian woman of German and Slavic descent from Berlin, Germany, and a Landed Immigrant in Canada. Twenty five years ago, I married a man from Edmonton, Alberta, which turned out to be the best decision of my life. With him by my side, I was able to become part of a great family, where I could grow and develop into who I am now. We have two grown children who make us very proud, happy and keep us busy.

I am studying to become a psychotherapist specializing in helping people deal with, and heal from, their short-and long-term trauma experiences. In the course of my training, I was drawn to the issues and challenges connected with trauma, because I see myself as a survivor of vicarious trauma that is generational, social and systemic. My sensitivity to the emotions of others, and my trauma background makes me feel

connected with people who have experienced, and/or have been affected by traumatic events at some point in their lives. I agree with the Aboriginal belief that seven generations of our ancestors' beliefs and actions influence our own world view and how we conduct ourselves on this plane of existence (Simington, 2003).

To understand the depth of my generational, social and systemic vicarious trauma, it is important to know a little about the history of the area where I was born and where my family has lived for at least five or six generations. The constant, turbulent and violent historic events in Upper Silesia contributed greatly to the hardships that my family and people in my community have experienced.

My account of the family history has, in great part, been handed down to me verbally in the form of stories from my maternal great-grandmother, both grandmothers, and other family members. I am not trying to recreate an objective history of my roots, because I am aware that “memory is selective, shaped and retold in the continuum of one’s experience” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 142). I am trying to trace the roots of my trauma, based on my present subjective perception, while looking back at my ancestors, my upbringing and their influences on me. Those personal experiences are little pieces of a larger puzzle of hardship and endurance on a national level of two countries and two cultures, lived out in a political and social arena.

Brief Historical Summary of Upper Silesia



Figure 6: Beuthen 1919 -1945



Figure 7: Bytom after 1945

I was born 13 years after the end of the Second World War in Bytom, a city in Upper Silesia, located in South-Poland. My mother had been born in the same city, before World War II, when it was called Beuthen. Then it was a German city on the border with Poland (see “*Figure 6. Beuthen 1919-1945*” and “*Figure 7. Bytom after 1945*”) (Putzger, 1974, p. 122, 138).

Throughout its history, Silesia has come under the control of a succession of countries-Poland, Bohemia, Austria, Prussia, and Germany. It is currently split between Poland and the Czech Republic. Upper Silesia was rich in agricultural land, silver, coal and iron ore, which made Beuthen and five surrounding cities an industrial metropolis in the 19th century, under the Prussian rule. Many German settlers were encouraged to fill in the growing work force demands. In a very short period of time, small towns grew into bleak large cities to accommodate the increase in the blue collar population. Beuthen became an important business and cultural centre(http://enotes.com/topic/upper_silesia,http://bookrags/wiki/upper_silesia_cities_and_towns, downloaded July 16, 2011). By the beginning of the 20th century, Upper Silesia had grown to become the third largest industrial area in central Europe. After the First World War, it was divided and the eastern part came under Polish rule.

In 1919-21, three violent Silesian uprisings occurred. They were the reason for the Upper Silesia Plebiscite, mandated by the Versailles Treaty, in which the Upper Silesian people were to vote on the location of the border between Weimar Germany and Poland (<http://www.jstor.org/pss/4546111>, downloaded December 5, 2011). It was a very difficult situation because many families were of Polish/German mixed heritage with divided allegiance, causing significant trauma and even bloodshed between family members. In 1945, Upper Silesia and Beuthen landed under Polish occupation. The majority of the German population was expelled by the Polish and Soviet armies to Germany, and forcibly replaced with Poles who had lost land along the eastern border to Russia (see light green colour east of Poland on map 2). A few thousand German workers with useful skills were allowed to stay and become Polish citizens. The occupation lasted until 1971, when the German chancellor, Wilhelm Brandt, declared the border official, and occupied Silesia became a permanent territory of Poland.

Personal Family History



My maternal Orzechowski roots.

Although some of the violent uprisings happened almost one hundred years ago, they directly affected my family and shaped the way I was brought up. My biological maternal great-grandfather was killed around 1909 in one of the frequent Silesian skirmishes that were not even worth mentioning in the historical records. His death left his pregnant fiancée in a difficult situation and greatly influenced my grandmother Margot's life-long image of herself as a bastard child. This self-image seems to have influenced her choice of a partner. According to her words, the Orzechowski family was as wild and independent as she always felt inside.

My maternal grandfather Josef, came from a very different family. In a mostly Roman Catholic area, Josef's father Paul, my great-grandfather, was a Protestant from a Hussite colony¹, but left that colony, never to return. My mother does not remember him ever mentioning anybody from the colony, which makes me suspect that there was some kind of drama behind his leaving. Josef's mother, Johanna, was Jewish, but converted to Catholicism as a young woman, along with her mother and sisters. This move seems to me now to be very drastic, considering that it happened at the end of the nineteenth century, when Jews were not yet as persecuted as they later would be. I suspect that here also was some traumatic incident that made this family distance

¹ A Hussite is a follower of Jan Hus, a Moravian priest, who, in the 15th century, challenged and criticized the Roman Catholic Church administration and was burned at the stake for his views. He challenged the Church over the same issues that Martin Luther would one hundred years later. His ideas created a new branch of Christian believers who were persecuted as heretics by the Roman Catholic Church and had to live in little colonies in remote rural areas on the outskirts of the Austrian empire, such as Silesia (<http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-hus.htm>, [http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVarticles/John Hus The Reformer.htm](http://lavistachurchofchrist.org/LVarticles/John%20Hus%20The%20Reformer.htm), downloaded December 5, 2011.)

themselves from their very valuable and important support group. Josef's parents were two loners and outsiders in Beuthen society whose only loyalty was to their immediate family. Life was difficult for my great grandparents because they lost the first seven out of fourteen children; my great-grandmother, Johanna, died when Josef was only eight years old. He and his four brothers were brought up by an older sister. The family was held together by a strong will and determination to not just survive, but to be successful and to thrive. The key to this success was being very flexible and adaptable to any political or social changes outside of the family structure, without subscribing to any of its ideologies. Josef became a successful businessman and a good provider for his family.

During World War II, as a half Jew, Josef had to hide for five years in Poland, and Margot, my grandmother, was left as a single parent with four children. After the war, the marriage between my grandparents survived the separation, and grandfather was again able to become a successful business man with the help of the Russian occupiers. My grandparents were even willing to become Polish citizens, until the Polish Socialist State took away the right to private ownership in 1958. At this time my mother's family left for Berlin, another volatile place with great business opportunities.

My paternal Ochmann roots.

My paternal grandparents were skilled blue collar workers and very proud Germans, which was not surprising considering that they lived on the outskirts of their country. After the Plebiscite, in 1922, they ended up living on the Polish side, as part of the German minority. My grandmother Elfriede, in particular, felt threatened in her identity by the constant border change, which made her even more patriotic to Germany. My father was her seventh, and only surviving, son out of nine. Grandmother gave birth to eight boys who died during the birthing process or shortly thereafter.

During WW II, my grandfather Georg served in the "Wermacht" army and became a prisoner of war, and came home several years after the end of the war. The traumatic war and post-war life estranged my grandparents to the point of no return, and they separated. When I was five years old, my grandfather died of lung cancer caused by his chain smoking habit, but he was also known to indulge heavily in alcohol and pain medication. I do not remember much about him, but I still feel the deep sadness that he carried around himself like a cloak when he came for a visit.

Grandmother Elfriede was not happy when my father married this "spoiled"

woman from that “shifty” family. She was particularly unhappy about my mother and her family’s lack of devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, and made it her mission to make better Catholics out of my brother and I.

When I was nine years old, my father was imprisoned for illegal black market activities, and was taken away for four and half years. During that time, life could have been tough, and was at times. Many former German Silesians, who were envious of my mother’s family for their success after World War II, hoped we would hit “rock bottom”. To their disappointment, my maternal grandparents sent regular provision parcels and money from Berlin, and we were actually able to live quite comfortably, except for the incident of my mother’s illness.

After 10 years of living with my always negative, miserable, and bossy grandmother Elfriede, my mother had a major nervous breakdown and fell into a deep depression. Shortly after my mom’s “departure”, my grandfather Josef’s sister came, made us pack a few things and took us with her into her apartment, which she shared with her daughter and her family. We stayed there, cramped but happy, for six months until my mother was better. It was for me a great relief, to know that my mother was well taken care of, and I could relax when I was in school. Grandmother Elfriede and her sister moved back to her apartment and did not return to live with us after my mother’s recovery.

Flashes of Memory: Upper Silesia

When you have a husband, and we have again a war, before he goes off to war, find a nice solid frying pan, and hit him good over the head. Then, you will at least know where he is buried.

I was perhaps ten or eleven years old when my grandmother gave this advice to me. So many husbands and sons of her generation had gone to war never to come back. Their bodies were lying somewhere in Europe, often hastily buried in mass graves. Those who had come back, like her husband, were changed to a point where living with them was very difficult, and for her, impossible. As far as my grandmother was concerned, her husband never returned from war, and she could not even grieve over his grave.

Those words and her deep sadness had a great effect on me. I knew many women in my community who deeply grieved a loved one over many years. I think this is the root cause of why I so dislike the military as an institution. I would never befriend

or marry a soldier, and if a friend decided to enter into the military services, I would distance myself from him.

All children that die before they are baptized, cannot enter through the gates of Heaven, because they are still tainted by the original sin of Eve. They have to wait in a purgatory until the judgement day, for God to decide what is to happen with them.

Those were the words of our local priest at one of my weekly religious education classes. I must have been eight or nine years old, because my father was still at home. Hearing those words, I could feel the heat of anger rising from my stomach into my head. All I could think was: "This is a lie! This is not my God he is talking about! God would never do that!" Suddenly, deep in my soul, I thought 'I knew' one of the reasons behind my grandmother's sorrow and suppressed anger. Her boys were held hostage in purgatory, and it was her fault because she was a descendant of Eve, who started the whole problem. I was so angry that I stood up and told him that he was wrong because God would never do such a thing. He got upset with me for my outburst; I just walked out and slammed the door. I was very angry but also afraid of what the priest would do. He went to my father to complain about my bad behavior. When my father asked me what it was all about, and heard my version of the story, he told me that I did not have to go back if I did not want to. I did go back for another six or eight years, but this incident changed my relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. I became more critical of the Church's dogma and its politics, and left the Church as a young adult because I could not support what I saw as the Church's methods for controlling its believers.

Oh, I have lots to do. I have to wash my sheets (by hand), hang them to dry, and iron them before I go to sleep. I do it every day. I can not go to sleep unless they are clean and fresh, and pressed.

On my way to school I would pass every day a window on the ground floor where sometimes a middle-aged woman would look out. I knew this window because I had been told that inside it, there lived a crazy woman who yelled and screamed in the night. My school mates used to throw little rocks at her window, call her names and make fun of her. At some point I stopped, and started having conversations with her. I could not pass by her window without acknowledging Ellie, and the profound sadness

emanating from her. After one of her “attacks”, she was picked up and we did not see her again.

Her words had such a big impression on me because they echoed the feelings of many former German Upper Silesians with whom I was in contact, including my grandmother and myself. I also often felt shamed and “dirty”. On a national level, Poles tried to heal from the traumas of war by televising war content on a daily basis over many years. There were feature films, documentaries and testimonies of Poles who had suffered at the hands of Germans, or heroic testimonies of beating the evil German army. German Silesians were, for many years after the war, relentlessly subjected to witnessing the horrors they, or their loved ones, had inflicted upon the Poles and Russians. To this day, I am not able to watch war movies or documentaries without being triggered to re-live the sadness connected with the topic.

According to White and Epston (1990), people experience emotional problems when the stories of their lives as they have been invented, by themselves or by others, do not represent the truth. For many years, the German-Silesians were not allowed to heal from their ruptured stories. Some escaped into insanity like Ellie; many, like my grandfather self-medicated their sorrow with alcohol and drugs; a great number tried to find solace in God by becoming very devout Roman Catholics, like my grandmother.

I do not belong here. This is not my home, this is your home. I am happy to be with my children, but I will show you what my home is. This little sack of dirt is all I have left from my home. It is my most precious possession, which I want to be buried with.

Those are the words of the grandmother of the family that moved into the house across the street from us. They were one of the many families that had lost land in East-Poland to Soviet Russia, and were forced to move to Silesia. We had a very good relationship with them and I spent a lot of time in their house. Babcia (Polish for grandmother) was traumatized and unhappy. She was supposed to feel victory over winning the War after all those years of fear and struggle; instead she felt robbed and betrayed. The Socialist Russian liberators were oppressors to her and she hated that political system, but it was dangerous to voice such feelings. Although not spoken of openly, the dislike for Poland’s “big brother Socialist Russia” was shared among many of the newcomers from the East. It was one of the few things that the German and

Polish Silesians had in common. Another commonality was their strong support of the Roman Catholic Church. I think that the devoutness was genuine, but at the same time, I wonder whether it was a statement of protest and disobedience against Poland's Socialist system which was locked in a power struggle with the institution of the Roman Catholic Church.

I do not know where you were in 1945, when the Russian tanks rolled through Bytom. My mother told me that one man went to greet them and was run over.

Those were my words of response to my history teacher who told us how happy the Silesians in Bytom were when the Russians arrived, how they had poured onto the streets to greet the Russian tanks. My mother was called to school and reprimanded for telling lies, and told to be careful what she was saying to us because it could have consequences.

I was very hurt and angry at my principal's response to my honest answer in class, and at the way my mother was treated. We were learning lies, and I did not want to have anything to do with a system that twisted truth to feed its own political goals. On the surface, I did not contradict my teachers anymore, but I did become very critical of everything that I was taught in school. I decided that I would not support the Socialist ideology, and that I would stay true to my German heritage, particularly because I knew that we would eventually move to Berlin to join my mother's family.

Living in Upper Silesia was not easy for me. I often had the feeling of sitting in the centre of a turbulent emotional whirlwind, trying hard not to get swept into the current of the storm. A strong sense of a personal inner knowing, and a trust in my intuition, that I considered to come from Divine guidance, was my roadmap through the different and often conflicting narratives. In my younger years, I could not understand why people, and particularly children, were so cruel to each other. Could they not feel the pain of the other? It took me a long while to realize that the ability to feel the pain of others, and be present to that pain, was my particular gift and burden.

Flashes of Memory: Berlin

When my family and I escaped to Berlin, I thought that life would finally become normal, but it was not to be. Grandmother Margot died a few months after our arrival, and grandfather Josef sold his business that my father was supposed to take over.

This is my ball, and here in this Capitalist system, we do not have to share. Give

it back.

This was the response of one of my Berliner co-students in gym class; we were age 15. On a political level, my family and I were welcomed in Berlin. We received all the necessities and ongoing support. On the societal level, we were seen as second-class citizens. The Cold War was still in full force, and as former Socialist residents, we were not to be trusted. Even my mother's family did not trust us. They welcomed us, but with caution and distance. That was the moment when I gave up wanting to belong to the German society, or to any specific society or tribe.

Living in Berlin, I realized that the German Berliners were right; I was tainted, I was different. I did love Babcia and her family, and could not share my German neighbors' dislike for the Poles. I was glad to be different, and did not want to subscribe to any one ideology. I wanted to pick and choose from whatever I felt was right for me and walk away from the rest.

I was thankful for living in West-Berlin with its multicultural diversity and its political status as an occupied city, suspended in time and place. It was charged with the energy of political activism, and gave me the space to find my own identity. Within the safety of the Berlin Wall, I refined and strengthened my own inner fence, where I felt safe and removed from the indoctrinations and rivalries of two countries and two opposing political systems.

The Journey of an Orphan Child

Take my hand, we will walk.

We will walk a path that started out as a fence.

A long fence of many miles, and many years.

Watch it transform into a wide path,

That guides us home to where I belong.

Karin (July, 2011)

I saw myself walking on a fence, a high fence that stretched between the two geographical, political and cultural landscapes of Poland and Germany, because I could not fully belong to either one. For a steady footing and a clear direction on that fence, I drew on the wisdom and strength of my rebellious and independent Orzechowski-Berger ancestors and their abilities to survive. Over the years it was hard work to stay alert and vigilant on my fence. I was often lonesome. It took effort to find like-minded

friends with whom I could share parts of my journey along my fence. I felt safe in Berlin, but something was still missing. I felt Called, but did not know where it came from or where to turn to in order to answer the Call. I always had a strong connection to God, but felt that I was starving spiritually.

Looking back, I see myself living out the archetype of an orphan child, a pattern best-known in many fairy tales. I identify with the feelings of an orphan who has lost his/her connection to the original family and clan, and had to develop a psychic independence based on personal judgement and experience early in life (Myss, 2003). The clan of my ancestors gave me a strong foundation, but in my teens, our family structure started to unravel. After 15 years of separation from my maternal family, and the death of our matriarch Margot, the original strong family bonds disintegrated, destroying our illusion of coming home. It was hard to realize that I was alone, loved but not really understood by my own parents.

In my twenties, I decided to leave my biological family who had become too rigid and controlling of me. I moved to Canada, where I was embraced by the Reed-Stewart family, who nurtured and supported me in my spiritual and intellectual growth. I enjoyed living in Alberta, Canada, but it still did not feel safe to permanently step off the fence and embrace the Canadian culture and citizenship. I had been vigilant and distrustful for so long that I did not trust the peaceful and tolerant nature of Canadian culture. I would lower my fence, step off it for a while, and at times even forget that I traveled along a fence, but abandoning it just did not feel right.

Twelve years ago I participated in a therapeutic touch course, taught by Dr. Jane Simington, that started my journey as a healer. In the following few years, I added to my holistic healing repertoire: Reiki, Qi-Gong, guided visualization and meditation techniques. I practiced those techniques on my family and friends, which sparked and renewed my interest in spirituality and psychology. My desire to combine holistic healing approaches with modern psychological techniques and spirituality led me through the doors of St. Stephen's College.

The college became my educational and spiritual home for the last six years. With every course, I was able to expand my professional and spiritual horizons. St. Stephen's became my safe place where I started to explore who I am, and what direction I would like to take as a psychotherapist. My interest in trauma processing led me to re-discover Dr. Simington, and particularly her Trauma Processing Recovery Course. It felt like

a perfect fit for me because the course was designed for practitioners in the health professions who were interested in an in-depth holistic approach to trauma treatment. Also, I liked Dr. Simington's teaching style and the intensive structure of the course.

Author's Soul Loss Recovery Experiences

Prior to the trauma course, I did not consider myself to be a very traumatized person. As a student of the Master of Arts in Pastoral Psychology and Counseling (MAPPC) program (now the Masters in Psychotherapy and Spirituality), I had the opportunity to explore and process many of my difficult experiences. In comparison with some of the other participants of the Trauma Processing Course, I felt that I would be more of an observer of the soul-loss retrieval process, but was surprised at the scope, depth and intensity of my own trauma processing. I was grateful for the gentle introduction into the topic and the thorough preparation prior to embarking on the soul retrieval journeys.

After establishing safety in the group, we were introduced to techniques such as putting-on brakes and grounding. An art activity in which we created an image of a safe place gave us a concrete reference point to where we could escape, when the soul retrieval journey became too difficult. The group members functioned as witnesses of the healing process and a support network for each others' journeys. It was indeed a great gift to be surrounded by non-judgmental, open-minded people who were willing to share each others traumatic experiences, and guide each other on soul-retrieval journeys. The art activities and individual reflections provided the necessary transitions between the educational and self-exploratory components (Simington, 2001).

I was surprised that my idea of a safe place for this trance-work was a hut on poles in shallow water near a tropical beach (see *Figure 9*. Karin's safe place), because my customary safe place is a meadow, high up in the mountains. I also felt compelled to add a mother whale with a calf, and a few feathers to the picture without really understanding why. The significance of this safe place became apparent after my first healing journey.

My co-researchers did not dwell on the specifics of their soul-retrieval journeys, therefore I would like to give an example of a soul-loss recovery journey based on my own experience. Each person experiences these journeys in an individual and unique way, but they all start on a path into the past, to the place and time shortly after the trauma.

For my first multiple soul-retrieval, I journeyed in a meditative state through my heart centre and onto a path. I gathered my animal and human spirit helpers around me, called out my name, and followed the path into my past. Suddenly, I found myself in my old house in Bytom. On a changing table, a baby me was trying not to see a terrible, white monster above her. I picked up the baby, held it in my arms, rocked it, and brought it back into my heart chamber, where I breathed it in, and made it part of myself.

I went out again. This time, I picked up a three-year-old, hiding under the stairs of our chicken coop in Bytom. I took her in my arms, comforted her, took her by the hand, and continued on my search. I recovered a nine or ten-year-old me in the washroom of my elementary school in Bytom, where I had hidden from some kids who had tried to prevent me from closing the door of the toilet cubicle. I embraced her, took her by her hand and continued on my journey. The landscape then changed to Berlin, where, to my surprise, I found a 23-year-old bride me, hiding outside the church where I had married my first husband, desperately not wanting to go through with the wedding, but being too afraid to stop it and run away.

