

Exploring the *Hero's Journey* as a Transformative Experience:
Self-revelatory Performance as Personal Therapy and Healing

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Abstract

Exploring the *Hero's Journey* as a Transformative Experience: Self-revelatory Performance as Personal Therapy and Healing Jennifer Furlong

The intention of this research paper is to share with the reader my transformative experience of exploring the *hero's journey* through the process of qualitative research (heuristic and arts-based) and Drama Therapy (self-revelatory performance, dramatic projection, Developmental Transformations, embodiment, role and counter-role), including the spiritual practice of shamanism, and how confronting and assimilating shadow parts of myself allowed me to heal a fractured self-concept. I will be including my personal therapy experiences and how various Drama Therapeutic research methodologies were used to help aid in my healing of past traumatic events. The three-year therapeutic journey that I undertook to remove obstacles in my life ended with a culminating enactment (Emanah, 1994) in the form of my self-revelatory performance. The process constituted a self-revelatory journey into the underworld of my psyche to meet and express shadow qualities such as rage, jealousy, sadness and guilt. The purpose of this journey was to learn about my own self-transformation by undertaking the *hero's journey* via a self-revelatory performance. This is my story of how an ordinary woman found within herself a mythical hero who saved the most precious thing in the entire world, herself; and then gave the ultimate boon to her community by showing them her process.

Acknowledgements

“The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his super human passage” (Campbell, 1968, p. 97)

I would like to acknowledge those who gave supernatural aid during this project: Dr. Stephen Snow, Allison Aylward, Mira Rozenberg, Shelley Snow, Phil Jones, David-Jan Jurasek, Bonnie Harnden, Yehudit Silverman, Calli Armstrong, Margaret Owen, My Drama Therapy class, Marlene Furlong, Terry Furlong and Pearl Mcharry, Marie-Christine Morel, Mary Helen Hulley, and of course I feel I should mention Joseph Campbell for his inspirational ideas regarding the *hero's journey*.

I want to acknowledge my Mom, Joanne Furlong, along with a prayer that one day she too may set out on her own *hero's journey* and learn to accept her darkness.

Most of all I want to thank my hero, Jennifer Lee Furlong. Remember Jenn, that you are and always will be a *Gunslinger*.

And, finally, I want to praise God and say thank you for illuminating and transforming my life.

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The destiny I've chose all becoming clear. The currents of the sea; the time is drawing near. Washes me away and makes me disappear. And I descend from grace, in arms of undertow; I will take my place in the great below.

-*The Great Below*
Nine Inch Nails

From the "great above" she set her mind towards the "great below," The goddess, from the "great above" she set her mind towards the "great below," Inanna, from the "great above" she set her mind toward the "great below."

-Sumerian myth of the goddess Inanna's descent into the nether world

You have come from the shadow of the heroin and the shadow of your brother my friend. Come from the shadow of yourself if you dare.

-*The Gunslinger*
Stephen King

"If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration.

-Jerzy Grotowski

Introduction

Summary and Description of the Inquiry: “Facing the Shadow”

“Get to school you stupid bitch!” “I wish I never had you!” “You are such a beautiful girl!” “You are my Angel.” These are things that I grew up hearing from my mother. My mother suffers from borderline personality disorder and is also an alcoholic. Growing up, my mother would fluctuate between loving and hating me. It was incredibly confusing and I learned as a child that I was a terrible person; in fact, probably even evil. I internalized all of her anger and it turned into rage against myself. I had an intense hatred of myself and saw myself as “bad.” Coming into the Drama Therapy program, I was able to develop insight into this hatred of myself through intensive personal therapy.

For the last three years, I have been in therapy dealing with issues of abuse and trauma. I’ve participated in both Psychotherapy and Drama Therapy, and realized through this process that I have emotions that have been killed and cut off. In order to be a complete human being, I needed to retrieve these emotions and accept them through loving kindness. In *Exploring archetypal images, especially the shadow, through the medium of Drama Therapy* (2003), Tornyai quotes Sam Keen as saying,

We need to become what Carl Jung called “the shadow.” Those heroes and leaders toward peace in our time will be those men and women who have the courage to plunge into the darkness at the bottom of the personal and corporate psyche and face the enemy within. Depth Psychology has presented us with the undeniable wisdom that the enemy is constructed from denied aspects of the self. Therefore the radical commandment “love your enemy as yourself” points the way toward both self-knowledge and “peace.”
(pp. 8-9)

Through dramatic projection (Jones, 1996), using the myth of the hero, characters, Tarot cards and song in therapy, I have been able to recognize the shadow parts of myself that need to be hunted down and revived. To be able to admit and show my peers the rageful, envious, guilty,

shameful parts of myself that inhabit the underworld of my existence is my definition of the hero's journey. Tornyai (2003), again, quotes Sam Keen explaining the same concept, "Keen thinks that the heroes and heroines of our time will be those who have enough bravery to face, integrate and love the dark sides of themselves" (p. 8). What does it really mean to face the shadow? According to Zweig and Abrams (1991), "Owning the shadow involves confronting it and assimilating its contents into an enlarged self-concept" (p. 239). For me, facing the shadow is enacting and embodying the abusive parent that hurt me and then expressing all of the anger, sadness and shame I felt at the time, but was never able to express.

I feel that being part of the Drama Therapy program has allowed me to be witnessed for the first time in my life. Being seen, being heard, and having people believe in me and my abilities, have had a profound impact on my life. I realized that if other people could accept me for who I was, then I needed to do the same thing for myself. I needed to confront this rage and hatred of myself, face my shadow and take off the role of the villain that my mother placed on me so many years ago. After I faced my shadow, I put on a different role. The role that I wanted to take on was the hero, whom I see as the survivor of this horrible abuse. So, I engaged myself in a quest. I needed to go into the underworld, into the great below, and find my shadow. By facing this internal rage, I was able to transform and heal the painful experience of being abused. I have followed a heuristic research methodology in my personal *hero's journey*, using a self-revelatory performance as a rite of passage. I wanted to find out if doing this could have a transformative and, perhaps even, healing impact on me. I set myself a challenge to reveal something painful in front of an audience in order to publicly challenge others to do the same (Grotowski, 1968). I participated in the rite of passage (which can be seen as the *hero's journey*) to heuristically explore its potential for self-transformation.

