

Mona Lisa ...Shall We Dance? An Exploration of my Individuation Process  
Through a Self-Revelatory Performance

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## Abstract

Mona Lisa...Shall we dance? An exploration of my Individuation Process through a Self-

Revelatory performance

Ingi Abou Zeid

This paper shows how the self-revelatory process served as a conscious mean for exploration. Through the self-revelatory stages the author was able to consciously explore her individuation process within a social, cultural and religious context while following various steps to build a creative performance.

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## **Introduction**

Why do you always try to please others? Why are you afraid to express yourself? Why do you work so hard to impress everyone? These are the questions that my brother used to ask me. I managed each time to escape from answering him. In truth, I was escaping from myself. I did not have enough courage to reflect upon the daunting answers to his questions. I was scared to face myself.

For many years, I successfully evaded answering these questions until I began to experience a sense of emptiness accompanied by a deep depression. In the beginning, I was coping with this emotional emptiness by staying in bed. Then when my latest episode of depression hit me during my Master's program in 2011, I was determined to face those unanswered questions I had ignored for so long, and discover their roots. This is how my search for my true self began and I commenced the conscious exploration of my individuation process in therapy.

This study will explore my individuation process through a self-revelatory performance. Eight months of psychological work was contained within the creative structure of the self-revelatory performance. The first section briefly reviews the literature related to selfhood. The second section explains the art-based methodology used to create the self-revelatory performance. The third section examines the impact of a self-revelatory process as a means of exploring one's individuation journey. Finally, the last section discusses the results and makes suggestions pertinent to the drama therapy field.

## Literature Review

The literature review begins by offering a brief overview of the current literature regarding the concept of selfhood. Following this the review will focus on the individuation process, as introduced by Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, Carl Jung. Lastly, this section will operationalize the definition, goals, and phases of this unique process.

Danish philosopher, Kierkegaard, maintained that an individual becomes deeply desperate when he chooses “to be another than himself” (as cited in Rogers, 1961, p. 110). In other words, when a person fails to live according to his true unique nature he suffers tremendously. Social, political, and cultural factors can incite a person to not be true to themselves. While tracing the socio-political impact on the self, Sheets-Johnstone (2008) depicted that the presence of self-ignorance and self-deception can be traced back thousands of years. She explained in her article that attaining self-knowledge was, and still is, a struggle (Sheets-Johnstone, 2008).

In her study of the true self, Miller (1997) accentuates the importance of self-knowledge in overcoming depression and grandiosity. Throughout her studies she further highlights that a sense of emptiness or grandiosity could result from early childhood experiences. A child can often develop a false self, also known as an “as if personality”, when a child’s true nature is repressed in order to accommodate parental needs (Miller, 1997, p. 11). This “as if personality” is an artificial personality created in early childhood to protect the individual from developmental trauma, distress and emotional pain. Even though this false self appears real to the external environment the person internally feels empty and lacks spontaneity. It is common for children to neglect their own needs in

order to gain love and acceptance (Bly, 1988; Miller, 1997; Winnicott, 1965). The false self develops as the child's reactions become limited to his parents' expectations.

Therefore by repressing his or her true nature the child loses flexibility and spontaneity, and fails to "develop and differentiate his true self" (Miller, 1997, p. 12).

Presently, many societies are more accepting of the quest for personal fulfillment as a legitimate and essential aspect of life (Baumesiter, 1987). Through his therapeutic interventions Carl Rogers (1961) realized that beneath all issues that clients bring into therapy lies one common quest: the search for the real self. This search requires a great deal of self-knowledge and self-reflection.

The quest for the true self is a unique journey that encompasses a multitude of challenges. When a person succeeds in overcoming challenges the quest for the true self becomes a joyful and enlightened experience (Johnstone-Sheets, 2008). However, Miller (1997) underlines that this long process of discovery and exploration of a person's own truth "can be painful before providing us a new sphere of liberation"(p. 1). A person might encounter many challenges before reaching this liberation. Those challenges include the pain that results from revisiting childhood traumas and painful memories. As a result a person may feel resistant to continue the exploratory process.