For the last part of this journey, the landscape changed again. I found myself as an adult woman hiding behind a cabinet, in an abortion clinic. The last adult me did not want to come back with me without the baby that was lying in a bucket. I promised her that we would come back for Charlie, when we were united and stronger. Reluctantly, she came with me. All of my parts and I went back into my heart chamber, where I was able to heal, breathe-in and welcome each part separately. It felt exhilarating to have all those parts back again.

My first healing experience after the multiple soul-retrieval happened during the evening. The following day, I asked a co-participant for assistance in rescuing Charlie from the bucket. Under my friend's watchful supervision, I went into a trance, where I found myself back on the path to the clinic. My spirit helpers were again present to assist me. Once there, I picked up Charlie, put him back into my womb, and left to my safe place, into the hut above the water (see *Figure 9*. Karin's safe place).

Once in my safe place, I called my female ancestors. They came, and among them were my great-grandmother Maria, and my grandmothers Elfriede and Margot. To my surprise, my mother also arrived. They all sat down around me, watched my abdomen



Figure 9: Karin's safe place

grow to full term, and helped me deliver Charles Francis. During the whole process, I was very aware of mother Whale supporting me and keeping the place around the hut safe. After delivery, I held and rocked Charlie, passed him around the circle, rocked him some more, and eventually, laid him into the arms of an angel, who took him up to a higher level of existence. It was an exciting moment for me because I was finally ready to let him go, knowing that his soul was now free to continue on its journey. I also knew that if I needed him, or called him, he would be back, not as a baby, but as a spirit helper, in whatever form he would choose to come.

When I looked around the circle, wanting to thank all participants for their presence and support, I noticed how sad my grandmother Elfriede was. Giving birth to Charlie reminded her of all the losses that she had experienced in childbirth. She also felt a deep regret for not having named her boys before they left. I asked her whether she would like to hold them and maybe name them. She agreed to hold them, and I asked the angels to bring her babies to her. My grandmother held and rocked them. My mother asked me whether she could call her two aborted children as well, and two angels came with a boy and a girl. We acknowledged their existence, gave them as much love as we could, and released them to follow Charlie. When everything was

done, I hugged my ancestors and my mother, and sent them back. After I thanked the whale and her baby for their support, I went back down the path into my heart centre and back into the reality of the retreat house. I felt very happy. My abortion wound was healed and I had found a new relationship with that spirit.

On another level, I still did not feel complete until I had named all of my uncles. I imagined each one to be a star that had left this plane of existence to shine upon and protect myself and my family. In a meditative state I called each one and named him:

Adam Star Ochmann, Georg
 Star Ochmann, Richard Star
 Ochmann, Oswald Star
 Ochmann, Joachim Star
 Ochmann, Walter Star
 Ochmann, Thomas Star
 Ochmann, and Sigmund Star
 Ochmann.

Looking back at those names, I feel a sense of gratitude because I have a feeling that those spirits were part of the crew, instrumental in protecting me from experiencing too much vicarious trauma during my formative years in Upper Silesia. I did not name my aborted brother and sister because my mother is still alive. I would like to ask her in the near future whether she has named them already, and if not, whether she would like to do it with me.

It is intriguing that while creating my safe place (see *Figure 9*. Karin's safe place), I knew beforehand what I needed to add into the picture for my healing to be successful. The feathers were symbols of angels presiding over the birthing process. The whale is, according to Jamie Sams (1988), like a swimming library. "Whale carries the history of Mother Earth, and is said to have been placed here from the Dog Star Sirius" (p. 201). "Whale signals a time of finding [our] origins, of seeing [our] overall destiny, as coded in our DNA, and of finding the sounds that will release those records." ... "[We] are the melody of the universe, and the harmony is the song of the other creatures" (p. 202).

My birthing experience in my safe place helped me not just to give birth to, and release, Charlie, but also to give birth to a new me. Whale assisted me in shedding my

old, dull skin, to reveal a new me that was already there, underneath the old skin, and is now shining with fresh and bright colours. During the birthing process, Whale helped me to connect with Mother Earth, who gave me the strength and support to do what I needed to do. Whale also helped me to see my destiny, as encoded in my DNA, that I was not able to recognize consciously for many years.

The most important lesson that I learned during the course was that I did not have many soul parts to recover, but those few soul parts were still crucial to have in order to feel more complete, whole and grounded in the “I Am That I Am”. My challenge constituted of releasing the soul parts of others that I had been given for safe keeping and had carried with me for many years.

When I went on journeys to recover younger pieces of myself, I found, instead, people that I had met at different stages of my life. For instance, I met Ellie looking at me through her window, Babcia looking at me from behind her sewing machine, a teenage boy who attempted to drag my brother away from me, and my elementary school Polish teacher. I found myself again in the ashes room in Auschwitz, surrounded by very pale and terrified people of all ages, asking for help. Lastly, I met my husband’s great-grandfather, whom I had known only from family stories. I discovered consciously, what I knew unconsciously all along; I was a Soul-Part-Gatherer.

On a subconscious level, my compassion allowed me to see and feel the tortured souls of unhappy people through their eyes - the windows of their souls. Through the connection between us, they entrusted me with their soul parts that did not feel safe at that particular time and place. Before the Trauma Recovery Course, I knew that I carried many memories of the people that I had met in the past. I did not know that they were actual soul parts, or how to set those unhappy and frightened soul parts free, so that they could find their way home again, wherever that might be.

I felt great relief when Dr. Simington suggested setting the soul parts free at the “Sending of Souls to the Light Ceremony” (Simington, 2001). In this ceremony, the whole group assembled in a circle and drummed while I summoned my spirit helpers for support, and called all the soul parts that were connected with me to step forward. As they came forward, I thanked them for their trust in me, and asked my spirit helpers to assist them towards their highest purpose. I felt free, light, and almost giddy with relief once the ceremony was completed.

the upper third a possible future outcome, given the present circumstances. The same division in three parts can be made from the left to the right. The centre of each third contains the core message within each layer. While interpreting the collage following a linear fashion, I am aware that time, as a linear concept, is an illusion. Images within the three time components influence each other, and are interconnected within the past present and future.

The centre of the bottom third of the collage (see *Figure 10*. Karin's spiritual growth) depicts what I perceive as the Divine Eye and Creative Energy of the universe that sparked Life here on Earth, including my own. It is also the symbol of my foundation as a spiritual being. On the right side of the lower third is my spirit animal, my old friend, the cougar. On the right side is also a cougar, as depicted in an old and rotting totem pole. Both cougars are facing each other, and between them is a sentence saying: "Sometimes, you take a ship to get back where you started". On my journey towards becoming a holistic psychotherapist, I am discovering my tribal roots. The totem pole is reminding me that the cougar is not just a recent friend and partner in my healing practice who had come into my life since the Trauma Recovery Course. Our connection actually goes far back into my tribal roots, that I am just starting to embrace and to appreciate.

In the centre of my collage is a big picture of a humpback whale mother, with her calf swimming above her in light blue water. The whale Madonna was also in my safe place collage that I created at the beginning of the Trauma Recovery Certification Course (see *Figure 9*. Karin's safe place). The size of the picture communicates its importance in comparison to the other pieces of the composition. As a messenger from Mother Earth, she became my guide, assisting me, her little calf, in my process of transformation into a soul healer. I was asked a year ago to describe how I experience a soulful healing. The analogy of going under water came to my mind. In an emphatic and deep relationship with a client; I enter an alternate reality. I can transform, with the help of my guide, into a whale, and follow my clients deep down into a different world, where it is sometimes very dark and frightening. I assist my clients into those places, because it is in those places that we gain awareness, healing, and possibly, transformation.

The whale mother gives the impression of moving gracefully from the left to the right, powered by the words "Without passion, there is no reason for existence". This

sentence reflects also the energy source of my life's journey. Passion always was, and is, the motivator of my actions. Passion helps me to decide which destination is worth pursuing by testing how deeply it moves me, which is reflected in the sentence in front of my mother whale. The whale is swimming, as if pushing the sentence in front of its nose, reminding me that I am on the right track. The blue colour of the sea water symbolizes truth, movement and direction into an unknown future. Until recently, I had problems with the colour blue. My soul recovery experiences freed my blockage to experience and embody the colour blue. I do not fear the unknown of the future anymore.

In the upper left-hand corner of the middle section is a picture of a little old aboriginal woman holding smoked salmon and smiling at me. I imagine she is offering me some of the sea bounty as part of a feast. I feel as if she is rewarding me for work well done so far. I am not of aboriginal ancestry, but the old woman is symbolic of a tribal person, who carries the memory and wisdom of humanity from the beginning of its conception. If we trace our ancestry back far enough, we will discover that we all started out as tribal people, and I feel connected to this primitive and pure element in us.

She is the old woman who met me at the sacred fire, at the beginning of my thesis writing journey, and inspired my visual depictions of the soul (see *Figures 1-5*). Since that first visit, she became my human guide and companion. She was with me before my soul-loss retrieval, but I was only vaguely aware of her because, according to her words, I was not ready to embrace her as my spiritual guide. I felt the truth of that statement after she revealed her name as Lilith. Indeed, Lilith crossed my path a few times in the last few years, but I was not aware that she was one of my guides. I have great respect for this ancient and powerful Goddess. I was frightened when she revealed her name to me. My first thought was, who am I to have such a powerful guide? Since her first full introduction to me, I have researched the Goddess extensively and learned to appreciate her as my guide and protector.

Lilith is related to the Sumerian Goddess Ninlil, Lady of the Air Who Gave Birth to the Moon, and is identified with the lily or lotus. She ruled over birth and growth on Earth. During the rise of patriarchy, her powers became politically unacceptable, and she was reduced to an evil demon, a hag of the night (Edwards, 1991, p. 195).

In the Jewish tradition of Kabbalah, according to Plaskov (2005), Lilith is known as Adam's first wife, created out of the same clay, and equal to him. Adam wanted to be superior, and consequently, she abandoned him. As punishment, Lilith was banished from the Garden of Eden. She became the Hag of the Darkness who was accused of killing newborn babies and spawning demons from the stolen semen of sleeping men. God created a new wife for Adam that was more docile and obedient, and named her Eve (p. 30-32). In the Christian faith, Lilith disappeared all together. There is no mentioning of her in the Bible (The Holy Bible, 1952), but her spirit is nevertheless alive, and I am honored to be called and supported by this formidable archetype. According to her words, she manifests herself to women who are ready to discover who they are, besides being wives, and/or mothers. She validated my own process of self-discovery towards my higher purpose, which I have been on for the last few years. The journey into the future seems lighter knowing that I have such a powerful and self-confident ally and advisor.

The eagle in flight at the top right corner is my guide in the air, when I need to see the big picture, or spot a minute detail from the greater distance and safety of the sky. Cougar, whale and eagle are North American animals. I am now aware, that it was instrumental for me to move to Alberta to receive the guidance of those spirit animals and to spiritually grow. Finding a soulful purpose is hard work, but the rewards are as sweet as a chocolate cheese cake, as depicted in the upper part of the collage. To be able to taste that sweetness, my soul, like a diamond, had to be shaped into a myriad of facets and polished to sparkle back the Divine light. I am very much aware that this shaping and shining is not complete yet, but I can already feel the power of the light that my soul is reflecting back.

For many years I called myself a raven, crow or magpie. Although I do not find them very attractive, I am attracted to them. All three bird types belong to the same family, are very smart in their ability to survive and thrive, and love shiny things. I also like to wear black, and adorn myself with shiny jewelry. When journeying into the underworld (Villoldo, 2010), I am often accompanied by one of them. Similar to the cougar, whale and eagle, the raven is also looking towards the right side, its beak open as if talking to the twin statues of beautiful women, at the very far right, upper corner. In front of him is an apple. According to Andrews (1993), "raven is a bird of birth and

death, a bird of mysticism and magic” (p. 187). With the apple in front of him, raven is offering me his wisdom and knowledge of magic. He is teaching me shamanic ways of healing and self-discovery. Raven has the knowledge of how to transform into other animals and how to enter into an alternate state of reality (Andrews, 1993). According to Sams (1988), raven magic can give me the courage to enter the darkness of the void, the black hole out of which all creativity arises. I was in that darkness many times before, by myself and with my clients. It is comforting to know that I have whale and crow, and with them Mother Earth, to assist me in my work there.

The twin statues, at the upper right corner of the collage, are also holding something that I recognize as a fruit, such as an apple or pomegranate, confirming to me that I am on the way to receiving and mastering the power of magic. The twin figures are looking back at the whale, observing its movement in the water. I believe that both figures embody my development, as it was before the soul-retrieval experience and how I am developing into the future, if I continue on my present journey’s direction. I started out being like the figure in the background - complete in its creation, but lacking colour. One can see eyes, but they seem to be blind. She is holding something round, but it is hard to tell what it is. The front figure stands in full colour, holding knowledge and wisdom in her hand. Her gaze is clear and piercing, and her smile is friendly, calm and self-confident. This woman symbolizes the development that I am striving toward.

Since my soul-recovery, I am more confident as a holistic psychotherapist. Drawing on my spiritual, holistic and professional background, and life experience, I would like to offer each of my clients a space where they can be safe from any political, cultural, religious or other pressures. I would like to offer them my support within that safety, where they can explore their physical, psychological and spiritual possibilities towards growth and healing. We are all Divine sparks. By helping others discover their own light, my inner diamond sparkles back that Divine light, and enriches my own Life and Purpose. It makes me stronger and surer on my own road through Life.

Short and Long-Term Effects After Soul-Loss Retrieval

Since then, I make it a habit to regularly cleanse myself of any foreign energy and release soul parts that attach themselves to me with or without my knowledge. This turned out to be a very important skill during my first practicum at a community centre for homeless and inner city people that I started a few months after the trauma course.

I worked in that community centre for one year. In the beginning, I found it very difficult to mingle with so many severely traumatized people. However, I persevered and learned there how to be effective as a counselor without taking on too much of the suffering of my clients. Without the training that I had received at the Trauma Recovery Certification Program, I do not think I would have been able to complete this practicum.

For a long time after the program I missed the group of people with whom I had spent three very intense weeks. I missed the intensity and depth of our experience, as well as our deep trust in each other. There was no judging of each other's experiences or world-views, and I reveled in the ability to say and share my deepest thoughts and beliefs. Within the group, I found a place where I could be truly me. That experience changed something in me. A few months after completing my first practicum, I started feeling dissatisfied with myself, but could not identify the source of my discomfort.

My counsellor, an aboriginal elder, helped me in exploring my feelings of discontent, and I discovered that I was not happy on my fence anymore. Being on my old fence felt suddenly more like being separated and prevented from making my true journey and attaining my true purpose. It was a major break-through for me when my counselor told me that it was my choice how tall or wide I would like my fence to be. After many years of vigilance and critical thinking, it never occurred to me that it is in my power to change the fence that I myself created.

With the help of an art activity and guided visualization, I was able to change my narrow fence into a wide road that could be lowered all the way to the ground level if I so desired. My new, wide road also had deep roots that stretched all the way to the centre of the Earth. It became not just a road but a living structure that knew when to protect me, and where to guide me. The roots, not the height, of my new road made me feel grounded and safe.

From a theological perspective, I see my counsellor as Naomi, taking me, her Ruth, down a long road towards home and a better future. As we walked down my now wide and comfortable road, I saw footsteps in front of me and behind me. While contemplating the discovery, I suspect that some of them were the imprints of my ancestors who walked this very same road before me. Looking back I saw my children on that road as well. It was a joyous feeling to discover that I was never really alone on this road, and

loneliness was but a choice. This path was not my road, and I did not create it, but it chose me. In a guided visualization, I went to meet the people with whom I had shared my life's journey, and was surprised to discover that the majority of them were women, women I knew as my ancestors but also strangers. I was not surprised to see Lilith, and my spirit cats, a cougar and a black panther, walking beside me.

Another important discovery was that I did not have to step off this road to meet and connect with other people. I can create, on this road, a safe place for others who seek my assistance, to walk alongside me and find their own healing and purpose in life. I felt strongly connected to the participants of the Intensive Trauma Processing group because, over the period of three weeks, we did walk this road together; they helped me to see myself and my journey with different eyes. I trust that the road will take me where I have to go, and it is comforting to know that I am not alone on it. I am a child of the Mother Earth, deeply connected with Her, and while I walk the road, I live out the purpose of my life every time I breathe in and out, and welcome whoever, or whatever, crosses my path.

Chapter 5: Mabel

Mabel and I participated in the same Trauma Recovery Certification Program in spring of 2009. We were part of a group of 10 people, who stayed together in a retreat house for three weeks to learn about, and experience healing from, past traumatic experiences.

The interview with Mabel took place in my house. She was relaxed, calm and at ease with the idea of being video-taped during the interview. She handed me the signed consent letter and said that it was worded to her satisfaction and we did not need to go over it again. The room was bright and spacious with a big window facing Mabel, letting ample sunlight flow into the room. We sat opposite from, yet close to, each other. The atmosphere was intimate and friendly.

Mabel is a tall, middle-aged aboriginal woman, with long black hair and a round, open face. She has an air of self-confidence and assurance around her that she carries without a hint of arrogance. Her deep warm belly laugh is contagious and gives voice to her positive and hopeful attitude. She is a very strong and stubborn woman, both qualities that I admire very much in her. At the same time there is a gentleness about her that made me, in the past, trust her even in my very vulnerable moments. I like Mabel's company. The fact that she immediately responded to my call to participate in the research project is a great honor to me and gives me the feeling that our respect and affection is mutual.

Mabel was my first co-researcher and I was somewhat nervous at the beginning of this first interview. Questions such as: "Will I be able to ask the right open-ended questions to receive the right kind of data?" or, "Is Mabel truly sufficiently comfortable with me to allow herself to become vulnerable and to open, thus allowing deep and thick descriptions of her experiences?" After a few minutes, I was able to silence my interior doubts, and relax into my emphatic listening mode. It was easy to follow Mabel's narrative because we already had a relationship of trust and we did not need any preliminary checking each other out. From the start, Mabel settled into an intimate retelling that created thick descriptions of her life, her career and her experiences during and after her soul retrievals as taught by Dr. Jane Simington.

Mabel radiated happiness when she talked about her granddaughters and their recognition of her profound growth after the Trauma Recovery Certification Program.

She was very confident and passionate when she talked about her job working with prison inmates, and her compassion for them is almost palpable. She described her experiences during the Trauma Recovery Certification Program, and its effects on her later life, with great conviction and assurance. When she talked about a recent incident of one of her abusers contacting her and dragging their past back into her present life, I could feel her emotional distress build within her as she talked about it. I was beginning to contemplate how to soften and cushion Mabel's deep emotions, when my dog began to whine and scratch at our door, breaking the tension and putting on a breaker to her emotional tension. When I asked her to tell me a story of the past, Mabel talked in general terms and did not want, or was too emotional, to describe any details. Her reluctance to dwell on details of her traumatic experiences suggested to me that she had maybe, for variety of reasons, dissociated herself from them. Even after many years of distance from those experiences and many years of psychological processing, those events and the emotions connected with them, still could be painful enough for her to avoid. I wonder whether we will ever be free of our emotional attachments to our difficult experiences? Or, is it even desirable to be free of them? They made us who we are now and the emotional attachments are reminders of that.

While listening to Mabel, I found her style of speech poetic and decided to interpret her interview transcript in the style of poetry. Transcription in itself is a "re-interpretation, re-telling and re-construction" (Speedy, 2001, p: 86) of the original text. I am particularly interested in 'found poetry', which is "a form of poetry that has been co-constructed from words and phrases found or overheard in particular contexts, such as from interviews, field notes and research conversations" (Gee, 1999, as quoted in Speedy, 2001, p: 89). While reading Mabel's transcript, I could feel the interrelationship between poetic and conversational narratives in terms of meaning-making, rhythm, textural space and implicit intonation (Speedy, 2001). I could hear the gaps and pauses in her speech as unspoken words for the listener to fill in. I chose 'found poetry' to interpret Mabel's interview because it seemed a most fitting interpretation of her style of speech. I followed Gee's (1999, as quoted by Speedy, 2008) suggestion to use a poetic style of an oral transcription in stanza form, "that follows closely the pauses, silences and emphases of speech" (p: 89). I found that this method indeed allowed a thicker description of her experiences as well as richer and more accessible meanings, than in

the cleaned-up and smoothed-out prose of a summary interpretation that allows too much of my own interpretation. Mabel's own words are poetic, beautiful and deeply moving, but stretch over eighteen single spaced pages and would be too long to be presented here in their entirety. My interpretation of her story lies in the decision as to which parts of her narrative are salient for this research purpose and which can be left out. I must admit here that I had great difficulty deciding which elements were more important than others, because I find her entire narrative very captivating and important, therefore the original transcript in its entity is located in the Appendix.