The Field of Inquiry

Literature Review

Could descending into the depths of my own personal hell by using the *hero's journey* to confront my shadow, help me to heal suffering? In *The archetypal foundation of the therapeutic process*, Sullivan explains that the psyche, the innermost core of a human being, holds the greatest healing: "We know that within each individual lie the seeds of one's own personal healing" (Sullivan, 1986, p. 28). Sullivan views the psyche as being held up by archetypes (Sullivan, 1986, p. 27). This means that we construct our realities by using images such as Mother, Father, Animus and Anima, God and Devil. The way that one gets to that inner most core, according to Sullivan, is through regression into suffering or a descent into the underworld. Sullivan compares theories of Jung, Sanders, Perera, Balint, Winnicott, and Kohut and links them to the archetypal foundation of the therapeutic process. Sanders' theory of symbolic healing, has an element of confrontation and manipulation of evil, "Through the experience of rage and other negative emotions directed at all the people who can be blamed for the pain of existence, the patient begins to face his or her own evil (rage)" (Sullivan, 1986, p. 34). I want to confront the rage that I have about the abuse my mother inflicted on me and heal my suffering; that is the goal of my journey in the self-revelatory performance.

In *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*, Miller discusses how children of child abuse survive abusive parents by cutting off parts of themselves that are discouraged by their parents. When I was growing up, it was unacceptable for me to show any emotion other than happiness to my mother. I therefore had to repress these emotions and I believe the emotions became buried in my psyche which I now designate *the underworld*. Miller states, "On the basis of my experience, I think that the cause of an emotional disturbance is to be

found in the infant's early adaptation. The child's needs for respect, echoing, understanding, sympathy and mirroring have had to be repressed, with several serious consequences" (Miller, 1997, p. 9). Miller discusses the consequences of this repression: "one such consequence is the person's inability to experience consciously certain feelings of his own (such as jealousy, envy, anger, loneliness, helplessness, or anxiety), either in childhood or later in adulthood" (Miller, 1997, p. 9). The solution that Miller proposes is to rediscover one's own historical truth, "... the experience of one's own truth, and the post ambivalent knowledge of it, make it possible to return to one's own world of feelings at an adult level- without paradise, but with the ability to mourn" (Miller, 1997, p. 9).

Christine Downing in her inspiring article *Journey's to the Underworld* explains, "The underworld seems to be an inescapable metaphor, what Jung calls an archetype" (Downing, 1998, p. 179). In her thirties, Downing became seriously depressed and thought of killing herself by swimming into the ocean. The night before she was going to attempt this descent, she had a dream that made her see that a symbolic death not the actual death, (a journey into the underworld) may be enough to create a transformation. Downing explains, "In retrospect, I came to view that difficult time in my thirties as what taught me that the underworld is itself a sacred realm" (Downing, 1998, p. 176).

My quest is to find out if exploring the *hero's journey* in a self-revelatory performance could be transformative. What is the *hero's journey*? The *hero's journey* to me is a quest to gain a spiritual vision of myself. To find the essence of myself by going into the deepest, darkest regions of my soul is what the *hero's journey* means to me. The hero's quest to me is a journey to my own personal underworld and back. The way out is through.

When one looks to define the hero's journey, it becomes obvious that there are two components at work; the myth or archetype of the hero and the journey or the quest that the hero takes. Hollis (2004) states that the hero's quest embodies two ideas, "the hero and the quest, each of which has a discernable lineage and separable meaning, yet synergistically enlarge each other" (p. 30).

Much has been written about the archetype of the hero. According to Butler (1979), "The hero is an archetypal figure, a paradigm who bears the possibilities of life, courage, love" (p. 6). Campbell (1968) views the archetype of the hero as a symbol for all of mankind. Campbell believes that there is a hero in each and every one of us. The hero may succeed or fail at his task, but remains a hero none the less (Campbell, 1968). I view the archetype of the hero as an essence inside every one of us just waiting to be discovered. In the book *Mythologems, Incarnations of the Invisible World*, Hollis describes that same essence, "The hero mythologem is a personification of the energy necessary to serve life's transpersonal agenda, especially its developmental sequences" (Hollis, 2004, p. 59). A mythologem is the central most important part of a myth (Hollis, 2004, p. 7).

Now, to illuminate the journey or quest the hero takes. The journey the hero takes, according to Campbell, is a cycle; departure, initiation and return (Campbell, 1988). In *The hero with a thousand faces*, the hero's journey is summed up perfectly by Campbell:

The mythological hero, setting forth from his common-day hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark, or be slain by the opponent and descend in death. Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give him magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. (Campbell, 1968, p. 227)

In Sullivan (1986), Campbell's journey of the hero is described as, "preparations for the journey, descent of the hero, encounters with the underworld forces, a successful ultimate ordeal and the return to the upper world" (p. 28). This links to Jung's idea of *coniunctio* which can also be seen as a journey to the underworld, "The mercurial fountain, king and queen, the naked truth: The bath: Death, ascent of the soul: Purification, the return of the soul: The new birth" (Sullivan, 1986, p. 36).

The *hero's journey* myth has been used as a way to view the personality by Jung. Jung like Campbell views the hero myth as a cycle. Segal (1998) states:

Myths of the hero most readily fit Jung's theory. In contrast to creation myths, hero myths already come packaged as myths about personalities rather than about the impersonal world. Yet Jung's psychological interpretations of hero myths makes the symbolized not persons but part of the mind. Like the myth of the child, the myth of the hero symbolizes at once an archetype and, even more, the psychological life cycle. (p. 216)

In the work of Jungian psychotherapist Sullivan (1986), "the Monomyth" is used as a template for the therapeutic process. The hero leaves his normal realm of existence and descends into the underworld which is his own personal hell. Sullivan states, "He confronts hostile and helpful forces in a variety of forms" (Sullivan, 1986, p. 29). The hero returns to his world after this descent into the shadowy realm with a healing boon (Campbell, 1968), "where the treasures of the underworld rejuvenate his life" (Sullivan, 1986, p. 29).

After reading *The Power of Myth* with Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers (1988), I realized what Campbell was saying about the hero and the *hero's journey* could be seen as a therapeutic process. The stages of the *hero's journey* which are departure, initiation and return could be linked to the therapeutic performance processes of need identifying, rehearsal and showing in Drama Therapy (Jones, 1996).

My goal in creating a performance was to physically go through the stages of the *hero's journey* in a theatrical frame and see if this could cause a transformation in me. This naturally led me to conduct heuristic, arts-based research for this project.

In order to explore my experience of the hero and the *hero's journey* I would employ the heuristics research method. Heuristic research comes from the Greek word *heuretikos* which means "I find" and is related to "eureka" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). In reviewing the essence of my experience of abuse, heuristic research provided me with the most effective frame. Heuristic research, "is a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39). Clark Moustakas created this methodology by abandoning the traditional scientific approach, which is to look outward for the answer and he instead turned the outward search into an internal subjective search. Moustakas inward search could also be seen as a descent into the underworld of the soul, a journey to the center of the experience. Heuristic research is not only for qualitative research, "Heuristics can be used in any science, in any research endeavor where the inquiry is on the cutting edge of new territory being explored" (Sela-Smith, 2002, p. 58). I followed the steps of the heuristic inquiry which are: Immersion, Acquisition and Realization as I developed my performance based on the *hero's journey*.