In *The Self*, Moustakas (1956), one of the leaders of humanistic psychology, collected various writings tackling selfhood, from different fields including anthropology, psychology, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. Moustakas then summarized the theories of self-development presented by Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Jean Paul Sartre, Karen Horney, Carl Jung, and Otto Ranke. Despite their differing notions and approaches, the



theorists shared the common perception that each individual has a unique self. This paper will focus on Jung's notion of self-development known as individuation.

The development of the "self" as a concept occupied a considerable place in Jung's studies and research. He perceived the self as the sum total of consciousness and unconsciousness describing it as "the circumference that encloses consciousness and the unconsciousness; it is the centre of this totality" (Jung, 1963, p. 96). Jung argued that the self instinctively thrives toward wholeness.

The journey toward wholeness was profoundly explored and studied by Carl Jung (as cited in Goldbrunner, 1964). The concept of individuation was one of his greatest contributions to the field of analytical psychology (Jung, 1963, 1964, 1965; Goldbrunner, 1964; Von Franz, 1975). Jung defined the individuation process as "the psychological process that makes of a human being an 'individual' - a unique, indivisible unit or 'whole man'" (Jung, 1963, p. 3).

The ultimate goal of this life-long psychological process is to get in contact with the self, combining the conscious and unconscious components of one's *psyche* (Jung, 1963, 1964; Von Franz 1975). In order to achieve this, a person needs to become conscious of various components of the psyche (Jung cited in Von Franz, 1975).

Before demonstrating the phases of the individuation process, it is important to note the difference between conscious and unconscious individuation. In his research on the evolution of consciousness and individuation, psychologist David Johnston (1996) highlights the significance of consciousness in the process of individuation. He alludes to two types of individuation: the natural (unconscious) and the individual (conscious) individuation. Likewise, Von Franz (1964), one of Jung's disciples and colleagues,

highlights the importance of individual awareness during the process, stating “the process of individuation is real only if the individual is aware of it and consequently makes a living connection with it” (p. 162).

The process of harmonization and integration of the various aspects of the psyche take place through three phases as described by Jung (as cited in Johnston, 1996):

The first phase, involves mental understanding of the individuation process and its significance. In the second phase, there is a need for the embodiment of insights as consciousness seeks effective fulfillment, which means that these insights have a direct effect on one's conduct in life. In the third phase, a connection is realized between the individual self and the universal self, which involves a universalization process and a definition of meaning beyond the individual. There is in others words, a union of soul, spirit and body (p. 9)

According to Jung (1963), individuation starts through a conscious exploration of the persona, the outer self of the personality, which can be seen as the mask that we wear and we want to present to the society. This is followed by the individual exploring the shadow self, which represents the dark side that we hide from others and ourselves. The shadow self, as part of the unconscious mind, consists of repressed compulsions, projections, fears and unhealthy complexes that are repressed or denied. Liberation from the shadow self occurs when the individual becomes conscious of and confronts their shadow self. Jung (1963) emphasizes that in order for an individual to reach wholeness he must start by acknowledging and accepting his own shadow self.

After awareness occurs the individual must become conscious of two archetypes the *anima* and the *animus*. The anima and animus represent the true inner self of an

individual and can manifest itself through dreams. Jung (1963) explains that anima is the eternal image of woman, or the sum of the unconscious feminine psychological qualities a man carries within. For woman the animus is the image of the man she carries within. It can also be identified as the masculine qualities carried within a woman. The anima/animus affects male-female interactions with the opposite sex if not consciously explored and acknowledged.

Once an individual is able to observe and unite both female and male characteristics within themselves, a person must unite matter and spirit. This happens by separating from father and mother figures. A man should liberate himself from his father to find his true identity, while a woman should separate herself from her mother. It is then essential to explore the deeper layer of the unconscious presented by Jung as the collective unconscious. According to Jung (1963) this part of the psyche consists of universal inherited elements that represent the continuation of culture and our sense of connection with previous generations. Finally, after assimilating these conscious and unconscious materials and after liberating himself from the collective unconscious a person finds his way to the “Self”.

### **Arts-based Methodology**

My individuation journey was explored through the arts-based method of self-revelatory performance. After eight months of profound psychotherapy and rehearsals, the final product entitled *Mona Lisa...Shall we dance?* was performed on July 8th, 2013 at Concordia University.