When I gave Mabel the original transcript to read and approve, I highlighted the passages that I considered most important to her story. During our follow-up interview, which took place in a café, we discussed my choices of passages and she agreed with them. She also chose Mabel as her name in honor of her grandmother. She told me about the importance of her social worker's words with regards to her having a choice how she wants to live the rest of her life. This was a novel idea to her that allowed her to take her life into her own hands. It was the moment when she turned away from being a victim and down the long and difficult road toward recovery. the additional information from the follow-up meeting was integrated into the transcript and my interpretation.

Summary of Mabel's Transcript in Poetry Form

I just turned 48 on the weekend.

I am a single parent of three of my own, and three adopted,

And sometimes it can grow to eight, ten, whomever,

I've got a lot to call me "Mom".

Two grandchildren, two granddaughters, two weeks apart,

I love them very much.

After our experience out at trauma processing,

They were there to meet me, to pick me up.

The one (granddaughter) just grabbed my face,

And she just looked into my eyes.

I was trying to turn away and talk to everybody, say goodbye,

But she kept grabbing my face.

She just looked really intently, like she was searching for something.

Then she smiled, and then she kissed me, ...,
And she just kept kissing me.
My other daughter was holding my other granddaughter,
And she was reaching out towards me too,
Really wanted to come into my arms.
I was carrying both of them.
She looked into my eyes too,
And all of a sudden they both started kissing me.
They looked at each other, "Yeah, she is there".
It was really, it was really something, like they could see,
Because they say that children are the closest to the Creator.
They could see, the way they held my face so intently,
How old were they, maybe about six to eight months.
They were still old enough to be able to
My face was not moving anywhere.
I just let that happen,
It was quite, quite nice.

Right now I am an
Aboriginal Community Development Officer.
Which is helping the offenders come back when wanting back,
Back to society.
The ones that I get,
Some of them are working really, really hard.
So then I help, try to set up resources for them.
Really, I enjoy my job.
Sometimes it is challenging because I do get some
That are just not quite there yet, not really.
At first I thought, "What can I do?"
But I can, I have the strength, and
People come when I call them.

I have come from a hard, hard background.
Child and Family services apprehended us, my older sister and I,
I think when I was three, if not a little younger.
I do have good memories of my biological family.
Lots of good memories growing up picking berries,
Up in the bush, by the lake where my family lived.
And then ..., from ...,
I don't remember the first year,
I only remember because my social worker
Let me look at my file at about when I was nineteen,
And tried to commit suicide,
That's when I found out that
The first year we were in 11 foster homes, and
Then finally found a foster home that kept us,
And we stayed there for 14 years.
Those 14 years were ...,
Parts of me said it was a safe place to stay,
Other parts experienced a lot of, ...,
Sexual and mental, mental abuse, that I don't remember,
I didn't remember I should say.
I didn't remember a lot.
I have blocked a lot of memories out.
I thought that was normal.
I just kept on surviving.
Somewhere along the way there was a little piece of me that said,
"No matter what, I am not giving up."
I lost my language,
Because I was originally fluent in Cree.
Mostly my older sister and I grew up together.
She faced more abuse than I did, she protected me.
I didn't know who I was, or where I fit in.
I didn't fit in my foster home because I was Aboriginal.

*I didn't fit in back at home, where my biological family lived, because
 For them I was that white girl all of a sudden.
 It was, it was quite difficult.*

*When I was 10, I just happened to find a letter
 For me from my brother that said:
 "I hope this letter finds you, I have been looking for you, for how many years."
 Because of all the abuse, I had almost forgotten that I had my own family.
 So then I started:
 "I want to see my family; this letter proves I have a family."
 So I made them, made them,
 Bring my brothers to visit us, and us go visit them.
 So that's how I kept that connection, always,
 And kept to take off, to visit.
 Find out what my other half was,
 Even though they didn't, they didn't allow us.
 They said it wasn't, it wasn't a good environment,
 Too much, too much drinking.
 My foster parents owned a bar.
 There was alcohol 24/7,
 And all the abuse that comes with alcohol and alcoholism,
 It was always there.
 There were so many situations I know of me with a different perpetrator.
 I can see myself watching what happened,
 Dissociating.
 I would often be..., I would be there.
 And there is me watching,
 And there is another piece of me that would be in the wall,
 Or, out the window.
 Three or four pieces of me, all over, thinking,
 "Wow!"
 This is, this is strange,*

No feelings.
And that really did affect me.
And having to bring all those pieces back,
And still working on them.
I did face, ... did heal.
Did a lot of work through a few of those pieces.
The latest piece has really shaken me because,
I just didn't want to believe that my foster brother was abusive.
He was supposed to be a brother!

What brought me to the Trauma Processing Program?
I have done a lot of programs, but
There was still a piece of me that was missing,
That I needed to have,
That I just needed, because
There was still a big part of me that still felt completely lost.
I knew that there was something out there.
I put it out to the Creator,
"OK, guide me to the next place, I am ready to take the next step."
And everything just seemed to follow through.
I have had a friend that used to work with Dr. Simington.
We just happened to meet, we started talking about the program,
And it just, it just seemed to call out to me.

I really enjoyed the workshop.
There were so many pieces that I needed to get back ...,
And I was bound and determined.
If I didn't, if I didn't do it for myself,
If I didn't continue working through putting the final,
Putting the final pieces of those old issues back,

I would not be able to move on.

So, I took the course.

And I would say,

After that I had to take a month off work,

Just to be with myself.

Just to collect all those pieces that were back together.

To re-introduce myself to my thoughts, my own, my own feelings.

It took me a whole month because,

I can not even count how many pieces I brought back.

I was bound and determined, and they were right there, waiting.

The first week I couldn't get out of bed,

It was so hard, I was so drained,

Yet,

I felt so good inside and thought,

"That's OK, I can take care of me for a change,

And that was and still is so comforting.

And even to this day,

There are pieces that are missing,

That I need to go back to pick up.

Picked up a few more pieces that just came out of the blue,

That I thought I had worked through.

Found myself dissociating again.

WOW!

I thought I knew what I needed:

I needed sweats, I needed to see elders, I needed to talk to people,

I called them all,

And it just wasn't working.

I ended up having to take a month off work again.

I called Jane,

And she just helped to bring back those little pieces

That just didn't want to believe that abuse happened.

When I confronted that man 19 ago,
 When I started healing and work on myself, I told him
 "I know what you did, I am giving it back to you.
 I am working on myself now,
 And I am not feeling guilty and ashamed anymore."
 And that's all I could do at that time.
 And now he is calling,
 Calling my sister, harassing my sister,
 Phoning me:
 "Whatever you are doing, you are ruining my life,
 You are ruining my career, my family.
 I will give you \$100 000, just don't charge me."
 When I realized that it shook me that much, it's when I realized,
 Man, I still have some issues that I have to work on and have to work through.
 And now I have the strength to go through it on my own.
 I remember six more occasions that I am working through right now.
 And yeah, I can go back and pick up those pieces myself,
 I am strong now.
 So, it's been, it's been rewarding in its own way.
 I have had a lot of times to go back and finding the trauma,
 Finding my spirituality,
 What is comfortable for me,
 And knowing,
 When you work with spirit within yourself and within others,
 It makes things so much more comfortable and freeing.
 I am working with the Spirit Helpers now.
 They just help and guide me along,
 Especially when I get stuck in in some situation.
 I have so many little voices all over, so many parts of me,
 And each one has a separate little gift.
 And then I have my guides that help me out.
 I don't feel as bad, I don't feel as lost anymore

As I used to.

*When I first started going to school for my mental health and counseling,
Each had its own qualities,
And things were still missing, there was always that something, missing.
I think, I finally found that piece, that just fits, helps tie everything together.
Having that understanding that
Everybody works in different ways and different paces.
Before I just wouldn't understand why those people can't do this,
And now I have more awareness and understanding.
I am more empathetic to what a person needs.
I am able to just sit, just sit and listen to them, really listen to them.*

*I see my experience now as a gift.
Those sexual, emotional and physical abuses have made me stronger.
I learned to dissociate to survive.
I am amazed and grateful for my mind and my spirit that could not be broken,
I am grateful for my strength and resilience to get through it,
And keep facing it over and over again.
Our purpose is greater than us.
We are here to help the best we can and enjoy what we have.*

*My relationship with my children has become a lot closer.
I am able to explain to them more of my feelings,
Of what's going on, what I have gone through.
And I find that they are now more open to talk to me about things.
They have noticed, I have really mellowed out,
And our relationship has gotten a lot better.
It has really made a difference.
Even with my own brothers and sisters, we are all a lot closer.
We've had a few deaths over a short period of time.*

*Now, they call upon me to be the person who helps at the funerals.
 I asked at one time, "Why are you calling upon me, I'm the youngest here."
 And they say, "It's your turn, right now we can't handle it,
 You are ready, please come and help us."
 Everybody is going to see me,
 "Go see Mabel, she knows what she is doing."*

*I am looking forward to my developing years.
 When I tried to commit suicide at that young age,
 I thought I never live beyond whatever age I was thinking
 Because it was so old.
 Now I can look forward to it.
 Enjoy my grandchildren,
 and hopefully there is more.*

Karin's Art-Response to Mabel.

After the transcription and poetic rendition of Mabel's interview, I created two artistic responses to her interview. In the first picture (see *Figure 11*. Karin's interpretation of Mabel), I imagined her energetically. In the second picture (see *Figure 12*. Mabel the Warrior Goddess), I responded to her emotional outpouring of the narrative.

Without thinking about anything specific, but keeping Mabel in my mind, I started the first picture (*Figure 11*) with a yellow column. Next, I drew orange around the yellow, then red, green, blue, and finished with dark blue. I tried to visualize Mabel and my fingers filled in the spaces between the colours. Orange and red seemed to move, reach out and create arms. Yellow penetrated all the colours and spiraled upwards. The black surrounding the upper part of the "person" reminds me of Mabel's thick, long hair. At the same time, it feels like armor that protects her vulnerable layers. After drawing the picture I looked at it from a distance. I was satisfied with my artistic interpretation of Mabel. The lines and colours are bold and strong, reflecting my feelings toward her.

Next I tried to capture the essence of Mabel's energy flow during the interview (see *Figure 12*. Mabel the Warrior Goddess). I started with a black upside down "vase", followed by the yellow line. While I drew I focused on my memory of Mabel sitting in



Pic. no. 11 Karin's interpretation of Mabel



Pic. No. 12 Mabel the Warrior Goddess

a chair opposite me, talking about her life and soul recovery experiences. I filled the space above the upside down vase with strokes of blue, followed by green, red, orange and yellow. Next I drew a container for this flower-like apparition with a very strong base. The picture did not feel complete, so I reached for black and drew spiral lines inside the “vase” and around the “flower” above it. It did not seem right to close the top because it would obstruct the “flow” of yellow. Looking from a distance I suddenly saw a face, a strong warrior’s face, with a mouth wide open, speaking strong, powerful words that are directly connected to the yellow, which represents my interpretation of her Higher Self. The darker yellow line is opening up to the lighter yellow, her connection with the Creator. The strong orange base represents her groundedness in the feminine Divine energy of the Mother Earth.

The Emergence of a Warrior-Goddess

While deeply submerged in Mabel’s poetic transcript, I was inspired by my pictorial representations of her and started seeing her in my mind’s eye as an Aboriginal veteran-hero-warrior-Goddess-a wild woman! This archetypal Mabel was clad in soft leather pants and shirt that were well-worn, and ornamented with many beads that were arranged in elaborate shapes. Her long black hair was held back by a headband with a

few eagle feathers sticking out behind her head and down a braid. She had many scars on her face and walked stiffly, suggesting also many healed battle wounds on her body. Her gaze was proud, direct and self-assured, yet there was also a depth and softness in it hinting at a gentle personality that needed to be protected and nurtured to survive all those battles she had to face, fight and win.

I tried to compare her with Greek and Roman Goddesses (Bolen, 1984), but none of them seemed appropriate for Mabel. Biblical figures seemed also out of the question because Mabel does not want to be associated with the Judeo-Christian faith. Mabel lives out the archetype of an aboriginal warrior heroine that manifested itself in her life. Bolen describes beautifully the hardships and the journey of a heroine like Mabel.

There is a potential heroine in everywoman. She is the leading lady in her own life story on a journey that begins at her birth and continues through her lifetime. As she travels on her particular path, she will undoubtedly encounter suffering; feel loneliness, vulnerability, uncertainty, and know limitations. She also may find meaning, develop character, experience love and grace and learn wisdom (1984, p. 278).

I am following Bolen's outline of a heroine choice-maker to highlight the elements of Mabel's life as a heroine. She was only three years old when she and her sister were taken away from her home, rejected and sent away eleven times in her first year of forceful separation from her family, only to be finally accepted into another abusive family situation. Mabel was able to survive because, during abusive situations, she would escape into a world of fantasy, become a protagonist from her favorite books. She became very skilled at dissociating herself from her painful reality and refused to become a victim.

"There are crucial forks in every road, where a decision needs to be made. Which path to take? Which direction to follow?" (Bolen, 1984, p. 280). When Mabel was 10 years old, she accidentally discovered a letter addressed to her from her brother that had been intercepted and withheld by her foster parents. She pressured them to allow her brothers to visit her, and whenever she could, she would run away and visit her biological family on the reserve. Even as a child she embodied what it was to be a heroine because she fought for what she believed in and the path she wanted to follow.

"To be a heroine, on her own heroic journey, a woman must begin with the attitude

that her choices do matter: A woman becomes a choice-maker, a heroine who shapes who she will become” (Bolen, 1984, p. 278). Mabel was 18 years old when she was introduced to the concept of having a choice and the freedom to choose her future life. That was her turning point from being suicidal to developing a strong determination to survive and a spiritual desire to search for a meaning in life. It was the moment when her heroic journey towards recovery started.

“As a woman proceeds on a heroine’s journey, she confronts tasks, obstacles and dangers. How she responds and what she does will change her” (Bolen, 1984, p. 283). Mabel followed the path of recovery by participating in many healing courses. This journey was very difficult and took a very long time because the demons of her past at times still held her hostage. At other times she would feel completely lost in, or overwhelmed by, the enormity of her task in addition to all the other responsibilities that she carried as well, this included taking care of her daughters and her very ill sister. The latter she did both out of love and out of guilt, because her sister took upon herself more abuse during their upbringing to protect Mabel. Her single-minded perseverance during her healing process made it possible for her to “*be on the other side*”, providing help and comfort to others in need, such as in Alberta Hospital and later as an Aboriginal Community development Officer out of Corrections.

“Loss and grief is another theme in women’s lives and in heroine myths. Loss of a relationship plays a significant part in women’s lives because most women define themselves by their relationships and not by their accomplishments” (Bolen, 1984, p. 288). Mabel has two daughters, from relationships that could not last because her traumatic past of sexual abuse interfered heavily with her ability to maintain healthy and nurturing relationships with men. Consequently, she carried for many years the heavy burden of single motherhood.

“Most heroic journeys involve going through a dark place, or traveling through a desolate wasteland, analogous to passing through a depression, a dark night of the soul” (Bolen, 1984, p. 289). Mabel went through many dark places, but she never gave up. In the end, those dark passages turned out to be valuable incubation times to discover or learn new values through which she was able to grow and enrich her life and become a guide for others. There was growth and improvement, but it was very slow and the monsters of the past still managed to surprise and overpower her at times. She knew that:

*“There was still a piece of me that was missing,
That I needed to have back, because
There was still a big part of me that still felt completely lost.”*

“In standard heroic myths, after setting out on the quest, encountering and overpowering dangers, dragons, and darkness, the protagonist invariably gets stuck, unable to go forward or back.” (Bolen, 1984, p. 290). As required of a heroine, Mabel stayed true to herself and prayed to the Creator to guide her to the next and final opportunity for her to heal, so that she would not feel lost or incomplete anymore. With the help of her cousin and her Creator, Mabel was able to participate in the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. As part of the Program she learned how to retrieve lost soul parts that had become separated from her during her past traumatic events.

*“There were so many pieces that I needed to get back.
(Without it) I would not be able to move on.
I can not even count how many pieces I brought back.
I was bound and determined,
And they (those pieces) were right there waiting.”*

The solution to Mabel’s feelings of being lost and incomplete had to be physically felt, “not logically arrived at” (Bolen, p. 291). Bringing all those little pieces of herself back was very hard work that required her to rest for a whole month after the course. She became the keeper and guardian of her newly acquired little pieces, because they only stay when the keeper is strong enough to make them feel safe.

Mabel also realized that the soul retrieval procedure was but the beginning of a new journey. “The path we take is so often a spiral in shape. We cycle through patterns that bring us repeatedly back in the vicinity of whatever our nemesis is that we must meet and master” (p. 293).

*“And even to this day there are pieces that are missing,
That I need to go back to pick up.
Picked up a few more pieces that just came out of the blue,
That I thought I have worked through.
Found myself dissociating again,
And she (Dr. Jane Simington) just helped bring back those little pieces.
And yeah, I can go back and pick up those pieces myself.”*

Mabel's Granddaughters and her Precious Little Pieces.

When looking at Mabel's narrative from the temporal order (Lieblich, 1998), the second paragraph of her narrative where she describes the reaction of her granddaughters to the changes in her soul, stands out. Unlike other passages where she jumps in time in order to explain a situation within the linear order of events, this paragraph is at the beginning of her story, and out of context from a linear perspective, indicating its importance to her. Her soul retrievals were the pivotal moments in her healing journey. She felt validated in her spiritual and psychological healing by her still unspoiled and innocent baby granddaughters, who saw the Divine Light of Creator and her mended Soul through her eyes. For Mabel it was, and after two years still is, a confirmation of all the hard work, endurance and perseverance during the Trauma Recovery course; it was and still is the highlight of her achievement.

When reading Mabel's poetic transcript, one cannot help but notice the repetitive use of the word "*pieces*", or "*part of me*" in her narrative. For example she mentions pieces of her that were missing and she needed to get back because they were right there waiting for her; pieces that needed to be collected and become acquainted with after they were rescued; pieces that are still missing and in need to be picked up. So many parts of her and each one has a separate little gift. I wonder whether the gifts of the long-lost pieces of her past contributed to her present attitude of seeing her traumatic experiences as a gift. When I picture Mabel's little pieces coming back to her, I see my artistic representation of soul loss after a traumatic experience (picture no. 4) from the introduction.

In the last two years after the Trauma Recovery Certification Course, Mabel has gained in confidence on a personal and professional level. She has discovered a personal spirituality, is able to enjoy life with her family more fully, and is looking toward her future. An important lesson for Mabel after the soul retrieval was her experience that one never knows how many pieces are still hiding and waiting for one to become strong enough to welcome them home, and that dissociations are their way to make her know that they are ready. During the last two years Mabel feels that her soul has become more complete and strong. With the help of Creator she is now able to welcome, integrate and care for any remaining pieces from within her that are waiting to come forward or to be picked up.

Chapter 6: Robin The

lion roars, but softly, He
pounces, but gently.

He lands on me, and looks me deep into my eyes.

I can roar, if I want to, if I choose to.

I can roar loudly,

I can roar very quietly.

Will you hear me?

Will you see me?

Will you take the time and open your ears?

Will you open your soul to truly listen to me?

Yes I will.

I will do my best to be truly present to you,

And all that you have to say

Karin (Sept. 19th, 2011)

Robin is a blond slim, fit-looking middle-aged woman of Scandinavian descent. She makes a very private and shy impression on me. I met Robin for the first time one year ago during the Trauma Processing Certification Program. In that program we developed a deep relationship of trust in each other by sharing many intimate moments. During the Course Robin was rather quiet and often kept her feelings to herself, but I noticed how deeply she could go into her own trauma and hold it until she was ready to process and share it, very eloquently, with the group. I thought that this ability made her an excellent candidate to share with me the rich narrative about her life, and her experiences after the trauma processing course.

The interview with Robin took place in my house. Robin handed me the consent letter, and I asked her whether she had any questions or reservations with regards to the letter. She said that everything was clear, and we did not need to go over it again. She asked me how often we would meet and whether she would be video taped each time. I responded that the first interview would be video-taped so that I would not need to make notes, but the subsequent follow-up meeting would not have to be videotaped if that was what she wished. She requested that the follow-up interview not be taped, and we both signed the consent letter.

During the interview Robin did not disclose much information that was not directly connected to the soul retrieval research topic. She also took time to choose her words carefully and tried to control her emotions as she described her life experiences. Nevertheless, at times, similar to Apple and Mabel, strong emotions surfaced. These emotions made themselves evident through her voice-it became very quiet, sentences were unfinished, there was inconsistency with the temporal and linear order of events as she related her life narrative. Particularly strong emotions surfaced when she talked about the sexual abuse of herself and her cousin in childhood. The sexual assault of her daughter was barely mentioned which makes me suspect that this whole situation is still very raw and difficult for her. The painful emotions with regard to the sexual abuse make it clear how traumatic and long-lasting this brutal invasion is on a very young victim.