I found an article about the *hero's journey* being used as a metaphor for counseling development. The *hero's journey* is explored in several ways as a metaphor for counseling and development. First of all the client, who comes to therapy because of a sudden loss, could be seen as having the template of the *hero's journey* thrust upon them. It is at this point in their journey that one decides whether to answer the call to adventure or refuse the call straight out (Lawson, 2005). The *hero's journey* metaphor can be used to motivate clients and put a different

spin on any obstacles they may be facing at the time (Lawson, 2005). Another way to explore the metaphor of the *hero's journey* is used by the therapist. The therapist becomes the guide to the client and is thrown into exploring their own *hero's journey*.

The rite of passage of the self-revelatory performance, which could be seen as a heroic journey, has been discussed by Elayne Doughty in *The Clay Baby: Finding My Roots. Self-revelatory Performance as a Rite of Passage and Initiation*, "I see these performances as rites of passage and initiation for the performer that mark the end of one cycle, and the beginning of a new cycle" (Doughty, 2000, p .8). Van Gennep (1968) describes rite of passage as, "The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another" (pp. 2-3). Using the self-revelatory performance to journey into the underworld could be seen as a transition rite of passage, from descent to ascent.

Yehudit Silverman's Drama Therapy technique *The Story Within - Myth and Fairy Tale in Therapy* uses myth and story as a way to access personal material safely and in a contained way. Her approach is a new one that uses the link between the creative process and the therapeutic process to help guide the client through the story of their choice to promote awareness of one's own personal myth (Silverman, 2004). The myth or story is used as a container in therapy and as a way to view one's own personal journey. Reading Silverman's article made the "unknown" less scary to me and I liked her idea of a *story within* that holds hidden treasure waiting to be discovered.

After observing my class with Professor Silverman and reading her article, I started to take a look at what Emunah had to say about self-revelatory performance. I read her chapter on this subject and was struck by one thing in general. Emunah (1993) talks about the self-revelatory performance being a new type of theatre and a new type of therapy. When I read the

theses by Samantha May (2002) and Sheila Rubin (1996) they also state that the self-revelatory performance is a new phenomenon and an excellent tool to be able to access our personal story and as a training tool for future Drama therapists.

Because I was starting to become more interested in the performance as ritual, I read the chapter by Dr. Stephen Snow, "Ritual/Theatre/Therapy," in *Current Approaches in Drama Therapy* (2000), Snow articulates that the construction of the self-revelatory performance can be seen as an ancient ritual and also as a healing practice, too (Snow, 2000). Snow (2000) has this to say about using archetypes in the ritual: "The course that an archetype imposes on an individual might well be described as a rite of passage and, for many Jungians, the process of the psychotherapy is exactly that: a rite of passage that takes one into the depths of the unconscious and then out again" (p. 223). Snow reviews Emunah's work and cites a famous quote from her book: "The therapeutic impact of performance is different from, and often greater than, process-oriented drama therapy" (Emunah as cited in Snow, 2000, p. 218), indicating how "self-rev" can be powerful therapeutic work.

I witnessed a heroic act by David-Jan Jurasek (2005) performing in a self-revelatory performance. In his thesis, Jurasek went on a journey to explore the role of guide within himself. Watching him on stage confirmed my belief that the self-revelatory performance can be healing. Again, I also had this feeling that the self-revelatory performance was a ritual that was performed as a heroic act and as a rite of passage. His journey, that is well-documented in his thesis, used the role of the guide to access, safely, some very painful memories. After a personal and professional breakdown Jurasek, decided to immerse himself in the role of the guide in a heuristic study to find his inner guide (Jurasek, 2005).

I've have also explored how Tarot cards can be used to access the knowable archetypes. The way that I wanted to use the Tarot cards was as a projective instrument to help with the acquisition of knowledge and to perhaps get at the archetype of the hero. In *The Use of Tarot Cards as an Archetypal, Projective Instrument*, Kopp states that it is possible to use the card as a projective instrument and as a way of accessing archetypal images (Kopp, 1983). However, Kopp mentioned that the only archetypes that are available for discovery are the already known archetypes. He said that it is impossible for anyone using any means to access the unknowable archetype. This will help to de limit my research while dealing with the hero archetype.

What I believe I accomplished with my self-revelatory performance was to use it as a rite of passage based on the *hero's journey* to the underworld and back. Using the self-revelatory performance as personal therapy to aid in my own healing, allowed me to add to the body of knowledge in regards to this subject.

The Hero's Journey

My Therapeutic Journey

My hero's journey began in May 2006 when I awoke one morning and decided that I was going to call upon the great hero inside me who would help me beat Lupus. I had been diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosis in April 2006, after almost a year of being unable to get out of bed. After my first semester of Drama Therapy, I became so utterly exhausted that I thought I was dying. I had a rash all over my chest and migraine headaches that lasted for days on end. I had gastrointestinal problems so severe that I had to stay in the bathroom for hours and would just lie on the floor thinking of how I would ever survive and if the end of my life was near. I was in severe pain throughout my entire body, and taking a bath and feeding myself became monumental tasks. When I was finally diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosis, I was

immediately put on Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and Hydroxychloroquine, an antimalarial medication found to be particularly effective for SLE patients. After the medication started taking effect, I began thinking of how I could help heal myself with Drama Therapy. I kept hearing people's voices in my head about how strong I was to be dealing with this disease and how I was so brave, in fact people went so far to say that I was "their hero." This is when I made a ritual marking on my skin that would be a symbol to me (see Appendix C) and to others that I was now the hero and would fight and win over this disease. I felt like I was called to a great adventure, so I pierced the bridge of my nose and took off on the hero's journey.

This crisis precipitated another event. I also immediately entered into Psychotherapy when I became well enough and realized, after many months, that I had an internal rage against myself because of my childhood abuse. Systemic Lupus Erythematosus is when the body's immune system starts to attack healthy cells in the body. The immune system becomes confused and starts to attack its host as if it was the enemy. My body was attacking itself physically and I was attacking myself through self-destructive thoughts and behaviors because I was taught to hate myself. It was as if my behavior was creating a physiological response from my body. I knew that in order for me to get healthy again I would need to fight both the disease and the behaviors that were keeping me sick. My therapeutic process throughout the three years was to learn how to love and accept myself.