The self-revelatory performance as introduced by Emunah (1994) “is not only a new kind of therapy but a new genre of theatre” (p. 291). In essence, it is a process that

consists of transforming one's personal unresolved issues, which often emerge within the therapeutic context, into a theatrical performance. Emunah (1994) accentuates that a self-revelatory piece is created out of current unresolved materials, not out of past or previously resolved issues.

The creation of the performance consists of a simultaneous evolution of the performer and the performance itself. Emunah (1994) states that "the performance and the performer's personal process evolve concomitantly" (p. 293). New materials surface during the creative process, which further fosters the performer's healing process. Likewise, insightful gains within therapy influence scene and content development. While creating the artistic piece a performer discovers new aspects about themselves and also explores suppressed aspects. Emunah (1994) advocates that drama as a medium serves as a catalyst for discovering suppressed shadow aspects, otherwise known as hidden materials. Similarly, Rubin (1996) supports that the creation of a self-revelatory performance can foster psychological growth by bringing into awareness memories, emotions, and unaddressed issues.

My self-revelatory performance piece was embraced in three stages: pre-rehearsal, rehearsal, and performance. This section aims to display the aforementioned stages. In exhibiting the stages themselves, a particular emphasis will be placed on the specific drama therapy techniques utilized to assemble my psychic material for the performance.

### **Pre-rehearsal: Searching for Mona Lisa**

The pre-rehearsal stage took place over six months preceding the creation of the self-revelatory piece. During this initial stage the emphasis was on exploring my

individuation process through weekly therapy sessions. After the fourth month my therapeutic journey was accompanied by bi-weekly meetings with my research supervisor. These meetings furthered my reflections and explorations, adding depth and perspective to my inner growth. The following three techniques were used throughout my pre-rehearsal stage: journaling, dream interpretation and the *Embodied Mandala* method.

**Journaling.** My journaling process incorporated both visual and written components. Every week I would spend three hours contemplating my upcoming self-revelatory performance. I contemplated by journaling after therapy sessions, and getting inspiration from looking at photographs that would ignite memories of unresolved childhood issues. Before each journal entry, I would engage in free-writing for a period of five minutes, allowing my stream of consciousness to develop tangibly into written form. Rubin (1996) advocates that free-writing serves as a warm up for the creative process by clearing the mind. Regarding the writing process, Rubin advocates that it facilitates attainment of deeper thoughts and memories (as cited in Blatner, 2007).

At times, when faced by overwhelming emotions I would rely on visual journaling. Ganim and Fox (1999) suggest that visual journaling aids in the containment of suppressed emotions during particularly difficult phases. Regular journaling during the pre-rehearsal stage shed light upon forgotten childhood memories and other unconscious material. It is through this journaling process that I was able to identify themes that later became the basis of my performance.

**Dream Interpretation.** While exploring aspects of my false self, during one of my therapy sessions, I remembered one of my dreams. In my dream I killed a little child that looked precisely like me at the age of six. I was devastated and repeatedly screamed:

"I killed my little child...I killed my little girl". The fear of being arrested for my actions forced me to conceal my crime by hiding her bleeding body in a garbage bag.

By gaining understanding of my dream within the therapeutic space I was able to find meaning in its symbolic content and further link this to my individuation process. While working with his patients, Jung (1964) noticed that significant dreams that contain mythic symbolism and archetypes are associated with the embracing of unconscious events within the individuation process. He advocated that "Symbols of the process of individuation are images, usually of archetypal nature, that appear in dreams and portray the centralizing process, or the production of a new centre of the personality" (Jung, 1963, p. 96). Therefore, he stressed the importance of dream analysis and interpretation during this unique process toward wholeness.

In his study of Jung's depth psychology, Goldbrunner (1964) describes dream analysis as a royal bridge to the unconscious. He explains that "the dream is a natural product of the psyche. It brings to light repressed elements, desires, and fears, moral indifference, but also all the infantile, perverse and criminal tendencies of the soul" (p. 36). The insightful exploration of my dream within the therapeutic process nourished my creative process. The dream was symbolically linked to my individuation process and was developed into a scene for my performance.

**Embodied Mandala Method.** While gathering descriptive information to support my exploratory journey, I chose to use the Embodied Mandala (EM) assessment developed by drama therapist Nisha Sajnani (2002). During one of my supervision meetings I suggested that we continue our examination via this interactive method.