I was delighted that Robin brought with her most of the art pieces that she completed in the Course. We reflected on two of her own art pieces in terms of her growth since the completion of the Program. We analyzed two elements from within her spiritual development collage. In the second piece, we looked at her artistic representation of her aura around the outline of her body which inspired my intuitive art response to her.

Karin's Art-Response to Robin



Figure 13: Karin's interpretation of Robin

My first art-response (see *Figure 13*: Karin's interpretation of Robin) to Robin was created immediately after Robin's departure from my house. I wanted to capture my subconscious understanding of her essence while her memory was still fresh in my mind. I picked a dark yellow oil pastel and drew a centre line on a piece of paper. I surrounded it with a vibrant red, followed by yellow and two different shades of green. The outer dark blue layer is breaking up and flaking away. The object which I created looks like a seed-an oval seed just beginning to burst open. The core of the seed is full of hot, fiery red energy. All the layers of the inside give an impression of vibration, or fast paced rotation around the core line. It seems as if the energy needs to escape at the top and bottom to prevent the seed from exploding. In this way the seed can open up and grow in a slow and controlled manner.

I see the seed as the core of Robin. On the outside she gives an impression of a very mild, quiet, even-tempered introvert, but I do not believe that it corresponds with her core being. I agree with another member of the Trauma Recovery Certification program who saw a lion in Robin that was capable of a mighty roar. I suspect that her quiet, almost invisible appearance and demeanor could be more a product of her strict upbringing than her True Nature, where:

"Being seen but not heard was quite an important piece ...

Our feelings, I don't think were mirrored well."

The broken blue line around the seed reminds me of the "solid line" around her aura picture that she created in class. She was not happy about this solid line in her picture because it:

"Seemed too solid for me, and ...

It means, that I am too restricted inside.

That's what I would change."

The blue line around the seed pod that I created, is broken in many places to symbolize the break-through of Robin's spiritual and emotional growth after the Trauma Recovery Course:

"Yes, I have broken through it lots of, in lots of ways,

And I feel different too."

The blue line is still there, but does not restrict her growth anymore. It seems to protect Robin from changes that she cannot control or that could become overwhelming. This

blue line is her foundation, her grounding from where she can launch her new growth and development. It is in the broken places where she can ask her *“inner critic ... that [is] a lot about performance”* to leave, and welcome *“the outward things”* to connect with her inside feelings, because

“I know what it feels to feel that blank.

It feels sometimes like there is nothing on the inside.”

My second art representation of Robin’s growth (see *Figure 14*. Robin’s growth), was created five days later while I was transcribing her narrative. My hands expressed on paper what I was feeling about Robin’s progress in her development after the Trauma Recovery Course. It was a joy to make that picture. I felt almost like dancing when I created the multicolor swirls and lines. For me, the picture is a celebration. The swirls, dots and lines are fireworks of emotions erupting from the open seed, finally free to be seen and heard. In comparison to the intensity of the seed, the dancing lines are light



Figure 14: Robin’s growth

and gentle, and yet they announce great changes and accomplishments in Robin’s life. The swirls, dots, and curvy lines talk to me about Robin’s joy at having her *“little girl”* back; being able to *“giggle, like ridiculously, like for no reason.”* They celebrate her *“being healed, calm and settled in [her] world, and feeling expanded, with this*

smooth, beautiful way of breathing.” They tell the story about her new beautiful relationships with her close family, friends, and with God. They talk about Robin discovering new ways of being on a physical, emotional and spiritual plane of existence.

Creating my celebratory art-response to Robin’s achievements while listening to her interview helped me to interpret her transcript with those achievements in mind. I was able to overcome more easily my feelings of anger over Robin’s sexual abuse traumas, and focus on her journey of self discovery and healing, without losing sight of her occasional setbacks and difficulties. I personally transcribed Robin’s interview and interpreted it in ‘found poetry’ form.

I sent the transcript back to Robin to review, and if desired, to add some comments. I also told her that I saw strong parallels between her narrative and the story of Mary Magdalene from the New Testament. She was surprised and intrigued by that idea. I asked her to read over the transcript with that thought in mind, and share her insights with me during our follow-up meeting, which took place a few weeks later.

Similar to Apple and Mabel, Robin shared with me that she was a little embarrassed, and surprised with regard to the rawness and choppiness of her narrative, but she did not suggest to change it or smooth it out. We talked at length about the effects of strong emotions on our ability to create coherent thought patterns. We agreed that strong emotions during the initial interview were an indication of the intensity and depth of the experience that was being narrated. I thanked her for being so courageous in retelling her profound experiences for the purpose of the research, and that the interview was exactly what I was hoping for. Robin agreed that deep emotions are reminders of our psychological battle scars. They remind us how much we have been hurt, and how far we have come in being healed.

Robin was touched that I compared her with Mary Magdalene. We discussed the meaning and value of theological reflection with regard to her Christian faith tradition and experience. I told Robin that theological reflection (Killeen & de Beer, 1994), or “faith sense is an understanding of life in the light of God’s participation in it” (Kinast, 1999, p. 3). It is a thoughtful and deliberate reflection on our personal experience in comparison to the larger events of our faith tradition. It allows us to re-envision, the beliefs that were handed down to us with new insights that can become an invitation to spiritual transformation and growth (Killeen, de Beer, 1994). Robin responded that this was exactly how she felt when she researched and compared her experience against

that of Mary Magdalene. Through that process, her own story became more important and was validated for her. Also, she felt less alienated and cut off from her faith, and more comfortable with the new faith directions she is contemplating.

Together, Robin and I chose the salient passages of her original found poetry transcript to be included in the abbreviated version below. She also highlighted a few places in her transcript that she felt resonated with Mary Magdalene's words, cited from the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, and the Gnostic Gospel of Jesus (Meyer, 2005). I will introduce those comparisons in my theological reflection on Robin (see content analysis to follow).

Summary of Robin's Transcript in Poetry Form

My name is Robin.

I live on a farm.

I have a degree in nursing.

I have a husband and three children grown.

I grew up also on a farm,

In a family of six children, of which I am the second oldest.

We were very close.

My family was very community oriented,

Very, very connected to the Church, the Lutheran church.

It was very important to my family that we help out in a lot of ways,

In the church and in the community.

I remember being six of us in the church pew,

And being very quiet.

It was very important, the whole,

Being seen but not heard, was quite an important piece. ...

Our feelings, I don't think were mirrored well.

It was all about doing, was a lot about performance in a kind of way,

I, ... realized later in my life that ...

I was sexually abused,

By an older cousin who was babysitting me, and ...

I didn't really connect how it might have affected me.

On the whole we were a good family.

*My mother's family of origin,
 There was a lot of alcohol abuse, and
 I know with some uncles back there,
 Was some sexual abuse there,
 But not much talk about her family at all.
 She was very proud to be part of my father's family.
 My father was, ... his father died when he was 12, and
 He started farming at a very young age,
 So yeah, a very fundamental religious belief was really important.
 Wasn't really important what you did or who you were so much,
 But that you accepted Jesus in your life, for the hereafter, ... yeah.*

*I was working as a nurse, and was feeling just a little unsettled,
 Whatever that was about, wanting more.
 I heard about this parish nursing course, and
 Jane Simington was one of the professors that taught it.
 I did the course, and it sort of opened me up.
 When I read her first book,
 I was more interested in some of the other stuff she was doing.
 The story for me was that she had trauma in her life,
 With that tragic loss of her son.
 She was very connected to the Church and to the Western health care systems,
 As I was.
 I always felt too, that if anything was a problem for me,
 That I was pretty well backed and supported in all those ways,
 And I had resources.
 And that was the story that I heard from her as well.
 And when tragedy happened,
 She felt that those resources didn't really meet her needs and her soul pain.
 That story sort of always stayed with me
 Because I really quite connected with that.
 I think I came to realize that I was sexually abused,*

And I can't remember exactly the incident that was leading up to that.
I had an abdominal mass,
And the doctor told me that it was a slow-growing cancer.
He was quite relaxed about it, but I wasn't.
Jane came to my mind.

I phoned her and asked her whether there was something I could do?
And she said, "Oh there is lots you can do."
She led me on this soul-retrieval journey.
I was open to it, but I was a little skeptical.
She told me that I might notice myself,
being like a little girl, because I retrieved this part of myself.
I went home the way I came into the office, but
In the middle of the night I woke up giggling,
Like, like ridiculously for me, like for no reason.
But then I remembered, yeah, she said that that could happen.
When I woke up the next morning,
I remember walking into the kitchen and saying to myself,
I am healed.
I did have surgery for my mass, that turned out to be an appendicitis,
And I did come to realize that, that was happening
As I was dealing with some sexual abuse
That was happening with my daughter within the Church and stuff, ...
But I felt, I just felt so expanded,
I guess, I felt like I could breathe easier,
This really smooth, beautiful way of breathing.
I felt very calm and settled in my world,
I felt abundance,
I felt like everything I needed was right now, right here.
I would say that in terms of a sense of feeling healed,
I have never experienced anything like that before or maybe not since.

*I did go to a body therapist for a few sessions,
 And she said, "Oh, there is someone here that wants to,"
 There was another soul retrieval that was happening,
 And it wasn't as profound, but it did happen unannounced to both of us.*

*I did take some of Jane's courses in Grief and Soul Retrieval,
 And then this Trauma Course came up.
 I thought, "I wonder if this might be a door for me
 Into some work that I might be interested in?"
 So I stepped into it.
 I felt nervous when I was in it,
 Because there was some kind of critic or judge about me,
 Because I did not have a professional plan.
 I know that this did not come from the instructor.
 It came from myself, I was feeling like I am not fulfilling myself professionally.*

*I have been really aware after the course
 That the real work for me was, and is
 Trusting in "The I Am That I Am."
 The God that was so out there, ...
 To experience that wholeness within.
 And that is almost like a life journey for me,
 Having had the ancestry, the heritage that I have.
 My ancestors were very religious people.
 It was a freeing thing.
 To remember who you are and live in that knowing.
 Of course, you know, empowering others, but
 To remember who you are.*

*Dissociation makes a lot of sense to me because
 I know what it feels to feel that blank; I feel blank sometimes.
 I can do the outward thing, but it doesn't connect with anything inside.*

It feels sometimes like there is nothing on the inside.

Dissociation I get.

In my upbringing there was a lot of, "Only pay attention to the nice stuff,

You don't even want to know about the other stuff."

And it worked for them, ... it was their coping mechanism.

In April we had a very close friend die of cancer very suddenly.

In the weeks before he died, his wife called.

She was very distraught.

It was very easy for me to just sit with her,

Do an imagery of bringing in the light, and

Letting what she did not need go down into Mother Earth,

And be recycled by Mother Earth.

That was very helpful for her.

She remembered and used it a-lot since his passing.

I also am thinking of some things that are part of me since that Course.

We had a really good cry in grieving my friend's loss shortly after he died.

The paper tissues were, ... it seems very automatic for me to say,

Let's go, take care of (burn) our Kleenexes in our back yard,

And to me it seems, ... of course we do that.

My husband and friend joined me and we had a really wonderful time.

It meant a lot to her and it was a very simple thing,

It gave her the opportunity, or invited her to honor her grief.

It was a spiritual moment.

*I can't say that I have been without feelings of dissociation since the Course,
but at least I know what I am feeling a little bit more,*

And can go there and hold that feeling.

Sometimes I do remember it as bringing in the little girl,

And that is remarkably helpful.

Sometimes I am holding myself with that feeling,

And letting it recycle, and letting it transform, and

I have a deeper trust that it will.

While before, I would have had a lot of fear, fear of the feeling.

I guess one of the things I kind of was and still am a little confused,

From that kind of sense that I got that

Once a part comes back, it's back,

And then maybe, ... and then let my judge and critic come in and say, ...

Not allowing my process anymore, because

It should be done, the part is back.

It is probably true that some parts are not all there yet, or just don't stay,

Because sometimes, ... I don't hold the safety for all of my parts.

I think something in my learning along the way, in the efforts for us to really feel

The hopefulness, or helpfulness, or the successfulness of this soul retrieval,

I think in that effort I might have gotten a little confused

About how important that integration is.

And to continue with that integration, instead of,

"OK, I have done the soul retrieval, and what's wrong with me now?"

It is an ongoing process.

The change in me is a big part of our friendship with my friend.

I was able to be quite a bit more present in her process,

With that understanding, both in my knowledge level, but also in myself

With my cousin who was also sexually abused,

(My understanding) was very helpful in my relationship with her.

She was interested how the Course was for me,

And we had a conversation about some of the things that happened.

And that really made a difference for her.

She used to lay down and not get up for long periods,

And that ... changed her.

My relationship with my husband,

I think I am more present, I think we are more present with each other.

I think he appreciated the explorations that I did.

*When I did the picture of my aura in class and after we were talking about it,
I felt, I did not like the solid line around it, seemed too solid for me,
and that's what I would change.*

*The solid line represents that I am restricted inside myself.
I have broken through it in lots of ways,
And I feel different too.*

*The phrase in the collage "Make it yours" is still very true, very solid for me.
The thing about the picture (a mother facing a daughter at eye level),
Was just the real mirroring reflection validating of this child,
Which was not part of my experience.*

*Another important phrase in the collage: "What's old is new again."
There is a lot of generational stuff here, and I feel like,
I am in a stage of transformation,
And thinking about the next generation,
And the values that I came with are transforming.*

*There was a time when I was quite angry at that piece, that phrase,
But I don't feel that anymore.
I have a better sense of where it came from, why it was there.
I was able to step out and break the thick line.*

Robin's Narrative: Content Analysis

Robin's family, particularly her close family, and friends are very important to her. Robin grew up in a very fundamentalist religious family, but was able to loosen, what I interpret as the shackles of that bond. God and Jesus are still important to her because they are the foundation on which she build her life. She took from her upbringing whatever felt right, and "recycled" the pieces that she was angry with into a present choice. She is still loosely connected to the community, still part of a good family, but did not look away and pretend that nothing had happened when her own daughter was sexually assaulted in her Church. She found her voice to stand by her daughter and fight the abuse in a way that she wished her parents would have fought for her. She wished they had "validated" her as a child, and seen her as she sees and validates her daughter. Unfortunately, not all of her "Church family" could support her in exposing

and bringing her daughter's abuser to justice. Eventually, Robin distanced herself from the church community that she had belonged to since she was born. During our follow-up interview, Robin mentioned the price she had to pay for speaking up and seeking justice. Her church community was a big part of her social and spiritual identity. It was the place where she found comfort, support, and companionship when celebrating religious rituals. Without this support she feels at times lonely and isolated. It is hard to find a new circle of people with whom she and her family can again share spiritual rituals as sacred moments of union between the human and the Divine.

In her mid-life, Robin *"started to feel a little unsettled, wanting more"*, but did not know what it was about. She rebelled against *"this important piece of being seen but not heard,"* and discovered that she was a person. Robin went on a journey to find out who she truly was, and on that journey came across Jane Simington, who was fundamental in helping Robin overcome her childhood rape trauma and her fear of a possible impending death through what was then believed to be cancer. Robin's personal trauma and disappointment with her faith and professional community woke her up. Robin had the choice to go back into invisibility or to continue walking the path of transformation. She chose to take more courses, initially to re-direct her professional career, but in the process found her self. She found her inner authority, *"the I Am that I Am"*, the Divine within herself; she is in the process of discovering how to *"live in that knowledge"* on a daily basis.

Robin and Mary Magdalene: A Theological Reflection

Many elements of Robin's story remind me of Mary Magdalene's story from the New Testament. Mary Magdalene is a biblical figure, and at the same time, embodies the archetypes of companion and supporter. She was a disciple to Jesus, and an apostle after Jesus' death. Many names in the Bible have symbolic meanings, and it is no accident that Mary is the name of Jesus' mother and later his most intimate and devoted companion. Mary is an English form of Maria, which is a translation from the Greek name Mariam, which comes from the Hebrew name Miryam. There are many elaborations on the origin and meaning of this name. Considering that it is mentioned only once in the Old Testament as the name of Moses's sister Miryam, who was a Hebrew slave in Egypt, I find the origin of this name as "beloved" from the Egyptian word mry, or "love" from mr, as most likely explanations (<http://www.behindthename.com/name/mary> downloaded,

December, 2 2011). I also like Zorrel's (1906) combination of the Egyptian word mr, or mar with the Hebrew Yam, which stands for Yahweh. When combined, this word means "One loving Yahweh" or "Beloved by Yahweh" (*Zeitschrift fuer Katholische Theologie*, 1906, p. 356, as quoted in <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464.htm> downloaded December 2nd, 2011). The above interpretations of the name Mary are very fitting descriptions of the supporting and loving roles that the two Marys played in Jesus' life and ministry.

A few months ago I read a novelization of Mary Magdalene by Margaret George (2003), which inspired my comparison. George was very thorough in her research, and I trust in the correctness of that inquiry. According to her research, Mary Magdalene is mentioned in four canonical gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in connection with five events:

- a. being delivered from seven demons by Jesus;
- b. following Jesus, along with other women he has cured, and supporting him financially in his ministry;
- c. being present at the crucifixion;
- d. coming early to the tomb on Easter morning to anoint him;
- e. encountering the risen Christ (p. 627).

Mary Magdalene reappears in the so-called apocryphal gospels, which are documents that were composed later, most likely at the end of the first or beginning of the second century. She is mentioned in the gnostic Gospels of Mary, Phillip, Thomas, Peter and the Pistis Sophia. In those writings Mary Magdalene is described as a person of enlightenment, with special spiritual knowledge and an important position among the disciples. She is seen as a partner and companion of Jesus, close enough to him, to make a few of his other disciples jealous of her position. After the Easter story Mary Magdalene disappeared into legend. There are many rumors, but no reliable reports about her later life (George, 2003).

Jesus cleansed Mary Magdalene of seven demons (Luke 8:2, Mark 16). "In ancient cultures, numbers were considered to come from the Divine and mystical realms. They have been attributed with special secret powers" (Schimmel, 1993, p.10). They were seen as mediators between the Divine and the created world.

The number seven is holy in every culture, and stands for thought and consciousness

(Schimmel, 1993). It represents humanity's connection to its source, God- or Christ-Consciousness. Seven is also the number of the Great Mother Earth. In all cultures, seven represents completeness and totality, plenty, perfection, rest, security, safety.

In the Old Testament the number seven is used repeatedly. It is used 55 times in Revelation, and usually means fullness and completeness. It is the number of occult intelligence. There are seven names for God, seven Great Holy Days in the Jewish year. The menorah has seven branches. The temple in Jerusalem took seven years to build and there are seven pillars of wisdom in the temple (<http://crystallinks.com/numerology2.html>, downloaded Nov. 7, 2011).

Based on the information above, it is safe to assume that the number seven was revered by the Jews of Jesus' time and was understood as a holy connection to God. Mary Magdalene was possessed by seven demons, which could mean that she was disconnected from God. Demons were, in her time, not considered as anything abstract, but intermediate beings between humans and Gods, evil spirit creatures of the dark. When possessed by them, they made one behave in erratic and unpredictable ways, and had to be exorcised by a religious official. From my understanding and experience of trauma, it is my assumption that Mary Magdalene was not possessed by demons, but suffered from severe trauma. The description of possessed people in the Bible reminds me of Freud's female hysteric patients, who turned out to be victims of sexual abuse. Considering that women of the New Testament were not seen as persons, but possessions of men, I wonder whether Mary Magdalene was abused by members of the family.

Severe, prolonged sexual and physical abuse shatters the soul and disconnects the victims from their Divine Light within and from the source of Life called God. I think that both Mary Magdalene and Robin were born into very religious families, where women were to serve but not to be seen or heard. Both experienced the same trauma and disconnection from their faith and from themselves. They were both living in a spiritual wasteland. A myth tells of Mary Magdalene leaving the "safety" of her home and faith that could not protect her, and going into the desert naked, covered only with her hair to face her demons (George, 2003). A very disappointed Robin left the "safety" of her faith and professional community as well, and ventured, unprotected, into the unknown foreign territory of shamanism to conquer her demons. Mary Magdalene

found her Messiah, who saw her, truly saw her, for the beautiful soul that she was. He welcomed her as an equal, a valuable member of his group. In the Gospel of Thomas (3:3) (Holy Bible, 1952), Simon Peter said to them: “Mary should leave us, for females are not worthy of light.” Jesus said: “Look, I shall guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male, will enter Heaven’s Kingdom. Kingdom of God is within a person” (Meyer, 2005, p. 34). Jesus wanted to elevate all females to the level of males. Mary Magdalene and the other women in his following adored Jesus because he cured their traumas and/or other physical illnesses. He also restored their crushed or diminished spirits within their psyches. He made them visible, gave them voices, and made them persons worthy of Life, with a soul and purpose in Life, persons who were equals in the Kingdom of God.