Creative Arts- Based Research Methods

Description of the Arts-based Methodologies and Their Implementation

Self-revelatory performance

Emunah (1994) explains that, “Self-revelatory performance is based on one’s real life, it presents issues who exposure demands a high level of risk taking, partly because they are current issues, rather than past issues which have already been resolved” (p. 224). The self-revelatory performance can be seen as a very heroic act as the performances involve courage and bravery, “they are applauded not only for their creative achievement, but for the process they have been through in creating it, for their courage to reveal themselves, and for who they are as people” (Emunah, 1994, p. 290). The self-revelatory performance allows the actor a chance to play at new roles that may have seemed impossible for them. For example, in my experience, being cast in the role of Victim because of abuse, and then, enacting the role of a Hero in the Self-revelatory performance which seemed absurd to me, “pretending to be in drama they are able to do something in real life that was previously too difficult or frightening. For it is in the context of drama that they experienced in many cases for the first time in their lives, what had seemed beyond reach in actuality” (Emunah, 1994, p. xv). For David-Jan Jurasek, his self-revelatory performance *Guide? Me? A Self-revelatory Research Inquiry into Becoming a Drama Therapist* allowed him the chance to try on the new role of Drama Therapist: “My immediate life issue, upon starting this research process, was facing the strong desire of fulfilling my life’s vocation of guiding others in the role of therapist while also feeling anxiety and dread about doing so” (Jurasek, 2005, p. 22). The self-revelatory performance could also be used to express repressed shadow sides of a person’s personality, “Drama is a vehicle not only for experiencing and integrating new aspects of ourselves, but also for expressing suppressed shadow aspects of ourselves. Facets of our personalities that have been concealed, from others and often from

ourselves, can be unleashed via the dramatic role” (Emunah, 1994, p. xv). Christine Dion Ciona’s self-revelatory performance *When Cancerman Comes to Dinner: A Therapeutic Exploration of Story and Role through Self-revelatory Performance* involved the very first telling of her story about battling childhood cancer, “this self-revelatory performance journey has been the soul journey that I did not permit myself to experience during the time of my illness” (Ciona, 2001, p. 27). Ciona survived her childhood cancer battle by suppressing the rage and anger she had at being diagnosed with cancer, “I saw the Monster as being both the Monster of cancer-- of being ‘diseased’-- and the monster of rage, hurt, anger and pain; the suppressed emotions of having cancer” (Ciona, 2001, p. 30). For her self-revelatory performance, she went into the underground to find the shadow side. Ciona also links her self-revelatory performance with the journey into *the underworld*, “it involves finding the story of my cancer experience that is necessary to tell remembering my illness and feeling the emotions, fears and sensations involved in this journey into the underground. This self-revelatory performance journey into the underground allows me to find myself” (Ciona, 2001, p. 27).

Drama Therapy Methods Utilized in my Self-Revelatory Performance

Embodiment

In Jones (1996) embodiment is explained as one of the nine core processes of Drama Therapy, “the way the body relates to an individual’s identity is an important element in Drama Therapy work (p. 114). In the performance I embodied my mother’s two sides through the characters, *Sally Sunshine* and *Detta darkness*. I first embodied this character in therapy and it brought up many difficult emotions for me. *Sally Sunshine* was the part of my mother that was happy and smiling all the time, and, through the therapeutic performance process, I realized that I had some *Sally Sunshine* characteristics myself. I realized through feed back from one of the

audience members during the post-performance circle that I only allowed people to see me happy and smiling even when I was terribly sick due to Lupus or depressed because I was getting divorced. The audience member realized through the performance that I hid certain parts of myself from her and encouraged me to show the sadness and the sickness and assured me that she would still be my friend. Embodying the abusive character of *Detta Darkness* was difficult to experience. All of the dialogue that emerged for this character was the abusive comments my mother had made to me. Actually saying the words my mother had said to me, as the character, was difficult and gave me insight into how hurtful it must have been for me to hear them as a child. As a child, your parents are God-like figures, and, when they tell you abusive things about yourself you have no reason to doubt them. Playing *Detta Darkness* increased my empathy for myself and my situation whilst growing up.

As well, the *Wolf Devil* embodied the rage that I had suppressed as a child. During the course of my actual therapy, I realized that I had problems appropriately expressing my anger. I needed to find a way to express my anger in a safe and distanced way and I thought about embodiment of anger through an angry dance. When I needed to express anger or rage, I turned on a really loud Nine Inch Nails song and allowed all of the emotion to be released through the dance. I let my hair cover my face and this became a mask to allow me to become someone else, so that I could distance these emotions if they became too painful. I would look at myself in the mirror, as I was dancing, and sometimes throw objects such as puppets at the mirror. I allowed myself to scream and rage and yell to just express these long held-inside emotions. Afterwards, it would create a sense of relaxation and contentment. Then, I decided to video tape myself doing the dance and show it to my therapist. I was very afraid that she would think I was crazy and tell

me how disgusted she was at me. However, her comments were always accepting and loving, and I began to realize that perhaps showing my anger was not going to destroy people.

Dramatic projection

The characters that I have developed in my self-revelatory performance are a direct result of dramatic projection. Jones (2007) describes dramatic projection as, “the placing of aspects of ourselves or our feelings into other people or things” (p. 137). I used Dramatic projection with the main characters from Stephen King’s *The Dark Tower* in *Developmental Transformations*. I continued with them in developing my performance. Jones (2007) explains how story can be used as dramatic projection, “In Drama Therapy clients can use an existing text or create their own script to work from, these are worked with so that the client can find their own associations, meaning or interpretation” (p. 153). When I was reading Stephen King’s *The Dark Tower*, I saw similarities between my life and the main character *Roland Deschain*. In the beginning of the story he is viewed as a loner, and outsider with no friends or companions, and I related to this. He learns through-out the story that he needs people to succeed on his quest to the Dark Tower and develops a small group of friends who aid and support him. I also learned that I need people and despite the traumatic events that have happened to me, I must continue to reach out to others instead of isolating myself for fear of being hurt.

I also used Dramatic projection with the Tarot cards. I used each of the cards to help me develop the characters and I projected certain qualities of myself onto the cards. *The Fool* came to symbolize *the Hero* who sets out on a new adventure. *The Man in Black* was *The Magician* as he is the typical trickster. *The Sun* represented the child and *The Eight of Swords* became the prisoner, as it is a card with a picture of a woman bound and blindfolded surrounded by swords as if she was imprisoned. *The Empress* is the archetype of Mother in the Tarot, so I used this card

to symbolize my mother, using the card right side up to symbolize *Sally Sunshine* and reversed for *Detta Darkness*. *The Devil* was chosen to represent the shadow side and *Justice* was used to symbolize the balance being restored to my life by accepting that shadow. *The Tower* was picked for the future adventure that I was now going to set out on and also represented enlightenment and illumination.

Developmental Transformations and Emanation Theory

Developmental Transformations is, “based on the theatrical ideas of Jerzy Grotowski” (Johnson, 2000, p. 87). A developmental transformation is based on many theories, but the one I am most interested in is the Emanation Theory. This theory is based on a belief that the, “world is understood to be flowing out from a fundamental source of existence that remains beyond comprehension” (Johnson, 2000, p. 88). When I was engaged in Developmental Transformations with my Drama therapist, delving into the source of my painful past and embodying how I feel, it helped me to redirect energy that needed to be moved. I believe that trauma that happens in childhood may get stuck in the body. The body is also a very important part of Developmental Transformations. Getting into the body allows for the mind to rest and the instinctual parts of the self to wake up. It is like embodied free association. The body is the ultimate source for us as human beings. When I allowed myself to improvise I was able to get rid of some of my resistances and get to the heart of the matter. Using Developmental Transformations helped me to develop my self-revelatory performance by uncovering exactly what feelings needed to be expressed and witnessed. I paired these feelings with the characters from *The Dark Tower* story and developed a role in which I could safely express, authentic, painful emotions to an audience.

