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TRANSFORMING THE ADDICTION TO PERFECTION AND DEFEAT

by

Anne Caroll

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ABSTRACT

This study is an in-depth exploration of one woman's experience of coming into relation with such functions as authenticity, personal and professional agency, and creative expression. As interpreted through a Jungian lens, these functions are associated with masculine energy. The mythical figure of Sisyphus, condemned by the gods to endlessly push a gigantic boulder up the side of a mountain, has been used to symbolize an addictive pattern of perfection and defeat that, with the critical inner voice of the "never good enough," prevents the individual from claiming these traits. As a result of walking through the fire of the research process, the final learning is that by coming into relation with the masculine, in this case with Sisyphus, it is possible to know a wholeness of self that brings one into connectedness with others and with transcendence.

Although ideas were drawn from a number of methodologies, including feminist research and narrative inquiry, a heuristic approach defined by Moustakas and Sela-Smith, and deepened by Romanyshyn's understanding of doing research with soul in mind directed the process. With the challenge posed by these authors, the researcher engaged in a concentrated praxis of action and reflection that finally exposed a depth of knowing that established congruence with personal values and academic requirements.

The concept of facing and coming into relation with a complex belongs to Jungian thought and it is this framework that has guided the research. Many authors contributed but the most significant insights came through a dynamic interaction with women authors who share the feminist belief that personal experience cannot be separated from the political and it is by understanding the nature of these interwoven threads that one accesses essential truths.

The final message is that a fierce and persevering desire to be in relation with masculine energy brings one to the center of experience. By standing at the core, there is the realization that, for a woman, this is the vast diffuse wisdom of the feminine and it is the masculine that gives it concrete form. With this awareness, there is a significant shift for the researcher on both a personal and professional level. To be free of the "never good enough" brings an authenticity of connection that alters relations in one's immediate circle and in the counselling room with clients. Furthermore, it is believed that this form of energy ripples outward. To heal oneself is to bring healing to others and hopefully to the planet as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As several people know, the fact that this document exists is a miracle. For the past thirty-five years, I have struggled to complete a thesis as a concrete manifestation of having overcome a barrier named Sisyphus. Knowingly and unknowingly, countless numbers of people have helped me stand in this place. I am truly grateful:

To the participants and the facilitators who through all these years brought themselves to healing circles and helped me dissolve the split at the neck.

To my advisor Deborah Barrett who gave me the research question. Although I questioned it often and went off on numerous tangents, on some level I knew it was right and always came back to it. Only by struggling to respond to the question did I come to know myself in relation with the Sisyphus complex.

To all those who stood with me and told me I was in their prayers. I think of Mary Kopp, Tina Wattier, Kathryne Storheim and particularly of Margie Koop who met with me once a month throughout the entire process and never once retreated from my outpouring of words and feelings. Through the hard times and the breakthroughs, she remained constant.

To my sister Lori. It was her unstinting financial and personal support plus computer expertise that made the whole thing possible. To her, I owe a deep debt of gratitude.

Finally, I thank my father. Without him, I would never have grasped onto Marion Woodman's framework with such desperation and been pushed and pulled into selfhood and into relationship.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This work has been a praxis of reflection and action. Throughout the process, insights gradually emerged that ultimately determined the content and how the thesis would be structured. A brief description may aid the reader in seeing how each chapter functioned to push the work forward and was determined, in turn, by the interaction of experience and reflection on that experience.

The *Introduction* provides background to the research process by describing where I stood at the beginning. As will be seen, the longing to live feminine consciousness as defined by Jungian analyst Marion Woodman (1982) determined how I understood the task. Only near the end, with the back and forth movement suggested above, did I realize that the purpose of this autobiographical introduction was to illustrate the initial stage of unconscious relationship with the masculine principle named Sisyphus.

In the second chapter, the principles of a heuristic methodology, expanded and deepened by Romanyshyn's insight, directed the process. It was this approach that constantly challenged me to live the principle of immersing myself in the experiential current. As the ability to release control gradually grew stronger, the work began to take shape.

A number of authors were integral to the experiential/ reflective process. As already noted, Woodman's writing defined my initial understanding. However, through the three-year period, her ideas interacted with many others to challenge my thinking. The *Literature Review* went through countless revisions before a mountain of ideas sorted themselves into three perspectives of coming into relation with the masculine principle. These perspectives, in turn, stimulated additional reflection.

The evolving process continued with the sharing of experience in *Chapter Five* and an analysis of the experiential process in *Chapter Six*. Only when the current had carried me to a depth of awareness never reached before did I know which events needed to be included and what meaning they possessed. In some ways, writing the final *Creative Synthesis and Conclusion* was more straightforward because by then I was able to pull the threads together and identify what I had learned.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Setting the Scene: My Early Experience

As I stood on the threshold of the research process, I believed that my backpack was full. Having done so much reading and self-reflection, I was ready to complete a thesis. The task depended on transforming Sisyphus, and at long last, I understood the problem and how to resolve it.

For me, the image of Sisyphus, as that mythical figure condemned to endlessly push an enormous boulder up the side of a mountain only to have it roll back down again, symbolized the reality of being bonded to the father and his value system. Since early childhood, my personal father had been god in my life; and, although I tried as hard as I could to be the person he wanted, the carrot of approval always moved just out of reach. As described by Jungian analyst Marion Woodman, the consequence was an inner voice that constantly delivered the judgment of inadequacy and defectiveness; it was this voice that drove the obsessive striving to reach perfection, and because of its impossibility, to ensure ultimate defeat. With the father, there was never any giving up. To fail meant to try harder.

This pattern had dominated my life but again, with help from Woodman, I saw how first unconsciously, and then deliberately, I had been committed to the healing process of transformation. Just as she described – first with dance and spontaneous movement, then with drawing, painting and journalling, and finally, by participating in therapeutic workshops, 12 Step meetings and Traditional Aboriginal ceremonies – I had dissolved the split at the neck to ground in the physical/emotional feminine core of the self. Over and over again, in circle after circle, I had done what I understood as making the journey from head to heart. With this descent, I experienced a dramatic difference. When speaking out

of my head, I heard myself as harsh and deliberate and I felt separate and distant; but, if I could reach that deeper place, it was as if I opened my mouth and the words flowed. Later I was often unsure of the content but what I knew without a doubt was the feeling of warmth and softness and the certainty that I was connected with myself, with all others in the circle and with transcendence. More than anything else, it was this knowing myself in relation that spoke of grounding in the feminine.

On this basis, again as promised by Woodman, I knew myself capable of the next phase, that of transforming the judgmental voice of a disembodied mind into positive masculine energy. A number of experiences assured me that this was indeed happening. One occurred just prior to coming to St. Stephen's, when during a workshop called *Returning to Spirit*, I came to the incredible realization that by focusing on feminine energy and rejecting what I labelled masculine and therefore patriarchal, I had simply reversed the valuing of my childhood. Essentially nothing had changed in terms of integration and balance. With this realization, I also knew the incredible price that I had paid and that it had fueled, rather than diminished, the relentless stream of criticism that kept me locked into the powerlessness of Sisyphus. When, during the workshop, we were asked to write to someone from whom we felt estranged, I wrote to my deceased father. In the letter, I acknowledged how hard I had tried to get rid of him, admitted that it had never worked, and told him that he could live in me. Immediately there was a sense of lightness. I had taken the first step toward integrating positive masculine energy.

From then on, with every opportunity presented by the St. Stephen's intensives, I focused on what it meant to transform the negative power named Sisyphus into the positive masculine. In one course after another, I faced instructors who, in my mind, symbolized the patriarchal father and time after time worked my way from critical dissociation to

acceptance and connection. With the academic papers, the effort was more deliberate.

With these assignments, just as I had experienced in safe healing circles, the words seemed

to flow. As I later wrote, it was as if a voice was speaking through me, telling me what to

say and how the ideas should be structured. When the complex did rush in on one

occasion, the period of hopelessness and panic was short-circuited with Killen and de

Beer's (1994) model of theological reflection. Following their advice, I chose Sisyphus as

the experience to explore and then envisioned one author after another stepping forward

and engaging in conversation. The result was amazing. Instead of a demonic and

overwhelming force, Sisyphus became a rather benign figure who was willing to listen and

to consider these various ideas and then decide which to accept and which to reject.

Toward the conclusion, I once again knew the experience to be valid because it passed the

test of connectedness with self, with others and with transcendence.

At long last, after the complex had prevented me from completing two previous

masters' programs, I stood at the threshold with what, until now, had been missing.

Without a doubt, I believed that I knew what it was to be grounded in the feminine and now

I had begun the process of coming into relation with the masculine. As I looked forward, I

had every faith that by actively engaging in the research process, this final phase of

integration could only assume greater clarity and strength. The proof would be

demonstrated by completing the thesis.

The Research Question

What is a woman's experience of being in relation with the Sisyphus complex as she

completes her thesis?

Definition of Terms

Complex

"An emotionally charged group of ideas or images. At the 'center' of a complex is an archetype or archetypal image" (Woodman, 1982, p. 195).

To define what is meant by archetypes, Woodman (1982) writes that, "These are universal patterns or motifs which come from the collective unconscious and are the basic content of religions, mythologies, legends, and fairy tales. They emerge in individuals through dreams and visions" (p. 195).

Self/self

Two forms of the word "self," one in upper and one in lower case, require some explanation. When the capital "S" is used, it is understood in terms described by Edinger (1972):

> The Self is the ordering and unifying center of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious) just as the ego is the center of the conscious personality. Or, put in other words, the ego is the seat of *subjective* identity while the Self is the seat of *objective* identity. The Self is thus the supreme psychic authority and subordinates the ego to it. The Self is most simply described as the inner empirical deity. (p. 3)

Although the word, Sophia, has not been used in this work, because the emphasis throughout is on the inner physical/ emotional core as feminine and associated with *soul*, the following Woodman references give additional clarification to Edinger's concept of *Self*.

> To find the stillness at the centre of the whirlpool, the eye of the hurricane, and not hold onto it with the rigidity born of fear, is what in analysis we struggle to reach. That centre I call Sophia, the feminine Wisdom of God. (1982, p. 72).

So long as we are in this world, the psyche is enacted through the medium of the

body. William Blake described the body as that portion of Soul discerned by the

five Senses. The soul is, of course, much more than the bodily "portion" of itself...

it manifests also in that infinite body, which constitutes the "body" of the

imagination, a body that includes the entire visionary world of the arts... (1985, pp.

55-56)

With the lower case form, the definition has been taken from *The Concise*

Dictionary of Psychology.

The self in *HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY* is roughly the equivalent of the *EGO* in

PSYCHOANALTIC psychology. It refers to that part of the PERSONALITY which

is CONSCIOUS of its IDENTITY over time (Statt, 1998, p. 119).

Sisyphus

In this study, the name Sisyphus is used to symbolize one particular magnetic

combination. From Malcolm Day's (2007) text, Sisyphus is described as a mythical figure

condemned by the gods to eternal torment. As he relates the tale:

Once, the river-god Asopus went to the city in search of his daughter who had been

abducted by Zeus. Knowing of her whereabouts, Sisyphus told Asopus on

condition that he would supply his citadel with a perennial spring. That agreed,

Asopus looked to take revenge on Zeus who, in turn, was furious with Sisyphus for

betraying godly secrets. The god punished Sisyphus by making him roll a boulder

continually uphill. Each time he nearly reached the top, his strength would fail,

and the boulder would roll downhill. (p. 69)

To provide a personal definition, the mythical figure of Sisyphus symbolizes

Woodman's description of a father's daughter addicted to perfection and defeat. For

Woodman, this largely-unconscious pattern is understood in societal, mythical and personal

terms. In looking at the broader society, Woodman (1982) explains that many of us are

addicted in one way or another because

> ... our patriarchal culture emphasizes specialization and perfection. Driven to do
>
> our best at school, on the job, in our relationships – in every corner of our lives –
>
> we try and make ourselves into works of art. Working so hard to create our own
>
> perfection, we forget that we are human beings. On one side we try to be the
>
> efficient, disciplined goddess Athena, on the other we are forced into the voracious
>
> repressed energy of Medusa... We are trapped in the extremes of the gods, territory
>
> that does not belong to us. (p. 10)
>
> For father's daughters, "Consciousness of defeat remains their grip upon reality"

(Woodman, 1982, p. 56).

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

Description and Suitability to my Exploration

Although ideas from a number of methodologies, including feminist research, narrative inquiry and particularly Romanyshyn's understanding of doing research with soul in mind, have impacted my thinking, the primary method has been a heuristic approach as defined by Moustakas and Sela-Smith. In an often-quoted passage, Moustakas (1990) captures the essence of this methodology.

> The root meaning of heuristic comes from the Greek *heuriskein* meaning to discover or to find. It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for further investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. (p. 9)

Essential to the process is the act of letting go. To illustrate, Moustakas uses the metaphor of falling into a river and letting the current sweep the researcher beyond all aid from old and worn concepts.

On the basis of Moustakas's work, Sela-Smith (2002) lends additional emphasis to the significance of releasing control by naming her methodology "*heuristic self-search inquiry*" (p. 83). As she describes:

> Heuristic self-search inquiry is a psychological process wherein the researcher surrenders to the feeling in an experience and does not know what will be learned at the time the inquiry is begun… There is no controlling the process; in fact, the opposite must take place. It is this surrender into feeling-the-feelings and

experiencing the experience that allows the self-as-researcher to enter heuristic self-search inquiry. Long-hidden tacit knowledge, suppressed, repressed, rejected, and feared by the individual, by social systems, and by humankind, may finally emerge. (pp. 83-84)

It was this focus on letting go of control and trusting in experience that drew me to a heuristic approach. For so many years, I had tried to forcefully change the compulsive pattern named Sisyphus with little success. Now, the principles offered by Moustakas and Sela-Smith assured a simple and obvious solution. If Sisyphus thrived on discounting present reality by obsessively comparing it to distant images of perfection, transforming the complex required an immersion in actual experience. For that reason, I vowed to follow Moustakas's direction of letting go and trusting the current to carry me into unknown territory with its promise of new awareness and personal transformation.

From his own in-depth exploration of the experience of loneliness, Moustakas (1990) maintains that with a concentrated inner focus, the heuristic process unfolds naturally through six stages. During the first phase of "initial engagement" (p. 27), the researcher discovers a question that "holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications" (p. 27). The second stage is one of "immersion" (p. 28). By keeping the question in the forefront of awareness, Moustakas states that through self-dialogue and pursuing intuitive clues, whether awake, sleeping or dreaming, everything becomes crystallized around this passionate concern.

The third stage of "incubation" (p. 28) necessitates withdrawing from a focused absorption in the topic. By turning away from direct engagement, the mind and heart continue to clarify and extend knowledge that is outside of immediate awareness. As

understood by Moustakas, without a direct and concentrated focus, additional qualities of the phenomenon and a vision of its wholeness can come to the surface.

The following stage of "illumination" (p. 29) occurs naturally as the researcher opens to essential tacit knowing. For Moustakas (1990):

> When the researcher is in a receptive state of mind without conscious striving or concentration, the insight or modification occurs. A degree of reflectiveness is essential, but the mystery of situations requires tacit workings to uncover meanings and essences. (p. 29)

Following this period of illumination, the researcher enters the "explication" (p. 30) phase during which there is an examination of the various layers of meaning. By attending to his or her own insights, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and judgments, the researcher gains a more complete understanding of the key elements. Refinements and corrections are then made to develop a comprehensive depiction of the dominant themes.

The final phase is "the process of creative synthesis" (p. 31). Once the researcher has mastered knowledge of the material that illuminates and explicates the question, the components and core themes must come together in the creation of a final product. As stated by Moustakas (1990):

> The major concepts that underlie a creative synthesis are the tacit dimension, intuition, and self-searching. The researcher must move beyond any confined or constricted attention to the data itself and permit an inward life on the question to grow, in such a way that a comprehensive expression of the essences of the phenomenon investigated is realized. (p. 32)

Although I did not experience these stages in the chronological order suggested by Moustakas, it is possible to describe what I did to move through an experiential process

that in fact incorporated the essence of each phase. Certainly throughout, I knew the validity of the message that with the moments of peace but more often of tumult, the methodology requires a constant returning to the self. In personal terms, Moustakas (1990) concludes that:

> The heuristic process challenges me to rely on my own resources, and to gather within myself the full scope of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses, and intuitions; to accept as authentic and valid whatever will open new channels for clarifying a topic, question, or puzzlement. (p. 13)

Method Outlined

Initial Engagement

The actual question came out of a discussion with my advisor. When asked what I felt passionate about, I began to talk about Sisyphus as a dynamic that had pervaded all aspects of my life and had been the barrier to completing two previous masters' theses. Out of this conversation, the question was framed in terms of my experience of relationship with the complex.

At the time, although I had no idea how to proceed, it felt like the right question. For many years, I had known that constant self-analysis had never gotten rid of Sisyphus. Now it seemed obvious that, because the complex thrived on discounting the actual, a focus on the experience of relationship held the potential for personal transformation. Certainly for me, this question fulfilled Moustakas's (1990) initial stage of engagement by setting a question that had "personal, compelling implications" (p. 27). In addition to Moustakas and Sela-Smith, other authors spoke about the rightness of a question that seemed to speak to the core of one's being.

In describing a phenomenological approach to research, van Manen (1990) sees the process as

... being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, a researcher, a theorist…It is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence. (p. 31)

In his understanding, this act of being-given-over is not a purely intellectual enterprise. As he writes:

To do justice to the richness of human life is to go beyond intellectualizing about experience. In fact, to do phenomenology is to do the impossible. It is to describe and reveal human experience in a full way while recognizing that no description is ever complete because of the complexity of lived experience. (p. 18)

Romanyshyn (2007) extends the significance of a question that is personally compelling by arguing that such an enterprise seizes the researcher rather than the other way around. As he explains, "Research that keeps soul in mind, complex re-search, re-search from an imaginal approach is a vocation. A topic chooses a researcher as much as, and perhaps even more than, he or she chooses it" (p. 112).

In addition to its intensely personal implications, the focus of the research satisfied Moustakas's (1990) requirement that a legitimate question has "important social meanings" (p. 27). Since early adulthood, I had viewed my experience in light of the feminist slogan that the personal is political. This perspective was reinforced in specific terms when the framework provided by Jungian analyst Marion Woodman (1992) helped me know myself as a "father's daughter" (p. 9). With this awareness, I understood that the complex I had

named Sisyphus characterized the lives of countless others. Through a Woodman lens, I understood that this obsession with perfection and defeat, a pattern that denied actual human reality as "good enough," was a component that motivated all addictive behavior. Furthermore, I believed that it had particular relevance for professional women who, through years of surviving in a patriarchal context, had lost "faith in the values that come from the heart" (Woodman, 1982, p. 51). Echoing Romanyshyn, Woodman expresses the belief that for many people in contemporary western society, the task is to contact one's abandoned soul. On this basis, I believed that by pursuing an in-depth exploration of my experience of Sisyphus, there would be social applicability that would extend beyond the personal and individual.

Immersion

In reflection, it seems that this stage lasted throughout the entire process and promises to continue. There is a reason that every member of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) introduces him or herself by stating that, *My name is _____ and I am an alcoholic*. The belief is, of course, that with an addiction such as alcoholism, the draw is always there and one drink will put the addict right back on the downward slope. In my experience, this has relevance to the addictive pattern of perfection and defeat. The task of letting go of control to genuinely immerse oneself in the moment is incredibly difficult. Throughout the three years, I must have told myself hundreds of times that I needed to let go, to get out of my head, and into present reality.

While struggling to release control, I immersed myself in the distant and more recent past. One piece of writing that I read and re-read, dated 1986, summarized the five years of working on a master's thesis in adult education. A second document, written in 2005, captured the experience of trying to complete a master's degree in social work

(MSW). I also referred again and again to certain papers submitted for St. Stephen's courses. In addition, I described in detail my experience of Sisyphus from childhood to the present. In this latter writing, I drew on authors in the fields of adult education, social work and theology to reflect at length on how their ideas related to my experience of the complex. Finally, in terms of the present, I journalled extensively about the thoughts and feelings that came up as I focused on the task of completing a thesis.

With what I thought of as a praxis of action and reflection, van Manen's (1990) words often came to me that "Writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself. As we stare at the paper, our objectified thinking stares back at us" (p. 125). At another point, he further emphasizes the significance of the writing process by stating that it becomes a complex matter of "rewriting, re-thinking, re-flecting (and) re-cognizing" (p. 111). Although I was not always conscious of it at the time, in hindsight, it was definitely true that the very act of writing was integral to the stage of immersion.

Other components also contributed. As part of the process, incidents came up in my life outside the computer room that spoke of Sisyphus. At one point, when I realized that the complex seemed to be popping up everywhere, I thought of Moustakas's belief that when we have a burning question, it acts as a magnet that draws and intensifies experiences that are relevant to the search. It seemed as if I was being given countless opportunities to face Sisyphus; and when each occurred, I would write about it in my journal and reflect on how it might help me move forward. In addition to recording and reflecting on the past and the present, I kept track of dreams and thought about them in terms of the quest. Along with the written data, on several occasions I used drawing as another means of expression and journalled about the significance of these visual images. This, then, comprised the data for the research. It included: documents from the two previous masters' programs, papers I

had written for the St. Stephen's courses, a number of drawings, the recording of dreams and extensive journalling.