In her soul pain, Robin couldn’t find the loving Jesus under the many layers of restrictions and biases within her fundamentalist Christian faith tradition. She went on a search, past the desert of her faith and professional community into the ancient land of shamanism, where she found a guide who helped her find and heal the missing pieces of herself. Robin identified with Mary Magdalene’s words: “Child of human kind is within, follow that, and those that seek it will find it” (Meyer, 2005). For Robin it is about finding that lost little girl with the help of soul-retrieval: “soul-retrieval is about recovering one’s lost soul pieces, and in the process finding self-love and self-acceptance” (conversation with Robin, Nov. 2, 2011). As she grew stronger and more whole, she was able to recover the Christ authority within herself. Like Mary Magdalene, Robin became a disciple of Jesus, but in a very different way than was traditionally expected from her:

*“Wasn’t really so important what you did or who you were, so much,
But that you accepted Jesus in your life, for the here after, ... yeah.”*

She did not follow the Jesus who was the Lamb of God, who would guide her into a heaven somewhere in the universe. She followed a rebel, who threw over the merchants’ tables on the temple’s ground in Jerusalem, and dismissed many of the sacred religious Jewish traditions that benefitted the priests but not ordinary believers (Holy Bible, 1952). She followed a Messiah, who treated women as equals, and believed that the Kingdom of God was within every person.

“Make it yours”, and “What’s old is new again”, are two phrases from her collage

that were particularly important to Robin. The first phrase stood for being seen and acknowledged by her family and community. The second represented the spiritual stagnation of the Lutheran Church, with “*a lot of generational stuff*” on her family side. There was a time when she was “*quite angry with that piece*”, because she found that Jesus’ teachings were being misinterpreted for the sake of the institution (conversation with Robin, Nov. 2, 2011).

*“But I don’t feel that anymore,
I have a better sense of where it came from, why it was there,
Just so long as everything can move.
And the values that I came from are transforming.
I am in a stage of transformation,

And thinking about the next generation,
And it’s all very exciting.”*

Jesus validated Mary Magdalene, and Robin. He helped them to remember who they were as women. He showed them a way to stay rooted in their faith but at the same time make it their own. He taught them how to take what was old and spiritually stifling, and change it, transform it to fit their individual needs.

At the Trauma Recovery Certification Program, Robin was introduced to a different paradigm of healing and spiritual practice. She was initiated into a few tribal ceremonies celebrating our human connectedness to our planet as a nurturing mother, with whom we are intimately connected. Robin integrated certain aspects of that worldview and ceremonies as “*part of [her] since that Course*”. On that journey to spiritual transformation and growth, Robin agrees with Mary Magdalene’s words when she proclaimed that “sin means not being in sync with nature” (Meyer, 2005). Sin became for Robin as it was for Mary Magdalene, not respecting that connectedness with Mother Nature and not honoring Her and ourselves in all of our humanness. Robin learned to embody and share those new beliefs with her friend whose husband was dying:

*“It was very easy for me to just sit with her,
And do an imagery of bringing in the light,
And letting what she did not need go down into Mother Earth,*

And be recycled by Mother Earth.

We had a really good cry in grieving his loss, shortly after he died.

The paper tissues were... it seems very automatic for me to say.

"Let's go take care of [burn] our Kleenexes in our back yard,"

And to me it seemed like, "of course we do that."

On her journey towards wholeness, Robin could also tap into additional support from the founder of her Lutheran Church, who was the leader of the great religious revolt of the sixteenth century in Germany. As a monk, Martin Luther criticized the Roman Catholic Church, was excommunicated, became a wanted man, and started a new religious branch of Christianity (<http://ccel.org/I/luther>). Robin has great role models within her faith tradition to help her find her own spiritual direction.

Robin is beginning to trust in the I Am That I Am:

"The God that was out there, ...

To experience that wholeness within."

The phrase is a popular translation from the Hebrew word "Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh", which is one of the original seven names of God (Schimmel, 1993). For her it is not something that once done is accomplished, but part of a process, a life-long process of growth and transformation. It is a journey of "... [remembering] who you are and living in that knowing." At the moment she is in the process of discovering what this "I Am That I Am" means for her and where it will take her; she is willing and ready for this journey.

Sometimes it is still difficult for her to hold on and nurture this spiritual light and her recovered soul parts. At times she still "*feels that blank*," the dissociation, where she "*can do the outward thing*", but "*doesn't connect with anything inside*." Her inner critic still sometimes torments her, but judging from her actions with her grieving friend and her cousin, it is safe to say that those are just momentary relapses reminding her how far she has already come. The Intensive Trauma Processing Course gave her the tools to help herself, her friends and her family in difficult situations and gain confidence in herself, which allows her lost soul parts to trust in her growth, and feel safe enough to come back and stay.

Chapter 7: Apple

The interview took place in Apple's house which was tastefully decorated, very clean and tidy. At once I noticed the bright green wall color in her living room and a bright yellow in her kitchen. Apple is an attractive, slim, middle-aged woman with short dark-grey hair. She was dressed in jeans and a bright orange cotton sweater. From the first moment we met, she made a very confident and friendly impression on me. She strikes me as a woman who makes things work, who takes charge, a pragmatic person who is used to making the best out of a given situation, like for example helping me fix my tripod. Upon arrival at Apple's house, I realized that my emergency tripod for my camera was missing the component that allows its attachment to the camera. Apple went into the kitchen, found two rubber bands and helped me fasten the camera to the tripod in a very matter of fact way as if she was used to doing things like that on a regular basis.

In addition to being very friendly, I also experienced Apple to be a little reserved and cautious with me; this is understandable considering that we had never met before. She came forward to participate in the research project after receiving my letter of invitation which described the research in very general terms. She stated to me during our first telephone encounter that she strongly believed in the power of soul-retrieval as taught by Dr. Simington.

During the interview, I could feel Apple becoming more and more emotional, which I felt was reflected by her disjointed speech, unfinished sentences and longer pauses. After receiving the interview transcript, Apple herself did not like it for the above stated reasons. She re-wrote it to make it more coherent and complete. I used her revised version in choosing the most salient parts of Apple's story to be included in this text.

At the end of the interview, Apple admitted to being cautious and reserved with me because she did not receive any details with regard to the interview procedure, thus could not prepare for it. For some reason I did not ask her why. I realized only the day after the interview that I did not send her the consent letter prior to the interview to inform her about the topic, procedure and her rights. I was shocked because it was very much unlike me to forget such an important element of the research process. After consultation with my supervisor, I immediately e-mailed Apple the consent letter and telephoned her back to ask whether she would still read and sign it. She agreed and I

picked up the signed consent letter a few days later.

All I knew about Apple before the interview was that she is married to a professional soldier, has a son with PTSD, and that she completed the Trauma Processing Certification Program little over one year prior to the interview. Shortly after the interview, I realized that our meeting affected me profoundly. At first I was not aware of this counter-transference. I just felt sad, drained, and angry - not with Apple but with what was done to her. After talking with my counselor I recognized the origin of these feelings. It triggered my own vicarious traumatic childhood experiences living in Polish Silesia, surrounded by severely traumatized people as a result of the Second World War and post-war politics.

I felt this anger well up in my belly while sitting across from Apple, listening to her story, and connecting to her own anger that I believe she is denying herself to feel and acknowledge. I found glimpses of her anger in her eyes that at times seemed to have sparks of fire. I connected with it when she talked about her son's psychologist demanding that she not interfere with her son's treatment because she is not the specialist. I felt her anger when she described the psychologist's arrogance in dismissing her soul-retrieval success with her son, because the psychologist did not believe in it. I felt Apple's denial of her angry feelings when she said that the psychologist's response was "unfortunate" for her. It is a statement of a mild disappointment and was in stark incongruence with her angry facial expression. Throughout the interview, Apple talked in a quiet and controlled manner and tried to re-tell her story in a coherent and linear fashion. However, her sentences were often incomplete or broken-up by long pauses, as if she had trouble finding the right words or keeping her emotions under control. She communicated feelings of distress with her very rigid body posture, occasional jerky hand gestures and bursts of energy shooting out of her body. After acknowledging and processing my own feelings and memories triggered by Apple's story, I was wondering whether there were other suppressed traumas of Apple's own past that were triggered by her experiences with her son's illness and his psychologist's words to her.

Watching traumatic incidents on television or listening to them on radio is not as traumatic for me because there is a barrier between me and the "bad news" that protects my vulnerable self. Sitting across from, and listening emphatically to, an angry and traumatized woman whose trauma deeply resonated with mine, made it impossible

for me to distance myself from her feelings and from my own feelings. This took me very much by surprise, and showed me how raw that childhood wound still is for me. Forgetting to send Apple the consent letter prior to the interview could be simply accidental. It could also be part of my subconscious dissociating from the fact that I was going to see and interview a person traumatized by the military, an institution I am trying to avoid as much as possible.

For some time, I actually considered not including this interview in my research project. I decided against it because I thought that this would be disrespectful towards Apple whose voice and authority has been silenced enough and whose trauma recovery experience is very valuable for this research project.

It was difficult for me to share my analysis of the interview with Apple. I was blocked from writing it for a few weeks because I was very afraid that my interpretation of her possible soul journey and recovery, would not be something she would appreciate reading. Also, I was not sure I could be objective enough to not transfer and weave in my own experiences along with hers. After a thorough processing session with my counselor (for more detail see chapter 8, p.108), I was able to voice my concern and find a way to unblock myself. I was able to visualize my connection to Apple as a strong cord that was stretched between her heart and mine. I cut that cord gently in my counselor's garden and planted it next to an apple tree for the energy between us to be absorbed and healed by the tree. Two days later I was ready to continue with the transcription and analysis of Apple's narrative.

Apple's transcript of her interview was originally also composed in poetry form, similar to Mabel's and Robin's. After reading it over, Apple did not like the disjointed flow of her speech in the original transcript. The following summary is a more cleaned-up and smoothed-out version of the transcript created by Apple.

Highlights of Apple's Story in Her own Words.

I was raised on a farm away from a big city. I got married to a military man, and we traveled. We were stationed in different parts of Canada; we also spent a few years in Germany. The last posting was to my home area, and that happened in 1992. I enjoyed the moves because I met new people each time, enjoyed the vicinity where we were stationed. Growing up on the farm, I only saw the local area. I had never been to the Rockies before, so to travel across the country and

to see all the different places, was a nice experience.

He was an infantryman, and from the beginning of our marriage, he was away approximately four to six months of each year; therefore, I was mom and dad to my children, and also had the responsibility of the whole household. There were lots of rough times, but I enjoyed my life.

My trauma was the reason I wanted to take the Trauma Recovery Certification Course. First of all I did the Grief Support Certification Course and found it very beneficial. I heard about the courses through The Western Catholic Reporter. Jane, the facilitator, had put an ad in it and I decided to register.

It caught my attention because it was about trauma recovery. My son went to Afghanistan. Before he stepped a foot back in Canada, after eight months there, he had suicidal tendencies, and was sick. Upon returning home, he attempted suicide, and was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Just to have him survive has been a huge journey of horrific events that involved him calling me to help him stay alive. Because of that I became sick as well, and now I am being treated for PTSD. I wanted to know how I could help myself. I am not keen on pills, and the courses were an avenue that I thought would be very helpful. I read some books to learn about PTSD and it helped greatly in giving me some awareness - but it didn't help me heal. One needs something more to heal.

When I took the Trauma Recovery Course, I went into it very deeply; there were a lot of triggers. We did an exercise where we had gone to get a soul part and I couldn't come back. Jane the facilitator asked me why, and I said, "All I can see is this black hole." "What's in that black hole," she asked? I replied, "It's just a black hole." She said, "OK, maybe there is something there that you need to get." She asked me to request from the universe whatever it was that I needed to get to come to me. There was no response from the universe, so she said, "OK, let's send the owl and see what we get." I sent the owl into the black hole. She said, "Is the owl back?" I said "The owl is coming back." She said, "What has it got?" I replied, "Nothing." She said, "You tell him to go there and come back with something." So I did, and when the owl came back, he came back with my son. I got him out of the black hole.

Since the last suicide attempt six months ago, I have been working with my son on getting him to a clinic because he was dead set on taking his own life. For the last few years, my son was in therapy and I had promised his psychologist that I would not interfere with her work by taking him on soul-retrievals. She is effective to some degree, but it is a very slow process. After his last attempt, I said to myself, "At this point, I am going to lose my son," therefore I broke the promise and asked God to bring back as many of my son's soul parts as he could handle into his heart chakra. I saw a vision of his soul parts enter his heart chakra. His body jerked and kept on jerking, which confirmed to me that he was receiving his soul parts. Afterwards, I calmed him down and told him, "You have to nurture and take care of your soul parts, your inner self. He said, "Well, how do I do that?" I said, "Take care of yourself, do not do anything that makes you angry, exercise, eat a healthy diet, do not try to harm yourself, and the soul parts will stay with you."

The next morning he asked, "How am I going to handle this? How am I going to keep him?" I said, "Just do the best you can." After three days of rest he became joyful and coherent. It was a complete 180 degrees change from before. He asked the psychologist, "What brought this on, why do I feel so good?" She could not answer; she said, "I have no idea, I see some huge improvements, but it is not going to last because you are going to fall." It was unfortunate for me, because I feel if she would have perked him up and said, "Oh it is all good, it is going to be wonderful", or "If you continue to do this work, things will get better", it would have been positive, and he may not have gone back into the darkness. No one acknowledges the power of soul-retrievals. The psychologist wouldn't acknowledge it, so my son doesn't really either.

All kinds of things are going through my sons head when he is already in a traumatic trance, therefore I do not work directly with him at those times. I just say "OK God, you have to get him some soul parts back," and there is definitely some healing that happens. I request it and God makes it happen.

I have done soul-retrievals on myself from the day I started the Trauma Recovery Course. I'm more stable; I'm not on pills, but I still have lots of work to do in healing. At the beginning I played the Soul-Retrieval Tape when I wanted

to retrieve soul parts for myself. Lately I do not even bother with the tape. I do the process whenever I feel something is missing and God grants me what I need. Because I have been doing it regularly, I have progressed on my healing journey. I went from someone who was emotionally exhausted, physically exhausted and depleted, to become functional, coherent, and emotionally stable. This is an attribute to soul-retrieval, but triggers still come and they still bring tears, anger and frustration.

Last year I started a program at a local University. I want to become a psychologist, so that I can be of assistance to the families of the military who are traumatized with PTSD. I was very helpless in dealing with my traumatic situation because I had absolutely no knowledge of the disease. I want to be helpful; nobody really knows a great deal about PTSD. It was always covered up. We need awareness, and we also need to do some healing.

I am presently a peer volunteer at a Stress Support Group. I received training to support other mothers. We need to give them more education to know the signs, the symptoms, and what to do in a crisis, tell them that they did everything that they could, and that it's time to do some self-care. There is a great need for that.

I believe that soul-retrieval combined with modern counseling techniques is very effective. We lose soul parts when something traumatic happens, because we do not feel the same afterwards anymore. We have changed. Therefore bringing a soul part back can make us partially whole again. You are never whole until you get all your parts back.

I believe that it is part of our energy that goes. We are all made up of energy; the Soul is energy. If we didn't have energy in our body we would be dead. Everything in our body works as a unit. If part of our energy goes, we just need to get it back to be complete. That energy could be called Spirit, Soul, or Inner Child.

I went to an orientation at a buddhist temple; I am starting meditation there tonight from seven to nine. It is for six months, every Monday through Friday. The instructor is from Thailand. He is an old monk, and quite a character. The reason I am taking meditation is that I want to understand the energy that I have got. I want to see my energy. I have placed some things on hold. I am taking my

time for a while. This meditation is for me personally, and that's where I am at present.

I am happier now, but that is all through a lot of healing, a lot of soul retrievals, a lot of self-care. God has healed and provided me with lots and lots of growth. It was a very slow start because I had lots of instances where my son was not well, so it makes it difficult for anyone to heal. You can get some progress upward, and then you can fall right back down. It is still a learning curve. Life is a learning curve. You go with the flow, at least that is what I always tried to do. There is a right way and wrong way, and I am always trying to follow the right way, but sometimes it is really hard to distinguish which option is the right one.

Apple's Narrative: Content Analysis.

In the interview, Apple did not reveal much about her early family background, her son or husband's name, or whether she has more children. This, in addition to her distorted and incomplete sentences, and occasional long pauses while retelling her story, makes me suspect that after almost four years of struggle to keep her traumatized son alive, she is still living in crisis mode. Because of that, her need to grieve her husband's and father's death, and process the trauma she is experiencing with her son's illness, is also suspended in what I believe is denial. Apple supports this analysis when she says, *"I'm more stable, I'm not on pills, but I still have lots of work to do in healing."* I see denial in this case as a coping mechanism, a dissociation from her inner self, until it is safe enough to look at and process. At the moment she is trying to stay still and whole. "A woman has a profound capacity to be still, perhaps the most powerful act any human being can make. She is required to go back to a very still inner center every time something profound happens to her" (Johnson, 1989, p. 49). In that stillness Apple is able to connect to the centre of her energy, draw strength from it and just be, or go on a journey and collect missing soul parts.

During our follow-up meeting, I asked Apple for a few more details. She described to me in greater detail her process of soul-retrieval. She goes regularly on a spiritual journey from her inner center, where she enters a path. Alongside that path is a big rock, her safe place, where she can rest and call back to herself all the soul parts that she has lost as a result of her traumatic past and present circumstance. Occasionally a

little girl still comes, but lately most of her lost soul parts are of her adult self that she welcomes, heals and integrates into herself. Those regular soul retrievals from within her inner world and the bright and cheerful colours that surround her outer world, allow her to stay centered, stable and positive while coping with the difficult family situation around her.

Karin's Art-Response to Apple



Figure 15: Karin's art response to Apple



Figure 16: Apple's spiral picture

Part-way into the interview I started making an art-response to Apple (see *Figure 15*. Karin's art response to Apple). As with the other women I sat with, my purpose was to spontaneously create a picture in response to the interview and the person across from me (Moon, 1998).

I created an outline of a blue vase. At the bottom of the vase is a yellow substance that spirals up and out of the vase. Apple looked at it and said that the spiral looks a lot like the spiral that she created in a picture, at an art class shortly after the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. It is an 8" by 11" oil painting depicting a spiral, mostly yellow with some green and pink in it on a blue background (see *Figure 16*. Apple's spiral picture).

When we put the pictures side by side (*Figures 15 and 16*), I shared with her that, when looking at her picture (*Figure 16*), I felt as if I were looking at the spiral from the inside of the vessel that I created. I asked her what the spiral meant to her. She said that it was her spiritual essence and journey. Yellow represented the color of the Divine; green and pink are the chakra colors of the heart, and the blue color surrounding her spiral is the universe, the yellow dots around it, the stars. For me this was a profoundly spiritual moment, because I saw the vase to be a representation of her soul and the yellow spiral, her spirit, connecting her with the Divine energy. For me this energy is also in the universe. The colors of the spiral are partially smudged and mixed together, giving an impression that they are bleeding into each other. This could symbolize Apple's healing but still bleeding essence. Something is still escaping from her essence that she is recovering on a regular basis with the help of soul-retrieval journeys.

On further examination I saw in the spiral, intertwined snakes going up and down the coils. I became very excited because I remembered Shinoda Bolen's (1984) comment about the importance of a snake appearance in a heroine's development.

Whenever women begin to claim their own authority, or make decisions, or become aware of having a new sense of their own political, or psychic or personal power, snakes start to appear. As a symbol, it represents power once held by goddesses, as well as phallic or masculine power of animus qualities" (p. 284).

The snakes were another possible indication for me that Apple is on the way to healing and growth, a confirmation of her healthy relationship with her animus. I shared my snake observation and insights with Apple, and once pointed out, she could see them too. She was surprised that she did not see the snakes before. Apple also showed me the bird, hiding in the spiral, that she believes to be her spiritual guide. As we shared our impressions, I felt that the tense atmosphere in the room dissolved. At that moment, I felt that we were connected on an intimate level that we were not able to reach for the entire hour of the interview. Apple keeps her picture on a stand on her dining room table as an affirmation of her healing so far and a reminder that she is on a journey that is moving upward, although she admitted that, "*Life is a learning curve. You can get some progress upward, and then you can fall right back down.*"

When looking back at the content and form of the interview transcript from a

theological perspective, the idea of the fairy tale character Sleeping Beauty came to my mind. She most appropriately reflects the sleepwalking nature of most of Apple's life from birth up to the moment of her husband's death six years ago. For my interpretation of Apple's story I chose therefore the narrative style of a fairy tale.

Sleeping Beauty and Apple: A Fairy Tale

Sleeping Beauty-Apple lived a busy, but uneventful and secluded childhood in a little kingdom (farm) in beautiful rural Alberta. As a young woman she met and married her "knight in shining armor" (infantryman) who rescued her from her seclusion and showed her the beauty of the world. They traveled and lived in many places and Apple enjoyed it very much. They became a family and Apple worked very hard at making the right choices, following the right path in bringing up her children and making her knight proud of her. Sometimes it was not easy but, overall, life was good until twenty some years down the road when terrible things started to happen.