Role Method

I used Role method (Landy, 1994) within the frame of Developmental Transformations (Johnson, 2000), to explore the characters more fully from the story *The Dark Tower* that I was using through Dramatic projection (Jones, 1996). Role method is:

1. Invoking the role.
2. Naming the role.
3. Playing out/working thought of the role.
4. Exploring alternative qualities and sub roles.
5. Reflecting upon the role play: discovering role qualities, functions, and styles inherent in the role.
6. Relating to fictional role to everyday life.
7. Integrating roles to create a functional role system.
8. Social modeling: discovering ways that the clients' behavior in role affects others in their social environments.

(Landy, 1994).

The role method helped me prepare the self-revelatory performance by finding the physical characteristic of the characters for the stage. It allowed me to explore how *Roland Deschain* moved and talked differently from *Detta Darkness*.

The role method helped me find negative qualities to *the Hero* such as arrogance and driving ambition and positive qualities to *the Devil* such as freedom and wild abandon. This allowed the characters to become more dynamic. I then compared and contrasted my behavior compared to the characters, and I began to see myself more objectively.

Shamanism

Obviously, one can not talk of going into the underworld and conjuring up the devil without mentioning shamanism. The connection between shamanism and Drama Therapy has been explored by several theorists (Snow, 2000, Landy, 1994, Jones, 1996, Lewis, 1993, Johnson, D.R, 2000,). What I found to be shamanistic in my performance was the altered state of consciousness that came from the actual performance. In *The Way of the Shaman* by Michael

Harner a Shamanistic State of Consciousness is explained, “The SSC involves not only a “trance” or a transcendent state of awareness, but also a learned awareness of shamanic methods and assumptions while in such an altered state” (Harner, 1980, p. 21). I personally experienced an altered state of consciousness during the performance several times. When I was back stage meditating and chanting before the show began, I was certain that the door leading to the stage would open onto an actual desert: the desert where *Roland* begins his quest to the *Dark Tower*.

During one of the songs I was performing, I also experienced a state of altered consciousness. I heard an audience member crying and I immediately realized that I needed to protect my audience by creating the right amount of distance. Modulating distance (Landy, 1994) is, “at the centre of the distancing paradigm is a balance between the two extremes of over distance and under distance. At this point, the individual is able to think and to feel, and to find a comfortable balance of physical, emotional and intellectual distance” (p. 112).

Qualitative Research Methods

Description of Qualitative Research Methodologies Used and Their Implementations

Heuristic Research Linked with the Hero’s Journey

It was from the exploration of the hero role that my heuristic inquiry began. I started thinking about what the hero meant and how I could see myself and be seen as the hero. This initial stage is what Moustakas describes as Initial engagement: “the task of the initial engagement is to discover an intense interest, a passionate concern that calls out to the researcher, one that holds important social meanings and personal, compelling implications” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27). I wanted to know how my life had been like the hero’s journey: had I done battle with demons and dragons and won? I wanted to know how I could be seen as heroic and, if I did see myself as heroic, was I then egotistical or arrogant?

This call of initial engagement phase can also be seen as the call to adventure in the hero's journey. In the call to adventure the hero is called to the threshold of adventure, "Destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual centre of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" (Campbell, 1968, p. 53).

Because I was not in school at this time, but I knew that I wanted to do a self-revelatory performance, I spent a lot of my time walking around thinking about the hero for my research project. I asked myself the question; what is a hero? I thought about how a hero is someone who does battle with an enemy. I became obsessed with the hero role and immersed myself in the second phase of Moustakas heuristic inquiry, Immersion. As I said, I was thinking about the hero as I was reading Stephen King's series of books called *The Dark Tower*. I thought about how I could possibly be like the hero, *Roland Deschain*, in the Stephen King books. During immersion, "virtually anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion (sic) people, places, meetings and readings" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). I knew I was fighting a great enemy (perhaps the greatest enemy I had ever faced) and, through the help of medication, surviving and getting better, I also wanted to know what other great enemy I had faced in my life and the idea of my childhood abuse became evident.

I link the immersion and incubation phases with Campbell's initiation stage of the *hero's journey* which is the road of many trials. As I was immersed in the role of the hero, my marriage collapsed and I found myself alone. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* Campbell speaks of the road of many trials as "once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials" (Campbell, 1968, p. 89). Being on my own, without my husband, in a strange city with no family and very little social support, I felt like I left reality. I fought a great many battles during this stage and

one of them was with the intense anger I had at being diagnosed with a disease and, subsequently, facing a divorce four months after diagnosis. After my marriage collapsed, I automatically went into survival mode and it was at this time that I temporarily let go of my quest for the hero. I was enrolled in full-time studies and my attention shifted from my question of how my life had been like the *hero's journey* to how will I survive the break up of my marriage and safely navigate through an intense graduate program with very little money. However, by letting go of the quest, I discovered my entire life was very much like the *hero's journey*.

Illumination occurred when I realized that the *hero's journey* could be applied to surviving childhood abuse and trauma. The illumination awakened me to a new role as well, which was the role of the anti-hero, the shadow side of the hero which I named *the Man in black* from *The Dark Tower* stories by Stephen King. Moustakas describes this stage, "the illumination process may be an awakening to new constituents of the experience, thus adding new dimensions of knowledge" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29).

At this time I had started Drama Therapy and was playing with the role of *the Gunslinger*. I found myself unable to play *the Gunslinger*, but able to play his nemesis *the Man in black*. This relates to Landy's (1994) role method as I was able to invoke and name the role of *the Gunslinger*, but I was unable to play out the role. By exploring alternate qualities of *the Gunslinger* such as *the Man in black* this allowed me to relate the role to real life. At this time, I was in taking an amazing workshop given by Phil Jones in which I took on the role of *the Villain*. It was through the work of *the Villain* that I discovered that I had been vilified by my mother for most of my life. No wonder I did not want to play *the Gunslinger*, I viewed myself as evil and bad for most of my life. The role of a mythical hero who is good and true and fights for

justice seemed out of my league. This illuminated me as to how much my past experience imposed on my current behavior.