Finally, an integral part of immersing myself in the process was to meet once a month with a fellow graduate student. During these two-hour sessions, over coffee and baked treats, I shared ideas related to the thesis plus a full range of feelings from hope and excitement to panic, frustration and despair. When we began meeting, this woman was actively engaged in the process of writing a thesis herself and listened and responded from her own place of being immersed in the process. However, about half way through, her work was complete and she could draw on personal and theoretical ideas to respond more objectively. Because the essence of the Sisyphus complex is a lack of self-trust, this mirroring and gentle challenge proved invaluable. I often thought of McNeely's (1991) observation that movement toward a more conscious relationship with animus energy requires a depth of emotional experience. It was this fullness of engagement that my friend and mentor provided and that helped strengthen the self-trust needed to descend to deeper levels of immersing myself in experience.

Every time I went deeper, there was resistance. As argued by Sela-Smith, this is inevitable when one moves into unknown territory, and if it is not faced, the researcher reverts to control and blocks the possibility of inner change. However, if the resistance is allowed to surface and is grappled with in a conscious way, it leads to a deeper accessing of knowledge that pushes the process forward through the stages.

Romanyshyn (2007) agrees that resistance is part of the process. As he maintains, although there are obvious dangers, when research is a vocation, the only alternative to facing and working with resistance is to make a mental flight into method as a strategy against anxiety. From personal and professional experience, it is his belief that:

Even with such a flight into method, do we not still suffer the work, bear it in our

flesh, and even spin it from blood and bone and gut and heart? And if we do, then

is it not better to do so with as much conscious attention to this process as possible?

(p. 179)

To heighten awareness, Romanyshyn (2007) identifies three forms of resistance.

He refers to the first as performance anxiety. In his understanding:

This resistance is rooted particularly in the ego's having to relinquish its control

over the process... One is thrust into unknown territory, and in this unfamiliar place

one is inclined to convince oneself that one's old wineskins are up to the task of

containing the new wine. (p. 180)

When this does not work, the researcher may encounter the second type which is

even stronger because it involves others. With reference to a student named Tomlinson, he

states her sentiment that, "In the world of sticks and stones... the 'real' world... it is difficult

to avoid the feeling that 'I am somehow making it all up'" (p. 180). As she speculates, "this

type of resistance is particularly a problem for women in our culture, since they have been

taught from very early on to distrust their own ways of knowing" (p. 180).

The third type speaks to the reality of imagined others. For Romanyshyn, to do

research with soul in mind is to release ego control and serve as an agent to the work. This

means that voices external to the self, perhaps those of our ancestors, need to come

through. With reference again to Tomlinson, Romanyshyn (2007) observes that she "is

inhibited by fears that these 'others' really are there" (p. 181). In her words, this possibility

"is daunting because it implies a responsibility to them if I recognize them as real persons,

in the same way that I am responsible to beings in the sticks and stones world" (p. 181).

Over the three-year-period of immersing myself in experience, I repeatedly encountered each of these forms of resistance and it was by facing them that I continued to descend to what Moustakas (1990) and Sela-Smith (2002) refer to as essential tacit knowledge.

Incubation

Initially, because of the all-encompassing struggle to immerse myself in experience, it was difficult to identify a period of incubation. However, in hindsight, I can see that what happened were breaks in the process that fulfilled the purpose of withdrawal as described by Moustakas.

From the beginning, I made the decision to work only in the mornings. Because Sisyphus is so much about trying harder and harder, it was essential to restrict the urge to keep pushing. For that reason, I nearly always left the computer at 12:00, had lunch, and then went to the gym or did other tasks during the afternoon and evening. While I was doing these activities, and at night while sleeping and dreaming, there was no doubt in my mind that my unconscious was hard at work. I had lived with this problem in one form or another all my life. The fact that I was not sitting at the computer made little difference.

Another experience of what Moustakas calls the incubation stage came with singing. I belong to a community choir and through the weekly practices and in preparation and performance of the three yearly concerts, I knew that I was able to set the thesis aside and to open another form of expression that brought something new to the process.

Finally, I did a great deal of walking. I once heard a program on CBC that described situations or activities in which people had light-bulb experiences. For some, these came while driving and, for others, they happened in the shower. Finally the

announcer stated that for yet another group, insights came while walking. As soon as I

heard these words, I knew that this was my way. Since early adulthood, whenever I was

confused or upset, I would walk. After a period of time, sometimes short and sometimes

much longer, there was nearly always greater clarity. This is what I used throughout the

research process. Every day I walked for at least an hour. With this simple repetitive

movement and the fresh outdoor air, I took a break and unconsciously worked things

through.

<u>Illumination</u>

In my experience, illumination came gradually in small bursts. These moments of

seeing and knowing on ever-deeper levels occurred only through a process of releasing

what I had previously grasped with such certainty.

It was Romanyshyn (2007) who explained the necessity of letting go as integral to

an "orphic inspired process" (p. 63). To briefly review the myth, Orpheus, through his

exceptional musical gift, was able to draw Eurydice back from the underworld of death

with the single condition of never looking back. Although he managed to follow this

admonition until the very end, in a final moment of doubt, he turned around and in a flash

Eurydice vanished into the darkness.

On the basis of this myth, Romanyshyn outlines six moments that illustrate his

conviction that to do research with soul in mind is a process of letting go of the ego's

complex ties to the work and, as such, is characterized by sadness and mourning.

His definition of the first three moments are encompassed to some extent by the

earlier passages organized according to Moustakas's stages of initial engagement and

immersion. The difference is that, for Romanyshyn, research is more than being grasped

by a compelling question. In his understanding, to do an in-depth exploration is a matter of

bringing an unconscious wound to consciousness. Initially these were just words that added legitimacy to the focus on relationship with a complex but, as I proceeded to let go of more and more, this concept assumed greater relevance.

In Romanyshyn's framework, the first moment is one in which the researcher is claimed by the personal and cultural unconscious. With reference to the myth, he explains that in psychological terms, neither Orpheus nor Eurydice actually knew the other. Instead, both were locked into projections of what they wanted to see and believe. As I would come to realize, I was similarly locked into my projection of godliness on the academic institution as father and it was the unconscious wounding of this projection that pulled me into the research process.

The second moment, although understood as the beginning of transformation, is described as a time of darkness. For Romanyshyn, it is at this point that the researcher faces the descent into as yet undreamed possibilities and, with this prospect, there is the realization that one must let go of present security. This brings a feeling of sadness. For me, although at times I did feel sad, the dominant feeling was of panic and despair as I faced the possibility that my reliance on analysis was not going to work.

During the third moment, there is denial. In Romanyshyn's (2007) words, "When one has lost control of the work there can be a redoubling of effort to regain that control" (p. 70). I did this for months as I drew on every author I had ever read and every experience I had ever had that spoke of what it meant to be rid of the complex. In a multitude of ways, I tried to remain in charge of the process.

It is the fourth moment of "mourning as separation" (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 72) that addresses more directly the phase of illumination described by Moustakas. With reference to the myth, Romanyshyn writes that:

Re-search that would keep the underworld of soul in mind requires this

transformative backward glance when the work is freed into itself and freed from

the researcher's narcissistic attachment to it... He or she is forced to separate the

image of what end the work serves for him or her from the work in its own right. (p.

73)

Again, although this happened over a period of time, in little spurts that began with

the realization that I had never been in conscious relationship with Sisyphus, I began to

release my attachment to the complex and to see it in more actual and concrete terms.

<u>Explication</u>

Once again it was Romanyshyn's insight that gave form to my experience. During

the fifth moment, he writes that, "Unable to hold on to the work and dismembered by it, the

researcher who lets go of the work begins to imagine it in a different way, from its point of

view, beyond his or her possession of it" (p. 76).

Although it is difficult to name any specific date, at some point the work did begin

to speak and I was then able to go back to my experience and to see the three stages of

coming into conscious relationship with the complex. Although none of the ideas were

new, by releasing the work, I knew the truth of Edinger's (1972) words that, "A meaningful

experience does not convey abstract knowledge but rather living meaning which laden with

affect relates us organically to life as a whole" (p. 108). It was only as the themes

seemingly emerged on their own that my experience possessed living meaning.

<u>Creative Synthesis</u>

For many months, I tried to fit my ideas into the thesis chapters of Introduction,

Method, Literature Review, Data, Analysis and Conclusion. What finally made it possible

was having a greater awareness of what it meant to be in conscious relationship with the

Sisyphus complex. As this developed, I became more capable of living Romanyshyn's (2007) conviction that the task is one of trusting the work. Through a process of constantly flipping into doubt and manipulation, the ability to trust gradually strengthened and ego control lessened. By letting go of trying to make it happen the way I had initially envisioned, the structures and themes eventually took shape and this determined the nature of the final chapter.

For me, the document needed to live the spirit of dialogue. As defined by Brazilian adult educator, Paulo Freire (1970), this refers to an interactive process whereby both the presenter and the receiver know themselves more accurately in terms of personal and contextual reality and become strengthened in their ability to address sources of structural oppression. Van Manen (1990) captures the essential equality and mutuality of this way of engaging by stating that, "the researcher must 'pull' the reader into the writing in such a way that the reader will wonder about the question in the same way that the researcher is wondering and questioning" (p. 44). He also shares the goal of change in terms similar to those expressed by Freire as he describes hermeneutic phenomenology as critically oriented. In the words of van Manen (1990), this research approach

> ... deepens thought, and therefore radicalizes thinking and the action that flows from it. All serious and original thinking is ultimately revolutionary – revolutionary in a broader than political sense. And so to become more thoughtfully or attentively aware of aspects of human life which hitherto were merely glossed over or taken-for-granted will more likely bring us to the edge of speaking up, speaking out, or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action. (p. 154)

The way I have internalized these ideas is to consciously avoid the position of expertism with its assumption of having arrived at a place of total and superior knowledge

and instead to share the insights of an in-depth exploration in such a way that will hopefully resonate with and trigger the kind of questioning mentioned by van Manen. The test of whether or not I have succeeded rests with the reader.

A final word goes to Romanyshyn (2007) who understands the stage of creative synthesis as yet one more act of release. With reference to several of his students, he writes of the strange mixture of joy and sorrow they report on returning to everyday life after having been in service to something other than themselves. As he explains:

> This is, perhaps, the archetypal root of that depression that often follows creative work, and perhaps, in recognizing that in all creative work we are from beginning to end in service to the unfinished business of soul, the leadenness of depression is transmuted into the gold of the bittersweet mourning of this Orphic moment. (p. 80)

Hopefully, this process of transmutation will become part of my own experience.

Validity and Reliability

After going through an intense process over a three-year-period, I believe I can make the judgment of validity as defined by Moustakas. From his perspective:

> The question of validity is one of meaning: Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one's own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching… present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience? This judgment is made by the primary researcher… who has collected and analyzed all of the material – reflecting, sifting, exploring, judging its relevance or meaning, and ultimately elucidating the themes and essences that comprehensively, distinctively, and accurately depict the experience. (p. 32)

Although I was plagued with doubt about whether my personal expression would satisfy the expectation of academic objectivity, the words of van Manen (1990) were

reassuring. In his understanding, "The phenomenon under investigation is not a problem in need of a solution but a mystery in need of evocative comprehension. We are not trying to dispel the mystery but rather to bring the mystery into our presence" (p. 50).

An article by Freeman (2007) on autobiography as a branch of narrative inquiry supports the idea that valid and reliable research is more than a recording of factual information. As Freeman argues, although narratives seem far removed from scientific objectivity, they often give insight into human life in a way that more objective methodologies do not. In his understanding:

> This is because they often emerge from a true, rather than a false, scientific attitude, one that practices fidelity not to that which can be objectified and measured but to the whole person, the whole human life, in all its ambiguous, messy beautiful detail. Narrative inquiry, in its aim of practicing fidelity to the human experience, thus seeks, in a way, to be more scientific – more authentically scientific – than those more systematic, precise, quantitatively grounded empirical enterprises that have traditionally been enshrined. (p. 134)

Certainly throughout the process, I was conscious of being faithful to the wholeness of self as mind, body, heart and spirit and to the knowledge that, in spite of how ambiguous and messy it so often seemed, I knew it to be true because I had experienced it.

With specific relevance to my study, Dosso (2004) and Bahm (2006) maintain that heuristic narratives establish validity and reliability by using peer debriefing. In their respective theses, the two researchers cite Merton's (1998) definition of this strategy as "the extended discussion with a disinterested peer of findings, conclusions, analysis and hypothesis" (p. 182). In Bahm's (2006) words, "Since qualitative research is about

essences and exploring the experience of a phenomenon, the best measuring stick is other people" (p. 30).

As noted earlier, I fulfilled this requirement by meeting on a monthly basis with a fellow graduate student. These sessions began early in 2010, before I had written the proposal, and continued past the deadline of April 1st, 2013. Although my friend and mentor shared her own experience and challenged and extended my thinking, I always felt that she resonated with my thoughts and feelings. In fact, on numerous occasions, she mentioned that my sharing helped expand her own awareness.

Both Dosso and Bahm also argue for a triangulation of multiple sources as a second legitimate means. For Dosso (2004):

Some authors use the term *trustworthiness* to encompass both the concept of credibility and reliability and accept triangulation as a suitable strategy of establishing both. Triangulation can be achieved by the use of multiple methods or by using divergent sources of data. (p. 40)

To create a document that would fulfill this requirement, I triangulated literary sources drawn from the academic fields of adult education, social work and theology, engaged in an extended period of de-briefing with a fellow graduate student, used drawing as an additional means of accessing tacit knowing, recorded dreams, and reflected at length on the papers I had written for St. Stephen's courses and the journaling I had done over a period of thirty years. Also, as noted earlier under the heading of *Immersion*, I lived van Manen's (1990) belief that the very act of writing is a source of knowledge. Certainly, as I looked back again and again at the pages that interwove ideas from the literature, from past and more recent experience, from the monthly peer-review meetings, and from my

drawings and dreams, my objectified thinking stared back and constantly challenged me to access that core of experiential knowledge that captures and communicates what is true.

In reflecting on her experience, Bahm (2006) maintains that she "continued to trust the process of heuristic research in the engagement of immersion, incubation, explication, synthesis and illumination to assure reliability and validity" (p. 30). For me, it was the difficulty of trusting the process and the countless opportunities this presented of working through resistance that moved me forward through the stages. Only near the end, when I knew what it was to be in conscious relation with Sisyphus, did I judge the process as trustworthy. Although a process of this kind is difficult to replicate, it is my hope that by outlining the way I experienced each of the stages, the reader has insight into the process, and if interested, could follow the path in his or her own way.

As has been noted, the final decision depends on whether this work touches the reader. It is that unknown *other* that will determine whether or not my story has the ring of truthfulness.

Ethical Considerations

In terms of ethics, this is clearly my story. My parents and husband are deceased and the anonymity of other individuals has been ensured either by obscuring identification through such labels as fellow graduate student or through the use of pseudonyms.

In her thesis, Baillie (2010) summarizes the ethical issue as one of being true to herself without hurting others. Her concluding statement is that, "I hope I will not inflict hurt with my words, but it is also paramount that I do tell my story in the way I experienced it" (p. 25). I share that hope.

Decision to Focus on Women's Experience

The principles of a feminist perspective underlie this work. Of central importance is the often-quoted slogan from the early women's movement that the personal is political. On the basis of this slogan, the assumption is that women are oppressed in North American society and that this reality determines the nature of their personal experience. To introduce her article on social work practice, Turner (1991) exemplifies this belief by asking:

> Just what do my race and sex have to do with my social work practice? In short everything. I am an African-American female... In every way, my practice reflects all that I am, all that I have been exposed to, and all that I continue to work at in order to change the paradoxical world in which we live. (p. 108)

In the same text and again with reference to social work, Gottlieb (1991) extends this belief to all practitioners as they reveal information related to the personal. As she maintains:

> Making one's self-discovery explicit and public is an additional way in which feminist social work practice differs from mainstream practice. In the latter, case studies or reports of research are ordinarily offered in the third person, as if a neutral person were describing a piece of "objective" professional work. When feminist social workers disclose their own developments as they have influenced their practice, they are illustrating another facet of the fact that "the personal is political." (p. 58)

With this perspective, it is my belief that the factors of being female, Caucasian, able-bodied, heterosexual and raised in a middle-class income bracket have been, and continue to be, of utmost significance in determining the nature of my experience.

Although in certain respects I know that it is unique, there is an assumption of commonality with all women and a conviction that the overlap is much greater with those who share the same structural determinants of sex, race, ability, sexual orientation and economic standing. It is for this reason, that the work is clearly identified as focused on one woman's experience with an assumed relevance to the lives of many other women.

The Personal as Political

The feminist conviction that human experience can only be understood when viewed in context has been clearly identified. However, additional comments may provide further insight into how this belief has influenced the direction of the research process and the composition of the final document.

In his description of pastoral counselling, Patton (1993) has identified three paradigms that have dominated the field. Looked at historically, the first, termed the *classical*, emphasized the caring elements as defined by a Christian faith. The second, the *clinical*, concentrated on the persons receiving and those providing the care. The third paradigm, named the *communal contextual*, has more recently shifted from the personal and individual to external factors that impact the lives of individuals, families and communities. As argued by Patton, although each of these perspectives has strengths which should be recognized and preserved, because the clinical has dominated for many years, it is now incumbent on professionals to address the imbalance by giving attention to those systemic forces that make such a difference in human lives.

Integral to an implementation of this third paradigm is the critical examination of personal values and biases. It is this examination that has, in large part, motivated the research process with the hoped-for result of shedding insight into a form of therapeutic practice that values communal and contextual factors.

Transition to Chapter Three

      The purpose of explicating the experience of relationship with masculine energy was raised in the autobiographical introduction. Prior to beginning the process, it was my belief that to claim this energy, one had to be grounded in the physical/emotional feminine. Through an exploration of the literature, three perspectives have been identified that served to challenge and expand my original thinking. In this way, writing the literature review has been an integral part of the research experience.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review is an exploration of the masculine principle as understood through a Jungian lens. All authors who draw on the ideas of Carl Jung share his conviction that men, as well as women, possess both feminine and masculine energy. However, because the study is the exploration of a woman's experience, and it is believed that this differs from that of a man's, women authors have been used as the primary references.

With a declared feminist perspective, authors Woodman (1982, 1985), Leonard (1982), Hedva (2001), Reis (1995) and McNeely (1991) argue that women raised in a western social context inevitably internalize the dominant patriarchal ideology. To illustrate, Jungian author and analyst Marion Woodman (1985) states that, "Like whales in the sea, people live in the only world they have ever known" (p. 184). With this unconscious immersion, they internalize a belief system that over-values the rational, analytical and masculine functions associated with the mind and that denies or actively disparages the physical, emotional and feminine wisdom of the body. For a female child, the consequence is to be split at the neck. In Woodman's framework (1992), she is a father's daughter" (p. 9) ungrounded in self and locked into a performance determined by externally-defined images of perfection. Her lived reality is one of constant anxiety that arises from the mistaken belief that she must control all external events. As expressed by one of Woodman's analysands:

> I get the feeling it's my fault that the baby cries, that my sister doesn't have enough
> money… I even feel it is my fault if the sun doesn't shine for my family's picnic. I
> feel they are blaming me, then I blame myself for not being God. (Woodman, 1985,
> p. 118)

In Woodman's understanding, to live in one's head cut off from the body has nothing to do with the positive masculine. Rather it is a way of being that is determined by an unjust social order that values power and control over living in harmony with the reality of life. In its extreme form, it manifests as Shakespeare's symbolic figure of Lady Macbeth who, with unconsciously raging false masculine energy, "would dash her babies brains out and sacrifice love for power" (Woodman, 1982, p. 20).

Reis (1995) lends support to Woodman's argument by writing vividly of being born in the "Belly of the Father" (p. 39). With this reality, she echoes the belief that because the patriarchal value system has dominated for several generations, our mothers and grandmothers have internalized its beliefs and therefore contribute to its all-encompassing impact. For Reis, "One of the hardest realizations for us to accept is that our mothers have been damaged by the culture we live in, as much as, if not more, than we have, since often our mothers may seem to be the actual embodiment and executors of the repressive patriarchal system" (pp. 44-45).

To illustrate her conviction that what we know is defined by the father, Reis draws on the myth of Saturn based on Kronos as the god who ate his children. In her view, it is the personal father who teaches the young girl so much about being female and, because he becomes conflated with the collective Father, assumes gigantic proportions. To be in his belly is to be held hostage to some unseen force. As an adult, the individual woman creates nothing that is genuinely and authentically hers and, because this comes to be defined as normal, she colludes in her oppression.