The EM method was inspired by the Mandala Method developed by Jennings in order to explore the self (Sajani, 2002). Sajani presents Jennings' method "as an approach to complement the Creative-Expressive model of drama therapy through which a person can examine a holistic representation of their life rather than being focused on a deficiency or isolated illness" (as cited in Sajani, 2002, p. 53).

Following Sajani's instructions I began by drawing my Mandala structure. The Mandala, a Sanskrit name that signifies circle, essence, or whole, was initially introduced by Carl Jung to reveal the client's unconscious material (Sajani, 2002). The Mandala structure according to Jennings has a center representing core beliefs (Jennings cited in Sajani, 2002).

After filling the center of my Mandala with a green heart I proceeded to fill the four quadrants proposed by Jennings (Sajani, 2002). Each quadrant represents an aspect of the self: the guide, the artist, the vulnerable person, and the skilled person. Sajani (2002) explains that these four aspects are a limited representation of one's self in a moment of time rather than a fixed presentation. Therefore, applying the EM assessment at a different intervals throughout the treatment period serves as a tool for gathering new insights, as well as evaluating change and personal growth.

After completing my drawing, my research supervisor followed Sajani's instructions to guide me through a physical exploration of my Mandala. Through embodiment I identified a struggle I have between four roles that constitute my false self: the victim, the sinner, the loser, and the good girl. These four roles were later embodied through the performance.

## **Rehearsal Stage: Mona Lisa Behind the Curtains**

After collecting significant data and inspiration from the pre-rehearsal stage, the final two months were dedicated to the transformation of my personal material into an artistic piece. The first month of my rehearsals was facilitated by my research supervisor. The second month of rehearsals was guided by a director. I met with the director for 21 hours over a period of one month to ensure the aesthetic quality of the piece. Emunah (1994) suggests a combination of structure and improvisation to create a self-revelatory performance. I relied on an exploration of the eastern chakra system to build the structure of my performance. As for the scenes, they evolved through acting/movement improvisation (Sheila, 1996).

**Improvisation.** The ideas and themes highlighted in the pre-rehearsal stage were explored through improvisation. Emunah (1994) argues that “improvisation facilitates a dynamic process between the actor and the performance piece” (p. 292). In other words, the improvised scenes affect the actor’s life and the changes in the actor’s life influence the performance. In brief, the improvised scenes activated my imagination to build my script and develop my performance, with the chosen scenes originating from the improvisations.

**The Chakra System.** A chakra is a Sanskrit word signifying a wheel or disk representing the seven energy centers of the body as explained in the Hindu tradition (Spencer, 1987). I was inspired to use the chakra system as a framework for my performance as it facilitated the organization of my scenes. Each theme tackled in my performance was thus examined within the chakra system.



Psychotherapist and author Anodea Judith (1996) explains that a process of reception and integration takes place within each chakra. Based on her research studies and practice, she postulates that blockages in the seven chakras result from childhood traumas, a limited belief system, emotional injuries, social programming and cultural conditioning. Such blockages experienced at an energy level hinder our personal growth and self-actualization. She then explains that in order to heal it is crucial to recognize the blocks we carry, and explore their roots.

Exploring my chakra blockages framed my performance, while also helping me to explore my individuation process and create scenes that reflected both early traumas and my healing journey. For example, Judith (1996) maintains that the blockage in the first chakra, the root chakra, occurs in childhood due to lack of emotional attention, induced fear and inappropriate mirroring. My scenes linked this information to my personal story, embodying the lack of emotional attention from my father compounded by the fear induced in me by my mother's fearful attachment style.

### **Performance: Mona Lisa On-stage**

The performance lasted 45 minutes and took place in front of an audience. I invited my professors, mother, therapist, friends, and classmates. The performance was then followed by a discussion where the audience shared their comments, thoughts, and feelings.

Many theatrical styles were integrated into my performance. According to Emunah (1994), the theatrical style and forms depend on the performer's choice. Some clients use monologues, other uses masks or puppets, some re-enact realistic scenes, others tell the story via metaphor (Emunah, p. 225). I chose to base my performance on

story telling wherein I played the role of the narrator. During my narration I incorporated role play and re-enactment of real life scenes. In addition, I added a dance component that explored my individuation process. The performance also included poetry and authentic movement.