Moustakas' Illumination stage links with Campbell's *hero's journey* stage of Apotheosis. Apotheosis is where the human hero fights his last demon and becomes illuminated, "like the Buddha himself, this godlike being is a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone before the last terrors of ignorance" (Campbell, 1968, p. 139). These illuminations lead me to use the Tarot cards to access the tacit knowledge stored within my own psyche. By using the Tarot cards, I discovered the name of my anti-hero which was *the Devil*. The fact that I had survived my childhood trauma was very heroic. Sometimes I can't believe that I did survive and shiver with the thought of so many that have perished at the hands of a parent who was suppose to protect and nourish, but ended up destroying the very life they gave birth to.

When I realized that my mother had planted the seeds of self-hatred in my psyche, I started to discover the treasure of my true self and that I was not to blame for the abuse that I suffered. I gained the ultimate boon which was the essence of my being, my true self without the hatred. Campbell states in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in regards to the ultimate boon: "the blind from birth received their sight; the deaf from birth their hearing; the crippled from birth the use of their limbs; and the bond and fetters of captives broke and fell off" (Campbell, 1968, p. 178).

The developmental framework of heuristic research readily fits with the stages of Campbell's *hero's journey* (see Appendix A). In this regard, the Explication phase is like the Ultimate Boon: The Ultimate Boon I awakened to was the fact that I was not to blame for the abuse I had suffered and that no part of me was beyond loving. I needed to further examine this.

In the Explication phase, the purpose “is to fully examine what has awakened in consciousness, in order to understand its various layer of meaning” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31).

The Creative Synthesis of this heuristic journey occurred on May, 8, 2009, when I performed *The hero with my face*, my self-revelatory performance. I took everything that I had discovered through the heuristic research process, therapeutic process, and hero’s journey and put it into a therapeutic performance process. I used the audience as witness (Jones, 1997) to prove to myself that I was not evil or bad. I choreographed a dance for *the Devil*, and made it as scary and as fierce as I could through movement, exploring all of the rage I had stored up in my body since childhood. My hypothesis was that my audience would stay with me to prove that I was worthy of love and respect even if I raged, yelled, and screamed at the top of my lungs. They did stay and this allowed me to come back to my true self; to return as the hero which is the hero’s return in Campbell’s model (1968).

In Moustakas’ *Heuristic Research. Design, Methodology, and Applications*, The Symbolic Growth Experience (SGE) “...refers to a sudden, dramatic shift in perception, belief, or understanding that alters one’s frame of reference or world view” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 99). As a result of this inquiry I have been able to accept that dark *Devil* side of myself and no longer see myself as globally evil or bad. My perception has been shifted as a result of this research and I believe that I have experienced the (SGE).

The Self-revelatory Performance “The hero with my face”

The Cast of Characters

**The Fool- The Gunslinger- The Hero
 The Magician- The Man in Black- The Villain
 The Sun- The Child
 The Eight of Swords- The Prisoner- Depressed Jenn
 The Empress- Sally Sunshine and Detta Darkness- My mother
 The Devil- The Wolf Devil- My internal rage
 The Tower- The Transformation- The healing of past trauma**

Creation

I created the performance based on the characters that I played with in Drama Therapy using Developmental Transformations. As the characters, I took the Tarot cards and placed them on the floor. I had each character take a Tarot card that best described them. As well, I had pieces of music that went with some of the characters to be able to authentically express real emotions from myself. I took these characters and placed them into the first *Dark Tower* story called *The Gunslinger*. In the first book, *Roland Deschain*, the last Gunslinger, is chasing his enemy, *the Man in Black* across the desert. Crossing the desert he meets a child at a way station named Jake. Here, I planted the child version of myself, Jennifer, the wounded child. From the template of *the Dark Tower* story, I created and wove in my own personal story which involved a descent into *the underworld* to rescue another Gunslinger which was also Jennifer. This became the plot of the performance. Upon meeting Jennifer, *Roland* is horrified to find that she does not believe in herself and that she would rather stay in the darkness of *the underworld* than to release the pain she feels towards her mother and ascend into the light. Jennifer stays in the darkness shedding her tears and smoking marijuana to numb her pain. Then, she explains to *the Gunslinger* that she has many reasons to stay in *the underworld* and asks him if he would like to see what she grew up with and why she sees herself as evil and bad. At this point, I embodied the character that represented my mother and authentically expressed her hatred and love towards me. This allowed me to feel the confusion and then rage at being mistreated by her for years. Then, I unleashed the *Devil* character and raged, yelled, danced wildly, and screamed. As *the Devil* character I ripped up a picture of myself and scattered the pieces around the room. Afterwards, I started to self-soothe myself by stroking my hair and telling myself that I was loveable and that I was not evil or bad. At this moment, I realized that all of the rage that I had was legitimate and

that I had every right to feel this pain. I retrieved the pieces of the picture and as I put them on my heart a light was turned up on stage and I was transformed into the hero character.

Performance- Tonight is the Night

Finally, the day that I was to perform the self-revelatory performance arrived. My feelings were surprising. I had two thoughts going through my mind: regarding the performance, I felt, "It is what it is"; regarding myself, I felt: "I am what I am." I could sense the many, many others that had gone before me on this heroic performance journey whether in self-revelatory performance or in performance in general. I felt at peace with my process and I was truly ready to "go for it!" But, on the other hand, more shadowy critical parts of myself felt, "they are all going to laugh at me" and "who do you think you are trying to convince others that you are a hero. You are no hero and you never will be!"

The performance went surprisingly fast (See video, included within). In rehearsals it was almost two hours but during the actual show it was about fifty minutes! The performance itself seemed flawless and was videotaped in high definition. I had no problem authentically communicating to my audience the emotions, thoughts, and body sensations of living with an alcoholic and mentally ill parent. The Drama Therapy exercise at the end of the night was extremely helpful in allowing me to create a reciprocal dialogue between myself and my audience. Everyone had such lovely things to say to me that it made me feel included and loved within my community, something that I thought was impossible for me a little over three years prior. Being the central focus in the circle was intimidating, but very validating to my experience of being abused, living with a disease, getting divorced, and, surviving it all! And I was able, now, to be witnessed in my wholeness: my shadow, my hero, myself.

Post Performance Experience- Catharsis and Depression

Yes, the performance was definitely a double-edged sword for me. I was very high right after the show and had a genuine sense of catharsis. As Emunah (1996) explains, “As buried emotions emerge and are given an outlet for expression, a powerful experience of catharsis occurs” (p. 77). I felt like I had done a good job with the performance and that I had healed a certain part of myself that was broken.

However, a word of warning to those who would like to create a self-revelatory performance: I believe that this type of performance may not be a good idea for those who do not have a solid therapeutic base with a doctor, therapist or spiritual advisor. It has real risks and dangers. It has been recorded in Emunah (1996) that suicide attempts have occurred after the self-revelatory performances: “Post-performance depression in conjunction with the fear of losing the new self image can lead to social withdrawal, substance abuse, or acting-out behavior. In work with people with a psychiatric history, brief rehospitalization and even suicide attempts are not uncommon” (Emunah, 1996, p. 297). I experienced a heightened sense of vulnerability and became depressed as if in a post-partum depression. My baby (the self-revelatory performance) was born and now I was left with a sense of emptiness.