Her beloved "knight in shining armor" died suddenly. Shortly after that, her father died after a sudden illness, and her precious son, who had also become a "knight in shining armor" like his father, was sent by his King on a mission to a far, far away land called Afghanistan where there was a terrible war. This precious son of hers must have experienced terrible, terrible things there because it did not take long for his soul to shatter into many small pieces; he wanted to kill himself before he even reached home. Consequently, he left his knighthood behind because his king has no use for soldiers who want to take their own lives. Apple suspended the grief over her great losses and sorrows to attend to the crisis at hand.

The shattered shell of her precious son caused Apple to painfully remember a previous experience with her beloved "knight in shining armor" coming home from a far, far-away mission with a condition called "Shell Shock". He had self-medicated by working too much for too many hours. That was the first time she became acquainted with the realities of the brutality of warfare. Her son's illness made her realize that "Shell Shock" was just another name for the terrible monster Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She was unaware of it before despite living with a "knight in shining armor", and being often surrounded by families of other "knights in shining armor". It was a well-kept secret. The betrayal of the realities of combat was bad enough for Apple, but the military's inability to heal her son's pain swiftly and efficiently was

another rude awakening that caused her soul parts to flee even more. These had to be regularly gathered in again just so that she could survive and function.

Now, the traditional Sleeping Beauty would have probably by now dissolved in a heap of tears and despair, and waited for a prince's kiss or "knight in shining armor" to rescue her, but not Apple. Her knight was gone but she is a resourceful woman who does not easily give up. From many years of experience, she knows how to fix things. Little bandages here and there did not help, so she went on a quest and learned all she could about the monster called PTSD. It was helpful in getting to know the monster better, but it was not very helpful in teaching her how to heal her son's despair.

On she went in her quest until she discovered the magic of holistic grief and trauma processing which was amazingly helpful to her. She was soon ready to take on the monster PTSD that took residence in her son and now in her as well, but was stopped by the official authority of the king's powerful magician (son's psychologist). She was told not to interfere. Anger welled up in her big and hot, but she kept it down because she has always tried to do the right thing and obey authorities. Besides, her son, her precious son, needed her to be strong and in control of her own feelings and emotions. Deep down, she knew that his life depended on her strength and her support of him. She knew that the time would come when he would need her. Eventually, after watching her son not getting any better, she did disobey the local official authorities by guiding her son on a soul-retrieval journey with the assistance of God.

Now, God and Apple did a wondrous thing of soul-healing with her son, and it was good. In fact, it was so good that parts of Apple's soul came back too, but could not stay for too long because they were again chased away by the dismissive words of the mighty magician, "It will not last, you will fall back"; that hurt Apple very much. Again, she was not one to give up easily. Every day, she brought home her soul parts that were too afraid to stay and she found another wise teacher from a far, far-away country. She embraced the practice of Buddhist meditation to gain more clarity and still her mind. With this help, Apple was able to build a safer home for her soul parts, and stay supportive of her son's struggles.

At the moment Apple is still in crisis mode, holding tightly to her still suicidal, precious son. They are both standing on a ledge, half-way down an abyss, suspended in their grief over many losses and many betrayals, trying to let go of the old ways of

thinking and being. While they stand there together, holding their grief between them, they might have noticed that they are slowly but steadily sprouting and growing small wings. Those wings are not designed to soar over the abyss, but to land in it gently, because at the bottom of it is a lonely terrible monster called PTSD who sits on a hoard of their soul parts. Their heroic task is to befriend and transform this monster, because only then will PTSD release their missing soul parts and allow them to again become whole and complete. Only then will they be able to grow those wings big enough to allow them to take off into flight, to the other side of the abyss and continue on their shared and individual spiritual journeys.

Sleeping Beauty and Apple: A Reflection

Sleeping Beauty is a very fitting archetype not just for Apple, but I sense, for many women in our modern, anglophone, North American, paternalistic society. With regard to our identity, after our birth we receive our father's last name; after marriage, we change it to our husband's last name. It is only recently that we are allowed as wives to keep our given names when we are addressed in any formal way (Stewart, 2007). I believe that a majority of women move through life in a dreamlike state, shaped and educated to fit a certain mould, until something significant happens. That something is often not like Sleeping Beauty's awakening with a kiss, but a traumatic incident that wakes us up with a jolt and triggers something in us that has the potential to make us remember what we were denied, what we have lost, and who we truly are.

The story of "Sleeping Beauty and Apple: A Fairy Tale" is my artistic interpretation of Apple's interview. I sent the first draft of my fairy tale interpretation to Apple for review and comment. We met a few days later for a one-hour long informal follow-up session that was not recorded. In general, Apple liked it, and connected to my interpretation of her story in fairy tale form. She particularly enjoyed her husband being called a "knight in shining armor", but told me that if it was supposed to be a true representation of her story, then some of the content had to be changed and/or expanded. We judiciously reviewed the fairy tale sentence by sentence and discussed what should be changed and/or added. In the process of revision, I discovered that Apple was familiar with the effects of war on soldiers. Many years ago, her husband returned home from a peace mission with a condition that was known at the time as "Shell Shock". He was not suicidal, but became a workaholic for many years. Apple did

not mention her husband's name in the recorded interview because he died suddenly in 2005. Her son went to Afghanistan one year later and returned suicidal eight months after his departure. While grieving her husband's death and before her son's return, Apple had to also deal with her parents' sudden illness and her father's death, and help her ill mother relocate into a senior's home. Apple did not realize that she was dealing with a compounded grief and trauma situation (Simington, 2000). All of that, in addition to fearing for her son's life on a daily basis, contributed to her development of PTSD.

Apple's son was in psychological treatment for three years with very little improvement. Six months ago, Apple was present during one of his severe anxiety attacks. He had stopped breathing, and she believed that his heart stopped beating as well. She started yelling and pounding on his chest which brought him back to consciousness. At that moment she decided that she brought her son back to life and was therefore free of her promises to his psychologist not to interfere in his healing. She guided her son on a guided visualization to retrieve a soul part, and looked after him for three days. Apple's son could not believe how well he felt and went to the psychologist to find out what happened. That was the moment when the psychologist said that she did not understand the improvement, but was sure that it would not last. The Jungian psychologist Robert Johnston (1989) believes that when a person, and particularly a man, is faced with a death of an old way of being, such as Apple's son was, it is natural for him to feel suicidal. As a man, "he has to go out and seek a heroic task, kill many dragons, and rescue fair maidens" (p. 47) to find a new way of being. With the soul-retrieval technique, Apple gave her son this opportunity to go on such a quest to recover part of his own Self that was stuck in a void between the old and possible new ways of being. She gave him the opportunity to regain part of his own power and control over his destiny. Apple's anger towards this psychologist is understandable. I could also sense Apple's anger towards her son for allowing the psychologist to take that newly recovered precious little power away from him, but I do not believe that she is consciously aware of those feelings, or is consciously suppressing them.

I think that Apple is on her way, but still at the beginning of her journey to self-discovery and healing. I was afraid to share with her my analysis because there was a possibility that it might make real something she was not yet ready or willing to face;

this would have been unethical of me. She knows whether she is ready for insights and to grow from her experiences.

My research question is whether soul retrieval had an effect in Apple's life? That question can be answered affirmatively, at least partially. According to her words, soul retrieval helps her to manage her PTSD. It enables her to remain stable and high functioning without having to take medication. She is still hopeful that with time her son will be stable enough for her to move on with her life, which means hopefully, looking at the other things that trigger her.

Another research question is whether dissociation played a vital role in her soul pain and soul healing? That question can be also answered affirmatively. At the moment, she has put her long-term goals aside, to stay focused on the welfare of her son. Apple has a strong relationship with a God, that is not tied to a rigid religious dogma, which allows her to experiment with a different spiritual world view, such as that of the Buddhist orientation. This, along with her positive attitude and her trust in her intuition, is another hopeful element for her recovery from PTSD. She is already volunteering with an organization which helps families of traumatized soldiers cope with and understand the condition of PTSD. She also has plans for the future, such as becoming a psychologist. She wants to be more effective in helping traumatized military families by using a combination of modern psychoanalytical techniques with holistic approaches that she has learned at the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. This latter approach includes energy work, meditation, soul-loss retrieval, and guided visualization. Being able to see a future and make plans for this future are further indications that she is already moving forward in her recovery.

Chapter 8: A Researcher's Reflections on the Research Process

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants over time, in a place, or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst, and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of experiences that make up peoples lives, both individual and social.

Clandinin & Connelly (2000, p. 20)

Negotiating a Narrative Inquiry

Finding research participants who were able, and willing, to give me rich data from their lived stories turned out to be a more difficult task than I first anticipated. Originally, I had desired to interview participants with whom I shared two intensive courses and with whom I had already established a relationship of trust. I believed that the familiarity between us would help in delivering data that was richer and more in depth than was possible between two people who were strangers to each other. Of the twenty people that I addressed, two came forward, willing to engage in the research process. The interviews with the two participants were very successful, but I had great difficulty keeping in contact with one of the participants. This difficulty caused me anxiety because I was afraid that behind this participants unavailability was her indecision about whether to continue with the research or not; this was her right as agreed upon in the consent letter. Before I could reach her and clarify the situation, I sent another call to the Trauma Recovery Certification Program graduates who were not personally known to me. Many participants came forward and I chose one whom I believed could respond richly to the research question. In the meantime, my "difficult to reach" participant reaffirmed her commitment and I ended up with three participants instead of two as originally planned. It turned out to be for me a very valuable experience to have co-researchers that I knew before this research endeavor, and one who was a stranger to me.

In the Midst of the Research Process:

Research Collaboration and Relationships

According to Josselson (2007), "the nature of the relationship that develops in narrative studies is emergent and can not be predicted at the onset" (p. 545), and as such, can deeply affect both parties within the relationship in unpredictable ways. My

co-researchers and I developed very intimate relationships. I was profoundly touched by their life stories. Their traumatic experiences triggered feelings of both anger and compassion in me.

I was angry with the Canadian social system that let Mabel down by taking her away from one abusive situation and placing her into another that turned out to be possibly as abusive and damaging. I was angry with Robin's family and fundamentalist religious community for stunting her growth and contributing to her feeling invisible and voiceless. I was very angry with the Canadian military institution for letting Apple down when she most needed help in dealing effectively with her son's suicidal ideations and PTSD after his return from Afghanistan.

Anger often motivates my thought processes and actions. It is the fuel that engages my passion, and an indicator that something is important to me, but can become damaging in its raw form. When I experience anger such as described above, I have to retreat, emotionally and physically, and process in solitude. I need to reflect on the source of my anger by submerging myself in research on the topics that made me angry: I reflect on what counter-transference is hiding behind my anger.

For these purposes, I usually begin by engaging in therapeutic art and guided visualization to find out the underlying causes of the feelings of hurt and anger slumbering in my subconscious mind - "meaning is not limited to what words can express" (Eisner, 2003, p. 230, as quoted in de Mello, 2007, p. 204). Next, I would go to my counsellor and debrief my feelings and insights, so I could continue with whatever topic or incident triggered my angry response. Self-analysis of my own emotions was a necessary step within the research process, because without it I was literally unable to continue with the analysis of the individual stories. I am aware "that one event can have many meanings, and that there is no such thing as objective truth" (Ely, 2007, p. 581). Still, I did not want my unprocessed anger to direct my insights and interpretations.

I discovered, similar to Andrews (2007), that it was difficult for me to listen non-judgmentally to Apple's story, as I too have "long standing and deeply felt beliefs about ... militarism" (p. 506), which triggered my strong counter-transference to her story. Her story touched a very painful place in me. My initial reaction was to drop Apple as a co-researcher so that I did not have to deal with her story and through her, with my own deep dark emotional wounds. A few weeks of self-reflection and processing of my emotions helped me to overcome this barrier and to gain more distance and clarity with

regard to Apple's situation and experiences. At the same time it opened a door to the analysis of my own story. In the end, Apple was a great teacher to me, whose wisdom and experience needed to be included in this research endeavor. On the other hand, I was deeply touched by, and empathetic with, the stories of Mabel and Robin without experiencing counter-transference, because there was very little emotional connection between their life experiences and my past.

Once I stepped beyond my anger, I realized that what made me fall in love with my co-researchers stories was not their past traumatic experiences, as fascinating as those were, but their abilities to rise above their limitations and turn them into catapults of personal growth and wisdom. Through their personal stories, one can also clearly trace back the social influences on their inner lives and their wider environments, which are fundamental elements in a successful narrative (Clandinin, 2007).

When collaborating with my co-researchers, I was always aware of our cultural differences. As an immigrant from Berlin, Germany, I saw myself as a multiculturally conscious feminist researcher, mindful of the "cultural borderlands" (Andrews, 2007, p. 490) between us. My general life-long experience with navigating borderlands allowed me to see the life stories of my co-researchers with "the migrant's double vision" (Bhabha, 1994, as quoted in Andrews, 2007). I was able to analyze their lives beyond the boundaries of "cultural limitations" (p. 490). Between the four of us, we developed an intimate circle where our stories merged; within that creativity, we achieved a "hybridization" (p. 490) of our interpretations which is not reducible to its individual parts.

I acknowledged my co-researchers as the experts of their life stores. I encouraged and honored their "narrative authority" (Olson, 1995, as quoted in Craig & Huber, 2007, p. 265) by validating their stories. The interpretation of those narratives, on the other hand, was my narrative authority, because "the researcher's self, with his/her fantasies, biases, and horizons of understanding, is the primary tool of inquiry (Josselson, 2007, p. 546). While interpreting my co-researchers stories, I was mindful of making this project truly a collaborative effort.

I transcribed the interviews, which were then approved or corrected by my co-researchers. During the follow-up one-to-one interview, each co-researcher and I chose collaboratively the salient elements within the transcripts, and discussed possible interpretations of them. The use of archetypes, and the choice of archetype for each

participant, was suggested by me, and its applicability reviewed with the co-researchers. The final interpretation draft was sent to each participant with questions inspired by Clandinin (2007): Is this you? Do you see yourself in the story? Is this a character you want to be when this is read by others?

Mabel responded with:

“Thank you. It was an honor to read my story with your translation. It moved me to tears of gratitude and happiness that I am a strong woman. My limitations are those held in my own mind and carefully treated with guidance by the Creator. Your art is amazing and I am gifted with those images” (e-mail correspondence, Dec. 5, 2011).

Robin gave me the most detailed response. She wrote:

“Hi Karin,

Here are a few thoughts... First, I was touched and welcomed into the process with your introductory poem. I was touched by your commitment to see, hear, listen, find and nurture. And indeed that has been my experience in participating in this project. I was welcomed by the description of the lion being accepted “however” it roared!

Appreciating your art. Picture #5, the seed, and your description feels like a fit! The broken blue line around the seed, corresponding with the line around the ‘aura art’ a helpful image, breaking up, allowing inner and outer world merging. And as you say, that can only happen when the critic is stopped. There is acceptance and love for the ‘I Am’. To get to that place I often need to pause and make a safe place to welcome the child, in order to trust in the I Am, so that I can also welcome my outer world.

Picture #6 is lovely, encouraging...and yes, I know it, at times, in my being.

And yes, I found the Mary Magdalene reflection very helpful. Someone recently said, after an interaction where my husband and I were telling some of our story, ‘thank you for that...it feels like it opens the way for me’. Encountering the Mary Magdalene story in this light felt similarly for me.

Collage: I remember feeling quite angry with the piece. I think, because it felt like it exposed me. There was a part that was quite disconnected from the rest. I felt that it kind of revealed my disconnect. So interesting, as I am seeing now, how

the disconnect was important for my ‘making it yours’ and recycling ‘what’s old to make it new again!’ And yes, there was anger in the discovery of being misled by the institution as...middle of p.22. (When it says ‘angry with that piece’, I was talking about that piece of art...the collage). It is just too amazing how this stuff works!?!! As I read through the rest....it feels like a fit. I do like the theological reflection. It adds a lot.*

Anyway, all the best with finishing the project. It was an honor for me to be part of it. I feel stronger, more expanded, for it. Thank you for your attention to my story. (e-mail correspondence, Dec. 3, 2011).

I am very fortunate that my co-researchers approved of and appreciated my interpretation of their narratives. They were able to self-reflect on the parts and the whole of their stories. They “found themselves in the telling, experiencing themselves as creating themselves and as recovering themselves from the stories that they told about themselves” (Martin, 1998, pp. 9-10, as quoted in Riessman and Speedy, 2007, p. 443). Had my co-researchers not approved my interpretation of their narratives, or suggested major changes, I do not think that I would change my inquiry. I own the narrative interpretation, but I would include their ideas following my inquiry. As an ethical researcher, it is important to me for my co-researchers to feel respected and validated during the entire research project.

Observations and Feelings of a Researcher as a Participant

As a participant with my own story to tell, I could identify with my co-researchers’ emotional difficulties to tell their stories in a coherent fashion and from a witness perspective. In order not to be influenced by my participants’ stories, I decided that my story should be the first one to be composed. It was not challenging to think about my own trauma experiences and how they shaped my development and my worldview. It was not difficult to talk about it with members of my research support group. It was not even difficult to write it down in the form of extensive field notes to myself. Surprisingly, when it came time to compose a research text, I had the feeling of standing in front of a “solid brick wall”. I was blocked for weeks, locked in self-contemplation and creative self-discovery. Consequently, I put the writing of my story on hold and focused instead on my co-researchers’ stories.

I felt personally addressed when I read Bolker’s (1998) words:

To make your writing really clear is also to make yourself very vulnerable. If

someone can find out from your writing what you believe, or how you feel, or where you stand, then you may be liked or disliked, agreed or disagreed with, congratulated or criticized for what you've written (p. 118).

I was indeed afraid of criticism. I have written papers containing my traumatic experiences before for a few of my master's courses, and did not experience the same emotions of hesitancy and protectiveness because I was familiar with my instructors, and trusted them to be fair but gentle with my material. My thesis, on the other hand, will be evaluated by two external examiners whom I do not know. The impersonal nature of that relationship made me feel vulnerable.

Furthermore, my co-researchers will be kept anonymous. I, on the other hand, stand in the open and vulnerable, knowing that my outpourings will be public domain once a copy of the completed and approved thesis is sent to the National Library of Canada. In the end, it was my co-researchers' courage in sharing their intimate life stories with me that moved me past my fear of criticism. I think that it would have been dishonorable towards them if I was any less courageous than they were. Once I confronted that fear, protecting my vulnerability became much less important than my passion for psychotherapy and shamanic healing practices. My fear was outweighed by my need to share my research results with the wider research community.

In the course of my thesis research, I also discovered that I was grieving. "Every major life change destroys the equilibrium of our lives and our self-image, and leaves behind a portion of an old self; even if the new self is better, we feel some sadness at leaving the old one" (Bolker, 1998, p. 128). I have long been excited about my future profession as a psychotherapist; nevertheless, I did have difficulties moving forward with my trauma processing narrative until I took the time to acknowledge and embrace my feelings of sadness at leaving behind my current career. As a school librarian, I enjoy sharing with children my love for literature. I will also miss being a student because I love being part of the St. Stephen's "family."

Bolker's insights with regard to this grieving process allowed me to look at my own crossroad. My ambivalence forced me to reflect on, and appreciate, the different stages of my life's journey. It also allowed me to more consciously move from one stage in my life, to another. In the end, completing my own narrative was a very freeing process of deep reflection on my past and present spiritual and professional development. I am very grateful for this awareness.

The Birth of a Soulful Psychotherapist

Similar to Flack (2007), I too have always sought communion with the Divine. As a child, I did not just sense the world of spirit around me, but spent considerable time in that world, without conscious awareness that it was a place where others could not easily find me. As an adult, I answered my calling by becoming a Chi-Gong, Reiki and therapeutic touch practitioner, and a self-taught visualization guide. In my practice, I experienced my clients opening up to me after an energy transfer work treatment or visualization journey. Very often they initiated a conversation about their difficult past experiences, or about existential and spiritual matters. I did not feel comfortable taking part in those conversations because I was not feeling qualified to engage them in a therapeutic conversation. This experience left me feeling very unsatisfied, and was instrumental in my decision to become a psychotherapist.

I enrolled with St. Stephen's College, where I received a thorough and in-depth psychoanalytical education, and was allowed to stay true to my "Original Self" (Moore, 2000). During my studies, my spiritual worldview was not only honored, but nurtured and challenged in ways that allowed me to become more conscious as a Christian of what I believe and why I believe it.

The Trauma Processing Certification Program allowed me to confirm and deepen my intuitive way of communion with the Divine, and for the first time in my life, I was able to share my intuitive knowledge about this alternate reality with a group of like-minded people. It felt very satisfying to be validated in my ability to travel the "otherworld" (Villoldo, 2005; Flack, 2007), to explore its landscapes and to do it in company.