In spite of this belief in the all-encompassing power of the negative or false masculine, there is remarkable consistency among female authors about the existence and definition of what constitutes the positive. For Woodman (1982) this energy is "goal

oriented and has the strength of purpose to move towards that goal. It disciplines itself to make the most of its gifts – physical, intellectual, spiritual – attempting to bring them into harmony" (p. 15). In greater detail, Leonard (1982) names a number of specific traits that include – "discipline, courage, decision-making, self-valuation and direction" (p. 2). In poetic terms, Hedva (2001) refers to our "inner King" (p. 83) and states that this energy "is connected with our fire of purpose and passions. The inner King empowers us to be able to take a stand in this world, even if it is contrary to the wishes of one's father, boss, or other earthly kings" (p. 83).

With this consensus, there is also widespread agreement that the task is not an easy one. As Emma Jung (1957) explains, many women long to possess the attributes associated with the masculine but fail to experience integration. Without sufficient awareness, psychic energy falls into the unconscious and the animus figure becomes autonomous and so powerful that "it can overwhelm the conscious ego, and thus finally dominate the whole personality" (p. 6). What emerges harkens back to the image of Lady Macbeth as Jung refers to "over-energetic, ruthless, brutal, men-women" (p. 4).

One factor that makes the task of conscious integration particularly difficult is the challenge of experiencing a direct relationship with animus energy. In Emma Jung's (1957) view, while a man can be in personal relation with his feminine principle or anima because he knows this reality through actual contact with a mother figure and then with other females, a woman does not have this kind of connection with her animus. The reason is that, for her, masculine energy assumes any form which is perceived as possessing authority. Therefore, in addition to a personal father, male teacher or employer, it can be equally manifested by figures such as military generals, members of juries, political leaders or movie idols with whom she has never had direct contact.

With her definition of the animus as the "archetypal masculine principle as it exists in a woman" (p. 30), McNeely (1991) agrees with Jung that direct relationship is difficult. In her understanding, archetypal energy is unknowable in itself and therefore one's awareness depends on how it is manifested through cultural expression, biological influence and events that recur in one's personal history. This is a complex business because, although biology has not changed very much since the time of Carl Jung's writing, the differences in culture with respect to the terms masculine and feminine are extensive. In concrete terms, she states that because today men nurture children and women are in the military, it is no longer taken for granted that specific genitalia correspond with patterns of behavior or to our definition of the masculine principle. "These cultural changes complicate the task of understanding what the female biological ego really is, and what the animus, as 'other,' is" (McNeely, 1991, p. 33).

The final area of consensus is that, in spite of the difficulty, the task is of utmost importance. This has been suggested earlier by presenting the alternative as becoming one of the "over-energetic, ruthless, brutal, men-women" (Jung, 1957, p. 4). Jung (1957) further emphasizes the point by writing that, although spiritual independence can so easily be misinterpreted, "without this sort of revolt, no matter what she has to suffer as a consequence, [a woman] will never be free of the power of the tyrant, never come to find herself" (p. 24). Woodman (1982), McNeely (1991) and Reis (1995) extend Jung's belief by highlighting the significance of creative self-expression. As Woodman states, "instead of projecting her own creativity onto men or expecting them to save her, she takes the responsibility on herself for her own life" (p. 170). For McNeely, "The primary business of the animus is to be a creative tool... For this reason I feel knowledge of the animus is important today for all women of all ages" (p. 31). Finally, Reis refers to Hestia as the

goddess-muse who draws a protective circle around women, a circle that provides enough safety to do meaningful work. In her words, "It is Hestia that ensures the sacred space where, in creative solitude, we can give birth" (p. 249).

In spite of extensive agreement, there is limited consensus among these Jungian authors about how a woman moves from being "out of relation" to being "in relation" with positive masculine energy. Although all believe that it requires consciousness, that the positive masculine is interrelated with feminine energy and that the spiritual dimension is integral, how these concepts actually play out varies from author to author. The intention of the following discussion is to gain insight into the process by examining areas of overlap and divergence. To this end, three perspectives have been identified.

To the Masculine through the Feminine

For certain authors, the only way of coming into relation with the masculine principle is by grounding in the feminine. Woodman belongs to this group. In her understanding, the task facing contemporary women is the transformation of disembodied mental energy into a life-giving masculine force by connecting with and releasing the instinctual feminine that is lodged in the cells and muscles of the body. It is a matter of differentiating two distinct forms of energy, the soul energy of the body and the spiritual energy of the mind. When a bridge is created between these two whereby each strengthens the other, the ego becomes strong enough to deal with the vicissitudes of life. However, Woodman (1982) repeatedly emphasizes that this is only possible when one draws on instinctual knowing by grounding in the physical and emotional. In one descriptive passage she makes the point by maintaining that:

Without that interplay between spirit and body, the spirit is always trapped. At the

very moment when it could soar, it is undermined by fear and lack of confidence

because it cannot depend on its instinctual ground even for survival… Like a boat

without a rudder whirling in panic-stricken circles, the sailor may be dragged into a

vortex of paralysis or terror. (p. 16)

Because the focus of this discussion is on relationship with the masculine, only

brief mention is given here to Woodman's description of how one grounds in the instinctual

feminine. In her understanding, the body has a specific form of language named

metaphorical which can only be accessed through such means as spontaneous movement,

drawing and journaling. When the body speaks through metaphors, the individual woman

develops what Woodman (1985) terms "feeling values" (p. 10) which motivate her to hold

previously-accepted actions up to critical examination. For example, a woman might ask,

"What am I willing to put energy into? What is important to me? [And in a specific case],

What did I really feel when the boss gave me Smarties today" (Woodman, 1985, p. 78)?

As her actions fall in line with an evolving value system, a bridge is created between body

and mind that releases positive masculine energy. With this bridging, the thinking function

no longer judges and criticizes but rather serves to support and strengthen the authentic

feminine core of being. In relation with the masculine, the individual woman becomes

capable of setting goals and possessing the necessary discipline to maximize the gifts she

has been given.

For Woodman, this is what it means to live mature feminine consciousness.

Drawing on sexual imagery to capture the creative expression of the authentic self, she

writes that, "When the breath of the spirit (the masculine) is not allowed to penetrate the

matter of the body (the feminine), *conception is not possible* (1982, p. 87). And in another

instance this idea is extended by stating that, "Sexuality and spirituality are one… The

flood of our passion pours into creativity. Imagination impregnates conscious matter"
(1992, p. 365).

Although Hedva (2001) does not describe coming into relation with the masculine
in the clear sequential terms described by Woodman, she has been included in this
perspective because the order is implied. In her text, healing from the mother wound as a
"biological imperative" (p. 81) is presented first and only later does she outline the process
of confronting and resolving the inevitable betrayal we experience with our earthly fathers.
While Woodman suggests that transformation occurs naturally once there is grounding in
the feminine, Hedva understands it as a process of its own that involves the withdrawal of
projections.

Of significance to women suffering from excessive guilt and feelings of inadequacy
is the realization that the projection of inner resources is inevitable and a precursor to
claiming our "inner King" (Hedva, 2001, p. 81). As Hedva maintains, we first define
kingly energy by seeing it in our personal fathers, heads of state, bosses, husbands or
lovers; and only when these figures fail to carry the projection of eternal, sacred and
timeless truths are we shocked out of idealization and "move from the trust of outer
authority figures toward a search for our ideals" (p. 81).

In her understanding, individuals move from the powerlessness of projection to the
strength of genuine acceptance by going through a series of phases. The process begins
with some form of traumatic event that causes separation. This event, experienced as an
overwhelming betrayal, changes long-held assumptions and beliefs. The second stage is
one of "purification" (p. 8). During this period, there are intense emotional ordeals that
include resentment, focusing on the negative, engaging in self-blame and the sense that all
of life appears to conspire against one's peace and happiness. As Hedva (2001) maintains,

movement to the next stage of "symbolic death" (p. 13), with its genuine acceptance of all that has occurred and of oneself as possessing strengths but also limitations, only happens when these feelings are experienced fully and for as long as necessary. With acceptance, individuals enter the stage of "new knowledge" (p. 16) during which, through books and interactions with others, they gradually come to trust in intuition as a guiding force. On the basis of this foundation, there is "rebirth" (p. 21). Echoing the theme of creativity, Hedva (2001) concludes that at this point, "We become the creative self and return to our community to fulfill a new and more meaningful role" (p. 21).

For Hedva and Woodman, the masculine principle is associated with spirituality. While Hedva does not link the body with soul and the mind with spirit, she does share Woodman's belief that the process of coming into relation with masculine energy brings us into relation with the sacred. To explicate, she draws on the three masculine concepts developed by poet Robert Bly. They include – "the Sacred King, the earthly king, and the inner King" (Hedva, 2001, p. 80). With reference to the stages outlined above, Hedva states that the process begins with projecting our inner resources onto earthly kings. As limited human beings, when they inevitably fail to carry our projections, we experience betrayal. However, in moving through the healing process, we come to know the "inner King" (p. 80). It is this knowledge that awakens us to the truth within, to the fire of purpose and passion which provides the strength, clarity and courage to act in the world. By coming to know the inner king, we come into relation with the transpersonal "Sacred King" (p. 80). At this level, there is a going beyond personal experience to connect with the great mystery and to experience oneness with all of creation.

Drawing on Jungian terminology, Hedva (2001) pulls the feminine back into the discussion by stating that masculine archetypal energy exists in relation with the universal Sacred Queen. In terms similar to those used by Woodman, she declares that:

> The Sacred King rules the universe with the Sacred Queen. They live in mythical realms each in the full power of the exalted male and female. They are joined in ecstatic sexual union. Oneness is an expression of the archetypal Father, King of the Universe, in the act of creation. (pp. 80 – 81)

Coming into Relation with the Masculine Apart from the Feminine

As will be seen, although the following authors acknowledge the core of a woman's being as feminine, and therefore of central importance, they believe that it is possible to own the resources inherent to the masculine without first grounding in the feminine. Leonard (1982) holds this view as she argues that the task facing women today is to heal the father-daughter wound.

For Leonard, without a mature emotionally-engaged father, the daughter does not receive the modeling and encouragement necessary to develop her own masculine attributes and is therefore compelled to adopt particular behavioral strategies to survive. As a preparatory step to letting them go, the woman must first recognize the nature of these strategies and acknowledge her dependence. To help in the process, Leonard draws on myth and art to identify common patterns of behavior. Under the umbrella term of "puella" (p. 38), she describes the "Darling Doll" (p. 39) as someone whose identity is based on external attention and approval, the "Girl of Glass" (p. 42) as the woman who lives primarily in an inner fantasy world, the "High Flyer" (p. 45) as someone who defines herself through risk taking and adventure; and, finally the "Misfit" (p. 49) who adopts the stance of the outsider and is continually critical of self, others and the world in which she

lives. In apparent contrast, the stance of the "Armored Amazon" (p. 62) includes such

patterns as the "Superstar" (p. 63), the "Dutiful Daughter" (p. 67), the "Martyr" (p. 71) and

the "Warrior Queen" (p. 75). Although the puella is characterized by dependence on an

external source while the Amazon, whether through exceptional achievement, obedience,

suffering or rebellion, assumes the power that an uncommitted or irresponsible father has

forfeited, what is common to both is an inner state of fragility. If the woman is able to

consciously recognize her defensive stance, the next stage is to confront despair as the

inevitable consequence of being dissociated from the self.

Drawing on the philosophy of Kierkegaard, Leonard believes that to come into

relation with the masculine principle is primarily an emotionally-based process that

requires one to move through three levels. At its most superficial, despair is largely

unconscious. Although it may surface in moments, as long as the defensive strategy is

working, the feeling remains buried. However, if it ceases to function and a woman is

thrust into conscious awareness, she knows the despair of weakness. Although this may be

more immediate for the puella, when circumstances create cracks in her armor, the Amazon

knows that fear, weakness and vulnerability lie at the core of her protective shell.

Furthermore, she must stay with weakness until she knows that she can cope with it. To

offer assistance, Leonard (1982) advises Amazons to first claim the strengths they have

developed and then to establish an alliance with the "Dummling" (p. 113). Although in

fairy tales this figure typically appears somewhat foolish and definitely non-heroic, he is

the one who engages with life without resorting to power and control. As Leonard states,

"What the dummling brings to the Amazon is a receptive letting-go attitude which enables

her to enjoy the simple things and move with the flow of life" (p. 113).

The final level is the despair of defiance. This has particular relevance to the puella because all her strategies involve a denial of personal strength. However, as understood by Leonard, when a dependent woman penetrates more consciously into the experience of weakness, the despair of defiance comes to the surface. Then she is forced to admit that essential inner resources do exist; that in fact, they have always been there, but out of fear and a degree of inertia, she has refused to claim them. As with the Amazon, Leonard suggests that the first step is to recognize the strength that is inherent to the strategy she has adopted. Whether it is sensitivity to others, a connection with fantasy and imagination, the ability to walk into unknown territory or a familiarity with the shadow side of life, the puella already possesses a foundation. With this awareness, she must build an edifice of her own.

Although Leonard (1982) clearly believes that integrating masculine traits is a separate task, she lends support to the earlier perspective by concluding her text with the significance of claiming the feminine. Without going into any detail, the author expresses the conviction that to engage with the masculine principle, a woman must recognize that at her core is feminine energy. In her words:

> Redeeming the father also requires redeeming the feminine in oneself... If the woman can really value herself and act out of her wants, needs, feelings and intuitions, create in a way that is hers and experience her own authority, then she can dialogue with the masculine. (p. 164)

Finally, Leonard (1982) reiterates the belief expressed by Woodman and Hedva that transformation is essentially a spiritual process. In her view, resolution comes ultimately when one overcomes despair in all its stages through a leap of faith. With this leap, there is an acceptance of "one's weakness and one's strength, the intermixture of the finite and

infinite realms in being human, and the realization that human beings must move between the opposites rather than identifying with an absolute" (p. 21).

Authors Emma Jung, de Castillejo and McNeely share Leonard's belief that women must access the masculine in its own terms. In her own way, each author reverses the order presented by Woodman and Hedva by arguing that it is by coming into relationship with masculine energy that the feminine assumes its rightful place. For Emma Jung (1957) the process involves a series of developmental stages. As she explains, many women today have assimilated the more primitive form of masculinity; that is, they have a strength of will and purposefulness in their otherwise feminine lives. The problem they face is integrating a more advanced intellectual/ spiritual element named the "animus-logos" (p. 5). With respect to this lack of integration, Jung shares Hedva's belief that the child initially projects her rational abilities onto the personal father and later perhaps onto a teacher, husband or institution. As Jung contends, it is important to realize that this transference includes not only an image but also the activities that go with it and that these are the capacities that she has failed to develop in herself.

The first stage is recognizing it as such and freeing the projection from the object. Simple as it may seem; because it is largely unconscious, the act of discrimination is extremely difficult. Furthermore, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that to be identified with the animus is to possess a sort of aggressive authority. In daily life, these authoritative-sounding truths do violence either to the subject under discussion, to the person being addressed or to the woman herself who delivers a final judgment without taking her own reactions into account. The task she faces is one of turning her attention inward and, with a focus on concrete lived reality, to draw forth the threads of what Jung refers to as common sense. On this basis, the woman releases a stance of profound

knowing and grounds her opinions and beliefs and subsequent actions in the immediacy of inner and outer reality.

Author de Castillejo (1973) agrees. With Emma Jung, she maintains that we cannot have a personal relationship with this powerful masculine force as it is generally understood. To illustrate, de Castillejo uses poetic imagery to describe the animus as a torchbearer who has no particular concern about the individual woman or her needs. He must shine his torch somewhere and, if she does not provide direction, in a wild and uncontrollable fashion, he will illuminate socially-approved slogans. Although they may sound impressive, these apparent truths have no grounding in actual reality. Of utmost importance is the knowledge that the animus can learn; and in fact, as stated by de Castillejo, "*He can and should be changed"* (pp. 88-89). Transformation comes about by speaking directly to the masculine principle, and doing so with utmost sincerity. Only when inner reality finds genuine expression can the animus fulfil his role as a guide through the precepts defined by a patriarchal culture. As stated by de Castillejo, "It is only if he knows her true feelings upon which she takes her irrevocable stand, that he can be relied upon to throw his light on what is relevant to *her*, relevant to the situation, relevant to the living moment" (p. 82).

Speaking from personal experience, de Castillejo (1973) shares her conviction that the soul of a woman is hidden in deep inner recesses and it is the animus that can direct her to this place. However, she must remain clear that his role is only that of a guide.

> As it is he whom a woman meets first he may appear to be himself the soul image she is seeking; but if she ventures with him further into the dark and unknown she may find that he does not himself represent her soul but is rather acting as her guide towards it. (p. 166)

The final author to share this perspective of accessing the masculine as a separate task is McNeely. As she outlines her understanding of the stages involved in coming into relation with animus energy, the author presents a framework that is different from and yet has elements in common with the arguments presented earlier.

For McNeely (1991), the female child first knows herself in the "Mother-World" (p. 103). Within this realm there is innocence and naivety but a lack of personal agency because masculine energy is projected. As a mother's daughter, she depends on others for identity and value and for this reason typically makes demands on them to meet her needs. As long as the animus remains split off, her dreams picture this energy as something foreign or strange, abusive or abandoning and her relations with actual men may be characterized by fear, indifference or demonstrate a belittling attitude.

The second stage is named the "Father-World" (p. 116). Initiation into this realm occurs when masculine energy, typically with some force, breaks into the state of innocence. With this penetration, the child, who is typically growing into adolescence, grasps for power and control. Although there is a sense of spirit, fire and light that was lacking in the mother-world, the danger exists of becoming fixated. If the relationship with the father and other male figures is positive, the child can grow into adulthood with an allegiance that blocks the development of her own creativity. The opposite is equally true. If her relationships have been negative, the sense of victimization, already established by a society that demeans the feminine, is exacerbated. With Woodman, McNeely (1991) uses the term "father's daughter" (p. 123) to describe this stage. With a stance characterized by withdrawal, perfectionism and critical judgment, the adolescent must find constructive outlets. Otherwise, the relentless criticism "infects her and influences her relationships by injecting an atmosphere of suppressed contempt" (p. 124).

In the next stage of "Brother, Hero and Patriarchal Partner" (p. 136), McNeely (1991) describes a more contemporary-feeling animus energy as the adolescent outgrows idealization or rebelliousness and allies herself with males of her own age. As understood by the author, a young woman typically develops certain qualities of the masculine archetype through the initial stage of sisterly or buddy-type relationships before experiencing the sudden intrusion of the hero. When the latter occurs, there is faith in *together forever* but heroic relationships are doomed to implosion because one of the partners inevitably carries significant energy for the other. If the young woman confronts this reality and continues to grow, she will come to realize that her values and needs differ from those of her partner, and, of greater import, are equally valuable. "She begins to claim not only *a* mind, but *her* mind, and to trust her instincts" (p. 151).

With this shift, the woman enters the final stage of "Equal Partner" (p. 152). No longer dependent on external male definition, she looks within for sustenance. For McNeely (1991), this final stage of relationship is androgynous. There is a sense of wholeness, of pain and joy, softness and hardness, both a giving forth and a taking in. In terms similar to those expressed by de Castillejo, McNeely (1991) declares that:

> I see the animus as a helpmate in the process of individuation, whatever the path, lending to the inner work discipline, energy to act with initiative, objectivity, spirit, courage to face the unknown, and determination. As mediator of the unknown he represents a commitment to consciousness, helping us to value, to differentiate, to stand aside and question that which eludes consciousness. Stimulating through the excitement of otherness, he fertilizes the imagination, respects mystery, assists in understanding messages from the Self. (pp. 155-156)

As with the authors mentioned earlier, McNeely (1991) believes that, by developing a conscious relationship with the animus, a woman knows the feminine. Once again echoing Woodman, she describes this energy as possessing the fluidity and mutability of the moon and water, as unifying diverse and ever-changing qualities, as cyclical rather than linear, and as manifesting in stillness rather than action. Coming to this awareness, one that is both individual and transpersonal, is not a once-in-a- lifetime event. Instead, McNeely (1991) describes her experience as "a continuing circle of descents and returns gradually coming to know Her through Him and vice versa" (p. 173).

The Masculine in the Feminine

With the declaration that she had to first resolve the alienation she experienced with her mother before facing the personal/collective father, it might be assumed that Reis shares the perspective outlined earlier by Woodman and Hedva. However, this is challenged when hearing that, for Reis, the animus is not a separate principle. As the author (1991) explains:

> Women working within the traditional Jungian framework have attempted to salvage this concept through liberating, or deconstructing, or re-evaluating the animus. Women working outside the traditional Jungian framework have discarded the notion of the animus altogether as derivative and disabling for women. (p. 51)

While acknowledging the significance of Jungian thought in her personal and professional development, Reis clearly places herself in the second group by outlining a developmental process that rings with the drama of the mythical hero but is re-framed in completely feminine terms. For her, the seeds of the masculine are contained within the feminine. In fact, as she argues, women must turn away completely from believing that a

relationship with any form of energy defined in masculine terms will give birth to the authentic and creative self or that holds the potential for transforming structural oppression.