I overcame this feeling of depression by entering back into Drama Therapy. I realized that I was confusing illumination and transformation. After the self-revelatory performance, I thought my life would be miraculously transformed, similar to the stage technique used in the self-revelatory performance at the end, of turning a white light up on an actor. I would be healed and all of the problems in my life would disappear. The next day after the show I still had bills to pay, fears to overcome, new battles to fight and this caused me to feel sad. However, transformation does not happen overnight and can take years. What helped me to overcome the

depression that happened after the show was to realize the difference between illumination and transformation.

I have been illuminated by the fact that I now understand my past and how it affects my daily life. I can overcome self-destructive behaviors and learn to love myself and give myself the things my mother could never give me. The transformation I want, which is to be free from the sadness of the loss I experienced in childhood, will come with time and I know that I need to be patient.

Findings

How the Self-revelatory Performance Was Healing for Me:

1. Identifying myself as a hero, as a Gunslinger had a positive impact on my self image.
2. Audience reaction and applause allowed me to feel a sense of accomplishment
3. Creating something out of nothing, creating my story boosted my self esteem
4. Understanding how I judge myself too harshly and how I need to give myself a break
5. Therapeutic performance process: getting on stage, doing a good job, positive feedback.
6. Feeling at the end of the performance "I did it! I can do this and I am capable."
7. None of my fears came true, such as the audience thinking I was stupid or crazy, and everyone did not get up and start laughing at me.
8. The rage that I felt was able to be fully embodied and was expressed both through the therapy process and in the therapeutic performance process.

The Social-Cognitive Perspective of Why the Self-revelatory Performance Was Healing

Because I learned that anger was never acceptable under any circumstance from my mother, whenever I experienced anger in the past, I would immediately internalize it and become depressed. It was much safer for me as a child to become sad than to express anger. If I could give an analogy here it would be like someone stepping on my foot, and instead of me saying, "hey get off my foot, you jerk!", I would immediately say to myself, internally, "you stupid, dummy, why did you let that person step on your foot?" One can see the great problem that this would create to the personality if every angry response is immediately turned inward towards the self.

This social- cognitive perspective on the personality emphasizes the thinking process of the person which can be affected by the environment, “We learn many of our behaviors either by conditioning or by observing others and modeling our behaviors after them. They emphasize the importance of mental processes: What we think about our situation affects our behavior” (Myers, 1995, p. 488). When I performed the self-revelatory performance, I learned that it was o.k. for me to express anger because my audience did not run away in terror from me. They taught me, by witnessing my “*Devil dance*,” that I could express anger and still be seen as a worthy person. The validating influence between my audience and myself corrected the previous experience of childhood.

The Humanistic Perspective of why the self-revelatory performance was healing

Through the self-revelatory performance, and the Drama Therapy program in general, I have been given unconditional positive regard which was missing from most of my life experiences. I felt in the Drama Therapy program I was accepted for who I was and this was helpful, “People also nurture growth by being accepting, by offering us what Rogers called unconditional positive regard. This is an attitude of grace, an attitude that values us even knowing our failings” (Myers, 1995, p. 481). In my own therapy, my therapists would focus on my strengths and what I had accomplished by being part of the Drama Therapy program and, after the self-revelatory performance was over, what an accomplishment that was.

Limitations of the study

I spent three years working on this research project. However, ironically, I think that time was one of the limitations to this study. I think that if I had another year I could have done more therapeutic work with each of the characters and discovered how each one had a unique and different memory for me.

Because I did research on myself there is definitely danger of bias. However, having a thesis advisor was very helpful in reducing bias. My advisor would make sure that I made my individual experience relate to the general, collective experience. He would always tell me, “the problem with the self-revelatory performance is that it has the potential to be masturbatory” and this helped me to remember that it was not all about me, and, that I needed to be aware of my audience. He helped me find the balance between actor and audience.

I wish I would have had more time to look at the link between Shamanism and Drama Therapy. I believe that we need to increase our understanding of this link by actually going into altered states during performance and talking about them and analyzing them afterward.

Summary and Discussion

The goals of the project were:

1. See how Drama Therapy works from the inside.
2. To experience how performance is therapeutic.
3. To find out how the self-revelatory performance is a ritual.
4. To experience a transformation from one stage of life to the next.
5. To understand my own self-transformation by undertaking the hero's journey via a self-revelatory performance.

I believe that every one of the goals were met on this project. By completing my Master's Thesis, now, I am going from one stage of life to the next; from the student to the practicing Drama Therapist. I must stress the importance of doing Drama Therapy whilst in the program. It has been invaluable to my journey in so many ways. I believe that I will be a better Drama Therapist, because I know what it is like from both sides of the couch, so to speak. I was able to participate in several Drama Therapy modalities and it allowed me to experience how they actually work in the real world. Instead of reading about Developmental Transformations, I was participating, witnessing and actually doing this Drama Therapy technique. It was invaluable to me as a therapist to be able to put into practice what I studied. But, it takes a great amount of

courage and bravery to put yourself out there and admit you need therapy. I have a tremendous amount of respect for those who undertake this heroic journey because it is not easy. As Sullivan (1986) explains, therapy is a hero's journey. Facing your shadow side and learning to love it is one of the hardest things that one can do with a life. I have to say, even now I am not in love with myself, I like myself and I don't hate myself anymore, but the love has yet to arrive. I'm hoping with the passing of each year in my personal therapy that this is something that will inevitably arrive. Better late than never.

It has been my dream to become a Drama Therapist for almost a decade now. I started out in 2001, with an interest to discover what Drama Therapy actually is, and I have to admit I still have many questions. But, I look at it like this: Drama Therapy is a heroic journey of adventure into the unknown of our own hearts and if we, in the words of *the Gunslinger*, "Stand and be true," we will be victorious.

"Stand and be true."