The performance was followed by a 30 minute discussion with the audience during which I asked them to share their thoughts, comments and questions.

### **Findings**

Through the self-revelatory process, I consciously explored different aspects related to my individuation process and underwent a life transforming experience. The self-revelatory process facilitates the translation of personal material into a performance (Emunah, 1994). This performance process promotes transformation for both the performer and the audience (Emunah, 1994). In his research study, Johnston (1996) concluded that the “individuation process is a conscious and self-reflective involvement with life, potentially leading to a profound personal transformation” (p.17).

The regular reflection accompanying my self-revelatory voyage awakened my attention to the internal shift that was taking place as a result of my process. My self-revelatory experience was a fertile soil for a holistic transformation that gradually touched different levels of my emotional, physical and spiritual being. Despite the painful feelings I experienced at times during the therapeutic and creative process, each stage in my journey was remarkably transformative. I have categorized the findings of this journey based on Clark’s concept of *perspective transformation*, which indicates that a transformation occurs at three levels: psychological, convictional and behavioral (as cited in Bleuer, 2009).

## **Psychological level**

During the pre-rehearsal stage I began to transform psychologically. It was painful to detach from my persona and gain insights about the shadow aspects of my psyche. The conscious re-visiting of traumatic experiences was so painful and it triggered intense feelings of anger towards both my parents and myself. Then my anger grew larger and was directed toward inherited beliefs and cultural misconceptions. Explaining the nuance of this anger is outside of the scope of this paper, however, it is important to note that acknowledging and expressing my anger was an important part of my individuation journey.

I experienced many strong emotions throughout this journey including psychological resistance, which occurred several times throughout the process. In the beginning, I was resistant during my therapeutic exploration. My therapist provided me with mirroring, validation and normalization of these feelings, which effectively contained the situation and enabled me to continue my exploration.

At the end of the pre-rehearsal stage, I resisted in transforming the exploration into a performance. I wanted to escape from further processing of my false self. I wanted to hide. In Goldbrunner's (1964) writings about Jung's concept of individuation, he explained that "process of differentiation from the Persona and the removal of the personal unconscious which occurs in the course of individuation make one sensitive. It is as though a protective skin has been removed" (p.122). I then suggested to my research supervisor to transform my personal material into a mask exhibition or just write a paper without creating a performance. My research supervisor not only approved my new ideas but she also validated my feelings as part of the process. This helped me to find meaning

in my resistance, and increased feelings of security. In the end, I decided to return to my performance plan.

A remarkable psychological shift took place during the final two months as I began developing the performance. I was truly enjoying the creative process and this gave me a sense of confidence. Through aesthetic distance, the creative process helped me to safely improvise and enact painful abusive scenes, thus allowing me to explore my shadow aspects. The dramatic space within the rehearsal context served as a safe container for my personal material. Engaging in the creative process was very nourishing and promoted my emotional growth. The transformation of painful memories into scenes helped me to become a witness of my own experience. Finally, this witnessing within a contained, playful space allowed me to gain new perspectives and alleviated the pain related to certain life situations.

The day of the performance I experienced a great sense of pride and achievement. I also felt liberated after revealing my own story in front of an audience. Being witnessed by the audience had a great impact on me. It allowed me to honor my own experience. Revealing the true self, in front of others, after the integration of conscious and unconscious materials is a considerable component in the individuation process. I felt liberated to reveal my true nature, my beliefs, and my rights as a woman in front of the audience, especially in front of my Mum who witnessed the process. My sense of liberation was mainly related to my courage to reveal myself with no fear of judgment or rejection. I was finally able to accept my physical appearance, my thoughts and my beliefs.

Finally, after the performance, I experienced a great sense of grief that was well contained in therapy and supervision. I felt as if I had lost something or someone. According to Emunah (1994) this is a normal reaction after the performance. Jung corroborates, attributing difficult feelings to the detachment and separation of old parts that does not constitute the self (Jung, 1963, 1964; Goldbrunner, 1964).

It is difficult to describe in words the profound psychological transformation I underwent. My emotional reactions toward many situations and personal interactions became less impulsive and more grounded. After revealing my own story in front of an audience, and it being so well received, I gained a great sense of self-confidence and self-assurance.