I agree with Raven-Hope, a traditional shaman interviewed by Flack (2007), that the otherworld of a shaman is vast. "The internal universe is much greater than the outer one science continually seeks to survey and map. "As shamanic practitioners, we become astronauts of inner space rather than outer space" (p. 122). This traditional aboriginal belief complies with the description of the soul by the contemporary spiritual philosopher Matthew Fox (1996), who quoted Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth century Christian mystic: "the soul is not in the body, but the body is in the soul. ... [This] means that our souls are as large as the world in which we live, as the fields in which our minds play" (p. 84-85). He believes that fundamentalists live in small boxes,

because “the world you live in is the world you believe you live in” (p.85). I think that my co-researcher Robin suffered trauma in her childhood and young adulthood because, as a member of a fundamentalist Christian organization, she was forced to live in a box that was too small for her soul and spirit. The fundamentalist box of her family and community served them well as a communal boundary and protection from the hardships and unpredictabilities of a pioneering society but, times have changed, it was no longer served Robin toward her personal growth and development.

The cosmos we are invited to play in today is one trillion galaxies, each with at least one billion stars. Each with a fifteen-billion-year history. ... We are invited to roam in this huge field today (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996, p.85).

All of the four women whose experiences are described in this narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2007) were able to explore parts of this interior cosmos during our soul travels as part of the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. Our spiritual worldview changed as a result of those shamanic travels. We were able to recover a few of our missing soul parts, break out of our boxes, experience an intimate connection with the Divine, and create new boundaries that are more appropriate for our soul's present development. I like the idea of roaming the vast spaces of our inner world, but I do not believe that I, or my three co-researchers, would feel comfortable in this vast space without some protection and boundaries. Mabel found many little pieces, and “*a spirituality that is just right for [her]*”. Robin found the “*I Am that I Am*” mirrored back to her, that helped her to “*remember who [she] was and is, and to live in that knowledge*” most of the time. Apple still goes regularly to a Catholic Church to find comfort and communion with the Divine, in familiar surroundings. She is now fully aware and content with the thought that God is not just ‘there’ anymore, but also a part of herself. She now sees that God is bigger than any religious organization. Presently, Apple goes to a Roman Catholic church on Sundays and to a Buddhist temple to meditate during the week (oral communication, August 2011).

The experience of shamanic soul journeying, and the insights I gained from this study, are instrumental in my present understanding of physical, and particularly psychological, illness. I see many people in our Western modern world suffering from what Thomas Aquinas called “a puny soul” (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996), which is against our true nature because we are born for “magnanimity, we are here to become a great

soul, magna anima” (p 84). The ability to soul-travel is important. Within the vastness of soul’s galaxy we are able to step outside of our small boxes, see ourselves for who we truly are - sparks of the Divine energy - and discover our unique gifts and passions. Based on my personal soul experience, I strongly agree with Fox that ... “magnanimity is about following our passions and guiding them to the directions that we are called to”, which ... “can only happen when we become a field through which compassion is working” (p.87). I call myself a spiritual psychotherapist because for me, as it is for Eckhart and Fox, the soul is where God, or the Divine Energy of the Spirit, works compassion.

The next chapter summarizes the results of this narrative inquiry, elaborates on soul retrieval technique’s applicability in the field of psychotherapy and discusses further possibilities for its future research.

Chapter 9: Summary

Similarities and Differences Across Four Narratives

We are sisters on a journey singing now as one.

Shining through the darkest night, the healing has begun, begun.

The healing has begun.

We are sisters on a journey, watching life unfold.

Sharing warmth of heart and hands, the knowledge of us all, us all,

The knowledge of us all.

We are sisters on a journey, singing now as one.

Shining through the darkest night, the healing is almost done, is done,

The healing is almost done.

Jane Simington (2001; adapted by Karin Stewart, 2012)

In this summary, a boundary is being crossed, from a narrative inquiry style that looks at the story as a whole (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), to a narrative approach which favors a categorical content and form analysis (Lieblich, 1998). This approach focuses on identifying key themes within the research project.

This present analysis centers on commonalities and divergences within the key themes as noticed across the four narratives. The trauma healing experiences were compared following the research question:

What is a person's experience of moving from power and soul loss towards soul and power retrieval as a way of recovering from long term effects of trauma and dissociation after a specific treatment program of trauma recovery.

Also taken into consideration were the key words, as outlined in the initial research question: trauma, soul pain, soul loss, power loss, soul-and-power retrieval, dissociation, and soul healing. The meanings of the research question and key words are understood in accordance with the soul retrieval philosophy which was developed, and is being taught, by Dr. Jane A. Simington (2001) as part of the Trauma Recovery Certification Program. Participants' opinions about possible harm, or instances of ineffectiveness, with regard to the soul retrieval technique are mentioned next, followed by an artistic rendition and interpretation of the co-researchers collective soul growth. The chapter finishes with a look into the relevance of the research findings to the field of psychotherapy research and practice.

The author's dual role as a research participant and researcher made it necessary to distinguish each role within the text. "Karin" is the research participant "the author" is the interpreting researcher.

The soul loss retrieval approach to trauma processing is based on the belief that severe trauma destroys our physical, psychological and spiritual ability to integrate and make sense of the traumatic event. From a spiritual perspective, during such an event, parts of our soul flee and hide in the time and space of the traumatic event, leaving us incomplete and vulnerable to further invasion. In the process, our spiritual connection with the Divine energy is weakened (Ingerman, 1991; Simington, 2001, 2003, 2010).

The author believes that humans are inherently spiritual beings, hard-wired to the Divine energy; always searching for, or trying to sustain their connection with the Divine (Fox, 1983; O'Murchu, 1998). Therefore, if soul is not addressed in the healing process, recovery is slow and only of limited value. The author chose to investigate a psycho-spiritual approach that incorporates shamanic wisdom and healing techniques, such as soul retrieval, because she believes that such a blend addresses the needs of the human soul and spirit in addition to physical and psychological wellbeing (Harner, 1980; Ingerman, 1991; Villoldo, 2000, 2005, 2010). It can be a valuable and complementary addition to many modern approaches within the field of psychological healing techniques. In addition, the idea of soul recovery requires a shift in the paradigm of one's worldview, that has the potential to be beneficial to both client and therapist. The author is also aware that the technique of soul loss retrieval is not necessarily suitable for every person seeking psychological assistance.

Results

Trauma: Experience of soul pain, soul loss, and power loss.

Everyone experiences traumatic events at some point in their lives. Most of these experiences are processed and integrated, to become lessons from which we potentially gain wisdom and self-knowledge (Simington, 2003). Human-induced atrocities, particularly those that repeatedly attack the body, mind and soul, are particularly difficult to overcome and integrate. They often require the traumatized person to engage professional assistance with the healing process (Herman, 1992; Rothschild, 2010; Simington, 2003, 2010).

Trauma cannot be compared between people because what is a moderately

traumatic experience to one, can be devastating to another. Nevertheless, the author believes that Mabel experienced the most severe trauma among the co-researchers in this research project. As a foster child, she was subjected, over most of her childhood and early adult life, to severe abuse on physical, psychological and spiritual levels. As an adult, she attended, over many years, a number of treatment programs to help her heal from, or at least cope with, the memories of her traumas.

Robin suffered from a caring, but strict and rigid family environment, where being seen but not heard was a very important rule. Later in life, after dealing with her daughter's sexual abuse, Robin remembered that she had been sexually abused as a child.

Apple has been, for the last few years, consumed by the pain of her present crisis situation with her suicidal son. Apple's son joined the army, and was sent on a combat mission to Afghanistan where he was severely traumatized and became suicidal. As a result of this trauma, both mother and son were diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Karin grew up in a supportive and caring, but difficult, environment within her family and community. Her trauma is of a vicarious nature. As an emotionally sensitive child, she was deeply affected by living in close proximity to people who had been very traumatized by their experiences during the Second World War, and by many other violent conflicts before and after that historic event.

Each of the co-researchers found the retelling of our traumatic past experiences to be freeing but emotionally difficult, even though for Mabel, Robin and Karin, the majority of the trauma happened in their childhood. Their subconscious emotional and non-verbal reactions to these historic events in their lives indicate the power and longevity of traumatic events in the course of a lifetime.

Dissociation: A way to cope and heal.

At the onset of a traumatic event, dissociation is seen as the body, mind, and soul's attempt to escape the pain that was caused by the situation (Roth, 2012). Once the crisis has passed, and the subconscious mind deems the person ready to again face the trauma, dissociation triggers memories of the past trauma through flashbacks and triggers (Rothschild, 2000, 2003; van der Kolk, 2007).

From a shamanic perspective, flashbacks and triggers are the mind's attempts to

uncover, recover, and heal the lost soul parts, so that a complete soul can again be fully connected with our Life-Sustaining Divine energy (Ingerman, 1991; Simington, 2001). Each co-researcher in this study had developed a different way to dissociate from her traumatic realities in order to cope and not feel the pain.

During Mabel's childhood, she often escaped her difficult reality by pretending to be the main character from one of her favorite novels. During moments of traumatic abuse, such as of a sexual nature, she would depersonalize from the situation. According to her words:

*I would often be..., I would be there,
And there is me watching.
And there is another piece of me that would be in the wall,
Or out the window.
Three or four pieces of me all over, thinking,*

*WOW!
This is, this is strange,
No feelings.*

These compounded depersonalizations happened to her repeatedly over many years, and caused healing to be very difficult later in life. Some of those depersonalizations were also locked into an amnesiac slumber, and would come forward unexpectedly during, or following, soul retrievals.

Robin used to disconnect by closing the door of her inner world from her outer environment. Within that inner world, she would make herself feel "blank" when a particular experience or memory was very painful. Over time, that way of functioning became a habit. For example, she "blanked" out her childhood sexual abuse until, in her forties, this amnesia was lifted by the trigger of her daughter's sexual abuse.

Apple protected herself by not allowing herself to see and to know about the harsh conditions of soldiers' lives during combat missions; it was too traumatic for her to live in fear for their lives, and to share in this pain when the soldiers came home. Although she lived with a professional soldier who experienced "shell shock" at some point in his career, and was in close contact with other military families in similar situations, Apple tried her best to create a "good life" for her family and for herself. She allowed trauma to penetrate her protective walls only when her son came home from Afghanistan and

wanted to end his life.

To protect myself from being invaded by an outside world that threatened my integrity and my inner knowing, I would escape into my soul world. Later, in my mind, I built a high wall or fence on which I sat, emotionally removed from the people around me. I would lower my fence and become involved in community life only when I considered the environment to be safe or controllable. This was at times difficult because I always felt the need to be vigilant against indoctrination from my political, religious or social environments.

The rhythm of speech used by the co-researchers to describe dissociation could be an indication that what they were remembering was very difficult for them. Mabel, Robin, and Apple found it at times difficult to speak coherent sentences. They jumped, sometimes in the same sentence, from one topic to another, leaving sentences unfinished; it was as if they did not remember what they wanted to say, or were just sitting in silence for a minute or two. Apple was so consumed by her present crisis situation that she totally “forgot” to mention in the interview her own traumatic life experiences before the incident with her son—such as the death of her husband and father.

Soul retrieval and soul healing.

Mabel, Robin and Karin had a professional interest in holistic trauma processing before registering for the Trauma Course. They also came to soul retrieval for different personal reasons. For Mabel, it was the last chance to find healing from her invasive flashbacks, and from feelings of being completely lost. Robin hoped to find herself, and a new meaning in her life. Apple wanted tools to help her son survive his trauma. Karin desired healing but was uncertain from what. All four co-researchers experienced profound personal healing during the Trauma Recovery Certification Course.

On her soul journeys, Mabel recovered many “pieces that just came out of the blue” and “some that [she] thought [she] had previously worked through.” Some pieces fractured into yet smaller parts, and had to be brought back repeatedly. This forced her to remember very traumatic events, more than once, and took her to the limits of her ability to cope. Since the soul retrievals, Mabel has found a spirituality that is “so much more comfortable and freeing” for her. She has also been able to develop a better relationship with her children and extended family, and reports having become a more

compassionate and competent pastoral care professional.

After more than a year following the Trauma Course, Mabel was surprised and shocked to discover that her last soul-retrieval healing odyssey was not the end, but yet another plateau on her journey towards healing. A sudden explosion of triggers and flashbacks forced her to repeat the soul-retrieval process with the help of Dr. Simington. This time, there were not as many pieces to recover and integrate, but the process was as intensive on an emotional and physical level. She understands now that each unexpected explosion of flashbacks comes forward because she is ready to face whatever they contain. Her confidence is rooted not only in her own abilities and skills, but also in the network of support that she has built in case she can not handle a future flashback “mine” by herself.

Robin intended to find a new profession, but instead was visited during a guided visualization by her father’s spirit. Her father’s acceptance and support of her inner growth was instrumental in her soul-recovery and transformation (Trauma Processing Certification Program, April 2009; follow-up interview, September 2011). After the course, Robin became aware that the real work for her still is:

*Trusting in the I Am That I Am,
The God that was so out there,
To experience that wholeness within.*

Also, “it was a freeing thing to remember who [she is]”, and “to live in that knowing”.

In the last two years, Robin’s life has changed in small but profound ways. Her relationships with her close family, and particularly with her husband, have become much closer and more rewarding. She is more attentive to, and supportive of, friends who are in a difficult situation. Robin embodies her newly discovered spirituality by sharing with her family and friends in holistic rituals that honor them as spiritual beings, and their connection with Mother Earth. At times, the feelings of emptiness and disconnection still take over Robin’s consciousness, but now she “knows what [she is] feeling a little bit more, and can go there and hold that feeling” until it transforms and becomes recycled by Mother Earth.

On a guided visualization during the Trauma Recovery Course, Apple received the help of Owl in recovering the soul of her son from a deep, black pit. It was a very profound spiritual experience for Apple because she felt that God gave her son back to

her from the realm of the dead. From then on, God was no longer an entity out there but became Apple's spiritual helper, particularly in the task of healing her son and herself. For her own lost soul parts, Apple goes to her safe place, on a rock by a road, where she calls them to her. They come, and she welcomes and integrates them on a daily basis.

For the last few years, Apple has continued to survive in a crisis situation, and will stay there as long as her son remains suicidal. Soul parts bond permanently only when they feel that the person who called them back can keep them safe. The unpredictability of Apple's situation makes it very difficult for her to guarantee their safety; therefore she has to go out and call them over and over again. They come and support her in her struggles, but some leave again. Being able to keep all of her soul parts, even for a limited time, gives Apple the confidence that she can heal and grow spiritually. It is only a question of time until they will stay and enrich her Life permanently.

When Karin started the Trauma Recovery Certification Program, she believed that she would be more of an observer of trauma processing because she did not consider her Life to contain any deep personal trauma that would require a healing treatment. Also, for one year prior to the Trauma Course, she had been in personal counselling where a few of her issues had been dealt with. During the Program, Karin was very surprised at the depth of her own processing. She recovered several pieces of her younger self, and revisited a few of her "processed" issues. This experience made her feel more confident in herself as a holistic psychotherapist. On a personal level, Karin became more grounded in her worldview and her spirituality.

The impact of soul retrieval on all of the co-researchers in this research project was also evident in the way they described their soul retrieval experiences on a non-verbal, emotional level, and by the placement of the retrieval story within the narration. Mabel, Robin and Apple placed their key healing stories close to the beginning of their narration, indicating the importance of the healing stories' effect on their post retrieval experiences, present development and future possibilities. Karin's story was not an interview; therefore, it is structured in a more temporal sense and controlled within its flow. Karin's soul retrieval and subsequent healing story is in the center of her retelling. It is holding the beginning and end of the narration in balance.

The experiences of the soul retrievals and successive healing journeys were described with great passion and awe by all co-researchers. Body posture changed

from a rather relaxed to an upright position. The content and form analysis of the co-researchers soul retrieval experiences indicates that the soul retrieval journeys during the Trauma Recovery Certification Program were of great significance to all co-researchers' later development.

Soul pain and soul recovery in a broader context.

The traumatic events, experienced by all co-researchers, made them feel unsafe, and often caused them to retreat from active participation with their families, communities and societies at large. Their disconnectedness and isolation helped them to cope and to move on in Life, but it also made them powerless, invisible, and voiceless. To those on the outside, they were living a "good Life" (Apple); on the inside they experienced a Life on the margins of their respective societies, hiding their "Original Selves" (Moore, 2000)—from others and often from themselves. That caused them to feel lonely and become vulnerable to further abuse, which is particularly true for Mabel, Robin, and Karin. Their coping strategies served them well for a long time but, at some point in their adult years, these strategies started to become a burden, a nuisance, and a difficult-to-shake habit.

Soul retrieval helped the co-researchers to revisit the traumas of their past within a safe and supportive environment. With the recovery of each little piece of their younger selves, they were able to reclaim their personal power, heal their souls, and rebuild their self-confidence and their past memories. By retrieving the parts that had been lost or stolen from them with every violation to their souls (Simington, 2003), the co-researchers were able to take back the virtues and gifts that had been lost—self-love and love for others, compassion, communication, the ability to laugh and be happy. With more complete souls, Mabel, Robin, Apple, and Karin could see, at times, the Divine light illuminating their Selves, reflecting back to them the beauty of their being. With every little soul piece recovered, they became more visible, discovered their voices, and built the courage to engage actively with the outside world. Mabel became more present, compassionate, and outspoken in her private and professional life. Robin introduced holistic ceremonies to celebrate moments of sadness and joy with her friends and family. Apple exercised her inner authority by reaching beyond outside authorities and taking an active role in her son's healing. She also grew in self-confidence and in assurance by reaching out to other women within the military organization, to help

them understand and cope with combat-induced PTSD. Karin embraced confidently a feminine spirituality, and a holistic psychotherapy practice.

Mabel, Robin, Apple, and Karin grew as individuals from their respective soul loss retrievals, and they also grew collectively by participating in this research project. The author imagined their collective experiences to be held in a collective soul vessel. Following is Karin's intuitive artistic interpretation of the co-researchers' collective soul (see Figure 17. Collective soul growth interpretation).

Artistic expression of collective soul growth.

All of our problems, personal and societal, are due to a loss of soul. Soul gets lost in our everyday lives whenever we try to force ourselves to fit some norm of health and correctness.... I want to be the person, who lives from the burning core of my heart, with the creativity that allows the soul to blossom in its own colors and shapes.

Thomas Moore (2000, p. V-VI)

The author started the picture with a container, a vase that displays deep cracks (see Figure 17. Collective soul growth interpretation). These lines suggest that the vase had been broken and repaired at some point in the past. In the vase are four abstract flowers. Each flower has an upright stem, and is different in color and shape,



Figure 17: Collective Soul growth Interpretation

representing each co-researcher's individual "Original Self" (Moore, 2000). The diversity in the colors and shapes of the flowers signifies each person's individual uniqueness, and their soul growth and healing that happened after the soul loss recovery. The soul healing energy is all around the flowers, represented by the light blue color. All four participants in this research project also created a collective soulful energy. The vase, with its cracks, is a symbolic representation of their collective experiences with trauma, which are in the process of healing and transforming into a new vessel of knowledge and wisdom. This collective energy is represented by the yellow color within the vase.

*I was thinking that within us is a connection of
Vines,
That stretch out,
That wrap their way around the
Vase,
Not overtaking it, but
Blending in to hold it together,
All connecting.
The shower of fireworks was nice.
The blue, I imagined a
Royal Blue color.
Grandmothers, Mothers, Sisters,
Joined in unison,
As the Spirits sparkle, and
Illuminate the Darkness.*

Mabel's reflection on "Figure 17"

(private communication, February 20th, 2012)

Transcribed in poetry form by Karin, (March 12th, 2012)

The intensity of the flowers (see Figure 17) has the quality of fireworks. Their energy flows out of the vase and powers the collective soul vessel forward—like a rocket into the mysterious dark blue. The dark blue represents the void of our society's collective soul loss. The author agrees with Moore (2000) that our society dwells in a deep depression. "In many subtle ways—in education, politics, economics, and at work—we demand that men and women trade in their desires and joys for economic

success and social approval, and thus we spread the depression that is the characteristic emotional malady of our time” (p. VI). This does not mean that our times are more violent than they were in the past (Pinker, 2011). Our modern Western society seems to have become more sensitive to emotionally and physically stressful situations than the generations in the past (Furedi, 2003).