As outlined by Reis (1995), the process begins with awakening to the reality of living in the "Belly of the Father" (p. 39). Because in varying degrees, every woman is a Saturn's daughter swallowed whole by a devouring father, the first task is to realize how she has been silenced and paralyzed by this external definition. In addition, she must deal with the divisiveness that is created by a mixture of feeling safe and protected with the inevitable accompaniment of fear and revulsion or rage. As real as these are, for Reis, the underlying emotional reality that so devours the daughter is the "black hole of paternal melancholy" (p. 53). To explain, she argues that every father, whether he has succeeded or failed in the patriarchal system, carries the burden of an oppressive system that has no regard for the feminine. Whether the woman believes she has had too little of the father because of emotional and physical absence; or, as in the case of incest, too much, it becomes her script to hold him up by carrying his melancholia. As Reis concludes, "In the Belly of the Father... a woman is dead to herself" (p. 74).

Once she is sufficiently conscious of having been devoured, the woman faces the first gate called the "The Awakening" (Reis, 1995, p. 75). Nearly always pushed to this point by an external crisis, Reis maintains that initially the prospect of letting go of all that is familiar is overwhelming and the individual tries to bargain. For example, if a woman enters therapy at this stage, she wants to make some modifications but not with the intention, or even the understanding, of what authentic transformation would mean. As well as bargaining, this period can hold anger and resentment that is often directed towards the personal mother and other women that she believes have colluded in her oppression. For others, the prospect of moving forward is too frightening and they begin to search for

another man to replace the father. However, if this is resisted, Reis believes that the woman moves through the gate and enters "The Battlezone of Culture" (p. 85).

For nearly every individual, this phase brings the awareness of needing to live a divided life, a division played out most dramatically in the desire to be in intimate relationship and to be fully oneself. Both involve a level of abandonment. In one, the woman denies herself to mirror the man; in the other she abandons her authenticity. For Reis (1995), "The determination it takes for a creative woman to remain true to herself and her creative life in the face of another's wants and needs is almost impossible to sustain" (p. 89). However, if the ongoing sense of divisiveness does not lead to illnesses such as clinical depression, anxiety or an eating disorder, it is during this stage that the daughter faces the father.

With reference to the lives of four "literary Daughters of Saturn" (p. 181) – Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickenson, the poet HD and Anais Nin – Reis (1995) echoes Leonard in emphasizing the impact exerted by an absent father. However, her position diverges as she argues that for these women, the father's lack of positive emotional engagement created a void into which they threw their creative efforts; and furthermore, it was with this outpouring of energy that each worked through the unfinished business with their personal fathers, with the other men in their lives, with the patriarchal culture, and with God. The consequence for each author was to access a deeply-buried personal authenticity that found expression in her writing.

To extend this experience to others, Reis (1995) believes that by staying with the struggle, one eventually comes to the edge of patriarchal thought. It is at this point that a woman realizes how the valuing of rationality, objectivity and dualistic thinking has determined Western discourse. By seeing the separation of man from woman, human from

nature, body from mind and spirit from matter, the individual consciously realizes how this way of categorizing and valuing has impacted every facet of her life. With this acknowledgment, she becomes open to a reality that is fundamentally different from what she has known. In Reis's terminology, she faces "The Threshold" (p. 182) into "The Wildzone" (p. 185).

From personal experience, Reis (1995) maintains that awakening out of the belly of the father is an unconscious act triggered by external factors but to step through this second gate requires full awareness. Although many refuse, she maintains that only by stepping over the sill can a woman claim the authentic creativity that is her heritage. As a place infused with feminine energy, it challenges all the teachings of what is considered dangerous, disgusting and unacceptable. In Reis's words, "Our access to the power in our bodies, our sexualities, our breasts and buttocks, our bellies and our blood, our hair, our freedom to move, our freedom to speak, all can be found in the Wildzone" (p. 188).

Through this process of claiming personal power and freedom, the woman meets the "Wild Mother [as a figure] nurturing and fierce, maternal and sexual" (Reis, 1995, p. 194). It is this connection that enables the individual to invent a body language that draws forth wisdom from the unconscious. By paying attention to her dreams and by immersing herself in this alternate reality, she knows herself in relation with her own inner being, with all other women and with the voices of animals, plants and the earth itself.

Following a period of immersion, however brief or extended, the woman must re-enter the *real* world. This is "The Return" (p. 224), and as Reis (1995) describes, as with any process of initiation, it is the most difficult. Although the old robes do not fit and no longer provide meaning and purpose, the external voices are loud, demanding and often ridiculing and it is hard to hold one's space and to continue speaking in the "Mother

tongue" (p. 196). However, if one perseveres, clings tightly to inner truths and continues to walk with others, it becomes possible to know the final stage of "The New Earth" (p. 227). Within this transformed reality, the woman begins to live creatively out of her center.

Although throughout the entire journey, Reis (1995) presents the masculine as a force opposed to the creative feminine, her text concludes with the conviction that the father must have a place. By drawing on the words of a fellow writer, she argues for inclusion on the basis that, "you are part of my life and cutting you out is like cutting out a part of myself" (p. 241). However, clearly-defined limits must be established. At all times, Reis advises consciousness by visualizing the father figure in a brilliantly-colored red outfit. In addition, any words from the internalized masculine that do not encourage and support feminine power, and the ability to use that power in wise and compassionate ways, will be "like brittle leaves that are consumed instantly by the fire in my belly" (p. 242). In return, the woman promises to create a safe space in which he can do such constructive things as reading, drawing and sleeping. As long as the father remains benign and supportive in this restricted place, she will listen to his pain and, in collaboration, work toward his healing.

Transition to Chapter Four

The purpose of the following chapter is to respond to the research question stated as: "What is a woman's experience of being in relation with the Sisyphus complex as she completes her thesis?"

My experience began with the submission of the proposal on May 27th, 2010 and continued until the deadline for the thesis on April 1, 2013. During this period of nearly three years, I moved from having absolute faith in my ability to come into relation with the complex to having these hopes dashed as I once again found myself face to face with the

demonic force named Sisyphus. With the subsequent panic and despair, I tried in every

possible way to break free of its fierce and overwhelming grip. Although there were

moments of reprieve, nothing worked for long. However, as I continued to listen to the

voices of Moustakas (1990), Sela-Smith (2002) and Romanyshyn (2007), little by little I

was able to let go and become an agent to the work. As described by de Castillejo (1973)

the process was one of valuing what really mattered. In her words, I had to take a "stand of

tears" (p. 76). By taking this stand, I eventually knew what it was to be in relation with

Sisyphus as a voice of the soul.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE EXPERIENCE OF RELATIONSHIP

Introduction

Over the three year period, I wrote literally hundreds of pages. Although some documents were framed in structured academic terms, for the most part, I simply poured out thoughts and feelings. Through the process of reflecting on these words as well as on past experience, stacks of earlier documents, several drawings and a long list of authors, I wrote more. This, of course, is the essence of the Sisyphus complex. The promise that beckons from the mountain peak is that, when one comes face-to-face with the critical all-powerful father, the possession of total and irrefutable knowledge will provide absolute protection from dismissal and ridicule. Obviously, because perfect knowing is impossible, the drive to accumulate never ends and the result is an overwhelming amount of material. For purposes of clarity, and to fulfill the intention of capturing and communicating the essence of the journey, what has been included below is an overview of the experience with the headings that came to me at the time.

The Proposal: Energy and Hope

I wrote the proposal. There was an incredible sense of energy and hope. All the pieces had finally come together. The research question was right. The methodology was perfect and I had an entire history of experience from which to draw. For the first time I was looking directly at Sisyphus. No longer was he the barrier to completing a thesis. Now he *was* the thesis. It was so simple, I almost laughed.

Previously I had understood transformation in Sisyphean terms. Always, I had believed that first I would reach the mountain peak of perfection and then, by standing in that place, the insanity of the endless cycling would stop and I would complete the work. Of course, that did not happen and now I understood why. It was so obvious. Sisyphus

thrived on a discounting of actual experience. With the "never good enough" phrase pounding in my head, the present self in the moment was constantly negated and completion was impossible. However, with a heuristic approach as defined by Moustakas and Sela-Smith, and, equally important, as recognized by St. Stephen's College, I would engage in an in-depth exploration of actual experience as the perfect counterpoint to the Sisyphus complex, and one that held the potential for personal transformation. I particularly appreciated Sela-Smith's (2002) voice of the "I-who-feels" because it felt like the right vehicle for the expression of feminine consciousness.

When I completed the proposal and handed it in, something I had never done before, I knew that I was on the right track.

Breaking Down: It does not Work

I wrote out my history. I described the roots in my childhood and how, from then on, I had lived the dynamic of a father's daughter addicted to perfection and defeat. Then I wrote pages and pages describing the process of transformation. It was so easy. I knew so much about the experience of grounding in the feminine and then accessing positive masculine energy. After all, I had recorded these events and their corresponding insights many times before. However, as I detailed one after another, I knew I was in trouble. It was the same old story. I was not peeling the onion to get to the core of experience. There was no tacit knowledge. I tried to get there by thinking about how my favorite authors understood the task but it did not work. I knew I was cycling. The old familiar panic and hopelessness was back. I was into performance; Sisyphus was in control.

I tried to fix the problem. For days I wrote about living a positive alternative. I shared the insight from Engel (1990) about being motivated by compassion rather than blame and judgment, about Edinger's (1972) diagram of individuation as the separation of

the ego to come into relation with the Self. I wrote about granting myself personal

authority grounded in experience as I understood it from Ringe (1990) and about Cowan's

(1984) belief that what we need is a comic instead of a tragic orientation and on and on.

There were so many ideas and I believed them implicitly. I tried as hard as I could to

follow their direction but I continued to cycle.

I then looked directly at the complex and analyzed the problem. With Woodman

(1982), I examined, for what felt like the thousandth time, my childhood relationship with

the father. Obviously, here it was again. The all-powerful academic institution loomed and

threatened and I was once more in the position of the child who had to try as hard as she

could while knowing that nothing would ever be good enough. Jung (1964) was right

when he said that we do not have complexes; they have us. No matter how much energy I

poured into fixing the problem, Sisyphus had me. Over and over again, I heard Sela-

Smith's (2002) admonition to use the voice of the "*I-who-feels*" (p. 85). I tried, and then

tried harder, but always I found myself back in my head and off on yet another theoretical

tangent. It was crazy. I hated it.

Standing in Experience

One morning, I had a different experience. After writing Woodman's (1993)

statement that, when the mother treats the child as a work of art, the child internalizes the

separation of mind from body, I stopped and thought about how this had actually happened.

In my mind, I saw a picture of myself at about two years of age. The image showed a

small girl holding a doll. Both were dressed exactly the same in little dark-colored coats

and muffs trimmed with false fur. Then I thought of another picture. In this one, I was

five. The image was professionally done, an upper body shot of a young girl with

perfectly-formed ringlets that came nearly to her shoulders. Her hair was held back on one side with a barrette. By this age, she had learned to smile but it looked strained.

I was then back into recording, theorizing and analyzing. This went on for months. Finally, I could not stand it. I had to do something, anything, to break the grip of Sisyphus. The only thing I could imagine was to stop looking at my experience of writing a thesis because no matter how I approached it, I found myself sucked into the complex. For the first time, with what felt like a physical effort, I re-focused the camera and allowed it to zoom in on my early experiences of school, experiences that were incredibly positive.

The first thing I wrote was that I loved school. However, this time, I resisted leaping into an analysis of how this feeling came from belonging to the same realm as my superintendent father. Instead, I wrote about my two best friends, a pair of identical twins. I remembered a picture of my Grade 3 class in which they wore matching plaid dresses. As I described, we did everything together. In school we came in first, second and third in nearly every test, and in track and field we received the red, blue and white ribbons. It was not important to be first. In fact, I wanted to be second; then I was in the middle with a twin on either side.

I wrote about what we did in our small prairie town as the seasons changed from fall to winter to spring. When we returned to school, it was ball season and, although I was not very good and almost always had a swollen middle finger from poor catches, I liked being part of a team. In the winter, we dug tunnels in the huge snowdrifts that banked against the tall caragana bushes. I wrote about the time I was allowed to stay overnight with the twins, something that happened only once or twice in my memory, and how there was a huge blizzard that blocked all the roads. In the morning, the bombadeer came to take us to school. In my mind, I could still see that grey machine that looked like an army tank

with its giant treads. Inside, there were two facing benches and a small stove at the front to keep us warm. As we squeezed tightly together, the vehicle started up and with increasing speed, flew across the open fields. I could not see a thing through the little windows except flying snow.

I then described how in the spring we picked crocuses for the teacher and walked through the puddles. Because the water always seemed higher than our boots, after recess there was a pool under everyone's desk. Finally, I wrote about the year that the twins and I found a little space in the middle of the caragana bushes. When we sat in there at recess, I knew that no one, except my two best friends, knew where I was.

With these experiences, I felt myself softening and relaxing and was amazed to realize that I could not stop smiling. It was so completely different, and such a relief, from the hard tight pressure that was Sisyphus. As long as I kept writing about the memories that brought a smile, the voice of the complex was silent.

It was by putting these events down on paper that I acknowledged the link between nature and the feminine. So often, I had visualized myself as a child standing out on the prairie, arms stretched as far as they could reach from horizon to horizon but, until that moment, I had never associated this with feminine energy. Always before, I had seen through a Woodman lens and believed that the connection began in early adulthood when I participated in activities that dissolved the split at the neck. Now, I knew that this was not true. Throughout my childhood, the prairie had held me and told me that I belonged. It was the mother I had never had.

With this realization, I followed the thread as it unraveled through my life. Particularly in the hard times, nature had been there. When I had broken down in my mid-twenties and been taken in by a fellow teacher and her husband, their warmth and

acceptance had been valuable, but equally important was the fact that they owned a Christmas tree farm and every day after teaching school, I walked for hours up and down between the rows of spruce trees. Although the trees spoke a different message from that of the prairie, the sense of safety and belonging was exactly the same.

As experiences like these continued to emerge, insights also came. While walking many years later in a very different natural environment, I had realized how my non-relationship with my mother related to Sisyphus. On this walk, it came to me that I had believed that, by surpassing the mother in any way, I would jeopardize any possibility of connection. I saw how this related to the position of being "less than." I had not married until late in life. I had not had children and I owned no competence in her areas of expertise such as sewing, knitting and cooking. Always before, I had understood this as sharing the father's condemnation of the mother and her world but now I realized that deep down I had longed for relationship and that the barrage of criticism directed toward her was the result of hurt and rejection.

From this insight, I jumped to what I had defined as emotional caretaking. For years, I had criticized myself for playing the fool by wearing masks of stupidity and confusion, of the overly-emotional or the entertaining clown. In any of a hundred ways, I knew how to slip into the position of being one-down in order to hold up the other and carry on the dynamic I had known as a child. Previously, I had explained it as the father's daughter locked into performance, but now I saw that all the masks were an expression of the deep-rooted belief that only through helplessness would I know relationship; that if I ever stood in strength, I would be rejected. Here was an entirely different insight into the victimized reality of Sisyphus.

This period of standing in the circle of the feminine was wonderful but it could not last. The thesis had to be about Sisyphus. Therefore, once again I looked at the past and tried to fit my experience into thesis chapters and once again I was back into panic and cycling. I would write and write and write some more. Sometimes a door would seem to open, but almost immediately it would slam shut. I would then go through hours, and sometimes days, of despair before trying another tack.

The Duality of Sisyphus

One morning, as I pulled myself for what felt like the hundredth time, from theorizing about experience, I saw how Sisyphus had been two sides of the same coin. This thought had come to me while writing about the positives of school, but now my understanding seemed to deepen. I had long known that with the complex, I discounted the actual but now my mind jumped to seeing how, at the same time, the complex had helped me validate experience. It seemed very strange and confusing; but in spite of that, I began to write out my history of having drawn in threads of experience even while I continued to hold up an ever-retreating image of perfection. It was clear that this began when, at the age of twenty-one, I read Abraham Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs. On the one hand, his famous ladder, with self-actualization perched at the top, established my first concrete image of perfection; on the other, these ideas validated the longings of my adolescence, longings that until then had never assumed concrete form or legitimacy. From Maslow, I could trace this duality through the ideals of liberation presented by feminist and Black authors, to Freire's image of dialogue and finally to Woodman's definition of feminine consciousness. Step by step, while polishing an unattainable image, I had been building a foundation of values and beliefs that I knew to be solid and true because of my experience.

As I wrote how the complex had worked in these two seemingly oppositional ways, I thought of Woodman's concept that the essence of feminine consciousness is the *both/and* of contradiction and ambiguity. Although I had assumed that she was right, now the idea seemed to shift from the abstract to something more concrete. Certainly, it brought a deeper and more genuine sense of compassion and acceptance for Sisyphus.

The Hurt Child: The Core of Sisyphus

Although I have no idea how it happened, one day I saw a child at the center. The picture was extremely clear. There was the outer shell of a loud, muscular and forceful figure pushing the boulder to the heights of impossibility, but deep within sat a naked form that made herself as small as possible by keeping her head down and clutching her knees tightly to her chest. With this image, I suddenly knew that Sisyphus had always done the only thing that he could, that his job had been to protect this child by creating a camouflage of sound and fury. He had to perform because no one must see the fear and vulnerability that lay within. In that moment, the sense of compassion deepened. I was well aware of the isolation, the fear and the constant pressure that came from being on the rack of performance, and I felt a real sadness for him and for that small terrified child.

With this awareness, I wrote out what I knew about my inner fragility. Initially, I had envisioned the child on the second rung of a ladder. My father as God was at the top, but I stood just under while my mother and younger brother were near the bottom. Then, when my father rejected me in early adolescence, I saw myself in a circle of darkness looking across a gulf toward those who stood in the light. Another image was that of a frail figure standing alone in a meadow surrounded by a circle of dark forms with rifles. Finally, I had often thought of myself as a small child beating at the knees of a giant. On the outside, I had grown to adulthood, but on the inside, I had remained that hurt, lonely

and frightened child. With this insight, I felt incredibly grateful to Sisyphus who had

suffered so much, but had successfully protected that vulnerable core.

Letting Go of the Father's Tools

Every day as I continued to write, I slipped into spiralling and then physically

pulled myself into experience. It seemed like it would go on forever. However, in the

midst of this push and pull, one morning I looked at my writing and realized that I had

never released the father's tools. In spite of trying so hard to stand in an alternative

feminine valuing of knowledge in cyclical, personal and holistic terms, I had fiercely clung

to the rational, objective and linear. Even with countless references to feeling frustrated,

panicky and terrified, on page after page after page, I heard myself analyzing, figuring and

grasping for answers. The father would only see, hear and accept my work if it

demonstrated absolute and final truth. It was a set up for failure. Obviously on some level,

I had continued to believe that my survival depended on Sisyphus.

This came as a shock because several years earlier, in one of the St. Stephen's

intensives, I believed that I had resolved the problem. After days of inner struggle, I

became keenly aware that since childhood I had understood my place as that of disciple in

relation with a godlike other. When this particular instructor revealed his contradictions

and limitations, I had immediately used withdrawal and righteous condemnation to force

him back on the pedestal of perfection. It was with a great sense of relief that, by the end

of the week, I was able to let go of all demands. With this act, I believed that I had also

freed those who, one after another, had stepped into the father's shoes and, by doing so, had

freed myself. Obviously, this assumption was wrong. In spite of everything, I had clung to

the father's tools in order to stay safe in the academic arena. Although it might be true that

only what was presented in objective, rational and linear terms would be accepted, in that

moment, I knew that I would never complete the thesis unless I let go of the father; this meant dropping his tools. Although I had no idea if other options existed, there was hope in a message by theological authors Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austern. In their 1999 article, the writers gently challenged Audre Lorde's (1984) conviction that the master's tools would never dismantle the master's house. For many years, I had agreed with Lorde's position, but now I considered that the reality was more complex. As Miller-McLemore and Gill-Austern propose, the task involves walking a tightrope of the old and recognized with the new and transformative. Once again, I heard the *both/and* of feminine consciousness. Shortly after this, I had a dream. As I wrote in my journal:

> The coordinator of the St. Stephen's program will be away for five days and I will
> be filling in. We begin to go over what I need to do but suddenly she looks up and
> rushes off to embrace a friend... They leave to go to an event. I'm also supposed to
> do some work with a Spanish class. I meet with the instructor who shows me their
> latest technique using computers and black "things." Apparently the students look
> through rectangular pieces of black plastic and read the information. I can't see
> anything and I have no idea how to use them. (Sept. 15, 2012)

Initially this dream felt devastating. Lately I had been giving myself credit for my work with clients and had told myself that this must have relevance to the self-trust needed to complete the thesis. Now, the first thought was that I had been fooling myself and nothing had changed. However, almost immediately, I realized that I could hold up this dream of incompetence and balance it with my former sense of being capable. Here again was a vivid depiction of the *both/and* and with this awareness, I knew that I could release Sisyphus.