### **Convictional transformation**

Since I was born into a Muslim family and raised in a catholic school, my belief system was radically influenced by the two traditions. For many years fear and guilt controlled my thoughts, feelings and actions. However, over the last two years I became dubious about many inherited religious concepts, such as judgment. My soul was instinctively rejecting religious ideas that bestow fear in humanity. I was instinctively searching for a spiritual path that brings love and creates oneness. I was lost, desperately looking for a peaceful spiritual route.

Through my conscious participation in my individuation process I was able to find answers to my spiritual quest. First, I was able to detach myself from the collective unconscious presented in inherited concepts and beliefs. The gain of self-knowledge throughout the process allowed me to trust my inner voice, which guided me toward my

spiritual path. In the last week of the rehearsal stage, while reflecting upon my process, I became inspired and wrote a full scene describing my new spiritual direction.

Jung emphasized that the individuation process is a spiritual one that allows the person to find his individual image of God (Jung, 1963). In fact, my inward journey allowed me to replace the fear and guilt occupying my belief system with love. Therefore, I chose to be a creator of my own path, following my heart instead of the dogma of others.

To be concise, the self-revelatory performance process created a new lens with which to explore my belief-system. Through deep questioning and reflection and play, I felt free to observe, question, challenge and come to my own conclusions with a lessened sense of guilt or fear.

### **Behavioral transformation**

During my acquisition of self-knowledge, I experienced a great sense of empathy towards myself, which allowed me to gradually establish new relationships with myself and with others. I became more attuned to my body and my inner voice. For instance, a month before the performance I became overwhelmed by the process and it was crucial to take a step back from the work, so I decided to go for a retreat. During the retreat I became aware that I needed to respect my physical and emotional needs, so I postponed my performance for 10 days.

Moreover, instead of accommodating my needs to please others I began to listen to my own needs. For example, during the 8 months of my self-revelatory performance I refused to be in a relationship where my needs as a woman were neglected. I also remarked that my compulsive thirst for external love and acceptance diminished slowly

throughout the process. I began being able to give myself this unconditional love. In addition, I felt less afraid to clearly communicate my needs to my family and friends.

The three stages of self-revelatory process helped me identify undesirable immature behaviors that do not match my true nature and to begin acting in conformity with my own true self. I started to see my parents from a different more accepting lens, and my interactions became more empathic and loving. My inner repair through the individuation process facilitated repair with my parents. It was amazing to witness this repair occur. Moreover, my effort to please others lessened, and I began to focus on my own needs and my own pleasure.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

My experience has shown me the numerous benefits of using the self-revelatory performance process in the individuation journey. The self-revelatory performance supports Jung's stages of individuation. Through the support of the self-revelatory performance, I was able to explore my false self, or my persona, and my shadow aspects, and gain self-knowledge.

The dramatic processes inherent in the creation of the self-revelatory performance served as a way to integrate both unconscious and conscious materials in a creative manner. I had a conscious understanding of my individuation process, what Jung (1963) refers to as the first phase of individuation. As previously discussed, my behaviour and relationships began to change, adhering to Jung's second phase of individuation in which the individual begins to embody their insights. Also, as Jung (1963) maintains, during the last phase the client universalizes their experience and makes meaning that goes beyond the individual. Emunah (1994) notes that the self-revelatory performance takes an

individual psychological issue and puts it on stage in order to find the universal aspects of the issue and connect with the audience. The self-revelatory process helped me move through the different stages of Jung's individuation.

Consequently, the self-revelatory process is one which involves a great deal of devotion, which results in profound transformation. The transformative benefits are reaped through commitment to a long, demanding and arduous process. During the process, particularly in the initial exploratory phase, a performer should expect intense emotions to surface. Each person should find ways to contain these emotions. In addition to journaling, I managed to minimize my emotional turmoil by relying on various techniques such as mindful meditation, yoga and drawing. The practice of mindfulness, which is a technique based on the non-judgmental awareness to what is present at physical, emotional and intellectual levels, greatly contained the emotional volcano that erupted during my exploratory phase (Kabat-Zinn, 1991). Kabat-Zinn (1991) asserts that mindfulness of our thoughts and feelings during emotionally charged situations helps us to effectively handle our deepest emotional pain. In essence, my practice allowed me to silently witness my process and to embrace my deepest emotions.