The narratives of the four women introduced in this research suggest that at the core of this depression – this collective soul loss – is abuse and a power imbalance. Inequality and power imbalance create tensions and restrictive boundaries, where some people are in, and others are out. Unjust boundaries create aggressions and discrimination (Andrews, 2007; Alexander, Eyerman, Giesen, Smelser & Sztomka, 2004; Cancelmo, Tylim, Hoffenberg & Myers, 2003; Johnson, 2006; Stacewicz, 2008). Aggression leads to violence, such as rape, as happened to two of the co-researchers, and other abuses that can be felt on physical, psychological and spiritual levels (Burstow, 2003; Cox & Kershaw & Trotter, 2000; Oksana, 1994; Warner, 2008). Abusive acts lead to soul loss, not only in the abused, but also in the abusers whose violence corrupts their own souls (Simington, 2001, 2003; Villoldo, 2005). This negative, destructive energy spreads out and contaminates the collective soul of relationships, families, communities, societies, and nations (Kaplan, 2003; LaCarpa, 2001; Malesevic, 2010). The effects of this cycle are visible in many parts of the world where armed and military aggression still leads to soul pain and soul loss on a colossal scale. There are no winners in this vicious cycle. When looking at this issue from a theological perspective, the author believes that power imbalance, particularly gender imbalance, started with Adam not wanting to recognize Lilith, his first partner, as an equal to him, leaving her no options but to leave the Garden of Eden (Plaskov, 2005). She left into exile, traumatized and lonely, condemned to live the existence of the Night Hag, who was rumored to kill newborn babies and spawn demons (Edwards, 1991). On the other hand, Lilith is a very strong and confident archetype who will not be that easily suppressed or intimidated.

The author believes that the power unleashed by the explosion of the firework flowers in my picture is Lilith energy. The four middle-aged women embody her archetypal power when they move their collective soul vessel forward to illuminate and help heal the dark blue of our society’s collective soul loss and soul pain. “When we each learn to ‘live from the burning core of our hearts’ (Moore, 2000, p. VI), we change

the energy, illuminating the darkness and depression around us. This resonates with me and gives meaning and purpose to my experience” (Robin, private communication, March 3, 2012). “We as women need to stand together, support one another, not be afraid, and still love our men” (Mabel, private communication, February 20th, 2012).

By discovering and nurturing their individual eccentricity and creativity (Moore, 2000), and by engaging in the healing of their souls, the co-researchers were able to become compassionate and truly present to themselves and to their families, friends and people within their professional circles. They have started to change the energy in their families and communities, illuminating this darkness and depression around them. Living soulfully on an individual level builds and multiplies the light of the collective soul, one little soul piece at a time.

Discussion

Requirements and cautions of the soul retrieval technique.

All of the co-researchers agreed that soul-retrieval is effective, but requires certain conditions from the participants to retain a lasting effect. It can be beneficial at any level of our spiritual development, but is most helpful to people who already are actively involved in their process of self-discovery. Although each of the co-researchers inhabited a different place on that journey, they were all experienced in self-analysis and self-reflection prior to the introduction of soul retrieval. At some point in their lives, prior to engaging with the soul retrieval method, they experienced and benefitted from various modern psychological interventions. They were also financially and emotionally secure enough to guarantee their soul parts safety—at least most of the time. Although Simington (2012) believes that spiritual healing has to come first, before one can address the mental-emotional or physical needs, a feeling of safety is paramount for this method to be successful. The author could not guide her homeless clients on soul retrievals because they did not live in safe environments, emotionally or physically, within themselves, within their community, and within our society.

Apple was thrown unexpectedly into a situation that required an immediate action on behalf of someone connected with her soul. I do not think that she would have chosen to embark on a soul retrieval for her own personal reasons. Apple teaches us that sometimes we need an incentive from an outside source to move us in the direction of personal development and growth.

The co-researchers also contemplated whether the soul retrieval technique has the potential to be harmful, particularly if not practiced by qualified and experienced practitioners. It is a difficult question to answer, because while some kind of skillful preparation would seem necessary, the question of what skills prepare us to work well with particular clients deserves reflection. Personality, present life circumstances, and where both practitioner and client are in their healing also affects the relational capacity of their encounter.

According to Mabel, soul-retrieval can be harmful if the person undergoing this treatment is not ready for it, even if there is an atmosphere of trust and emotional support from an experienced professional guide and a support group. As with any other intensive therapeutic intervention, Mabel believes that one has to be careful not to re-traumatize the client with too many memories at once. Mabel found the introduction of emotional brakes at the beginning of the Trauma Processing Course, along with space for silent reflection very helpful in controlling the many memories that flooded her consciousness after the trauma retrieval. Even with a very experienced guide, Mabel needed a whole month to recover after the first and second intensive soul loss retrievals.

Apple and Robin did not consider soul retrievals harmful, but thought that they could possibly be ineffective or at least very disappointing, particularly if there was a low level of trust in the therapeutic setting. Robin pointed out that clients should be made aware that if they are not in control of their lives, or “don’t hold the safety for all of [their] parts”, newly rescued soul parts have the potential to leave again.

Karin agrees with Robin and Apple that when dealing with moderate traumatic memories, soul retrievals are not inherently harmful. Soul journeys are guided visualizations that are similar to lucid dreams. Based on her experience as a visualization guide, she believes that if people are not ready to face the traumatic situations of their past, the visualization journeys will not take them to where they need to go to find the lost soul parts. Some will not be able to visualize anything; others might go on a different journey, or stop part-way to rest. It can still be restful and healing, but not reach the intended goal of soul retrieval. Karin learned to trust in the protective ability of the subconscious mind to allow only as much trauma to surface as we are ready for. Also, even with an inexperienced guide, people on journeys will not get stuck there indefinitely. They will eventually find a way to come back from those

journeys by themselves. Karin also agrees with Mabel, Robin, and Apple that, after each soul retrieval journey, a commitment to self-care is essential in order to benefit from this treatment. In addition, support from family, friends and a professional counsellor is necessary for the long-term process of soul healing and integration to be successful.

All of the co-researchers believe that there is a danger of soul retrieval being perceived as “too good to be true”, or seen as a one-shot wonder treatment. It involves an active and conscious participation on the part of the participants. It is the beginning of a new relationship with one’s self and one’s God, in whatever form that may be. As with any serious relationship, one has to be willing to accept occasional pain and feelings of anxiety because those feelings are often markers of something that is waiting to be found, healed, and re-integrated. It also requires companions who are willing to accompany us on that journey of healing, someone with whom we can share our burdens and celebrate our discoveries and growth.

Possibilities for further research.

This research project is a narrative inquiry into the experience of soul loss, soul pain, and soul recovery of four middle-aged women. The author started this inquiry because she wanted to know whether she was unique in her experience of soul healing after her soul recovery. The inquiry has sparked the author’s desire to look further into a bigger pool of experiences.

Some of the questions that the author found particularly intriguing are: Do other middle-aged women experience soul loss healing similarly? How do women from different developmental stages experience this healing process? Is there a difference in experience between genders? Does the age difference and life experience make a difference? How do children experience soul retrieval and soul healing? What is the difference in effectiveness of soul retrieval between long-term and short-term trauma? How does the shamanic approach to soul healing adapt to other religious or cultural paradigms? How does Simington’s approach adapt to, or co-exists with, other psychological approaches? In the future, the author hopes to see some of those questions answered by further research because she is particularly interested in an integrative style of counseling with a flexible and inclusive spiritual component.

Areas of potential application.

At first glance, it seems that shamanic soul loss retrieval and modern psychology

have very little in common, although both are connected to the “care of the soul” (Moore, 2000). Shamanism, and particularly the philosophy of soul retrieval (Harner, 1990; Ingerman, 1991), is a more ancient healing of mind and body that focuses on our concrete, everyday reality. It is a spiritual healing procedure that is older than recorded history. It has been part of every primitive culture around the world, and is still practiced in today’s traditional cultures—among peoples of Japan, Korea, Hawaii, and our North and South American First Nations People (Simington, 2003).

The modern psycho-analytical orientation, on the other hand, is only about 140 years old (Corey, 2000, 2005). Until recently, the healing approaches to trauma were based entirely on the management of what was being expressed in observable ways in the clients’ present-day reality (Herman, 1992, Rothschild, 2000). Increasing neurological evidence deepened our understanding of trauma’s reconditioning of the brain and nervous system. This research uncovered the physiological effects that trauma has on every aspect of human functioning, particularly with regard to dissociations, flashbacks and triggers (Lanius, Vermetten & Pain, 2010; van der Kolk, McFarlane & Weisaeth 1996). Amazing strides have been made in a very short time, but one has to be aware that trauma research is still in its infancy (Herman, 1992), promising continuous growth and further profound insights in the future.

Both shamanic and psychoanalytical orientations are concerned with human well-being, and particularly with the effects of trauma on traumatized people. Although they approach trauma through a different lens, “the ancient practice of soul retrieval and modern psychology have much to offer each other” (Ingerman, 1991, p. 39). Soul and Spirit expand upon the modern psycho-analytical attention to the deeper, inner processing of the intimate experience of self. In the following, I examine the above mentioned approaches with regard to the phenomenon of dissociation. Both approaches are contrasted with Dr. Simington’s integrative psycho-spiritual model that incorporates shamanic elements with modern psycho-analytical techniques (2001, 2003).

Both paradigms would agree that there is a “disruption of the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity and perception” (DSM-IV-TR, 2000, p. 519). What they have yet to integrate is where we “go” to re-integrate what has been disrupted. In traditional psychology, when traumatized people, such as Mabel as a child, escape their bodies, they “go” into their minds, repressing the traumatic memory. This

memory is not gone, but hidden somewhere in the subconscious realms of the mind, from where it can resurface at any time and, over time, has the potential to cause dysfunctional behaviors (Warner, 2008). The curative path of psychotherapy often focuses on bringing these repressed memories back into consciousness, where they can be discussed and integrated. This is often a very painful and time-consuming process, where many defense mechanisms have to be overcome before the suppressed memories can be accessed and integrated (Rothschild, 2003). “We may spend years in therapy or self-help groups trying to uncover traumas and to become whole” (Ingerman, 1991, p. 12).

According to the traditional shamanic view (Meadows, as quoted in Flack, 2007), “there is nothing to uncover or find repressed because what is missing is not in the mind, but instead, stuck in a parallel reality, separate from our own being” (p. 127-28). Once the escaped soul parts leave the body and mind, it requires experienced professional shamans who are appropriately qualified to retrieve those missing soul parts from the clients’ “vast interior cosmoses” (p. 122) of their souls and “blow” them gently back into their bodies.

In Dr. Simington’s integrated, psycho-spiritual-shamanic model (2001, 2003, 2010), the dissociated soul parts are also believed to have fled the body and mind, into the alternate reality of the time and place when the traumatic event happened. Clients can travel into their respective pasts because “all past, present and all future come together in the innermost depth of our soul” (Fox & Sheldrake, 1996, p. 88). Similar to psycho-analytical models, these traumatized soul parts are still connected to the mind of the traumatized person through traces of memories that are imprinted in the subconscious part of the right-brain hemisphere (Herman, 1992; Rothschild, 2003; van der Kolk, 2007). Dissociations, triggers and flashbacks are seen as reminders to the clients that there are parts of their souls hiding in an alternate reality of their soul cosmos. They remind the mind that it is time to bring the “lost” soul parts back, because our souls, like our bodies have self-healing capabilities (Harner, 1990; Ingerman, 1991; Villoldo, 2000, 2005, 2010).

Another point of comparison between ancient shamanic healing, Dr. Simington’s integrative psycho-spiritual model, and modern psycho-analytical approaches has to do with *who* does the retrieving of the traumatized parts and who holds the power over the process. In a shamanic soul retrieval procedure, it is the shaman who holds the authority

and power over the healing, and the clients are passive recipients of their recovered soul parts (Harner, 1990; Plotkin, 1993; Villoldo, 2005). Dr. Simington's (2003) approach holds that it is the clients themselves who hold the power over the retrieval of their soul parts and their own healing. She believes that clients know where to go to find their lost soul parts. What they need for a successful soul retrieval is a safe and empathetic environment, self-confidence in their ability to complete the task, and guides who will help them get where they need to go, as well as support them on that journey. Modern psycho-analytical methods also play an important role in every part of that integrative process. The most important aspect of any therapeutic process, shamanic or modern, is the development of a deep and emphatic relationship between the therapist and client (Hubble, Duncan & Miller, 1999). Within that relationship clients are nurtured and encouraged to develop self-confidence and self-esteem, which gives them courage and strength to face and process the issues that made them seek out a professional counsellor (Moursund & Kenny, 2002). The approach to this healing process depends on the therapist's theoretical orientation, his character or temperament, and the client's needs (Kottler, 2010). According to Kottler (2010), there are as many approaches to therapy as there are therapists, and those therapies can even change or become modified as therapists grow and develop. All therapeutic interventions, including the shamanic-integrative approach (Ingerman, 1991; Simington, 2001, 2003), are very creative and malleable healing paradigms, open to growth and change.

A last point of reference between ancient shamanic healing, Dr. Simington's approach and modern psycho-analytical approaches concerns healing within the element of time. For the traditional shaman, the healing is completed after the soul parts have been restored to the clients (Villoldo 2005). In Dr. Simington's model, the soul retrieval is just the beginning of the healing process within an integrative counseling modality, but it has to come first because the client's soul has to be whole for any additional therapy to be successful (Simington, 2001, 2003). It is the moment when the healer moves into the professional role of a psychotherapist. Clients with a more intact soul are encouraged to continue their healing process by beginning to address, for example, their repressed feelings, or habitual and maladaptive behaviors with regard to the trauma situation. There is a wide range of valuable therapeutic interventions that are being used in the mainstream trauma processing field, such as a variety of cognitive behavioral therapies (Corey, 2000, 2005), Gestalt Therapy (Pearls, Hefferline

& Goodman, 1994), Psychodynamic Therapy, and Transactional Analysis (Rothschild, 2003) that are very successful in addressing these issues. If cognitive therapies are not effective or desirable for the client, one can choose therapies that concentrate more on the somatic, visual and sensory images of trauma, such as Somatic Trauma Therapy (Rothschild, 2003), Prolonged Exposure Therapy (Foa, Hemmer & Rothbaum, 2002), Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (Shapiro, 1995), and Thought Field Therapy (Callahan, 2001). Depending on the client needs and comfort level, some of these modalities can be used in a more integrative fashion, by themselves, or in combination with more spiritual approaches (Corey 2000; Fontaine, 2000) such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBRS) (Stall & Goldstein, 2009), Clinical Hypnosis (Pecarve, 2001; Yapko, 2003), and Pastoral Counselling (Dayringer, 1998; Lartey, 2003). Artistic approaches such as Play Therapy (Goodyear-Brown, 2010), Art Therapy (Malchiodi, Ginns-Gruenberg, 2008; Moon, 1998), Movement Therapy (Hartley, 2005, 2008), and Psychodrama (Corey, 2000; Wilkins, 1999) are also very appropriate choices for their capacity to bring forth the inarticulate.

Dr. Simington's integrative approach does not replace psychotherapy, but enriches it by adding a spiritual dimension to it that is older and predates what most of us understand as our organized, religious and dogmatic foundation. This could position it as a healing approach that would make room for many faith and life orientations. The cosmos of the soul is non-denominational and inclusive of all spiritual expression. Mabel traveled during guided visualizations accompanied by spirit animals; for Robin it was the spirit of her deceased father who validated her journey; Apple was assisted by God; and for Karin it was the Goddess Lilith (Plaskov, 2005) who guided and supported her on her journey to becoming a psychotherapist.

Approaching healing through the dimension of the soul resonates with people in a world that is multi-cultural and increasingly mobile, where immigrants are possibly more familiar and comfortable with traditional shamanic approaches than modern cognitive, or even arts-based, approaches. This intentional blending of the ancient and the modern can then raise our awareness and invite conversation about how different peoples understand and approach healing to the very particular traumas they may have experienced.

Particularly when considering the multicultural landscape of Canadian society, soul retrieval has the potential to be vital in moving our personal and collective

narratives forward. For this to happen, there is a great need for skilled holistic psycho-spiritual therapists who can introduce the philosophy of soul and the technique of soul healing into the therapeutic process, and walk this journey with their clients. Many modern clinical and traditional health professions could gain much by embracing soul as an element in the healing of body, mind and spirit without having to change the foundation of their orientation.

In the future, as mental health professionals, Mabel, Robin, Apple and Karin will be contributors to this new blending of energy and soul healing in their unique ways. They will keep the “fire in their hearts” burning, to illuminate the way for whomever crosses their paths seeking soul wholeness. They are passionate about helping others to recover their soul parts, because only complete souls can absorb and reflect the Divine light and guide us towards our “Original Selves” (Moore, 2000). In turn, these healer Selves contribute to the collective soul growth and soul healing of society.

In closing this inquiry, the author would like to offer a blessing:

May our society and the world as a whole become a better place
for all of creation, one little soul piece at a time.

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Appendix A

Letter of invitation to participate in a research project.

Karin Stewart
St. Stephen's College Student
Friday, March 30, 2012

Dear graduates of the Trauma Recovery Certification Program,

I am a St. Stephens College Student, enrolled in the Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality (MPS) Program. I am writing to you because, as part of my program requirement, I am planning a research study entitled "Trauma, Dissociation, and the Journey to Soul Healing". In this study I am investigating: a person's experience of engaging in a process from power loss and soul loss towards soul and power retrieval as a way of recovering from long term effects of trauma and dissociation, as initiated in Dr. Jane Simington's Trauma Recovery Certification Program. I thank you for responding to my call. I hope that you will find this research project interesting, and I am inviting you to possibly become one of three research participants. Please note that after an initial assessment for participation with you, I, with my supervisor's input, will need to reserve the right to ascertain which two respondents would be best able to respond to the needs of this research project. To acknowledge the interest of all who respond to this invitation, each will receive a personal copy of my research analysis summary upon project completion.

Participation in the research study would involve an initial phone conversation or meeting, 1 video-taped 1-hour interview, 1, 1-hour follow-up meeting, and possibly a few phone calls for needed consultations, and a closure phone call or meeting, within the next three months. The dates for the interviews and phone calls will be scheduled according to your convenience and availability.

During the interviews you will be asked:

- to share with me a little about your personal history,
- the reasons for enrolling in Dr. Simington's program,
- what traumatic events from your past that were addressed and processed during

the program, and what effect, if any, did this experience have on your professional or general life practice since that healing event.

If you so choose, I would also appreciate you sharing with me some of your journal entries and art pieces that were created during the Trauma Recovery Certification Program in direct connection with soul loss and soul retrieval. To ensure transparency between us and during the research process, you will have access to any written accounts of our conversations on a regular basis.

There is no monetary compensation for participating in this project, however, your contribution has the potential to add to the body of knowledge about the working of soul during a traumatic event and its healing capacity following the event on a physiological, psychological, and spiritual level. Particularly, your contribution could enhance the knowledge of trauma processing in the field of psychotherapy. Considering the prevalence of trauma in our society, this contribution would be of great value on an individual, communal, and societal level.

I hope you will find this project worthy of your time and effort, and I am looking forward to hearing back from you to arrange a mutually convenient time for our initial assessment interview.

Respectfully,

Appendix B

Letter of Informed Consent

I, _____, consent to participate in the research study entitled “Trauma, Dissociation, and the Journey to Soul Healing”.

I am aware that this research is being conducted by Karin Stewart, a graduate student of the Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality Program (MPS), at the St. Stephen’s College in Edmonton, Alberta. I am also aware that this research study is a partial requirement pertaining to this degree, and is being supervised by Dr. Colleen MacDougall.

1. I understand that the purpose of this study is: to gain in-depth knowledge about the short and long term effects of soul loss and soul retrieval after graduating from the Trauma Recovery Certification Program, as developed and led by Dr. Jane Simington.
2. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and I have the choice to withdraw from the project at any time without any adverse consequences to me. If I choose to withdraw, the data provided by me thus far will be destroyed, or returned to me personally if this is what I wish. Withdrawing can be verbal if so desired. Appropriate follow-up referrals will be facilitated by myself and Dr. MacDougall if so desired by me.
3. I understand that as a co-researcher in this study, I have the option of an initial meeting prior to an engagement in two in-depth interviews which will occur at a mutually agreed on time and place.
4. I understand that the conversations in the interviews that I will provide will be video-taped. Those tapes will be securely stored and transcribed by Karin Stewart. In addition to Karin Stewart, they will also be accessible to Dr. Colleen MacDougall, her thesis supervisor, and possibly to Dr. Julie Henkelman, Karin Stewart’s MAPPC program supervisor. The video tapes will be destroyed immediately following the acceptance of Karin Stewart’s thesis by St. Stephen’s College or returned to me.
5. I can choose to share and discuss with Karin Stewart any written account and/or

art work of my choice that I completed during the process of soul loss and soul loss retrieval that is still in my possession.

6. The content from the interviews will be compiled, analyzed and interpreted in a narrative form. I will have regular access and input into the written accounts of these communications.
7. I understand that all information provided by me will be held in strict confidence. Also, all information in the study that could identify me will be altered.
8. I authorize Karin Stewart to use the data provided by me in a secondary fashion, such as in journal articles, books, or other educational purposes. Karin will update me before any such publication. The data will be destroyed three years from secondary use in publishing.
9. I understand that benefits to me will be of a personal nature and that there will be no monetary compensation for my participation.
10. I understand and agree to the full nature of the study, after a thorough discussion on that topic with Karin Stewart. If I need further information, I can contact Karin Stewart, or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Colleen MacDougall. Dr. MacDougall is a Registered Psychologist and is available to me as requested for psycho-spiritual support.

Participant Signature

Date

Witness

Date