In my imagination, I saw that the complex was driven by a desperate need to don the cloak of rational certitude. Only with this cloak, one I imagined as tightly fastened at the neck and falling right to the floor, would I have the clarity, courage and strength to face the father and speak my truth. It was with this insight that I looked directly at Sisyphus and told him that he could rest. Even though I had no idea how to walk the tightrope, I believed that by embracing knowing and not knowing, competence and incompetence, I was taking a step in the right direction.

This realization led to another. As I surveyed the multitude of documents listed on my computer, I knew that I had not been writing about being in relation with Sisyphus. All this time, with the father's tools, I had been packaging my experience with the hope that if only I had enough packages, the critical judge would be impressed and I would be accepted. Now this shifted. By looking back at my history, particularly at the papers I had written for the St. Stephen's courses, I could identify inklings about being in relation, but that is all they were. For most of my life, Sisyphus had been unconscious and then he was an enemy to be defeated. A dynamic interactive relationship with the potential for growth and change had never been part of my experience and, although it now seemed essential, I had no idea how to live it as the basis for writing the thesis.

For a period of time, I avoided the task by thinking of Emma Jung's (1957) argument that it was not possible for a woman to have a personal relationship with the animus and McNeely's (1991) belief that the animus was an elusive form of energy best described through poetry. However, this did not last, and soon I turned again to face Sisyphus. It was de Castillejo's (1973) image of the animus as torchbearer that made a difference. With this picture in mind, I believed that the focus could not be directly on the complex but that I would know myself in relation if I could take what she called the stand

of tears. By valuing what truly mattered, Sisyphus could turn his torch away from the illumination of external slogans and shine it on my inner self. It was with this focus that the image of the terrified child came back and I knew that Sisyphus had never been an enemy. Because I had not had the clarity or the courage to take an experiential stand, he had been forced to shine his torch on authoritative-sounding truths, to play the role of protector, and to thus ensure my safety and survival.

This brought a sense of strength that was enhanced by thinking of the complex as being at my command. Instead of an overwhelming power that controlled every aspect of my life, suddenly it was up to me. Several times, I wrote de Castillejo's (1973) statement that the animus did not care about my needs. If I could not, or refused, to take my stand, then it had no choice but to illuminate external slogans. It was my responsibility to risk self-exposure and, if I could do this, then he would turn his torch and give form and voice to the diffuse feminine wisdom that lay at the centre of my being. For so long, I had tried to pull myself into present reality in order to live the principle outlined by Moustakas (1990) and Sela-Smith (2002), and thereby, to arrive at that magical place where Sisyphus would be transformed. Now, that was gone and I had an entirely different and more meaningful reason for delving into experience. With this motivation, the complex no longer needed to be silent. In fact, the opposite was true. By taking my stand of tears, Sisyphus would tell me what to say and how to say it. I had always loved Freire's (1970) conviction that "to speak a true word [was] to transform the world" (p. 75). Now I had a much clearer sense of what that might mean.

Even though I did a great deal of slipping and sliding, from that moment on, this gave me direction; with it, I gradually edged closer and closer to knowing and claiming what mattered. Over and over again, I faced the fear and panic that sucked me into the

safety of performance, but, by holding onto the image of Sisyphus as torchbearer, I

gradually risked going deeper into actual experience.

The Balance of Old and New Tools

As I continued to write and reflect, a text by Romanyshyn (2007) gained increasing

significance. Again and again, I wondered how I could become an agent to the work and

allow the historical or ancestral voices to come through. At one point I followed his

suggestion of dialoguing with my deceased parents, with my grandmother and with other

father's daughters. Perhaps it was as a result of these written conversations or maybe it was

the ongoing process of releasing one form of dependence after another but, one day, I knew

that it was the voice of the feminine that needed to speak through the work. No longer was

this an ideal concept defined by Woodman. Instead, I looked at my ancestors and saw how

each had clung to the perfectionism and defeat of Sisyphus. I felt their terror of softness,

vulnerability and receptivity, a fear so strong that connectedness only came through such

safe relations as those with a mentally-challenged son, with children and grandchildren,

with pets or with flowers. Otherwise, Sisyphus came into play with a ferocity that kept the

mask of absolute knowing and competence fixed firmly in place. For me and for them, I

needed to be guided by Romanyshyn's (2007) words of listening and trusting, of re-visiting

and re-membering.

With this in mind, I turned back to my writing and, in line after line, I saw

Sisyphus. Defeat shouted from every page as I heard the voice of the never good enough

and felt the drivenness to try and reach that elusive and ever-retreating mountain peak. It

was obvious that I had been terrified throughout the process; as I contemplated the

hundreds of pages, I felt it all again. It occurred to me that perhaps for the first time, I

knew Sisyphus in an immediate and heartfelt way. I envisioned stacks of disorganized

documents filled with repetitive ideas on crumpled, ripped and blood-spattered pages and allowed the panic, despair and hopelessness to flow through. Here was the actual experience of the complex. Here was the response to the research question, but how could it possibly be expressed in an academic format?

As I stayed with the experiential reality of being overwhelmed, I thought about mindfulness. From a recently-read text, I practiced seeing my thoughts and feelings as needing to be fully acknowledged but not to be grasped and wrestled to the ground. As the authors advised, by treating them with gentle awareness and acceptance, they would simply come and go and cease to be so overpowering.

After weeks of practice, one day I looked at my writing and thought of being with myself as I would with a client. For many years, I had valued Gendlin's (1990) words about the importance of human presence. Now his ideas came back to me and I imagined the swirling confusion that was Sisyphus in one boat and an empathic mindful part of me in another that rocked gently a little distance away. Eventually, I found that I could be aware of the feelings, and in relation with them, without being pulled into the maelstrom. At long last, I knew that I could communicate with Sela-Smith's (2002) voice of the "*I-who-feels*" (p. 85).

About this time, I had a dream that I believed spoke of being in relation with masculine energy. As I recorded:

We find a boy in the woods on the back of a flat deck who has been stabbed through the stomach with a knife. I hold the boy's head and one of my colleagues pulls out the knife. The child is young, about five or six. He flinches but nothing else. He does not open his eyes. We take him into town... My colleagues go off to investigate the crime while I take the child to get help. I am carrying him. He is a

round, healthy-looking boy but not too heavy to carry. I quickly realize that there is no hospital so I ask about a doctor. A man, the owner of a grocery store, tells me where to go. I walk into a house. It's like an old-fashioned parlor with dusty-looking, plushy furniture. There's an older woman sitting in a chair with her feet stretched out. The woman is the doctor. She does not get up but I give her the child and she examines him. She tells me that he will be fine. I had expected to leave him but this seems pointless so I pick him up again and we leave. He opens his eyes. He has round pink cheeks and he looks just fine. But I still carry him. (Jan. 13, 2013)

Shortly after this, it was like a message came to me that I needed to claim my mind. With what seemed like such a simple, but actually amazing prospect, many experiences rushed in. I thought of the time long ago when I had told the facilitator of a bioenergetics workshop that I hated my head with its endless stream of criticism and wanted to be rid of it. I considered Woodman (1982) and all the energy I had devoted to dissolving the split at the neck to be in the preferable place of the body. Then, I remembered how, with a Myers-Briggs test, I had scored so low on the thinking function because with every question that juxtaposed thinking and feeling, I had chosen feeling. It was not a new awareness that intelligence had been the prerogative of the father and part of holding him up was to define myself as stupid; and, although this had changed somewhat when I heard about emotional intelligence, in that moment it was clear that I had never challenged the basic assumption that my head was an enemy. For the first time, I was able to consider the possibility of having a strong mind without being terrified of setting up another image of perfection. It seemed that I could now believe in Sisyphus and not feel threatened.

It was with some amazement that shortly after this, a neighbor talked to me about the possession of high intelligence as a gift as well as a curse. Again I had to overcome the urge to reject the concept but, as I later reflected, it came to me how the path of self-negation with the unconscious Sisyphus had created separation and envy. I thought about how often I had withdrawn into silence and the place of being *less than* when others shared experiences with children and grandchildren or talked about family vacations and community involvement. Now it occurred to me that even though I could not speak about these things, by claiming my mind perhaps something entirely different might surface, something that would bring connectedness.

It suddenly seemed that my head was a stranger that I needed to get to know and with that realization, it was as if Sisyphus no longer hovered nearby but moved right inside. My mind crackled with energy and I knew that I could complete the thesis.

Transition to Chapter Five

Although in actuality the process was like a series of paths that crossed and crisscrossed and so often seemed to run into dead ends, by continuing to write and to reflect on thoughts, feelings and beliefs over an extended period of time, I was eventually able to peel away the layers and allow the underlying themes and sub-themes to emerge. It is with this final structuring that I have outlined the lessons learned from my experience with Sisyphus.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to respond to the research question of explicating one woman's experience of being in relation with the Sisyphus complex. As noted in the method chapter, the data I used included extensive journalling over the three-year-period. At the time, this spontaneous writing served a number of functions – to record and analyze events that related to the thesis, as a means of clarifying my thinking and, particularly during the second stage, as the only way I knew to release feelings that so often seemed overwhelming. However, with the in-depth reflection that happened near the end, I found myself going back again and again to this outpouring of words and peeling away layer after layer to gradually descend to the core of experience. In hindsight, it was the personal journalling that became the primary source for defining the process of completing a thesis in terms of three distinct stages of relationship.

As noted in the *Experience* chapter, integral to being out of conscious relation with the Sisyphus complex is an obsessive need to accumulate more and more material. In the beginning, the accumulation is intended to make the image crystal clear and outline in detail the steps that will ensure success. Then there is a great more writing when the wonderful plan, one that appeared absolutely fool-proof in its logical rationality, falls apart. In the words of Woodman (1992), "The patriarchal drive to know everything deepens the splitting and the either/or attitude" (p. 356). For someone in the grip of Sisyphus, this attitude comes from the deep-rooted, and largely unconscious, belief that without perfection, there is total failure. It is this conviction that widens the split and spurs the individual to accumulate yet more material. With this obsessive gathering, the result is truly a mountain of information. For that reason, selections have been used here to

supplement that which appeared in the data chapter to better illustrate the process and the themes that emerged.

It is dependency on an external *other* that lies at the core of relationship with a complex such as Sisyphus. In the first stage, this is not conscious and one could say that the abnegation of personal responsibility works very well. As this ceases to be true, a battle ensues to break free and eventually to take on what rightfully belongs to the individual. With this central underlying theme, all the identified sub-themes in stages two and three are necessarily interrelated. The purpose of dealing with them separately is to shed light on the experience from various angles and to thus bring a greater depth of understanding. The fact that there are no such identified themes in the first stage is due partly to its brevity but primarily because of the uniformity that characterizes the experience of believing that one is right and that all will unfold exactly as planned.

Stage One: In Unconscious Relation with the Envisioned Sisyphus

It is so simple it nearly makes me laugh. I always believed that Sisyphus stood between me and a thesis. If only I could get rid of the dynamic I would be successful. Now it is all turned around. Sisyphus *is* the thesis and a heuristic methodology is perfect. I've known for so long that the complex thrives on discounting the present because of that glittering image that beckons from the mountain peak. Now all I have to do is to validate my experience. It's amazing. I don't know why I didn't see it before. (May 23, 2010)

For me, this passage captures what it means to be in unconscious relation with Sisyphus. Although the words say that I will not set up an unattainable image of perfection and thereby avoid slipping into the complex, in reality, this is exactly what I do. Nothing has essentially changed because the image that beckons is still that of creating a perfect

work. The only difference, and one that will eventually be significant, is that I now

envision the attainment of perfection through the heuristic validation of actual experience.

      This stage captures the reality for the children in Moore's famous poem where,

"visions of sugar plums danced in their heads" (1823, p. 3). In the case of the children, the

reader assumes that these magical pictures materialized on Christmas morning, but for a

father's daughter locked into perfection and defeat, there is no such outcome. As

understood by Woodman (1985), the lack of consciousness is rooted in the relationship of

the female child to the father. In her words:

> Together they build a Garden of Eden. The child is trapped in spiritual incest, even
>
> more dangerous than actual incest because neither he nor she has any reason to
>
> suspect that something is amiss... With her he will have thoughts and feelings
>
> that never come up with anyone else. She instinctively knows... how to connect him
>
> to his own inner reality. Indeed, this is the only world she really understands – this
>
> world where she acts as the connecting link between her father's ego and the
>
> collective unconscious. Feeding on his vision of Light, Beauty and Truth, her
>
> young psyche can plumb the depths of anguish or soar to the heights of his dream.
>
> That dynamic interplay continues to be her life-source as a creative woman and
>
> without it her life becomes empty. (p. 35)

It is the legacy of having fed on the father's vision of light, beauty and truth, a

vision that only ever belonged to him and never to her, that infuses the stage of

unconscious relationship with the Sisyphus complex. As expressed in the opening journal

passage, with this internalization as a child, in adulthood there is the exhilarating

conviction that the end of despair, fear, uncertainty and powerlessness is at hand. She has

worked long and hard to know everything there is to know about the problem and its

resolution. The theme of justice rings loudly in her ears and she is eager to embark on a mission that cannot fail.

This is the stage of inflation as described by Edinger (1972). The individual is identified with the Self as the totality of all that is and subsequently there is a total denial of the limitations and contradictions of human reality. As he explains:

> There is a twofold connotation of infancy and early childhood. On one hand there is the wholeness of paradise and innocence, of great life and curiosity, a state of being one with the gods and with nature but on the other hand it is an inflated state of irresponsibility, lust, arrogance and crude desirousness. (p. 11)

At this stage of unconscious relationship, there are indeed the childlike qualities of naiveté, wonder and enthusiasm; but, as noted by Edinger, this is accompanied by lust, arrogance and crude desirousness. Because the ego is still too fragile to separate and know that genuine strength comes from being in relation with the Self rather than by claiming godliness oneself, there is a strange combination of omnipotence and inadequacy. This is perfectly expressed by the Woodman (1982) client who blames herself when the sun fails to shine on a family picnic. Without godlike control, she has no value.

In my belief system, it was the thesis that would bring me to the envisioned place of total fulfillment. As I wrote in my journal, the path was crystal clear. I just needed to

> ... acknowledge, with compassion, the limitation and twistedness of the pattern as it was lived out and to draw forth the seeds of strength. For example, all of that work with Freire, Bishop, Graveline, Woodman and the others brought forth a great deal of knowledge and understanding that could now, with a foundation of compassion, acceptance and validation, be used in a different way. Somehow it is that knowledge that can feed the present and future as I write this thesis. The form it

takes, something I don't know right now, will be guided by that process of re-naming. This is the heuristic journey. (May 13, 2010)

For me, the imaging of what it meant to reach the Promised Land went beyond the personal. To finally complete a thesis would indicate my ability to act in the world and this meant living relationships of equality and mutuality not only in my personal and professional life but also on a broad societal level. For years I had held fast to the message of Aboriginal leader Lilla Watson (1994) who, in speaking to professionals, stated that, "If you are here to help me, I'm not interested. If you are here because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together" (p. 4). To capture this expanded purpose of the thesis, I wrote in my journal that, "The hope of personal transformation is the goal of this research; the hope of societal transformation is the ultimate goal. What is freeing for me is freeing for all" (May 9, 2010).

What comes through these statements is the sense of idealistic rightness that makes identification so enticing. Emma Jung (1957) gives insight into this phenomenon as she maintains that it can be very difficult to know whether a thought or opinion is dictated by the animus or the self because a complex has at its command a sort of aggressive authority. In her understanding, "It derives this authority from its connection with the universal mind but the force of suggestion it exercises is due to a woman's own passivity in thinking and her corresponding lack of critical ability" (p. 14). From this perspective, the task for someone unconsciously possessed by a complex such as Sisyphus is to see that certitude is disconnected from reality and therefore not an expression of the self. As Jung (1957) goes on to explain:

> One of the animus activities most difficult to see through lies in building up a wish image of oneself. This is how we want to be rather than how we actually are. A

wish image could be "the appealing helpless child," "the selfless handmaiden" or "the one who is born to something better." This enables the animus to have power over us until we make up our minds to sacrifice the highly colored picture and see ourselves as we really are. (p. 18)

In my experience, this was the central task. Although I had been working for years at self-acceptance and naively believed that I had succeeded, it would take the conscious struggle of stage two before it became possible to re-frame the purpose of the thesis as something other than an affirmation of a highly-colored picture of myself.

Another dimension of the pull exerted by unconscious possession is the apparent promise it holds for connection. In my case, as a result of depending on the survival strategy of "the Misfit" (Leonard, 1982, p. 49) with its reliance on being different and therefore superior, I had always known a great deal of loneliness. After reading texts by feminist authors in the fields of adult education, social work and theology, my vision of standing on the mountain peak of perfection pictured me in solidarity with these women. Carl Jung (1976) sheds light on this use of projection to meet our human need for belonging by explaining that, when we project, there is the illusory sense of being one of the sheep in the flock. However, it is only an illusion because it depends on an undeveloped sense of self. In his view, it takes the conscious aloneness of withdrawing one's idealized projection and the subsequent development of resources from within that opens the possibility for genuine and satisfying connectedness with other human beings and with the external world.

In conclusion, although it is obvious that this stage of unconsciousness is a set up for the fall, that reality will inevitably intervene, and the individual will know "alienation" (Edinger, 1972, p. 49), the stage of inflation is essential to growth. As indicated by the

earlier journal passage in which I recognize the extensive knowledge gained from reading and reflecting on authors such as Freire (1973) and Woodman (1982), this is a time for strengthening the ego. However fragile in actuality, it is this phase that provides the faith in one's ability to take that next step and then the next; it is this acknowledgment that will eventually make the ego strong enough to let go of control and open the door to conscious relationship.

One final insight into the necessity and the limitations of the first stage comes from a text by Pitcher (1995) titled *Artists, Craftsmen and Technocrats*. By studying a number of businesses, the author concludes that the most successful enterprises are those with technicians on the bottom of the decision-making ladder, an artist with vision and imagination at the top and a group of craftsmen in the middle. For Pitcher, it is the realistic group, named the craftsmen, which is essential for success. By being grounded in the actual, they recognize the value of the vision, know that in its present form it is unworkable, and then proceed to transform it into something viable. To reflect on my experience in light of Pitcher's observation, it is obvious that the artistic component is alive and well but that there are no inner craftsmen to do the hard work of translation. It will take the next stage of being thrown into the river of actual reality and forced to swim with the current before this develops.

Stage Two: In Relation with Sisyphus as the Demon

During this stage, the faith in one's ability to make the vision a reality vanishes like smoke. In the beginning there is just a niggling doubt but, when more and more effort is expended and nothing seems to work, the doubt expands. This drives an obsessive need to re-gain control. The voice says over and over again, "If only you can understand what's wrong, then you can fix it;" but when no answer comes, the words of "never good enough"

increase in volume. The feeling is that of a little mouse trapped in the wheel that goes

round and round, faster and faster. Try as it might, there is absolutely no way to get off.

For the woman caught in the complex, the result is panic, despair and overwhelming

helplessness. She has done absolutely everything – collected all the information, done the

analysis over and over again, pierced to the heart of the problem, worked for years and

years on personal healing, and it is still not enough. Nothing will ever be enough. There is

only more trying and more spinning.

Although the experience is incredibly painful, this stage is essential to growth. The

shell of false inflation must crack in order to thrust the individual into the reality of human

limitation. The process is one of expending all the resources at one's command and trying

in every possible way to own personal power before there is an admission of defeat and

surrender to a force beyond the self.

The following two journal passages identify the central themes of this stage. As I

wrote in August, 2010:

It is obvious that once again the all-powerful academic father looms and threatens.

He holds final judgment and the hammer of rejection. Again I am the child who

must strive and never succeed. The voice of the "never good enough" shrieks in my

head. (Aug. 26, 2010)

By September, it was even worse. In my journal, I expressed that:

I feel incredibly hopeless. Day after day I struggle to write the literature review and

work for hours on each and every paragraph. It's nuts. I'm going to die and all I

will have known for the final years is agony... The thesis [is like] an enormous

black vulture that hangs over my head waiting patiently and relentlessly to devour

my soul... it eats at me every day and takes away hope and faith and possibility. (Sept. 17, 2010)

As evident in these passages, to be in relation with the demonic Sisyphus is to live the reality of the child in fearful dependent relationship with the critical father and to endlessly try to be *good enough*. The insanity of being in the grip of the complex is to know that nothing will ever satisfy the Judge but that one must never stop trying. An image that came to me again and again was a small figure beating at the knees of a giant. She had to keep trying as hard as she could to prove her worth in order to gain his recognition and acceptance while all the time knowing, without a doubt, that it would never happen.

With this overview, it becomes possible to explore in greater detail a number of sub-themes that are facets of being in relation with the demonic Sisyphus.