Also, I relied on creative visualization to overcome pre-performance anxiety. As explained by Emunah (1994), "a self-revelatory involves a great deal of risk taking performance and courage" (p. 226). Hence, a week before the performance I began to practice creative visualization every night. This technique relies on using "imagination to create what you want in life" (Gawain, 1990, p. 13). I would visualize myself joyfully and gracefully acting, dancing and performing onstage in front of an audience. This creative practice allowed me to develop sustained courage, which helped me to show



immense vulnerability in front of an audience. In addition to creative visualization and meditation techniques, the creation of the artistic piece itself served as a container for my feelings. Channeling my negative feelings such as anger and pain into a creative product was highly therapeutic. The use of certain drama therapy techniques alleviated the highly charged emotional process. For instance, the use of humor during the creation of the scenes was very calming. In fact, it created an emotional balance throughout the performance that contained the audience (Emunah, 1994). Therefore, I recommend the use of humor when dealing with heavy personal issues. In addition, I also included a dance component in the performance to offer a space for my body to assimilate the experience. In sum, the humor and dance served as an aesthetic element while creating an emotional container for both myself and the audience.

Unlike talk therapy, the self-revelatory process offered a space to physically revisit my past traumas. This physical exploration was very significant as it allowed me to gain insights about deeply hidden materials. For instance, revisiting the sexual abuse I witnessed during my marriage through the use of body movement was very therapeutic.

My performance incorporated various symbols and metaphors that created appropriate distance to safely contain my exploration (Jones, 2007). Jones (2007) stated that “symbols in drama therapy can either be created deliberately or can occur spontaneously within an enactment” (p. 270). In fact, I was experiencing resistance to reveal my sexuality in front of an audience till I became inspired through improvisation to use a balloon to symbolize it. The use of the balloon as a symbol served the aesthetic purpose while adding a sense of humour. Hence, it created an emotional and physical distance that helped me to overcome my resistance. I also relied on physical symbolism,

for example, at the end of the performance I was cutting the wig that I was wearing to emphasize the idea of getting rid of the false self.

Finally, being witnessed had a great impact on the transformation experienced at the end of the performance. Jones (2007) postulates that “in drama therapy the therapeutic possibilities of witnessing others and being given the opportunity to be a witness to oneself are of equal importance” (p. 101). In my self-revelatory performance, different levels of witnessing took place. I was witnessed by the audience as I was witnessing the audience’s reactions, as well as my own reaction, to the revelation process.

A person undergoing the self-revelatory process should be flexible to the changes that will occur along the journey. It is this flexibility that will allow for important discoveries. For instance, for theatrically aesthetic reasons I decided to eliminate five props three nights before the performance. These props were imbued with symbolic meaning and removing them was a difficult decision. This decision allowed for a uniqueness and an emphasis on the very important two props that remained: one was a pink balloon that represented my virginity, and my persona of the good girl, and the second was a straight haired wig that also represented my persona of good girl and the “good enough Egyptian girl” who is encouraged to aspire to be beautiful and European-like. As a result of their uniqueness the two props held a much more significant place in the performance, highlighting two very significant concepts. Also, I had to change the date of my performance a month prior to the performance to respect my emotional need for space and to slow down the highly emotional process. Through this action I began practicing self-acceptance and self-care.

## **Conclusion**

A self-revelatory performance was a great choice for the conscious exploration of my individuation journey, and was a unique voyage to experience. One should try to enjoy every moment of it and gently confront their fears to allow themselves to surrender to this very meaningful process. The more you let the process guide you the more transformation occur. I recommended that those undertaking a self-revelatory experience remember to be flexible to explore, to experience and to take risks. The more risks a person takes during this process the more self-knowledge he will acquire.

Despite the fear and resistance I experienced before the performance I have allowed my mind, body and soul to plunge into the here and now (Rogers, 1961). As a result, I enjoyed and cherished every single moment onstage. I have come to learn that it is important to consider that the end of the performance does not mark the end of the process. The therapeutic process takes a new direction after the performance as new elements emerge. Even though, I was able to go through elements of the main stages of individuation I still have a long way to go.

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