-Roland Deschain, of *Gilgamesh*

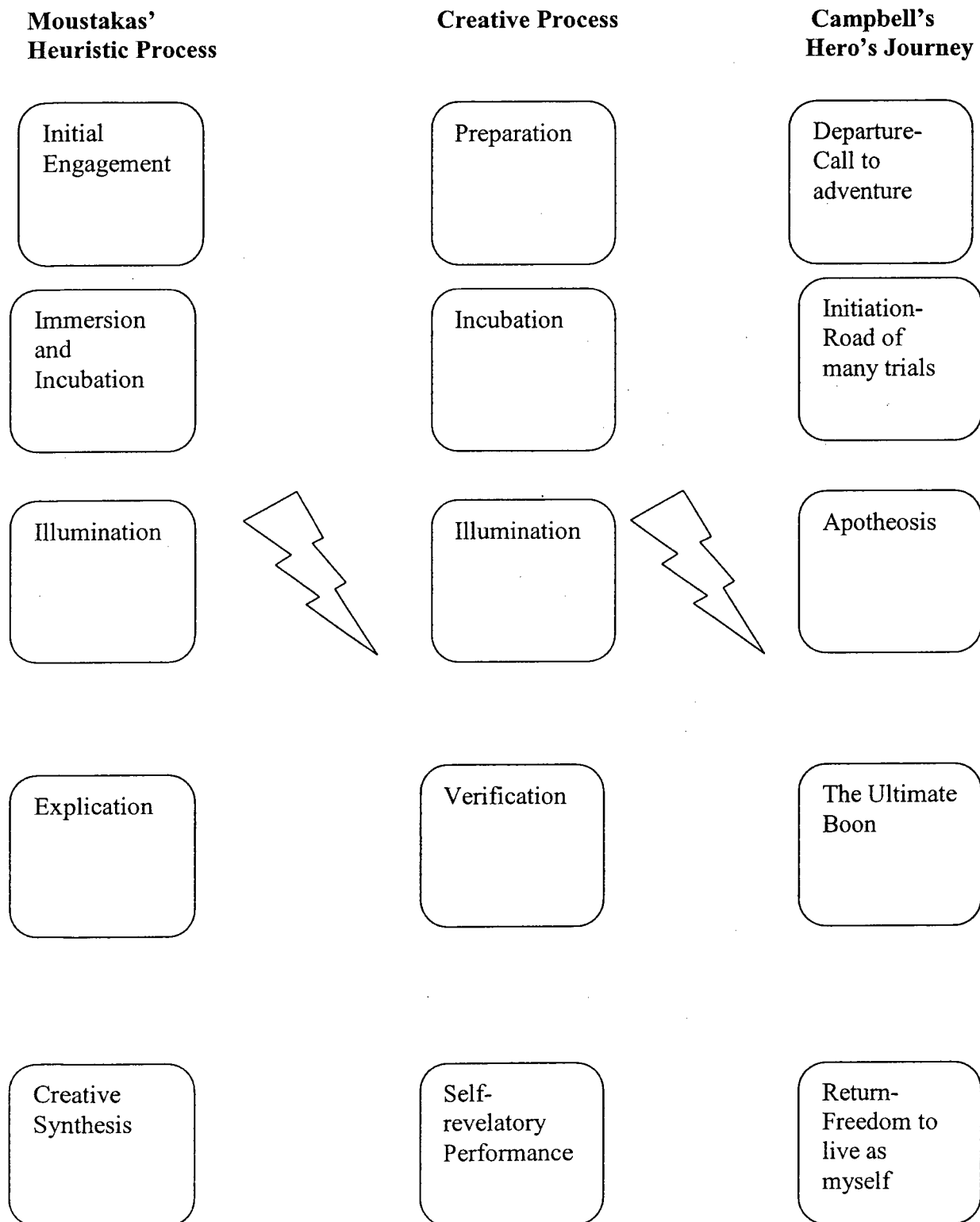
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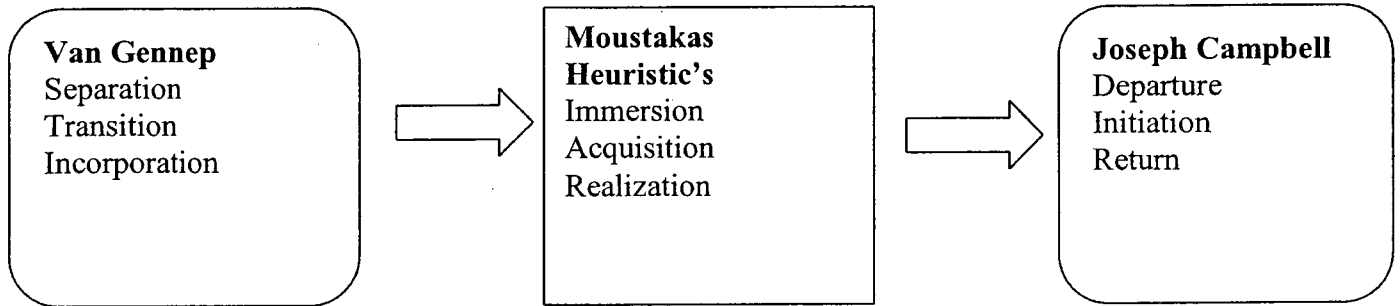
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Appendix A



Appendix B

Appendix C



The Hero with my Face
A musical Self Revelatory Performance by Jenn Furlong.

“If the actor, by setting himself a challenge publicly challenges others, and through excess, profanation and outrageous sacrilege reveals himself by casting off his everyday mask, he makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self penetration. -Jerzy Grotowski

You have come from the shadow of the heroin and the shadow of your brother my friend. Come from the shadow of yourself if you dare.-The Gunslinger- Stephen King

The destiny I've chose all becoming clear. The currents of the sea; the time is drawing near. Washes me away and makes me disappear. And I descend from grace, in arms of undertow; I will take my place in the great below.-The Great below -NIN

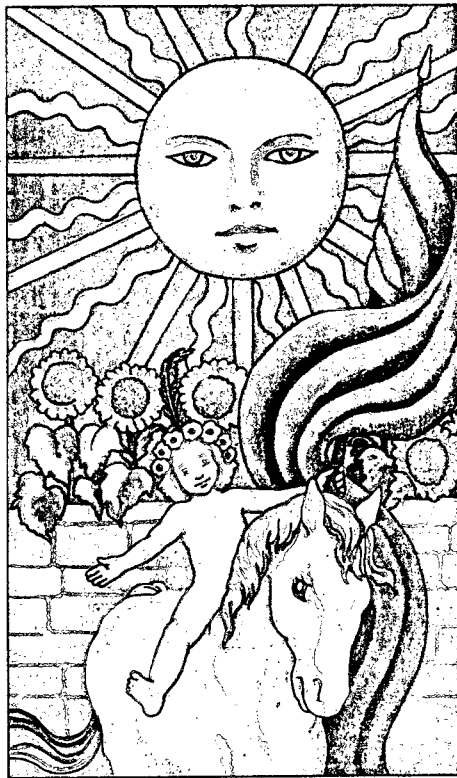
May 8, 2009 at 8pm I will be performing my Master's Thesis Research project in room VA-212. Please join me to bear witness to my heroic journey into the great below of my personal darkness and out through self acceptance and love. The performance will be of no charge but a small donation to CAHD would be greatly appreciated. Love, Jenn.

Appendix D





XIX



THE SUN

© 2000 LORNA

EIGHT



SWORDS

III



THE EMPRESS

XV



THE DEVIL

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Appendix E



This is a picture that I gave out at the end of the show. I chose this picture of myself as a little girl to symbolize the return to innocence achieved at the end of the show.