The Critical Judge

McNeely (1991) understands the phenomenon of constantly anticipating criticism by an all-powerful father as an inner reality. In Jungian terms, she explains that:

> The father's daughter has an animus that is concerned with power and is extremely judgmental; consequently she may be a perfectionist with respect to herself and others. It may be difficult for her to express criticism openly, but unless she finds a constructive outlet for her perfectionism, it infects her and influences her relationships by injecting an atmosphere of suppressed contempt. (p. 124)

This is the essence of power-over. Because the daughter spins in the helplessness of trying ever harder in the face of an all-powerful critical other, she tries to stop the craziness by grasping for power herself. The tool that she knows all too well is that of criticism. It has been directed against her countless times and she, in turn, uses it against

others. This is evident in one journal passage when I asked, "How much of this can I handle before I go right around the bend? I want to blame St. Stephen's but I know that the College is not really the problem. It's within" (July 3, 2010). To blame others may be an initial reaction but the responsibility ultimately belongs to the self. As will be seen, this is both a curse and a gift.

Another strategy of reaching for power is to try to resolve the problem through rational analysis. The belief is that if only it can be understood, then the problem can be fixed. In my experience, the barrier was obviously Sisyphus. I had failed to complete a thesis twice before because of the dynamic and I would fail again unless I could transform it. To this end, I spent hours and hours in figuring. The following is one example.

I wrote all those papers for the St. Stephen's courses. And then it comes to the thesis and I panic. I start to cycle into helplessness and hopelessness. [And the answer is that] I have wanted to rip the masks off the dominators, to expose their power-over, and bring them down. This is my father wearing the mask and all those that have followed in his footsteps. Here is my powerlessness, as a child, as an adult, as a female being... So the way I have used the thesis is as a tool to prove my sense of worth. If only it is good enough, people will take notice and be impressed... [Then] I will believe I have a right *to be* in the world and have a right to own voice. All of this speaks to a fundamental belief that I do not have the right *to be* and to own voice. (Nov. 18, 2010)

However, coming up with this supposed answer and telling myself to smarten up did not work. In fact, it just reinforced the sense of personal inadequacy that maximized the power of the complex.

In combination with extensive analysis, another tack was to think of past successes and try and repeat what had worked before. In a specific case with a St. Stephen's instructor, I had managed to resolve the dynamic with the all-powerful critical judge. As I reflected on this experience, I understood that:

> I had repeated my old pattern with Daddy... I needed a parent. I needed someone to provide safety and protection and validation... Otherwise, the world had no meaning. Everyone lied. I had no god to trust and believe in and follow... [Later while walking and thinking about this], I suddenly knew that I did not need to have someone fulfill this responsibility. I could stand and be myself in my reality. I could let go of this father figure and all others. No one needed to be god for me to be O.K. I owned the inner King. I owned those masculine abilities. (May 5, 2011)

Once again, I told myself to just do that. After all, I had figured out the problem and managed to resolve it once. Surely I could do it again. However, as with every other attempt to grab for control, it did not work.

This trying, and then trying yet harder, is the instinctive reaction to the experience of alienation and it can last a very long time. To imagine letting go is inconceivable. The father already holds the power to denigrate and reject one's right to be in the world so the act of surrender feels like granting him total dominion and accepting that one is nothing. Yet as noted by numerous authors (Edinger, 1972; Hedva, 2001; Hollis, 1998 & Woodman, 1982), the opposite is true. It is by letting go and accepting human limitation and contradiction that it becomes possible to claim a strength from within that can be trusted and that brings hope for change.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous shares this conviction. In every meeting, the participants read Step One which states: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol

– that our lives had become unmanageable" and then Step Two follows with, "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity" (Al-Anon Family Groups, p. 367). With its focus on healthy relationships, Codependence Anonymous, as an offshoot of AA and a program of particular relevance to those possessed by Sisyphus, replaces the word "alcohol" with "others" and promises that by following the twelve steps, "No longer do you need to rely on a power greater than yourself. May you instead find here a new strength within to be that which God intended – Precious and free" (Codependence Anonymous unpublished brochure).

The Dependent Child

> Always this complex is about the young child standing apart, standing in the dark shadow of inadequacy and defectiveness, looking with both longing and condemnation toward the circle of others standing in lightness (valued, recognized, with identity, status, connectedness and all the other wonderful spiritual gifts.) She wants to be part of the circle. She does not believe that she will be welcomed and accepted because of her core defectiveness. She must prove herself, that she has something really important to contribute. Only then will they turn, judge her value and decide whether she is worth acceptance and recognition. This is the heart of Sisyphus. (Nov. 6, 2010)

When one is in the grip of the complex, the experience, as noted above, is that of a helpless terrified child. Although the feeling of terror is real enough, to gain the required strength to let go of dependence, the father's daughter must acknowledge that, on a deep level, she believes that her survival requires ongoing helplessness.

As I will eventually see, as long as I remained locked into endless cycling and never pushed the boulder over the mountain peak or simply left it lying at the base, I never had to

risk owning the self! In my case, the life position that I developed during adolescence and continued to use through adulthood was the stance of "the Misfit" (Leonard, 1982, p. 49). Although on the surface, the individual may appear assertive, if not aggressive, Leonard (1982) is clear that the fragile "eternal girl or puella" (p. 15) lies at the core. Once there is an admission of this defensive stance, the path toward greater consciousness requires that one descend through layers of despair.

As described by Leonard (1982), the first level is the despair of weakness. For someone locked into the demonic Sisyphus, this is not difficult to recognize although it is another thing entirely to stand in the despair and feel its full impact. For the misfit, there must be a conscious awareness that with this pattern, the woman anticipates, and even creates, relationships that are rejecting. Furthermore, she must come to realize that the subsequent distancing from others serves to reinforce the alternating cycle of superiority and inferiority, that it ensures isolation and the perpetuation of dependence, and that the ongoing experience of powerlessness has been fundamental to her survival. With this admission and having felt the full extent of her weakness, it becomes possible to descend further and know the despair of defiance.

For the puella, this poses an extreme challenge because, as with all the other patterns, the misfit rejects personal strength. It is far easier to blame and cling to righteous condemnation than it is to stand in the self. However, by acknowledging the resistance, there is an awareness that the required inner resources do exist but because of familiarity and the false security of dependence, she refuses to claim them. Moving beyond the despair of defiance is not easy but, with perseverance, eventually she will experience the leap of faith that Leonard (1982) describes as an acceptance of "one's weakness and one's strength, the intermixture of the finite and infinite realms in being human, and the

realization that human beings must move between the opposites rather than identifying with an absolute" (p. 21).

An observation by Engel sheds additional light on why, in spite of its obvious turmoil, a father's daughter may choose to remain in fearful dependence rather than claim the strength that she knows exists. With reference to the work of Alice Miller, Engel (1991) explains that abused children tend to live in a state of denial by carrying full responsibility. As she explains, this is an instinctive reaction because such children "prefer to take upon (themselves) the hell of blindness, alienation, abuse, deception, subordination, and loss of self rather than lose that place called Paradise, which offers [them] security" (p. 157). To address the dynamic of Sisyphus more directly, the author maintains that denial can manifest as stellar behavior that is driven by a constant and hopeless search for redemption coming from a deep sense of unworthiness.

In her work with victims of abuse, Engel (1990) offers hope for someone in the position of the fearful child by distinguishing between evil and sin. With insight from Latin American theological sources, she defines evil in terms of systemic forces of oppression that perpetuate relations of the powerful over the vulnerable. "By contrast, sin refers to those free, discrete acts of responsible individuals that create or reinforce those structures of oppression" (p. 155). Although interrelated, when working with victims of abuse, Engel (1990) maintains that:

> Evil and sin are to be stressed differently. With perpetrators it is important to
> emphasize sin as individual responsibility. If evil is stressed, then the emphasis can
> shift to a lack of being responsible. With victims, it is important to emphasize evil
> in systemic terms because focusing on sin can exaggerate self-blame and over-
> responsibility. (p. 156)

Along with the need to lighten the burden of over-responsibility, Engel argues that there *is* a vital task for victims of abuse. Their true responsibility lies in breaking through the conspiracy of silence by grounding in and validating their experience and then speaking out in a voice that is as loud and clear as the prophets of the Old Testament. Throughout stage two, this idea kept reverberating in my head.

Silence and Paralysis

> i was going to die, sooner or later whether or not i had ever spoken myself. my silences had not protected me. your silences will not protect you…what are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them still in silence? we have been socialized to respect fear more than our own need for language.
>
> audre lorde (quote in a brochure)

Many years ago, while waiting in the office of a community-based agency, I had picked up a brochure and read these words by Audre Lorde. The passage made such an impact that I used it to introduce document after document for the MSW thesis. To be in conscious relationship with the demonic Sisyphus is to know the truth that lies within and yet, as Lorde says, to be so conditioned by fear that it is never spoken.

On some level, an individual possessed by a complex is keenly aware of inner vulnerability and fragility. To risk authentic speech is to expose the self and that is far too threatening. Therefore, the automatic reaction is to withdraw and go into silence. By burrowing deep within, there is a sense of security. For others, or perhaps for the same individual at alternate times, there may be a barrage of words that pour forth with great energy and finely-tuned articulation. However, as understood by codependent author Pia

Mellody (1989), this is the wall of words that serves to hide the inner self every bit as effectively as silence.

With silence and paralysis, there is self-blame. In my case, it came from having worked so hard and for so long to understand the problem and effect change. Because I possessed a great deal of personal and theoretical knowledge and had extensive faith in my ability to articulate insights and ideas, I experienced a constant stream of self-recrimination when I found myself repeatedly slipping into one of the defensive stances described by Leonard (1982). Although my preferred pattern was that of "the Misfit" (p. 49) who withdraws into silent rage and righteous condemnation, in the world of work and in close relationships, I tended to adopt the stance of the "Darling Doll" (p. 39) as the holding up of the other at the expense of the self. On occasion, and only in relatively safe environments such as the university, the silence would burst forth in the alienating guise of the "Armored Amazon" (p. 63). No matter the particular pattern, all added fuel to the silent paralyzed core and the self-hate that characterizes the demonic Sisyphus.

Initially this was further fed by my ability to speak in safe structured environments such as 12 Step meetings and Traditional Aboriginal ceremonies. Because of these countless experiences of owning voice, I would flay myself mercilessly for going into silence as soon as I stepped out of the circle. However, in moving through the second stage, there was a shift from blame to greater compassion. Gradually I recognized and accepted how much I had needed the degree of safety provided by these situations in order to allow the fragile inner self to find expression and, to thereby, little by little, grow stronger. In Jungian terms, it was essential to project animus energy onto external structuring or trusted leadership in order to risk exposure. Until I was able to claim inner strength, there was no other way. External forms of authority had to provide protection.

An integral part of the process was being bombarded by images of a helpless child. From an early visualization of my father at the top of a ladder with me standing very close on the second rung, to imagining a small frail figure in the middle of an open meadow surrounded by dark forms with rifles, to the child standing in darkness and looking out at those in the light; and finally, to the child beating at the knees of the giant, I saw and knew my vulnerability. It was by paying attention to and writing about these images that I was eventually able to be with them instead of avoiding the hurt and fear that they evoked. I found this essential to the process of developing inner resources.

When that child part of the self is close to the surface, art therapy provides a safe means of expression. Although I rarely had this experience in an academic context, one exception occurred during a St. Stephen's course when, following a role play on conflict, we were asked to draw our response. Without a moment's hesitation, I filled one side of the paper with the strong clear form of my father. On the other, I drew my mother in softer and less-well-defined strokes. In the middle was a small figure who was doing everything in her power to block the father's arrows but, no matter how hard she tried, she could not stop them from piercing the mother. This was an incredible awareness. For so many years, I had believed Woodman's contention that the dynamic of the father's daughter begins when the unconscious rejection by the mother pushes the child into an allegiance with the father and his value system. However, with this drawing, I saw that my original alliance had been with the mother, and only when I failed and it was clear that the father held total control, did I turn to him. It helped explain the core of personal inadequacy that fueled the Sisyphus dynamic and, thus, brought a tremendous sense of relief.

This event speaks to the degree of safety that someone in the grip of Sisyphus requires to break through the barrier of silence and paralysis. Only because I had been with

this particular group of people in a concentrated experiential process for nearly five days and had gained a deep trust in each of them and particularly in the group facilitator was the insight able to rise to the surface and find expression. To let go of this dependence on a trusted other by developing the capacity from within is the task of the next stage.

Dealing with Resistance

Before going on to the phase of being in conscious relationship, it is necessary to devote some attention to the significance of resistance. Rand (1997) addresses this issue by referring to an innate psychic hunger that draws us to wholeness but, because the food that will actually nourish is so far outside what we know, either we cannot conceive of it at all or its unfamiliarity causes us to turn away. As she explains:

> The goal which beckons to this psychic need, the image which promises to heal, to make whole, is at first strange beyond all measure to the conscious mind, so that it can find entry only with the greatest of difficulty. We would rather cling to the concrete compulsions and addictions with which we are familiar. (p. 207)

This concept of clinging to the known is true of all psychological change. To let go of what seems essential to survival, however destructive it may appear on the surface, is a scary prospect. For women in particular, I believe that there is great resistance to giving expression to one's inner being and it is this deep fear that speaks to the three levels of resistance described earlier by Romanyshyn's student Tomlinson. There is the basic fear that one's inner self may not actually be real and certainly not legitimate for an academic exercise. Then, there is fear of attack and/or dismissal from the outer world. Finally, there is the deepest fear that we are part of an ancestral line and have a responsibility to stand up and add our voice to the chorus of those who have gone before and will come after. As Reis (1995) outlined in the *Literature Review*, to cross the threshold into the "Wildzone"

(p. 188) of authenticity, described by Woodman (1982) as "red in tooth and claw" (p. 15), is a daunting task indeed and many refuse. However, it is only by sacrificing the norms of convention and entering the unchartered territory of being fully oneself and part of the heritage of women that one claims genuine creativity.

With this perspective on resistance, it is worth examining Canadian activist Anne Bishop's (1994) understanding of power-over relations. Although the pattern has been noted earlier, Bishop gives additional insight by arguing that in our North American culture, we understand power as control exerted by someone in a position of authority, a reality of powerlessness experienced by nearly all children, and in reaction to this, discover some way to grasp power for ourselves. With this early indoctrination, as adults we find ourselves in one of those two places or, as is often the case, flipping back and forth between the two. In her quest to define and support relations of "power-with" (p. 31), Bishop explains that for women, the task is to identify our fears and understand that they cover sources of repressed inner strength. Because we have been punished for expressing ourselves in a genuine way, there are layers of fear that must be identified and one by one gradually brought to light in order to claim what lies beneath. The most common fears for women, according to Bishop, include claiming our bodies, our anger and our sexuality, owning our ability to nurture, and sharing our grief and common problems with others. As she advises, the way through fear is to use individual activities such as journalling combined with participation in group situations in which our sharing of thoughts and feelings will be treated with respect and gentleness. Because powerlessness is such a core issue for someone in the grip of Sisyphus, to see resistance within this framework helps to counter the self-blame and feeling of inadequacy that triggers old and trusted defense strategies.

With specific reference to research, it is helpful to briefly re-visit Romanyshyn's (2007) belief that, because the ego wants so desperately to retain control when faced with the unfamiliar task of becoming an agent to the work, the entire process is one of working with resistance. Whether it is performance anxiety, fear of those who would throw sticks and stones or the actual existence of ancestral voices, to move through resistance is to let go of more and more until one is open and receptive. With this, there is an inevitable feeling of sadness. In fact, for Romanyshyn, the entire research process is one of mourning.

Although I certainly felt a great deal of sadness in looking again and again at the endless striving and ultimate defeat that characterized relationship with the demonic Sisyphus, it was primarily the feeling of fear that fed my resistance. To let go of control, particularly in the father's world of academia, and feel so exposed, was a momentous and terrifying proposition. Because it was such a greased slope into the powerless stance of victim, resolution required an "imaginal approach" (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 82). On numerous occasions, I had to visualize the alternative place of "power with" (Bishop, 1994, p. 31) and to physically wrench myself out of the stance of the misfit to stand alone and unguarded. With this ongoing effort, what Rand defined as the food that initially appeared foreign and scary gradually became more familiar and accessible.

To conclude, it was by facing resistance at the third level that ultimately kept me holding on and continuing. Although there was constant doubt, in a corner of my mind, I believed that the thesis was being propelled by an external force. This conviction came from the two previous failed attempts. After each rejection, I had told myself to walk away, that with all the effort I had expended, it was obviously not my task. I was also unable to follow the well-meant advice of other graduate students who told me to just jump

through the hoops, get the piece of paper and then do what had personal meaning.
Although I tried very hard to do both these things, again and again I would pick up the
thesis and focus on the question that continued to plead for resolution.

In the face of what so often seemed like self-abuse, I give credit to a Higher Power
beyond my understanding and to the ongoing support of two people. The first was an old
friend who had known me throughout the entire history of trying to write a thesis. Over
and over again, she would tell me that she would never have stayed with the frustration and
rejection that I had experienced and that, therefore, it had to be a calling of some kind. The
second was my fellow graduate student who through our regular meetings repeated the
same message that there was a force in charge of the process and that in spite of my fear
and resistance, it would happen. Although I drew on cognitive ideas about facing and
working through resistance, it was this message that made the greatest difference.

Hitting Bottom

At some point, after what felt like an eternity of cycling in the grip of the complex,
in the words of the AA program, I hit bottom. With the following writing, I came to the
core, that for father's daughters, "Consciousness of defeat remains their grip upon reality"
(Woodman, 1982, p. 56). As I reflected:

> I try and try harder and harder but it is never enough. The carrot of approval and
> validation always moves just out of reach. However, in my trying, I have a
> relationship with the father. He gives me focused attention through his evaluation
> and judgment. He is constantly looking at me and noting the ways I fit and the
> ways I fail to fit his expectations. I believe he cares about me because he puts
> energy into watching and evaluating. Through my efforts and my failure to arrive, I
> have a link to God. Through Sisyphus I have a link to God... It is by striving and

failing that I know connection and safety and protection. This is my raison d'être.

This connection gives my life meaning and purpose. It defines who I am and

gives me identity and value. (Nov. 7, 2011)

Shortly after this, I wrote that, "Over and over again it boils down to *not needing to*

be god to *be*. I can *be* and *be in the world* without being God" (Nov. 10, 2010). To hit

bottom and claim strength in the moment, instead of spiralling back into helplessness,

marked the transition to the stage of conscious relationship.

Conclusion

As has been noted throughout the discussion, it was by seeing the personal as

political that enabled me to counter the over-responsibility and self-blame that fueled the

demonic Sisyphus. One important insight came from Edinger (1972) who wrote that, "The

very existence of depth psychology is a symptom of our time... [that] If it is pursued to its

inevitable conclusion, it cannot help but lead more and more people to a rediscovery of the

lost suprapersonal categories within themselves" (p. 69). Throughout stage two, it was

helpful to reflect on these words and to think of the contrast between this possibility and

earlier times when transpersonal categories were carried by religion. Certainly that had

been true for my paternal Mennonite grandmother who apparently read the Bible every day

and was sustained by faith when, following the death of her husband, was left with nine

children and no reliable means of financial support.

With Edinger's perspective, I saw myself as part of a generation in which this had

broken down and, although I had lost the secure religious foundation that my grandmother

knew, it was replaced by an inner drive to focus on the subjective and, with this

concentrated focus, to eventually claim the suprapersonal categories within the limited ego

as it separates to come into relation with the totality that is the Self.

As outlined in the second stage as it played out in the critical Judge, its accompanying reality of the terrified dependent child and the subsequent experience of silence and paralysis, this period is one of great turmoil but also of incredible possibility. Projections must be withdrawn and this only occurs when, through a period of intense struggle, one becomes aware of a growing inner strength. In the words of Woodman (1985):

> The only way to the Self is through conflict. If the ego rejects conflict, then the goal is contaminated by the ego's desire for more and more power, wealth, or happiness. The result is ego inflation and inflation is a regression of consciousness into unconsciousness. (p. 27)

Certainly I experienced conflict, but as Woodman promises, I also became more keenly aware that, in the midst of the battle, those elusive inner resources did in fact exist and that I could rely on them.

Stage Three: In Conscious Relationship with Sisyphus

To be in conscious relationship with the Sisyphus complex is to experience the energy as a helpful partner that accompanies one on the descent to the core of self and then gives concrete expression to that depth of inner knowing. It is with this partnership that the gifts associated with the positive masculine become available to the psyche. As explained by McNeely:

> Crucial in the relationship with animus [energy]... is the capacity to allow him to be a helpmate in the further descent to the center of the feminine experience, and also the return to the world with the treasured feminine... I see the animus as a helpmate in the process of individuation, whatever the path, lending to the inner work

discipline, energy to act with initiative, objectivity, spirit, courage to face the unknown, and determination. (1991, pp. 155-156)

In my experience, this process was not a single event. Initially, there were moments of going down and touching what felt like the center and then bouncing back up into the conflict. Only in hindsight did I see the process as one of gradual descent to the feminine core of being and to realize the vital role that Sisyphus played.

<u>Sisyphus as Two Sides of the Same Coin</u>

After so many months of seeing Sisyphus as a demonic force, one morning I suddenly realized that, although the complex had denied the validity of actual experience, it had also helped me claim its legitimacy. At the time this was extremely confusing but, as I reflected, it was clear that in the long process of striving to fit an image of perfection and thereby discounting actual reality, it was while polishing the image and driving myself to the mountain peak that I had been pulling in experiential threads and little by little weaving them into a firm foundation of values and beliefs. This was perhaps most obvious with Woodman's (1982) definition of feminine consciousness. On the one hand, by holding it up as an image of perfection, I had ensured my defeat and fueled the demonic Sisyphus; when I read *Addiction to Perfection*, I found myself making notes on nearly every page and with the underlining and the notations, I claimed more and more of my history as a father's daughter in personal and collective terms. As I reflected in my journal:

Finally, I realized how without knowing it I had been building my stand. Even though de Castillejo's image had been in my mind since early in the process, I had focused on Sisyphus as the animus madly illuminating slogan after slogan from Maslow up to Woodman. Only at this point did I see how I had been weaving my stand of meaningful experience. In looking back, I realized how this had begun

with Maslow. Even though I had used his concept of self-actualization as an unrealizable image of perfection, it had helped me validate adolescent longings. This process of validation had continued through Freire, Woodman and all the social work authors. Step by step while polishing the image, I had been slowly and gradually building and strengthening. Little by little, I had been claiming the validity of what I had known through experience. (March 7, 2012)

In spite of the confusion, this realization struck me as positive because it spoke of letting go of absolutes to claim the human reality of paradox and contradiction. For months, this had been a repetitive theme in the effort to stand in that circle where Sisyphus would be forever silenced. However, with this awareness I saw the complex in a new light and what came to mind was a statement by theological author Sharon Ringe. In speaking about women as needing to be authoritative interpreters of scriptural texts that failed to present them as subjects in their own right, Ringe (1990) wrote that, "Giving theological authority to the interpreter allows a dialogue to occur instead of outright rejection or mute obedience" (p. 289). After reflecting on this statement for a St. Stephen's paper, I knew that I had reacted in one of the two ways noted by Ringe. Either on the basis of a righteous feminist stance, I had labelled and rejected anything that in my mind expressed patriarchal values or else I had slipped into the silence and paralysis of mute obedience. In unconscious relationship with the Sisyphus complex, I had continually repeated the childhood pattern of setting up the other, listening to and mirroring their superiority while all the time hoping desperately that, if only I did this well enough, they would, in turn, listen to me. Obviously, out of fear, I was driven to first stand with the other and deny the self and then, in the stance of victim, to hope that he or she would stand with me and take in my truth. In the end we would all be together in a wonderful circle of absolute safety.

Ringe's statement exposed and challenged that assumption and I saw that the alternative was to grant myself theological authority grounded in actual experience and to engage with the other as a distinct entity. In the words of Hollis (1998), "Consciousness is achieved only through the loss of the Other, and the perception that the Other is truly Other" (p. 17).

This, then, became my task with the academic institution. In my mind, I saw myself standing on one side while on the other stood the father. For a long time I had told myself that he did not hold the gift of beingness and that this was something I needed to claim for myself but it had remained in the realm of abstract theorizing. Now I knew in concrete terms that the thesis was about granting myself authority; and on this basis, to be open to the father, not as I wished him to be, but as he actually was. With this realization, my purpose became real and immediate and I knew that the ability to engage in dialogue would only happen by coming into conscious relationship with Sisyphus. To be aware of the both/and nature of the complex felt like a step in that direction.

The Hurt Child at the Heart of the Complex

I see a child sitting at the very centre. On the outside is a muscular and forceful masculine figure that constantly strives for perfection and condemns all weakness and contradiction but inside is a fragile terrified being who makes herself small and invisible. With this image, I knew that Sisyphus had always done the only thing that he could do. His job was to protect this child by creating a smokescreen of performance. In the father's world, her survival depended on powerlessness. It was Sisyphus that kept her safe. In that moment, I felt great compassion for this complex that could never stop pushing. (April 12, 2011)

This was an amazing realization because I thought I knew everything there was to know about this child. I had drawn her many times and had visualized her in countless

ways but never before had I imagined that her need drove the complex. In the past, my reasoning had been that the problem was rooted in my childhood and that, once I healed that initial wounding, I would own adult strength and agency. The fragile child would be gone and so would Sisyphus. Obviously, this belief only brought more hurt and more striving. When I saw the child at the center of the complex, it was completely different. There was no analysis, or not until much later, and no need to fix. I simply saw and felt compassion. Sisyphus was not the overwhelming and all-encompassing power that made my life a misery. Instead, he was basically helpless. It was fear in the face of the father that drove me to repeat the pattern of childhood. To survive meant to remain powerless and, even though in adolescence there were times of rage and even attack, the core of dependency was never challenged. The father stayed superior in a stance of objective rationality because I held fast to reactions that perpetuated helplessness.

For Hollis (1998), this is the reality of the overwhelmed child. When the relationship between parent and child is reversed so that it is the child that is expected to meet the needs of the parent rather than the other way around, there is inevitable flooding. Instinctively, the child knows what she must do but, with the knowledge and skills at her command, it is impossible to fulfil the task. Instead of placing the responsibility where it belongs, on the parent, the child cannot risk losing the only security she has known. Using the well-known concept of the "Stockholm Syndrome" (p. 23), Hollis explains that personality strategies will be based on collusion with powerlessness as a world view. Even when there is a grasping for control in order to not replay the deep fears of childhood, this never works for long. Until the depth of this fear is confronted and acknowledged, it continues to determine the thoughts, feelings and actions of the adult. As Rand (1997) states, "It takes a long time for hurt women to relate to the hurt child within because that

child has never been recognized" (p. 43). In that moment, and perhaps for the first time, I consciously knew this child and by connecting with her fear and vulnerability in an immediate and concrete way, I knew Sisyphus.

One of my father's favorite sayings was to be an engine and not a caboose. It took many years before I realized the inherent contradiction in this message. On the surface, there had to be the appearance of being an engine by looking strong and never showing weakness, but in fact, there was only one power driving the family train and all others needed to follow in mute obedience. In actuality, it was essential to remain powerless and to thus support his dominance. This came to me clearly as I realized how, through the stages to this point, Sisyphus had successfully walked the tightrope of appearance and actuality.

For many years I had been working on developing healthy boundaries and now I understood the codependent message that boundaries come from within. By facing and accepting that core of vulnerability, there was a connection with inner self-worth. From this center, boundaries could flow outward that would protect inner fragility when needed. Also, although I did not know what it might be, by claiming the adult part of the self, I knew I could set Sisyphus free to assume a different role. What I would realize later was that this had already happened. By touching down into the core of diffuse feminine knowledge, Sisyphus had acted as helpmate to bring that kernel of truth to the surface.

Letting go of the Cloak of Rational Certitude

It is amazing to think of not living in fear, of not living the compulsion of striving with the ingrained message of the "never good enough" and instead knowing the strength and reality of human competence and the possibility of learning as "enough." (May 27th, 2012)

This realization came as a result of a dream. As recorded in the *Experience* chapter, I had dreamt about having no idea what to do when left in charge of the department at St. Stephen's or how to facilitate a particular Spanish course that was using strange technology. As I noted, this dream initially triggered the thought that I had been fooling myself about feeling a stronger connection with Sisyphus but, almost immediately, I grasped my journal again and wrote these words.

> Being with competence and incompetence. With incompetence I can release
> Sisyphus from striving. And then, he no longer has to hold up the father to ensure
> my survival. This was a powerful insight. I felt it was another turning point, or
> another opening of a little door into seeing and being in relation... It was amazing. I
> was on a high all day. (Sept. 16, 2012)

A father's daughter who is plagued by the message of "the never good enough," must come to have faith that she can stand in the human reality of contradiction and ambiguity, of strength and limitation, and be protected. As noted earlier, it was the development of boundaries that enabled me to let go of the cloak of rational certitude. With the program of Codependence Anonymous, I gradually replaced what Pia Mellody (1989) has identified as the four walls of anger, fear, silence and words with an outer reality that was flexible and permeable. It took many times of exposing the self and not being destroyed before I developed enough trust to know that I would be hurt, perhaps many times, but that I could cope with it.

By letting go of certainty, I once again knew how Sisyphus had protected me through powerlessness. As long as I clung to the belief that I had to reach the mountain peak of absolute knowing in order to be safe enough to speak my truth, I ensured survival. The father remained in the godlike place of omniscience because I stayed in the defeated

position of uncertainty and self-doubt. By releasing this belief, I was able to take the next

step and to imagine myself letting go absolutely. As I reflected:

> My survival depended on that holding up. The father had to stay up there for me to
>
> live... My place was as a disciple. I would be capable of *being* and of *agency* only
>
> with his protection and approval. At that moment, I realized that I could indeed
>
> take my stand and I could let him go. If he fell, he did and I would still stand. This
>
> was an incredible realization.... Even though I grabbed my dependence back and
>
> continued to hold onto his tools, at that moment I withdrew the projection and
>
> believed that I knew my relation with Sisyphus as animus. I felt really strong.
>
> (Aug. 17, 2012)

It was this action of releasing dependency as a life stance that came up repeatedly in

the movement toward conscious relationship. As Reis (1995) outlines the process, by

engaging in the "Battlezone of Culture" (p. 85) over an extended period of time, a woman

comes to acknowledge the power of the father and to own enough strength to step outside

of fearful dependence and claim a "Mother Tongue" (p. 196). With this voice, she can be

led "out of stagnation, blockage, and paralysis towards creative action" (p. 197).

The Tightrope of Old and New Tools

In a document sent to my advisor, I included a quotation by Miller-McLemore and

Gill-Austern (1999). As they wrote:

> Although Audre Lorde's words are recognized, that you cannot dismantle the
>
> master's house with the master's tools, the task is more complex than she suggests.
>
> It is necessary to acquire the necessary tools to survive and to create new tools for
>
> genuinely transformative work. It is a tightrope. No one creates in a vacuum. (p.
>
> 84)

I then went on to wonder "what it would involve to use what was necessary for survival and also to create new tools" (March 7, 2012).

To frame the task in this way was yet another insight into what it meant to accept the contradictory essence of human reality but, in addition, this understanding had particular significance to being in conscious relationship with Sisyphus. By letting go of the cloak of rational certitude, I had freed Sisyphus from depending on the father's tools of rationality, objectivity and linear development. Now the challenge was to find a way to use these tools in combination with those that were transformative.

For several months, I had no idea what to do. Only through extensive reflection did I come to believe that it was not a matter of holding the old in balance with the new but rather of using the old tools in a different way. The key was to write with softness and compassion. Again it was a process, but little by little I believed more firmly in de Castillejo's (1973) conviction that the task was one of trusting the animus to act as a guide to the center of feminine experience. Although this seemed right, there was a great deal of resistance. For someone who had relied on the safe distancing provided by the disconnected head, the prospect of going to the core of being and believing that the physical and emotional would be the source of valid expression, particularly in the academic realm of the father, was terrifying. However, I had long agreed with Sela-Smith's (2002) conviction that to access tacit knowledge, it was necessary to use the voice of the "*I-who-feels*" (p. 85). An additional push came from McNeely's (1991) declaration that, "A characteristic of a good relationship to the animus is the capacity to contain strong emotions" (McNeely, p. 76).

Help came from an approach called "mindfulness-based cognitive therapy" (Williams, Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zinn, 2007, p. 2). As the authors advised, instead of

grasping onto thoughts and feelings as problems to be analyzed and resolved, it was necessary to practice awareness by seeing them as clouds that moved in and then moved out. Although the thoughts needed to be acknowledged and the feelings felt, an approach of gentle recognition could bring answers that control seemed to push away. Because this spoke to me of acceptance and compassion, I practiced these ideas. Eventually, it became possible to be with strong feelings without being overwhelmed and escaping into my head. As I wrote in my journal:

> All feelings have energy and when I can be with them without trying to fix, then I draw energy and it is this energy that I need for the thesis. It is quite splendid. I have hated that feeling of emptiness and loneliness that I get sometimes... And I hate falling into envy... It's much harder to draw energy from that than it is with emptiness. But this is the challenge. I need to be with all my feelings as they flow through. (Jan. 9, 2013)

To be with strong emotion helped me finally come into relation with the actuality that was Sisyphus. At some point, he no longer had to be different but could be exactly as he was in all his intensity. While journaling, I asked:

> Is this a major shift to be able to imagine being with Sisyphus in the striving and remain grounded? Something tells me that this is the thesis. It is this shifting from hating and trying to get rid of the striving to living with the striving, the longing, the reaching for the impossible and for transcendence. I did not imagine this different way of being with the dynamic. It is the longing that brings me into my body, that brings me close to tears... I need to feel for that striving person that I have been and continue to be. I need to feel the pain of it and I need to feel the wonder and beauty and meaningfulness of it. I need to know I can be in relation with it and that this

> separates the striving from defeat. I am no longer living the performance of the
>
> father's daughter when I can feel the tears behind my eyes. Then I am embodied.
>
> Then I can use the voice of the "I-who-feels." (Nov. 21, 2012)

It was this being with the reality of Sisyphus in the moment that created a shift.
The intensity of the striving and its emotional pain seemed to lighten and I was more
conscious that the energy was a source of help rather than destruction.

The Significance of the Feminine to Being in Relation with the Masculine

> Yesterday I knew what Romanyshyn meant... It was the feminine that needed to
>
> speak. It was my feminine, the feminine of my mother and my grandmothers,
>
> particularly my maternal grandmother. It was the feminine in my father. I felt it. I
>
> knew it. (Dec. 18, 2012)
>
> I can feel the tears in my eyes. We were all so controlled by Sisyphus. The
>
> feminine could not get through. She could not risk exposure. Now she is crying for
>
> voice. (Dec. 19, 2012)

Only near the end of the research process did I know that it was the voice of the
feminine that needed to speak. For so long I had tried to live Woodman's definition of
feminine consciousness. By releasing tears and rage in one circle after another and through
art, movement, writing, breath work and singing, I had expressed what I believed was the
feminine core of my being and yet, not until this moment, had I known the reality in a deep
and expansive way that encompassed me, my parents, my grandparents and perhaps
countless others. By hearing and feeling this voice, I knew what it was to be in conscious
relationship with Sisyphus as masculine energy. At last, I understood what de Castillejo
(1973) meant when she wrote that:

The animus brings no treasures. Woman is vaguely aware of being herself in direct touch with the mysterious source, but her awareness is so diffuse that she can seldom even speak of it. She needs, passionately needs, the animus's torch to light up for her the things which she already innately knows, so that she can know she knows them… Without his help she cannot catch the coloured fragrance of her world and show it clearly even to herself. (pp. 84-85)

As with the entire experience, to come to this awareness was a process. Again with reference to de Castillejo, it was a descent and only in hindsight did I see how Sisyphus acted as a guide. To look chronologically, before beginning the research process, I had to repeatedly ground in the feminine energy of the body. At the time, I believed that these experiences were free of the complex and had no idea that Sisyphus as animus energy was actually helping me touch down and bring deeply-buried thoughts and feelings to the surface.

Then, during the second stage with the demonic, I had to re-ground. Even though at the time, I understood it as breaking out of the insane cycling, and thus having no relevance to the complex, it was by connecting with the softness and warmth of the feminine that helped me go deeper into what was authentic and meaningful. Only later did I realize that this was not avoidance but actually integral to the process, that it was the torch of Sisyphus that directed me to this remembering and bringing forth. From then on, it was a slow process of touching down into what felt like connecting with extreme vulnerability. Even at the time, although there was ongoing resistance, I knew that the task was to own enough strength to risk personal exposure in the world of the father. To do so required an ongoing validation of experience on ever-deeper levels. Again it was Sisyphus who lit up one

experience after another and helped me claim their validity. This is illustrated by my response to Reis's (1995) text. As I reflected:

> With Reis, I see the depth of being swallowed in the belly of the father and I truly realize the incredible effort it's taken to free myself. I value Sisyphus as the only means available for my survival. Just as Emily Dickinson needed agoraphobia to write her poetry, I placed myself in the position of doing the only thing that I could. To own voice has been truly a momentous task. It has been absolutely terrifying to face the demon father, to free myself and to be strong enough from within to come into relation. I give thanks to Reis for helping me value my struggle and to see it as courageous, to see it as real and legitimate. (Oct. 22, 2012)

As indicated in this passage, the process of coming to trust the feminine self is long and arduous. Editors Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) give insight into what supports women in their descent to the core of feminine knowing. On the basis of extensive interviewing, the editors conclude that:

> Many women expressed - some firmly, some shakily - a belief that they possessed latent knowledge. The kind of teacher they praised and the kind for which they yearned was one who would help them articulate and expand their latent knowledge: a midwife teacher... Midwife teachers assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it. (p. 217)

It was the role of midwife that my friend and fellow graduate student fulfilled and that made a tremendous difference to gradually going deep enough to know that it was the historical and ancestral voice of the feminine that needed to come through the work.

The Androgynous Essence of Conscious Relationship

Now, as the feminine becomes more integrated into collective consciousness, we tend to identify body, feminine and unconsciousness as equivalent. While this is a step forward from ignoring all three, it still reflects our incomplete psychic development, which must eventually recognize body wisdom as an expression of the Self, both/neither masculine and/nor feminine. (McNeely, 1991, p. 83).

In my experience, the concept of androgynous relationship has not been fully developed. The sense of it came when, near the end of the process, I was conscious of claiming the mind that I had negated for so many years. In that fleeting moment, I knew Woodman's definition of the mind/body connection but it was not my awareness, as she defines it, of the mind as masculine spirit and the body as feminine soul. Instead, I knew a wholeness of mind and body that seemed to more closely fit McNeely's description of being both and neither. As I journalled:

I am coming to believe that I have a full strong self, a self of mind, body and spirit, that I have the capability to be an active authentic agent in my life but I am resisting like mad. As suggested by Kierkegaard, it's time to take the leap of faith. (Nov. 13, 2012)

To pursue the idea of androgynous essence, it is helpful to consider McNeely's belief that the final state of being in conscious relationship with animus energy is that of "equal partner" (p. 157). As has been noted in a variety of ways, the theme of creativity emerges once again as McNeely (1991) shares that:

Poet Jean Burden wrote that the artist is psychologically androgynous, creating from the polarity inherent in one's masculine and feminine natures. She sees the creative act in women as essentially expressive of a masculine drive... [In Burden's

words], "I have to gather myself into the masculine side of me and thrust it into

the feminine side. The result is a poem." (pp. 162-163)

With Burden, to think of claiming my mind gave faith in my ability to create. It truly seemed that Sisyphus was inside and that I could trust him to give voice to my soul. By owning this voice, it felt like the words did not just belong to me but came through me and I was able to live Romanyshyn's (2007) conviction that to do research with soul in mind is to be an agent to the work. As I journalled:

If I truly write my experience of relationship with Sisyphus - heartfelt, emotional,

breathing, alive - then with the strength of vulnerability, with fear, with striving...

with the dark and the light, this is life. This is giving voice to my soul. It is

bringing the wound to consciousness and going beyond it. (Feb. 18, 2013)

Summary

In my experience, the change process was one of moving from the inflationary period of unconscious relationship, through the stage of alienation with its desperate attempt to get back to the confident excitement of stage one, to an eventual admission of defeat and surrender, and finally, to come to an acceptance of the strengths and limitations of being human in relation with the totality that belongs to the sacred. Although the details vary from individual to individual, Barrett's (1996) study of the transformative power of suffering indicates that these three stages may be common to many.

To look more closely at coming into conscious relationship with a complex such as Sisyphus, the task is one of knowing, trusting and strengthening the ego. It is fear that one cannot stand in actual humanness and survive that leads to the projection of inner resources on an external other and a subsequent life stance of dependency. By bringing this reality to awareness through the gradual strengthening of inner resources, it becomes possible to step

out of powerlessness and to assume a stand of one's own. It is when human reality is recognized and valued as *good enough*, that a trust develops in the relationship with the Self as the source of meaning and purpose rather than believing that it comes through the affirmation of an all-powerful other. As this consciousness of relationship grows, new tools arise which give expression to an authentic inner being. In this study, it was by delving deep into the feminine core of experience that Sisyphus as masculine energy was able to release the role of protector and fulfill his true work of giving voice to the soul.

Transition to Chapter Six

On the basis of this in-depth reflective analysis, it becomes possible to pull the threads together and present a final garment that through color, texture and shape communicates my experience of relationship with the Sisyphus complex.

CHAPTER SIX: CREATIVE SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter has four purposes. The first is to provide an overview of the study with particular reference to the concepts raised in the *Method* and *Literature Review*. The second is to broaden the camera lens and explore the relevance my individual experience might have for the field of psychotherapy. The third is to shift the focus to the future by suggesting possibilities for further research. The fourth and final purpose is to zoom in once again on the purpose of the study as an in-depth exploration of individual experience and, in conclusion, to identify the essential tacit knowledge that can now be captured with a click of the camera.

An Overview

It is the issue of dependency that lies at the heart of being in relation with a complex such as Sisyphus. With a deep-rooted sense of defectiveness and inadequacy, there is a desperate need to prove one's worth to an all-powerful other but to never threaten a relationship of dependence that ensures survival. The consequence is a pattern of endless and momentous striving that provides identity through the appearance of success but that never threatens safety by becoming actual reality. In my case, the dynamic played out most clearly in Leonard's (1982) description of the "Misfit" (p. 49) as the outsider who can appear confident and project a sense of superiority in their criticism of everything that falls short of idealistic images. However, the underlying purpose of the behavioral pattern is to perpetuate a state of powerlessness through the rejection of the self and the anticipated negation by all those perceived as standing in the place of judgment.

To come into conscious relationship with the complex is to address the core of defectiveness and to let go of dependency as a life stance. This requires the identification and claiming of inner resources that occurs through a period of intense conflict. Only by

struggling for months with the demonic Sisyphus was I eventually able to stand at the core of feminine experience and accept my humanness in terms of its contradictions and limitations as well as its strengths. Only then did the fear of owning and declaring an authenticity of self lessen to the extent that I was able to let go of the safety ensured by powerlessness.

Although the intention that spurred the research process was to come into relation with Sisyphus as positive masculine energy and thus to claim all those wonderful attributes that for so long I had projected onto others, this actually served as a vehicle for countering the core fear of standing alone and knowing that the human self in its full reality was all there was and all there needed to be. With compassionate self-acceptance, the door opened to the possibility of relationship. No longer would I need to rely on the structured safety of healing environments. However essential at the time, it now became possible to own authentic voice and to know myself in relation with the sacred in the world of the father.

To negotiate the journey, a heuristic methodology, expanded and deepened by Romanyshyn's understanding of doing research with soul in mind, was essential. The message I needed to hear over and over again was that I could trust in the validity of experiential knowledge. Although the significance of this principle in countering the endless cycling of Sisyphus was evident from the very beginning, in actuality, the process was one of developing the ability to live the methodology. From an abstract conceptualization, it was by moving through the three stages that I gradually had enough self-trust to touch the core of feminine experience and to claim the strength and courage to bring it to the surface.

Through the process of becoming increasingly capable of practicing the methodology, I gained insight into the three perspectives outlined in the *Literature Review*.

As may be remembered, the first, "To the Masculine through the Feminine" outlined a belief in a chronological order, that to come into relation with the masculine required an initial grounding in feminine energy. The second, "Coming into Relation with the Masculine apart from the Feminine" presented the conviction that relationship with masculine energy was a task in its own right. The third and final outlook, "The Masculine in the Feminine" outlined a perspective that understood the masculine principle as contained within the feminine. In my experience, all three had value but they also had limitations.

With respect to the first, I would never have stepped onto the path without having expended considerable energy into what Woodman (1982) defines as dissolving the split at the neck to ground in the feminine energy of the body. Even though the assumption that I had completed this step proved false, it was an essential springboard. Then, as outlined by de Castillejo (1973), Emma Jung (1957) and McNeely (1991), it was necessary to focus on being in relation with the masculine as a separate task. For years, I had clung to the assumption, drawn from Woodman's work, that by doing enough grounding in the feminine, this relationship would happen automatically. In my experience, it was not true. As illustrated by the three stages, I had to focus on the task in its own terms before Sisyphus was revealed as integral to the process rather than a barrier. Because the challenge was to risk grounding in and giving voice to the feminine, the third perspective described by Reis (1991) proved particularly helpful. It was through her vivid descriptions of being in the belly of the father and actively engaging in the battlezone of culture that strengthened the capacity to trust in the validity of inner knowing. Although my final awareness did not support the belief that masculine traits lie within the feminine, her ideas made it possible to eventually share de Castillejo's (1973) conviction that the diffuse

knowledge of the feminine does not have a voice of its own and, therefore, it is only by taking one's stand and re-directing the torch of the animus from external slogans to the core of one's being that it finds concrete expression.

With this overview, it is possible to look at the relevance of my research to the field of psychotherapy as a whole.

Relevance to Psychotherapy

A number of authors (Hedva, 2001; Leonard, 1982; Reis, 1995 &Woodman, 1982, 1985) would agree that my individual experience is shared by countless others and that these individuals, particularly during the stage of alienation, may seek help from a therapist. It, therefore, behooves practitioners to consider what my experience has to say about an approach that would be helpful.

First, to address the contention that the personal and unique is applicable to many, Woodman argues that we live in an addicted society that thrives on the discounting of lived reality. Whether it involves an obsession with food such as anorexia nervosa, a dependence on a substance like alcohol, or a behavioral pattern such as gambling, all share the central belief that the present self in actual reality is not enough and that only by standing in an alternate place will one know the exhilarating rush of excitement and energy that makes life worth living. Fundamentally, it is a denial of humanness and the compensatory drive to be godlike. As Woodman (1982) explains:

> We are living in a technological age that puts its faith in the perfection of the
> computer. Human beings tend to become like the god they worship, but fortunately
> for us, our agony does not allow us to become perfect robots. However hard we try
> to eradicate nature it eventually exerts its own value system and its own painful
> price... faced with the possibility of our own self-destruction, we are trying to

reconnect to roots that have lain dormant underground for centuries in the hope that

the nourishment from those depths may somehow counterbalance the sterility of

the perfect machine. (p. 16)

It is an awareness of the enormity of this challenge that a therapist needs to possess.

For example, when meeting someone with a Sisyphus complex, it is very easy to simply

say, as a number of professionals have said to me, that one must let go of perfectionism. In

the words of one individual, "Just talk back to that voice of the never good enough and tell

it to shut up." A response such as this merely reinforces the complex by communicating

that I should have what it takes to do what is advised and, if I do not, it is a mark of my

inadequacy. The driving force of trying harder kicks in and the pushing continues. For this

reason, it is essential for a practitioner to genuinely acknowledge the overwhelming power

possessed by an addictive pattern, whether or not it is accompanied by a physical

substance, to realize the extent of inner fragility that exists, and to identify and appreciate

the coping strategy that has been adopted.

As education is one component of therapy, and because women comprise the vast

majority of those who seek counselling services, it is worth re-visiting the concept of the

teacher as midwife introduced earlier by Belenky et al. (1986). As described by the editors,

"the kind of teacher [their female interviewees] praised and the kind for which they yearned

was one who would help them articulate and expand their latent knowledge: a midwife

teacher" (p. 217). McNeely (1991) extends the significance of a therapeutic alliance that

embraces the personal and emotional by referring to an individual client who had "a good

intellectual grasp of the next stage, but has not had the emotional experience necessary to

fully actualize her independence and empowerment in relation to the masculine world." (p.

76). Finally, in these terms, it is essential to recognize the significance of conflict. In my

experience, as long as I avoided facing the demonic Sisyphus, I remained in unconscious idealization and fueled the power of the complex. It was only through months of consciously battling with actual reality in both emotional and cognitive terms that I was able to eventually come into conscious relationship. Had I been working with a therapist during this period, it would have been essential to have the struggle validated as a significant component of the change process.

On this basis, the lesson for therapists is the importance of holding the other in his or her emotional reality without resorting too quickly to cognitively-based solutions. This requires a comfort level with one's own emotional intensity. As an ethical imperative, professionals need to deal with their personal issues in order to prevent unresolved *stuff* from affecting what happens in the therapeutic relationship (Corey, 2009; Yalom and Leszcz, 2005). Typically, authors discuss this admonition in terms of the concept of countertransference. Rarely do they, with the exception of Jungian analysts, understand the task as one of bringing unconscious complexes to conscious awareness and then into relationship. While recognizing from personal experience that it is a momentous task, this is the argument proposed in the present study. As a result of going through the process, it is my belief that until I knew myself in conscious relationship with Sisyphus, the complex would have continued, out of awareness, to determine the level at which I would work with others. Many times I had heard the statement that therapists can take clients only as far as they have gone themselves. These words have a much greater depth of meaning for me now.

In conclusion, the challenge is to walk *with* the client through the fires of the ordeal. Practitioners who maintain distance and superiority in terms of theoretical knowledge or mental/emotional health run the risk of falling into a state of unconscious inflation that

perpetuates the dependence of a complex such as Sisyphus. For McNeely (1991), this

danger can arise when a professional identifies him or herself as a healer because of its

suggested power to change or fix. For that reason, she prefers to think in terms of

"touching" (p. 77), particularly with respect to those parts of the psyche that the client

believes are untouchable. With this gentle and respectful approach, unknown and unnamed

moods, dreams, strengths and possibilities can rise to the surface and enter conscious

awareness.

One practitioner that appears to live the humility and mutuality inherent to

McNeely's definition is the grandfather of focusing, Eugene Gendlin (1991). As Gendlin

maintains:

The essence of working with another person is to be present as a living being. And

that is lucky, because if we had to be smart, or good, or mature, or wise, then we

would probably be in trouble... So, when I sit down with someone, I take my

troubles and feelings and I put them over here, on one side, close, because I might

need them. I might want to go in there and see something. And I take all the things

that I have learnt—client-centered therapy, reflection, focusing, Gestalt,

psychoanalytic concepts and everything else (I wish I had even more)—and I put

them over here, on my other side, close. Then I am just here, with my eyes, and

there is this other being. If they happen to look into my eyes, they will see... the

slightly shy, slightly withdrawing, insecure existence that I am. I have learnt that

that is O.K... [That what is needed] for the big therapy process, the big development

process is a person who will be present. And so I have gradually become convinced

that even I can be that. Even though I have my doubts when I am by myself, in

some objective sense I know I am a person. (p. 21)

It was by thinking of Gendlin's message during the third stage that I was able to practice being humanly present to myself as I would with a client and this helped to shift into a stronger sense of conscious relationship.

To broaden the lens even further, it is necessary to consider the responsibility that psychotherapists have for structural change. Personal issues have systemic roots and only by addressing these roots can individuals change in a deep and real way. An example from the field of social work may help to illustrate. Many years ago, an instructor introduced his course by drawing a steep cliff on the blackboard. As he explained, most social workers are at the bottom dealing with those wounded in the fall. Although this is an essential part of practice and should not be discounted, it is equally important to devote time and energy to working at the top of the cliff and prevent people from falling in the first place. Within the field of social work, the effort spent in prevention is considered sufficiently important to be listed as a responsibility in the code of ethics. My question is whether this should be an imperative for psychotherapy.

Support for moving in this direction comes from the field of pastoral counselling. As outlined in the *Method* chapter, Patton (1993) has argued for a shift in emphasis from an individualistically-oriented clinical paradigm to one that he names "the communal contextual" (p. 5). In his words, "Because so much of the assessment process associated with counseling has been focused on factors 'inside' the person, to address that bias a great deal of attention now must be centered on factors 'outside' the person that are affecting his or her function" (p. 218).

A concrete application of this perspective comes from liberation theological author Mary Potter Engel (1990) who differentiates between evil in terms of individual culpability and sin as victimization due to forces beyond one's control. As previously noted in the

Literature Review, Engel believes that it is the concept of systemic evil that should be emphasized with victims of abuse because of the burden of over-responsibility they already carry. Prior to and throughout the research process, the validity of this argument came through the consistent draw I experienced toward arguments that valued the personal/political because they helped to alleviate personal inadequacy and individual self-blame.

With this view of seeing individual behavior within the social context, therapists are called to review and reflect upon the assumptions, values and beliefs that underlie and determine the nature of their work with clients. It is the importance of critical self-reflection that has been emphasized in the present study and that has hopefully provided some insight into therapeutic practice that would employ a communal and contextual paradigm.

In reflecting on this responsibility, for many years I believed that it required active participation on the political stage. However, after a number of frustrating attempts and as a result of working through this process, I now believe that what needs to happen, particularly for women who constitute the vast majority of all helping professionals, is to nurture in self and others what Reis (1995) understands as feminine-inspired creativity. In the legend of Inanna, after the goddess draws forth strength from the father's world, she steps onto her own ground. As she does so, new powers appear. As Reis (1995) explains:

> These are the powers she earned by courageously facing the demons and bravely
> undergoing her ordeals. They are her womanly powers, the ones that make the flow
> of power go in the right direction... Her creativity is no longer driven by the
> personal or cultural fathers. Her work becomes a self-chosen task of cultivating, the

making of a womanly contribution to the community, something for the common

good, in whatever field she chooses. This is a woman's power to create. (p. 253)

With a degree that reads *Master of Psychotherapy and Spirituality*, I believe that this is our

task.

Recommendations for Further Research

The present study is one woman's experience. The hope is that it will resonate with

others and trigger a process of reflection and questioning that could conceivably lead to

additional academic exploration. These studies would certainly provide a greater depth of

insight into the experience of coming into relation with a complex.

To consider other possibilities for research, it is necessary to revisit the feminist

belief that personal experience cannot be separated from contextual factors. With this

assumption, it is assumed that someone of a different gender, race, economic standing,

sexual orientation or physical/mental ability would have a very different experience of a

complex even if it appeared to bear a marked similarity to what has been named Sisyphus.

When consideration is given to the number of complexes noted within a Jungian lexicon,

the possibilities expand exponentially. To give a brief example, for a male researcher, it

may be relevant to explore the experience of a mother complex, the puer who is afraid of

growing up, the senex who is locked into acting like an old man, the anima as the feminine

principle in men or the hero. Gillette and Moore (1991) have added to this list by naming

the king, warrior, magician and lover as four archetypal energies that determine a variety of

male complexes.

Although significant research has already been done in many of these areas, further

studies can only expand awareness into the positive masculine and strengthen

understanding between the sexes. As evident by statistics regarding divorce, Alberta is

recorded as holding the record rate per capita (Barefoot, 2008), this is sorely needed. In addition, speaking professionally, by reading texts such as the one by Gillette and Moore and Robert Bly's (2004) *Iron John*, I have gained greater insight into the male psyche, and that has contributed to my therapeutic work with men. The fact that, in my experience, more men are coming into the counselling room seems a positive sign for personal and societal change, and therefore, additional insight would be most welcome.

Another possible area for future research lies in Carl Jung's (1964) response to a question about whether or not he believed in God. Jung is reported to have said that he knew that God existed because of the events that continued to create upheaval in his life. As indicated in my exploration, it was by going through a period of intense conflict that I came to an acceptance of what it meant to be human and this strengthened what Edinger (1973) refers to as the ego-Self axis. A research question might be whether, for others, the process of working through a complex increases the capacity for experiencing that which is sacred and transcendent.

One of the implications of this study is that a purely cognitive behavioral approach is not the most effective way of addressing a persistent and deep-rooted complex such as Sisyphus. However, as indicated earlier in the passage by Gendlin (1990), part of being present to a client is keeping an extensive body of theoretical knowledge close at hand. Certainly, cognitive-behavioral principles and techniques would belong to that collection. Therefore, one significant avenue for future research may be an exploration of how depth therapy could blend with cognitive behaviorism to expand and strengthen therapeutic practice.

A final area of research might expand the focus on individual complexes to the level of community and nation. Certainly Carl Rogers (1989, 1961) believed in addressing

psychological issues at this level. To follow in his footsteps could suggest a number of significant studies that might give insight into issues around criminality and even terrorism.

Synthesizing What has been Learned

To return to the focus of the study as the experience of relationship with the complex named Sisyphus, the lesson is that one must separate from a state of immersion in order to release the visions of sugar plums and face the actuality of the self. It requires a deep and full acceptance of humanness in terms of vulnerability, weakness and limitation but also of the strength that comes from valuing experiential knowledge. The process is both emotional and intellectual. One cannot move through the three stages by relying on cognitive analysis alone. In fact, in my experience, this simply fueled the obsessive clinging to control that exacerbated the cycling of the demonic Sisyphus. There must be a letting go that, for me, was symbolized by releasing the cloak of rational certitude. To be human is to know and to not know, to be competent and incompetent. The gift of being in conscious relation with masculine energy released the desperate need to prove self-worth, a proving that brought only disconnection and the powerlessness of dependence, and thus, opened the way to knowing a genuine connectedness with self, with others and with transcendence.

To explicate my experience of the sacred as it relates to being in relation with the self and others is challenging. The reader may remember van Manen's (1990) belief that, due to its complexity, experience is "a mystery in need of evocative comprehension" (p. 50). How much more difficult then is the evocation of one's relationship with transcendence. However, it has been mentioned repeatedly throughout the work and therefore warrants the attempt. With reflection, it seems best illustrated through two interwoven threads. The first was the ever-deepening faith in a force that I did not

understand but that clearly pushed and pulled me forward. As phrased by Rand (1997), I came to believe in the reality of an "an innate psychic hunger that draws us to wholeness" (p. 82). For me, the fact that this hunger never ceased, in spite of ongoing resistance, spoke of the existence and the power of transcendence.

Secondly, it was the theme of relationship itself, played out in so many ways that defined the other thread. In the words of Clark and Olson (2000):

A sense of *being in relationship with* [italics have been added) is a universal baseline common to all cognitive, affective, and behavioral expressions of faith. Indeed, some would say that without faith one cannot be authentically human, inasmuch as being human rests on a condition of incompleteness, and requires "existential openness toward transcendence." Simply stated, to be human means that one is not alone; it is in our relationships that we "live and move and have our being." (p. 19)

As noted in the *Analysis*, it was a major insight to see Sisyphus as two seemingly contradictory sides of the same coin. To reframe this in terms of Clark and Olson's definition of being in relation with transcendence, although envy, comparison and judgment determined a state of isolation; in apparent contradiction, throughout the research process, the drive to stand on the mountain peak of perfection was all about relationship. With the pragmatic need to be in relation with the academic father in order to complete the thesis, a splitting occurred that addressed the central concept in a number of different ways. In concrete terms, there was the relationship with my friend and mentor. Then through the research process, I pulled in and claimed a number of different components that related to relationship. These included an early connection with the feminine through childhood friendships and the natural world, a valuing of my involvement with others in healing

circles and a long list of personally-significant authors. With ongoing guidance from Moustakas, Sela-Smith and Romanyshyn, I was gradually able to release ego control and allow myself to sink more deeply into the unknown. Eventually the current carried me into conscious relationship with Sisyphus as guide and helpmate. By the end, when I knew that I could write the thesis, isolation and aloneness had been largely replaced by an acceptance of human strength and limitation in myself and in others. No longer did I need to live a stance of powerlessness and distancing in order to survive and no longer did the other need to be godlike. As I freed the father and knew that I could cope with his or her response, whether engaging or rejecting, I freed myself. To let go of needing to control and manipulate was to know myself in relationship on many levels and it was this reality of interconnectedness that spoke to me of being in relation with the sacred.

Finally, it was the burgeoning awareness of equal partnership, a partnership that went beyond the individual to embrace the transpersonal forces of the feminine and masculine that was the central lesson of the study. An additional example is used here to illustrate. With her emphasis on grounding in the instinctual feminine, Woodman (1985) draws on the metaphor of being in relation with the virgin archetype. In her framework, the concept of virginity does not relate to chastity but rather to the free, fecund and untrammeled essence of a virgin forest. In human terms, it manifests as "the courage to Be and the flexibility to be always Becoming" (p. 117). As she maintains, women who consciously relate to this archetypal energy do not make mothering synonymous with femininity and nor are they hampered by unconscious material from their own personal mothers. Instead, by going through the agony and the joy of an initiation process, they come to an authentic knowing of who they are and a commitment to continuing the journey. As I have come to understand, through this relationship with the totality of the

virgin as the "one-in-herself" (Woodman, 1985, p. 117), I have felt strong and pliable enough to surrender to the penetration of masculine energy and to bring the fruit of that union into the creation of this work.

To draw back from the personal for a moment, one explicit purpose of the study has been to address the practice of psychotherapy. Although discussed earlier, by including a brief reference from a text titled *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, it assumes a rightful place in this concluding passage. Although the sexist language is somewhat disconcerting, Wilhelm (1962) offers words of wisdom to female therapists in his response to an ancient adept who declares that, "If the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way. [As Wilhelm states] This Chinese saying, unfortunately all too true, stands in sharp contrast to our belief in the 'right' method irrespective of the man who applies it" (p. 83). For me, the research process has lent support to the conviction that by being in conscious relationship with a complex such as Sisyphus, I have moved that much closer to being the *right woman* who can use therapeutic knowledge, skills and techniques in the *right way*.

Finally, it is important to re-emphasize the significance of ongoing process, a reminder of Woodman's (1985) description of *being* and *becoming*. Although there has been a sense of resolution by identifying and explicating the three stages, it is invaluable with a complex such as Sisyphus to not take oneself too seriously or to believe that one has arrived. Both are triggers for slipping back into inflation as preparatory to the fall. In agreement with Romanyshyn (2007), the wounded researcher must now let go of the work and return to everyday life. While this may not possess the intensity of the research process, it can be viewed as an ongoing exploratory path and one well worth walking.

McNeely (1991) captures the necessity of this final letting go by looking at her completed text and declaring that, while "Every chapter calls out to be extended and revised again and again" (p. 180), she decides to take a friend's advice and release the need for a perfect product by using the phrase *Animus Aeternus* in the title of her work. However, as she describes, this is not the final step because she then turns to the Trickster who says, "Call up a man and ask if you can stop now" (p. 180).

In my case, I direct the question to Sisyphus. He replies, "Yes. It is *good enough*."

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